

# Sunflower Montessori

Inspection report for early years provision

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	142790
<b>Inspection date</b>	20 April 2007
<b>Inspector</b>	Susan June Stone
<b>Setting Address</b>	9 Palmer Street, Frome, Somerset, BA11 1DS
<b>Telephone number</b>	01373 453853
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<b>Registered person</b>	Sunflower Montessori Nursery
<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 outstanding.

### WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Sunflower Montessori Nursery is a private nursery school, situated in the town of Frome in Somerset. The nursery are registered for 30 children between the ages of two to five years. It is open five days a week term time only from 9.00am until 15:00

The accommodation is privately rented and consists of two rooms with an extension downstairs to include a kitchen and messy play area. An outside area is now available to use. The children work in mixed age groups and are split between the two rooms. There are 61 children on roll at present, which includes 31 funded three-year-olds, and 23 funded four-year-olds. The nursery support children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and children who have English as an additional language.

The joint owners share responsibility for the nursery and there are four other members of staff. All staff hold an early years qualification. The joint owners hold a Montessori diploma and a BEd.

The nursery receives support from the local authority advisors.

## **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION**

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

The provision is good.

Children have access to a range of activities which help to contribute to their healthy growth and development. They are beginning to learn about their own personal care and they show a good awareness of their own needs. They understand the importance of maintaining their own hygiene. They know they must wash hands before snack and after messy activities. Before snack the children wash their hands at the sink, using liquid soap and running water. Paper towels are used for drying hands. Staff set good examples for maintaining hygiene in their own behaviour. They help to prevent the spread of infection through carrying out effective cleaning routines, such as ensuring tables are cleaned before and after meals and snacks. They have a good knowledge of first aid, which ensures medical needs can be dealt with effectively. First aid boxes are easily accessible to staff and they are regularly checked to ensure the contents are suitable to use and conform to current guidelines. Unfortunately some of the contents have reached their expiry date.

Children's individual dietary needs are known to staff and managed effectively. The children are developing an understanding of healthy eating. Food provided by parents is suitably stored until lunch time. Healthy snacks are provided each day, at morning snack children were able to choose from sliced apple or dried banana chips. A variety of different healthy snacks are provided throughout the week. Children are able to choose between milk and water to drink with their snacks, which they pour for themselves. They are able to help themselves to additional drinks of water throughout the day if they are thirsty, which helps them to manage their own health care needs.

The daily routine allows the children to experience regular outdoor play where they benefit from the fresh air. They take part in outdoor physical activities using equipment like hoops and bean bags and playing large group games with the parachute. Children also participate in indoor physical activities like music and movement sessions. These activities help the children to develop large muscle skills and co-ordination.

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

The provision is good.

A welcoming environment is provided for children and parents. The children play within a very well organised setting, and have sufficient space to move about and enjoy the activities safely. The children are divided into two groups and each group have their own room base with permanent staff. The use of space, and the resources within the nursery and each room, allows children to participate in a range of activities which help to encourage development and learning in all areas. It also allows the children greatest freedom to play in comfort. The rooms are suitably divided into different areas of play which allows the children appropriate independence under adult supervision. They are able to select resources that they wish to use which are stored on the open shelves at an appropriate height for the children. Children enjoy using the toys available to them, like role-play, puzzles and games, making decisions about their play and learning. There is sufficient furniture and equipment available to meet the care needs of all children attending which are clean, safe and suitable to use. The activity resources are rotated between each room to ensure the children remain stimulated and means they are able to use new and different activities regularly.

Children are cared for within a safe and secure environment, where hazards have been identified and addressed. For example, the radiators are fitted with guards, a gate is used at the top of the stairs and door jams and hooks are used to prevent fingers being trapped. Good security of the premises ensures no unauthorised access and the children remain safe from strangers. Staff safety check all areas before children arrive to ensure all safety measures are in place. A written risk assessment of the premises regularly takes place and any potential hazards to children that are identified are addressed. This helps to ensure the safety and well being of all persons present. Staff and children also regularly practise procedures to ensure their safety, such as the evacuation of the building in an emergency.

The staff are well deployed within the setting which helps to ensure that the children are supervised closely at all times, and their safety and well being are protected. Children's well being is well protected by the staff, who have a good understanding in their role of protecting and safeguarding children. All staff are aware of the setting's child protection policy and procedures. The managers have a clear understanding of their role in the protection of children, making sure the children's welfare is always a priority.

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

The provision is outstanding.

Staff have a very good understanding of the development and care needs of the children attending and provide a very welcoming environment that encourages individual learning and development for all children. Very good relationships have been developed between staff and children in all areas of the nursery. There is a calm, relaxed and happy atmosphere throughout the setting where the children thrive and enjoy the activities available, learning and developing as they play. A good range of development activities and resources are available to the children. A balance of free play and adult led activities are offered, that encourage learning and development in all areas. Children are encouraged to explore and investigate using all senses as appropriate. The children play alongside each other and interact with each other very well. They feel confident and secure in their surroundings and they are happy to share and take turns. Their personal independence is being developed as the children make choices about their play and learning. They choose the activity they wish to do, such as the role play area, playing with the playdoh or making their own collages by cutting and sticking old cards. Children's care and education needs are very well supported and they are making very good progress in their development and learning.

### **Nursery Education**

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Staff demonstrate an excellent understanding of the Foundation Stage and how children learn. Children learn through rich, varied and imaginative experiences. Activities are planned to cover a wide range of exciting and stimulating topics across all six areas of learning. Staff use open ended questions to make children think. For example, 'What do you think this might be?', 'What do you think it might be used for?' 'How many more do you think we need to reach the end?' The staff know the children extremely well and adapt activities to suit individual needs. They ensure the children are suitably challenged and gain from the experiences offered.

Clear written activity plans indicate that children are offered a range of activities across the six areas of learning. These indicate learning intentions, which relate to the stepping stones in the Foundation Stage. Daily activity plans indicate how the activity will be delivered to different children depending on their level of understanding and ability. This is to ensure that activities

are suitably challenging and meet individual learning and development needs. For example the guessing the picture activity, for more able children this was extended to encourage them to find the correct letter the picture began with. Planned activities are evaluated and recorded for each child against the individual learning objective to gauge if children have been suitably challenged and progress has been made. This information is then transferred and recorded in the children's individual progress folders. Staff work together to observe and report on the children's progress and achievements. All children have individual folders which indicate their individual achievements. These folders are then used to help to inform planning to ensure appropriate activities are offered to ensure the children are making good progress through the stepping stones of the Foundation Stage.

Children are very confident to attend the nursery and separate from the parents and carers with ease. Very good relationships have been formed with staff and adults and early friendships are being formed between the children. Children are able to sit quietly as appropriate, such as at large group circle time and story time. They understand the nursery routines and the levels of expected behaviour. The children's behaviour is exemplary, they respond very well to the positive praise and encouragement offered by staff. Their personal independence is being very well developed. They independently select the resources from the shelves and put the equipment back when they have finished using it. They pour their own drinks at snack time and wash their cups and plates when they have finished their food. The children independently use the toilet facilities and wash their hands afterwards.

Children use language well to communicate and express their thoughts and ideas. They confidently initiate conversations with adults and each other, eagerly talking about what they are doing and events in their lives like going to Ballet Dancing classes where they have to wear a special dress called a Tutu and special shoes which you must not wear outside. They enjoy books for stories and sit quietly to listen at story time. Some children know the letters of the alphabet and the letter sounds. They are able to recognise the initial letter of different objects when playing a picture card guessing game. They are able to recognise their written name and some children can recognise the name of others. Their writing skills are being developed through planned activities and regular opportunities for mark making.

Children show an interest in numbers and counting, and they regularly count in daily routines, like how many children are present and estimate if there are more boys or girls present. They count spontaneously within their chosen play and are able to recognise numbers in their digit form. During the threading activity a child counts to 23 without any help from staff. They have a good understanding of size and shape and use these skills when making puzzles and playing shape puzzle games.

Through topic work and themes children learn about different festivals, cultures and beliefs and they are learning to value and respect others' views and beliefs. The children talk about the child that the nursery sponsors in Africa, and regularly compare aspects of their own lives to hers. Opportunities are provided for the children to develop their information and Communication Technology skills by using the nursery laptop computer. They successfully follow the instructions and are able to complete the program at different levels of difficulty. Opportunities are provided for the children to explore and investigate with a range of materials. A child looks at and feels the natural shells and wood and describes how they feel, he put the shell to his ear to explore the sounds that he can hear. At large group time, staff ask children to find items made from different materials like wood, metal or plastic.

Children have access to many different creative activities like collage, junk modelling, painting, and playdoh. Staff are appropriately involved in these activities. They supervise the children and allow them to develop their own artistic flair and design; they encourage self expression and provide a variety of resources and materials to develop this. A child states 'we are making vehicles, I am going to use milk bottle tops for the wheels because they are round'. Children enjoy favourite songs and rhymes. They join in with enthusiasm and enjoyment, matching movements to the words. They are eager to be chosen to be a character when re-enacting the story. They use their imagination in the chosen role play, pretending to go to the beach by train. They put sun cream on their baby dolls to protect them from the sun and they pretend to have picnics eating sandwiches on a blanket.

Children move around the setting with great confidence. They successfully negotiate space when choosing activities they wish to participate in. During outdoor play they confidently play together throwing and catching beanbags and balancing them on their heads. They use a variety of tools and equipment with increasing control and dexterity, such as using scissors and glue sticks to make their own picture collages, they use rollers and cutters for playdoh activities. The younger children thread pasta onto string while the older children progress to threading pieces of drinking straws keeping to a colour pattern, counting the pieces they have threaded.

Overall children are making excellent good progress in all areas of learning.

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

The provision is outstanding.

Children are confident and settled within the nursery, and they are valued and respected as individuals. They receive excellent support and care from staff who liaise closely with parents and carers to ensure children's individual progress is well enhanced. Children gain a well-developed respect for others and their beliefs, cultures and traditions through discussion, planned activities and resources which promote positive images of diversity. Topics include opportunities to explore other festivals and cultures which have personal meaning to children attending the nursery. The nursery sponsors a child from Africa and the children have compared their own lives to the life of children in Africa. Such as living in mud huts in Africa and having to fetch water from a well in the ground. Staff try to incorporate different aspects of African life into activities provided, encouraging the children to think how their lives compare, looking at the differences and similarities.

Children show an excellent understanding and awareness of others. Children with English as an additional language or learning disabilities are enthusiastically welcomed into the group by their peers and inclusion is very evident. Staff support children with learning disabilities and/or difficulties exceptionally well and use simple sign language to help children communicate. This is beneficial to all children, promotes equality and aid communication. Children's individual needs are met in a highly effective, effortless way by staff. All children have equal opportunities to partake and with additional support skilfully provided for younger or less able children to participate. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Children are building good relationships with staff and peers. They play well individually or together in small groups and encourage others to join in. They know the nursery routines and their behaviour is exemplary. The children show a sense of belonging and feel part of the group. Children learn skills to become self-disciplined and work together effectively on their own or with others. Older, more able children assist younger children with tasks and enjoy showing them how to behave. Staff are consistent in their behaviour management and reward children

constantly with verbal praise or encouragement and positive body language. The children demonstrate good manners and are polite, saying 'please' and 'thank you' when appropriate, like at snack time without having to be prompted by staff.

The partnership with parents and carers is outstanding. Parents are extremely happy with the care and education that their children receive. Discussions with parents help to ensure that the individual needs of the children are identified and addressed. Staff are available to talk with parents each day which helps to contribute to the consistency in the children's care and well-being. Children benefit greatly from the effective sharing of information between staff and parents. Planning is displayed for parents and letters are sent home about the topics to be covered each term. Children's initial assessments include input from parents and their individual progress is shared regularly. This ensures children's individual needs are met effectively. Questionnaires are sent home to parents to identify their thoughts and comments about the future of the nursery, the responses to these are valued and respected by the owners and are used to help to monitor and evaluate the nursery provision.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is good.

The care offered is very well supported by extremely efficient organisation of daily sessions. The leadership and management of nursery education is outstanding. The joint owners oversee the general running and organisation of the nursery. They are supported by dedicated staff, which are aware of their roles and responsibilities and who work very effectively together as a team. Staff are well qualified and experienced in childcare. They have a good understanding of child development. They are enthusiastic in their roles and committed to working with the children. The children benefit from a well organised environment with well planned activities, which enables them to play and explore freely. They experience a wide variety of different play opportunities which support their development and learning well. Consequently, the sessions run smoothly for the children who make good progress. The staff know all the children well, they all evaluate children's participation in activities and record the children's development. They then use this information to plan the next steps in their learning. As a result, they have a clear understanding of how to implement the activities effectively, adapting them as necessary to meet children's individual needs.

The required documentation relating to the children's education, care, health and safety is in place to ensure that they are cared for appropriately and the outcomes for children are promoted. However the daily attendance register does not accurately record the arrival and departure times of children and adults. For a short time at midday it is not clear how many children are actually present. When the morning session finishes, the register does not indicate which children have left before the other children arrive for the afternoon session. Also staff do not record if they leave the premises for their lunchtime break. This means an accurate record would not be available in the event of an emergency evacuation during this time. All records and documentation are readily available for inspection and are stored confidentially to protect children's personal details. Parents have access to written records about their children and have the opportunity to discuss their children's welfare and learning.

There is a very positive ethos and the owners and their staff work extremely hard to provide excellent quality care and meaningful learning experiences for the children. The joint owners ensure the provision is constantly monitored and evaluated to meet the needs of the children and staff keep up to date with the latest information for consistency. They are committed to improving the outcomes for children and immediately address any identified weaknesses.

Training is given a high priority and staff's knowledge of the Foundation Stage Curriculum and the National Standards is excellent. This enables the setting to maintain the high standards and deliver a very effective curriculum alongside the Montessori teaching and ethos.

Overall the nursery meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

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

At the last combined inspection in October 2003, there was one recommendation to address with regards to the care inspection, and a point for consideration from the Nursery Education inspection. Both have been addressed well. The recommendation from the care inspection was; to develop and implement a key worker system. An effective key worker system has been introduced which works well within the setting.

The point for consideration from the Nursery Education inspection was to develop the information given to parents about the planning and how the activities link to the Early Learning Goals. The written activity plans clearly indicate the learning intentions of each activity and are linked to the stepping stones, which lead towards the Early Learning Goals. These plans are displayed and available for parents to see and discuss with staff as necessary. Copies are available for the parents to take home if requested. Newsletters are also sent home to parents to inform them of the activities and topics each term.

### **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 outstanding.

### **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 contents of the first aid box are suitable to use
- ensure an accurate record of children and adults on the premises is consistently maintained



## **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)