



New Hickory Montessori

Inspection report for early years provision

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Inspection date 09 March 2006
Inspector Susan McCourt

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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?

New Hickory Montessori Nursery is registered for full day care and is part of the Tudor House chain of four nurseries. It is in a purpose-built building in a residential area in the village of Lindfield. It has three play areas and sole use of a small garden.

The setting is open from 08:00 to 18:00, Monday to Friday, all year round.

The setting is registered for 28 children and there are currently 52 on roll, of whom 25

receive funding for nursery education. The setting supports children with special needs, as well as those who speak English as an additional language.

There are eight staff, including the manager. Six are qualified for their role, including two who hold the Montessori Diploma. One member of staff is in training. The setting receives support from the local authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children play in a clean environment, where staff follow daily and weekly cleaning schedules to ensure the premises and equipment are free from dirt. Children learn about personal hygiene through the daily routines, and they can easily access soap, running water and paper towels. The nappy-change area is also maintained to a high level and staff use gloves, wipes and sprays to prevent any cross-infection.

Medication and accident forms are well-maintained and any allergy or special dietary requirement is known to all staff, safeguarding children's health and well-being. Parents provide lunches, while the nursery provides a healthy range of snacks for children, all of which are eaten in a social atmosphere. Children can be independent in choosing their snack and pouring their drinks, they can also access drinking water at any time while playing. This helps to ensure that children are not thirsty and that they are well-nourished. Children also take part in cooking activities and learn about where food comes from.

Children take part in regular physical activity as part of the normal routine. They have excellent opportunities to develop their small muscle control through activities such as cutting, threading and the Montessori practical life equipment. Children also use the climbing frame, slide, rockers and benches to practise their gross motor control. Staff are observant of children's skills and support them to try new things with confidence.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children play in a bright, stimulating and welcoming building, which is well-maintained for children's safety. The building is warm and comfortable with ample space for play, cosy areas for resting and an area for messy play, ensuring that children have scope for free movement. Few children currently sleep in the setting and laundry facilities are off-site, meaning that fresh bedding was not immediately available for one child's nap-time. The outdoor area is safe and secure and can be used all year round, giving children lots of opportunities to play in the fresh air. The craft area also houses the kitchen units. Staff are careful to ensure that this does not present a hazard to children playing in the area.

Children have good access to the range of toys and play equipment in all areas of their learning and development. Equipment is kept in good order, so children have

maximum use of the facilities at all times. There are ample chairs and tables for children to play together or alone, giving them choice and independence.

Children play in safety. The building is secure and private, so unvetted people cannot gain access to children. All activities, outings and aspects of the building are risk-assessed and children are well-supervised at all times, both in and out of doors. Staff encourage children to follow simple safety advice, such as walking and not running, which raises children's awareness of safety issues. Children also take part in regular fire drills. Staff ensure that children are kept safe on outings, by having a higher ratio of adults to children.

Staff are all aware that the welfare of the child is paramount with regard to child protection. Staff update their training through short courses and have access to a wide range of written materials giving guidance about such issues. Staff know to report any concerns to the designated person and professional bodies, which safeguards children's well-being.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children arrive happily and settle into their play with confidence. Younger children have their own room for play and join the older children to take part in some story times or singing. Children can choose from a good range of activities and most equipment is within easy reach, increasing children's independence. Staff build good relationships with the children and are alongside as they play, providing guidance and support. The learning environment, indoors and out, is continually considered and updated by staff in order to maximise children's use of it. The activities always include the range of Montessori play equipment. Staff use the Montessori methods to observe and record children's achievements, as well as the Birth to Three Matters framework and the Foundation Stage curriculum guidance.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff have a good understanding of the Foundation Stage and Montessori methods and incorporate both into their planning. They use themes and plan a good range of varied and meaningful activities. For example, a trip to a farm was followed up by making a chicken in a craft activity with real feathers and, later, making egg sandwiches. Plans are adapted spontaneously to respond to children's interest and ideas. Staff know the individual children very well. They observe their achievements closely and differentiate subsequent activities, to build on children's recent learning. Achievements are noted in the Foundation Stage profile which gives a full picture of the child's learning.

Children show good levels of concentration and stay with activities they have chosen for lengthy periods. They are confident and are happy to take charge of their personal hygiene. Children play well with each other and can co-operate in tasks such as tidying up before snack time. They are considerate of others, especially the younger ones, and can modify their behaviour to set a good example. Children communicate well and enjoy conversations with each other and staff. They chat

enthusiastically about what they are doing and can describe the consequences of their actions. Children are skilled at recognising letters and words and enjoy looking at books and sharing stories. They make marks in a variety of ways, copying letter shapes in sand or just connecting lines and dots to make patterns, developing their pencil control.

Children's mathematical development is fostered using Montessori equipment, which encourages children to arrange objects in size order, match numerals to objects and compare length, size and shape. Children count spontaneously in play and can make simple calculations in counting songs. Children enjoy spotting patterns and shapes in everyday items, such as the trellis fencing, as well as in mathematical equipment. Children learn about measurement and can use mathematical language to make comparisons. Children are curious about the world around them and enjoy having the time to really look at a variety of natural objects such as feathers, bubbles and egg shells. Children plant seeds and small plants and learn how to take care of them. Children see a good selection of non-fiction books about the wider world and take part in different festivals, such as Chinese New Year. They also use a variety of technological equipment such as computers. Creative craft play is rather too structured and children do not get a full chance to really explore the art materials that staff have selected. Children enjoy singing and have live musical accompaniment whenever possible. Children enjoy dressing up or using puppets and act out simple story lines with each other.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

The equal opportunities policy is regularly reviewed and meets the standard. Children and their families are treated with equal concern by staff, who liaise closely with parents to meet the needs of all children. Children in the setting are introduced to the wider world via a good range of resources and activities, which helps their understanding of diversity. Some children in the setting have special needs and staff work closely with the parents and other professionals, to ensure that the care they receive is consistent. The inclusion officer keeps up to date with training, to ensure that the setting can respond appropriately to all children.

Children behave well and know their boundaries, because staff give simple, clear and consistent guidance as to their expectations. Staff are good role models and treat the children and each other with great respect. Children know that kindness and being considerate are important, because staff highlight any such examples by adding a leaf to the 'kindness tree' display on the wall and showing it to the parent.

The partnership with parents is good. Parents receive good quality information about all policies and procedures, curriculum information and children's achievements. Parents also receive regular newsletters and they value the verbal handover from the key-worker each day, as well as the written information that goes home. Parents can attend regular formal and informal events at the setting and can discuss their child's progress at any stage. The setting consults with parents through questionnaires and values parents' responses.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. Children say a simple grace together before eating snacks and meals. They are given time to watch and they show wonder at natural phenomena, such as the feel of a feather on their skin. Children learn about right and wrong and are very considerate of each other's feelings.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides. The registered provider ensures that all staff are suitable to work with children; she also ensures that any unvetted visitors are not left alone with children. All staff have the experience, skills and ability for their role and staff are deployed effectively, to ensure children's safety, welfare and development. Children have a key worker, which helps children to settle and have consistent care. Staff receive appraisals and develop their skills through short courses. The setting exceeds the ratios of qualified to unqualified staff, and regularly exceeds the staff: child ratios, giving children a high standard of care. Bank staff are drawn from other nurseries in the chain and so are always familiar with the routines. The register is an accurate record of children and staff in attendance; visitors sign a visitor's book. Policies and procedures are reviewed in line with good practice. Any information is stored securely and confidentially.

The leadership and management are good. The registered person and the staff team have a shared view of their aims and objectives for the children's welfare, and their careful concern is reflected in the practice of the nursery. Policies and practice are regularly reviewed and staff's ideas for improvement are valued. The managers work alongside staff in all aspects of the work, acting as mentors and providing support. The staff team works well, communicating effectively to ensure the smooth running of the nursery.

Improvements since the last inspection

As a new registration, there are no previous care recommendations to report on.

The nursery has retained its previous funding registration and the previous recommendation made still applies. At the last inspection of nursery education, the setting received a recommendation to improve the short term planning. Staff and managers worked together, to devise a system that could be used by each nursery in the chain and yet could still be adapted to suit the different settings. Children now benefit from having activities devised around interesting themes that cover all areas of the curriculum, which can respond spontaneously to their interests and individual needs.

Complaints since the last inspection

There have been no complaints made to Ofsted since registration.

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 that children use fresh, clean bedding when sleeping

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 that children have full and free access to craft materials in focussed activities.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the leaflet *Building better childcare: Compliments and concerns about inspectors' judgements* which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk