



Great Beginnings Montessori Nursery School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number EY301187
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Inspector Catherine Greene

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Registered person Wendy Heather Innes
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?

Great Beginnings Montessori School opened in their new premises in Jan 2005 but has been established since 1984. They operate from the Advent Centre close to Edgware Road W1. The pre-school is registered to care for 56 children between 2-8 years. There are currently 56 children on role this includes children in receipt of funding for nursery education. The pre-school serves the local community.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children stay healthy because staff follow good health and hygiene practises. For example, children learn the importance of washing their hands before eating, or after using the toilet, and staff use effective procedures when changing nappies or preparing snacks. Children are provided with suitable healthy snacks each session, such as fruit, crackers and cheese. They choose from milk or water to drink. Their lunch boxes, which parents provide, are suitably stored. Staff liaise well with parents, ensuring that any children's special dietary requirements are appropriately met. Children can help themselves to drinking water, which is always within their reach, if they are thirsty.

Through topic work and daily discussion children learn well about healthy living and the importance of exercise. Each day children have good opportunities to enjoy physical activities and practise their co-ordination skills. For example, they climb and balance on the climbing frame, use wheeled toys and have regular visits to the jungle gym and local park. Children can rest according to their needs as the setting provides comfortable seating in the book corner.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a safe, welcoming and secure environment. The hall used is spacious, allowing children to move and play freely. There are plans to display children's work and photographs of their activities are catalogued and available for parents, this will make the environment friendly and welcoming to children and their families. When children walk to the nearby jungle gym they are kept safe as staff use good safety routines. Staff are aware of any hazards in the setting such as the closeness of the main road, and take appropriate measures, including regular risk assessments, to ensure children's safety and wellbeing.

Children have access to an extensive range of equipment, resources and materials which are safe and suitable for their use. The furniture and storage units are of child height and size. The resources are organised so children can access them easily and develop independence in their play and daily activities. Children are well protected through staff's secure knowledge and understanding of health and safety issues. The staff group are due to attend child protection training to update their skills and knowledge. In conjunction with this the setting will update their procedure to include details of the regulator and ensure that parents sign any accidents or incidents recorded in the accident book.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children arrive happily to pre-school and are eager to learn and to take part in the activities available. The activities are well planned and include strategies designed to help all age groups learn and progress. Children enjoy being in the setting and are encouraged to have fun. Staff relate very well with the children. All areas of their learning are well promoted, particularly children's social and emotional development.

The setting has devised a good system based on Montessori methods to record the progress of the children attending. Staff are given key roles in the group; for example, one member is responsible for observing and monitoring whilst other staff work closely with the children to help ensure each child's progress is monitored and their learning is encouraged on an individual basis. Staff have a very good understanding of the foundation stage which they have translated very well, in planning and providing a thorough Montessori curriculum. This will be further enhanced by the introduction of Birth to Three Matters guidance.

Children take part in a wide range of interesting and worthwhile activities that engage the children's attention. The planning used shows what children should learn through their activities and includes how to challenge children appropriately according to their stage of development. This planning is shared with parents so they can be involved in their children's learning. Children are encouraged to think and put their thoughts into words through the adult's good use of questioning.

Nursery Education

Children are confident in the setting and understand when they should concentrate and listen. They are very attentive at story times and enjoy books and rhymes. They participate and contribute well in group activities such as circle and registration times. Staff plan interesting activities often in small group work, that encourages children's language and communication skills and mathematical development. In their daily play and routines children practise counting and use numbers; for example, they count the number of children present each day and discuss the date. They enjoy recognising numerals during counting and memory games.

They have many opportunities to develop their creativity; for example, they can paint and draw freely and have access to a variety of tools and craft materials, which also helps to develop their small muscle control. The children love to perform and have been busy rehearsing their play Dear Zoo which they performed for parents and staff. They have also enjoyed making the animal masks as props for the play.

Children learn about their lives, the environment and about others lives through interesting topic work and themes. The recent topic of 'People that help us' has been used to enable the children to meet many visitors to the setting, including an, osteopath and a dentist. There are resources in the setting that help children to begin to learn about their own and others different cultures and beliefs.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children make good individual progress because staff have a secure understanding of how children learn effectively and use their self-chosen play to extend their learning. They adapt their questioning techniques, according to the age and ability of the child, and implement Montessori teaching methods to introduce an exciting range of activities and experiences to all

children. Practitioners encourage children to lead their own learning and this is successfully achieved by a well developed routine, with a good balance of child and adult initiated activities.

Children are eager to learn and concentrate well showing good perseverance with activities. They co-operate and negotiate roles; for example, when acting out their imagined ideas in role-play, they value one another's ideas. Children listen with great excitement to stories and suggest their own endings. They confidently search for items beginning with the same sound and notice letters in familiar words around the room. Children independently use a range of tools and materials and freely access a variety of resources from the different presentations being worked on in the room.

Effective use is made of time and resources to provide children with opportunities to engage in physical activities, including dance. They explore creativity using a wide range of material such as paint, junk modelling, wood and sand. Children show great interest in examining the objects brought in for the nature table, which leads to much discussion about how to care for the environment. They learn about themselves and their families through discussion and topic work and talk about their local community and the wider world. There are some opportunities for children to experience new technology when using the cassette/radio player and there are plans to further develop this area with the introduction of a laptop computer for children to use later in the term.

Staff observe and monitor children's progress regularly in a variety of different ways and this is used to identify individual targets for children to work towards each term. Realistic expectations of children and good individual knowledge helps them to consolidate their learning before moving onto the next stage. As a result, the curriculum is tailored to individual children's needs and abilities, which ensures effective support and sufficient challenges are provided to help children achieve their individual potential.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

All children are welcomed and play a full part in the pre-school because staff value each child as an individual. Children are extremely confident and show good self-esteem responding well to continual praise and encouragement. Children work well together, for example, they co-operate and take turns with the activities and during circle time and snack. They take turns to help pour drinks and clear up their cups after snack time. They understand the rules and routines of the setting well. Children interact very well with each other, and with the adults present. They have made firm friendships and enjoy each other's company. Children learn to be independent, they have good opportunities to choose what they do and to select their own resources, they are always busy and purposefully occupied.

Children behave very well, their positive behaviour is encouraged by the staff, who offer continuous encouragement, praise and rewards and act as good role models.

Children learn about themselves and the wider world through planned activities and discussions; for example, around a variety of cultural festivals, helping them to understand and value the similarities and differences between themselves and others.

The special needs co-ordinator ensures all children including those with special educational needs are able to learn and develop appropriately in the setting. For example, individual learning plans are put into place when necessary. Good methods of communication are fundamental for children and staff are skilled at ensuring appropriate measures are in place. Children learn that others have different needs and have good relationships with each other. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The partnership with parents and carers is good. Parents are very involved in the activities of the pre-school and are welcomed into the setting. They help on occasions and take part in fundraising, contribute to topic work and share their skills. One parent who is an osteopath brought a skeleton in to show children as part of their topic on 'the body'. Children benefit from this open and close partnership. Parents are well informed, they receive regular newsletters. Staff are always available to talk to parents ensuring children's individual needs are met. There is a parents handbook giving information about the curriculum offered, about the topics for the term and the planned learning objectives. Parents receive an annual report on their children's progress. Parents are invited to spend time in the pre-school observing their children's progress.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children benefit from a well organised and efficiently run provision. Staff are well deployed and are very clear about their roles and responsibilities. As a result of this the children are secure and settled. Staff are very experienced in childcare, they receive good induction when joining the setting and are encouraged to train and attend short courses to develop and enhance their knowledge and understanding of childcare and education. Unvetted adults who may visit the setting do not have unsupervised contact with the children. The manager has developed an effective operational plan, and a good range of policies and procedures, which are relevant to the setting and are used to ensure all children's wellbeing. However some policies and procedure need updating to include specific safety aspects such as the swimming procedure.

The daily registration systems used are suitable with the times of adults and children's attendance adequately recorded for overall safety. The setting ensures high adult/child ratios are always maintained, this allows staff to continuously support children's play and activities and provide individual care and attention.

The leadership and management of the setting is good. The manager and staff have a very good understanding of the foundation stage and early learning goals. They have a strong vision for the future and development of the pre-school which was reopened in new premises under six months ago. Regular appraisals and weekly

staff meetings are used to help build a strong team where all the staff are valued and encouraged to contribute. Staff meetings are used for staff training, to evaluate the provision offered, to plan activities based on the Montessori curriculum and to discuss children's progress and individual needs.

The pre-school has fostered strong links with the local community and have received very good support from Westminster's early years team. They make good use of local resources such as the jungle gym for physical activities and visit the local school for special events and sharing resources. The pre-school meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

This is the first inspection since registration at the new site.

Complaints since the last inspection

There are no complaints to report

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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):

- devise a written procedure that covers safety for specialist activities such as swimming
- update staff knowledge and understanding regarding child protection and include details of the regulator on the child protection policy
- develop understanding of child development guidance such as Birth to Three Matters to further enhance level of service offered
- ensure parents sign the accident record
- the addition of a procedure for uncollected children to the existing lost child procedure

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):

- opportunities for children to develop further interest in new technology

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