

Casa dei Bambini

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY297374
Inspection date	14 November 2007
Inspector	Lisa Jane Cupples
Setting Address	St. Johns Hall, St. Johns Street, Winchester, Hampshire, SO23 0HF
Telephone number	01962 855412
E-mail	susan@hartley-house.co.uk
Registered person	Hartley House Montessori LTD.
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?

Casa dei Bambini is one of three settings run by Hartley House Montessori Ltd. It opened in 2004 and is situated in a privately owned building in a residential area of Winchester. A maximum of 40 children may attend at any one time. Sessional and full day care is offered all year round, Monday to Friday from 08:00 to 18:00. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 63 children aged from six months to five years on roll. Of these, nine children receive funding for nursery education. The nursery supports children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and also supports children who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery employs 13 staff to work with the children. Of these, eight members of staff hold appropriate early years and/or Montessori qualifications. It is a member of the Pre-School Learning Alliance and adopts the Montessori method of teaching.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children learn the importance of personal hygiene and are developing good self care skills through daily routines and discussions. For example, children wash their hands before snacks and meals and after using the toilets. Children are protected and enjoy a healthy environment because the staff implement good hygiene procedures. Staff ensure tables are cleaned with anti-bacterial spray before and after meals, and a colour-coded system is in place to ensure children have individual bedding, helping to prevent the possible spread infection.

Children will receive appropriate treatment if an accident occurs because the manager ensures members of staff who hold a current first aid certificate are always present. Fully stocked first aid kits are in place and staff check the contents regularly to ensure they are up-to-date and well-maintained, helping to keep the children healthy. The staff have a very clear understanding of the procedures to record all accidents that occur on the premises and clearly document all administered medication. Parents sign to acknowledge that they have been informed, helping to keep children healthy.

Children enjoy the use of the outdoor play area and reap the benefits of the fresh air daily. Staff ensure all children access the outdoor area or go for walks around the local area, visiting parks or nearby shops. Children are developing good spatial awareness as they ride wheeled toys with confidence. They use bats and balls to develop their hand to eye co-ordination effectively. Children's climbing skills are promoted through the use of an outdoor climbing frame and slide.

Children benefit from a nutritious diet because the staff team have a clear understanding of healthy eating. They provide a wide range of fresh fruit and vegetables for snacks and meals. Staff discuss the needs of each child with the parents in detail and record the information on their registration forms. Menus are displayed for parents and they receive written information about what their children have had to eat during the day. Children are beginning to understand about healthy eating through daily discussions and talk openly about which food is good for them 'helping them to grow big and strong'. Staff find out about each child's allergies, medical, cultural needs and parental preferences through discussion, ensuring that their practice reflects the needs of the children and their families.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The premises are clean and well-maintained providing a safe and healthy play and learning environment. Children's work is displayed around the rooms and children enjoy telling visitors about the pictures they have created. Children's independence is encouraged throughout the nursery as children hang up their coats and aprons, self-select activities and participate in the Montessori tasks. The building has central heating installed, which provides a comfortable temperature and the radiators are covered to protect the children. The rooms are set out allowing the children to access the resources and play materials on their own, increasing their freedom of choice and decision-making skills. Children throughout the nursery have access to suitable resources that reflect their age and stage of development. The equipment is maintained well and is cleaned regularly, providing children with safe experiences during their time at the

setting. Children have the use of Montessori equipment, which provides them with a range of sensorial and experiential activities, helping them to learn at their own pace.

Children's safety is promoted effectively because staff are vigilant and ensure the premises are checked before the children arrive. For example, all plug sockets are covered, stair gates prevent the youngest children from accessing the kitchen area and risk assessments are completed. All visitors are required to use an intercom system to gain entry to the building. Staff are alerted and come to the main entrance to let people in. They are asked for identification and sign in and out of the visitor's book, providing an accurate record of everyone who comes into contact with the children. Parents of children who attend the setting use the side entrances, so the children do not have to struggle with the steps at the front of the building. Children are beginning to learn the importance of keeping themselves safe through daily routines and guidance from the staff. For example, the youngest children are reminded not to climb and the older children know they must not run inside the building in case they fall and hurt themselves. Fire drills are practised regularly and arrangements have been made with the church opposite the nursery for staff and children to gather in the church grounds in the event of an emergency, ensuring the children are safely away from the building.

Comprehensive child protection policies and procedures are in place and are shared with parents to ensure they fully understand the setting's role and responsibility towards safeguarding the children. Staff have a clear understanding and would recognise the possible signs and symptoms of abuse. Any concerns are recorded and if necessary they would be reported to the relevant agencies to protect the children. The policies also include procedures to follow if an allegation is made against a member of staff, promoting the children's safety at all times.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children throughout the nursery are happy and build sound relationships with the staff. Staff caring for the children aged under three years are affectionate and attentive, responding well to the children's needs, providing additional resources, participating in the activities and laughing with the children. Staff have an understanding of the Birth to three matters framework and plan a range of activities for the children. Staff ensure the practical experiences offered to the children are balanced promoting development in all areas. Children's progress is monitored by the staff team, although many of the children's records are not up to date, making it difficult for staff to share accurate information with the parents.

Children in the toddler room sit quietly and listen to the story; staff involve the children to hold their interest, for example, talking about their eyes, asking if they know where they are and then counting them. Children are supported well in this room. Staff assist the children to wash their hands and take their aprons off after craft activities. They sit with the children, talking to them continually, helping them to complete activities, building their concentration. Children use the resources around the room and enjoy taking part in real life experiences, such as sweeping the floor with the small dustpans and brushes. Staff talk to the children about the animals they are playing with, introducing new vocabulary as they interact.

Children in the baby room benefit from the calm and relaxing atmosphere in this part of the nursery. Soft music plays in the background as children are given time to explore their surroundings. Children are inquisitive and investigate the toys and enjoy a selection of sensorial activities, for example, feeling the corn flour substance and watching it trickle through their fingers. Children giggle as they use the shaker bottles, making loud noises. They clap their

hands with delight and smile as visitors come into the room. The activities are kept short and changed frequently to hold the children's short attention spans and ensure they make the most from their time in the nursery.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning are satisfactory. Staff have an understanding of the Foundation Stage and link the uses of the Montessori equipment and resources with the early learning goals, ensuring children make progress. However, children do not always complete the tasks and some learning intentions are not met. The effectiveness of the curriculum is not monitored at this time; as a result many learning opportunities are missed. For example, children often get out activities and then lose interest as staff do not support them effectively. At other times children are supervised and supported well, and benefit from the quality of the activities and staff interaction. For example, children complete complex alphabet puzzles with the help of staff and build mazes with the length rods, concentrating well. The staff deployment in the pre-school room is inconsistent and children's experiences differ greatly depending on who is working in their room at the time.

Children are confident and their independence is encouraged throughout the sessions as they self-select resources from the low-level shelves, although some children do not always settle down to the activities. Children's spoken language is developing well. They are able to name the farm animals and talk about the types of food the different animals like to eat. Children have opportunities to mark make throughout the day and some children are able to form clear recognisable letters. They are beginning to link the sounds with letters during practical activities. Children use mathematical language to describe size and shape as they build the cylindrical towers, although some children lose interest and put them away before completing the task. Children recognise numerals during the session and count confidently up to and sometimes above 15. They have many opportunities to problem-solve as they learn to set up the Montessori equipment in order. For example, they arrange the length rods until they are in order from long to short.

Children use the computer with ease and show curiosity, asking many questions to learn more. They use a range of natural and man-made materials throughout the day. Children learn about the world around them through topics and themes. They talk about other countries and look at the similarities and differences of food, clothing and music. Children have many opportunities to express themselves creatively during free-style art and craft activities and painting. Children select the type of paper they want to use, collect the paints, put on their aprons and set to work. However, the inconsistent supervision allows children to lose focus. For example, one child painted a picture, then the table and even started painting the wall before staff noticed

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Staff have a clear understanding of equal opportunities and ensure all children have access to all the equipment and resources in their base rooms. Staff take the time to get to know the children and their families well, helping to build sound relationships through open communication. Children are treated as individuals and their needs are recorded on the registration forms and discussed at staff meetings to ensure all staff are fully aware. Children throughout the nursery are beginning to show consideration for others. They share the resources and help each other to tidy away. The youngest children are praised when they are gentle with each other, helping them to respect each others needs. Children work well together and recognise

the need to share and take turns. They have a positive attitude towards themselves and one another, and involve themselves in each others play. Children's social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is fostered.

The special needs co-ordinator has attended training and has a clear understanding of her role and responsibilities. Effective systems are in place and the nursery works well with parents and other agencies to ensure children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language are fully supported. Children behave quite well and are polite. Staff know the nursery rules, but they are not consistently implemented throughout. As a result, children push the boundaries because they do not always receive explanations of why they can not or should not do something, therefore the children do not always know what is expected of them.

Children benefit from the relationships between their parents and the staff. Parents are able to talk to the children's key workers at any time and have access to their children's progress records on request. Although, some records are not well maintained, limiting the amount of information the parents receive. Parents' evenings are held regularly, helping to keep the parents informed and daily diaries are completed including details of the children's diets, nappies, sleep routines and general well-being.

Partnership with parents of children who receive funding for early education is satisfactory. Parents receive information about the setting and their aims and objectives. The handbook provides parents with information about the Montessori approach to learning and the Foundation Stage. The curriculum planning is displayed for parents, encouraging them to become involved in their children's learning. They have access to their children's records on request and parents are able to talk to the staff about their children's progress, although there are no opportunities for them to make written comments or contribute to the records about the children's learning at home.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides. Children's safety is promoted because clear recruitment and vetting procedures are in place. New staff complete an in depth induction programme, ensuring they are fully aware of their roles and responsibilities. Daily routines are organised well and run smoothly. The children move freely from one activity to another, ensuring most children are fully occupied throughout the day, although this is less well organised for the pre-school children at certain times during the day. For example, when staff are at lunch children are not supported sufficiently and some children become distracted or wander around without purpose. The ratios are maintained at all times and staff deployment is adequate in most areas of the nursery. Children are well protected because most of the policies and procedures are implemented well. Most of the required paperwork and documentation is maintained and is readily available for inspection at any time, although the children's hours of attendance are not recorded in the daily attendance registers.

The leadership and management of the setting are satisfactory. The owner employs a qualified manager to oversee the day to day running of the nursery. Staff appraisal systems are used to identify strengths and weaknesses throughout the year and ongoing training is provided for all staff. The room leaders take responsibility for the curriculum planning; however, there are no systems in place to monitor how effectively the curriculum is being delivered. The deployment

of qualified staff in the pre-school room is also inconsistent at times, hindering the speed of the children's progress towards the early learning goals.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection the provider was asked to improve and consolidate staff knowledge of child protection, special needs, and behaviour management. All staff have a clear understanding of child protection, safeguarding the children who attend. The special needs co-ordinator has also attended training and understands her role, enabling her to support all children. Some in house training has taken place regarding behaviour management although at times the staff teams approach is inconsistent and children do not always know what is expected of them.

At the last nursery education inspection the provider was asked to provide opportunities for children to use ICT and programmable toys. The setting now has a computer, enabling children to develop their skills as part of the daily routines. Children also have access to a selection of programmable toys, developing their understanding of everyday technology.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since the last inspection Ofsted received one complaint that required the provider to take action in order to meet the National Standards. The complaint related to National Standard 2: Organisation, National Standard 6: Safety, National Standard 7: Health and National Standard 12: Partnership with Parents. The concerns were regarding insufficient staff to child ratios, the policy for signing children in and out of the nursery, children playing outside while inappropriately dressed, inadequate recording of accidents and parental concerns not being adequately addressed. Ofsted conducted an unannounced visit to investigate the concerns. Following the visit one action was set under National Standard 2 and one action was set under National Standard 12. Ofsted received a written response from the provider detailing the steps the provider had taken to address the issues which Ofsted found to be satisfactory. In view of this no further action was taken and the registered person 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 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 the children's progress records are kept up to date

- ensure staff implement the behaviour management rules and boundaries consistently so children know what is expected of them
- ensure the daily registration records include the children's hours of attendance.

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):

- monitor the effectiveness of the curriculum to ensure the planned learning intentions are being met
- improve staff deployment in the pre-school room to ensure children receive consistent support and supervision throughout the sessions
- provide opportunities for parents to make written contributions to their children's records of achievement.

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