



# The Montessori Childrens House

Inspection report for early years provision

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	110004
<b>Inspection date</b>	08 March 2007
<b>Inspector</b>	Lynn Reeves
<b>Setting Address</b>	Main Road, Kingsley, Bordon, Hampshire, GU35 9ND
<b>Telephone number</b>	01420 479000
<b>E-mail</b>	
<b>Registered person</b>	Suzanne Jane Webb
<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 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 Children's House has been under the current ownership since 1999. It operates from within the Kingsley Centre in the centre of the village, near Bordon in Hampshire. Accommodation includes the main hall, an additional room for occasional use, and an outside play area. The nursery is registered to provide care for 26 children aged two to five years. It is the policy of the pre-school to accept children aged from two years and six months old. There are currently 22 children on roll, of these 13 are in receipt of nursery education funding. The pre-school supports children with learning difficulties, disabilities and children who speak English as an additional language.

The group opens four days a week during school term times. Sessions are Monday, 08:45 to 14:45; Tuesday, 08:45 to 12:00; Thursday, 08:45 to 14:45; Friday, 08:45 to 12:00.

Six part-time staff and one full time manager work with the children. Six have Montessori qualifications, and one is receiving in-house training in Montessori methods. The setting receives support from the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership. Children are organised and educated according to the principles of the Montessori teaching method.

## **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION**

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

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a warm, clean and spacious environment, where they learn the importance of good personal care. They have a clear understanding of why they must wash their hands before they eat and after using the toilet. Children's health is protected as there are good procedures in place to prevent the possible spread of infection. For example, children are provided with individual towels to wipe their hands on, staff wear disposable gloves for nappy changing and all equipment is sterilized and cleaned regularly. Most staff are first aid trained and all documentation for the recording of accidents and medicines is in place and recorded accurately.

Children develop a good understanding of healthy eating and are introduced to a range of new foods and tastes during planned activities, for example, French cheese, croissants and kumquats. Children grow their own fruit and vegetables from seed and have opportunities to taste them. Each day monitors are selected to help prepare and cut up the fresh fruit for snacks and help to set the tables for those staying for their lunch. Children enjoy having their meals together; staff sit with them encouraging them to try new tastes such as the kiwi fruit and chat about what the children have been doing, making this a very sociable time. Children are very independent and help themselves to drinks throughout the day to keep themselves hydrated; this helps them to begin to recognise for themselves when they are thirsty. All staff are aware of children with special dietary needs as the relevant information is recorded on the children's records.

Children enjoy a wide range of activities which contribute to their good health. They have access to the outdoor area where they can dig in the dirt to plant things. They develop control of their bodies when using the slide and balancing blocks, dancing to music and run and climb during a weekly nature walk. However, these activities are not planned daily to encourage children's physical development. A good range of fine motor activities, such as sewing, cleaning, cutting and using tweezers to grasp things, enable children to develop the physical skills necessary to hold a pencil in preparation for early writing.

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

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a clean and safe environment. The premises are warm and welcoming where some of the children's own designs are displayed developing their sense of belonging. Children benefit from an extensive range of age appropriate toys and resources, which are organised and divided effectively into specific learning areas. Children have access to a wide

range of good quality play materials and practical life activities; these are clearly labelled and stored at low level to encourage children to be independent.

Children learn to take responsibility for their own safety and for their environment. They follow the basic safety rules in place and independently tidy away their activities when they have completed them. They mop up spills and sweep up items that fall onto the floor to ensure others do not hurt themselves. Staff ensure the play areas are safe by completing regular risk assessments and fire drills are practised to ensure children's safety, although the procedure for recording these is not consistent. The premises are kept secure and procedures are in place for the safe collection of children, for example, all parents/carers who regularly collect a child are given an authorization card which must be shown at reception.

Staff have a good knowledge and understanding of child protection issues. They recognise their responsibility to the children in their care and are aware of the correct procedures to follow if there are any concerns about a child's welfare. All existing injuries that children arrive into the group with are recorded and the required policies and procedures are in place to safeguard children.

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

The provision is good.

Children feel welcome in the setting as they are warmly greeted into a calm and nurturing environment, by the friendly and professional staff team. Children start to develop their independent skills, they are encouraged to remove their shoes on arrival, put on their slippers and choose what activities they want to play with. Staff get to know the children well. They talk to them about their families and what they have been doing at home, helping to secure relationships between the children and staff developing a strong sense of trust. Younger children are fully included in all aspects of the care and learning as the staff have introduced the Birth to three matters framework to ensure activities are adapted to meet their needs. Staff interact well with the children, and talk about how each child is progressing with each other to plan for their next steps of development. Children are provided with a range of experiences to keep them stimulated and interested. Staff recognise the value of play and take advantage of spontaneous situations to enhance children's learning. For example, children talk about the new tadpoles that have been brought into the group.

### **Nursery Education**

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children are progressing very well because staff are very knowledgeable about the Foundation Stage curriculum and the Montessori approach of teaching. Staff understand the children's developmental needs and provide a wide range of activities and experiences to move them on. They create a well presented and stimulating environment, in which children can explore and investigate. This is done at a pace that suits them and enables them to make progress in their learning. Staff are very gentle in their approach to the children. They support and guide them when necessary, in a way that does not disturb or interrupt their play, allowing the children to work through their own challenges. Staff are very adept at using open ended questions to make children think and adapt teaching techniques according to the age and ability of each child. They implement a varied range of teaching

methods to introduce an exciting range of activities and experiences to all children including those with learning difficulties, disabilities and children who speak English as an additional language. Planning for the setting clearly shows how the staff have made links between the Montessori method of teaching and the Foundation Stage. The observations made on children's achievements throughout the sessions are used to inform next stages of children's development.

Children demonstrate high levels of independence, they collect their self chosen activities and concentrate for long periods of time until they have achieved their aim. They work alone, alongside others, or engage co-operatively in small groups. Children listen well to instructions and participate well during a vast selection of learning opportunities. Children learn to take care of their environment; they remember to push their chairs under the table when they move on to another activity, and replace their activity before choosing another. They sit together and pour themselves a drink from the jug, chatting to their friends. When they have finished, they collect their cups and take them to the washing area, where they independently wash and stack the utensils. During the practical life skill activities, for example, washing up, washing clothes, polishing mirrors and scrubbing table tops, they independently mop up spills of water, using cloths and mops and replace articles that they have used ready for the next child.

Children enjoy listening to stories in groups, for example, "The hungry caterpillar" and staff use appropriate props, such as, felt leaves and fruits to keep the children interested. They access books independently from the book area where they sit with their peers, handle books appropriately and recognise that print carries meaning. Children are beginning to link sounds and letters as they find their name on their coat hooks and work folders, and see clearly labelled resources around the room. Some children are able to form clear recognisable letters as they attempt to label their own work. Others are helped by staff, for example, they are encouraged to follow the dotted lines to develop their pencil control. Children have opportunities to mark make as they use an assortment of writing materials, such as, pens, pencils, crayons, chalks and markers.

An excellent range of resources introduce children to mathematical concepts such as measure, shape, order and size using graded Montessori equipment. They use sandpaper numerals as a way of learning how to recognise and record numbers. Children are encouraged to count at every opportunity, for example, clapping to how many syllables are in specific words, they count the tadpoles, how many pieces of fruit they are cutting up, and how many children are sat in the circle. They use adding and subtraction when using additional props, for example, the fruits eaten by the hungry caterpillar in the story and the addition strip boards where they calculate units of tens. More advanced children use units of hundreds and thousands. Weight and measurement is compared as children pour water into plastic bottles and china tea cups and complete an exercise on how tall children are, using tape measures.

Children learn about themselves and their families through discussion and topic work and acquire knowledge of their environment during their weekly nature walk on the common and when visiting the local shop and church. They plant seeds and vegetables; observe living things, for example, the tadpoles and learn about new life. Children care for the pre-school gold fish, which they have named Fish and Chips. Children have some opportunities to use technology, for example, the computer, tape recorder and some programmable toys. However, these are

limited and not available daily to fully enhance their understanding of how things work or to fully stimulate their curiosity.

Children enjoy taking part in group singing on a daily basis, where they use their fingers and bodies to act out the actions to favourite nursery rhymes, for example, "Five little ducks" and "The animals march two by two". They listen to a range of music to help them think about how they are feeling and use a range of musical instruments. Children take part in movement to music and develop control of their bodies as they pretend to be runner beans growing, they stretch up high, then curl up into little balls on the floor. They develop control of their large muscle control when using climbing apparatus, balancing beams and during their weekly walk, although this is not provided daily and limits some children's opportunities to develop these skills.

Children independently use a range of tools, for example, rolling pins, cutters, tweezers, scissors, glue sticks and paint brushes. They enjoy using a range of media, such as water, sand, pasta, glue, paint and play-dough. Children have access to a dedicated sensory area where they can touch, feel and smell various items, such as, pine cones, twigs, cotton wool, corks, sponges and fabrics. They use their senses and express their feelings as they dip the woodblocks into paint to decorate their Easter carrier bags. They talk about how the paint feels cold and sticky and describe the different patterns they are making. They use their imagination playing with props, for example, several children pretend to be in the jungle with the plastic elephants, monkeys and tigers and make a cage to capture them. Another children explains that he has made a new invention with the wooden blocks.

Staff work very well as a team suggesting new ideas and methods for the planning and monitoring the children in a variety of ways to identify individual targets for children to work towards. Staff recognise the group's own strengths and weaknesses and provide a curriculum which meets the needs and abilities of the children, this ensures children are able to achieve their full potential.

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

The provision is good.

Children are highly valued as individuals as the staff get to know the children and their families. Children develop a positive attitude towards their peers and adults. Planned activities, resources and celebrations introduce children to the local community and to the wider world and encourage them to be accepting of difference. Children often take part in cooking activities and try different foods from around the world. They dress up in different costumes and see a range of visitors, for example the policeman, fire brigade and road safety officer. There are good systems in place to support children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and for those who speak English as an additional language. Staff work successfully with parents in identifying children's needs and involve other professionals where appropriate, to support each individual child.

Children benefit from effective praise and encouragement; they are extremely well behaved and well mannered. Staff use positive methods when managing children's behaviour and intervene only when necessary, allowing children time to think, negotiate and resolve disputes

for themselves. This positive approach fosters children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The partnership with parents and carers is good. Parents receive good quality information about the curriculum and the Montessori method of teaching. Staff hold coffee mornings and parents evenings where they talk to parents about the Montessori approach and ways that they can continue some of the ideas at home. Parents receive regular newsletters and are kept informed about forthcoming events via the notice boards. They have opportunities to attend the setting to observe their children at play and staff talk to parents regularly about their child's progress to aid good communication. Parents are encouraged to become involved by sending things in from home relating to themes and helping out on the parent/rota system. Parents have opportunities to view their child's records at any time, therefore, children's learning is significantly enhanced by the contributions parents make and the secure links in place between home and the pre-school.

### **Organisation**

The organisation is good.

Space, staff and resources are well organised to create a stimulating environment where children are busy and occupied throughout the session. Staff demonstrate a good knowledge and understanding of child development and successfully implement the Montessori method of teaching. A robust recruitment system ensures that children are cared for by an appropriately checked staff team. All staff must read and sign all policies and procedures and the high staff to children ratios, enable them to meet children's individual needs and support children with additional needs well.

The policies and procedures are regularly updated to ensure their effectiveness and ensure that children's need are met. Documentation is generally well maintained, however some weaknesses have been identified with regards to the fire procedures and the registers. All records and documentation are stored securely to maintain confidentiality.

Leadership and management of the nursery education is good. There is a strong commitment to good practice and effective systems are in place to monitor and evaluate teaching. Management provides very good support to staff, both informally on a daily basis and formally through weekly meetings and annual appraisals. Staff regularly observe the children and also each other, to develop their teaching practices and offer constructive feedback. Staff work well together as a team, they are keen and enthusiastic and are active in updating their training. This helps ensure all staff contribute fully to the group and successfully promote outcomes for children. Overall, the setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

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

At the last nursery education the setting was asked to provide opportunities for children to freely express their own creativity and imagination in role play, model making and craft activities. They were also asked to enable children to develop climbing and balancing skills on large equipment. Children are now able to freely select what they want to play with; they use their imagination during art and craft activities. Climbing equipment has been purchased to help

develop children's large muscle control, however, this is not made available daily, therefore remains a recommendation. The setting was also asked to ensure children have opportunities to know how to use ICT equipment and programmable toys on a regular basis. There is still limited access to programmable toys for children to gain an understanding on how things work, therefore, this remains a recommendation following this inspection.

At the last care inspection the setting was asked to ensure that all records relating to day care activities are readily accessible on the premises and available for inspection at all times; and to give parents details of policies and procedures available. All records are now available and kept on the premises for inspection and information regarding the policies and procedures are clearly displayed in the foyer area and made available to parents.

### **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):

- ensure the dates and times of fire evacuations are consistently recorded and evaluated
- ensure records show staff's times of attendance

#### **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):

- further enhance children's opportunities to use everyday technology to enable them to find out how things work and stimulate their curiosity
- ensure all children have opportunities to participate in activities that promote and develop their large muscle control

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)