

# Clarendon Montessori School

Inspection report for early years provision

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	129338
<b>Inspection date</b>	10 January 2008
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<b>Setting Address</b>	Meadowbank, Alexandra Road, Kings Langley, Hertfordshire, WD4 8EP
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<b>Registered person</b>	Alison Redmond
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Integrated
<b>Type of care</b>	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](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

## THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE AND NURSERY EDUCATION

On the basis of the evidence collected on this inspection:

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

The quality and standards of the nursery education are good.

### WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Clarendon Montessori School opened in 1997 and operates from a single storey building in Kings Langley, Hertfordshire. A maximum of 26 children may attend the setting at any one time. The setting is open each weekday from 08.30 to 15.00 term-time only. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 26 children aged from two to under five years on roll. Of these 10 children receive funding for nursery education. Children mostly come from within the local catchment area. The setting can support children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and can also support those children who speak English as an additional language.

The setting employs four staff, all of whom including the manager hold appropriate early years qualifications.

## THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

### **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is good.

Children's health and well-being is effectively promoted and given high priority by all staff. Children show a good understanding of how to keep themselves healthy. For example, they know the importance of hand washing and independently wash their hands after messy activities and using the toilet. Staff offer sensitive support asking 'How do we wash our hands? Fronts, backs and then rinse. Well done.' They use paper towels for drying their hands reducing the risk of cross-infection. Children are supported in the correct use of tissues with younger children being shown how to blow their own noses and then where to dispose of the tissue. They develop good self-care skills in line with the Montessori approach. For example, children self-select aprons to wear for messy activities and try to put on their own coats before outside play.

Children are suitably nourished and are offered healthy snacks such as fresh and dried fruit promoting their growth and development. Their dietary requirements are met effectively through discussions with parents and written records. Children staying for lunch bring a packed lunch. Parents are given advice on the suitable contents and are requested not to provide too many sweet items encouraging the children's healthy eating. Children enjoy a wonderful social occasion during snack time when they talk about their food likes, dislikes and tastes. On eating part of their biscuit and making a crescent shape, children comment that 'It looks like a moon'. They then eat a bit more commenting 'Now it looks like a tall moon.' Children's knowledge about different foods and ingredients is developing as they grow cress seeds and make home-made pizzas and 'Rice Krispie' cakes.

Children develop a positive attitude towards physical exercise and enjoy daily inside and outside play opportunities all year round. They eagerly play with a range of different sized balls developing their kicking and catching skills and ride around confidently on the three-wheeled bikes provided. They also practise their balancing skills as they walk along a painted line sometimes carrying a bell to see how steady and controlled their movements are. Children use a wide variety of tools with skill. They practise and master fine manipulative skills by means of regular access to a very good range of resources such as scissors and Montessori equipment. For example, children pour, use tongs and spoons to transfer objects from one container to another, thread, sort and screw and unscrew bolts.

Children benefit from most health records being in place; however the written parental consent for seeking emergency medical treatment is not as required by the National Standards and therefore compromises their health. Staff are vigilant about recording detailed accident records and obtaining parental consent prior to administering any medication protecting the children's welfare and promoting continuity of care.

### **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is good.

Children are very safe within the setting as staff have identified and minimised risks. Staff are vigilant at monitoring the environment both inside and outside. Daily and weekly checks of the building and outside areas ensure the children's safety further. The floor is checked ensuring that it is clean and free of trip hazards and the outside gate is locked throughout the session. Children are very well supervised at all times. Staff are effectively deployed to ensure that they are well supported and safe in everything they do. For example, during outside play a member

of staff stays inside ready to supervise those children needing to use the toilet or to go inside for any reason.

Children are encouraged to learn about their own safety within a carefully controlled environment. They know not to run inside as 'We don't want someone to get hurt do we?' They use a variety of equipment and are taught by the staff how to use these safely and how to move around the room with minimal risk. For example, children are routinely shown how to carry chairs and trays of fragile equipment. They also know their boundaries, for example, not crossing the painted line outside with their bikes due to the slope and lining up on the coloured spots when it is time to come in. Children independently access a wide range of toys and resources which are safely displayed on low, open shelving around the room. Resources are regularly washed keeping them safe and suitable to use. Children are encouraged to tidy the resources away properly encouraging their respect for their surroundings.

Children's welfare is fully safeguarded as key staff present at each session are knowledgeable about child protection issues having recently attended both the basic and advanced child protection training. They have a clear understanding of this area and always put the child first. Contact numbers for concerns are readily available should the need arise.

### **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is good.

Children benefit from a vibrant, child-centred environment where they are able to have fun and enjoy learning. They are enthusiastic when they arrive in the morning and mostly separate easily from their parents and carers. Those feeling a little hesitant are sensitively supported by staff until they feel secure enough to join in. During the day, children frequently initiate conversations with adults laughing and smiling as they explain, for example that 'My mummy has gone shopping' and 'I have my own office at home.' Therefore demonstrating their emerging confidence and self-esteem.

Children are happy and secure within the environment. The school follows the Montessori philosophy and all children are provided with very good opportunities to explore and investigate a wide range of interesting activities as they work through the curriculum. Younger children start with the 'First Impressions Preparation Programme' enabling them to get used to the environment, for example, learning how to move around the room safely. All children are developing their independence as they choose an activity from the low shelves or tables set up around the room and return them when they have finished. They gain good self-esteem as staff praise their efforts and celebrate their achievements. When children successfully count the correct number of people at the table they are praised with 'Excellent counting. Well done.' Children enjoy the balance of activities available helping them progress in all areas of development. They spend their time purposefully, for example, painting and using their imagination as they play with the small world kitchen and cooking utensils.

Children demonstrate high levels of concentration and confidence as they sit sensibly together at circle time joining in the discussion and contributing their choice of which song to sing. Staff work together planning activities which give all children opportunities to develop their skills. For example, they all take a turn at pouring out the drinks at snack time with less experienced children given lots of hand-on support and encouragement to complete the task. Planning documents show how activities are successfully linked to the Foundation Stage curriculum and children's progress through the different areas of learning.

## Nursery Education.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children benefit from a well-balanced curriculum because staff have a good understanding of the Foundation Stage and of incorporating the Montessori teaching methods into the curriculum. Staff make effective use of assessments to guide their planning and teaching and therefore develop children's progress. Children are introduced to activities and given time to master them building their confidence and self-esteem. Observation records are updated on a daily basis ensuring that they are always current enabling staff to plan for the children's further progression. Staff provide a good balance of both adult- and child-initiated learning allowing children time to join in group and solo activities. Children are effectively and enthusiastically challenged because staff know them well and make good use of open-ended questions encouraging the children to think for themselves. During an activity to see which objects float and sink children are asked the meaning of the words and are then asked to predict whether they think that a straw, for example, will sink or float. Staff make effective use of the time, resources and accommodation ensuring that all the children spent theirs purposefully. Activities are well prepared in advance ensuring that the children are not waiting around aimlessly for the required resources. Staff also know their roles well ensuring that the sessions flow with ease.

Children's attitudes to learning are very positive; they are highly engaged and motivated throughout their time at the school. They spend extended periods of time concentrating on their chosen task. For example, children sit intently as they listen to the story tape of 'Five Minutes Peace' whilst looking at the picture book held up by a member of staff. They then discuss the story again recalling what happened and the order in which the characters appear. Children's behaviour is good and they are all very aware of the rules and boundaries in place, for example, telling the inspector to put her hands on her head just like themselves when staff signalled that it was time to listen. Their self-esteem is very much enhanced by, for example, use of a reward system. Children less confident in using the toilet are given stickers which they then take great delight in showing the other children present.

Children use numbers confidently in their play and when using equipment. For example, they use Montessori beads or cubes to learn about simple addition and subtraction techniques. Children use numbers in practical situations such as counting how many children are sitting for snack and during number rhymes such as 'Five little monkeys jumping on the bed' when they calculate how many are left and then hold up the correct number of fingers. Staff provide good examples of mathematical language and thinking when they are interacting with the children. Consequently the children are developing a very good understanding of concepts such as weight and shape. For example, staff describe a dinosaur as heavy and children recreate patterns using flat and solid shapes.

Children have many good opportunities to develop their early writing skills; as a result many of the older children are writing recognisable letters and are able to clearly write their own names. Staff are knowledgeable in teaching children letter sounds and linking this to words. For example when discussing the colour of play dough the member of staff encourages the children by giving the first letter 'g' followed by the word green. Children are also encouraged to bring items in home from home beginning with the week's letter and then to talk about them in front of the class building their confidence and self-esteem as they do so.

Children have good opportunities to learn about the world around them as they collect items for the nature board and enjoy themes about the life cycles of animals. They plant and watch flowers grow and discuss mother and baby animals. They also learn about the importance of

recycling by making a wall display containing different coloured recycling bins and then deciding which items should be placed in each particular bin. They use different tools and techniques to experience, assemble and join different mediums including making pictures by using string, bubble painting and sticking. Children are gaining a sense of time as the daily routine for the session stays the same and they discuss the change in weather and seasons on a regular basis. They are learning about their own cultures and those of others as they look at world flags, cover themes on China and celebrate world book day. Although children have some use of Information technology the range is limited and likewise their experiences.

Children are aware of their own space and those of others. They manoeuvre themselves and the bikes around the outside area with out bumping into each other and sit on the carpet for story, giving all their required amount of space. They are also developing their understanding of healthy living as they discuss themes about themselves and make 'All about me' books.

Children have good opportunities to develop their creative knowledge through use of different textures and mediums. Children participate in a wide range of art and craft activities and are able to experience these at their own pace. Whilst painting at the easel children start to paint their hands feeling the paint on their skin and becoming so engrossed that by time they have finished most of the paint is on their hands and not too much on the paper. Children thoroughly enjoy singing and have the opportunity to explore music as it is played at certain times during the session and in music and movement sessions. Their imagination skills are encouraged as they play with small world resources explaining to the inspector, for example, that 'My horse is going to fly into space where it will find a friendly alien with two hands and one hundred eyes!'

### **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is good.

Children are valued and respected as staff ensure that specific individual needs are consistently met. This is demonstrated by the approach the staff use in welcoming each child individually at the start of the session and knowing their particular likes and dislikes regarding toys and activities. Children who are hesitant in using an apron for craft activities are encouraged to participate without an apron as staff feel it is more important that they are able to join in and clearly discuss the possibility of some paint getting on the child's uniform with the parents. Children are offered a wide range of activities and resources that help give them a positive view of the diverse society in which they live including puzzles, books and dressing-up clothes. They also explore and celebrate cultural festivals such as Bonfire Night, Christmas and Chinese New Year. All children are able to participate fully in the opportunities offered because staff have a clear understanding of the meaning of inclusion. Children who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities have their requirements clearly identified as there is a practical policy relating to this. The staff are skilled in implementing the policy and in identifying particular needs. They work sensitively with parents and other professionals to ensure that children are offered the most appropriate care and support.

Children demonstrate care and affection for each other, for example, helping younger children to find their coat peg and hang up their coat. Staff show their appreciation of this by praising the child and thanking them for their help. Children work well together and show respect for each other. They use 'please' and 'thank you' without prompting from staff and demonstrate good manners especially at snack time when they, for example, wait for everyone to get their snack before starting to eat their own. Their behaviour is very good as they confidently choose their activities and organise sharing play materials such as, bikes and the play food. They

understand the ground rules and what is expected of them. For example, when coming in from outside play they know to wipe their feet first. They respond very well to staff and this positive approach and good staff role modelling ensures that children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The partnership with parents and carers is good. There is a strong commitment to involving parents fully in the setting and in their children's learning. Parents are kept well informed of their children's progress through daily dialogue; open evenings, termly meetings to discuss progression and regular newsletters. There is a prospectus, policy folder and an informative notice board containing information about a number of issues including the links between the Montessori Curriculum and the Foundation Stage. The school has an open-door policy and often invites parents into the setting, for example, holding regular coffee mornings encouraging the parents to see what the children have been doing and how the end result was made. However, the complaints procedure does not have the latest Ofsted address and contact details delaying the reporting of any concerns by parents. Although the school seeks parents' views on an informal basis, this limits participation by all parents and lessens their involvement in their child's education. Parents are very pleased with the school, describing it as 'the best school ever'. Other positive comments received from the parents' state that their children settle quickly and make good progress.

### **Organisation**

The organisation is good.

Consistent teamwork contributes to children having positive play and learning experiences at the school. Staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities and work cohesively together to ensure the sessions run smoothly. They are vigilant to children's needs and ensure children are well supervised and ratios met. Staff are efficient, professional and organise a stimulating environment in which children focus well on learning through effectively supported, purposeful play. They have a good understanding of how children learn and update their skills by regularly attending external training. Policies and procedures work in practice to promote children's health, safety, enjoyment, achievement and ability to make a positive contribution. Most documentation to support these areas is well maintained, however some requires reviewing and updating.

The leadership and management good. Staff are experienced and knowledgeable about the Foundation Stage and Montessori curriculum, which has a positive impact on the children's achievements. The Directress has effective leadership qualities and is supported by a committed and skilled team. Staff receive regular appraisals and are encouraged to attend further training to enhance their knowledge and skills. Staff are dedicated to ensuring good standards are maintained and led by the Directress identify areas for further improvement. Overall the children's needs are met.

### **Improvements since the last inspection**

At the last care inspection the school was asked to establish procedures for recording existing injuries to children. This is in place protecting children's welfare further. They were also asked to increase the range of resources reflecting positive images and to observe and plan what younger children can do. All these areas have been improved widening the children's understanding and planning for their further progression.

At the last nursery inspection the school was asked to demonstrate the links between the Montessori curriculum and the Foundation Stage curriculum and extend this information to the parents. This is now in place through information on the notice board and discussions that take place at parent's evenings and one to one consultations. Therefore parents feel more involved in their child's education and learning.

### **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 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 good.

### **WHAT MUST BE DONE TO SECURE FUTURE IMPROVEMENT?**

#### **The quality and standards of the care**

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

- obtain parental permission to seek any necessary emergency medical advice or treatment for the children
- update the complaints procedure with regard to the latest ofsted changes and make it more readily available to the parents
- update and review the setting's policies and procedures.

#### **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):

- increase further the children's use of Information Technology in everyday tasks
- improve further the seeking of parents views about the setting.

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](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)