

The Village Montessori Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	402282
Inspection date	04 February 2008
Inspector	Ann Marie Cozzi / Lynn Clements
Setting Address	Theydon Bois Village Hall, Coppice Row, Theydon Bois, Essex, CM16 7ER
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Registered person	Deborah Palmer
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?

The Village Montessori Nursery opened in 1999 and operates from one room in the village hall. It is situated in Theydon Bois, Essex. A maximum of 18 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery is open each weekday on Monday and Wednesday from 09.15 to 15.00 and on Tuesday, Thursday and Friday from 09.15 to 13.15 for 42 weeks of the year. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 32 children aged from two to under five years on roll. Of these, 24 children receive funding for nursery education. Children come from both the local and wider catchment area. There are systems in place to support children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The nursery also has strategies in place to support children who have English as an additional language.

The nursery subscribes to the Montessori approach to education. It employs six staff. Five of the staff hold appropriate early years qualifications. In addition to this, the manager holds Early Years Professional Status.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children's understanding about the importance of personal hygiene is developing through the satisfactory daily routines in place. For example, the disposal of dirty tissues after nose blowing. Most children know that they should wash their hands at relevant times, for example before preparing snacks and eating food. Staff support children reminding them how to wash their hands properly. All health related documentation is in place as required. Most staff have current first aid training enabling them to care for sick or injured children appropriately.

Children have opportunities to learn about healthy eating through the balanced range of food provided and meal-time discussions, cooking activities and topics. They have access to drinking water at all times; this ensures no-one remains thirsty. There are some opportunities for children to develop their self-help skills, such as attempting to pour their own drinks and serving some of their lunch independently. Parents share information about their child's individual dietary needs and this is recorded and stored confidentially.

Children have some access to physical activities through outdoor play. They are learning how to manoeuvre bikes and skilfully steer wheeled toys. Children develop their coordination and spatial awareness as they use the climbing frame and slide. They use single-handed tools, such as scissors, pencils, tongs and paintbrushes with increasing competence.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

On the whole, children explore and investigate within a safe environment. Although there are daily safety checks of the premises and resources, at the time of inspection risk assessments to fully identify and minimise potential risks to children were incomplete. For example, accessible low-level cleaning products. Staff encourage children to become aware of their own safety and that of others, supporting them whilst they use utensils to prepare snacks and encouraging them to tidy away after playing to prevent tripping hazards.

There is a range of suitable child-height tables and chairs enabling children to play and learn in safety and comfort. Child accessible storage ensures that children can access resources independently. However, there is a potential of cross contamination to children from the current nappy changing arrangements. These are carried out on the floor of either the disabled toilet or in the adjacent corridor on a changing mat. As a consequence, the dignity and privacy of children is also not always respected.

Children are able to share their ideas through discussion whilst undertaking activities. They are supported by staff to take some responsibility for their own safety, such as all children regularly participating in fire drills. Staff have a sound knowledge with regards to the signs and symptoms of abuse or neglect. A written policy is in place which they follow in order to access appropriate support.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children enjoy their time at the nursery and play happily, engaging with their peers and adults. There are satisfactory systems in place to develop children's emotional, physical, social and intellectual capabilities. Children demonstrate confidence as their self-esteem is promoted through the daily routines. They receive plenty of praise and encouragement which helps to promote positive attitudes to future learning. Children develop their natural curiosity as learners, sharing their ideas and asking questions such as why, when and how. Through the daily routine they enjoy opportunities to develop their language skills with each other and staff.

Children show initiative; for example they help staff to clean the floors after lunch with a child sized broom. They are able to concentrate for short periods of time, for example, whilst using construction materials. However, the provider has yet to implement secure systems in line with the 'Birth to three matters' framework to ensure that children's progress and development is monitored effectively and that this information is used in future planning.

Nursery education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. The management team have a sound understanding about the Foundation Stage. Children are making satisfactory progress towards the early learning goals, however, staff are not fully involved in supporting them to make progress towards the six early learning goals within the Foundation Stage. The majority of staff monitor children's progress using Montessori aspects of learning.

Assessment records are in place and these are completed by the management team. However, children of differing ages are currently assessed against the end of the Foundation Stage stepping stones, which are primarily aimed at more able or older children in a reception class. This impacts on appropriate challenges being set and observed for the younger or less able child. Planning is in place and shared with staff. However, the management team do not currently use children's identified next steps for learning to inform their planning, to ensure that activities and future learning experiences are firmly based on what each child knows and can do. Planning is available to parents on request and daily routines are clearly displayed in the classroom. Staff support children in their play and learning. They are interested in what the children say and do, taking time to listen and respond positively to their suggestions and ideas. Children are confident in their relationships with each other and staff as they move freely around the nursery, generally making their own choices about the activities they wish to explore or the games they want to play.

Children enjoy what they do and the majority are able to sustain interest in a range of activities. Overall, children concentrate well. Children's self-esteem and confidence increase as they share stories from home, such as Grandad coming to stay, or as they seek out others to show them their finished creations. They begin to form good relationships with each other and members of staff, as they greet each other on arrival and make room at activities. Children are becoming increasingly independent when dealing with their own physical needs. For example, they know where to put their belongings.

Children are developing their understanding of writing for a purpose, as they put their names on their creations or as they begin to apply simple phonic knowledge, for instance to write and name their favourite animals. They enjoy stories, accessing books independently. Children begin to make sense of the world around them as they explore and investigate some information

technology, for example as they negotiate programmes on the computer. Children learn about the changing seasons of the year and what the weather is doing while playing outside. They enjoy learning about different cultures and customs. Children listen to music from different countries and taste foods from around the world.

Children use positional language as they play, talking about putting bricks on top, or underneath. They have opportunities to build on their calculation skills as they join in number rhymes, or as they use the range of Montessori equipment, which supports their developing mathematical ideas. Children begin to explore repeating patterns, setting the table or constructing three dimensional models and tall towers using different coloured bricks or shapes.

The satisfactory range of physical activities accessed during outside play contributes towards developing children's confidence and skill. They move around safely, demonstrating their developing spatial awareness as they avoid obstacles or each other. Children develop hand-eye coordination as they use single-handed tools and utensils with increasing control. They are beginning to learn about the importance of physical exercise and how it can help them to stay fit and healthy.

Children express their individual creativity through a satisfactory range of craft activities. For example, they freely paint and create pictures. Children experiment with different textures as they feel and smell shaving foam, or manipulate play dough. There are some opportunities for them to engage in role play scenarios. Staff work as a team, praising and encouraging children to develop their personal independence and support their learning.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Staff work with parents and carers to meet children's individual care needs. Children learn about other cultures and beliefs during topics and discussions, examining utensils such as chopsticks and tasting foods from around the world. There are systems in place to support children who have English as an additional language. Whilst there are currently no children on roll with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, staff do have systems in place which ensure that children and their families are appropriately supported. These include liaising closely with parents and other professionals, such as the area special needs coordinator, to form individual education plans. This helps to ensure individual targets are identified and that children are supported. The setting aims to use an inclusive approach, which enables children to feel part of the group and secure in their surroundings.

Children in the main are well behaved. During the structured sessions they respond appropriately to staff requests to get ready for meal times, find their name for the magnetic board, help tidy away and wash their hands. Children receive positive praise and are treated with respect by staff who generally act as good role models, encouraging the children to have good manners. However, not all staff consistently give clear explanations to help children distinguish the boundaries between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour and at times the staffs' approach to behaviour management is not consistent throughout the session, in particular during free play when staff are less engaged with the children.

Relationships with parents and carers are sound. On arrival they are greeted warmly by a member of staff at the main door. Verbal feedback is shared with them at the end of the session. Newsletters and a notice board which display the daily routine, ensure parents are made aware of how children spend their time at nursery. Parents and carers receive some useful information

about the nursery through access to the parents and carers folder at the start of their child's placement. There is an appropriate complaints procedure in place which is located in the parents folder.

Partnership with parents and carers of children in receipt of early education funding is satisfactory. They have access to daily routines, which are displayed in the nursery. On request, they also have access to the Foundation Stage planning which is kept in the parent file. At the time of placement, the manager discusses with parents and carers the opportunities she provides for their children in relation to the Foundation Stage. However, there is a weakness in the systems to ensure that parents and carers of children in receipt of early education funding are kept fully informed about their progress towards the Foundation Stage. In addition, there are currently no formal opportunities within the Foundation Stage for parents and carers to add comments or share information with key workers about their child's achievements. This impacts on staff ability to fully support and assess the whole child in relation to the six early learning goals. Daily opportunities are in place to keep parents and carers fully informed about their child's progress towards the Montessori aspects of learning.

Children are learning to share and help each other. They encourage others to join in their games and make room for them at activities. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Documentation required by legislation is in place and vetting systems are implemented to ensure that children are protected. There is a formal induction procedure which ensures that new members of staff have an understanding about health and safety and child protection procedures. Satisfactory systems are in place to support existing members of staff.

There is an operational plan which is shown to parents at the time of their child's placement. This provides them with the opportunity to learn about the overall management of the setting. Records are stored securely and confidentiality is respected. Overall, children's needs are met.

Leadership and management of early education is satisfactory. The manager and deputy work together to implement the Foundation Stage. However, staff lack opportunities and support from the management team to develop their knowledge and understanding in relation to the Foundation Stage. This impacts on their ability to fully support children within the six areas of learning. Staff are, on the whole, deployed well and a satisfactory key worker system is in place to provide support for each child.

Improvements since the last inspection

Since the last care inspection the provider has improved outcomes for children. On the whole staff are effectively deployed to support children. However, this is not always implemented during the free play part of the session and has been taken forward at this inspection. Accident and medication records now respect children's anonymity. Hygiene practices have been improved at snack and meal times which protects children from cross contamination.

At the last nursery education inspection the provider was required to develop systems for monitoring and evaluating the quality of the educational provision offered to the children. The provider has accessed 'Effective Pedagogy', from the local authority, to support practice. This

has been implemented as a means of ongoing assessment and evaluation of the Foundation Stage curriculum. However, staff knowledge and understanding about the six early learning goals and the Foundation Stage in general is limited and this has been taken forward at this inspection. During the last inspection the provider was also asked to review the current level of documentation completed by staff when children are present and ensure staff effectively support each other, particularly during large group sessions. Observations have been coded, enabling senior members of staff to record what children know and can do in a quick and efficient manner, leaving them more time to interact with children during large group activities and meal times. However, these observations do not effectively identify how children are making progress towards the Foundation Stage. This has been taken forward at this inspection.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since the last inspection 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 the 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

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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):

- ensure arrangements for nappy changing protect the dignity and privacy of children and meet local environmental health requirements
- develop further risk assessments of the premises to promote safety within the setting and ensure proper precautions are taken to prevent accidents
- ensure that adults caring for children in the provision are able to manage a wide range of children's behaviour in a way which promotes their welfare and development
- improve outcomes for children from birth to three by using an approach in line with the 'Birth to three matters' framework.

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):

- develop the current systems of assessment to ensure that all the Foundation Stage stepping stones are fully included and that all children are challenged appropriately

- further develop the current planning systems to ensure that they are based on what children know and can do and use their identified next steps for learning to inform future planning (this also applies to care)
- increase opportunities for parents and carers to share their children's Foundation Stage records
- increase opportunities for staff to develop, use and implement the Foundation Stage.

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