

Sandfield Montessori Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY342763
Inspection date	27 April 2007
Inspector	Margaret Patricia Mellor
Setting Address	Sandfield House, Lickers lane, Whiston, Merseyside, L35 3SR
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Registered person	Suzanne and Alex Scott
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 satisfactory. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are satisfactory.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Sandfield Montessori Nursery opened in 1980 and was re-registered in 2006 following a change of ownership. Children use six play areas on the ground floor of a converted house situated in the Whiston area of Knowsley. There are secure, fully enclosed gardens available for children's outdoor play. It primarily serves children living in or around the local community.

The nursery is registered to care for a maximum of 52 children aged under five years at any one time. It opens Monday to Friday from 07.00 until 18.30 for 51 weeks of the year. There are 48 children on roll aged from eight months to four years. Of these, 15 children receive funding for nursery education.

The nursery employs 12 staff to work with the children. Seven staff have a relevant childcare qualification and one a teaching diploma. Additional staff are employed for cleaning and preparing the children's meals. They receive support from Knowsley Sure Start Services and an early years teacher advisor. The nursery is a member of the National Day Nursery Association and Pre-School Learning Alliance. The Montessori method of teaching is implemented in the nursery.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a comfortable environment, which meets the children's needs. Younger children develop their awareness of simple personal hygiene through their nursery routine and as staff sensitively help them with washing hands or wiping noses. Staff take time to explain why being hygienic is important and older children confidently talk about how washing hands helps get rid of germs. Children build on their awareness as they eagerly help brush the floor, wipe tables and wash their cups after lunch. Staff, themselves, have a good understanding of health care issues, for instance, consistently wearing disposable gloves and aprons when nappy changing. There are effective procedures for cleaning the premises, which further helps to prevent the spread of cross-infection.

Children's interest in a healthy lifestyle is promoted well. Their interest in food is very positively nurtured and a nutritionist has helped to develop the children's menu. The cook uses fresh foods and the children's lunch is particularly wholesome and served in ample portions so that children are well nourished. Staff are keen to share healthy eating ideas with children through discussions and practical activities, such as fruit tasting sessions. Children love to be active and respond with gusto as they run in the fresh air, splash in puddles, play in the snow, push or ride on wheeled toys and climb. Younger children show plenty of curiosity as they freely crawl and explore their environment. Children's gross motor skills are further enhanced as they explore rhythm and move to music. They have plenty of fun as they lace cards, thread beads and crayon or paint, promoting their fine motor skills. Children learn to listen to their bodies as they independently help themselves to drinking water when thirsty and younger children develop their coordination as they drink from a feeder type cup. Children are able to be active or restful, according to their respective needs.

Children's health is safeguarded because staff act in their best interests when they are ill and store medication in an accessible place out of children's reach. This is well supported by detailed sick child and medication policies. Eight staff have a relevant first aid certificate and the first aid boxes are kept fully stocked, so that children's minor injuries are dealt with appropriately. There are effective procedures for sharing information about children's dietary needs so that parents' wishes are respected and children stay healthy. Children's health is further assured because staff ensure that they use sun creams, wear hats, play in the shade and have plenty of drinks on hot days.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in a warm, clean and generally safe environment. Their well-being is safeguarded because there is a designated child protection co-ordinator. Staff have accessed training and show a sound awareness of the procedure to follow should they wish to report a concern. They follow effective procedures when visitors and parents arrive. This is supported by a door intercom system, closed circuit television and effective procedures for the collection of children in an emergency. All the necessary safety equipment is in place, for instance, radiator guards and fire evacuation cots for younger children. Although staff carry out a daily visual risk assessment of the premises, a car seat in the hall way, access to the first floor of the premises and segregation of the nursery entrance in the garden area with a makeshift barrier are potential risks to children's safety. The play areas are spacious and afford plenty of natural light.

Children play with a satisfactory range of toys and equipment that are suitable for their age. Staff follow effective health and safety procedures for checking the resources so that children remain safe. They organise the space, providing interesting areas of play and relaxation for the children. Children sit, play and relax in comfort because the furniture and floor cushions are suitable for the range of children who attend. They enjoy safe challenges on the portable toys and large play equipment in the garden. Children learn aspects of personal safety as they regularly practise what to do in the event of a fire. They build on their awareness through staff's gentle reminders about picking up toys or running indoors. Staff take time to explain to children why they must stop what they are doing, for instance that they may trip and hurt themselves. Children sleep in safety and comfort because staff supervise them well and are close at hand to respond to their awakening.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are making satisfactory progress in all areas of their development. They are clearly relaxed and at ease in nursery, promoting their personal, social and emotional development. Younger children begin to appreciate the company of others as they play sociably alongside one another and with each other whilst staff are close at hand for reassurance. They begin to learn to cooperate and relish staff's close contact as they play with the toys or show signs of tiredness. Children are gaining confidence as they build relationships with their peers and staff, who are attentive as they talk, listen and play with the children. They become more confident communicators as they sing rhymes and join in discussions at story time. Children are keen to engage staff in their activities, for instance, as they do puzzles. They enjoy singing and story times.

Children have fun in nursery and are involved in their play, which engages their interests. This is supported by activities planned by staff who are beginning to use the 'Birth to three matters' framework and observation books to promote children's learning and development. Younger children begin to develop a sense of 'Me, Myself and I' as they respond to their name and spontaneously play with their hands or feet. They are gaining control of their physical needs, for instance, when thirsty or going to the toilet. They begin to find a voice sometimes repeating simple words when playing and babies enjoy making repetitive sounds. Children learn to explore and investigate using their senses. They respond gleefully as they run their fingers through the water, smell jelly and feel the different textures in the treasure basket.

Nursery education.

The quality of the teaching and learning is satisfactory. Children are making sound progress towards the early learning goals. Staff are enthusiastic in their approach and interact with the children well, motivating their learning and play. They communicate well and ask questions to encourage children to use language for thinking. Children are interested and happy in their play and are developing a positive attitude to learning. Activities are topic based and planned to provide children with a varied programme. Staff evaluate to monitor the learning outcomes and information is recorded on how this supports plans. They use observation effectively to assess the children's progress and track their development through the stepping stones. However, not all staff are knowledgeable about how assessments are used to fully address and inform future plans.

Children develop appropriate levels of personal independence. They are beginning to self-register as they arrive, are encouraged to put their coat on before playing out and love to help to set

the table at meal times. Children communicate well with each other and adults. They talk fondly about their family and about past and present events in their lives. Children have access to many books for enjoyment and learn that print carries meaning through displayed words and captions. They begin to recognise their own name and the names of others. They chalk on the flags but there are few resources in the mark making area for them to practise writing for themselves. Children are developing generally well in their mathematical skills. They confidently count to 10 and staff encourage children to use mathematical language when measuring the sunflower plants and as they build with large and small blocks. However, staff are not providing children with opportunities to attempt simple addition and subtraction in everyday activities.

Staff provide interesting activities that help to foster children's curiosity and investigative skills. Children happily play with the toy telephones, calculators and cameras but there are few programmable resources to build on children's learning of technology. They learn about living things as they feed the squirrels, hunt for bugs with magnifying glasses in the garden and talk about the bees. Children are encouraged to develop their creative skills and freely express their own ideas and feelings through art and craft. They explore colour, texture, shape and form through a range of media, such as collage, sticking, painting, sand and water. They have plenty of fun as they do glass painting and talk excitedly about the dream catchers they make. Children build on their creativity and have plenty of fun as they spontaneously dress up and role play in the home area.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children's self-esteem is nurtured in a positive environment. Their art work is widely displayed in nursery, promoting children's self-worth and a welcoming environment for themselves and their parents. Staff use plenty of praise to acknowledge what children have done well. They are attentive, encouraging children to talk about what they are doing and to express their interests. Younger children relish staff's close contact as they play with the toys and begin to develop the concept of sharing. Older children learn to play cooperatively together, for instance, taking turns. Staff, however, are passive when managing children's inappropriate behaviour at meal times. This means that children's social skills and awareness of what is expected of them is not fully promoted.

Children settle well and happily join in the activities because staff work closely with parents to ensure they understand children's individual needs and home routine. Parents say that they are very happy and satisfied with their children's care, diet, play experiences and progress they make. They are provided with a nursery prospectus as part of the enrolment procedures. Newsletters and a notice board keeps parents up to date with developments. There is effective, ongoing sharing of information about the children because staff take time to write the child's day diary sheet and chat to parents as they arrive. This reassures parents that children interests come first and contributes to the quality of care offered.

Children are happy in nursery and develop appropriate levels of self-esteem. The effective equal opportunities policy and named coordinator for special educational needs ensures that all children are included and valued as individuals. Children begin to develop positive attitudes towards others as they play with the multi-cultural resources, small world toys, look at books and do puzzles. They relish celebrating a range of special events in their lives, such as birthdays and a new baby in the family. Children learn about other cultures and have plenty of fun as they celebrate the Rio festival when they dress up and do face painting. This is supported by drama workshops, festival packs and resource information. Children attend from different family

backgrounds and activities are non-gender specific, further contributing to children's awareness of diversity and equality issues. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Partnership with parents and carers is satisfactory. There is written information for parents about the children's learning programme and early learning goals. Information about the Foundation Stage and children's learning is also discussed informally. Parents are given information about the current topic, for instance growth and how they can support children's learning at home. However, there is no formal procedure for parents of children in receipt of the nursery education grant to meet with staff. Consequently, parents are not fully involved in children's learning.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in a generally safe, comfortable and suitably equipped environment. There are effective systems for the recruitment and induction of adults who care for the children. This is supported by effective procedures so that non-vetted adults are not left unsupervised with children. All the regulatory documentation is in place, stored securely and made available for inspection. There are well written policies and staff have accessed training, such as first aid and child protection, which helps to provide an effective service for the children. However, staff do not consistently record the times they are on the premises and parents are not clear about the role of the regulator in investigating complaints.

Children benefit from the appropriate adult support and staffing ratios are met. They are cared for in three age related groups and every child has a named key worker, contributing to children's happiness and sense of belonging. Staff are enthusiastic about their own self-development through regular attendance on childcare courses, for instance, 'Birth to three matters', contributing to the quality of care offered. Staff organise the environment, allowing for both active play and relaxation, but many of the toys are not easily accessible to children. Therefore, opportunities for children to make choices and develop their independence are not fully explored. Information is shared with parents regularly, contributing to children's continuity of care.

The quality of the leadership and management of the nursery education is satisfactory. The manager is aware of the nursery's strengths and weaknesses, and is very keen to improve. The staff team is effective and help older children make steady progress. Since registration, a teacher has been employed and they have introduced children's activity plans and development records around the six areas of learning. The manager organises staff meetings and appraisal sessions to identify any staff training needs. Staff access childcare information and are due to attend 'Foundation Stage' training in order to improve their skills and knowledge. Monthly team meetings and in-house training help staff to share ideas, contributing to the quality of care and learning offered.

Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of the children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

Not applicable

Complaints since the last inspection

Since registration 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 complaint record may contain complaints other than those made to Ofsted.

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 satisfactory. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are satisfactory.

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 safety in the outdoor area and continue to develop the daily risk assessment of the premises
- review the staff attendance records, organisation of children's resources and procedures for communicating the complaints procedure to parents.

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):

- improve opportunities for the children to attempt simple addition and subtraction in everyday activities
- improve resources for children to explore writing for themselves and to learn about technology
- continue to develop staff's knowledge of how to evaluate the activity plans and how the children's assessment records are used to inform future plans
- improve opportunities for parents to meet with staff to discuss their children's progress
- improve the ways that staff manage inappropriate behaviour and children are helped to learn what is expected of them.

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