

Stepping Stones Montessori Nursery Ltd

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	129056
Inspection date	10 January 2008
Inspector	Christine Jacqueline Davies
Setting Address	39 Kitto Road, London, SE14 5TW
Telephone number	020 7277 6288
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Registered person	Stepping Stones Montessori Nursery Limited
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?

Stepping Stones Montessori nursery was registered in 1996. The nursery is accommodated in large community premises, which belong to the neighbouring church and there is small outdoor area for supervised play. The nursery is situated in the Telegraph area of Lewisham and serves the local area.

The nursery is open from 08:00 to 18:00, Monday to Friday, all year round. A maximum of 29 children aged from six months to under five years, may attend the nursery at any one time. There are currently 29 children, aged from six months to under five years on roll. There are 14 funded three and four year olds attending the nursery. The nursery provides support for children who have a learning disability and those who speak English as an additional language.

There are seven staff who work directly with the children and are either suitably qualified or experienced. The nursery receives support from the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a clean and pleasant environment which contributes to their overall health and well-being. Effective hygiene routines reduce the risk of spread of infection and encourages children to develop good personal habits, through rigorous hand washing routines. Children's health and welfare are further safeguarded because good procedures are in place for administering medication, including obtaining written consent and keeping appropriate records, signed by parents. In addition to this, there are at least two members of staff on the premises who are first aid trained. Children have good opportunities to be active throughout the day and are able to access a varied range of outdoor equipment which aids their physical development and helps to maintain good health. In addition to this, children enjoy regular visits to the park where they can use a range of large and small equipment. Children benefit from a well balanced diet which promotes healthy eating. Meals and snacks are freshly prepared on the premises and meet the dietary needs of children attending the nursery.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Good safety precautions ensure that the premises are safe and that children are protected from harm. For example, children benefit from secure premises and written procedures such as health and safety, contribute to the safety and welfare of children. In addition to this, children are always supervised closely and are never left unattended. Staff pay good attention to fire matters and ensure that fire prevention equipment is checked as required. Furthermore, regular fire drills, help children to become familiar with evacuation procedures in the event of a fire. Children have sufficient space to play independently and access toys and equipment, that are suitably maintained and conform to safety standards. Consideration is given to children's safety when off the premises. For example, a detailed outings policy and written consent from parents, helps to promote children's welfare and keep them safe. Children's welfare is further safeguarded because staff have a secure understanding of child protection issues and have access to up to date procedures.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children under three benefit from a good range of activities. Their natural curiosity is stimulated through the provision of age and developmentally appropriate toys and resources. Resources are stored on low level shelving which contributes to children's independence and encourages exploratory play. Children explore their environment with enthusiasm and are encouraged by staff to make connections through all their senses, helping them to be creative and develop an awareness of their surroundings. Furthermore, staff provide suitable and challenging experiences which encourage children to develop their confidence to try new things. An established key worker system helps babies develop a sense of trust and feel secure. They particularly enjoy individual attention and being physically close to other children and familiar adults. Staff use the Birth to three matters framework to guide their planning for children under two years. However, current assessment procedures do not clearly identify the next steps for children. Children's profiles contain samples of their work and photographic evidence of their achievements.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff successfully combine the Montessori method of teaching with the Foundation stage curriculum, which enables children to make good progress in all areas of learning. Children benefit from formative assessment which is mainly based on observations. These observations help staff plan for individual children in terms of their current interests, but does not always clearly identify the next steps for children or identify the key areas of learning. Children are encouraged to become competent learners and have good opportunities to develop their individual interests and learning through regular sessions of uninterrupted play. Good organisation of the space, help children develop autonomy and promote independent learning. Children are confident within the setting and have formed positive relationships with staff and their peers. This helps children develop self assurance and feel secure.

Children make good progress in the area of communication language and literacy. Children enjoy a good range of fiction and non fiction books and revel in using the associated props that accompany their favourite stories. Staff create a relaxed supportive environment, which enables children to participate in detailed conversations with their peers and contributes to their growing literacy skills. Children have access to a good range of mark making tools which are strategically placed in different areas of provision. This encourages children to write for a purpose and make marks to convey meaning. Children notice print in their environment via resources that are clearly labelled and through displays that they have attempted to label themselves. Children are beginning to link sounds to letters via songs and word building activities. Children's mathematical development is supported via a good range of resources and equipment. For example, children use Montessori equipment such as the pink tower, number rods and knobbed cylinders, to help develop their understanding of length, shape, size, height and number. In addition to this, children learn about matching , sorting and counting via jigsaws, peg boards and constructional activities.

Children develop their knowledge and understanding of the world through a variety of activities and equipment. For example, children learn about the lifecycle of a butterfly using sequencing cards and through first hand experiences such as growing their own vegetables in the garden. Children are confident about technology and have access to tape recorders and CD players, enabling them to select their favourite audio stories or music independently. Non fiction books about the earth and different world flags, help children make sense of the world in which they live. A well stocked home area contains a selection of dressing up clothes and utensils, helping to reinforce different cultural backgrounds within the local community. Children's physical development is supported generally well. They have access to a range of resources that promote their fine motor skills, hand-eye coordination and large motor skills. However, detailed planning for the outdoor area is limited, which means that children's physical skills may not always be fully extended during outdoor play. Children enjoy a good range of creative activities and particularly enjoy music sessions where they learn scales, harmony and rhythm.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children develop confidence and a sense of belonging because staff are fully aware of their individual needs. Good settling in procedures and a key worker system, ensure that new children feel welcome and develop a sense of trust with staff and their peers. Children's spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is fostered. Staff have high expectations of children and ensure that appropriate strategies are used when managing children's behaviour. So as a result, children

behave well. Staff help children develop a positive attitude towards others, through regular discussion and activities based on different cultural festivals. Although there are a range of resources such as books, dressing up clothes and skin tone paints, that reflect diversity, this area of provision within the setting requires further development. Children with learning difficulties and disabilities are very well supported by staff. Staff provide additional support to those children who may have language and communication difficulties, through the use of the Picture Exchange Communication System. Furthermore, staff work closely with parents and outside professionals to offer good levels of individual support and promote inclusion.

Partnership with parents and carers who receive nursery education is satisfactory. Parents are encouraged to be involved in their children's learning, however, there is little information regarding the Foundation Stage curriculum readily available to them. Despite this, parents have opportunities to discuss their child's progress through the provision of informal and formal reviews.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Detailed policies and procedures help to promote children's overall safety and well-being. In addition to this, staff are suitably qualified and experienced, which helps children's individual needs to be met. Systems are in place to ensure that staff undergo rigorous vetting procedures, so that children are protected from harm. All required documentation is in place and the provider ensures that the conditions of registration and associated regulations are complied with. Space and resources are well organised, which contributes to children's overall learning.

Leadership and management of nursery education is good. The quality of provision is monitored on a regular basis and good support systems are in place. So as a result, helps staff to deliver the Foundation Stage curriculum effectively. Regular meetings are held with staff to raise issues and improve practice. In addition to this, staff receive support and training from the early years advisory team which enables them to keep abreast of current early education practice issues. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

The previous care inspection recommended that the provider ensure all rooms and areas not used by the children are made inaccessible, that glass panes are made safe and that tripping hazards are removed and fire notices are displayed. It was also recommended that the provider keep a record of the time of arrival and departure of children attending the nursery and ensure that arrangements are in place for babies to follow individual routines. In addition to this, the provider was asked to provide a variety of accessible play materials for babies and review the methods and procedures for recording and sharing information with parents. The previous nursery education inspection recommended that the provider ensure children are encouraged to make frequent use of resources that aid their communication, language and literacy development, develop a greater sense of personal independence and extend opportunities for parents to discuss their child's progress.

Since the last inspection, the provider has made good improvements. Safety film has been applied to glass panes, hazardous flooring in the hallway has been replaced and fire notices are now displayed. Children are supervised at all times and any rooms not used by children are kept locked. A daily register is kept and parents are now responsible for signing their children in and out of the premises. A record for staff and visitors is also in place. A key worker system

is in place which ensures that babies follow individual routines. A daily record outlining young children's care, is given to parents. Low shelving has been fitted in the baby room to encourage exploratory play and choice. A good range of activities are also available to babies. The provider has ensured that more language resources have been introduced to children such as games and books. Mark making tools have been increased, and writing materials are located in different areas of provision. Formal reviews are held with parents to discuss what their child has achieved, targets for children's development are also agreed with parents. Parents have opportunities to have informal discussions with staff.

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

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- develop equipment and resources reflecting diversity and ensure that they are easily accessible to 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):

- ensure planning/assessment, clearly identifies next steps for children (also applies to care)
- ensure that plans clearly specify areas of learning and include how outdoor area will be used with children

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