

CA Montessori Children's Centre

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	108451
Inspection date	08 April 2008
Inspector	Rosemary Davies
Setting Address	Ditton Park, Riding Court Road, Datchet, Slough, Berkshire, SL3 9LL
Telephone number	01753 241206 or 01753 241209
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Registered person	Computer Associates International Inc
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 outstanding. 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?

CA Montessori Children's Centre opened in 1999. It is a privately owned, work place day nursery. Children attending come from a wide catchment area, as parents using the facility are employed by CA Public Limited Company. The children's centre operates from seven rooms on the ground floor of the company's premises in Datchet, Berkshire. Children have ready access to outdoor play areas. The children's centre opens from 08.00 until 18.00 for five week days throughout the year, with the exception of bank holidays.

The children's centre is registered to accommodate up to 100 children, at any one time. There are currently 72 children from seven months to four years on roll. Of these, 23 receive funding for nursery education. Children attend for a variety of sessions.

The children's centre follows a Montessori philosophy. It has 23 staff who work with the children, of whom 20 have appropriate early years qualifications at Level 3 or above. Regular support is received from the local authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Children thrive in this children's centre because staff do everything possible to promote children's good health. They follow stipulated procedures meticulously to prevent the spread of cross-infection. Consequently, children use extremely clean premises, in which excellent levels of hygiene are maintained. For example, the playrooms are professionally cleaned daily and staff maintain high levels of cleanliness throughout the day.

A clear policy informs parents of when their children must be kept at home if unwell. Staff are clear on their responsibility to inform the relevant authorities about any illness considered notifiable as a matter of public health. Many staff hold relevant first aid qualifications, so a first aider is always on duty. Parents administer any medication required by their children. All required medical and accident records are kept appropriately.

Babies' milk is properly stored and heated. Babies receive their feeds whilst being closely held and cuddled. Children benefit from eating healthy and nutritious meals, freshly cooked on site. These include plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables on a daily basis. Additionally, older children help themselves from fruit baskets if hungry between meals. Menus are displayed and parents consulted as to what is provided. Staff keep parents informed about children's food intake through the day via the company's intranet system. Children enjoy growing some plants, such as herbs, for themselves. They learn much about healthy living. Staff encourage them to develop excellent personal hygiene routines; older children clean their teeth after meals, for example, knowing that eating 'too many sweets' is unhealthy.

All children in the children's centre benefit from daily fresh air and exercise. Babies have plenty of space in which to move around and practise crawling or standing up, whilst toddlers practise walking up and down short flights of stairs. Children in the pre-school rooms develop their physical skills extremely well, benefiting from daily use of the playground where they set their own challenges, such as when climbing. They benefit too from regular visits to the gym room with specialist instruction. They develop a wide range of physical skills and learn about how their bodies change and their heart rates increase when they exercise.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Children's safety is placed at the heart of everything the children's centre does. The building has exemplary security systems, so visitors cannot enter uninvited. Computerised systems record children's whereabouts on the grounds; staff know whether children are in their playroom, out for a walk or are at the playground.

Children use highly suitable purpose-designed, modern premises. Consequently, fire prevention precautions and emergency exits conform to required standards. Staff practise emergency evacuation procedures regularly, with many children already understanding what the 'loud bell' means. Effective risk assessment procedures are in place, which are reviewed annually. Staff check equipment regularly for defects and any repairs are undertaken by qualified maintenance personnel. Children use high quality equipment, much of it relating to the Montessori philosophy. This is readily accessible to children on low-level shelving. Older children benefit from extensive

use of the spacious grounds for walks, whilst the younger ones are wheeled around safely in large buggies. The secure, well equipped playground is used effectively too.

Staff understand their responsibilities for safeguarding children's welfare. Clear lines of communication are in place and understood by staff, including those working in the children's centre on a temporary basis. Staff update their training in child protection regularly.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Children thoroughly enjoy their activities in this children's centre. Staff make excellent use of the Birth to three matters framework to provide an interesting and well balanced range of experiences, which meet children's welfare needs well. Children move around the playrooms confidently, making up their own minds as to what they wish to do and investigate. Babies are provided with suitable toys and resources but staff are careful not to put out too many, so as to overwhelm them. Toddlers learn to join in small group activities, such as when cleaning out the goldfish or singing action rhymes. At all times, staff participate fully in children's play and guide their learning. For example, they discuss the colours of the goldfish, their food and how many there are. High levels of individual attention help children develop their speech extremely well. Relationships throughout the children's centre are excellent, being caring, relaxed and friendly.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children make good progress overall towards the early learning goals of this Foundation Stage of their education. This is because staff have a secure understanding of what is required and plan a stimulating programme of experiences for the children, overall. Planning covers all six required areas of learning effectively, although there is a gap in the programme to develop children's knowledge and understanding of the world; insufficient use is made of information and communications technology to support children's learning, on a regular basis.

Staff have worked on developing their ability to observe children carefully and make reliable assessments of progress made. The system needs further refinement as some records are not dated or kept sufficiently up to date. Children's starting points are not always established when they first start in the Foundation Stage. Consequently, it is sometimes difficult to discern what progress has been made. However, staff are always fully engaged with the children. They know them sufficiently well to question them appropriately to extend their thinking and help them make the next step in their learning.

Children evidently enjoy their experiences and are keen to join planned group activities or to settle at ones of their own choice individually. Several of the older children begin to play together, sharing books and pretending to read stories to each other, for example. Children show they value books. They choose to browse through favourites individually and eagerly anticipate visits from the mobile library. Other aspects of their communication, language and literacy develop well too, with all children readily recognising their names and many beginning to write them. The variety of topics introduced help children develop their vocabularies well, learning the names of plants and beans that they grow during a topic on 'Spring', for example.

Staff introduce early mathematical ideas effectively across all areas of learning. They pick up well on spontaneous opportunities to promote counting, such as when discussing children's

personal photographs and how many candles are on a birthday cake. Children learn much about the natural world around them through taking regular 'nature walks' in the extensive grounds. They discuss the changing seasons, together with the various birds and creatures they see. Children enjoy recreating their experiences, especially through drawing pictures, although their creative responses are sometimes limited through staff not providing a variety of relevant media and materials when needed. Children develop an effective pencil grip particularly well through use of the wide range of specialist Montessori equipment and activities.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

All children are warmly welcomed and included in this children's centre. Staff do their utmost to help children feel safe, secure and settled. They are treated as individuals and have a key worker who gets to know them well, helping to ensure that their particular needs are accommodated. Staff recognise that some children have additional needs, although no such children attend the children's centre currently. Suitable systems are in place when needed. Children learn that families differ; some celebrate Hanukah, others Eid or Easter. All enjoy celebrating their own birthdays, with older children baking birthday cakes. Children develop their sense of the children's centre as a community and older children know that parents work in the same building. Staff work extremely closely with parents to meet children's needs. Sometimes parents drop in to see their children or take them to lunch in the canteen for a treat. Excellent use is made of internal computer systems to keep parents informed about their children's welfare throughout the day.

Children's behaviour is extremely good; staff are excellent role models to them, adopting a consistent, positive approach and talking pleasantly to the children. Staff give children clear directions and explanations, so that they understand just what is expected of them, such as not walking around the playrooms until they have finished their lunch. Children learn to be quiet whilst the younger ones sleep, thus developing consideration towards others. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The partnership with parents and carers of children funded for nursery education is good. Parents receive regular information about what their children are learning and many contribute by sending in items relating to current topics or visiting the children's centre to read stories to them. Parents receive written reports about their children's progress and are welcomed to parents' evenings twice a year. However, they are not invited to contribute to their children's assessment in the Foundation Stage, particularly at the beginning, so staff may not realise all children's capabilities.

The children's centre has a suitable complaints procedure. Up to date contact details of the regulator, Ofsted, are clearly displayed, should parents require them.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides. Children are cared for by well-qualified staff who are cleared as being suitable to work with children. Procedures in place to select, appoint and induct staff are exemplary. Staff appraisals take place annually, with six monthly reviews of targets set. Strong emphasis is placed on continued training and the acquisition of relevant qualifications. Consequently, children benefit from being cared for by staff who are clear about their roles and what is expected of them. Staff receive clear

leadership from the centre's manager. Regular team and room meetings help ensure all staff know individual responsibilities.

All required documentation is in place, kept securely and with regard to confidentiality, including in internal computer systems. A full range of policies and procedures underpin the smooth, safe and efficient day-to-day running of the children's centre. Policies, including risk assessments, are reviewed regularly.

Leadership and management of nursery education is good. Staff begin to use self-evaluation to identify the strengths and weaknesses of nursery education for themselves. They have already established the need for more technological equipment and for staff in the two pre-school rooms to work more closely together, for example, over record keeping and assessment. Senior staff take and act on the advice of outside professionals in order to improve what is offered to the children.

Improvements since the last inspection

Following the last inspection for care, the children's centre was required to address three recommendations relating to the health and safety of children, together with the deployment of staff. All issues have been addressed successfully, so that the care provided has improved.

At the last inspection of nursery education, the children's centre was asked to consider improving the systems of planning and assessment. The planning system has been revised appropriately but the assessment system still has some weaknesses; consequently, this remains as a recommendation.

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

No recommendations for improvement are made because the quality and standards of care are outstanding.

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 the assessment system by inviting parents to contribute to it throughout the Foundation Stage and by ensuring records are kept up to date
- ensure children have regular access to information and communications technology throughout the Foundation Stage.

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