

Seedlings Montessori at Moorlands

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	161028
Inspection date	03 July 2007
Inspector	Lorraine Wardlaw
Setting Address	Moorlands Primary School, Kesteven Way, Southampton, Hampshire, SO18 5RJ
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Registered person	Helen Prochazka and Barbara Isaacs
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?

Seedlings Montessori Day Nursery opened in 2001. The day nursery and after school club runs from two rooms within Moorlands Primary School, in Bitterne, Southampton. There are currently 43 children from two years to nine years on roll. This includes 36 funded three and four-year-olds. Children attend a variety of sessions, including all day. The setting is able to support children who have learning difficulties and English as an additional language.

The group opens five days a week for 48 weeks a year. The setting is open from 08.00 until 18.00 daily. There are five members of staff who work directly with the children, and the owner is available to cover in staff's absence. All of the staff have Montessori qualifications and some have additional early years training. The setting receives support from the Local Authority. The setting received accreditation by Montessori Education (UK) an investors in children quality assurance scheme in 2006.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children enjoy a very healthy snack at a time of their choosing, which helps them respond to and look after their own physical needs. They sit with their peers and select pieces of banana, grapes, apple, pear, cucumber and carrot, and drink water or milk. Children with allergies are well cared for because staff are very aware of them and staff are trained to offer medical assistance, should they have a reaction. Children demonstrate good personal hygiene routines; for example, they independently take a tissue from the tissue box to wipe their nose and without support access the bathroom to use the toilet and wash their hands. Children have excellent opportunities to develop their fine motor skills through the wealth of Montessori activities on offer to them; they proudly undo and screw the nuts and bolts together, use tweezers to move small beads into a container, or use the padlock and keys. However, there is less emphasis on planning children's gross motor, physical development with infrequent use of the covered area in inclement weather. Two-year-olds are well supported by staff; they are able to hold their comforter and staff offer cuddles when they are feeling anxious. They have opportunities to rest or sleep during the day. Children's health and welfare is successfully promoted because staff keep good records of the children's accidents and medication administered.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for and learn in a very safe indoor environment where they can safely move around in the good amount of space provided. They safely select from the full range of Montessori equipment, which is presented in an orderly way and safely organised at the children's height. Good safety measures have been put in place, such as finger guards on the outside doors to prevent children from hurting their fingers and extensive risk assessments are carried out every six months on all equipment and areas within the nursery. Staff deal swiftly with mushrooms, growing in the grass and children learn not to touch them because they may be poisonous. Children regularly practise the fire drill and staff receive good, regular training about fire safety. Children are gently reminded by staff, should they forget, to tuck their chairs under the table when they have finished a task, to ensure there are not any hazards in the nursery. The older children learn about road safety and all children learn to look after one another when they walk in the school grounds, by holding each others hands. Children are well protected from harm, because staff speak with confidence about the child protection procedure and liaison with social services.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are very confident learners; they arrive happily each session and with ease, swiftly selecting an activity that stimulates their interest. They are keen to complete the wealth of Montessori activities, with minimal assistance from staff. Two-year-olds who are settling in are offered sympathetic support from staff, and initially enjoy activities that are familiar to them, such as play with the small worlds trains, cars or animals. Their play is later extended when their key worker presents them with Montessori activities, such as opening and closing cupboards and encouraging painting at the easel. More confident two-year-olds, spontaneously put away their toys, roll the mat up, put it away and select the collage materials, glue, spreader and sit at the table to create their own individual picture.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff provide a calm, quiet, stimulating learning environment where children can work on their own initiative and progress at their own pace. Children benefit immensely from the one to one teaching they experience with the staff. Staff have a secure knowledge of the Foundation Stage curriculum and work extensively with the Montessori curriculum, which addresses successfully, most of the children's learning needs. Good plans cover all equipment and curriculum areas, are linked to the stepping stones for learning and include individual Montessori learning plans for all children. Staff have a good knowledge of children's capabilities and complete Montessori assessments. However, this knowledge is not transposed into the Foundation Stage assessments, where there are few anecdotal observations of children's starting points, and attainment in relation to the stepping stones, which lead to the early learning goals.

Children engage easily in conversations with the adults and with visitors to the setting. They talk about their home experiences and describe in detail their activities. For example, a three year old explains to the inspector 'put the sponge in the water and it soaks all the water up'. Some staff are skilled at promoting language development, by asking open ended questions, but some staff stand back and miss opportunities to talk to children, to develop their thinking skills, particularly at snack time. Children can recognise their name and have good opportunities to read simple words such as hen, with the excellent Montessori resources. They are able to practise emergent writing and some children can form letters correctly when writing their name. Children have fun with the practitioner when they individually, play the I spy alphabet sound game with objects. They handle books independently and like to role play, by imitating the adults with books and at ellipse time. Children are able to count well and recognise numerals through the excellent resources available to them. For example, a four-year-old grades and counts the number rods on the carpet, counting confidently to 10 and matches the numerals; another counts the spindle rods and matches them to the numerals. Children regularly sort small beads, make patterns, grade and name solid shapes with the specialised equipment. They work out number problems for themselves, such as when they need to find four children to play the sound lotto game, and sing number rhymes with the hand puppet. However, there is less emphasis by the staff during the every day routine and other tasks to promote simple number problems, with more emphasis on counting. Children have good opportunities to find out about the wider world through the cultural area of Montessori; here they can look at maps, the globes or access books on different cultures and flags of the world. They enjoy using technological equipment; children regularly use the setting's digital camera to record their work and are becoming skilled at using the mouse with the computer. There is a well resourced nature table for children to look at, touch and contribute to. Children love to create their own collage pictures and to paint at the easel, developing their own creativity. They use their imaginations when they build with bricks, such as a castle and carefully grade the colour tablets by decreasing shades on a mat.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Children consistently display high levels of concentration at their self chosen activities and from a young age they learn to operate independently in the well-laid out environment. They need minimal assistance from the adults and persevere until they have completed their task. For example, children spontaneously take their plate and cup to the low sink after snack time, and independently, they wash and wipe it up. Children feel a great sense of achievement, doing things on their own, and proudly take photographs of their work, such as a large model made

out of bricks. They quickly learn codes of conduct within the nursery such as returning their activity to the low level shelf before selecting a new activity and are very well behaved. Children enjoy praise and encouragement from the staff, who have a good understanding of their individual needs. All children are welcomed and fully included in the life of the nursery and are able to appreciate positive images of disability and culture. Children with learning difficulties are suitably supported because staff seek to work with multi agencies to meet their needs. Children take part in activities to help the wider world and those who are less fortunate than them, for example, they take part in operation Christmas child. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Partnership with parents is good. Staff are approachable and communicate regularly with parents about their children's care and education. Good systems are in place which helps the partnership such as the diary record book, open evenings about the Montessori approach and the regular exchange of information about children's progress and objectives. Parents are regularly issued with newsletters about the nursery and highly praise the relationship they have with the nursery.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children are very happy and they clearly benefit from the well organised, Montessori environment and from the experienced and caring practitioners. Ratios are effectively adhered to which ensures children receive good supervision, when needed and there is good use of indoor space and resources. Records are well up to date, the required documentation is in place and all paperwork is available for inspection. Staff are well qualified and attend occasional short courses and regular in house training to update their knowledge and skills. The staff team work well together and have a professional approach to their work; this has a successful impact on the outcomes for children. Good written policies and procedures underpin staff practice. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Leadership and management is good. The manager has a clear understanding of her role and responsibilities and is keen to improve the setting's practice further. Staff undertake six monthly appraisals to reflect on their practice and informal observations of their Montessori teaching practice takes place. The nursery monitors its curriculum by reviewing practice and reporting to Montessori Education (UK) but this does not wholly identify areas of improvement in the Foundation Stage.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the nursery were requested to extend the resources in the role play area to enable children to develop their imaginative play in group situations and to use writing for different purposes. The setting introduced a notepad and pen with the vet's role play outfit for children to write with and have extended their role play outfits. Also, children sometimes have the opportunity to write a coffee and tea list for staff. The setting were requested to provide opportunities for children to develop their gross motor skills, through climbing and travelling over, under and through large pieces of equipment. Although the setting bought a large climbing frame, children's gross motor development is not fully promoted and therefore this remains a recommendation. The nursery were also requested to ensure all snacks served to children are of good nutritional value; this has been successfully addressed with children accessing a good variety of fruit and vegetables.

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.

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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):

- plan for children's gross motor physical development daily and make use of the outside covered area

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 develop staff teaching practice to promote children's problem solving skills and language for thinking during the routine and work time
- ensure staff keep children's record of achievement up to date, including observations of their starting points in all areas of learning, with particular emphasis on those not covered by Montessori records

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