

Tilsworth Montessori School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY270686
Inspection date	05 July 2007
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Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Sessional 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?

Tilsworth Montessori School was registered in 2000 and is privately owned. The philosophy of the group lies in the Montessori teaching methods. The school is situated within private grounds adjacent to, and attached to, a private residential property. The premises are in the village of Tilsworth and the school serves the local area.

The school opens between 09.15 and 12.15 and offers five sessions to every child during school term times. The school is registered to provide care for 20 children aged from two to under five years. The admissions policy states that children are accepted at two years and six months of age. There are currently 17 children on roll and of these, 12 receive funding for nursery education. The school supports children with learning difficulties or disabilities and is able to support those who speak English as an additional language.

There are three staff who work with the children and this includes the owner and her manager. Of these, two hold appropriate childcare qualifications. The school is a member of the Pre-School Learning Alliance and receives input from the local authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children stay healthy because staff show a good knowledge of the setting's procedures for health and hygiene and are committed to consistent implementation of the agreed procedures. Sick children are excluded from the provision to minimise the spread of infection and the premises are maintained in a properly clean state. Tables are regularly sprayed with anti-bacterial agents and the toilets are kept clean and hygienic. Children are learning about the importance of personal health and hygiene. They are developing independence in this area and developing responsibility for themselves. For example, children wash their hands after using the toilet as a matter of course and are able to explain to the inspector that this is to get rid of germs. Children readily use hand wipes at snack time. Children receive appropriate treatment in medical emergency because most staff hold current and suitable first aid qualifications and the first aid box is accessible and suitably stocked. Staff conscientiously record all accidents and include the relevant details to protect children's welfare.

Children benefit from healthy snacks. The snack rota is displayed for parents' information and includes plenty of fruit. Snack time is being used to good effect as a learning time for children, promoting social skills and increasing development of independence. For example, children learn to wait until everyone at the table has their snack in front of them before beginning to eat and they pour their own drinks, demonstrating competent hand-eye co-ordination. Children demonstrate they know how to stay healthy. For example, the children cut out pictures of various foods and sort them into food groups. The children chat about their task and comment about 'carbohydrates filling your tummy', and 'proteins helping your body grow'. The conversation continues with further observations and comments such as 'if you don't eat anything, you will wither away and die', and 'your body needs water'. Children do not become thirsty whilst playing because they have independent access to a drinks tray. They can pour drinks of water at any time during the session. The setting constantly monitors and reviews practice to sustain the high standards of hygiene. For example, when children are noticed to be pouring remaining water from their drinking cup back into the jug of fresh water, a group activity on the correct use of the water jug and beakers was held at circle time.

All the children enjoy a wealth of daily indoor and outdoor activities which enables them to develop control of their bodies and improve their physical skills through an appropriate level of challenge. Lots of Montessori materials help to promote children's physical development. For example, children learn control as they walk round the red rods made into a spiral. They learn to balance as they walk the line. They develop co-ordination as they build the pink tower. Circle time offers a wide range of activities such as yoga, dance and mime. For example, the children love to do the 'Birdie Dance', showing balance and co-ordination as they stand on one leg. Children get outside in the fresh air on most days and relish their time in the garden. A vast range of outdoor play equipment provides opportunities for children to climb and balance. Children use the fixed activity frame, tricycles, tools for digging, balls and small apparatus, rockers and cars. Young children demonstrate a noticeable ability to cope with the varying surfaces, slopes and changes of level as they manoeuvre their toys around the garden.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are well-cared for in a warm and welcoming environment which is purpose designed to promote the development of children's independence. Children quickly learn to manage their own personal hygiene in the accessible and purpose-designed toilet facilities where staff provide support if required. The staff maximise the use of the rural location of the school, ensuring children get out in the fresh air every morning. Children make choices and learn to take responsibility for equipment and their surroundings. They work in a well-organised practical environment where low-level, open shelving offers easy access to the learning materials, in line with basic Montessori philosophy. The setting is equipped with mostly specialist Montessori materials. Any non-Montessori items are carefully selected to bring natural materials to children's range of understanding and to be suitable and stimulating for children, in line with the philosophy of the school. All equipment is checked daily and any damaged items are thrown away. All materials are sterilised at the end of each term and this helps to sustain high standards of safety and cleanliness for children. The staff have put up posters and pictures to make the classroom attractive for children. Attractive displays of children's work adorn the walls and demonstrate some of the techniques introduced to the children. For example, the children have mixed up paint with their fingers and made patterns.

Children are kept very safe in the school because staff give excellent priority to security issues. Children's safe arrival and departure is particularly well-monitored and children are very well-supervised at all times. Doors and gates are bolted and the front door has a spyglass feature so that staff can choose whether to open the door or not. Staff record fire evacuation procedures and carry out drills with suitable frequency to ensure the safety of the children. Staff monitor visitors to the setting by keeping a visitors book. Risk assessments have recently been completed on activities as well as the setting in general. These include potential hazards such as the use of a glass pipette; plastic bags for playdough; children swinging on their chairs and the trampoline ladder. The garden is always thoroughly checked before use. Children learn to keep themselves safe in the setting through the Montessori 'Grace and Courtesy' activities. For example, children are shown how to do things such as how to tuck a chair under the table and how to carry a chair safely. Children learn how to walk in the classroom and how to carry scissors safely.

Children's welfare is properly safeguarded because they are protected by vigilant and caring, informed adults who understand current child protection policies and procedures in line with those of the Local Safeguarding Children Board. The owner has received suitable training in this field and relevant and current reference information is readily accessible. Information about safeguarding children is appropriately shared with parents.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are happily and gainfully employed in this small, friendly and traditionally Montessori school. They learn to be tidy and to mix with other children, whilst gaining a foundation in the primary school subjects. Children develop good concentration and independence skills. Children enjoy their play and learning because staff are confident, enthusiastic and skilled in their childcare practice. Staff provide a broad range of worthwhile activities, both indoor and outdoor, which actively engage children throughout the school in the learning process. Children actively participate in the purposeful activities and clearly enjoy the busy atmosphere. Children have clear routines to their sessions and follow set procedures for certain activities which help them

feel secure. For example, children know that they will sit in circle time before snack. Planning and assessment documentation takes general heed of the 'Birth to three matters' framework when working with children under the age of three years. Staff provide positive role models for children and give sensitive support to all children. Children are happy, settle quickly and relate well to other children and staff, who encourage and build children's vocabulary through constant praise and recognition as they support play. Staff get to know the children very well and skilfully adapt their level of language and questioning to reflect each child's stage of development.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. All staff have a competent knowledge of the Foundation Stage and deliver a varied programme of play-based activities which provide an overall balance across all six areas of learning. Children are making good progress towards the early learning goals given their ages and starting points. Children are happy and settle quickly in the gentle and nurturing environment. They generally display high levels of involvement and gain a sense of achievement, self-confidence and self-esteem through planned and spontaneously chosen activities. Older and more able children maintain their interest in the activities due to the skilful intervention of staff who re-direct their learning appropriately. Staff work together as a very effective and committed team deploying themselves to support children's learning with general sensitivity and respect.

Planning is matched to the terminology of the stepping stones and builds appropriately on the Foundation Stage guidance whilst being cross-referenced to the Montessori materials. Children choose their own 'work' and the staff circulate around the classroom to support, encourage and extend learning as appropriate for the needs of the individual children. This means that children are able to access the appropriate stepping stones which reflect their current stage of development and ability. Conscientious observations of children's learning are made and written up regularly, contributing towards the assessment system which tracks children's progress through the stepping stones. Examples of work are dated and provide evidence for assessment. Staff evaluate activities effectively and use this information to monitor the quality of the provision.

Staff use clear and skilled teaching techniques which they confidently adapt to suit the various ages of children at this setting. Children enjoy good, trusting relationships with staff who get down to their level and engage in meaningful questioning, conversation and discussion which develops learning through play. The children have a long 'work cycle', where they choose their own activities. This means that children are mostly interested and motivated to learn independently. Children generally resolve their own arguments and are kind and thoughtful. Snack time is a generally positive and effective learning time for the children. They learn good manners, courtesy and develop their independence through pouring their own drinks and serving snack to their friends. Children successfully carry a jug of water across the classroom to the table and are so proud of their achievement, watching for praise and endorsement from the staff.

Appropriate emphasis is given to the development of children's speaking, listening, reading and writing skills. The sound of classical music signals 'circle time', and the children clear away quickly and efficiently, before fetching a carpet square to sit on. Children enjoy a wide range of songs and rhymes which support their awareness of language. For example, the children recite poems from a familiar repertoire to promote an awareness of alliteration and rhyme, including 'When Betty eats spaghetti' and 'Harry went to Hammersmith'. They mime actions

to 'Miss Pet Pigeon is picking for bread' and mime the movements of animals such as an elephant and a monkey. Staff read lots of stories during the day and the children listen attentively. Children share books with their friends and benefit from individual attention in the book corner and at the computer table.

Children learn about numbers, use mathematical language and solve simple problems through the use of the Montessori materials. For example, children use the 'Sandpaper numbers', tracing the shapes of the numerals with their fingers and then forming the numerals on the chalkboard for staff to admire. Children learn about simple fractions as they use the 'Insets'. They sort, order and grade the colour slides. Children explore natural objects, counting the legs on a crab and then choosing to draw a picture of the creature. Children work well with the computer and a display shows how two children take turns and work collaboratively together to make patterns using a paint program. A wide range of construction toys enables children to build and fix pieces together, improving manual dexterity. They talk with staff at snack time, about events in their lives and those of their families. One staff member had gone on holiday to Devon and this led onto a discussion about whether the children had ever stayed in a caravan. Children enjoy a wide range of indoor and outdoor activities to promote physical development. These include ribbon dancing, yoga and aerobics. However, staff do not yet maximise their use of the garden as a resource to support children's learning across all areas. Children explore paint and print, using their own ideas to create their own pictures and enjoy messy, 'sensorial' play with natural materials. Children begin to use imagination playing alongside others in role play situations. Staff extend ideas as needed, model roles they might use, ensure all can join in and that children share resources fairly.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children learn about equality through play activities and learn to respect the rights of others. Children are learning to feel valued and good about themselves, they are learning to appreciate others' similarities and differences. Children develop their understanding and appreciation of others through simple planned activities that promote a greater awareness of the wider world. Children participate in art and craft activities connected with celebrations and taste cultural foods. For example, children really enjoying exploring Chinese noodles in dishes. They smell and feel them, and enjoy the challenge of trying to transfer the noodles from one dish to other with chopsticks. Many of the Montessori materials reflect diversity and global trends, but there are few positive images of disability.

Children who have learning difficulties or disabilities receive excellent support. Their varying needs are recognised and met sensitively. Children's individual needs are discussed with parents in detail. Any special requirements or information are discussed and consistent communication and information exchange takes place. Children who may have learning difficulties receive appropriate intervention and referrals to suitable professionals outside the provision.

Staff adopt a consistent and positive approach to the management of children's behaviour. Clear boundaries are established at the children's level of understanding. Children are aware of the routines and procedures and what is expected of them. Children have an understanding of the effect of their behaviour on others around them and take responsibility for themselves. Staff provide excellent role models for children by being calm and polite. Staff praise children freely, ensuring that they develop confidence and self-esteem and understand when they have done well. However, staff do not always record incidents of concerning behaviour and share

this information with parents. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The relationship between the children's parents and the setting is actively promoted, effectively supporting children's well-being, development and progress. A two-way flow of information, knowledge and expertise supports children through a mutually positive relationship. Extensive information is available for parents on a daily basis, because the hallway is used extremely well to display a wealth of information. For example, photographs show the children using Montessori materials such as the Red Rods and the Broad Stair, together with a narrative explanation of the learning that is taking place. A selection of professional magazines and publications is available for parents and carers to borrow. Parents are warmly welcomed into the provision and are well-supported by staff during the settling-in process through induction sessions. Staff encourage parents to share information about their children and they are able to see their child's records and regularly contribute to them if they wish. When working well, this arrangement of two-way sharing benefits the child and enhances their learning. This underpins their progress in the school and consequently their ability to fully contribute to the provision. The partnership with parents of children who receive nursery education is good.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The established and experienced staff team are well-supported by the owner who oversees the management of the school and this safeguards and promotes children's care and welfare. The owner and manager work alongside their staff team and therefore have a 'hands on approach' to every aspect of the school operation.

Organisational procedures ensure that all staff have a clear understanding of their role and responsibilities. Induction procedures are planned and work in practice when new staff are employed. Children are grouped appropriately with effective use of space and resources. Registration systems record the attendance of children and staff to secure their safety. The setting is highly proactive in seeking solutions to identified issues and demonstrates a willingness to continually review and revise its practice in response to suggestions, comments or criticism. For example, minor matters raised on the first day of inspection were immediately addressed by the owner and resolved before the second day. This ensures that the setting continues to run in a safe and efficient way.

The leadership and management of the nursery education is good. The staff team are well-qualified and dedicated to the concept of quality childcare and education. Staff are passionately committed to the Montessori philosophy and work hard to demonstrate how these teaching methods support children's progress towards the early learning goals. They are actively involved in planning and decision-making and contribute to the continuous monitoring of the setting through self-evaluation and reflection in line with 'Every Child Matters'. Staff follow children to the activities which engage their interest and provide effective support to draw the learning from play. This promotes highly positive outcomes for children. Staff demonstrate a genuine affinity with children; they respect children's feelings, value their comments and clearly enjoy their company. Documentation is clear and accessible. Staff clearly and confidently speak about their procedures to follow in the event of a range of scenarios. Planning and assessment systems secure and progress children's learning. Overall, children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection, the setting was set four recommendations to improve the quality and standards of day care. The setting was asked to review the number of staff holding a first aid qualification; to develop staff knowledge and understanding of special needs and child protection and to ensure that appropriate action can be taken when a child has been identified as having special needs.

The school ensures that all permanent staff hold a current first aid certificate so that any staff absence is covered. Recent training has ensured that the setting has appropriate information sources on legislation regarding the Disability Discrimination Act. The owner has attended training on the role of the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator. The owner has attended a recognised course on Safeguarding Children and has efficiently cascaded the information to staff. The actions taken have substantially improved the quality of care and the welfare of children.

This is the first inspection of nursery education.

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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On the basis of the evidence collected on this inspection:

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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):

- enhance the resources to reflect positive images of disability
- ensure any incident is recorded and the parent informed of the incident on the day.

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):

- explore further, ways of utilising the garden as a resource to support children's learning.

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