

Woodentots Montessori School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	100605
Inspection date	23 November 2007
Inspector	Tom Radcliffe
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Registered person	Woodentots Montessori Limited
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?

Woodentots Montessori Nursery is run by Woodentots Montessori Limited. It opened in 1989 and operates from two rooms in a specially adapted basement of a house. It is situated in a residential area in Camden in the London borough of Camden. A maximum of 20 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery is open each weekday from 09.00 to 15.00 in term time. Sessions in the nursery are from 09.00 to 12.00 and 12.00 to 15.00. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 35 children aged from two to five years on roll. Of these, 17 receive funding for early education. The nursery mainly provides for children in the local area. The nursery currently supports children with learning difficulties and also a number of children who speak English as an additional language.

The Montessori nursery employs three members of staff and uses Montessori methods of teaching. All hold appropriate early years qualifications, which includes Montessori Diplomas.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The nursery has facilities available to children which are very clean, well organised and resourced and that are maintained to high standards of cleanliness and hygiene. Staff ensure that the setting is ready for children as they arrive, this promotes a purposeful start to the day. The setting has in place good practices to promote the health of children as it has effective procedures to ensure that medication is administered correctly and to minimise accidents. Staff record all details relating to these practices which they share with parents and use to inform future practice. Children can be well cared for if they sustain minor injuries as sufficient numbers of staff are qualified in first aid and there is good access to suitable first aid equipment. The setting works well to minimise the spread of infection as children who may be infectious are excluded from the nursery. The good health of the children is also promoted by the setting as it has obtained parental permission to obtain any emergency treatment or advice that may prove necessary. The staff in the nursery take several opportunities to promote effective hygienic practice during the day; for example, children have become accustomed to regularly washing their hands, properly using tissues and wearing indoor only footwear.

Physical development is very good. The children take part in a large range of activities that actively promote their physical development. The nursery ensures that children regularly have access to stimulating outdoor activities in the excellent garden area. Children play very enthusiastically in this area and all have proper clothing to ensure that the garden is used every day. The garden has outdoor equipment to allow children to climb, balance and run; a good use of decking and pathways allows the children to use wheeled toys and there are other opportunities for children to dig, experience woodwork, play in sand, plant bulbs or grow other plants. All children have access to this area and all gain valuable learning experiences from it on a daily basis. Staff support children very well in the garden area and facilitate its use very effectively.

Indoors the children have access to a range of activities that develop their fine motor skills; these include working with clay, using tape recorders, painting and preparing their own drinks and snacks. Even the youngest children in the nursery will peel carrots for snack time or prepare their own fruit juices by squeezing oranges. The staff support children very well as they undertake these activities, as a result children are confident and show good levels of physical skills. Children are able to be active or take part in quiet activities according to their individual needs. The setting provides a range of nutritious and healthy snacks during the day; these include various fruits, vegetables and yoghurt. Children often have snack time outside in the garden where they enjoy meaningful social interactions. Children also help prepare snacks and learn about the value of healthy eating and lifestyles. Children who stay in the nursery all day bring packed lunches which are stored correctly and contain food that follows the setting's healthy eating recommendations. Children have access to fresh drinking water throughout the day and the setting also provides milk and hot chocolate to meet the needs of the children.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

The nursery has premises that are very secure and safe for children. All external doors are securely locked and access is gained only with the authorisation of staff. The setting has in place effective procedures to ensure children's safety as they arrive and depart from the nursery.

Staff welcome parents into the nursery as they drop off their children and they take opportunities to exchange important relevant information to ensure that the children settle quickly into their day. Children's welfare is safeguarded in the nursery as all staff have a good working knowledge of its procedures; as a result staff are able to protect children by a good awareness of child protection issues and secure systems of reporting any concerns. The manager ensures that all staff have regular training in safeguarding children to ensure that an effective procedure is in place at all times.

Children are kept very safe in the case of an emergency as the setting regularly undertakes practice evacuations and has in place proper fire detection and control equipment. The nursery ensures that it is a safe place for children to be in by undertaking regular and effective risk assessments. This ensures that children do not face unnecessary danger from hazards; for example, all equipment, activities and all parts of the premises are regularly assessed for their on-going safety. However the nursery goes beyond this level of risk assessment by giving children the responsibility to be aware of their own safety and allows children to learn important skills in well managed situations. Children respond very maturely to this high expectation and as a result safely prepare vegetables for snacks, use tools outdoors in wood working or bulb planting. This approach has a very positive impact on the children's development and makes the incident of accidents very low; children of all ages throughout the setting thrive as a result of this level of responsibility. Staff support this approach very well and monitor activities with great care and skill. This is also reflected in how well children use the toilet and hand washing facilities which are accessible and maintained in very hygienic conditions.

The nursery makes very good use of its space as free movement is promoted throughout the setting. This approach is very well supported by excellent staff deployment, good levels of high quality resources and children who are used to thinking for themselves and making choices about what they do. As a result children are able to work in the garden area from either of the two main activity rooms on purposeful activities in a well supported learning and play environment. The nursery has a very good range of furniture which accommodates a range of activities and takes into account the ages of all children. There is an excellent range of very good toys and resources in use within the nursery that are well maintained and clean and which support children's development in all areas. The nursery premises are very stimulating for the children, they are light and spacious and very child friendly. The recently built garden room provides high quality accommodation for children in a safe, well managed environment. The visual impact of the nursery is very good with attractive displays of resources, displays of children's work and information for parents about the setting, its work and staff.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are arranged into family groups as they undertake a range of stimulating and challenging activities. Of the rooms in use, one houses full time children while the other is for children attending either morning or afternoon sessions. The garden area supports the nursery's philosophy of promoting free movement and choice within the setting. All learning and play areas are well equipped as children are engaged in purposeful activities which they select independently, and involves working individually or with groups of children. Staff support the children very well as they settle quickly and become engaged in activities that are available to them. Children wishing to work individually are also well supported; for example, a child did not join a group working with a member of staff with clay, instead she shared a book with another member of staff who wanted to be sure that the child used her time effectively.

Children's self esteem is raised through displays of their work and by staff allowing children to express preferences and follow interests. As a result children spend their time with free choice activities that include; using dressing up resources, sharing stories and playing with puzzles and mathematics resources. Staff supervise the children well at these times as they offer the guidance and support that children require, while at the same time promoting children's language development. This is achieved by encouraging conversations with children about their work, recent holidays or giving children a chance to discuss their opinions or feelings. Staff also work with children on other planned activities; for example, during circle time, working in the garden or on sensory activities. This allows staff to gather important information about children's development that is recorded and used to plan for future activities and shared with parents. The atmosphere within the nursery is very good at all times as children and staff work and play together with great interest and enthusiasm; for example, despite the cold weather children spend a great deal of time in the garden area engrossed in bulb planting activities sharing many conversations and ideas with staff. The children take a great pride in the setting as they assist in setting up activities, help clear resources away and grow plants to use at snack time; for example mint was grown in the garden and used to make tea that was sampled by the children. Children adapt well to adult led activities and will listen to stories, contribute during circle time and acquire new language or mathematical skills.

The setting plans very well for children's activities; they make good observations and collate meaningful records of achievement to share with parents. The nursery is going to continue to develop this provision which is appreciated very much by parents. The planned activities support children's development very well and prepares them for later work based on the Foundation Stage curriculum. The setting is already working with the Early Years Foundation Stage guidance. The setting makes very effective use of the Montessori methods of education which impacts positively on children of all ages within the nursery.

Nursery Education.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff have a very good understanding of how young children learn and a very good understanding of the requirements of the Foundation Stage curriculum. Staff working with the older children in the setting ensure that they build upon the skills and abilities that the children have already acquired. The activities that the children undertake are dominated by free choice and play but staff ensure that adult intervention and focus enables children to face challenges and developmentally appropriate activities. The role of key workers is very effective as they track children in their family groups and ensure that progress is made. This is achieved as staff make careful observations of children, on what children do as they undertake planned activities, on what they say and what they achieve. This information is collated and shared with parents and used to inform future planning. This approach to learning allows staff to have a very good idea of children's starting points, a knowledge of where children should go next and a good grasp on children's individual strengths and weaknesses. Staff support of children is very effective and their interventions are based on children's needs and the learning objectives that are being worked towards. As a result staff support children effectively as they share stories, use circle time, develop physical skills in the garden or undertake writing activities or experiment with number and mathematical ideas. Children enjoy the level of independence and choice that is given to them as they become engaged in activities; for example, children independently accessed stories on a cassette recorder, made discoveries about animals that lived in the garden area or used labels of names to gain a greater understanding of written language.

The nursery maintains a very good social atmosphere. Relationships are very positive as children play together, share and take turns. The levels of independence that children have directly and positively impacts upon their behaviour as they select activities, choose how they spend their time and become involved in conversations with staff and other children. The children are very comfortable with and knowledgeable about routines in the nursery; for example, they will readily put paintings to dry in the proper place, change footwear when going outside and wash hands unprompted. The children in the nursery are very confident speakers, they talk very freely about their work with appropriate vocabulary; for example, children spoke about the comparative roughness of materials and about how clay felt as they worked with it. Children work in a very language rich environment where meaningful conversations are commonplace and language is given a high priority through an extensive use of labels; for example, those on resources, activities, displays and name boards. Children are becoming increasingly aware of their own names and can write them on their work.

The setting has a good range of mathematical equipment that is used to enhance the children's understanding of number; for example children were able to understand that some numbers were greater or less than other numbers. Children are also given many practical examples of using number; for example when planting or undertaking wood work, which consolidates their learning. Children explore simple technology through the use of cassette recorders and they have access to a wide range of activities to support all aspects of physical development both indoors and outdoors. These include large apparatus and wheeled toys in the garden and puzzles, games and construction sets indoors. Children also take part in regular yoga and dance work with visiting teachers. Children have access to art and different materials to work with imaginatively. The nursery supports children's learning very well in the Foundation Stage.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

The setting ensures that it has a very good working relationship with parents and that all detailed background information is provided and acted upon effectively. The nursery is praised by parents for the professional way that they respond to all information and how they work tirelessly to accommodate all individual needs. Staff talk knowledgeably about the children in the setting particularly about them as individuals with different backgrounds, interests and proclivities. This results in the setting being able to very effectively work with children and so integrate them successfully into the nursery's work. Thus children who celebrated thanksgiving as an important part of their culture were given opportunities to talk about how they celebrated it and why. The nursery also works very well to include all children whose home language is not English by using their experiences as examples of the diverse nature of the children's world. The nursery is well placed to meet the needs of children with learning difficulties and disabilities; it has a very suitable physical environment, an inclusive approach and qualified staff who are experienced in working with external support agencies and parents.

The atmosphere in the nursery is excellent; the children's behaviour is of the highest quality as they work cooperatively with adults and their peers. Children are challenged, excited and inspired by the activities that they are presented with; they have well developed social skills and demonstrate high levels of responsibility as they contribute both to their learning and the way that the setting operates. Behaviour in the nursery is managed by negotiation and discussion, with children contributing a major part to this process. Staff in the setting are excellent role models as they facilitate these important processes through a consistent approach that they are fully committed to. The nursery uses resources that reflect positive images of

diversity; these include photographs, resources, books, music and artefacts. Children's spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development is fostered.

The partnership with parents and carers is outstanding. Parents are very involved with the nursery and the partnership helps to account for the high standard of care for children; for example, parents value the approach taken by the nursery to children's learning and select to use the setting's service rather than other alternatives that are available. Parents value all contacts with the nursery both informally and formally. Staff in the nursery are skilled communicators and take all opportunities to talk to parents about children's progress, their happiness and the work of the setting. Regular meetings take place for parents to assess children's development and to gain a greater understanding of the philosophy of the setting. The parents consider that the written material produced by the nursery to show development is excellent and that it forms the basis of meaningful discussions with key workers throughout the year. The parents also think that the nursery provides a comprehensive range of information which gives them a very good understanding of all policies and procedures. Parents are an important part of the setting; they contribute many suggestions, share ideas, observe practice first hand and feel that they are valued.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The provider has established very robust recruitment procedures, these help to ensure that staff employed at the nursery are suitable to work with children. The staff at the nursery are very well qualified, experienced and committed to the successful philosophy of the setting. All staff have a very good understanding of how young children learn; this is as a result of careful recruitment, on-going training and good quality processes of staff induction. The setting has policies and procedures in place to ensure the effective and safe management of the nursery. Staff deployment is excellent and responds to the needs of the children on all occasions. The accommodation, level and quality of resources and use of space are very good. Children's wellbeing and care is given very good attention. Children know how to keep themselves safe and healthy and are given significant amounts of independence and responsibility which they respond to positively and maturely. The setting has an excellent partnership with parents who value the development records made available to them; the nursery is committed to continuing this provision in the future in order to enable parents to have access to high quality and meaningful information about their children.

The leadership and management is good. The setting's manager has a clear understanding of the strengths of the nursery and how she wants it to develop. She has a clear vision for the nursery and has made significant improvements to its provision with the garden developments and the addition of another teaching and learning area. The manager leads a team of staff very well who all have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. The staff carry out duties very effectively to the great benefit of the children. The manager carries out very effective staff supervision and appraisals and ensures that all training needs are met. Planning is produced by all staff and is informed by observations on children and is designed to ensure that children make progress in the nursery. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

The last inspection made the recommendation that the planned improvements to the garden area were implemented. Since that time the nursery has developed an excellent garden area which positively contributes to the daily experiences that the children have while in the nursery.

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 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):

- Continue to develop processes of assessing and recording children's achievements to share with parents and use for planning future activities.

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):

- continue the developments as indicated in the care section above.

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