

The Norwich Montessori School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY366985
Inspection date	15 May 2008
Inspector	Georgina Emily Hobson Matthews
Setting Address	Montessori School, Old Watton Road, Colney, NORWICH, NR4 7TW
Telephone number	01603 452 522
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Registered person	The Norwich Montessori School Ltd
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 outstanding.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

The Norwich Montessori School opened in 1995 and re-registered in 2007 following a change of ownership. It operates from the parish rooms in the village of Colney, on the outskirts of Norwich, Norfolk. Children have access to an enclosed outdoor area. The school serves a wide catchment area. Children attend for a variety of sessions.

The school is registered to care for 26 children from two to five years. There are currently 30 children on roll and this includes 21 children who receive funding for nursery education. The school supports children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and children who speak English as an additional language. Sessions are held each weekday during school term times from 09:00 until 13:00.

The school is privately owned and employs four members of staff to work with the children. Each member of staff holds an appropriate early years qualification. The school receives support from the local authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children's health is promoted well and they are cared for in a warm, clean environment. They are protected from becoming ill as the staff display excellent hygiene practice and highly effective systems are in place to prevent the spread of infection. The school has procedures in place to take appropriate measures if children are ill. Children's welfare is promoted as sufficient staff hold a current first aid certificate and can respond to accidents appropriately. A first aid box is well-stocked and easily accessible.

Children learn the importance of personal hygiene and to take responsibility for their own personal needs. They are provided with explanations of why it is important to prevent the spread of germs. Staff encourage the children to access washing facilities independently to wash their hands after toileting and messy play and before eating or preparing food. Children are aware that they should cover their mouths when they cough and they use and dispose of tissues effectively. They learn how to maintain a clean environment as they wash plates and cups after snack and sweep scraps of paper from the floor after a craft activity.

Children benefit from a healthy diet at the school and develop a valuable awareness of healthy eating. Special dietary requirements are identified prior to the commencement of care to ensure that parents' wishes and any religious needs are met and that no child is at risk from a reaction to food. Staff have a good understanding of healthy eating and provide nutritious options for the children at snack times. Children help themselves to a snack of fresh fruits and vegetables and milk or water, in their own time. Fresh drinking water is available at all times in order that children learn to have drinks when they are thirsty. Parents supply a packed lunch for children who remain at the school until 13:00. The school prospectus reminds carers not to provide chocolates or sweets in order that each child enjoys healthy food.

Children show an awareness of space as they move with confidence in and outside the school. They develop a positive attitude to exercise and have opportunities to explore a variety of physical movements each day. Children have access to a pleasant garden with a range of inviting activities. They move with control and co-ordination and are able to travel around, over and through and to balance and climb on a small pieces of equipment. Staff provide sensitive support and children show delight as they learn to catch, to throw and to kick balls into nets with success. Children's fine motor skills develop exceedingly well. The Montessori 'Practical Life' activities enable them to handle tools, objects and malleable materials safely and with increasing control. Children are able to rest according to their individual needs in a quiet book corner where they make themselves comfortable on soft cushions.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a welcoming, child-centred, secure and safe, indoor and outdoor environment. There is adequate storage space for equipment. Children have sufficient space for free movement and to spread out activities. They use a wide range of developmentally appropriate, high quality, safe and suitable resources and equipment. Children's safety is fostered as the school has carried out a comprehensive risk assessment of the premises and this is reviewed on a regular basis. Staff complete a daily safety check of the school to reduce hazards and to minimise the risk of accidental injury to children. However, on the day of

inspection hazardous items are accessible within the lower kitchen cupboards. Although children do not remain in this area unless supervised, they access the garden by walking through the kitchen. As a result children's safety is not assured. Children learn to keep themselves safe as they are provided with clear explanations about safety issues within the school and outside. They learn about road and fire safety and of how to stay safe in the sun.

Children are safeguarded as the managers and staff are aware of their responsibilities in the area of child protection. They have a secure understanding of the procedures to follow if they have child protection concerns and have effective systems in place to release children into the care of other adults in the event of an emergency.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

The school improves outcomes for children under three years. The managers and staff have an excellent understanding of the needs of younger children and provide a range of stimulating and challenging activities to support their physical and emotional development. Children are happy and at ease within the school. They are able to make choices and to play at their own pace. Children become increasingly independent, acquire control over their bodies and develop new physical skills as they explore the Montessori 'Practical Life' activities. They are able to concentrate without interruption and to complete activities independently. As a result, children gain a worthwhile sense of satisfaction in their achievements.

Children form close bonds with staff. They separate easily from their parents and settle quickly within the group for registration. Staff work alongside the children, are attentive to the children's needs at all times and offer them thoughtful support and encouragement. They listen carefully to the children and show a genuine interest in their ideas. Children communicate well with each other and make friendships at the setting.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Children are making very rapid progress towards the early learning goals in the six areas of learning as staff display an excellent understanding of Montessori teaching methods and the Foundation Stage. Each one is involved in the planning of the curriculum and they consult with parents and children so that their ideas can be incorporated into the educational programme. The school creates a calm but stimulating learning environment for the children in which they may explore a variety of rich, varied and imaginative experiences. The management organises the school and the resources with meticulous care. This enables the children to complete activities with independence and success and to become self-sufficient in their learning. Sessions are paced well. As a result, children show high levels of independence, curiosity, imagination and concentration and use all their senses to actively explore a range of new experiences.

The school's progress and observation records provide the team of staff with a detailed outline of each child's stage of development. From this, staff are able to tailor their teaching to identify individual targets that challenge each child and extend their learning. As a result, each child is highly motivated, engrossed in the activities and able to persevere and to resist distractions. This record is shared with parents and provides a clear picture of each child's accomplishments within the Montessori environment.

Children form new friendships at the school. They display high levels of concentration and interest, and are keen to try new activities. Children speak with confidence about their home life at circle times. They gain a sense of community as they sing at the Norfolk Music Festival and at the Norfolk Show. Children speak clearly and audibly, communicate well with each other and enjoy listening to stories, poems, songs and rhymes. They use language to recreate experiences. For example, two children drive cars in the garden and immerse themselves in imaginary play. They tell each other to stop at 'red lights' and to move at 'green lights' and suddenly announce 'I need to call the police'. Children link sounds to letters using multi-sensory resources and during games of 'I Spy'. They have lots of opportunities to form letters, for example, in sand, rice and paint or on different papers and a blackboard. Children know that print carries meaning and see print in different languages around the school. They enjoy looking at books and handle these with care. Older children learn to read using the school's phonic reading schemes. They hold and use a pencil effectively and write simple sentences about what they did in the holidays.

Children recognise numbers and use this in counting songs and rhymes. They learn to count as they explore with number rods, spindles and counters. Children begin to understand the concepts of units, tens, thousands, decimals and fractions. They sort items into different criteria and begin to calculate as they consider how many more or how many less. Children think about shape, space and measure as they make patterns, construct and identify shapes. They explore by using all of their senses as they grade different colours, sounds, sandpapers and as they taste and smell a selection of items. Children find out about the features of living things as they observe the school's fish, enjoy visits from a staff member's dog and children's guinea pigs. They grow daffodils, strawberries, courgettes, broad beans and have planted an apple tree in the garden. Children have lots of opportunities to construct and they think about how things work as they use items such as mirrors and magnets. They develop a sense of time as they talk about past experiences and learn about events that occurred in the past. Their sense of place develops as they talk about where they live and on visits to local places such as the church. Children explore with different media and materials and think about colour, texture, shape and form. They paint, print, draw, make collages and design with papier-mache and clay. Children sing songs and match movements to music. They explore how sounds can be changed using a variety of instruments and learn to recognise repeated sounds and sound patterns during their weekly music lessons.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children develop a secure sense of belonging at the school as the parish rooms are set up carefully prior to their arrival and the staff offer them a warm welcome. Children hang their outdoor clothing on named pegs in the foyer and have individual trays in which to store their completed pieces of work. Their achievements are celebrated in attractive wall displays and photographs that are posted around the room. Children's individual needs are identified prior to the commencement of care and they are valued and treated with equal concern. They develop positive attitudes to diversity as the school includes images of the different people that make up our society within its resources. Children celebrate Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Jewish and Buddhist festivals. The school has experience of caring for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and for children with English as a second language.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. They understand responsible behaviour and can distinguish between right and wrong. Children's behaviour is of a consistently high standard as the staff use positive behaviour management strategies that

are appropriate to each child's level of understanding and maturity. Little instruction in behaviour is required as the children clearly know what is expected of them at all times. They show a mature respect for the needs of others and are able to take turns, to share resources, to co-operate and to negotiate with each other. In addition, children maintain a sense of order within the school as they return activities with care on completion, ready for others to access with ease.

The school works in partnership with parents to meet the needs of the children. Parents are provided with an informative pack that contains details about fees and funding; an introduction to the Montessori philosophy and teaching and procedures relating to the Norwich School. Newsletters update parents on future events and they are invited to access a set of the school's policies and a selection of magazines, books and videos relating to child development. Parents are made aware of how to raise a complaint or a concern if they are unhappy with any elements of their child's care. However, the school's policy statement requires further development in order to fully inform parents of the process. Children's ongoing progress is promoted as the staff work closely with parents. The school shares a correspondence book with parents in which events in the children's school and home life and short details of their achievements are recorded. A formal, annual meeting is offered to parents to discuss each child's progress. Parents become involved in their child's development as they donate items such as an apple tree and plants to the school. Their satisfaction in the school is reflected in their very positive feedback.

The partnership with parents and carers of children in receipt of funding for early education is outstanding. They are provided with information about the school's education provision. The school values their observations of their child's learning and encourages them to share what they know about their children. Progress and observation records are available to parents at all times and they receive an annual report on their child's progress within the six areas of learning. Regular newsletters provide details of learning topics and enable parents to support their child's learning at home.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The proprietor and staff share a clear vision of how the setting should run. Robust recruitment and induction systems ensure that new members of the team understand this vision. Children benefit from the care of an appropriately vetted, qualified and experienced team of practitioners. They are skilled and confident in their approach and show a commitment to promote children's well-being and to support each child to develop their potential. They work well together and demonstrate a secure understanding of the school's policies and procedures. There is an ethos of reflective practice throughout the setting and as a result children flourish within the school. They are never left alone with anyone who is not vetted. Children's progress is enhanced as staff access ongoing training to improve their practice. Documentation to promote the welfare and care of the children is well-organised and stored securely to ensure confidentiality.

The school is organised effectively to accommodate children's play. They are able to move around easily and safely and to access equipment in a well-prepared environment. Good staff ratios ensure that children are consistently well-supported. Overall children's needs are met.

Leadership and management of early education is outstanding. The proprietor and her team of staff display a commitment to children's achievement and development and create an inclusive environment where every child matters.

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):

- assess the risks to children in relation to the lower cupboards in the kitchen area and take action to minimise these
- develop the school's complaints procedures.

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