

# Toad Hall

Inspection report for early years provision

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	144720
<b>Inspection date</b>	05 December 2007
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<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 satisfactory. 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?

Toad Hall Montessori Nursery School opened in 1985. It operates from a four-storey terraced house in Kennington. It is situated within walking distance of Lambeth North and Kennington stations, local bus routes, shops and parks.

There are currently 34 children aged between two and five years on roll, this includes 20 funded children. The session supports children with special needs and children speaking English as an additional language. The nursery opens five days per week, during term time. The nursery is open between 08:30 and 16:30. Children attend for a variety of sessions.

Three full time and one part time staff work with the children. The provider is on site each day. One member of staff has a relevant early years qualification, equivalent to National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) level 3 and other staff are NVQ2 or working towards recognised early years qualifications. The setting receives support from Surestart and the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP). Staff use Montessori and traditional methods of teaching to cover the foundation stage areas of learning. The nursery has a part time French teacher attending once a week.

## THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

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

The provision is satisfactory.

Children's good health is supported through themes and activities which encourage them to think about healthy eating. The children often join in with tasting sessions where they are able to experience lemons and pasta, for example, and packed lunches brought from home include a range of fruit and vegetables to help their balanced diet during the day. Staff record the children's allergies and get to know them well in this small nursery which helps them to provide for their needs. This works particularly well if the children are unwell and there are areas for them to rest and relax. Staff use appropriate medication procedures to ensure their wellbeing but first aid certificates have not been updated in a timely manner.

Children learn good hygiene habits at the nursery which is kept generally clean, given its age and condition. They wash their hands with liquid soap and use paper towels to dry their hands and then discard the paper appropriately. Their physical development is given good support because staff endeavour to provide large physical activities such as dance and movement and parachute games outside. The children enjoy visiting a nearby park which compensates for the small outdoor area currently available.

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

The provision is satisfactory.

Children's safety is generally well maintained in this four storey Victorian house. Resources and equipment including specialist Montessori resources are of a generally good standard and easily accessible to the children during their play. Children learn how to keep themselves safe because staff talk to them about how to sit correctly on their chairs and not to run about the nursery, for example. Staff use risk assessments at times to check the areas children use and consistently supervise their wellbeing. In practice, however, risk assessments do not always work well, resulting in some hazards about the building, including a missing smoke alarm and inaccessible fire doors. Policies and procedures regarding health and safety are appropriately inducted to staff and ratios and registers are maintained to ensure this practice is consistent. Should they occur, staff record children's accidents and share this information with their parents as necessary. Children's welfare is generally safeguarded because the manager has trained in child protection and understands recent guidelines given to support the exchange of information. Staff get to know the children well and have secure links with the local authority to enable them to share any concerns, but there is no incident record for staff to record their concerns in this area.

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

The provision is satisfactory.

Children enjoy being at the nursery and develop confidence and a growing independence in their environment and the routine provided. Staff use their knowledge of Birth to three matters generally well to ensure children get the best from what is on offer. At times, however, activities are overly structured and tasks such as colouring in and worksheet practice take away time when staff could be developing their potential through meaningful play. Despite this the children concentrate well and benefit from activities where they can build imaginative constructions and get involved in pretend play in the nursery home corner. Staff observe the children and get to know them well in small groups and the children are able to build strong friendships with those around them. They enjoy a good selection of resources and activities

including painting and threading beads and between activities they sit on cushions to relax with their favourite books. They participate enthusiastically during singing times and show a sense of wonderment at their home made hanging glitter stars and Christmas decorations surrounding them.

## **Nursery Education**

The quality of teaching and learning is good and staff are very attentive to the children. They interact positively with the children offering open ended questions and in this way support children's growing vocabulary and confidence in talking. As a result children progress well through the stepping stones in the Foundation Stage of learning. They talk about what they are doing, when threading snakes with wooden beads and count as they scoop in the correct amount of 'reindeer food' for their Christmas parcels, for example. Children's learning and vocabulary is further supported because they learn French as part of their weekly curriculum.

Staff observe the children and report on their progress in the six areas completing detailed reports on their progress and next steps of learning. Plans generally follow on from the children's interests and abilities but are not flexible enough to allow children to fully explore their ideas. This is because activities are at times overly structured and do not allow children to explore the environment and see through their ideas.

Children behave well at the nursery and are able to concentrate on what they are doing. They negotiate their ideas with each other, for example, during self chosen shopping games and help each other in problem solving tasks, for example, when building the pink Montessori tower and filling and emptying containers. Children use and enjoy a range of books and show that they know that print goes from left to right. Their knowledge of the sounds that letters make is well supported as they feel and touch sandpaper and foam letters, for example, and listen to staff's pronunciation when trying to form the letters of their name. Good opportunities arise for children to solve problems using a range of specialist Montessori graded equipment and puzzles and through the use of sand and water activities where children learn about weight and volume.

Children's physical development progresses well as they use a range of equipment in their outside area to throw, catch and move around the space, and local parks are used to compliment the children's large physical skills. Many activities help the children to develop fine motor skills and they manipulate small objects, pencils and books with care and consideration. They paint creatively, talking about the shapes and colours in their artwork and particularly enjoy 'cooking' and putting the dollies to bed and constructing imaginative train tracks and houses with bricks and straws, for example. They learn about the world around them during activities where they observe and paint the life cycle of the frog, for example, and during visits from outside people such as the 'bird man' who allowed the children to hold the animals visiting. Many cultural based activities, often involving parents help the children to have a wider view of the world and technology is used well to support learning in all areas.

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

The provision is satisfactory.

Children benefit from attending a nursery where they have equal respect and staff get to know them well through key working and small group activities. Good relationships and the children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered as a result. Resources such as dolls, small world and puzzles and the activities provided reflect a range of cultural backgrounds.

This helps the children get to know about other ways of life. In supporting this aim parents are often encouraged to get involved and in the past, for example, one parent visited the nursery to make pasta with the children and to talk about being Italian. Children who may speak other languages or who may have learning difficulties and/or disabilities are welcomed into the nursery and the small group activities and additional signing, for example during songs, helps them to settle well. Policy documents in this area are currently being updated to reflect practice, however. Children behave well at the nursery, as they negotiate the rules of games and remind each other of how to be kind. This is as a result of staff's calm nature and consistent reminders for children's good conduct. The partnership with parents and carers is good and parents offer very positive feedback on their children's progress at the nursery. They are well informed of children's progress in the six areas and are able to regularly meet with staff to discuss the curriculum and children's care.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is satisfactory.

The nursery is well established and staff have been with the group a considerable time. Staff who are experienced and trained in Montessori and NVQ qualifications use their knowledge well to support the children in their care. The registered person ensures all staff working with the children are vetted and suitable to do so. Children benefit from the close contact they have with familiar adults and from the routine which helps them to settle. Some policies and procedures in place have not been suitably updated, however, and this has an impact on children's safety in some aspects. For example, risk assessments do not work well in practice and some areas of the building are not suitably checked. First aid certificates have not been updated in a timely manner and this is a breach of regulation. Despite this the nursery is developing secure relationships with their local authority and understand the need to address these weaknesses with haste.

Leadership and management is good and managers support their staff well in their understanding and implementation of the Foundation Stage. This is achieved through regular meetings to ensure consistency of practice. Strengths and weaknesses have been clearly identified and the manager is receptive to new ideas to improve children's daily experiences given the limitations of the building. Staff are generally well supervised during activities and more experienced staff endeavour to share their skills and experience to support younger staff. Overall, the nursery meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

## **Improvements since the last inspection**

During the last inspection the provider was asked to conduct a risk assessment on the premises identifying action to be taken to minimize identified risks and ensure safety is maintained. They were asked to ensure registration systems show children's and all staff's daily hours of attendance and to provide a written record, signed by parents, of medicines given to children. The provider was also asked to ensure the designated person responsible for child protection issues has had training and that the child protection procedure for the nursery includes the procedures to be followed in the event of an allegation made against a member of staff. They were asked to provide a stimulating range of activities and adequate resources to help children make progress in all areas of their learning and ensure staff observe and record what children do to help plan the next stage in children's learning. In response to these requests the provider has attended training in child protection and understands what to do if an allegation is made against a member of staff. Policy documents have yet to be updated in this area. The register now includes details of children's and staff's arrival and departure and medication requests are

recorded appropriately. Resources and activities reflect a range of interests but are at times, overly structured. Despite this staff are secure in observing and providing for children's next steps. Written risk assessments have been carried out on the building and have identified potential hazards but ongoing regular practice does not work well to ensure children's safety at all times.

### **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.

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### **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 there is an incident book to record any concerns staff have about children's welfare
- ensure written risk assessments work in practice to ensure children's safety at the nursery
- provide more activities for the younger children to allow them to learn through play
- ensure staff's first aid certificates are updated at the earliest opportunity to meet National requirements
- update policies and procedures to reflect current guidelines in the National Standards

#### **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):

- provide less structured activities for the children to enable them to better extend their interests and explore the environment to support learning

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