

Wharfedale Babies

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY340891
Inspection date	02 May 2007
Inspector	Christine Anne Rice

Setting Address	Wharfedale Montessori School, Strid Cottage, Bolton Abbey, Skipton, North Yorkshire, BD23 6AN
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Registered person	Jane Lord
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Type of inspection	Childcare
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Type of care	Full day care
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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

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.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Wharfedale Babies is a Montessori nursery, run by the proprietor of the nearby Montessori school. It operates from a converted school house on the outskirts of Bolton Abbey near Skipton. The setting is open Monday to Friday from 08.00 to 18.00 forty six weeks of the year. Children have the use of a large hall which can be separated into two areas if required. There are enclosed outdoor play areas for the children.

The setting is registered to care for a maximum of 16 children under the age of five years, and of these, not more than six may be under two years at any one time. There are currently 12 children on roll.

There are three members of staff, all of whom hold an appropriate early years qualification. Children are cared for in small, mixed age family groups in accordance with the Montessori philosophy and practice, which the setting follows.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children stay healthy because staff follow good health and hygiene guidelines, policies and procedures. For example, the premises are scrupulously clean, bedding is washed daily and the nappy changing mat is cleaned after every use with anti-bacterial cleaner. The staff act as good role models, successfully promoting the children's awareness of the importance of good hygiene by teaching the children how, when and why they need to wash their hands. The children's health is further promoted by the setting's comprehensive sickness and administration of medicines policies. In addition, all staff hold a current first aid certificate and there are two first aid kits available, plus an accident record, which is up to date except for one missing parental signature.

The children benefit from eating wholesome, nutritious food, such as oatmeal biscuits for snacks and sausages, new potatoes and peas for lunch, followed by fruit salad for dessert. Tea commonly consists of omelettes, cheese on toast or sandwiches. All food is cooked on the premises and careful attention is paid to ensure that the food is fresh, so that, for example, if the children are to eat salmon for lunch, the fish will only be bought the previous evening. The hygienic handling of the food is assured as two of the staff have food hygiene certificates. The children develop an awareness of healthy eating as they help to prepare the food, such as by washing the potatoes. When children are thirsty they may help themselves to filtered water, which is always available at the side of the room in a covered jug.

There are good opportunities for the children to enjoy fresh air and exercise as they have access to a secure outdoor play area, which is well equipped with bikes and push-along toys. Priority is also afforded to sleep requirements, as children rest according to their own needs rather than a strict routine.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The children are cared for in a warm, safe and secure environment, which beckons them as there are many interesting resources and activities arranged at child level. There is good evidence of children's activity as the windows are decorated attractively with craft work daffodils and bluebells, which the children have made with a little help from the staff. Children develop independence as they freely choose their own activities from the toys and equipment, which are kept in low drawers and shelves around the room. The majority of the resources are made from natural materials, with wood predominating. These resources are kept meticulously clean by the staff, who wash the toys every week.

There is a very good range of equipment to meet the children's needs and promote their learning in all areas. For example, there are age-appropriate utensils for eating, child-sized tables and chairs, highchairs, potties and double buggies. The provision for sleeping is excellent with the bedding being very clean as it is washed daily. Younger children snuggle down to sleep in cosy baskets, whilst older children sleep on individual mats in a specially designated quiet area of the room.

As the staff have a very good awareness of safety, potential risks are minimised. For example, the kitchen is safely gated, written risk assessments are completed for indoor and outdoor

activities, hazardous materials are inaccessible and activities and resources are suitable for the ages of the children. Children are carefully supervised at all times. Doors are kept locked and opened only with keypads to prevent children leaving the premises unattended. There is a good system for ensuring the safe collection of the children, as the provision will not allow the children to go home with anyone other than their parents, without the parents' written permission. The children too, are learning to contribute to their own safety, for instance, with the practising of the fire evacuation plan.

The children's welfare is further promoted because staff understand their role in relation to child protection. There is a written child protection policy, which includes all the correct procedures, although it does not contain certain details, such as the contact details for the local child protection agencies.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Children play and learn in an atmosphere of calm and order with an excellent variety of challenging activities to stimulate them. The staff attentively support the children, who independently choose resources that interest them. Amongst the wealth of choices are threading toys, heuristic play, sensorial letters, dressing frames, construction toys, dough, drawing, painting, musical instruments, a slide, a hobby horse and push-along toys. All activities are child led, rather than adult dominated. Children demonstrate respect for their surroundings by tidying up toys when they have finished playing with them, before moving on to explore something new.

Particularly popular is the kaleidoscopic mirrored tent, which the children sit in with their toys, experimenting with movement and marvelling at the results, since the reflections appear to go on to infinity. Children participate in a good amount of independent activities, such as solving jigsaw puzzles and reading books. They come together for more organised group activities, such as box craft, when very young children use spreaders most successfully to stick different shaped boxes together. Staff challenge the children to think about the different shapes and show the children, for instance, how some boxes open to provide two circles. Some children manage to inadvertently glue small boxes to their trousers. Staff and children alike enjoy a chuckle, fuelled by this amusing sequence of events.

Outdoor play too is a strong feature of the setting as children play outside in the secure playground most days. Here they enjoy developing physical skills through riding bikes and playing with balls. There is a play house for imaginative play, plus the opportunity for sand and water play. Children learn about the natural world through growing herbs and cress from seed, as well as going for walks with the staff to feed the ducks and to see the new born lambs in spring time. Staff plan activities, but they do not follow them slavishly so that children benefit from activities which are sometimes spontaneous and are always responsive to their needs and interests.

Young children benefit from the warm, caring relationships they enjoy with the staff, who are unstinting in offering cuddles. In addition, high quality interactions between the staff and the children ensure that the children blossom. The staff make excellent use of their specialist training by linking a myriad of activities with the 'Birth to three matters' framework. They then carefully assess the children's progress in individual activities and make detailed recordings. As a result, staff are extremely well informed about the children's capabilities and are able to help them capitalise on their achievements and enhance their development.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

The children, who are highly valued as individuals, are treated with respect and equal concern. All the children are fully included and have free access to appropriate toys and equipment in line with the setting's equal opportunities policy. Information is sought about children's dietary and cultural requirements so that the care is tailored to the children's particular needs. Children learn about the diversity of the world through access to a good range of resources, such as information and story books and multicultural Russian dolls, which reflect positive images. This is supplemented with the sampling of dishes, such as curry and chilli, from different parts of the world and the celebration of various festivals. For example, the children have recently celebrated Anzac Day by baking Anzac biscuits.

Staff have a positive attitude towards caring for children with learning difficulties and disabilities. There is a special educational needs coordinator (SENCO) in place and staff acknowledge the importance of carefully assessing whether they can properly meet an individual's needs, balanced against the needs of the children they already care for. The staff foster a concern for others and children develop responsible behaviour. If younger children behave inappropriately, they are distracted, whilst older children are given explanations as to why their behaviour is unacceptable, in accordance with the discipline policy. Children behave well and are cooperative, taking turns, for instance, to wash the potatoes for lunch.

Great emphasis is placed by the setting on working in partnership with parents. Verbal and written information is continually shared, so that the staff are well informed about any events at home that may have a bearing on the children's mood or behaviour, such as the birth of a new sibling, for example. Every evening the children take home personal diaries, which contain copious notes about their daily activities and achievements, including details about their sleeping and eating. Parents are encouraged to make contributions to these diaries by adding comments and including items, such as photographs. Should parents have any complaints, they have recourse to a written complaints procedure. However, this does not contain the regulator's contact details.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The provision comes within the auspices of the Wharfedale Montessori School, though the day to day responsibility rests with the manager and deputy, who are well qualified, with qualifications in both Montessori education and childcare. All staff are employed following thorough recruitment and vetting procedures. The ensuing induction process ensures that the staff become familiar with the setting's policies, procedures and ethos. The staff have all completed training in the 'Birth to three matters' framework, which they apply to good effect in benefiting the children. Regular appraisals and encouragement to pursue training opportunities, both in-house and in the community, ensures that the staff are very motivated and up to date.

Staff create a stimulating, orderly and harmonious environment for the children, whilst making good use of time, space and resources. The staff work seamlessly together as a team and are deployed well to maximise the children's enjoyment and development as well as safety, since the children are always well supervised. Children feel secure and confident because the staff consistently interact with them, providing effective support and encouragement. The ample adult to child ratios, which are currently above minimum requirements, are an added bonus.

There is a good range of policies and procedures in place, which provide a structure for the safe and efficient management of the setting. With the exception of some minor omissions, all of the required documentation, such as the register, accident book and visitors' book are in place and current. The registration certificate and certificate of insurance are prominently displayed for parents to view.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

Not applicable.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since registration 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.

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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 that the contact details of the local child protection agencies are included in the child protection policy
- ensure that all documentation, which is required for the efficient and safe management of the provision is fully maintained.

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