



Office for Standards
in Education

NURSERY INSPECTION REPORT

URN 127806

DfES Number: 511214

INSPECTION DETAILS

Inspection Date 26/01/2005
Inspector Name Peter Kilburn

SETTING DETAILS

Day Care Type Sessional Day Care
Setting Name Epping Montessori Nursery
Setting Address Catholic Church Hall
Church Hill
Epping
CM16 4RA

REGISTERED PROVIDER DETAILS

Name Mrs Jennifer Timms

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

The purpose of this inspection is to assure government, parents and the public that the nursery education for funded three and four year old children is of an acceptable quality. Inspection of nursery education also identifies strengths and weaknesses so that providers can improve the quality of educational provision and help children to achieve the early learning goals (elgs) by the end of the Foundation Stage. This inspection report must be made available to all parents.

If the setting has been inspected previously, an action plan will have been drawn up to tackle issues identified. This inspection, therefore, must also assess what progress has been made in the implementation of this plan.

Information about the setting

Epping Montessori Nursery is one of two privately owned nurseries. It opened in 1992 and operates from a large hall within a Catholic Church in the town of Epping in Essex. A maximum of 30 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery is open each weekday from 09:30 to 12:30 during school term times.

There are currently 33 children aged from 2 to under 5 years on roll. Of these, 23 children receive funding for nursery education. Children come from the local and wider catchment areas. The nursery currently supports a number of children with special needs and also a number of children who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery employs five staff. Four of the staff, including the Manager, hold appropriate early years qualifications. One staff member is working towards a qualification.

The setting receives support from the Early Years Partnership. The nursery uses Montessori teaching methods.

INSPECTION OF THE NURSERY EDUCATION PROVISION FOR FUNDED THREE AND FOUR YEAR OLDS.

How effective is the nursery education?

The provision for nursery education at Epping Montessori is of good quality. It enables children to make very good progress in personal, social and emotional development, communication, language and literacy, knowledge and understanding of the world and physical development and generally good progress in all other areas of learning.

The quality of teaching is generally good. Effective, strong relationships are established between staff and children. Children are encouraged to be independent, confident and have high levels of concentration when engaged in self-selection of Montessori equipment. Staff work together to deliver topics through long, medium and short term planning. The Foundation Stage is delivered, but not fully understood and implemented by all staff. The use of resources and the differentiation required to provide enough challenge for more able 3 and 4 year olds are not yet being fully identified. Children with special needs and English as a second language are being well supported.

Staff observe children and record their progress within Montessori philosophy and six areas of learning, although some records are not based on all areas of the stepping stones. The next steps of learning for each child are therefore not clearly identified when using this information.

Leadership and management are generally good. The manager and staff discuss the daily running of the nursery and curriculum planning. There is no formal process for monitoring and evaluating activities and quality of teaching. Links are established with other professionals to support children with special needs and contact with the Early Years Child Care Partnership enables staff to access training.

Partnership with parents is generally good. There is ongoing contact with staff to discuss their children's progress. Regular meetings and reports issued for each child when they leave the nursery. Some information regarding the Foundation Stage is provided for parents.

What is being done well?

- Children have many opportunities to self-select Montessori equipment from low-level shelving placed around the hall. They have good levels of independence, confidence and concentration and become involved in their learning in small groups or on their own.
- Children are confident communicators; they interact and talk with each other and with adults. Their vocabulary is being extended by staff introducing new words which are often linked to topics being covered. There is a strong emphasis placed on linking sounds with letters.

- Children are able to find out about the wider world and different cultures and beliefs through resources and celebration of festivals, together with visitors to the group. Children are encouraged to explore and to investigate how things happen.
- Parents value the daily observation record books provided by the nursery to inform them of their child's overall progress and development.

What needs to be improved?

- the staff's understanding of the Foundation Stage curriculum; enabling them to link planning and assessment to the stepping stones
- the link between assessment records and short term planning; providing a clearer indication of the next steps of learning for all 3 and 4 year old children and appropriate challenges through the monitoring and evaluation of the quality of teaching.

What has improved since the last inspection?

The nursery has made very good progress in addressing the two key issues identified at the previous education inspection.

Regarding the grouping of children to improve challenge levels in large group sessions, such as story time and directed physical development, the former is now most often aimed at a high level of challenge, with questions and answers. Staff review with children what the stories are about to encourage children's own ideas through self expression. Consideration is now given to the younger children who are unable to maintain focus either by sitting still or understanding. These children are read to at a more appropriate level, usually in very small groups of two or three to enable staff to recognise if they lack interest. Therefore, if children are not interested, staff are able to encourage them to choose another activity, such as a puzzle. The staff now provide groups of children with physical activities to ensure enjoyable challenges for all ages. The activities and groups are adapted to enable children to undertake appropriate activities, such as older children throwing and catching beanbags with a partner and younger children in small groups with staff. Balancing exercises are adapted appropriately, with younger children carrying rod or tray while walking on a marked line, while older children are challenged with higher level of difficulty re water spillage, bell not ringing, beanbag on head etc.

The second key issue regarding the development of design and making skills for older children has improved. The nursery now has a greater range of construction resources, such as small world play, duplo, stickle bricks and wooden blocks. The children now do more frequent 3D construction ranging from junk modelling to clay/pottery, plus sewing and cookery. The combination of Montessori resources, such as Pink Tower and Red Rods, enables children to build using solid shapes and by matching sides and shapes.

SUMMARY OF JUDGEMENTS

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Judgement: Very Good

Children's confidence and self-esteem is high and they are supported by the staff who know them well. Children demonstrate high levels of concentration when completing tasks and confidence in their self-care by freely choosing activities, independently pouring drinks and washing up. Children's behaviour is very good and they are clearly made aware of the expectations of the setting. They share equipment, take turns and act as monitors to help staff.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

Judgement: Very Good

Children confidently communicate with staff, visitors and each other. They talk about their experiences and are building their vocabularies reflecting their experiences. Children recognise letters and link sounds to letters in simple words. They write or engage in mark making during everyday play and can recognise and write their names. More able children recognise letters of the alphabet, read simple text and write clear and correct letters without assistance.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Judgement: Generally Good

Children benefit from good individual staff support, helping them to count reliably to 10 and sometimes beyond. They recognise numerals on the Montessori equipment and resources used in their every day activities. Children engage in some calculations, although few every day practical activities are provided to introduce and encourage calculation. They use and identify shapes during their play to build, match and sort, while using language to describe position, size and weight.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

Judgement: Very Good

Children have many opportunities to explore and investigate objects and materials using their senses. They are gaining a good awareness of time and place through topics and discussion with staff, for example about differing sorts of houses and transport both past and present day. Children extend their understanding of technology by using a computer, programmable toys and a telephone. They develop an extensive awareness of other cultures from books, puzzles and a wide range of themes and topics.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Judgement:	Very Good
------------	-----------

Children show a good awareness of space as they move around. They have access to a varied range of both small and large equipment when playing inside, such as beanbags, hoops, a tunnel, a slide, a balancing circle and a large climbing frame. Children are learning to handle useful tools, different textured materials and objects with increasing co-ordination when using writing equipment and Practical Life resources. Children learn about their bodies and healthy eating through topic work.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Judgement:	Generally Good
------------	----------------

Children explore colour well and can identify the primary colours. They can independently access a varied range of resources and have opportunities to express their creativity through painting, box modelling and collage work. Children use some resources to engage in imaginative play. Children join in with the routine songs and make musical instruments to explore the changes in sound. They use body language, gestures and facial expressions to indicate their personal satisfaction.

Children's spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development is fostered appropriately.

OUTCOME OF THE INSPECTION

The provision is acceptable and is of good quality overall. Children are making generally good progress towards the early learning goals. The next inspection will take place in three to four years time.

WHAT THE SETTING NEEDS TO DO NEXT: THE KEY ISSUES

- develop staff's understanding of the Foundation Stage curriculum; enabling them to link planning and assessment to the stepping stones
- continue to develop a planning and assessment system for the next steps of learning for 3 and 4 year old children; providing more challenge and including rigorous use of monitoring and evaluation of the quality of teaching.

The provider must draw up an action plan within 40 working days of receipt of this report showing how the key issues detailed above will be addressed. The action plan must be made available to all parents and to the Local Authority if required. An evaluation of the action taken will form part of the next inspection of funded nursery education.