



Bay Tree Montessori School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY318998
Inspection date	29 June 2006
Inspector	Anne Mitchell
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Registered person	Shepherd Montessori Schools 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?

Bay Tree Montessori School was registered in 2005. It operates from a converted factory in Winton, in Bournemouth, and has spacious interconnecting play areas. There is a fully enclosed garden for outdoor play. A maximum of 32 children aged from two to under five years may attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery is open from 08:00-17.30 each weekday, 51 weeks of the year.

There are currently 25 children on roll. Of these, four children receive funding for

early education. Children attend from the local area. The nursery supports children with learning difficulties and disabilities.

The nursery employs a total of four staff, who work full and part time. All staff hold appropriate early years Montessori qualifications.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children's health is effectively promoted as they follow good hygiene routines. Soft paper towels are available at the low level sinks in the toilet area, and near both low level sinks in the nursery. Children automatically wash their hands independently after using the toilet and before snack. They know why this is important as one child tells an adult 'You need to wash the germs off your hands in case they go in your tummy and give you tummy ache' Children help to clean the table before a cooking activity and sing a cleaning song. There are good nappy changing routines in place, to limit the spread of infection. Staff use disposable gloves, and keep the toddlers amused and interact during the process. Children in nappies also wash their hands after their change, encouraging good habits from an early age.

Children's dietary health is successfully supported through healthy snacks. Children enjoy raisins, crackers and a fresh fruit salad they prepared at the start of the day. Children have regular access to drinking water to keep their fluid levels maintained. Children use the child sized jugs to fill with drinking water from the taps and pour into their cups. They have good opportunities to learn about healthy eating and good nutrition through planned activities, such as baking bread and making a fruit salad. Staff prompt discussions about foods that help us grow and make us strong.

All staff hold first aid training so children can be treated immediately in the event of injury. Accident and medication records are in place and completed clearly to support children's health and welfare. Children have daily opportunities for fresh air and exercise in the nursery garden during planned outdoor sessions.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are safe in the secure environment. Access to the setting is effectively monitored, and children and visitors are signed in and out with times recorded. Children play safely indoors and out, as all resources are at low level and easily accessible. Equipment is of high quality and regularly checked to ensure it's continued suitability. Children benefit from play in the secure garden, and they are protected from the elements by the provision of a sheltered decking area and gazebo.

Sun safety is well promoted as all children use sun screen before outdoor play. Children learn about keeping themselves safe. A four-year-old watches a younger

child run in the play area and tells the adult 'You shouldn't run inside'. The adult asks why not, and the child replies 'If there's water on the floor, you might slip and hurt yourself.' Supervision is very good inside and out. Staff are vigilant about children's safety and have a good awareness of what is happening at all times. Visibility in the setting is very good, enabling staff to monitor all areas from the office, kitchen and between play areas.

Children are well protected from harm and neglect through the staff's secure and confident knowledge and understanding of child protection issues. They are clear about recognising signs and symptoms and recording concerns. The manager is the nominated child protection co-ordinator and has a secure knowledge of his duty to report concerns. There is a well written child protection policy in place, but it does not include a procedure to follow in the event of an allegation being made against a member of staff.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are motivated and enthusiastic. All activities are child led and at their own pace. The nursery follows the Montessori philosophy which encourages a child-centred approach to play and education. Children have opportunities to develop life skills. They learn to manage their own clothes using dressing frames to practise buttons, zips and bows. They are also shown how to care for their classroom, using child-sized brushes and dusters. Children develop practical skills quickly, such as pouring drinks from a jug and cleaning their tables after a painting activity.

Children independently select and use a range of well thought out activities to help them sort, match and compare objects by shape, size, touch, taste and sound. Language materials provide a phonic approach to writing and reading. Children learn through their senses by tracing sandpaper letters with their fingers while adults talk to them about the sounds. All children use Montessori materials, like the number rods, golden beads and spindle boxes with increasing understanding and confidence. Children use globes, puzzle maps and artefact boxes to build their understanding of other countries, cultures and people. Plant growing activities, such as cress, and caring for the nursery's two guinea pigs, help children to learn about the natural world.

Children use their imaginations through creative play and in the garden. An adult leads a 'horse ride' through the woods, over fences and hedges and through rivers. Children who choose to participate do so with joy and enthusiasm. One child tells an adult, 'My horse is called Buttons' Children participate in imaginary car and bike races. One three-year-old approaches an adult and asks, 'Would you like an ice cream, and do you want a flake with that?'

Nursery Education.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Although following the Montessori philosophy, staff are clear about how this links with the Foundation Stage curriculum and their knowledge is secure. Plans show how activities cover all areas of learning.

Learnt skills are reinforced through repetition, and children's progress is clearly recorded. Written observations on children are used effectively by staff to monitor their progress and plan the next steps of their development. Staff are skilled at encouraging children to think for themselves, and they demonstrate very good teaching skills. One member of staff introduces a child to an activity with a range of different sized screw top jars. Without speaking she uses exaggerated hand movements to demonstrate the unscrewing action. The child watches her carefully and soon picks up the skill, proud and happy that he has mastered this by himself.

The organisation of the room is effective, providing a peaceful and calm atmosphere, where children can freely select a chosen activity. The outdoor area is inviting. There is a large playhouse, a spacious covered decking area directly outside the door, and good visibility. However, use of the outdoor area is planned at certain times of the day, limiting opportunities for children to use this as part of their daily curriculum.

Children are very independent, selecting their chosen activity and returning it to the shelf once completed. They visit the snack area fill their jug with water from the tap, and pour their own drinks. Children make good relationships with each other. One child finds a toy motorbike and gives it to the child it belongs to. 'Here you go, I found your motorbike'. An older child greets a two-year-old, who is new to the group. 'Hello, how are you today?' The older child smiles broadly and gently strokes the child's hair. Behaviour is good. Staff have high expectations and manage children's behaviour in a gentle and consistent way.

Children demonstrate good language skills and a developing knowledge and understanding of vocabulary. The calm and quiet environment encourages children's listening skills. 'I can hear a truck! No, it's the dustbin lorry!' Children enjoy regular positive experiences with books and stories and visit the book area throughout the day, with and without staff. Children remain interested and focussed during a well read story, participating with enthusiasm and predicting what might happen next. Children's writing skills are effectively promoted by providing them with regular and independent access to writing materials. Children learn letter shapes by tracing sandpaper letters with their fingers, while they are told the sounds.

Children independently count to 10 and above. A three-year-old threads different shaped buttons on a lace. He carefully counts each one up to 14. Another child asks a member of staff, 'How do you write a four?' She brings him the box with sandpaper numbers. The child finds the number four without hesitation and says 'Oh yes, I remember' He then traces over the four with his finger, before writing it on his picture next to his name.

Children have very good opportunities to learn about the natural world through planting and growing activities such as cress, herbs, sunflowers and potatoes. Children enjoy caring for the nursery's two guinea pigs and staff talk to them about how to handle them and what they like to eat. Children's opportunities to explore ICT are limited, although they sometimes use a digital camera and CD player. Children have free access to creative materials to enable them to design and create models. Children learn about the wider world through discussion about Australia, as the current theme explores different regions. A member of staff shows a child how the Australian Aborigines make designs using small dots. A four-year-old draws two

tigers saying 'They come from a long way away, in India'

Children have good opportunities to use dough, paints, chalks, pens and crayons. They independently select resources and create pictures and models from their own imaginations. One child is fully absorbed in a large intricate picture he has been working on for a prolonged period. He adds designs to photos of cars, stuck onto the paper. He describes each addition to the car in detail. 'This one is a jet ski, and this is the bit that makes it go in the water. It has special windows so the water won't come in and you can never break them' Children sing and play percussion in planned music sessions. They also sing spontaneously while busy working, at the snack table or in the garden. Although there is no designated role play area, children's imaginations are well fostered through make believe games in the garden, and through their artwork. Planned activities, such as cooking, promote children's sensory development. They smell the bread mix and golden syrup, and enjoy tasting the finished bread and flapjacks.

Through the varied Montessori activities and equipment, children have highly developed small muscle development. They scoop up raisins, beads and shells with spoons. They use tweezers to pick up paper. A member of staff shows a child with slow exaggerated movements how she squeezes the peg to open it and releases it to peg it onto the side of the container. After a few tentative practises, the child acquires the skill and continues to open and close the pegs with confidence and dexterity. Children have daily opportunities to balance on the large wooden sleepers that edge the garden. They pedal with confidence and are developing throwing and catching skills. However, more able children lack opportunities to climb and balance on more challenging physical play equipment.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children's individual needs are effectively met by staff, as they talk in depth to parents about the child's likes, dislikes and general routines. Children are given space and time to explore their chosen activity to their satisfaction, and are given the tools to support and extend this if they choose.

Children learn to recognise and respect difference through using resources such as puzzles and books which positively reflect cultural diversity. They explore other cultures through well planned projects. The setting's equal opportunities policy reflects current legislation, and supports the nursery's positive approach. Children who have specific requirements are effectively supported by knowledgeable and supportive staff and the spacious, accessible environment.

Children's behaviour is good. Staff use positive language at all times to promote children's self esteem and encourage good behaviour. They recognise that children's behaviour is due to outside influences and give children time to explore their feelings. They give clear explanations about their expectations, and why some behaviour is not acceptable. Children are caring and friendly towards each other and staff encourage older children to take responsibility in helping the younger children, showing them where things go, for example. Children's spiritual, moral, social and

cultural development is fostered.

Partnership with parents and carers is good. They receive an informative prospectus about the nursery. Parents and carers are welcomed daily by friendly staff who take a genuine interest in each child. They are well informed of children's progress, behaviour and routines on a daily basis. Parents state that they are very happy with the level of care and education provided. One recognising that her child has blossomed in the six months he has attended the nursery.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children benefit from the care and education they receive from the well qualified and suitably checked staff team. There are effective procedures in place to recruit and check staff. All staff hold relevant Montessori qualifications, and work very well as a team, demonstrating a commitment to the Montessori philosophy and to on-going training.

Organisation of the play area is good, offering children a calm, relaxing and spacious environment. All areas of the nursery are visible, providing children with good opportunities to be independent in their choices, while enabling staff to provide a high level of support and supervision. The outdoor area is inviting and has been well considered, with areas that can be used in all weathers. However, there is no climbing equipment, and outdoor play is planned at certain times of the day, limiting opportunities for children to use this as part of their daily curriculum.

Leadership and management is good. Staff are well supported by the management. Informal and regular staff appraisals are conducted to highlight any training needs. Staff work together to discuss planning and evaluate the effectiveness of the nursery education. The manager continuously assesses how the environment is organised to ensure children remain motivated and interested. He has clear plans and aspirations for the future to continually improve the provision.

The setting has clear and well written policies and procedures, although the child protection policy is not fully updated. All required documentation is up to date and stored securely on the premises.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

Not applicable.

Complaints since the last inspection

There have been no complaints about the provider received by Ofsted since the last

inspection. 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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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):

- develop the outdoor area to incorporate it into the daily curriculum, providing children with further opportunities for learning and play

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 there are sufficient opportunities and challenge for more able children to climb and balance on a regular basis

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