



Bishops Waltham Montessori

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number EY305418
Inspection date 09 January 2006
Inspector Elly Bik-Kuen Wong

Setting Address St John Ambulance Hall, Little Shore Lane, Bishops Waltham,
Southampton, Hampshire, SO32 1ED
Telephone number 07729 864034
E-mail
Registered person Emma Victoria White
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?

Bishops Waltham Montessori was registered in 2005. It is a nursery which is privately owned and managed. It operates from the main room and garden in a community hall and serves the local area. There are currently 26 children from 2 to 5 years of age on roll. This includes 23 funded 3-year-olds and 4-year-olds. Children attend for a variety of sessions. The nursery currently supports children with special needs and welcomes children who speak English as an additional language.

The setting opens five days a week during school term times. Sessions are from 09:00 until 12:00 and 12:00 - 15:00 from Monday to Thursday. On Friday, the session is from 09:00 till 12:00. Usually two to three staff (out of a total of five) work with the children each session; three have early years qualifications to level 3 or 4 standard. The two full-time senior staff hold a Montessori Diploma equivalent to a level 4 NVQ qualification. The setting receives support from the Local Authority. The setting adopts the Montessori approach to education.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are given clear guidance and good support to develop their competence in hygiene routines. Children are supported well with footstools to access adult-size hygiene facilities, with a high level of independence in the hired venue. Most do not need reminding about washing their hands after toilet, as they understand its importance for preventing germs and infections. Those younger children who wear pull-ups or nappies are changed appropriately by staff as necessary. Staff work to sound policy and procedures to promote good hygiene for children. Surfaces used by them are cleaned or disinfected daily. Children are instilled with a sense of responsibility; they put things away and even help the staff to clean and dust at the end of the day. There is also a sickness policy shared with parents to prevent cross-infection from those children who are unwell.

Children develop good health and bodily awareness, because they are given daily opportunities to make their own decisions about their food intake at the self-service 'café'. Children choose confidently from a good choice of snacks including fresh fruits and dried raisins. Staff support them to plant seeds and water the plants in the vegetable garden, and they learn about the value of fruit and vegetables within a healthy and balanced diet. Children help themselves throughout the day to drinking water when they feel thirsty. At the same time, they develop good manipulative skills when they routinely pour water from a glass jug into small drink glasses. However, those children who forget to access the self-service 'café' are not consistently monitored for their fluids intake to prevent dehydration. Some staff have trained in food hygiene, and ensure that food and drinks are prepared hygienically, and that consumables among lunch box items are stored in a safe manner. Staff work closely with parents to meet any special dietary allergies and requirements among the children; and ensure that those with on-going health conditions are supported appropriately for their health and safety.

Children's physical fitness and development is promoted through daily outdoor exercise and special dance sessions built into the curriculum. Apart from play with various large and small equipment in the garden, children sometimes walk in the nearby fields and to the village in spring and summer. During twice-a-week dance sessions, children are supported by a qualified dance teacher; and they move and dance energetically in time to music or songs. They develop good bodily balance, co-ordination, and spatial awareness when they negotiate space while moving and jumping into hoops and across 'barriers' such as large ribbons around the room.

Children have fun, and have consistent opportunities to develop good hand-eye co-ordination. This is through handling graded Montessori measuring blocks and practical life tools like pegs, tweezers, and pipettes. Children also develop good finger control through using scissors, glue sticks, and sellotape for collage or model making.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a safe and secure manner within the welcoming setting, which has disabled access and suitable facilities both indoor and outdoor. Children generally move freely and safely within the nursery because of emphasis by staff on an orderly, accessible, and safe environment for play and learning. Risks and hazards are regularly assessed and reduced both indoor and outdoor. Staff undertake daily premises checks to ensure that the premises and equipment are safe for children and adults. The Montessori and other learning resources are set up in a visible and accessible manner for children to self-select easily and safely. Children have suitable space on tables and the floor to use their chosen resources for satisfying free play. However, when children use the book corner for large group time on some limited occasions, there are tripping hazards for them.

Children receive good attention and support by dedicated staff, who work to a one-to-six staffing ratio. Staff are deployed on such a basis for supervising children's small group play in the garden, and have reviewed and addressed the risk of having only one member of staff outdoor at times. Only parents or their authorised representatives can collect the children, who are called to the door one by one when their own parents or carers have arrived. Children are protected from unvetted persons, including visitors, who are never left unsupervised with children. Children's times of arrival and departure are recorded accurately to help monitor their presence and safety within the setting. However, the attendance records for monitoring the visitors and staff's presence were not always accurate enough to safeguard children. Those children who may be affected by accidents and emergencies are protected by the many staff who are qualified to administer first aid. Children's welfare is also safeguarded by staff who show secure understanding of how to implement child protection procedures according to local and national guidance.

Children develop good spatial and safety awareness due to the good role model and explanation by staff. For example, one girl explains to a new child about tucking her chair back under the table after use. Children routinely return play resources to where they obtain them from, to maintain an orderly and safe environment. Children can easily access scissors and other tools for creative play, but know that these sharp tools have to be handled in a gentle and careful manner. When a bean bag leaked accidentally in the book corner, children showed self-control and creativity by clearing up and utilising some of the small beads for their self-initiated collage activity. Similarly, when children practise manipulative skills while using tweezers to pick up small dried peas during practical life activities, they know not to put the small objects into their mouth. However, staff acknowledge inadequate risk assessment regarding the hazards posed by small objects. One boy says during a birthday celebration that

they do not play with matches. Children learn about fire safety and practise emergency evacuation regularly according to the staff's fire plan.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children thrive in the relaxed, calm, yet stimulating atmosphere. Children are greeted warmly, and settle into the routines easily. The newer and younger children develop their confidence through extra support by staff and parents. Older children are kind and helpful towards their younger counterparts, and show them what to do. Children feel a sense of achievement as they post their name card to self-register, and go straight to play with the wide range of stimulating Montessori and other learning resources. Some practical life activities offer sensory experiences which are popular with even the youngest children. For example, they mix water with flour, and then stir to make a doughy mixture. Children also touch and feel the sandpaper numerals; or experience shapes and patterns with various insets. They make wooden models with large construction blocks or long rods; or play with jigsaw puzzles. There are also a dolls house; a train set; dressing-up clothes; dolls and prams; free painting, art and craft; and musical instruments. The environment is well organised, and resources are arranged systematically in order of difficulty at a low level, so that children can access them easily.

Children are content and self-assured because there is an ethos of respect for each child's space and choices of activities. Play and learning is mainly child-led as children can self-select resources and make their own choices of activities. Staff offer support during focused activities, and interact with children to enhance their learning when appropriate, but they do not disrupt or dominate their play. Many children show a high level of competence in self-learning strategies. They know exactly where the equipment is, and fetch it for satisfying free play. When they have finished, they feel responsible to return the equipment to the same place, so that other children can also access them easily. Many children care for their own personal needs well, for example, regarding toileting and hand washing. They are also independent with snack and lunch time routines.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children learn from staff very early on about the ground rules for behaviour and how to use the various resources for their learning appropriately, and with consideration for others. Staff set up high-quality Montessori and other learning resources in a methodical and accessible manner. This leads to a calm, orderly, yet challenging and stimulating environment, conducive to children's self-exploratory learning.

The staff team demonstrate good understanding of the Montessori approach and Foundation Stage of learning. There are some outstanding practices in teaching, which impact on children's rapid progress in some areas of learning: for example, about the wider world and environment. Children are excited about exploring nature and living things through sensory and concrete experience: for example, the transformation of eggs inside an incubator to hatched chicks. Both children and

parents are thrilled by some wild animals that came to visit with their handlers, including a snake, rabbit, and 'singing toad' from Africa. Staff reinforce children's learning about different countries of the world with reference books, maps, pictures, a globe, and genuine artefacts in 'continent boxes'. A four-year-old recognises the main continents as marked on a wooden model of the world (made by staff), and points to 'Africa' as where the 'horse' in the 'farmyard' comes from.

Staff use their time well to interact with and support children. For example, they challenge children to think during the 'sink or float' experiment why a bath sponge sinks rather than floats, and children then discover that it is because of its ability to absorb water. Staff use age-appropriate language and methods to develop children's grasp of time passing and difficult scientific concepts. For example, a birthday boy aged three years is asked to walk with the 'earth' (symbolised by the globe) in his hand around the 'sun' (symbolised by a large burning candle). Each round is then explained as the passing of one year in his life, and supported by his photos at different stages. Many children initiate conversation and volunteer information in a confident manner because staff listen to and respect their ideas. A four-year old thinks and talks clearly about his complicated 3-D junk model, which he imagines to be a steam engine with two inter-connected boilers to keep the steam in. Many of them are confident speakers, and are at ease at socialising during play or snack and lunch time. However, during large group times, children do not always listen well, or take turns in speaking.

Staff provide a wide selection of books which appeal to children. When exploring topics about the wider world, children are shown that information books and reference materials, such as pictures and diagrams of the planets, convey exciting new knowledge for them. Staff routinely read stories and share books with children, so children visit the book corner to use books for their own pleasure. Staff have clear knowledge about how to use the phonetic system to introduce the alphabet to children. As a result, children make good progress in recognising many phonetic sounds, such as those of their names; and in reading and word building. Children routinely make marks on their own work; some four-year-olds are enthusiastic about tracing and writing their own names. A child is reported by her parents as keen on writing 'shopping lists' at home, but the current curriculum does not build on such interests by encouraging children to make mark or attempt writing as part of imaginative role play. Staff regularly encourage children to count, so many can count up to or beyond 10, as well as compare numbers, for example, of girls and boys during circle time. Children access good quality wooden construction and mathematical resources readily; they are encouraged to arrange graded wooden blocks or rods in order of size or length to develop concepts about size, shape and pattern.

From the beginning staff find out through parents their children's stage of development, interests and needs, so that these can be built on to help the children achieve their potential. Staff are pro-active in supporting children with special needs. They respect their preference while including them in everyday activities in a sensitive manner. The staff team are well experienced and take their task of nurturing and educating young children seriously. They know how children learn, and the best ways to motivate and challenge them to think and develop. Staff are familiar with all the children, and are perceptive about their needs and interests. They regularly

observe, record, and assess children's achievements; and also plan experiences that extend their learning. However, some children's plans are not sufficiently informed by the assessments of their progress, and therefore lack appropriate challenge to move children onto their next stage of learning.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Children are extremely confident and self-assured. They are learners who are highly motivated, competent and autonomous; and show impressive concentration and perseverance in their self-initiated play and learning. Right from the beginning, children's ideas are treated with the utmost respect, as staff are clear about not dominating the classroom, but allowing children to explore and flourish in a well resourced environment rich in learning experiences. Staff allow children to decide on the kind and pace of their own play and learning. They do not hurry children along or make them join a different activity unless they want to. Staff encourage children to assert their own ideas and importance, for example, by playing the 'silence' game: everyone has to stop talking if a child holds up the 'silence' sign.

Children are very well behaved, as they are all gently 'inducted' about clear ground rules for accessing resources, and caring for them and the environment. They do not fight over toys or equipment as the ground rules teach them to get alternative resources when someone else is playing with what they want. They show a high level of independence during snack and lunch routines, and wash up their plates and drink glasses afterwards without prompting. They show great eagerness to contribute to the caring of their environment, for example, by helping with the cleaning and dusting routine at the end of each session. Children thrive on staff's clear social boundaries for sharing, turn taking, talking, and listening, so they do not interrupt others or argue. Children show an excellent attitude towards one another. Older children help the younger ones to settle, and show them where to hang their coat, and where to have snacks and drink. Children benefit from staff's excellent role model and guidance for social behaviour. When celebrating Easter and Christmas, staff not only help children to have fun, but cultivate the message of peace and love amidst all the festivities.

Children settle very well because of excellent rapport and liaison with parents and carers. All children and families receive outstanding support, including those children with special health needs and dietary requirements. Children with special educational needs are supported extremely well. The experienced and dedicated staff liaise very closely and tirelessly with their parents and outside agencies to ensure that these children thrive and make excellent individual progress. Staff are very pro-active in fostering a strong sense of belonging and community among the children and families. This is apparent with the consistent and heart-warming support given by parents, when children give a talk on their pet guinea pig; or contribute items for the 'sound box' or Chinese New Year celebration. Staff feel extremely assured of parents' forthcoming support to dig and extend the outdoor learning environment in the near future. Staff have a firm belief and clear vision in reinforcing the cultural traditions for children. Both staff and children have lots of fun while exploring the village's old church and other buildings to learn about their history. They also walk

there to view their winning entry in the village's hanging basket competition for children. They feel a tremendous sense of pride and community when they see the flowers that they have planted, watered, and nurtured. Staff put great emphasis on respecting the individual, so everyone is treated with sensitive care and equal concern. Children also continually develop a very well-informed perspective of the wider world through high quality learning resources and stimulating activities. They also gain a valuable insight into various diverse cultures through rich experiences such as festival celebrations, food tasting, and art and craft. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The partnership with parents is outstanding.

Staff are very pro-active in establishing close links with parents. This ensures their on-going excellent partnership in promoting children's nursery education. Staff discuss informally as well as provide consistently high-quality information to parents, so that they understand fully their philosophy, teaching approach, and focused themes and topics. There is detailed information provided in regular newsletters, wall displays, and during parents' information evening about the curriculum based on the Montessori approach and Foundation Stage of learning. As a result, parents become fully involved in their children's learning. For example, they reinforce the phonetic system at home with their children for teaching sounds, reading and word building. At joining, parents are warmly welcomed to share what they know about their children's interests and needs, so these can be built on to extend and challenge them individually. Parents receive very useful information about their children's progress and achievements informally, and through termly profile records (organised under the six areas of learning), and parents' evenings. They reciprocate enthusiastically and share what they know about their children, to help staff update their assessments and plan appropriately for them. As a result, both parents and staff contribute to and play a full part in helping children to achieve their full potential in nursery education.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children experience a friendly, well organised and well resourced setting, which is conducive to their care, learning and enjoyment. Senior staff demonstrate a good understanding of the Montessori approach and the Foundation Stage of learning. This impacts on the child-centred organisation of resources and daily routines, which promotes children's confidence and strategies in exploration and self-learning. There is a comprehensive operational plan, and staff work to a set of policies and procedures to promote children's welfare and education. Daily processes are organised well to meet children's health and safety requirements, though certain risks remain to be assessed: for example, regarding outside play, and the use of certain space and resources in the nursery. Good procedures are in place for recruiting, vetting, and inducting new staff, who are all issued with suitable information about the operation, including a set of policies. Likewise, parents are given all relevant information about policies and procedures, and are invited to familiarise themselves with the setting through trial visits and discussion. All required documentation is in place, and is stored in a secure and confidential manner. However, some lacks

accurate details, such as the registers for visitors and staff. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

The leadership and management is good.

Under new management that took over at the beginning of last term, the experienced staff team continue to work well together. The senior staff are qualified to a high standard in early years, and offer good leadership to drive the staff team forward for promoting positive outcomes for children's education. Management ensure that there is a wide spectrum of knowledge and skills to meet all children's needs in care and education, including those with special educational needs. They are keen on staff development, and provide on-going support to staff informally through discussions and observations, and formally through staff meetings and appraisals.

The new management have implemented new systems for monitoring, assessing, and planning children's care and learning. As the systems are evolving, they acknowledge minor gaps in the curriculum, and certain weaknesses in linking up individual children's plans with their assessments. Management ensure that the staff team discuss, informally and during weekly staff meetings, their curriculum plans, and how to meet children's individual needs by working closely with parents, early years agencies, and the Local Authority. However, the current system for evaluating daily activities, processes, and the curriculum is informal. Management continue to reflect upon their strengths, and recognise points for development to promote positive outcomes for children's care and education.

Improvements since the last inspection

Not applicable.

Complaints since the last inspection

There have been no complaints made to Ofsted since 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 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):

- update risk assessment to further reduce risks for children, such as regarding the safe organisation of space and resources indoors
- ensure that children who do not access the self-service 'café' are monitored for their intake of fluids to prevent dehydration.

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):

- ensure that planning provides appropriate challenge for individual children, based on relevant information from their records and assessments, which help to identify their next steps in learning
- enhance the system for monitoring and evaluating daily activities, processes, and the curriculum, to identify the strengths, gaps, and weaknesses for improvement.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the leaflet *Building better childcare: Compliments and concerns about inspectors' judgements* which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk