

The Village Montessori

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY348344
Inspection date	25 May 2007
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Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Sessional 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

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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 outstanding.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

The Village Montessori Nursery was established in 1981, and was re-registered under its present owner in 2007. It operates from premises which were once a church hall and are now used as a community centre. The nursery has sole use of a small hall and an adjoining room for main activities, together with toilet facilities. The large community hall is also used for some planned activities. There is an outdoor play area which is used every day and accessed directly from the small hall. The nursery runs two sessions each weekday from 09.15 to 12.00 and 13.15 to 16.00 for 38 weeks of the year. The nursery serves the families from the local community.

The nursery operates according to the philosophy and practice of Dr. Maria Montessori. Four staff work directly with the children all of whom hold recognised childcare qualifications including the Montessori teaching qualification.

The nursery is registered to care for a maximum of 24 children at any one time. There are 48 children on roll, 42 of whom receive funded nursery education. The nursery supports a number of children with disabilities and/or learning difficulties and a number of children who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery has regular support from a special educational needs teacher and an area special educational needs coordinator (SENCO). Staff have access to training courses and support services run by the Lewisham Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP) and the Pre-School Learning Alliance.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children benefit from being cared for in a clean, bright, warm and welcoming environment. Staff ensure that all areas are kept clean and carry out routine checks on the children's bathroom throughout the session in order to ensure it remains in a clean and hygienic condition. Children confidently take themselves to the bathroom and learn about the importance of good hygiene as they wash their hands after using the toilet and use wet wipes to clean their hands before they have their snack. Although good facilities are in place in the children's bathroom, a communal towel is also provided which presents a risk of cross infection. Children learn about good hygiene as they learn to keep their play space clean and tidy and they routinely sweep up any mess, mop up any spills and wash their own cups after taking a drink of water. However, although these procedures effectively support children's learning and independence, the facilities currently provided for washing cups and mopping up spills could compromise effective infection control measures. This is because a communal bowl is used for cup washing and, in addition, a second bowl containing sponges for mopping spills is located nearby and children sometimes confuse which bowl and sponge to use when mopping up spills.

Children's emotional well-being is very well supported. Parents are encouraged to spend several sessions in the nursery with their child so that children become familiar with the nursery staff and routines. In addition parents are invited to stay each morning to share in the news circle. This helps children to feel settled and secure and to develop a sense of community and belonging. The whole staff team demonstrate a good understanding of children's individual interests, strengths and needs and ensure that each child receives good support and encouragement.

The nursery's policy on sick children and exclusion for infectious illness, helps to ensure that children's health and well-being is protected. In addition, all required medical consent forms are completed, a complete first aid box is maintained, most staff hold a current first aid qualification and all required records relating to accidents and medication are in place.

Children have excellent opportunities for vigorous exercise and physical play in the nursery garden, which is used almost every day. Children relish the time they spend in the garden when they can take part in a variety of physical activities. Children use the large climbing frame and slide with growing skill and are able to ride and manoeuvre a range of wheeled toys with care and control. The provision of a 2 wheeled balance bike, a bike without wheels, helps children to make the transition from tricycle to bicycle easily and a number of children can confidently ride 2 wheeled bikes. Children are also able to use garden tools which they select from the range provided. They carry tools carefully across the garden and use them with ease and confidence as they dig, rake and sweep in a patch of earth. Children have planted potatoes, onions and carrots in the garden and they proudly show off the growing plants which they water regularly. Children are waiting eagerly for the crops to be ready to harvest. In addition to outdoor play children also take part in a range of planned physical activities indoors, in the large hall.

Children have excellent opportunities to develop their fine motor skills as they use a range of tools and equipment. For example, children enjoy learning how to sift flour, grind coffee beans in a pestle and mortar and transfer grains of rice from one container to another using tweezers. They pack activities away neatly into boxes or onto trays and replace them on the correct shelves and fold up their place mats with care. Children become manually dextrous and are able to use a range of tools with good control. For example, children are very confident when using the art and craft area as they cut up boxes, materials and sticky tape to create their own models.

Children are able to refresh themselves throughout the session as they help themselves to water. At snack time children enjoy a biscuit and a selection of fresh fruit, some of which they help to prepare. At this time children happily sit at tables with their friends and confidently pour their own drinks from jugs placed on each table.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are safe and secure within the nursery and there are good procedures in place at the start and end of the session to ensure children's safety. The nursery garden has been newly fenced in order to keep children safe when playing outdoors.

Children are able to access the full range of good quality toys and resources which are attractively displayed and presented in low level storage units. Children develop their independence as they confidently select activities and then choose where to sit and who to play/work with. When children have finished with an activity they carefully tidy everything away, helping to keep their play space safe and free from trip hazards.

Children learn how to use equipment safely as they routinely select a safety helmet when they are using 2 wheeled bikes and as they learn how to carry garden tools safely around the nursery garden.

Staff ensure children's safety within the setting through routine checks on the premises and by carrying out risk assessments. There are good arrangements in place for keeping children safe on outings, for example a full risk assessment together with notification for parents and various staff checklists for a recent visit to a local farm are stored in the nursery's outings file.

Children are protected from harm and neglect because staff have a clear understanding of their responsibility to safeguard children. The leader and deputy have recently updated their child protection training by attending the local authority Safeguarding Children course. In addition the nursery child protection procedure gives clear guidance on the steps to be taken should a referral need to be made.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Children are extremely happy and relaxed in the nursery. There are very good procedures in place for settling new children into nursery and staff have a good understanding of children's individual needs and interests and they support children well in their play. Consequently children flourish, they quickly become confident and learn to be independent as they make choices, select activities and clear away resources when they have finished with them. Staff encourage children to take responsibility. For example, as they take turns to ring the triangle, which is used to attract children's attention and signal a change in the daily routine, or as they place

the fruit on the tables and call children's names to take their places at snack time. Staff skilfully help children to think through problems and find solutions for themselves and they use praise and encouragement effectively which fosters children's self-esteem. Staff spend time talking and listening to children, they encourage them to think about what they want to do and say and to consider the impact their actions have on others. As a result children learn to consider others and begin to understand what is right and what is wrong.

Staff in the nursery encourage children to learn at their own pace and place great emphasis on children learning through their own experience and exploration of the activities provided. Children are encouraged to learn nursery boundaries and staff use innovative methods to support them and to help children adjust to the nursery routines. For example, a child was helped to become calm and to sit still when indoors but to be more active in the garden by thinking about his behaviour indoors as being like a cat, moving carefully and sitting quietly while in the garden he could be more like a horse moving swiftly and noisily around. Children with additional needs are well cared for by the whole staff team who are ably supported by the nursery's special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO).

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. All staff are qualified Montessori teachers and they use the Montessori teaching methods very effectively to ensure that all children make extremely good progress in their learning and development. Staff plan and provide a broad and balanced range of activities and resources in a welcoming, well planned and accessible environment. Very good use is made of both the indoor and outdoor environments and children enjoy daily access to outdoor play in the nursery garden. Planning clearly details how the Montessori teaching programme links to the Foundation Stage and weekly plans identify a key learning intention each week, which is drawn from the early learning goals.

All children are relaxed, happy, confident and show high levels of independence. They are enthusiastic, motivated to learn and interested in the activities provided. They confidently select and tidy away resources for themselves, show high levels of concentration when playing and receive excellent one-to-one support from staff. Children's personal, social and emotional development is excellent. Behaviour is very good and children are sociable, friendly, courteous and well mannered. They learn to consider each others' feelings as they routinely ask their friends if they wish to join in an activity, and they learn to think about the consequences of what they do and say as staff encourage them to think about the impact their words and actions have on others. Because staff support and encourage children so effectively, and have high expectations of them, children quickly become self-disciplined and independent within the nursery and they learn to manage many self-care and domestic activities for themselves.

Children enjoy conversation with each other and with staff and many children speak out confidently during circle time. Children are able to recall and retell past events and use language to negotiate with each other in play. Staff remind children to 'use your words' to resolve conflict, for example, at circle time when children want to sit next to a particular friend. Staff skilfully encourage children's language development as they introduce new words and carefully explain meaning. They help children to understand the rhythms of speech, for example, as they clap out the number of syllables in a word or help children to think about words that rhyme. Children enjoy drawing and mark making and examples of children's art work and writing are displayed on the walls. A comfortable book corner encourages children to use books for pleasure, consequently children enjoy sitting in this area and they learn to handle books carefully. During

activities staff show children how books can be used for reference. For example, as children examine the tadpoles in a tank they refer to a book which illustrates the lifecycle of a frog.

Many of the traditional Montessori resources help children to explore mathematical ideas such as space, shape and measurement and children learn about the practical use of numbers and counting as these are used during daily routines. Songs and rhymes introduce children to the idea of simple calculation and this is further explored in the many practical activities.

Children enjoy exploring elements of the natural world in the garden where they dig in the earth, grow vegetables, feed the birds and look after the nursery pets. They currently have a rabbit and two guinea pigs as well as two chicks which they hatched in a incubator in the nursery. Outings, such as a recent trip to Woodlands Farm, help children to learn about the wider world and, during the inspection, children enjoyed drawing pictures of their visit and talking about the animals they had seen. Children explore everyday technology as they confidently use the nursery computer or as they learn to programme a simple floor robot (a Beebot). Children enjoy carefully counting out the number of steps and the directions that the Beebot should move in to get to a given point.

Children are encouraged to explore activities for themselves and they enjoy using the well resourced craft area where they can make their own freely designed pieces of work, which they do with considerable skill. In the role play area children enjoy dressing up and inventing their own games and they also play imaginatively with a range of small world toys. Children enjoy regular opportunities to listen to music and to play instruments. During the inspection a visiting student and her brother devised a short musical circle time when they explained to children how both a violin and piano make music, allowing children time to examine the instruments. They used a practical demonstration of how musical notes on a page can be translated into sounds, allowing children to select cut out notes and place them on a staff and then playing the sound the notes made. At the end of the circle they played a piece of classical music to the children. Children were captivated, they listened intently to the music with expressions of wonder on their faces and clapped spontaneously and enthusiastically when the piece finished.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Children learn to value and respect each other in the harmonious and inclusive atmosphere of the nursery. They learn about elements of a range of cultures and beliefs as they celebrate some community festivals such as Christmas, Chinese New Year and Diwali and as they play with the small range of books, toys and artefacts which reflect the wider community.

Children with disabilities and/or learning difficulties are very well supported. The staff team fully embraces the Montessori principals of inclusion in every aspect of its work with children. The nursery's special needs co-ordinator (SENCO) works with parents, staff and other professionals to ensure that children have individual education plans in place that will enable them to benefit fully from the opportunities provided by the nursery. Although the nursery SENCO is responsible for co-ordinating children's individual plans he makes sure that all information is shared with the whole staff team so that everyone is aware of how to give each child the best possible support.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. Staff treat all children kindly and with respect. In turn children treat each other with kindness and they show concern for each other. For example, as there are rarely any tears in the nursery, when a child fell from

a bike in the garden and began to cry a group of children crowded round asking what was wrong, one child went to fetch a tissue and another gently patted the crying child's back. Children also learn to care for other living things as they tend the garden and look after the nursery pets, taking turns to feed the animals and sometimes taking them home to care for at holiday time. Because staff employ positive behaviour management techniques, which help children to think about their actions, children are learning right from wrong and beginning to understand that what they do has an impact on others. The group circle times, when children come together to share news and sing songs, help children to gain a sense of community, children enjoy these times and clearly have a strong sense of belonging. Because children have access to a wide variety of enriching experiences they are learning to make sense of the world and to delight in the opportunities they encounter at nursery.

Children's behaviour is excellent. Because staff are always calm, patient, polite and well mannered, children learn from their example. In addition the nursery has simple rules and boundaries which children quickly learn and understand and this helps them to manage their own behaviour and become self-disciplined.

The partnership with parents is outstanding. Parents are very well informed about the nursery, the Montessori methods of teaching and how staff link their teaching to the Foundation Stage. Plans, which outline the main activities as well as the main early learning goal children are working on each week, are displayed for parents and parents are able to discuss children's progress informally with staff at any time. In addition, the nursery has recently produced new records which detail children's progress along the stepping stones and these are shared with parents at termly open evenings and given to parents when children leave the nursery. Parents are welcome in the nursery and many stay for the early circle time when children share news. This helps children to feel secure and fosters a sense of belonging. Parents spoke enthusiastically about the teaching methods used and many said that they are able to continue to extend children's learning at home using the methods employed at nursery. They praised staffs' caring and supportive approach and all parents spoke about how staff carefully pitch activities at the right level for the children. Parents all said that their children had made great progress since joining the nursery, commenting particularly on the excellent personal and social skills their children have gained at nursery.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides. Children's safety is assured because good arrangements are in place to ensure that all adults working with children are suitably vetted or supervised. In addition, suitable registration procedures are in place for both children and staff and a visitor record is maintained. Staff ratios are maintained and good deployment of staff ensures that children are well supervised at all times. All staff hold a Montessori teaching qualification and the staff:child ratio is frequently increased because the nursery often supports Montessori students on teaching practice.

The organisation of space and resources is excellent. Staff have created a welcoming space where children feel relaxed and at ease. Consequently children quickly become confident and gain independence. Children are able to select and use nursery resources, they know where activities are stored and show an appreciation of how to handle delicate items with care for example, when they use the nursery microscope and slides or play with the Beebot.

The nursery manager demonstrates a clear understanding of the National Standards and associated regulations and has ensured that all required documentation is in place, well maintained and carefully stored. Children's individual records are routinely shared with parents and confidentiality is maintained.

Leadership and management is outstanding. The nursery manager is passionate about her work in the nursery, she uses the Montessori teaching methods to great effect, supporting children's learning and helping them to make exceptionally good progress towards the early learning goals. The manager has a clear vision and focus for the nursery and is committed to making continuous improvements to the service she provides, she has also built a staff team who share her vision. They are dedicated, enthusiastic, well motivated and clearly focused. The whole staff team work together very effectively and provide children with excellent support.

The nursery manager has clearly linked her Montessori teaching plans to the Foundation Stage early learning goals. Effective planning, together with the staffs' good understanding of children's individual strengths, interests and needs, ensures that each child receives good individual attention and support at an appropriate level.

The excellent organisation of space and resources, both indoors and in the garden, coupled with effective planning, good teaching methods and a robust system to monitor the overall effectiveness of the nursery education programme ensures that children receive a broad and balanced programme of activities which helps them to make very good progress. This is enhanced by the nursery's strong commitment to inclusion which ensures that the needs of all children are met and the good partnership with parents helps to ensure that children's learning and development can be extended at home.

Improvements since the last inspection

Not applicable.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since registration there have been no complaints 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.

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 outstanding.

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):

- ensure that children are protected from the risk of cross-infection, for example, by removing the communal hand towel from the bathroom and ensuring that children do not compromise good infection control measures when washing up their cups and when cleaning up spills

The quality and standards of the nursery education

No recommendations for improvement are made because the quality and standards of nursery education are outstanding.

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