



Chives Montessori School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY290559
Inspection date	31 October 2005
Inspector	Nicola Mary Eileen Matthews
Setting Address	Akenham Studios, Akenham, Ipswich, Suffolk, IP6 0HL
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Registered person	Carolyn Olive Juliet McNeill
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?

Chives Montessori School is privately owned. It opened at its present location in 2005 and operates from 3 rooms in a single storey building. There are separate kitchen and staff facilities. The school is situated north west of Ipswich in the rural location of Akenham near Henley. A maximum of 30 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery is open each week day from 09:15 to 15:00 during term time and some days in the school holiday. All children have access to a secure enclosed

outdoor play area.

There are currently 39 children from 2 to 5 years on roll. Of these 25 children receive funding for nursery education. Children come from a wide catchment area. The school currently supports a few children with Special Educational Needs and children who speak English as an additional language.

The school employs six staff. All the staff, including the manager, holds appropriate early years qualifications. There are two members of staff currently improving their qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in a well maintained environment where good attention is given to cleanliness of the classrooms. Their health is compromised by the dirty kitchen floor and poor personal hygiene procedures during snack time and when going to the toilet. The younger children are supported well by the staff and encouraged to wash their hands after toileting. All children wash their hands before lunch and prior to participating in a cooking activity.

Children's dietary needs are well met. The parents provide a packed lunch of which the contents are monitored by the staff to ensure children are eating healthily. Children are encouraged to eat the savoury items before progressing onto the fruit, yoghurts and biscuits. Children can access drinks throughout the day. The pre-school children have a snack bar during the morning session. They independently pour themselves a drink and choose what fruit to eat.

Children's emotional well-being is supported by caring staff who acknowledge the less confident children's distress by being very close to them when the parents leave. They are encouraged to use a familiar favourite toy to help feel a sense of belonging. Children settle quickly and start to confidently explore the environment.

Children enjoy physical activity. They have a programmed outdoor session each day, weather permitting, where they run, chase, push trolleys and ride wheeled toys which develops their balance and coordination. Some children experience dance and tennis lessons once a week.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a safe and secure environment where all visitors are monitored. Children are able to play safely in the two playrooms as staff implement many safety procedures. However, some hazards are not minimised and this compromises the pre-school children's safety. Children are closely supervised and

play safely outdoors.

Children learn safe practices because the staff provide explanations as to why they should not do something. This helps develop their understanding of hazards and to take responsibility for themselves. Children use a wide range of good quality play equipment much of which follows the Montessori philosophy. They safely access the activities as they are stored on low level shelving on trays or in boxes.

Children's welfare is effectively promoted and safeguarded through clear policies and procedures that staff are aware of. For example, staff hold current first aid certificates and have knowledge of child protection procedures in line with the Area Child Protection Committee guidance.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children arrive and confidently hang their coats up on named pegs and find their name card to take into the pre-school room to wait for registration. They wait for the majority of children to arrive before an activity starts. The younger children sit with the older ones for a story where, at times, some children are disruptive and do not concentrate. This makes it difficult for the others to become engaged in the story.

The younger children enjoy a good range of Montessori activities and persevere to complete a task that requires good hand to eye coordination. For example, sweeping up dried peas using the dust pan and brush. They are developing their independence well as they choose from the range of activities available and receive sensitive support from the staff. However, the craft activities, which are initiated and mainly completed by the staff, are too challenging for the younger child. This limits their creativity when responding to ideas and experiences.

All children are developing good social skills and the more able ones confidently and spontaneously use please and thank you.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children are making good progress towards the early learning goals as they use the Montessori and other equipment. However, omissions in the short term planning limit individual children's progress.

Children's self initiated play is well supported by the patient and caring staff. They use questioning effectively to enable children to demonstrate what they know and challenge some thinking. For example, children looked at pictures of the countryside and had to predict what the weather might be; hot, warm, cold or cool. They then grouped them under these headings which encouraged them to try and recognise simple words.

Children experience a well ordered environment where activities have a permanent storage place on low level shelving around the perimeter of the room. They independently take an activity to the table or floor and practise the skills required to

successfully complete the task such as building a cube using rectangular blocks. The staff direct the children in activities that are challenging and then allow the child time to practise and consolidate the new knowledge. Children are expected to sit in adult led groups for long periods of time at the beginning and end of the morning session. They loose concentration which limits their learning.

Children's assessment records, which follow the Montessori exercises, are used to record children's progress; these are not linked to the stepping stones. However, in the near future 'Keeping Track', developed by Montessori, is being introduced and this is linked to the stepping stones. Children are not assigned a key worker. All staff contribute to the assessment records.

Children's language development is very good. They are confident and articulate communicators initiating conversations with the staff and each other. Children effectively recall what they have done at home or at Chives Montessori School in the past. Children know many letter sounds and can recognise simple words and their names. They confidently write their names and form the letters correctly, often talking about the construction of the letter as they write it. Children have opportunities to make marks on paper. They use marks to represent writing in home made story books and draw flowers in a pot. Children enjoy traditional stories and then act out the scenario, for example Red Riding Hood, with support from the staff. They confidently join in circle games and songs taking part in the actions and singing the words with enthusiasm. However, they do not independently explore musical sounds and rhythms.

Children are developing very good recognition of number. They use their fingers to show how many they are talking about and count with a purpose such as how many children are present today. Children initiate their own counting as they listen to stories and then count the items on a page. They use mathematical language in their play such as bigger, smaller, round, square, lots and few. Children handle and construct with resources that are 2D and 3D and learn about tessellation and patterns. They enjoy cooking buns where they help weigh the ingredients, mix them together and notice the change once everything has been combined.

Children confidently use magnifying glasses to explore objects, words and pictures. They are learning about the weather and can confidently identify some features of winter accurately. Children are able to develop their understanding of other countries and cultures through topic work exploring animal life and festivals. The more able children are able to recognise some continents' names and shapes as they play with the large wooden jigsaw and globe.

Children explore colour as they paint using a variety of brushes and techniques. They explore man-made and natural materials as they handle the resources. Children show delight in running lentils or glue through their hands and making marks in the orange sand. They use their imagination well when playing in the shop acting out familiar scenarios and as they make up stories about a farm.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children experience a meaningful range of resources and activities to promote a positive view of the wider world and increase their awareness of diversity and understanding of others. They learn about continents and countries and how people look and live in these areas as well as geographical features such as pyramids and mountains. Children learn about their local community as they go for walks around the farm.

Children play harmoniously alongside each other, they share and take turns amicably. Older children understand the rules and help reinforce these by telling others, for example not to run. They play imaginatively in small groups and are making friendships as they seek out a preferred playmate. Children are becoming socially competent as they say please and thank you and participate in circle time at the end of the day to say goodbye to everyone. They demonstrate good levels of independence in personal care such as changing clothes and putting on coats and shoes. Children show a sense of wonder, pleasure and pride. The provision fosters children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The partnership with parents is good. They receive clear information about what their child has done during the day. The staff complete a white board in the entrance hall detailing activities children have participated in. Evening meetings are organised to help parents understand the Montessori philosophy and to show they can continue this at home and take an active part in their children's early education. Children's healthy eating is promoted by a dietician visiting to explain what is suitable to put in a packed lunch box. Parents can ask to see their children's assessment records and the staff spend time explaining to parents how their child is progressing. Parents speak highly of the setting. If they should need to complain then a complaints procedure is available and a record will be kept which they can request to see.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Systems are in place to ensure staff working with the children during term time are safe to do so. The recruitment procedure is robust and staff display their qualifications in child care and education in the entrance hall. However, some temporary holiday staff do not always go through the robust employment procedures which could compromise children's safety. The staff team work well together to create and maintain a caring environment for children.

The quality of leadership and management of the nursery education is satisfactory. The manager takes responsibility for most of the responsible roles in the provision. The staff's effectiveness is monitored through an annual appraisal system where professional development is encouraged. Training is given high priority and some staff are currently completing their Montessori qualification to enable them to help all children achieve well.

Documentation is satisfactory, policies and procedures are in place and comply with current legislation and promote children's well-being. The needs of the children for

who the setting provides are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

Not applicable.

Complaints since the last inspection

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 fire exits are not obstructed and hazards are minimised (this refers to uncovered electric sockets and access to unused rooms)
- ensure all temporary staff have completed the vetting process and are suitable to work with children.

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 a key worker system so each child's progress is effectively monitored
- improve the curriculum planning so that it is linked to the stepping stones and is informed by each child's assessments to help them progress in their learning.
- organise the large group sessions so all children are able to concentrate and sit quietly

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