

MARS Montessori School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	131709
Inspection date	01 April 2008
Inspector	Liz Corr
Setting Address	4 Collins Yard, London, N1 2XU
Telephone number	020 7704 2805
E-mail	marsmontessori@hotmail.com
Registered person	MARS Montessori School 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?

MARS Montessori Nursery was registered in 2000. It is a private nursery and operates from the ground floor of a four storey building in the N1 area of the London borough of Islington. Children access two rooms and an enclosed outdoor play space. The nursery serves the local community, full and part time places are offered. They open each week day from 08:00 until 18:00 for 48 weeks of the year. There are currently 34 children on roll, 18 of whom receive nursery education.

The nursery employs five staff and a cook. All staff hold appropriate early years qualifications. The setting receives support from the Early Years Service in Islington and received a Quality Assurance award in 2006. The nursery uses the Montessori method of teaching combined with traditional early years practices.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a warm and welcoming setting. Positive measures are in place to promote good hygiene and prevent the risk of cross infection. Children regularly wash their hands using liquid soap and access individual hand towels. Individual bedding is also provided. Hygienic procedures are followed for nappy changing as staff wear disposable gloves and aprons.

Children's health is promoted by a clear sickness procedure which is shared with parents. Consequently, children are cared for at home if they are unwell. Details of children's individual health needs are well recorded including, any allergies. A good ratio of staff hold up-to-date first aid certificates and parents are kept informed of any accidents at the setting.

Children benefit from freshly cooked meals prepared on the premises. They enjoy a nutritious and balanced diet and menus are planned in advance using mainly organic ingredients. A range of healthy snacks are provided during the morning and afternoon. Drinking water is available throughout the day so children can help themselves whenever they are thirsty.

Children have lots of opportunities for physical play and fresh air. They enjoy outdoor play in the enclosed garden. A well organised range of activities are available each day including, balancing and climbing equipment. Dressing up clothes encourage children to play imaginatively outdoors and they have fun digging for worms in the soil.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are welcomed into the clean and bright setting which is organised into areas of interest and learning. The walls are attractively decorated with displays of children's topic work which promotes a child-friendly environment. Children are able to easily make choices from the good selection of equipment and activities available.

Children are protected from strangers as staff ensure that the entrance to the setting is well monitored. Consequently, parents and visitors are identified before they access the building. Records of attendance for children, staff and visitors are maintained including, their times of arrival and departure. Appropriate procedures are in place, in case a child is lost or uncollected.

Children's safety at the setting is promoted as daily risk assessments take place. Children are learning how to keep safe in an emergency as evacuations are practised each term. Staff carry out efficient procedures to protect children at rest time as they are constantly monitored.

Children's welfare is safeguarded as there are clear procedures for staff to follow if, they have child protection concerns. However, the procedure does not include the steps to take for reporting allegations made against staff.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are happy and settled, they benefit from an efficient settling-in period which is carried out in partnership with their parents and key worker. They make choices from the wide range

of activities available and become immersed in their play. A child chooses to play with the selection of farm animals and begins to sing 'old Mc Donald had a farm'. They enjoy exploring natural materials and are developing hand eye coordination as they pour, spoon and thread. They have fun as staff encourage them to dig for worms in the soil outdoors.

Warm and caring relationships are evident between staff and children. A child is supported as they make a birthday card for their granddad. The child is encouraged to think about he likes, and gives an enthusiastic response as they remember their granddad likes football. Carefully planned group story sessions ensure that younger children are included. Imaginative props support their understanding of the story. All children show a positive interest in the 'living eggs'. A child is fascinated with the poster showing the stages of growth for the soon to be hatched chicks. They excitedly show a visitor a picture of full grown hens as they wait their turn to watch the eggs.

Nursery Education

The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff have an efficient understanding of the Foundation Stage curriculum and have received training in this area. Consequently, themes and activities are well planned to cover the six areas of learning. Children's progress is regularly assessed and termly reports are provided to evaluate achievements for the early learning goals. Children benefit from stimulating teaching methods for example, staff use a variety of techniques to maintain children's interest in stories. They sometimes read a story using a lap top and include all the children by providing exciting props. Children are interested and motivated to learn as they are all included.

The environment is well organised and encourages children to practise their independence and make choices. Children are provided with guidance for using the lap tops and receive a certificate when they are competent. Consequently they are able to access a variety of programs independently. They are increasing their independence as they learn to put their own coats on and take turns to be special helpers at lunch time. However, opportunities to serve themselves during lunch have not been developed. Children listen attentively to stories which are well organised and interactive. During the Hungry Caterpillar story they are each given a prop. They wait patiently as they are called to place their piece of food inside the caterpillar. They watch excitedly as the caterpillar turns into a cocoon. They are enjoying opportunities to learn the names and sounds of the alphabet during group times and small group games. Staff speak clearly to children when they are demonstrating tasks. Although some staff are skilled when questioning children to extend their thinking, vocabulary and understanding during activities, this is not a consistent practice with all staff. Children are growing in confidence as they take part in organised and spontaneous activities to explore numbers, space and measure. During the Hungry Caterpillar story they count the pieces of food that were eaten. They are involved in a variety of activities sorting objects into type and matching patterns during bead threading. They develop fine motor skills as they take part in pouring activities and learn to manipulate bolts and screws while building with Meccano. Children are exploring and investigating their environment and developing a good understanding of the wider world. Exciting activities are provided including, the 'living eggs'. Children sit patiently as they watch for signs of the chicks hatching. Staff have prepared the children well for the process and they know that after two chicks have hatched they will be moved to the brooder box. They continue to explore living things as they monitor the progress of the real caterpillars they have collected who have now turned into cocoons. Their understanding of the life of a caterpillar is further extended during the interactive story of the Hungry Caterpillar. They are reminded that when the butterflies emerge from their cocoons they will release them into the garden. Children are making good

progress in their creative development as they regularly take part in creative activities as part of their themes. Their art work is attractively displayed around the setting further promoting their self-esteem. They have good opportunities to develop their imagination during role play as their home corner areas are adapted in line with planned themes.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children's individual needs are well known to staff as useful information is collected at the settling-in period. This enables staff to provide appropriate care and attention as needed. Children have access to toys and equipment that positively reflect diversity and regularly take part in activities to increase their awareness and appreciation of the wider world. This includes topics about Easter, Chinese New Year and Australia.

Children benefit from a calm and consistent approach to behaviour management. They are involved in a stimulating range of activities and receive good attention during their play. They have tranquil moments as they sit gazing into the 'living eggs' incubator waiting for the eggs to hatch. They receive regular praise and encouragement and stickers are provided as rewards for their achievements or for being a special helper at lunch time. Children are aware of the 'Golden rules' for the setting which encourage them to be gentle, be kind and be helpful. Consequently this fosters their social, moral, spiritual and cultural development. Good systems ensure that children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are identified and supported.

The partnership with parents is good. Effective information is made available to parents by way of weekly diaries, notice board and regular newsletters. Information is also shared at the beginning and end of each day between parents and staff. A parent commented that their child had progressed well during their time at the setting and had found that staff were supportive and friendly. A clear complaints procedure is provided and includes details of how to contact the regulator.

Children receiving Nursery Education benefit from useful information, informing them of the topics children are involved in. Termly reports include photographs of children's achievements and written evidence of how their children are progressing towards the six areas of learning.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children are happy and well cared for in an well organised setting. The staff team work well together and are motivated to provide a stimulating environment for the children. They are learning to be confident and independent as they make choices from the broad range of activities available.

Children are cared for in a secure environment where all staff are suitably vetted to ensure they are suitable to work with children. All staff hold relevant child care qualifications and there are good opportunities to extend their knowledge through further training. A full range of policies and procedures are in place to promote the smooth running of the setting, with the exception of the child protection procedure which does not contain guidance for reporting allegations against staff.

The leadership and management of the setting is good. Children benefit from an efficiently managed setting. The staff work well as a team and are motivated and organised. The manager

has a sound knowledge of the Foundation Stage and has organised a dedicated member of staff to be responsible for delivering the curriculum to cover the six areas of learning. Planning and assessments are well organised and termly reports are provided for parents. The manager is committed to making improvements for communication with children so all staff extend their thinking, vocabulary and understanding. Also to develop opportunities to develop children's independence by serving themselves at meal times.

The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last Care inspection two recommendations were made. The first was to ensure that the attendance register includes details of arrival and departure times. This is now practised each day and as a result has improved the safety and welfare of the children at the setting. The second recommendation was to develop procedures to be followed in the event of allegations of abuse against staff. However, this remains outstanding as a policy for staff has not been developed.

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):

- ensure the child protection policy includes clear details of the steps to take in case an allegation is made against a member of staff

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):

- continue to improve the quality of teaching by ensuring all staff extend children's thinking, vocabulary and understanding and by providing opportunities for children to further their independence by serving themselves at lunch time

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the leaflet *Complaints about Ofsted Early Years: concerns or complaints about Ofsted's role in regulating and inspecting childcare and early education (HMI ref no 2599)* which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk