

Smiles Montessori Pre School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY236797
Inspection date	08 January 2008
Inspector	Lynn Clements
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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 good.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Smiles Montessori Pre-school opened in 2003. It operates from a suite of rooms, within a unit on a light industrial area of Bush Fair in Harlow. The pre-school serves the local area. They are registered to care for a maximum of 60 children at any one time.

There are currently 91 children from three months to five years on roll. This includes 40 children in receipt of early education funding. Children attend for a variety of sessions. The setting supports a small number of children who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities or who have English as an additional language.

The group opens five days a week. Morning sessions run from 09.00 until 12.00. Lunch sessions from 12.00 until 13.00. Afternoon sessions run from 13.00 until 16.00. There are additional hours from 08.00 until 09.00 and 16.00 until 18.00 to provide longer sessions if required.

23 staff work with the children. 18 staff, including the manager hold appropriate early years qualifications. The setting receives support from the local authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are fully supported within the pre-school. Excellent bathroom facilities, all at child-height enable children to take responsibility for their personal hygiene. They learn about the importance of good hand washing routines not only to "get the soap off" but also to "stop the germs from hurting our tummies". Child-height posters and photographs provide clear reminders for children about how to wash their hands properly. Hand sanitizers are strategically placed around the provision to help prevent cross-contamination. Very good nappy changing routines are in place and protective clothing is worn by members of staff to protect children from the spread of bacteria. All health related documentation is in place and shared with parents and carers. Medicines are stored out of reach and a record is maintained of any doses given to children during the day. This information is then shared with their parents or carer to ensure they are protected from accidental overdose when they return home. Staff throughout the setting complete first aid training on a regular basis. This enables them to deal with emergency situations appropriately and ensure children are given the necessary care. Accident records are in place and shared with parents. A clear sick child policy is in place and implemented in practice to prevent the spread of infection.

The pre-school provides well balanced, home cooked meals. This ensures that children receive nutritionally balanced meals to meet their growing needs. Information is obtained from parents about children's individual dietary requirements. These are met and parental wishes are respected. This sharing of information ensures that children are protected from foods which could harm them. Baby bottles are correctly labelled and stored to ensure they receive the correct formula to help them grow and thrive. A snack bar is in place for the older funded children. This enables them to develop their self-help skills as they pour their own drinks or make choices as they choose what they want to eat. However, snack routines for the younger funded children are limited. Younger children stop playing and have their snack as a whole group. This leads to extended periods of time, with children sitting around while they wait for everyone to wash their hands, then wait for staff to pour out all the drinks. This impacts on opportunities for them to build on their existing independent skills. Drinking water is available to children at all times, this ensures no one remains thirsty.

Opportunities for children to develop their physical skills are good. Daily provision is made for children to play outside in the fully enclosed outside play space. Children enjoy developing hand eye coordination as they throw and catch balls. They use balancing equipment with developing skill. In addition to using the garden, staff organise walks in the local area. Children enjoy the fresh air and learn to move their bodies in different ways. They use single handed tools and equipment with increasing control and confidence. All children are able to rest or be active according to their individual needs.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Attention to aesthetics ensures that the pre-school is maintained to a very high standard. Children's creations and relevant information is displayed well. This provides a welcoming environment for children, families and visitors. Children gain a sense of pride, as they see staff taking an interest in what they have made and putting it on the wall for everyone to admire. Daily checks are carried out of all child-accessible areas. This ensures that the play space remains

safe and secure for the children to play freely. An exceptionally good range of child-height furniture and equipment enables them to play in safely and comfort. Child-height storage is in place, well labelled with pictures, enabling children to make their own selections about the games they want to explore.

Risk assessments are in place to ensure the setting remains safe for children and staff. Closed circuit television has been installed, this enables managers to monitor classroom practice and the whole site throughout the sessions. Secure arrival and collection procedures are in place. A buzzer is used and visitors can only gain entrance via the main office. All visitor identification is checked and a clear record of visits is maintained. A password system is used for any adults collecting children on behalf of their parents or carers. No child is allowed to leave the premise with any adult who has not been cleared by parents and checked by members of staff. This ensures that children are protected from harm. Safety equipment, such as stair gates and finger guards on doors help to keep children safe. Fire drills are regularly practised so everyone knows what to do in an emergency. Children have good opportunities to learn about keeping themselves safe. They learn about road safety and stranger danger whilst out and about. They carry their chairs safely around the classroom or learn how to use the stairs with care. Children tidy away their toys after playing, which helps to keep their play space free from potential tripping hazards.

Staff have a clear understanding regarding safeguarding children. There is a clear procedure in place for the reporting of any concerns to the relevant authorities. Staff take the care of children very seriously and update training on a regular basis. Clear systems⁶ are in place to protect children from harm and ensure their welfare remains paramount.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are very confident in the pre-school and in their relationships with each other and staff. They are greeted warmly by staff as they arrive each day. Children develop a sense of place as they confidently hang up their belongings, return greetings to each other and members of staff and generally move around the setting, freely selecting activities and games to explore. In addition to the stimulating activities set up by members of staff, children are encouraged to share their own ideas about what they want to do and play. This is further supported by child questionnaires, which encourages the children to take an active role in planning activities and deciding on new equipment that interests them and helps to bring their curriculum to life.

Children negotiate small world and role play scenarios based on real and imagined experiences as they dress up or organise games, such as their make-believe library. Children and babies make their own choices from the wide range of good quality activities and learning opportunities available. In the well organised baby room, staff ensure that babies have a variety of activities to stimulate their interest. Low-level mirrors provide opportunities for babies to investigate themselves. Sorters and books, pop up toys and sensory equipment all provide babies with an exciting environment in which to develop. Older children work confidently on their own or in groups as they investigate shaving foam or use a variety of creative media, including glue, glitter and coloured crayons and paints. Children construct from a variety of building blocks designing three dimensional space ships from stickle bricks.

Children communicate well, sharing their ideas while they play and seeking out others to join in their games. They use appropriate language and gestures to communicate their needs, ideas and experiences, sharing their news or asking questions, such as why, when and how, as they

explore different activities and toys. Staff have also introduced baby signing, this is then carried on throughout the pre-school to add another dimension to communication.

Staff have successfully introduced the 'Birth to three matters' framework. This ensures that they have effective strategies in place to monitor and support the positive development of children under three years. Staff fully understand about the importance of including parents and carers. Observation of children's progress is made by staff and records for younger children are regularly shared with parents and carers, sent home and their comments and ideas encouraged. This sharing of important information ensures that the children's key workers remain aware of their overall development and use this in their planning to ensure children have the best start possible.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff organise the pre-school room to provide varied and exciting activities to promote the children's learning, decision making and independent skills. The outdoor play area is also used effectively to consolidate and develop the children's learning in different ways and on a larger scale than is possible indoors. Staff are very good at supporting children in their play and learning, particularly in small group work. They know when to stand back and give children time to develop their own ideas. All staff are interested in what the children say and do and use positive methods including descriptive praise to promote the children's good behaviour.

Key worker observations of the children are very good and used to monitor their progress and update their records of assessment in relation to the six areas of learning. Records provide staff and parents with a clear picture of what each child is able to do, using the stepping stone learning intentions. However, whilst each key worker knows their children extremely well, children's next steps for learning are not consistently identified or used to inform future planning. In addition, whilst current planning contains differentiation with regards to equipment, it does not clearly identify how specific learning intentions can be adapted to ensure that all children are challenged appropriately, and continue to make good progress towards the early learning goals.

Staff ensure they provide a broad range of activities and experiences which encourage the children's interest and investigation skills. Children enjoy what they do and are able to sustain interest in a range of activities which promote their understanding and learning. Overall, children are motivated and concentrate well at activities which capture their imagination. For example, they enjoy small world play as they use tanks of water to explore under the sea, or create star ships and cars using a variety of building bricks.

Children use computers with competence and control. They confidently negotiate programmes which help to consolidate previous learning. They explore change, observing the daily weather or seasons of the year. They communicate well, using books appropriately and clearly enjoy stories as they use the pictures as clues to help them guess what happens next or join in repeated refrains with glee. Children self-register, using their name cards. Staff make the most of these opportunities, encouraging them to link sounds to letters, helping them to develop simple phonic knowledge for later learning.

Everyday opportunities are taken to introduce mathematical language and calculation. During registration, for example, children count how many girls and how many boys have come to play,

they work out the difference and identify the large number. During snack, sand and water play they explore capacity and volume and they fill their cups or containers.

Children learn to care for others. Pre-school pets provide the ideal opportunity for children to learn about caring for living creatures as they ensure that the cages are clean, warm and that Mr Dude the guinea pig and Mr Harry the hamster have fresh food and water everyday.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Discussions with parents and carers prior to placement ensures that children's individual needs are met. Staff provide a good range of opportunities for children to learn about the wider world. They plan topics and activities which enable the children to learn about different cultures and beliefs. There is a wide range of high quality, resources and artefacts, including small world toys, books, globes and positive images displayed around the setting. These enable children to explore their ideas and build on their understanding of the world in which they live. In addition to this, staff take children on walks in their local community, buying food for the pre-school pets at their local shop, meeting people and learning about the world on their door step. There is no bias in staff practice in relation to gender, race or disability.

There are effective systems in place to support children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Staff work together with parents and other professionals in the best interests of the child. One-to-one support and additional equipment is provided as required. As children move through the setting, staff share relevant information to ensure smooth transitions. This dedication is extended by members of staff as they write reports and attend meetings to support families and the child as they move onto main stream school or onto other settings.

Behaviour throughout the pre-school is very good. Staff have clear age-appropriate strategies in place to promote good behaviour. Boundaries are fair and staff work closely as a team to ensure they provide a consistent approach for the children. Open communications with families helps key workers and staff to provide continuity of care. Members of staff treat children with respect, giving them time to share their ideas and think through what they want to say without any pressure. Staff act as good role models, being considerate, using calm voices and being kind and sensitive to the needs of others. This supports children and enables them to develop their own positive behaviour, learning to take turns, share and be kind to each other. The very good use of descriptive praise and encouragement raises children's confidence and self-esteem. Children behave well.

Staff ensure that parents are kept fully informed about their child's experiences within in the pre-school. A key worker system is in place to provide parents with a regular point of contact and a familiar face. Notice boards, newsletters and an open door policy regarding appointments, ensure that parents and carers have plenty of opportunities to be kept informed about forthcoming events and the day to day running of the setting. Time is also taken to ensure that parents and carers have a voice in the care of their child. Parental questionnaires are used, enabling staff to keep track of their requirements and how the pre-school can adapt and develop to meeting changing needs. Children's needs are being met well because staff work closely with parents and carers. This partnership provides continuity for children as they move between their home and the pre-school. Prior placement information is sought from parents and carers enabling staff to plan for their individual needs. Information about the 'Birth to three matters' framework is very good and parents and carers are encouraged to share in their children's learning experiences.

Partnership with parents and carers of children in receipt of early education funding is satisfactory. Parents and carers have access to the planning displayed in the rooms and in addition to this, project sheets are sent home enabling them to support topics within the pre-school. Some information about the six areas of learning is displayed in the classrooms. However, information in the prospectus about the Foundation Stage is limited. Children's records of assessment are shared during the annual open evening. However, there are no formal systems in place to provide parents and carers with regular opportunities to view their child's records or share observations of their children's achievements at home, to provide key workers with a picture of the whole child.

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 good.

Robust procedures are in place for the employment of staff and the monitoring of volunteers, to ensure children are protected from harm. A helpful range of policies and procedures have been developed and implemented in practice. This ensures the safe management of the setting and positive outcomes for the children. All policies are shared with parents. Registration systems are in place and include the times of arrival and departure of children to ensure that each child can be correctly accounted for at all times and protected from harm. Records are stored securely and confidentiality is respected at all times.

Children are cared for by staff who have a good knowledge and understanding of child development. The majority of staff hold appropriate qualifications. Staff induction procedures are in place and on going appraisals are implemented to support existing members of staff. The organisation of the setting ensures that children are well cared for and develop positive attitudes and dispositions towards their learning. Overall, children's needs are met.

Leadership and management of early education is good. Exceptionally clear systems are in place for monitoring members of staff. These ensure that the delivery of the Foundation Stage is closely monitored. Where appropriate, action is taken to develop practice in the best interests of the children. Appraisals enable management to draw on staff existing strengths and skills. This information is used extremely well in the deployment of staff to ensure children make good progress towards the early learning goals.

Improvements since the last inspection

Since the last inspection, staff have completed relevant training and have a good understanding of the different ages and stages of child development. This enables them to support children's progress well and deal with any behavioural issues appropriately. Adult sized furniture is now in place. This enables staff to comfortably feed babies in highchairs, at meal times and interact with them more fully. The following policies have been updated. There are now clear procedures for staff to follow in the event of a child going missing, allegations regarding safeguarding children being made against a member of staff and clear information for parents or carers to follow should they wish to report a concern. These updated policies and procedures, ensure the safe day to day management of the setting.

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):

- develop snack time routines, enabling children to build on their existing self-help skills and independence.

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 assessment systems to ensure children's next steps for learning are clearly identified, ensure that this information is used to inform future planning; ensure differentiation is clearly identified in the planning systems, enabling staff to confidently adapt activities to challenge children effectively
- develop opportunities for parents and carers to share in their child's record of assessment, enabling them to share comments and observations about their achievements at home to provide the key worker with a picture of the whole child.

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