



## Wivenhoe Montessori Childrens House

Inspection report for early years provision

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	EY222657
<b>Inspection date</b>	08 November 2006
<b>Inspector</b>	Lynn Denise Smith
<b>Setting Address</b>	The Pavilion, King George V Playing Fields, Wivenhoe Colchester, Essex, CO7 9QA
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<b>Registered person</b>	First Steps Montessori Ltd
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Integrated
<b>Type of care</b>	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](http://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 outstanding. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are outstanding.

### WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Wivenhoe Montessori Children's House is run by First Steps Montessori Ltd. It opened in 2001 and operates from rooms within a converted Sports Pavilion in Wivenhoe Park. It is situated in a small village on the outskirts of Colchester. A maximum of 26 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery is open each weekday from 09:00 until 12:45 on Monday, Wednesday and Friday and 09:00 to 15:30 on Tuesday and Thursday throughout the year. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 43 children aged from two to under five years on roll. Of these, 27 children receive funding for early education. Children come from the local area and surroundings villages. The nursery currently supports a small number of children with learning difficulties and also supports a number of children who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery employs 10 members of staff. Of these, five hold appropriate early years qualifications and four are working towards a qualification.

## **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION**

### **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is outstanding.

Children are extremely healthy at this nursery as staff pay meticulous attention to all health related issues regarding health, hygiene, food and drink. Children play in an extremely clean and hygienic environment; staff follow clear written policies on cleanliness. Children's daily routines include hand washing before meals, when they have been to the toilet and after messy play. They proficiently explain why they wash their hands to get rid of germs. Children have superb opportunities to develop a good understanding about health related issues. They have clear and effective discussions with staff and are surrounded by well presented posters which inform them about their body and what happens when they run and walk.

Children's medical needs are expertly met as staff follow their first aid knowledge to deal with any accidents or injuries and have an effective policy for dealing with sickness. Clear written accounts of accidents and medication administered ensures that parents are fully informed about their children's medical needs.

Children have excellent opportunities to experience fresh air on a daily basis, when they play in the well equipped and fully enclosed garden. They also go for walks to the woods, around the adjacent field, to shops and to the play park in the local village.

Children develop a full range of physical skills when they utilise the extensive range of indoor and outdoor equipment. They have opportunities to learn to run, kick a ball, throw balls and beanbags, climb up and down a range of equipment and move proficiently around each other. They acknowledge each other's personal space. They also develop balance and coordination when they participate in Montessori activities such as 'walking the line' and 'walking the maze'. Children's fine motor skills are superbly developed as they master the use of an exciting range of tools and Montessori equipment. They use their fine pincer grip to transfer small items from one container to another using tweezers and efficiently weave thread through a set of pre-pressed holes on threading cards. Children enthusiastically participate in music and movement and enjoy waving exciting coloured arm ribbons around as they dance to 'Latin American' Salsa Dance Music.

### **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is outstanding.

Children are cared for in an extremely well organised, bright and attractive environment. They are safe and secure. Thorough monitoring of the door by staff ensures that children are unable to leave the premises without an appropriate adult and that all visits are monitored and asked to sign the visitors book. Children and their parents are made welcome at the setting as they are greeted at the main door by a member of staff. They enter through a lobby which is covered in welcoming, colourful posters and examples of the children's creative work. Children play in

two well organised and attractive play rooms, moving freely and proficiently between the two to access an exciting range of activities. A fully enclosed garden which contains an excellent selection of large and small equipment enables children to have daily exercise and fresh air.

Children independently access an extensive selection of play and educational equipment from the low level shelving situated in both playrooms. They safely help themselves to items of equipment which are regularly checked and monitored by staff to ensure they are complete, safe and clean.

Children successfully learn about keeping safe as they follow the staff's clear directions and advice, for example, some of the younger children crawl underneath the tables whilst waiting to go in the garden, staff ask them to come out and explain that they might hurt themselves if they do this. Children often go for walks during their session at nursery; they learn to walk safely along the road as they each hold onto a large bead, sewn to a section of rope. They help to find the safest place to cross and learn about road safety through clear and proficient discussions with staff.

Children are expertly protected from potential harm as staff demonstrate an extensive knowledge base about child protection issues and how to deal effectively with any concerns. They work closely with other agencies to ensure that families are well supported and that children's continued safety is paramount.

### **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is outstanding.

Children have fun; they actively participate in an excellent range of activities both planned and free activities suited to their ages and stages of development. The children's sessions include active and quiet times and they are encouraged to guide their own play and learning. Children have superb opportunities to experience outdoor play daily and explore physical play indoors when the weather is too bad.

Children form warm and secure relationships with staff; they approach the adults in their life with confidence and gain real pleasure from the cheerful, positive responses of the staff to their requests.

Children enthusiastically participate in cooking activities such as making bread, cutting vegetables for soups and snacks and buttering their own toast for mid morning break. They have opportunities to weigh and measure ingredients and watch how the ingredients change through mixing and cooking.

Children aged under three years are effectively cared for as staff are beginning to use the 'Birth to three matters' framework in their planning; they incorporate this with their Foundation Stage planning and acknowledge that some areas overlap.

### **Nursery Education**

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding.

Staff demonstrate a sound knowledge of the Foundation Stage and understand how young children learn and develop. The setting predominantly works towards the Montessori Philosophy; some staff have received training in early years concepts of learning and others have trained under the Montessori methods of teaching. They incorporate both processes in their teaching and learn from each other's experiences. Activities are tailored to individual children's stages of development and therefore provide good opportunities for them to be challenged and to problem solve.

Staff plan effectively to cover all six areas of learning, they use long, medium and short term planning and work to a two year rolling programme of themes and topics. The daily activities are evaluated for their effectiveness and only incorporated in the programme again if they worked well and children gained the required learning outcome from them.

Children are extremely well behaved; they are able to concentrate for prolonged periods of time as staff create a calm and relaxed environment. A high adult to child ratio enables staff to sit with children who are finding tasks difficult and help them to work through them to achieve a completed task.

The session is extremely well organised and provides a good amount of free and guided play. Children help themselves to activities from the shelves for the first half of the session and then participate in a small group activity, they usually finish the session with physical, outdoor play.

Children's progress and achievements are observed and reviewed using a system which has been adapted to incorporate use of the Montessori equipment alongside the Stepping Stones. Staff can easily identify which stepping stone children have reached and at the end of their time at the setting their developmental records are translated back into the stepping stones for parents to take to their child's new school.

Children are very confident and enjoy their time at nursery; they are extremely self-sufficient and plan much of their own play. Children are settled and content and leave their parents or carers with ease; they relate well to each other and to the adults in their life. Children like to share experiences of their home life with the adults and with their peers; they are encouraged to bring photographs of home or special people to show their friends during circle time. Children's self esteem is very well promoted as staff regularly praise their behaviour and thank them for completing a task.

Children are very competent speakers and listeners; they converse well and are able to describe their thinking in detailed explicit accounts. Children are beginning to write clearly and form letters; some are able to write their names and enjoy practicing letter formation when working with the sand trays. Children enjoy looking at books and being read stories; they understand that there is a beginning, middle and end to a story. They identify their own names when self registering their presence and when they select their name from the snack bar list to show that they have had their snack. Children's language is very well developed and further extended by staff asking them open ended, clear questions. Children are linking sounds to letters when they play with the sound boxes which are labelled with the appropriate letters, for example, a and b and contain small items which begin with either a or b, such as, an apple, a ball and a bus.

Children proficiently count to ten and over and make excellent use of the high quality range of mathematical equipment on offer to them at all times. They learn to order and sort items and to explore weight and measure by freely accessing the equipment and by sitting with a member of staff. Children use practical mathematics in their everyday activities and are using simple calculation such as 'how many will be left if I take this one away'.

Children gain an excellent grasp of knowledge and understanding of the world when they explore their natural environment by going for walks, observing the changing seasons and watching things grow. They have superb opportunities to watch birds and wildlife as the setting is situated close to some woodlands and surrounded by a field. Children have daily use of a computer and access a good range of construction toys. They learn to construct with a range of materials such as boxes and tubes. Visitors to the nursery extend the children's learning and enable them to explore their local environment, for example, the local Fire Department visit and allow the children to explore the Fire Engine and the local Police Officers visit and show the children the items they carry in their car to assist with a road traffic incident. Children have opportunities to learn about the wider world as they make good use of the atlas, globe and visual resources to discover other countries and the people who live in them.

Children enthusiastically express themselves creatively through arts and crafts and through dance and music. They have free daily access to creative play materials and are encouraged to guide their own creative activities, ensuring that these are very child led. Children explore colour and a variety of different media as they self select resources and materials. They paint, print, and make collages and place their finished art work on a rack to dry. Children have regular access to musical instruments and thoroughly enjoy participating in group singing sessions. They actively join in with Salsa Dancing, which is made even more fun as they are provided with brightly coloured ribbons to attach to their wrists to swing around as they dance.

### **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is outstanding.

Children's individual needs, likes and dislikes are very well known to staff who actively seek information from the parents about their children's home backgrounds and beliefs. The information provided by parents is used to ensure that staff are able to effectively meet all children's needs. Children are settled, valued and respected at this setting, they are confident and clearly feel like an important member of the group. Children have excellent opportunities to develop their understanding about other people and their cultures as they learn about the various continents and who lives there. They use a globe and various visual resources to identify where each country is. They enthusiastically celebrate a range of festivals and special occasions including birthdays, with the birthday boy, girl or member of staff wearing the 'special birthday hat'. Children experience a range of foods from other countries when they celebrate festivals and their learning is extended through the use of music and dressing up clothes.

Children needing additional help are expertly supported by staff who demonstrate a clear understanding of child development and monitoring children's progress. All children are included within the setting and activities are adapted to ensure that every child has an equal chance to participate. Children requiring additional help receive support and guidance from outside

agencies and staff work closely with parents to ensure that they are fully included in all discussions and plans for future action.

Children's well-being is exceedingly well promoted as staff and parents work effectively together to ensure a smooth transition between home and nursery life. Parents and staff communicate on a daily basis and staff are always accessible to discuss a child's needs with the parents.

The partnership with parents and carers is outstanding.

Children's care and welfare is superbly enhanced by the nursery adopting a positive and open relationship with the parents. Good, effective meetings between staff and parents at the beginning of the children's learning experiences at this provision enable them to share relevant information and to discuss each child's starting point. Parent's evenings held twice a year enable parents to have the opportunity to discuss their children's learning and progress on a formal basis. A final hand-over meeting is then held when the children are about to leave to go to school, whereby parents are made clear about the stage of development their child has made through the stepping stones and towards the early learning goals. Parents are fully informed about the topics and themes being covered as part of the long, medium and short term planning as they receive regular, well presented newsletters and information is also displayed on a large notice board in the main entrance of the building.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

They are actively encouraged to be independent and to self select their play and learning. They form excellent warm and caring relationships with each other and with the adults who care for them. They are learning about the consequences of their own actions when they play cooperatively together and are encouraged to think about how other people might feel.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is outstanding.

Children are cared for by a committed team of staff who work well together. They have all undergone necessary checks to ensure they are suitable to work with children. There is a good level of qualifications between the team and some of the newer members of staff are embarking upon training soon. Those staff who are training or attending training seminars are well supported and encouraged to bring their new found knowledge back to share with the rest of the team.

Children receive a high amount of individual attention from staff as the adult to child ratios consistently exceed minimum requirements. Children's needs are effectively met as they have a specific member of staff to liaise with their parents, maintain their developmental records and to provide a hug if they come in to the setting feeling a bit low or out of sorts.

The rooms within the setting are superbly presented with a good range of high quality equipment. Excellent use is made of the space available to enable children to participate in an exciting range of activities, for example, they can use one of the computers in the smaller playroom or paint a picture in the craft area in the larger of the two playrooms.

All required documentation is in place and maintained to a very high standard. The children's records are available at all times and are kept confidential when the group is closed. An extensive and full range of written policies and procedures are in place and are regularly reviewed and updated in line with current practice.

Leadership and Management is outstanding.

The Registered Provider of this setting is also the named suitable person; she took over the running of the group five years ago and has seen it grow from strength to strength. The staff team consists of some long established staff who worked at the provision before the change of ownership and some newer staff who have joined the team over the past five years. The staff work effectively together and are all aware of each other's strengths and interests. There is a clear ethos within the setting based upon the Montessori method of teaching and learning; the vision for the group is that children will gain independence and strive to achieve their potential in all six areas of learning. Staff are highly motivated and committed to providing a high standard of care and education.

The staff meet every Wednesday morning before the children arrive to discuss planning, individual children, topics and general day to day organisation. Staff pride themselves on the presentation of the nursery both indoor and outdoors and are continually reviewing and self assessing their work to continue to grow and develop.

Staff's professional developmental needs are addressed and met through a formal appraisal systems and through ongoing day to day discussions. Staff are fully consulted in all aspects of the nursery and actively encouraged to suggest and make changes for the better.

Overall, children's needs are met.

### **Improvements since the last inspection**

At the time of the last inspection the setting was asked to :-review and update the special educational needs statement in line with recent legislation and advice. This has now been done and all policies are up to date and in line with current procedures, children's well being is promoted through the constant reviewing of all paperwork and documentaiton.

### **Complaints since the last inspection**

Since the last inspection there have been no complaints made to Ofsted that the required the provider or Ofsted to take any action in order to meet 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 outstanding. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are outstanding.

### WHAT MUST BE DONE TO SECURE FUTURE IMPROVEMENT?

#### **The quality and standards of the care**

No recommendations for improvement are made because the quality and standards of care are outstanding.

#### **The quality and standards of the nursery education**

No recommendations for improvement are made because the quality and standards of nursery education are outstanding.

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](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)