



The Montessori Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	300795
Inspection date	05 March 2007
Inspector	Geneen Yvonne Hulse-Brown
Setting Address	137 Psalter Lane, Sheffield, South Yorkshire, S11 8UX
Telephone number	0114 2552626
E-mail	
Registered person	Robert Anthony Fearnough
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?

The Montessori Nursery is a private nursery which opened in 1966. It is accommodated in a large Victorian property in the Ecclesall area of Sheffield. The nursery offers childcare to children from the local and wider community and outside the city boundaries.

There are four classrooms, where children are grouped by age, plus toilets, kitchen, office, staff room and storage space. The nursery has a secure outdoor play area.

A maximum of 70 children aged two to five years may attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery is open Monday to Friday, for 38 weeks of the year, from 08.30 to 15.30 and children attend for a variety of sessions. There are currently 75 children on roll; of these, 50 receive funding for early education. They offer care to children for whom English is an additional language.

The nursery employs 10 staff to work with the children on a full- and part-time basis; all staff hold a recognised early years qualification. The nursery receives support from the local authority community teachers and the National Day Nurseries Association.

The Montessori Nursery follows the Montessori teaching philosophy.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children enthusiastically enjoy a broad range of activities that contribute to keeping them healthy, as they undertake indoor and outdoor activities on a daily basis to develop their physical skills. They have fun climbing, using their imagination in the large boat and playing with hoops and balls. Children enjoy music and movement sessions indoors as part of daily routines. Well-designed outdoor areas allow the children to explore in all weathers, sheltering under the gazebos and climbing frames as they chase between them. Older children recognise the need to wrap up to keep warm and dry, talking about zipping up coats to play outside. Children's fine motor development is successfully promoted as they manipulate small tools well, such as scissors, pencils, glue spreaders and paintbrushes. They competently spoon rice into pots, gather pine cones from the garden and put them into carts, and skilfully remove the backing paper from stickers.

Staff create many opportunities for children to talk about being healthy through the use of projects, displays and planned topics. Children are developing a good understanding of a healthy diet, as they talk together at snack time about fruit being good for us. They enjoy tasting days as part of planned activities and 'fruit day', where they all bring fruit for snack. Children demonstrate a good understanding of their likes and dislikes, for example, talking about liking ham and cheese and not liking oranges. Children understand their bodies and know when they want a drink, as older children help themselves to water when they are thirsty and explain, 'I've had a big drink'. Nursery routines offer younger children a choice of when to eat their snack. They regularly choose to eat together, chat, share experiences and home events. For example, children bring cakes they have baked at home to share with their friends and talk about how they made them. Routines for older children offer more planned snack times where they all sit down together, and this may on occasion limit children's independent choices. Children help each other unwrap snack packets and offer help to carry things to the table, such as cups or the water jug.

Children are cared for in a warm, clean environment where effective methods ensure they develop good personal hygiene practices, such as hand washing before meals and after messy activities. They talk about washing hands to get rid of germs and when they are sticky from eating fruit. Children understand the importance of good practice and demonstrate it in their play and activities. For example, when reminding others to get a tissue for their nose and throw it in the bin after use.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a safe and secure environment where all risks are minimised. They confidently move around the nursery to develop their independence and learn to keep themselves safe. Children know not to run indoors and they negotiate internal stairs with increasing competency. Staff reinforce staying safe as part of everyday routines, such as reminding them to be careful with scissors as they are sharp. They skilfully use topics and outings to consolidate children's understanding. They talk about road safety when they visit the local shops and hold hands when climbing. When reading the story of the three bears, staff get children to think about why we blow hot porridge so as not to burn ourselves. Very experienced staff effectively ensure that the premises are kept safe and secure as they monitor visitors to the premises.

Children independently make choices of activities from a broad range of easily accessible resources displayed on low shelving around the playrooms. They request anything they cannot see, such as a hammer when playing a game and the train track. Well-planned areas in all playrooms allow children space to be quiet, use their creativity, extend their imagination and develop their play. Children actively plan their own time through the use of stimulating activities where they explore, experiment and progress their ideas. They happily undertake activities in small groups using Montessori equipment to consolidate and extend their learning. Children benefit from daily access to a fun and exciting outdoor play area, where they can explore and experiment in all weathers, collecting leaves, climbing and playing parachute games.

Effective procedures are in place to support good practice as staff understand first aid procedures and how to protect children from illness. A very experienced staff team demonstrates a very good knowledge of child protection procedures and how to keep children safe. The management team is in the process of updating policies to include the recommendations from the Local Safeguarding Children Board. Staff understand their role in protecting children and use this information effectively to promote the children's well-being.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children enjoy their time at nursery and make good progress in all areas of development. This is due to knowledgeable staff who plan activities and experiences that motivate children and promote their interest. Staff effectively use the 'Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage' and the 'Birth to three matters' framework to provide good quality care and education. Children settle well and are happy and secure as they enthusiastically undertake a wide range of fun and challenging activities. They are very confident and interested in their surroundings, establishing successful relationships with staff and children alike. Children actively make choices about their play, selecting resources to undertake tasks from the broad and interesting range available.

Children demonstrate good independence skills to successfully plan their own time and make decisions about what they want to do within the structure of the nursery day. They confidently put on coats and hats to play outdoors, get paper for painting and find the creative resources

they need to complete their task. Staff listen intently and consistently respond to the children's individual needs, adapting activities to follow their ideas and suggestions. For example, when playing outside with the parachute, they change its purpose to become first a ghost and then a sail for the boat.

Children are encouraged and supported to extend and try out new skills, for example, when using the Montessori equipment. They receive high levels of support from staff, who use observations and their knowledge of the children to build on what they can do to extend activities at the child's own pace. Staff complete portfolios on all children based on the 'Birth to three matters' framework and the stepping stones. These records include observations and photographs of children engaged in a wide variety of meaningful activities, which are effectively used by staff to plan for individual children.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff's broad knowledge of the Foundation Stage ensures that children progress well in all areas of development. Children are motivated and interested to learn as they enjoy well-planned and spontaneous activities and experiences, which challenge and extend their skills. They use their imagination very well during role play activities, making up simple stories by making buses from chairs to take them to the countryside and seaside. They remind each other to wear their seatbelts and act out a picnic in Peasholme Park.

Children show very good concentration skills as they sit in semicircle and listen intently to what each other has to say. They are very confident speakers as they share their experiences, talking about home, holidays, family and events with enthusiasm. Children excitedly talk about the floor being sanded at their new house and about grandparents visiting from abroad. Staff listen with interest to what the children say, offering support and suggestions to enhance their experiences, such as talking about their own home life and family. For example, when describing the large truck a partner drives, the children excitedly ask how many wheels it has, how big and what colour it is. Children have free access to tools and materials, such as wooden bricks to construct simple and complex models, building tall towers that are bigger than the staff. They extend their imagination and their natural creativity using a wide variety of readily available craft materials and resources, making pizza from doilies and shiny paper. Children explore textures as part of a dinosaurs project and staff extend their thinking and senses with a feely bag game, where they have to guess if an object is rough or smooth.

Children are very confident and engage well with each other and welcome visitors, sharing their achievements and negotiating roles in games. They play well together and alone to enthusiastically progress their ideas, asking for help as needed. Behaviour is very good and reflects the staff's high expectations. Children take turns and share, learning how to manage their own behaviour and respect for others. At semicircle time they are encouraged to listen and value what each other has to say. Staff ask the children to help less-able children to perform tasks or join in games as appropriate. Children are introduced to number and problem solving through daily activities, counting and sorting as part of daily routines, using Montessori equipment, singing and ring games. They count the number of children going out to play, how

many dinosaurs and spots on dice when playing a game. Children recognise when numbers are out of sequence and remind staff what number they have missed out.

Accurate observation systems are in place, which effectively monitor children's progress. Children's portfolios are an effective aid to planning and progressing the children's learning as staff record their progress through the 'Birth to three matters' framework and the stepping stones. These records follow the children through the nursery, building on existing skills to take them to the next stage and providing new challenges. Children are successfully guided to undertake a very good balance of focused and freely chosen activities, with staff responding and making changes to incorporate the children's ideas and suggestions. Well-planned activities provide children with access to many choices and challenges that allows them to focus on independent learning. However, on occasions, routines can limit children's access to making choices of indoor and outdoor activities that will extend them further. Staff demonstrate a broad knowledge of the early learning goals and use this to plan a well-organised curriculum to include all areas of learning. They effectively use open-ended questions to extend children's language, develop their thinking and value what they say. Small and large group times offer the children space to reflect, to think about what they have done, share information and plan what they want to do next. Attractive and well-presented displays of the children's work successfully contribute to promoting their self-esteem.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children build strong and respectful relationships with staff and each other. They show good self-esteem, confidently ask questions and actively make choices, as they are warmly welcomed by sensitive staff who value their individuality. Children receive praise and encouragement for achievement and attempts, for example, when helping to tidy away and cutting out carefully. Well-planned, meaningful activities and resources develop the children's awareness of similarities and differences, which in turn increases their understanding of the wider world. Children enjoy walks to the local shops as part of topics and enthusiastically explore outdoors to broaden their knowledge of the community. Photographs of the children on outings are used effectively to reinforce and remind them of activities and experiences.

Books, toys and pictures show positive images and children share their home experiences with each other. Children with English as an additional language are welcomed into the provision and systems are in place to support them to ensure they are cared for according to their needs. Children's behaviour is very good and reflects the staff's high expectations. Children understand clear and consistent boundaries, demonstrating care and respect for each other. They share, negotiate and take turns when playing games and using equipment, for example, sharing books and looking at the pictures together. Children make space for friends to sit by them at circle time and offer help to carry toys. Children follow good role models in staff showing care and consideration for others.

Partnership with parents and carers is good. Staff work hard to ensure parents are kept well informed about what the children are doing at nursery and are continually reviewing systems for information sharing. Parents and staff work well together to meet the children's needs and activity plans are displayed in all playrooms to show parents daily routines and weekly themes.

They receive good quality information about the setting and in turn share their knowledge of the children. However, some parents are not clear as to how children progress using the stepping stones or the 'Birth to three matters' framework. Parents confidently approach staff and demonstrate a very high level of satisfaction with the setting. The children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The leadership and management of the nursery is good. Effective organisation of the educational provision ensures that children's care and learning is successfully promoted. Very knowledgeable staff demonstrate a strong understanding of their roles and responsibilities to ensure that children's individual needs are consistently met. A well-established and experienced staff team work well together to follow effective procedures to continually monitor and evaluate the provision. The senior management team has completed the self-evaluation form in discussion with nursery staff, based on their own monitoring process. Parents' questionnaires have been used to collate their comments and plan for the nursery's ongoing development. Nursery managers support a committed staff team to ensure they are involved in reviewing practice and adopting new procedures.

There is a high commitment to personal training and group development to consolidate practices and further enhance the provision. All staff hold a recognised early years qualification, with ongoing access to in-house and external training to continue to develop the service offered. This training is cascaded through the team to ensure all staff are kept up to date and build on good practice. A comprehensive range of policies and procedures are in place to support the setting to offer an effective service. These policies are in the process of being reviewed to ensure they meet changes to legislation and the development of the nursery. The nursery supervisor is also compiling a file of evidence to support how the nursery achieves the outcomes to meet the National Standards. There are numerous opportunities for staff to meet together, to share information and to consolidate their working practices. The nursery supervisor holds regular appraisals to effectively identify the training and development needs of individual staff and the nursery. Effective use of the children's portfolios monitor their progress and development based on the 'Birth to three matters' framework, the Foundation Stage and the Montessori teaching philosophy. Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of the children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

Key issues to consider from the previous nursery education inspection related to planning, routines and opportunities for children to progress and follow activities through to conclusions. The nursery has reviewed planning and routines to allow children more flexibility to make choices and plan their own time, resulting in children being able to follow activities through to conclusions and promote their all-round learning and development.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since 1 April 2004 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 complaint 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):

- continue to develop parents' understanding of how children learn using stepping stones and the 'Birth to three matters' framework (also applies to nursery education)
- continue to review and update policies and practices to support the ongoing development of the setting.

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):

- consider how children could use additional opportunities to extend their independence and make choices of indoor and outdoor activities.

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