

# The Castle Montessori

The Castle Montessori Nursery School, Spring Garden Lane, Berkhamsted, HERTFORDSHIRE, HP4 3GY

<b>Inspection date</b>	22/04/2013
Previous inspection date	17/12/2008

<b>The quality and standards of the early years provision</b>	<b>This inspection:</b>	
	Previous inspection:	
How well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend		2
The contribution of the early years provision to the well-being of children		2
The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the early years provision		2

## The quality and standards of the early years provision

### This provision is good

- Leadership and management is effective in continually raising standards and meeting the care, learning and development needs of the children.
- The good interaction between staff and children encourages the development of close relationships and the learning of new skills.
- A well-established staff team work well together, creating a secure and safe learning environment for children.
- Detailed and close monitoring of children's progress ensures children are actively engaged in a broad range of activities and play experiences which are developmentally appropriate. This helps them to make good progress in their learning.

### It is not yet outstanding because

- Opportunities to promote children's imaginative play are not fully maximised.
- Ways of using information from parents about their children's achievements at home is not used to the very optimum to extend children's learning at the setting.

## Information about this inspection

Inspections of registered early years provision are:

- scheduled at least once in every inspection cycle – the current cycle ends on 31 July 2016
- scheduled more frequently where Ofsted identifies a need to do so, for example where provision was previously judged inadequate
- brought forward in the inspection cycle where Ofsted has received information that suggests the provision may not be meeting the legal requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage or where assessment of the provision identifies a need for early inspection
- prioritised where we have received information that the provision is not meeting the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage and which suggests children may not be safe
- scheduled at the completion of an investigation into failure to comply with the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

The provision is also registered on the voluntary and compulsory parts of the Childcare Register. This report includes a judgment about compliance with the requirements of that register.

## Inspection activities

- The inspector observed children's activities in all rooms and the outside learning environment.
- The inspector held discussions with the manager, the operations development manager and quality manager, the assistant manager, deputy and staff.
- The inspector undertook a joint observation with the manager of lunchtime in the two to three's room.  
The inspector looked at children's assessment records, planning documentation, the self-evaluation form and a range of other documentation including a selection of policies and children's records.
- The inspector took account of the views of parents spoken to on the day.

## Inspector

Jane Mount

## Full Report

### Information about the setting

The Castle Montessori was registered in 1999 and is one of the ten nurseries in the Sunhill Daycare (Europe) Limited nursery chain. It is on the Early Years Register and the compulsory and voluntary parts of the Childcare Register. The nursery operates from a two storey converted building in Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire. There is a fully enclosed outside area available for outdoor play. The nursery follows elements of the Montessori educational philosophy of teaching.

The Castle Montessori employs 17 members of childcare staff including the manager. Of these, the majority hold early years qualifications at level 3 or above. The nursery opens Monday to Friday all year round from 7.30am to 6.30pm. Children attend for a variety of sessions. There are currently 97 children attending who are in the early years age group. The nursery provides funded early education for three- and four-year-old children. It supports children who speak English as an additional language and children with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

### What the setting needs to do to improve further

#### To further improve the quality of the early years provision the provider should:

- extend opportunities for children to enjoy their creativity through curiosity, exploration and play by reviewing the organisation and provision of imaginative role-play activities
  
- enhance how the information parents share about their children's achievements at home is used to maximise children's learning at the setting.

### Inspection judgements

#### How well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend

Staff have a secure knowledge of the learning and development requirements of the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage. They effectively use the framework along with elements of the Montessori teaching approach to promote children's learning. For example, staff use many play opportunities which engage children's senses, such as, sand play. Younger children enjoy the sensory experience of dry sand and develop good pouring skills as they tip sand from one container to another. When water is added, they talk about the changes and are interested in how the sand feels 'gritty' between their fingers. Older children use their senses, such as, when they use sandpaper

letters to trace letters in their name. This also promotes children's literacy skills.

A key person system is used and staff closely monitor their key children's development to ensure there are no gaps in their learning. For example, they carry out regular observations and use this information to assess children's progress. This enables staff to plan developmentally appropriate activities for individual children. Consequently, all children, including those with additional needs or English as an additional language, have their learning needs supported well. Activities and play experiences cover the seven areas of learning and staff support children well. This enables children to develop and learn effectively and to acquire the essential skills required for the next stages of their learning.

Through the key person system, staff work closely with parents to ensure children's learning is fully promoted. For example, parents contribute to initial assessments of children's starting points on entry through the completion of an informative 'All about me' pack. Parents are then kept updated about their children's attainments, for example, they receive information about their children's achievements through regular discussions with their key person. More formal opportunities, such as, parents evenings, keep them informed and provide them with the time to discuss their child's development. Parents are encouraged to support and share information about their children's learning and development at home. An 'I can do' board in each room is used to display contributions from parents of activities or outings their children have taken part in when in their care. This is a good way of celebrating children's achievements although the system is not fully embedded because the gathered information is then not effectively used to enhance children's learning to the full in the nursery.

Children's communication and language skills are promoted well and children are becoming confident communicators. For example, babies enjoy the opportunity to vocalise and babble as they respond when their key person says their name. Toddlers are beginning to engage in conversations as staff encourage them to talk about the pictures in their favourite book. Older children confidently initiate conversation, such as, when they are playing outside and they communicate their thoughts and share ideas with their peers as they play together with the bikes. Indoor and outdoor space is organised to provide varied and interesting play experiences for children. Overall this is highly effective although there is scope to review the organisation of the environment, so role play activities capture and engage children's interests more.

### **The contribution of the early years provision to the well-being of children**

Children's good health is promoted well. They are learning about the importance of personal care routines, such as hand washing before eating, through discussion and the daily routine. Children are provided with healthy food choices at meal and snack times and they participate in a variety of activities where they learn about what constitutes a healthy diet. For example, they enjoy sticking pictures of the fruits and vegetables they have eaten each day onto posters which they then eagerly count. This gives children a visual reminder of what constitutes a healthy diet. Children also enjoy growing a range of vegetables, fruits and herbs in the nursery kitchen garden so they can experience the fulfilment of growing their own food. For example, children eagerly water a small apple

tree they have planted and impatiently wait for it to grow bigger and produce apples to eat. Plenty of fresh air and exercise keep children fit and their physical development is promoted well. In the large garden area children skilfully manoeuvre around obstacles when riding bikes. They develop hand to eye coordination when throwing balls and confidently balance on the 'wobbly' bridge.

Staff help children gain an awareness of keeping themselves safe as they explain and practise simple procedures. Younger children learn how to manage the step into the garden safely while older children learn about safety rules when throwing a ball. Staff offer lots of praise and encouragement to children to promote positive behaviour. Children are learning how to play together and are encouraged to show care and concern. Staff are good role models and teach children how to behave considerately towards others. Their independence is promoted with the environment organised to encourage children to make independent choices. For example, low-level units enable children to easily access resources and even the younger children take an active role in serving their own food at mealtimes or pouring their own drinks.

An effective key person system enables staff to work in close partnership with parents to ensure children's individual needs are met. This enables staff to form secure attachments with their key children which fosters children's personal, social and emotional development. From a young age children display a strong sense of belonging as effective settling-in procedures help them to quickly settle in the nursery environment. The key person system also supports children and their parents well and helps to prepare them for transitions, such as, moving rooms within the nursery or moving on to other early years settings.

### **The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the early years provision**

The management team show a strong commitment to providing good quality childcare. They work hard to support their staff team and to ensure everyone has a secure and thorough understanding of their responsibility to meet the requirements of the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage. Robust recruitment and vetting procedures ensure staff are suitable to work with children. All staff have a good understanding of child protection issues due to regular training and are fully aware of the procedures to follow if they did have a concern. Staffing arrangements are organised to ensure children's safety is promoted. For example, effective staff deployment systems ensure required staff to child ratios are met and the majority of the staff team are qualified practitioners. Children are closely supervised and the premises are secure with a buzzer system in place, which ensures children are protected as no unauthorised persons can gain access. Safety systems including regular fire practices and a 'Code 5' procedure keep children safe in an emergency. Documentation for the safe and efficient management of the setting is in place and well organised, for example, attendance registers are accurately maintained.

Comprehensive induction systems help staff to fully understand their roles and responsibilities. Regular communication and information sharing amongst the whole staff

team is highly beneficial and promotes good team working. Staff performance is closely monitored with regular supervisions and annual appraisals in place. Staff have many opportunities to develop their skills and knowledge with in-house and external training positively encouraged. Also, all of the staff team take part in an anonymous peer evaluation programme called 'three stars and a wish'. This involves staff being asked to comment on three positive aspects of a colleagues practice and to highlight one area for improvement. Senior management say they have found this invaluable when highlighting areas for improvement and staff respond positively to the views and comments of work colleagues.

Purposeful partnerships between staff and parents ensure children's care and learning needs are fully supported. Many ways are used to share and exchange information with parents. This includes a website, newsletters, informative wall displays, daily diaries, handover sheets and communication boards. A parent liaison group has also been set up and has been found to be a useful way of finding out the views and wishes of parents. Parents spoken to on the day of inspection speak highly of the nursery and its staff team. They say staff are friendly and approachable and they feel staff know their children well. The nursery works in partnership with others. For example, the manager and assistant manager attend regular networking meetings at the local children's centre. This enables them to meet with providers from other settings and share good practice. Well-established links have been forged with local schools thereby supporting children's transition when moving on to school. Effective systems for working with parents and other agencies ensure children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are closely monitored and given valuable support to enable them to participate and achieve. Staff value children's backgrounds and their home languages with effective systems to help children and families with English as an additional language.

The management team monitor and assess the quality of the provision and set realistic targets to drive improvement. For example, it was identified that the garden needed some development and following the successful completion of this it is now an interesting learning environment for children. Staff are encouraged to be reflective practitioners and have their own room action plans which help to identify areas for development. Feedback is actively sought from parents and children also. The educational programme is closely monitored with highly effective systems in place to track children's progress across the seven areas of learning. The nursery manager benefits from effective support from the company's quality assurance manager and the operations development manager. They help to monitor the nursery and have a positive impact on continuous improvement.

### **The Childcare Register**

The requirements for the compulsory part of the Childcare Register are **Met**

The requirements for the voluntary part of the Childcare Register are **Met**

## What inspection judgements mean

### Registered early years provision

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	Outstanding provision is highly effective in meeting the needs of all children exceptionally well. This ensures that children are very well prepared for the next stage of their learning.
Grade 2	Good	Good provision is effective in delivering provision that meets the needs of all children well. This ensures children are ready for the next stage of their learning.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	Satisfactory provision is performing less well than expectations in one or more of the key areas. It requires improvement in order to be good.
Grade 4	Inadequate	Provision that is inadequate requires significant improvement and/or enforcement action. The provision is failing to give children an acceptable standard of early years education and/or is not meeting the safeguarding and welfare requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. It will be inspected again within 12 months of the date of this inspection.
Met		The provision has no children on roll. The inspection judgement is that the provider continues to meet the requirements for registration.
Not met		The provision has no children on roll. The inspection judgement is that the provider does not meet the requirements for registration.

## Inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under sections 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006 on the quality and standards of provision that is registered on the Early Years Register. The registered person must ensure that this provision complies with the statutory framework for children's learning, development and care, known as the Early Years Foundation Stage.

## Setting details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	129395
<b>Local authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	911205
<b>Type of provision</b>	
<b>Registration category</b>	Childcare - Non-Domestic
<b>Age range of children</b>	0 - 17
<b>Total number of places</b>	87
<b>Number of children on roll</b>	97
<b>Name of provider</b>	Sunhill Daycare (Europe) Limited
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	17/12/2008
<b>Telephone number</b>	01442 872398

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## Type of provision

For the purposes of this inspection the following definitions apply:

Full-time provision is that which operates for more than three hours. These are usually known as nurseries, nursery schools and pre-schools and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage. They are registered on the Early Years Register and pay the higher fee for registration.

Sessional provision operates for more than two hours but does not exceed three hours in any one day. These are usually known as pre-schools, kindergartens or nursery schools



and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage. They are registered on the Early Years Register and pay the lower fee for registration.

Childminders care for one or more children where individual children attend for a period of more than two hours in any one day. They operate from domestic premises, which are usually the childminder's own home. They are registered on the Early Years Register and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Out of school provision may be sessional or full-time provision and is delivered before or after school and/or in the summer holidays. They are registered on the Early Years Register and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage. Where children receive their Early Years Foundation Stage in school these providers do not have to deliver the learning and development requirements in full but should complement the experiences children receive in school.

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