

Edgbaston Kindergarten

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	227164
Inspection date	25 April 2007
Inspector	Michelle Smith
Setting Address	413-415 Gillott Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham, West Midlands, B16 9LL
Telephone number	0121 455 0883
E-mail	emily.perry@btconnect.com
Registered person	Anna Jacobs
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Full day care

ABOUT THIS INSPECTION

The purpose of this inspection is to assure government, parents and the public of the quality of childcare and, if applicable, of nursery education. The inspection was carried out under Part XA Children Act 1989 as introduced by the Care Standards Act 2000 and, where nursery education is provided, under Schedule 26 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004; the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding; and, where nursery education is provided, the *Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage*.

The report includes information on any complaints about the childcare provision which Ofsted has received since the last inspection or registration or 1 April 2004 whichever is the later.

The key inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality

Good: this aspect of the provision is strong

Satisfactory: this aspect of the provision is sound

Inadequate: this aspect of the provision is not good enough

For more information about early years inspections, please see the booklet *Are you ready for your inspection?* which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE AND NURSERY EDUCATION

On the basis of the evidence collected on this inspection:

The quality and standards of the care are good. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are good.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Edgbaston Kindergarten is a Montessori nursery that opened in 1994. It operates from the ground floor of converted premises in Edgbaston, Birmingham. The upper floor of the property is only used by staff. There is a fully enclosed garden available for outside play.

A maximum of 40 children may attend the nursery at any one time. There are currently 51 children from aged from 0 to 6 years on roll. Of these, 18 children aged three to four years receive funding for early education. There are three children on roll aged two years who receive funding through the Soho Ward Pilot Scheme to attend three sessions of early education per week. The nursery is open each weekday, all year round. It is closed for one week at Christmas and on bank holidays. Sessions are from 07:30 until 18:00. Children come from a wide catchment area.

There are 14 full-time members of staff working with the children, including two supernumerary managers. The lead manager has recently achieved 'Early Years Professional Status'. There are eight staff members that hold early years qualifications. The remaining six staff members are working towards a qualification. The nursery receives support from the local authority and is

a member of the National Day Nurseries Association. The nursery takes part in an accredited quality assurance scheme and has recently received the gold award for the second year running.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children learn about the importance of good hygiene and keeping healthy. They show familiarity with daily personal care routines. From a young age they squeeze soap into their hands, swill with water and place their used individual towel into the easily accessible bin. Clear procedures for sick and infectious children help to prevent the spread of infection. Accident and medication systems are fully understood by all staff and all records are accurate and up-to-date. This keeps children healthy and safeguards their well-being.

Children eat a well balanced diet which takes account of their individual dietary needs and preferences. Staff prepare healthy snacks such as apples, raisins and rice cakes which children enjoy. Children sit with their friends to enjoy nutritious food, for example, meat with potatoes and vegetables which is prepared by an external caterer. Staff support young children to develop their self-care skills, for example, they encourage babies to hold a spoon when eating yogurts. Children learn about the principles of healthy eating through many diverse methods, for example, they discuss how to achieve a nutritionally balanced diet using interesting, innovative props such as a 'wish box'.

Children of all ages thrive when playing in the open air. They have daily, unrushed opportunities to explore, test and develop their physical skills. Some children sit on bikes and push themselves along using their feet whilst others thrive on the challenge of assessing which tricycle is the fastest. Older children are confident to take appropriate risks within the safe environment. They develop excellent balance and control as they play in the tree house, push each other on the swing and climb steadily up and over a climbing frame. The outdoor play environment is used with success to progress all areas of learning. Children draw patterns on walls with chalks, pretend to mend bikes using pliers and play quietly in the sand. This makes outdoor learning fun.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a welcoming and well organised environment where the very large majority of risks are limited through good safety and security systems. No unauthorised persons are able to enter the nursery because staff are very vigilant about checking the identification of visitors. In addition, they follow procedures consistently to make sure children are only released into the care of named persons. Risk assessments are completed. However, some areas of the building are in need of further repair and decoration. Staff have identified areas of the premises that are in need of improvement and have been awarded a grant to rectify the issues. Children are kept safe on outings. They take regular walks to places of interest such as the church and the reservoir. Older children know that they must hold the hand of a designated person and that they need to stay on the path when feeding the ducks. Staff undertake specific risk assessments for each outing they go on and complete written paperwork to safeguard children's care, for example, they write down their expected time of return and carry a first aid kit.

Children use a varied range of indoor equipment which is clean and safe. They play with age and stage appropriate purpose-built toys as well as natural materials such as shredded paper and homemade play dough. The large majority of outdoor toys are safe. However, pedals on some of the bikes are not in a good state of repair. This increases the likelihood of accidents. Resources are used in open-ended ways by children who are imaginative, for example, they pretend dolls hair curlers placed on their finger tips are finger nails.

Children's welfare is safeguarded because the nursery has robust child protection policies that are understood well by staff. Staff are confident in their role to protect children from risk of harm and know what procedures they need to follow if they have concerns about a child in their care.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children of all ages settle quickly in the friendly nursery atmosphere. They have positive relationships with staff who provide them with comfort, support and reassurance as and when needed. The large majority of staff have a very good understanding of the 'Birth to three matters' framework and most implement the principles successfully to offer a full range of child-centred experiences. Staff plan learning opportunities for all children and make detailed observations to support their progress towards developmental targets. Children spend most of their time in their own classroom which helps to build security and confidence. They are grouped according to their age whilst taking into account each child's individual ability level. Most children under three years play very happily with a diverse range of equipment and sensory materials such as cardboard boxes, brushes, farms and activity keys. Accessibility to toys is very good in most of the rooms which helps children to become independent learners. However, activities in the classroom for children aged one to two years are sometimes less well organised to maximise children's learning through free choice and decision making. This reduces their ability to further develop their own ideas.

Children develop good early communication skills. They actively talk about their favourite book and are confident to express what they would like to play next. They express their originality through creative work, naming the colours they are using to paint and describing their end painting as a 'rainbow'. Simple games of peek-a-boo played in the garden are enjoyed by the children who learn to relate to others and have fun at the same time.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff provide a child-orientated environment where learning is exciting and enjoyable. A lead member of staff plan has very good knowledge of the Foundation Stage and is supported by keen and enthusiastic assistants. Planning, observation and assessment is used to ensure positive outcomes for children. A rigorous system is in place to make sure every child is making good progress through the stepping stones for learning. Staff have high expectations for each child's development. They provoke creative responses from children by using open-ended questions with great success. This helps children to think for themselves and to raise solutions for problems, for example, children know that if they are too hot outdoors they need to take off their coat and place it on the chairs. Staff support children to consolidate and extend their own learning through 'reflection time'. Children sit in a circle with a lantern as a focus to talk and reflect on current events. Staff use a diverse range of methods which encourage good behaviour. They give individual children appropriate levels of responsibility such as going indoors to find and bring out the play tools and take the

time to value what each child wishes to say. As a result, children play in a positive learning environment.

Children are very motivated and keen to learn. They help out with daily tasks such as handing out cups at snack time and carry bread inside their rucksack when going on a local outing. This helps to build their independence. Children have very good relationships with each other. They sit together in the book area and make up stories, for example, they imagine that a tall doll is their sister and that they need help her to put on her school shoes. Children enjoy books individually and in small groups. They sit with staff to read stories and keenly look through the book holder to find their favourite tale. They are very aware of the written word and phonics. They know that 'd' is the starting sound for duck and cat begins 'c'. Children develop their mark-making skills as they join the dots to write their name and make patterns in the sand.

Children use numbers independently and with great confidence. They are very quick to say that 16 is one more than 15 when asked by a staff member how many children are present and how many there would be if one more child came along. As children progress through the Foundation Stage they begin to use numbers in a meaningful context. More able children discuss between themselves if 10 is a big number and then seek the support of staff for a definite answer. All children begin to use their fingers to bring numbers to life as they touch count six balloons on a lotto card. More able children competently match the numeral six and recognise that the numeral nine also looks like a six when turned upside down.

Children are beginning to make sense of the world around them by exploring and investigating via first hand experiences, for example, they hold magnifying glasses when playing outdoors. Children are very curious and are keen to know more about a wide range of subject areas, for example, they ask 'what is lamb?' as they eat their dinner. They spot similarities and differences in the environment as they see blossom off the trees blowing past the windows and make real connections saying that 'it is white stuff' and 'it looks like snow'. Children learn about history, their own culture and the wider world as they take part in activities about knights, castles and being British. Plans show that children have some opportunity to become familiar with the use of information and communication technology (ICT) within everyday lives. However, they are not sufficiently able to access ICT equipment within free play and outdoor experiences. This restricts their understanding of technology.

Children enjoy imaginative play. They pretend to be rabbits as they run around the playground and giggle as they scurry back to their rabbit hole when the pretend fox comes. They are kind as they look after their dolls, placing their dolls dummy carefully into their mouth and holding them close to their chest as they carry them around. Children enjoy regular visits from a music teacher, so helping them to learn about rhythm and sound. They have instant access to musical instruments as they are attractively displayed in a 'music making area'. Children use a wide range of materials and tools to express their creativity, for example, they stand outdoors gluing and draw freely using pencils.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children benefit from superb continuity of care when they start in the nursery because parents are asked for detailed information about their child, for example, their likes, dislikes and routines. This helps staff to get to know each child as an individual, to tailor the routine and adapt the play environment to meet their needs. Parents of younger children are kept up-to-date with

their child's care through written diaries and daily discussions. Children benefit greatly from the two-way communication as they settle with ease and enjoy their play.

All children are included in all activities. There are sufficient and suitable resources that enable children to begin to value and respect others. The nursery has effective strategies in place to meet the needs of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and children for whom English is an additional language. Children within the nursery show good levels of respect for each other. The younger children learn that there are consistent boundaries for their behaviour such as remaining within the gated area when playing outdoors. Older children begin to take responsibility for their own actions, for example, they sweep the sand that has fallen onto the floor into a dustpan. Staff use innovative methods in order to maintain a positive environment, for example, they hide their eyes and begin counting with other children how long it takes for a child to join the queue to wash their hands. This light-hearted approach shows staff have a clear understanding that enjoyment and fun provide the best context for learning. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The partnership with parents and carers of funded children is good. Parents receive detailed written information about the Foundation Stage. They are able to view the written curriculum plans which show what activities children take part in and how they link to key learning objectives because they are clearly displayed in the entrance hall. Regular letters are sent to parents informing them of the project theme, what children will be learning and how they can choose to support their child's learning at home. Yearly updates as well as daily discussions help parents to understand their child's progression. This positive approach to information sharing enhances children's learning.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children thrive in the effectively organised nursery environment. A particular strength of this nursery is the free-flow between indoor and outdoor play for children aged three plus. A sheltered outdoor classroom means that they can play outside in all weathers with a full variety of equipment and resources such as dressing up clothes and construction toys. This makes exceptional use of space and places high priority on outdoor play and child-orientated learning. Staff are well deployed, particularly outdoors. This allows children take risks under close supervision.

Detailed policies and procedures including a strong operational plan are in place and these are implemented successfully by staff into consistent working practices. All staff undergo suitability checks. New staff members take part in a full induction process. As a result, they become sure of their job role and individual level of responsibility very quickly. The management team ask staff to complete a self evaluation form which means that staff assess their own performance and highlight any areas for personal improvement. Children benefit greatly from this positive managerial approach as they are cared for by highly motivated, suitable and knowledgeable staff.

Leadership and management of funded children is good. The lead manager has a clear vision for the nursery education with a strong emphasis on the importance of free play and planning, so ensuring children develop their own learning. Children flourish as they are cared for by consistent staff who understand how children learn and develop. The nursery continually evaluates their educational practice. As a result, many weaknesses are identified and swiftly

acted upon and there are only minor areas for improvement within the curriculum. Consequently, children are making good progress.

Overall children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection, the nursery was asked to ensure good hygiene practices are in place regarding food preparation and to ensure an appropriate range of utensils is available for younger children at mealtimes. Children's health is now further promoted as staff follow hygiene practices consistently, for example, only staff with food hygiene certificates serve the lunch time meals. Young children relax to enjoy their meals using stage appropriate cutlery. As a result, they eat as much as possible and are content.

The nursery was also asked to improve opportunities for children to self-select resources and activities and to make sure that children access an appropriate range of resources which reflect positive images. Most children are now given many opportunities to make choices and decisions within their play, so helping them to become motivated learners. They learn about the diversity of society as resources now reflect positive images, for example, children take part in many sensory activities which raise their awareness of disabilities such as sight impairment.

The final recommendation raised at the last inspection was to ensure regular risk assessments are carried out on the indoor areas used by the children and the outside play area. Risk assessments are carried out on a daily basis. Any hazards that are identified are noted and a route of action is identified which minimises the very large majority of risks to children.

At the last education inspection the nursery was asked to ensure that staff plan a wide enough range of opportunities throughout the day for children to initiate activities and continue their learning in different ways. The nursery was asked to pay particular attention to improving opportunities for children to explore and investigate the properties of objects and materials and associated physical processes. Children now have uninterrupted time for self-initiated learning indoors and outside. They actively explore and investigate a wide range of properties and objects, for example, when playing with leaves in the sand.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since 1 April 2004 there have been no complaints made to Ofsted that required the provider or Ofsted to take any action in order to meet the National Standards.

The provider is required to keep a record of complaints made by parents, which they can see on request. The complaints record may contain complaints other than those made to Ofsted.

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The quality and standards of the nursery education are good.

WHAT MUST BE DONE TO SECURE FUTURE IMPROVEMENT?

The quality and standards of the care

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- improve the state of repair and decoration of the premises and make sure all outdoor equipment is maintained in good condition
- further improve children's access to resources so that they can make more choices; this refers to the working practice within the classroom for children aged one to two years.

The quality and standards of the nursery education

To improve the quality and standards of nursery education further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- further improve the organisation and range of resources to increase children's understanding of information and communication technology within everyday lives.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the leaflet *Complaints about Ofsted Early Years: concerns or complaints about Ofsted's role in regulating and inspecting childcare and early education (HMI ref no 2599)* which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk