



Beechoak Farm Montessori Preschool

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	402271
Inspection date	16 November 2006
Inspector	Cheryl Langley
Setting Address	Church Lane, High Beech, Loughton, Essex, IG10 4AJ
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Registered person	Beechoak Farm Montessori Preschool
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?

Beechoak Farm Montessori Preschool opened in 1996. It operates from a converted farm building on the edge of Epping Forest. The nursery uses five rooms for the children, two of which are upstairs. The nursery has a small farm attached where the children can have supervised visits. There are currently 85 children from two to five years on roll. This includes 40 children funded for nursery education. Children attend for a variety of sessions. The setting currently supports children with learning and or physical disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language.

The group opens five days a week, all year round. Sessions are from 09:00 until 16:00 or 08:00 until 17:00. A breakfast club operates between 08:00 and 09:00 and an after school club operates from 16:00 until 17:00.

There are twelve full-time members of staff, which includes the manager and administration support staff, plus one part-time member of staff working with the children. Eight members of staff have a recognised early years qualification. The setting follows the Montessori teaching philosophy and one member of staff is trained in this method.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children stay healthy in this clean and welcoming setting because of the good routines and procedures followed by the staff. They are protected from infection and taken care of if they have an accident or become ill. All of the required documentation to support the children's health care is in place. However, the parental consent to seek emergency medical treatment and or advice lacks some detail to ensure attention is received promptly in an emergency situation. Children learn self-care routines and develop knowledge and understanding of the benefits of leading a healthy lifestyle. For example, they wash their hands at appropriate times to avoid ingesting germs or spreading infection. Children take part in interesting activities that reinforce ways to stay healthy. For example, they are aware that exercise will keep them fit and know what they have to do to protect themselves from heat stroke or sunburn.

Children are nourished and enjoy a healthy diet. They help themselves to drinking water at any time. Children are aware that they need to drink more when it is hot or if they are taking part in physical activities to remain hydrated. Through discussions at meal times, play and planned activities they learn about food and how it helps them to grow and stay healthy. For example, they enjoy 'food tasting' using all of their senses to experience new food and to maintain a varied and balanced diet. Specific dietary requirements are respected by staff and good systems are in place to ensure all foods comply with children's individual needs, so that parents wishes are adhered to and the children's health is not put at risk.

Children have fun with a wide range of activities which contributes to their health and develops and enhances their physical skills. There are daily opportunities to go outside in the fresh air and move around freely or use a range of equipment. Children develop control of their bodies using different size climbing frames and slides, balancing on a beam, rolling and spinning hoops, manoeuvring sit-on rides, shaking and rattling musical instruments or chasing bubbles. Inside they become adept at using utensils and tools for art and craft activities, mark making or feeding themselves independently. Children have the opportunity to be active or rest according to their needs. The daily routine and organisation of the preschool offers space and appropriate areas for sleep and quiet activities.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children's safety is a high priority. Good security systems are in place to protect the children and risks are regularly assessed and minimised. Health and safety requirements are adhered to. Children are able to move around freely to play and access resources without coming to

harm. They use good quality developmentally appropriate resources which are clean and regularly checked to ensure they are safe.

Children learn to take responsibility for protecting themselves and avoiding accidents. For example, staff skilfully explain safe practices, such as why children need to take turns on large play equipment and to hold on when walking up and down the stairs. Children are aware of the dangers of fire. They know why they must leave the building in an emergency and take part in regular fire drills. Safety messages are reinforced through interesting activities and discussions. The children enjoy visits from professionals who help to keep us safe, such as the fire brigade and police officers.

The children's welfare is effectively safeguarded. The manager and staff have a clear understanding of child protection issues and are aware of the procedures to follow should they have any concerns about a child in their care. All of the required documents and information is to hand to support them in this area and staff attend training in child protection on a regular basis.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children enjoy a broad variety of exciting play and activities which are planned and organised by the staff. They use the 'Birth to three matters' framework to plan stimulating and challenging activities which are appropriate to each individual child's needs and abilities. Staff are attentive and make the most of opportunities to extend the children's thinking and learning. For example, they ask questions and encourage the discussion initiated by children about the shapes they can see in water made by cups on a table. They name the circle correctly and with some guidance recognise a triangle and star.

Children have fun with a range of activities which help develop their knowledge and skills. For example, children learn to count in sequence as they sing simple songs, or count their friends in a group. They name the colours of their cups or clothes and recognise different animals in books or on posters. Sharing stories and learning simple rhymes develops their language and communication skills. They are aware that people use different languages or ways of communicating that are not just verbal. For example, children enjoy using sign language to greet each other. They become confident and relaxed at speaking in small and large groups and are beginning to listen and take turns during discussions. Children learn mathematical language as they place musical instruments "up" or "down" or "add" one more to their pictures. They match and sequence patterns and pictures with games, puzzles and painting activities. Monitoring the changes of their surroundings at the preschool or observing the animals on the farm they learn about the natural environment. They have discussions about the different types of weather and know which type of clothes they need to keep warm. Regular use of materials such as pencils, crayons, paint and materials for glueing and modelling, encourages the children to develop their hand and eye co-ordination to make marks or be creative. They enjoy making large pictures of their footprints with paint, or smaller pictures using their hands. Through role play they express their experiences and feelings in a variety of ways. They enjoy playing families with home play toys, caring for dolls or making food for their friends.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children are progressing well, supported by staff that have a competent understanding of the Foundation Stage. Plans cover all six areas of learning and there is a good observation and assessment system in place. Both the plans and children's assessments link closely to the stepping stones and early learning goals of the Foundation Stage. The level of challenge is sufficient to interest all of the children and more able children's learning is extended. There are effective systems in place to support children with learning and or physical disabilities.

Children concentrate and focus on their activities. They build with connecting bricks to make vehicles with moving parts to push along and play imaginary games with. Children listen attentively and are keen to answer questions to match sounds to letters on the computer and confidently manipulate the mouse to move images around and make choices. They link the letter 'C' to various items and are able to form the letter in the air. Using pens and pencils, more able children write clearly formed letters to write their names or simple words. They extend their vocabulary and explore the meaning and sounds of words through stories and discussions. For example, they name the pictures held up and enthusiastically discuss what they see, they talk about the life cycle of the butterfly and their own experiences of travelling on an aeroplane. They speak clearly and show awareness of the listener. Children develop simple counting and calculation skills as they enthusiastically participate during songs, nursery rhymes, planned activities and daily routines. For example, they count their peers during registration and count toys or items on a page. More able children count beyond 10 with confidence. They begin to add and take away and learn how to use a number line for simple calculation. Children have good knowledge of shape and use the correct language to describe them, such as 'square', 'circle' and 'triangle' and some are able to recognise 'pentagon' and 'oval'. They match items that go together through purpose or their pattern, such as, pairing shoes or toothbrush and toothpaste. Children become familiar with weight and volume as they measure sand or water.

Children explore the reasons why things happen and how things work. They connect cogs in the correct sequence to make them move, construct the marble run to make the marbles move freely and observe images through a magnifying glass to see the difference in size. They build and construct using different types of equipment and use trial and error to solve the problems of balance. Children monitor change, they learn about caring for plants to help them grow, or caring for animals that they can have as pets. Children develop a sense of time and place through topics and activities about themselves and their community. For example, they work together with the adults to create their own 'time capsule' and bury it for the future. They find out about the wider world by taking part in fundraising activities to help others. The children enjoy painting tee-shirts to raise money, using red and yellow or mixing them together to make orange. They move all parts of their bodies as they climb, balance and go through, over and under different equipment. Children become adept at using mark making equipment, tools and utensils. They cut, glue, and paste different material to create pictures. For example, they make paper crocodiles with moving tails, or stick glitter to black paper to create brightly coloured pictures of fireworks. Opportunities for children to develop their design and making skills by building and constructing with different objects and materials are planned and take place regularly, but resources are not freely available for children to select the required tools and use techniques to shape and assemble freely using their own ideas.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

There are excellent systems in place which help the parents and staff forge a strong partnership. Information is exchanged regularly before and after sessions and parents are kept informed about the provision and their child's care in various ways. For example, they receive regular newsletters, have notices on display and are invited to two parents evening per year to share their children's achievements. A flexible settling-in procedure and information from parents at the outset makes all the families feel welcome and helps staff provide appropriate care for the children which is consistent. Staff are affectionate and attentive which makes the children feel relaxed and secure. Parents are encouraged to give their comments on feedback sheets or in suggestion boxes. Their views are respected and used to inform the ongoing action plan to improve the care and education that the children receive. Parents are well informed of how their child's needs are being met and their developmental progress. The staff have received many positive and complimentary comments.

The setting provides a wonderful range of activities and meaningful resources to promote a positive view of the wider world. Books, dolls, play figures, posters and carefully planned activities to celebrate different countries, cultures and religions increases children's awareness of diversity and their understanding of others. For example, the children enjoy learning greetings or polite expressions in different languages.

All of the children are valued and respected. The staff work hard to meet the children's individual needs and enable all of them to take part in the daily routines and the various activities which help them develop. Through the good examples set by the staff and planning the children are aware of the needs of others and play an active part in ensuring their peers are included. As a result they are developing caring and co-operative relationships. Children are well behaved. They are increasingly able to manage their behaviour, to find solutions to conflict and show respect for the needs of others. Children share, take turns and are polite, remembering to say please and thank you. The organisation of the day makes sure children have opportunities to socialise in small and large groups which helps them make positive relationships. Realistic challenges are set by the staff and children are able to complete tasks at their own pace. They are praised appropriately and given responsibilities to encourage their independence. This promotes their confidence and self-esteem. They feel relaxed and secure and able to try new experiences.

The quality of the partnership with parents and carers is good. Parents receive very good quality information about the provision and the nursery education that is provided. Plans and details of the activities and what children learn by taking part is on display. Parents are invited to discuss their children's progress at any time with the friendly staff, share their achievements or attend consultations to go through their child's assessment records. They are informed about current topics through the regular newsletter and notice boards. Parents are encouraged to be involved in their children's learning by sharing topic related items, or if they wish, continuing with activities at home. The setting fosters children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children benefit from the thorough recruitment, vetting and induction procedures which ensure they are protected and cared for by staff with knowledge and understanding of child development. Comprehensive policies and procedures support the effective running of the preschool and keep the children safe and healthy. Children enjoy both small and large group times throughout the day which enables them to take part in and share different experiences. They have a key worker which helps to ensure there is consistency in their care and a familiar point of contact for parents. Planned activities and free play are organised to suit the individual abilities of the children and help them make progress. Children are stimulated and sufficiently challenged. They mix with other children in the preschool and visit the next group they are moving on to, to help them feel confident and secure about the change in their routine as they move on. Overall, the range of children's needs are met.

The quality of leadership and management of the nursery education is good. The manager values the team and promotes their professional development. She encourages them all to take an active part in the setting, evaluating and improving practice and planning the care and education programmes for the children. They are all aware of their responsibilities and work well together. Staff are committed to providing an inclusive environment in which all children have the opportunity to enhance their development and education.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection Beechoak Farm Montessori Preschool agreed to implement a number of recommendations to improve the care and education of the children.

Good hygiene practices are in place to encourage hand washing and make the children aware of the reasons why this is necessary. The outside area is used for a range of activities to develop and enhance the children's physical skills and extend the opportunities for learning outside. Strategies are in place to enable staff to support children who speak English as a second language. The organisation of the routines, grouping of the children and deployment of the staff ensures the needs of the children are effectively met to encourage their independence and development.

A good range of activities are planned to encourage children to express their ideas and practise skills for communication, language and literacy and creative development. There are planned activities in the area of knowledge and understanding of the world for them to develop their skills, but opportunities to express their ideas independently are limited.

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.

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 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):

- update the wording for the written parental permission to seek any necessary emergency medical advice or treatment.

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):

- provide more opportunities for children to develop their design and making skills, to enable them to build and construct by selecting from a wide range of objects, materials and appropriate resources and tools, and use different techniques to shape, assemble and join materials.

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