

Merry Gold AMI Montessori

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	402938
Inspection date	10 December 2007
Inspector	Sylvia Dindar
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Registered person	Malsri Amarasuriya
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Sessional 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?

Merry Gold Montessori is a privately owned nursery. It opened in 1990 and operates from Murray Park Hall which is situated within Murray Park, in Whitton. A maximum of 35 children attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery is open on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday each week from 09:00 to 12:00 during term time and opens on Monday and Thursday from 13:00 to 16:00 during the spring and summer terms. All children share access to a small outdoor play area.

There are currently 31 children aged from two and a half to five years on roll. Of these 13 receive funding for nursery education. Children come from a local catchment area and attend for a variety of sessions. The setting supports children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery employs six staff. Three of the staff, including the manager hold appropriate Early Years qualifications. One member of staff is currently working towards a recognised Early Years qualification. The setting receives support from the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership. They are following the Foundation Stages of Learning.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children's health is safeguarded because staff follow appropriate health and hygiene procedures to ensure that the premises and equipment are kept clean. Children understand the importance of simple, good hygiene practices, such as hand washing, and know that their hands 'get dirty and have germs on'. Appropriate accident and illness procedures are in place, however, they do not fully protect children's overall health as staff do not record the time that children have accidents. Staff have training in first aid and a fully stocked first aid box is available for use.

Children are well nourished and receive nutritious snacks. They have their health and dietary needs met because staff work well with parents to obtain written information about individual requirements. Snack times are observed to be relaxed and sociable occasions, with staff sitting and chatting to the children. Children confidently help themselves to drinking water which is easily accessible on a low table, as a result children are becoming aware of their own bodily needs and do not become dehydrated.

Children have regular opportunities to enjoy physical activity both indoors and outdoors. The staff make good use of the local park in which the nursery premises are located and children have lots of opportunities for outdoor play. They are able to run around and explore. Children have access to the fixed climbing frames, swings and slides as well as a range of bikes and trikes. Indoors they march around and dance to music and jump confidently on the small trampoline. These activities build strong muscles and help children develop their co-ordination and balance.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children play in a building that is secure and visitors are required to sign the visitor's book and staff monitor them whilst they are on site. Risk assessments are thorough and hazards are addressed. For example all electrical sockets are protected with socket covers. The front door is locked and visitors have to ring the bell for entry. Fire exits are kept clear and children learn to keep themselves safe when involved in regular fire drills. Staff are vigilant, well deployed and show good supervision of children both indoors and when outside.

The environment is warm and welcoming for the children and they benefit from a well organised play environment. They have easy access to the attractive low cupboards where the well maintained Montessori play equipment is stored. Rugs on the floors allow the children to set out such equipment as trains and construction sets and play in comfort. Low tables and chairs are set out in the middle of the room to allow the children to play with their self chosen activities and have space to play.

Children are safeguarded because staff understand their role in relation to child protection issues. Staff demonstrate a good understanding of the different areas of abuse and of possible signs, and of the procedures to be followed if they have any concerns.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children enjoy their time at the nursery. Children's independence is actively encouraged through the concept of the Montessori philosophy. Children are encouraged to sweep up after spilling the sand and to clear up toys which they have played with, creating an organised environment. They show good skill in pouring their own drinks. They are encouraged to be independent when putting on aprons and staff gently encourage them to hang them up when they take them off. Children have opportunities to freely choose from the wide range of toys and resources on offer. These cover all areas of learning and meet the children's developmental needs. Children particularly like sand and water play and freely paint at the easels, choosing their own colours. They help themselves to interesting puzzles that make them think and play harmoniously as they construct and build the railway track. They are learning to negotiate and share the equipment. They enjoy making music together both as a group on an individual basis, for example, one child makes music using the electronic keyboard. Children explore the environment; staff specifically plan an outdoor session when children are encouraged to use their senses. Children listen and identify the different noises such as the plane flying overhead. They are encouraged to feel the bark of the tree and look for insects. Children find worms and they discuss whether they are alive or dead. When they find a live one they gently explore it and staff remind them to be careful and ask the children where they think they could put it to ensure it is safe and survive, therefore, children are learning to take care of living things. Children play in the puddles and staff ask them how they came to be there, this encourages children to talk about the weather and use their language skills. They gather leaves and watch as they float on the puddles, and they go off to look for things that would sink and enjoy the splashes they make as they do.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children benefit as the adults who care for them have a good knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage and how children learn, consequently children are making good progress. Children are self motivated and enjoy their learning experience because they get to choose what they want to do. As a result children are confident and becoming competent independent learners. Some structured activities are planned by staff, however, children are under no pressure to take part. As a result children have meaningful play experiences that are spontaneous and fun. Consequently children are interested in what they do and have good levels of concentration. Staff gather information about children's starting points and observe children in their play. They plan a wide range of exciting activities for children to help them progress through the stepping stones, these incorporate the six areas of learning as set out in the early year's curriculum. The plans are used flexibly and take into account the children's interests and ideas. For example, one child is playing with the play dough and asks for water as she demonstrates and talks about how her mother makes chapattis at home and wants to make some at nursery. The staff integrate this into the planning for the end of the week. They use a range of teaching methods as the nursery staff are aware that all children learn in different ways. For example, staff ask open ended questions, so that children are encouraged to think for themselves. They engage children well in conversations so the children can express themselves freely and offer up their ideas showing what they already know. They use the children's natural curiosity so children learn to explore things for themselves. They provide support and guidance and offer ideas when children struggle to make sense of what they are doing. However, the staff are not using the observation records consistently to plan for children's individual learning in a consistent way. For example, the majority of the time

staff generalise in their planning and do not consistently show what individual children need to learn next, however, at times this is happening because they know the children well.

Children explore and create music using a range of equipment and materials. They listen carefully and respond to the staff asking them to play softly and then loudly, and march in time to the music. They develop their own ideas because they have resources that are easily accessed and allow the children to be spontaneous and trigger their own ideas. For example a child finds a circle of card and works out a process in order to make a clock. He gathers paper, draws around it, showing confidence and care in the use of scissors and cuts around the template showing great care. He progresses further and completes the project by writing numbers and his name on it.

Children have good opportunities to learn about maths as they are provided with an excellent range of Montessori equipment to develop in this area. For example, they play with the graded building blocks, and learn to sequence them in ascending size and weight. They sort different materials into types, for example, colour, length and size. They group and sequence colours from dark to light shades using the small coloured frames. They learn to count at circle time showing that they can count confidently up to ten, some with help. They play with complex grading puzzles that make them think which means the children are well stimulated.

Children practise mark making in a variety of ways, for example, they draw letters and numbers in sand and lentils. They sit in the writing area and share resources, such as felt tips crayons, pens and chinks. Children are beginning to write recognisable letters as they try to write their names or pretend to write letters. They are learning to link sound to letters as they recognise the first letter of their names on their coat pegs.

They learn about the world they live in as they acknowledge and celebrate various festivals, for example, Harvest, Diwali and Christmas. They are developing an understanding of the people in their community as they deliver the produce they have gathered at Harvest and take it to the local old people's home. They show interest in how things work and want to explore them further, such as torches, magnets and padlocks. Children enjoy playing on the electronic keyboard and know how to switch it on and off. They explore the sounds they can make by experimenting with the different buttons. Children learn that sponges absorb water and therefore can be used for a purpose of moving water from one place to another.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. Children enjoy their time at the nursery. They are welcomed in by staff and are allowed time to settle and decide what they want to do. Some want to sit and wait for their friends to arrive or sit in a reflective mood listening to the music playing before commencing their play. This allows for children's different characters and needs and creates a calm atmosphere in which all children happily separate from their parents and carers. The children are developing confidence and self-esteem as they explore their environment independently. Children are finding out about the world in which they live as they celebrate a range of festivals, such as Christmas and Diwali. The staff team are reflective of the local community and this promotes a sense of belonging.

The setting has a sufficient understanding of the needs of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There is a Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator present and written policies are in place to support practice.

Children generally behave well and know what is expected of them. The staff have simple rules which are applied consistently. For example, older children know that they have to tidy away when they have finished playing with their toys and do this very well. Younger children are reminded gently and they respond well because they want to please the staff who have built up a good rapport with them. Staff understand why children's behaviour deteriorates so are supportive of those children that find it difficult and work alongside their parents to ensure that children get consistent messages. Staff are good role models and are gentle and kind, they show respect for the children and their families and as a result children are kind to others. They are consistently praised for their efforts and achievements and this builds their confidence and self esteem.

Partnership with parents and carers is good. Children benefit from the good relationships between their parents, carers and staff. A number of well organised notice boards provide essential information for parents such as policies and procedures including health issues, complaints, child protection and information about the curriculum, as well as the planned activities. Staff provide a verbal handover at the end of the session about children's care and activities. Regular newsletters keep parents informed of current issues and events within the nursery that affect their child. Parents are invited into the nursery termly to have an informal interview and are informed of their child's development. Parents are welcomed into the setting to help out or to share a specific skill. A key worker system is in place so they are able to discuss their child's progress at anytime. In addition, parents may request informal meetings throughout the term to discuss their child's progress. Written information about the Montessori curriculum, Foundation Stage and the Birth to three matters framework is available to parents.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children's care is significantly enhanced by the nursery's good organisation. Children's care and learning is reinforced by the effective deployment of staff and good leadership and management of nursery education. Staff working with the children are enthusiastic, knowledgeable and consistently promote the children's well-being. They demonstrate good knowledge and understanding for the National Standards and of the Foundation Stage curriculum. They give good information to parents about the curriculum. All relevant documentation is in place and generally maintained to a good standard, for example, consents for emergency medical care are in place for all children, however, accident records have some detail missing which means there is the potential impact on the children's future care as staff do not record the time at which accidents occur.

Staff observe children's development and learning and keep detailed records that help generally to meet their needs. Children's records are openly shared with parents and their contributions valued. Staff demonstrate a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities, and all have read and signed to say they understand the policies and procedures.

Leadership and management is good. The staff are enthusiastic about the nursery and early years, which results in a happy team who work effectively together where children feel safe and secure in their environment and make good progress towards the early learning goals. The staff have good relationships with children and their parents and carers and this has a positive impact on the children's learning. There is a strong commitment to improvement, training and development of the staff, which enhances and maintains the good care, learning and well-being of the children. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At last care inspection the nursery were asked to improve the following; their knowledge of special needs and to ensure staff demonstrated consistency when managing children's behaviour; they were also required to provide healthy snacks for children. To address this the staff have taken up training opportunities on special needs and behaviour management in order to ensure that all staff have some adequate knowledge and that children are provided with consistency of care when dealing with behaviour. Children are provided with a range of healthy snacks, for example, fresh fruit and vegetables so the healthy eating message is re-enforced.

They were also asked to improve documentation to ensure that the policies reflect what happens in the setting; improve risk assessments; request consent from parents for emergency medical care and ensure that they have the emergency contact details recorded on all children. All policies have been reviewed and changes made in order to reflect what happens in the setting and these underpin the nursery's good practice. Risk assessments have been undertaken on equipment and outings are regularly updated, these include trips off site and the safety of children on premises. Identified hazards are addressed by staff. Parental consent for emergency medical treatment or advice is secured from parents as well as the details for emergency contacts and as a result children's safety and well being has been improved.

At the last education inspection the nursery were asked to improve their knowledge of the stepping stones towards the expected early learning goals; the systems used to monitor this in order to improve the children learning experiences; to increase the opportunities for children to develop knowledge and understanding of the world and physical activities. Staff have attended training and are now confident in their presentation of all areas of learning. They have improved the way they observe, record and plan learning opportunities for children to ensure that all the six areas of learning are covered, including physical play and the activities in which children gain knowledge and understanding of the world. Children are making good progress overall as staff know them well and record what children can do, however, they are not using this knowledge to routinely plan individual learning programmes for children. Therefore, the learning opportunities are less focused for individual children.

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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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):

- ensure that accident records show the time of the accident

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):

- further develop children's records so that observations are used effectively to plan the next stage of children's learning

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