

# Rigg Farm Montessori Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	400409
<b>Inspection date</b>	22 November 2007
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<b>Type of inspection</b>	Integrated
<b>Type of care</b>	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](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?

Rigg Farm Montessori Nursery has been registered since September 1994. It is privately owned and is set in a purpose-built, single storey extension of a farm house in the rural village of Beckwithshaw near Harrogate. The setting serves the families within the local community and surrounding villages and towns. Children have use of a large room and there are cloakroom and toileting facilities in an adjoining area. Children have access to a very large outdoor play area, including a field, with access to farm animals, plus gardens which are tended by the children.

The provision is open during term times with the exception of an optional two week summer scheme which runs when the need arises. The nursery is open between the hours of 09.15 and 16.00. Children attend on a full and part-time basis. The provision cares for children aged two and a half to five years and extends to children up to the age of eight years during the summer scheme. They are currently caring for 52 children, of whom 25 are in receipt of nursery education funding. The provision currently cares for three children with English as an additional language and children with learning difficulties and disabilities.

There are six members of staff, including the provider who is the manager of the nursery. The manager has an honours degree and a Montessori International Diploma, a Level 4 qualification. The majority of the other staff members hold a Montessori qualification to Level 3 or above.

## **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION**

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

The provision is good.

The children's health is promoted as the staff encourage good hygiene practices. For example, children learn how to blow their noses and to cover their mouths when they cough to stop germs spreading. The staff encourage children to wash their hands at appropriate times, such as before eating and after going to the toilet. Furthermore, the staff use gloves and aprons when changing nappies, plus anti-bacterial gel, which is readily available in the children's room to clean their hands throughout the day.

The children's health is protected as the provision has thorough policies and procedures regarding medication and illness. Consequently, if children become ill whilst at the setting, parents are contacted and the staff care for the children, making them as comfortable as possible, until the parents can collect them. In addition, written parental permission is obtained prior to administering medication, which is carefully recorded. Accidents too, are recorded and parents generally countersign the records, although a few signatures are missing.

Children develop independence as they butter their own crackers and help themselves to fruit when they are hungry. Snacks are predominantly healthy, though the children have the occasional biscuit. The children tend to eat sandwiches and wraps for lunch with fruit for dessert. The provision of nutritious food is encouraged by the setting's policy of no chocolate or crisps in lunch boxes. Children stay refreshed as they always have access to water, which they pour from jugs, kept replenished by the staff, on the snack table. Since the children take responsibility for looking after their room and keeping it clean, when they finish eating, they tidy away their lunch boxes and wash their plates.

All the children enjoy very good opportunities to gain fresh air and develop physical skills. They have free access to a spacious and well-equipped outdoor area, which includes adventure play equipment, a wild life area, vegetable garden and animals in pens. The children revel in the freedom of the outdoor area, playing chasing games, climbing on the equipment, swinging, sliding, digging for worms, shovelling bark under the tyres, pedalling bikes and balancing on beams. In pursuing these activities, the children develop a very good sense of control and coordination. Children recognise the effects that exercise has on their bodies, as they know that their hearts beat faster after running. The children develop fine motor skills as they roll and cut dough, deftly use scissors to cut out the months of the year pictures and turn the keys in the padlocks.

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

The provision is good.

Children learn in a well-organised environment, which has separate areas equating to the different areas of learning. For instance, there is a practical skills area, a sensorial area, a cosy book corner with wicker chairs and cushions and a creative area with paints, easels and dough to model. Carers and children are warmly welcomed on arrival. At the end of the session, parents may watch a video recording of their children's activities, which is played in the entrance.

Space is used constructively and activities are purposeful and orderly. Children independently select their own activities with ease, as all toys and equipment are stored at child height on low shelves or on the floor at the side of the room. All areas are well resourced with specialist equipment which is predominantly made from natural materials, such as wood.

Children benefit from a good range of safety measures; for example, there are no sockets at child level and comprehensive risk assessments are used. Children are closely supervised as staff ensure that all areas are monitored both indoors and outdoors. The outdoor area is securely fenced and gated to prevent children leaving the premises unattended. A combination lock provides a secure entry system, which prevents strangers accessing the premises. However, at busy times, such as when the children arrive in the mornings, the door is sometimes left ajar rather than being firmly closed when the last person leaves, which detracts from the overall level of safety. Children learn to contribute to their own safety as they understand how to carry equipment, such as a stool, or a pair of scissors safely. Furthermore, all children practise the fire drill regularly and the setting assigns priority to practising the drill when new children start, so that they are all well prepared in the event of an emergency.

Children are protected from possible abuse or neglect as staff are recently trained and have a good understanding of issues relating to child protection. The setting has a written policy, which details the appropriate procedures to be followed in accordance with the Local Safeguarding Children Board guidelines. This policy is shared with parents and includes the process to use if an allegation were to be made against a member of staff.

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

The provision is outstanding.

The children are very confident and happy in the setting; they play and learn in a calm, ordered and enabling environment. The staff are extremely committed and enthusiastic in their work. As a result, the children are inspired and arrive at the session eager to learn and be challenged, informing the staff that they want to do hard work. Children feel secure as they all come together at the beginning of the day for a welcome song and they share news and interesting items, which they bring from home, such as binoculars and toys. They eagerly tell the group about their possessions and show the other children how their toys work.

When children first begin the nursery, the staff helpfully show the children the activities and how to use the room. Staff relate extremely well to the children and are very skilled in their interactions, knowing when to allow a child the space to develop their own learning at their own pace and when to be more directive to maximise the learning value of an activity. Children benefit from the sensitivity of the staff, who are warm and gentle, ready to provide reassuring hugs to any children who need some comfort.

Children derive enormous benefit as they explore with real materials, such as when they pour coloured liquids from glass jars into pottery jugs. They most successfully develop the indirect preparation skills for learning to read and write and at the same time learn value and respect for belongings, which are breakable. Children are very focused and sustain concentration remarkably well as they thread chunky beads. They are sociable and very helpful, assisting one another with jigsaws and working as a team to fill the water tray outdoors, before washing the bikes together.

### **Nursery Education**

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. All staff are highly skilled and trained in Montessori methods, which they apply in conjunction with their knowledge and training in the Foundation Stage to provide exceptionally effective teaching. As a result, children are thoroughly engrossed and highly motivated, making excellent progress towards the early learning goals. The assessment methods, which are applied rigorously across all the areas of learning, are highly responsive to the needs of the children. They provide an accurate and daily picture of the stage the children have reached in their learning, thus enabling staff to plan effectively for the children's next steps. Staff are meticulous in using this information to ensure that all children fulfil their potential through consistently effective learning and appropriate challenges.

Children have a sense of belonging and hang their coats on their pegs before confidently beginning the nursery session. They are very familiar with the routines and are extremely independent as they put their own shoes on and confidently attempt to tie their laces. The children are quite autonomous as they self-select and carry out activities, which interest them. Once they have finished an activity, they tidy up without any prompting, ensuring that it is ready for the next child. A whole range of activities enable children to foster independence skills. These range from helping to set the table for lunch, to pouring their own drinks, sweeping the floor and putting away the mats when they have finished their activity.

The children communicate well, they smile happily when they relate their news at circle time and maintain good eye contact when talking to members of staff. The children listen with enjoyment to stories. They can link sounds to letters, very competently working out their names from the letter clues in a rhyme. Through various games, including matching activities and the use of sand paper letters, the children learn to recognise letters and develop early reading skills, so that more-able children can read a range of familiar three letter words. The children attempt writing for different purposes; for example, they draw letters in the sand, they write their names on their pictures and they label the equipment and features of the room, such as the window.

Mathematical language is incorporated into the children's play, as, for instance, the children enjoy singing number rhymes, such as 'six little monkeys'. The children are interested in number problems and use equipment, such as the number rods and tens and units beads, to consolidate their understanding and expand their learning. There are no limits as the children experiment with numbers, adding and subtracting, up to one hundred. They are aware of the date and are able to clap twenty one times to signify that it is the twenty second of the month. Benefiting from an excellent range of matching and sequencing equipment, the children can successfully compare sets of objects and order them according to, for example, length in the case of the wooden rods. Children recognise cubes, triangles, squares and trapeziums and can relate these shapes to their environment as, for example, they describe the globe as a sphere.

Children have rich opportunities to learn about their environment and the natural world through the provision of many first-hand experiences. These include the observation of the life cycle of a chick from hatching to growing into an adult bird, the development of tadpoles into frogs and the feeding and watching of the birds in the garden. Outdoors, the children also have their own vegetable patch and flower bed, where they grow sunflowers. They are responsible for looking after the animals and maintain the outdoor area by, for instance, putting tree bark under the swings to soak up the pools of water. The children build cylindrical towers and learn how to safely use a hammer and nails. They have an awareness of time, describing events at their recent family bonfire and have a sense of place as they know that the earth is a planet. The children notice the weather, describing how they feel when they come indoors. Staff help children to test out the validity of their comments, suggesting they look at the tree to observe

if it is windy. The children are interested in technology, such as the operation of computers, and they delight in recording their own voices.

Children develop their creativity in a range of ways. For instance, they enjoy mixing and exploring colours, grading them from lightest to darkest. They share in the creation of a large tree, which they paint outdoors, collecting real leaves to stick on to make a collage effect. During all sessions, the children enjoy singing rhymes and songs, tapping out rhythms on their knees. They develop their imagination as they play pirates on the climbing frame. The children are expressive, beaming with pleasure as they dig and find worms. They explore their senses, listening for the birds and saying that it tickles when they stroke their hands with a feather.

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

The provision is outstanding.

Children are valued as the staff tailor the children's care and education according to their individual needs. They are made to feel good about themselves as they are supported in developing independence both in their learning and their self-care. Children form excellent relationships with their peers and with the staff, who know the children and their families extremely well. The children show care and concern for one another, learning to share resources and take turns. They are polite and behave well as they understand what is expected of them. There are excellent opportunities to learn about the diversity of the world as this is intrinsic to the Montessori philosophy. Consequently, for instance, the children 'fasten their seatbelts' and imagine they are being transported to another country, such as Africa. Then they explore the setting's resource boxes, which include all things African, such as costumes, pictures and interesting objects. In addition, the children sing songs about different cultures, such as collecting pawpaws, and celebrate a variety of festivals, from Thanksgiving, to Divali and Chinese New Year. Through a sponsored run, the children raise money for 'Children in Need'. They spend some time reflecting, saying 'thank you' for their families, homes and toys. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

There are very effective arrangements to care for children with learning difficulties and disabilities. For instance, there is an appropriate policy, a trained 'special educational needs coordinator' and a determination to adapt the activities so that all the children may access the whole curriculum. In addition, staff operate a key worker system and provide one to one support for children who require this level of provision. Excellent partnerships are forged with parents and professionals in meeting the children's needs, since, for example, parents are party to the recruitment of appropriate staff to care for their children. Individual education plans are fully implemented and the children's progress is carefully recorded and discussed in regular meetings.

The staff act as positive role models, treating everyone with friendliness, care and courtesy. In handling any inconsiderate behaviour, they help the children to find solutions that are appropriate to their age and stage of development. Positive behaviour, such as a willingness to share, is encouraged and staff support children in feeling valued and building self-esteem.

Partnership with parents and carers is outstanding. Feedback from parents is extremely positive, as they describe the nursery as 'fantastic'. Parents describe how their children 'love coming' and are way ahead when they start school as the nursery helps the children to maximise their potential. Parents are encouraged to make suggestions and be involved as much as possible. The nursery has an open door policy so that parents are always welcome. At the outset, parents receive a copy of the setting's main policies and information is sought from them about how best to care for their children. Settling procedures are flexible in order to accommodate the

needs of each child. Subsequently, parents are kept informed through regular verbal feedback and through open evenings. In addition, parents may make an appointment to discuss their children's progress with the key worker at any time; they are free to access their children's profile whenever they wish and add any comments. Detailed written reports are provided at the end of the year, when the setting liaises with the schools the children are moving on to. Informative evenings on the Foundation Stage curriculum supplement the prospectus and the regular information provided in newsletters and on the notice board. Parents support their children by watching them do their sponsored run and attend social events, such as a summer barbeque.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is good.

The nursery is managed by the owner, who, together with her dedicated and stable staff group, create a safe and constructive learning environment. Staff are effectively deployed and work well as a team in meeting the needs of the children. Staffing ratios are consistently generous, which assures the children of a good level of support and care. Consequently, children thrive in this happy, settled atmosphere. Staff are encouraged to pursue their professional development, which sustains their enthusiasm and motivation. They are, for instance, pursuing further Montessori courses, are all trained in 'Birth to three matters' and some staff are booked onto the Early Years Foundation Stage training.

Regular staff meetings and appraisals enable staff to fully participate in planning, evaluating and developing practice, whilst induction procedures ensure that staff are properly prepared for their role. Policies and procedures, which are shared with parents, are comprehensive and support the efficient management of the setting. The nursery maintains all the necessary documentation, such as the emergency contact details and the children's registration forms. This information is easily accessible and stored securely.

The leadership and management of the nursery education are outstanding. The nursery manager is passionate about providing Montessori education and organises both staff and resources to provide rich educational experiences for the children. Her enthusiasm is reflected in the excellent staff team, who share in the planning, which incorporates all areas of provision and thoroughly covers all areas of learning. The needs of all the children are successfully met as activities are differentiated according to the age and capability of the children. Highly efficient observation, assessment and evaluation systems are consistently used to inform the planning for each child and optimise the use of resources. Consequently, children are most gainfully employed, busy, happy and actively learning.

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

## **Improvements since the last inspection**

At the last care inspection the provision was asked to improve the policies relating to lost children and child protection as well as the security of the premises.

Since the last care inspection, the provision has developed its policies concerning lost children and child protection and has improved the security of the premises. These changes have a positive impact on the children as they promote their safety.

At the last education inspection, the provision was asked to extend the opportunities for children to develop their creativity.

Since the last education inspection, the provision has rearranged the creative area, where children enjoy free access to a range of media, such as paint and collage materials. This has a positive impact on the children's ability to develop their creativity and thus their overall educational development.

### **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 that all parents sign their children's accident record
- ensure that the effective system for managing access to the premises is always used.

#### **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)