

Lilliput Montessori Day Nursery (Whetstone)

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	223232
Inspection date	01 August 2007
Inspector	Sheila Dawn Flounders
Setting Address	8 Swan Yard, High Street, Whetstone, Leicester, Leicestershire, LE8 6LQ
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Registered person	Lilliput Day Nurseries Limited
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 satisfactory.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Lilliput Montessori Day Nursery (Whetstone) is one of five settings run by Lilliput Day Nurseries Limited. It was established in 2000 and operates from two sites in the Swan Yard precinct in the village, which together contain four base rooms and associated facilities. A maximum of 60 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery is open each weekday from 07.30 to 18.00 all year round, excluding bank holidays, for 51 weeks of the year. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 71 children on roll aged from six weeks to under eight years. Of these, 28 children receive funding for early education. Children from the village and the surrounding areas attend the nursery and the out of school facility. The nursery currently supports a number of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and also a number of children who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery employs 13 members of staff on this site. Of these, eight hold appropriate early years qualifications and four are working towards a qualification. Other staff are transferred

from the other nurseries in the group to provide cover when necessary. The setting receives support from the local authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are provided with regular drinks, which the older children access independently to ensure they are well-hydrated. They are reminded about asking for extra drinks when playing outside in hot weather. Younger children and babies are offered drinks at frequent intervals throughout the day, with various cups and bottles used according to their individual requirements. Only water, milk and sugar-free juice are provided. Recent catering changes now provide a freshly prepared menu, with many healthy options included, for example, a choice of fruits at snack-time. All of the food is properly prepared and nutritious. Sufficient information is obtained about children's allergies and dietary requirements to enable the menu to be adapted to meet all their needs, for example, vegetarian alternatives, or food pureed down for the younger babies. Pre-school children sometimes operate a snack bar to access their break and make their own sandwiches to increase their independence, whilst at other times they enjoy the social occasion of all having snack together. Staff often provide a positive influence in encouraging children to eat a healthy diet by having lunch alongside them.

Children are aware of their own personal hygiene from a young age, with toddlers able to wipe their hands after eating with individual flannels. Older children have independent access to toileting and hand wash facilities, although they do not always remember to wash their hands before eating. Staff usually clean the tables thoroughly before meals and snack time, to help prevent cross-infection and implement even more stringent routines when notified by parents of any serious infections. The robust nappy changing routines, exclusion periods following illness and general cleanliness of the nursery all contribute to children staying healthy. Parents are advised that children will need to stay at home if they are unwell, or be taken home if at nursery, although medication can be given with written consent, particularly for children with ongoing medical needs. Babies sleep according to their own routines in their room, with static cots and individual bedding used. After lunch all of the younger children sleep in the toddler room on sleep mats, with staff staying in the room with them, as well as doing regular checks which are recorded.

All of the children have access to physical play, both inside and in the garden, with a timetable to ensure each group has some independent use of the area. Inside use of equipment such as a bouncy castle, ball pit, tunnel, soft play, and a see-saw ensure that the younger children can develop their large muscle movement whatever the weather. The older children have weekly dance lessons, PE, and activities such as an obstacle course inside as well as all of them having the use of scooters, large cars and the trampoline outside. Pre-school children are able to control their movement, for example, when moving to music, or as they use their co-ordination to go around the garden on the scooters. They are aware of the space around them and able to negotiate a path between others. Various opportunities are provided for them to be familiar with the parts of their body, the importance of a healthy diet and the effect of exercise through topics and discussion as they take part in physical activities.

All of the children have particularly good opportunities to practise their fine movements, from the babies experience of picking up feathers and small pieces of paper as they are gluing, to the toddlers putting lids on pots. Then they begin to use some of the Montessori shelf work,

such as the pegs or threading, which is further developed in the pre-school room through a wide variety of activities in their general play and shelf work. For example, they dance around the room waving ribbons, dress dolls, build with blocks, lego or mobilo, or use a trowel in the sand, demonstrating the use of tools and materials with increasing control and purpose.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children and their parents or carers are made welcome whichever part of the nursery they use. The secure entrances mean that the door always has to be opened by a member of staff and parents leaving are vigilant about not letting anyone else in or leaving the doors open. Parents are able to take their child into the room where they will be starting their session and see the child settle in bright, airy rooms, with lots of evidence on boards and tables of the children's activities. Some recent changes have been made to base rooms to offer a more suitable amount of space to some of the younger groups within the nursery as numbers have fluctuated. All of the furniture, equipment and toys provided are appropriate for their purpose, suitable for the ages and abilities of the children and suitably maintained apart from the current highchairs. These do not have full harnesses attached, although most of the babies are kept safe by a combination of a central strap and the tray.

Staff within the rooms are vigilant about safety, for example, lunch time spillages are quickly cleaned up, items, such as glue stored in high cupboards and reminders are given to the pre-school children not to go near the floor fan before it is switched on. Staff working with the older children are particularly careful to explain to them why certain safety rules are in place. Many safety measures are fitted as standard to keep children safe, for example, all radiators and unused sockets are covered and gates fitted where necessary. Detailed risk assessments have considered most possible hazards, although there is no evidence of them being reviewed after significant change and some hazards have been overlooked. For example, it has become common practise to wedge open several of the fire doors during the hot weather in contradiction of the nursery health and safety policy, which would compromise children's safety in an emergency, particularly the main kitchen door.

Children are kept safe on outings through sufficient staffing levels, always including those with training in first aid and safeguarding children, and ensuring that all necessary equipment and children's details are taken. The transport used belongs to the company. When older children walk across to use the garden they are well supervised. All children are encouraged to wear hats in the hot weather and have to either wear sun cream or keep covered up when playing outside. They also learn to protect themselves during regular practises of the emergency evacuation drill, which take place often enough to ensure all staff and child participate over time. Children are further protected because the registered person ensures that all staff are suitable to work with children and that they are made aware of local safeguarding children procedures during their induction. Most have also attended training to be able and confident about putting the procedures into practise if necessary, and information about these procedures is fully shared with parents.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

All of the children are provided with a wide variety of activities and play opportunities which enable them to make progress in their development and learning. The younger children engage

in activities which staff plan using the 'Birth to three matters framework' so that challenge is provided for each individual. Babies enjoy a range of tactile experiences, for example, exploring the contents of treasure baskets, the various noises of the musical farmyard or interacting with staff to build with blocks. Once they are steady in their mobility and move to the next room they are introduced to more physical activities, for example, jumping on the bouncy castle or joining in with action rhymes, and a greater variety of activities to extend their fine motor skills, such as sand and water play. When the groups join together they enjoy activities which are suitable for all, such as junk play. Before they are ready to move across to the pre-school the two-year-olds are introduced to some of the basic Montessori shelf work, for example, pouring and stacking blocks, alongside their general play, such as dressing up, small world experiences, the home corner and musical instruments. Many of the resources are used by all of the differing age groups at various times to maximise the experiences available to the children, with staff co-ordinating their planning to make this possible. Regular observations are done of all the children, with information then collated into their files by their keyworker, to ensure that they are individually encouraged to participate in relevant activities which stimulate their progress.

All of the children enjoy their time in the nursery, through their interaction with familiar members of staff and children of similar ages they develop confidence and self-esteem. They become involved and interested in what they are doing, for example, the babies enjoy getting glue all over their hands whilst trying to fasten various materials to paper and toddlers experiment for some time to see which lids will fit on a carton. Two-year-olds talk to staff about what they are drawing and join in enthusiastically with a friend to 'Row your boat'. There is constant chatter in the rooms as children talk to each other and the staff, or staff respond to the babbling of the babies. Children are encouraged to be as independent as possible and given opportunities to model behaviour they have seen previously, thus a child tries to redial on a phone, when he says he cannot get 'Bob', or helps collect the flannels and starts to wipe another child's hands. The children's assessments show that they are acquiring new skills and knowledge all the time, and staff delight in sharing these with parents and other staff. The children benefit greatly from the staff's enthusiasm in all rooms and that they join in activities with them.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory, with some good aspects. The staff working with funded children have varying knowledge and experience of the Foundation Stage curriculum. There are some weaknesses in their understanding of what is required by children of the ages attending, although their individual interaction with the children is good. The planning is topic based, covers all the areas of learning and contains most of the necessary information. However, there is only brief detail of how activities are organised and developed, which does not indicate any differentiation for the varying ages or abilities of those in attendance and thus how they are challenged to extend their understanding. Some evaluations are completed, but they fail to consider if the desired learning intentions have been achieved, information which is required to inform future planning as to what individual children need to do next.

Staff use an appropriate variety of teaching methods with the children, striking a balance between adult-led activity and child-led, structured and free-choice, whole group, small group or individual interaction. They take time to explain to children what it is they want them to do during focussed activities and make appropriate use of their time when not interacting directly with the children to move around the various activities and see where they can offer support or a word of encouragement. Children respond well to the positive reinforcement they are given and the strong role model staff provide and as a result their behaviour and understanding of

what is reasonable are good. Staff utilise the space and available resources well to provide a variety of activities at any one time. Regular planned observation on each child allows staff to collect sufficient information to build up their assessment records. These provide evidence that children are making appropriate progress towards the early learning goals as details are known about their starting points, particularly when they have previously been in the nursery. Some evidence suggests that staff have an unrealistically high expectation of the children's ability and set unachievable learning intentions in the planning stage, which are linked to the early learning goals, rather than the stepping stones towards them.

All of the children in receipt of early education are making at least satisfactory progress, many are making good progress. They all have opportunities to access activities which develop their knowledge, skills and experiences across all six areas of learning, with consideration given to ensuring part-time attendees are also able to do so. The Montessori methods used link in well with the curriculum to provide good opportunities for child's personal, social education particularly to encourage independence and a positive attitude to learning. Children are confident about approaching adults for support or to talk about their ideas. They are able to sit quietly and listen during circle time activities, but also give reasonable answers to questions. They are very considerate to those around them, willing to share and take turns and through personal experience are learning that others needs are different to their own. Good use is made of stories, for example, the current favourite is teaching children that bullying is not acceptable, and when asked what they could do a child responds, 'tell them to play somewhere else'.

Children have many opportunities in role play situations to model language from their daily experience. They take on various roles, negotiate plans with each other to decide who will do what and adapt their play as other children join in. For example, most of the children joined in with either bathing the babies or washing up at some stage during the session. They talk to each other confidently about what they are doing, using appropriate vocabulary, which resources they are using and think about what other things they might do with the water. Within the planned curriculum children use phonics to learn the basic sounds and talk freely to each other about the sounds of letters in their names. Children practise their emergent writing skills in planned activities such as writing lists of favourite fruits, or through unplanned opportunities, such as when mark making outside with a paintbrush and water. Evidence shows that most of the children are able to write using correctly formed letters.

Children are provided with regular opportunities to say and use number names in familiar contexts, with the date a daily feature and several items of shelf work featuring numbers to five or ten. Activities, such as board games with dice, are used to reinforce their understanding of what the numerals mean. Simple problem solving is introduced, for example, what the next date number will be or how to make the larger numbers. The use of mathematical language, such as 'more' or 'less' is encouraged in activities such as number rhymes, which also introduce basic ideas of addition and subtraction. As they build a variety of towers children are encouraged to think about how to make them taller or higher and many of their Montessori exercises involve length, width and geometric shapes.

Children are able to explore and investigate objects and materials during every session. For example, they think about what objects are made of, talk about how a whisk works whilst using it in water, and the properties of magnets whilst playing with the train. They learn about living things in topics on life cycles and by helping to care for the groups pets. They are encouraged to think about different ways of building and given opportunities to experiment with their designs, for example, with the train track. The computer is used to support their learning and children model the use of technology in their role play, particularly in the home corner. Group

activities are used to discuss the weather, including what season it is, with the days of the week and months of the year reinforced through songs. Children are provided with a variety of opportunities to explore media and materials in two and three dimensions. Staff feel these are particularly important to reinforce fine control and at times monitor activities to see which children are reluctant to get involved. The use of instruments is a regular weekly feature, with some children also have additional sessions with 'Jo Jingles', and they are able to copy movements and tap out rhythm to music. All of the children have good experience of role-play, they are able to model real life in a variety of scenarios and then extend their imaginations during their general play, for example, making up their own stories when playing with soft toys or being an alien whilst playing with the bricks.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

The nursery works hard to find out about each child's individual needs before they attend and then on an ongoing basis, to ensure these are met. Individual routines are displayed for the babies and considered by the staff along with their development stage at all times, for example, they go and blend lunch for those finding it too lumpy. Details of particular dietary requirements are given to the cook daily and activities provided for those children who wake first during the after lunch naps. Those children who have additional physical, behaviour or language needs are well supported, sometimes by the use of specialised equipment, or by their own support worker and through training which several of the staff access. Individual education plans are used to ensure appropriate activities are available after liaison with external agencies if necessary, following discussion with parents. All parents are able to discuss issues with their child's keyworkers daily, with younger children also having daily diaries which detail their care routines and activities.

All of the children are encouraged towards independence by being given increased levels of free choice and opportunities for self-selection, including responsibility for clearing up after themselves at snack and meal times, with appropriate equipment to support them. There are usually several activities available at any time and even within adult focused activities the children are still able to make choices and decisions for themselves, which are respected by the staff. For example, when the babies are involved in a creative activity, for safety reasons staff sit them in their highchairs, but they are still able to decide which materials they want to stick on the paper and which they just want to explore with their hands. Older children are presented with direct choices, for example, do they want to stay inside or go out into the garden, with staff available to support each, and later about which story they want to listen to with the two most popular requests read by staff. Throughout the nursery children quickly settle and have a sense of belonging, they are aware of the routines and where to find items, such as their personal belongings. They are proud to see their creative work displayed on the wall and their parents welcomed when they arrive, with staff taking time to talk to them.

All are aware of their own needs and find ways to communicate these to staff. At times during the day each child has some opportunities for individual interaction with staff and also to feel special which enhances their self-esteem, for example, when reading a story together, having a cuddle, or when being soothed to sleep. The older children are particularly tolerant, offering to let another child have resources without being asked, or to play a game alongside them even when they know the younger child will not fully understand how to play. Children become aware of wider society through topics that are planned and access to a variety of resources and artefacts which provide positive images of other cultures, reinforced by positive role models amongst the staff and visits within the local community for the oldest children. Children generally

are aware of the nursery boundaries and behave very well, with only gentle reminders all that are occasionally needed, for example, for older children to only talk quietly whilst the pre-school group are listening to a story. They are also aware and accepting, that some of the children with disabilities have different boundaries to their own. Positive behaviour is encouraged by staff acting as role models, frequent praise, staff playing alongside children at activities and the use of manners. Any incidents are consistently dealt with by staff, recorded if serious, and shared with parents. Funded children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The partnership with parents and carers of children in receipt of funding is good. All parents and carers are either given, or have easy access to, a variety of information in differing formats before their child attends or transfers through from the previous room. For example, new parents are invited for visits with their child, a home visit can also be made, discussions are held with the keyworker, they are given a parent pack and told how to access the detailed policies and procedures. Existing parents of funded children are consulted before the child transfers, informed about the child's settling in visits and provided with additional information about the differences in the curriculum for this age group. The daily exchange of information via the white board keeps parents and carers of funded children informed of the daily activities with written reports and parents evening used to give more formal information on children's achievements and progress twice a year. Parents are able to share what they know about their child at these formal meetings, which is added to the records, and also during daily contact. The 'Parental involvement policy' provides examples of how they can be involved in their child's learning alongside access to the weekly plans and keeping updated via the newsletters.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The registered person has adequate vetting systems in place to ensure that all adults within the setting are suitable to look after children. She tries to have all the staff qualified in first aid, most with basic food hygiene knowledge and an ongoing programme to update everyone with the latest safeguarding children procedures. Many of the staff are already qualified, with most of the rest currently working towards a suitable qualification. Overall ratios in the nursery are maintained at all times, although occasionally ratios within individual rooms do drop, meaning that for short periods in some rooms staff are unable to meet children's needs effectively. All necessary day-to-day documentation is in place, stored confidentially and mostly well maintained with minor adjustments needed to ensure that all signature are gained, for example, on medication forms and the staff register. All policies and procedures are readily available, some having recently been reviewed and updated.

Space within the nursery is used to ensure that each age group have separate base rooms, although at times they appropriately join together providing children with varied social interaction as well as familiarity with staff and children they will be with in the future. Many of the toys and resources are accessed by most of the children, unless for safety reasons they are unsuitable, providing them all with a greater variety of activities. Currently the presence of the older school-aged children is impacting on the pre-school children at times, for example, when they are having quiet activities or when they have to wait to be taken across for outdoor play. Overall the provision meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

The leadership and management of early education is satisfactory. Between the registered person and the manager there are systems in place to generally oversee the funded education provision. The manager spends time within the pre-school, interacting with the children and

the staff and due to recent staff changes she has been looking at the planning. Some of the strengths and weaknesses of staff have been identified through their appraisals and regular meetings with appropriate training identified, but the gaps in their knowledge of the Foundation Stage curriculum have yet to be rectified. The current records provide sufficient evidence to enable the education provision to be monitored and evaluated, but closer scrutiny by the management is needed. The management and staff within the pre-school demonstrate a strong commitment to improvement, with the manager setting a good example to staff by continuing her own personal development. She also encourages them to attend training, has ideas for ongoing improvement in place and strong links exist with nearby schools and the local authority.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the provider was asked to conduct a risk assessments on activities away from the premises, develop staff's knowledge and understanding of child protection issues and include an anti-bullying strategy in the behaviour management statement. There is now a more detailed statement which includes the methods used to manage child's behaviour at their differing ages and by implication, how bullying would be dealt with. Risk assessments have been extended to cover all current activities and outings and several staff have undertaken more in depth training and cascaded to the rest of the team the current procedures for safeguarding children. These measures have improved children's safety and their positive contribution within the setting.

The provider was also asked to increase opportunities for large muscle development, link the planning more to the Foundation Stage guidance and use observation and assessment to ensure challenge is provided. There is now an outdoor play area available to the children, supplemented by a planned indoor session weekly to provide more opportunities to develop large muscles. The planning system has been developed to demonstrate which areas of learning are being targeted with the activities and planned observations are included to monitor each child's progress, although it still does not include differentiation, to show how challenge will be provided for the more able, or activities adapted for the younger or less able children.

Complaints since the last inspection

In May 2005 concerns were raised with Ofsted about the safety and security of the outdoor play area for children. An Inspector visited the nursery to discuss this, to observe the premises and to review relevant documentation under National Standard 6 (Safety). Based on the information obtained during the visit the provider was not meeting National Standard 6 in full and was asked to take action to ensure that the outdoor play area was safe, secure and suitable for its purpose, which they did. The provider remains qualified for registration.

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 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):

- review risk assessments after significant change
- ensure staff follow the health and safety policy, especially in connection with the closing of fire doors.

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):

- ensure that evaluation of planned activities is robust, including consideration as to whether the declared learning intentions have been achieved by children
- broaden planning to identify how children of all ages and abilities are included and have appropriate challenge
- develop staff's understanding of the expected level of achievement of the children.

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