

# Mulberry Montessori School

Inspection report for early years provision

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	EY347249
<b>Inspection date</b>	04 July 2008
<b>Inspector</b>	Caroline Wright

<b>Setting Address</b>	Mulberry Montessori School, Royston Lane, Comberton, Cambridge, Cambridgeshire, CB23 7EE
<b>Telephone number</b>	01223 263646
<b>E-mail</b>	
<b>Registered person</b>	Christina Clayton
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Integrated
<b>Type of care</b>	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](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 inadequate – notice of action to improve. The registered person does not meet 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?

Mulberry Montessori is privately owned. The nursery uses the Montessori approach, integrated with early learning goals, to help children learn. It opened in 2007 and operates from a purpose-built building. It is situated on a farm on the outskirts of Comberton, Cambridgeshire. A maximum of 42 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery is open each weekday from 07.50 to 18.00 all year round. All children share access to an enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 37 children aged from birth to under five-years on roll. Of these, 14 children receive funding for early education. Children come from a wide catchment area. The nursery currently supports a number of children who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery employs six members of staff: five of the staff, including the manager, hold appropriate early years qualifications.

## THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

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

The provision is inadequate.

The provision for maintaining children's good health is inadequate because some accident records do not contain parent's signature of acknowledgement and not all accidents are recorded. This has the potential to put children's ongoing health at risk and is a breach of regulations. However, staff are appropriately qualified in first aid and good records regarding children's allergies, medicine administration and existing medical conditions are maintained.

Children learn about personal hygiene through regular routines such as washing their hands before eating. Older children learn about daily hygiene through purposeful activities such as washing dishes after snack time and clearly understand that they need to wash their hands, 'because germs make you sick'. Staff act as very good role models, wiping down surfaces before serving food and after children have eaten, to help them to stay healthy. The bathroom areas, with low-level sinks and toilets, enable children to use the lavatory when they need to, so that they begin to take care of their own bodies. Younger children learn how their bodies work when staff help them with potty training and very good hygiene procedures are carried out by staff changing nappies to help maintain children's good health. All areas of the premises are scrupulously clean so that children are protected from infection.

Children learn about leading a healthy lifestyle when they run around and exert themselves in the outdoor play area. Older children enjoy riding bicycles or pushing trolleys outdoors to help them to develop their muscles and babies learn to use the trainer stairs under the sensitive supervision of their key-workers so that they develop essential skills. A satisfactory range of accessible large and small equipment inside and out enables children to develop new physical skills according to their individual stage of development. For example, children spend a long period of time fixing together rods to make bridges, manipulating the pieces with good control. Children use tools such as scissors, pencils and pastry-cutters and very young children pour lentils or water competently, developing good co-ordination and control. Babies and toddlers pour their own drinks at lunch time, drinking from child-sized glasses without spilling the contents.

Children help themselves to fresh fruit and water or milk at snack time each day and older children can help themselves to a drink of water from a jug on the side when they want one. They know that they need to wash strawberries at snack time 'to get the chemicals off or you'll get poorly.' Main meals are freshly prepared each day by the dedicated cook who is very well informed of children's special dietary needs. Children's nutritional needs are well provided for. Fresh ingredients, including organic vegetables where possible, are used to provide a varied diet of meals that children thoroughly enjoy eating. Good information is gathered from parents by key workers to enable babies' individual feeding routines and weaning requirements to be followed effectively.

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

The provision is inadequate.

The outdoor play area is not secure and the main entrance door to the premises is not always locked; on some occasions the front door is propped open. This means that children have the potential to leave the premises unescorted and members of the public are able enter the building without being invited. Whilst children's general welfare is safeguarded and promoted by staff

who have a sound understanding of their role in child protection the procedure for vetting adults who provide care is not robust. This potentially puts children's safety at risk. Therefore, the overall arrangements for maintaining children's safety are inadequate.

However, children move around the nursery under the careful supervision of their key workers. They demonstrate a sound understanding of how to keep themselves safe. Very young children wait patiently to enter the lift with their 'hands on tummies' so that they keep their fingers away from the lift door. Staff gently remind children to 'walk inside' so that children learn about keeping themselves safe in the future. Adults provide real life experiences such as cutting fruit for snack or serving each other to lunch, and use these opportunities to engage in discussions with children to help them to learn through day-to-day routines and practical situations. 'Grace and Courtesy' activities help children to learn how to carry out daily practices in a safe way. For example, they learn how to carry a chair with the legs facing downwards towards the ground so that they do not present a hazard to others.

High handles and locks that are out of children's reach prevent children from accessing areas that are not safe such as the staircase or the kitchen, without adult supervision. Children are able to select resources that are appropriate for their age and stage of development, and these are checked regularly by the nursery staff to ensure they are in good condition and are safe.

All areas of the physical environment are highly attractive and promote children's independence. Displays of children's work and fresh flowers at children's level so that they can see them, contribute effectively to providing a welcoming, child-centred environment that helps children to feel valued and to develop a strong sense of belonging.

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

The provision is good.

Children under three-years-old are encouraged to become independent and make decisions. They are interested in the activities available and spend long periods of time concentrating and exploring self-chosen activities and materials at their own pace. For example, they spend a long time squeezing a tomato, watching the pips and the juice run and noting 'its got seeds...little seeds!' Babies eagerly scoop flour from a plate using a spoon, feeling its texture with their fingers when it falls onto the table.

Children develop their language and communication skills when they look at books with the adults. Staff encourage children to enjoy books and stories through their skilful story telling. They use their voices to encourage children to listen and join in with the narrative, introducing new words such as 'ocean' to help children to develop a wide and interesting vocabulary.

Children play together in the life skills area, polishing brass or cleaning mirrors, sharing resources well. In the outdoor area children engage in their own story telling as they ride the tractors or 'go shopping'. Adults enthusiastically respond to children's questions and babies' 'babbling' with smiles and encouraging comments, to urge them to communicate and become confident. Young children understand and confidently use the language of mathematics; for example, they ask for 'more' water or comment that the piece of sausage they have on their plate is 'too big'. They eagerly experiment with paints on the easel to create their own pictures and develop their imagination.

Staff have already begun to use the new Early Years Foundation Stage framework to enhance the Montessori experiences they provide. They plan a range of activities and monitor children's

progress through observations and assessments on a regular basis. However, resources available to babies are limited and group activities do not provide them with enough opportunity to explore at their own pace. This limits their ability to pursue their own interests and to engage in sustained thinking.

#### Nursery Education.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children communicate effectively and their listening skills are very good. They talk with understanding about what they do at home, using their increasing knowledge of the world to talk about their adventures. They use complex sentences to describe what they see. For example, they say, 'I went to Duxford at the week-end with Daddy. We saw a helicopter with a huge propeller on the top.' Children enjoy painting and drawing and talk about what their pictures mean. Some children are able to write their own name, using recognisable letters. Children work well together and understand each others needs, taking turns and sharing resources, respecting each other's 'work space' well. Children look at books and turn pages from front to back carefully. They enjoy moving their bodies and following the actions in music and movement experimenting with sounds and rhythm; they join in enthusiastically to their favourite songs at circle time. They use tape players to play 'sound bingo', developing their listening skills and learning how to use everyday technology. They know that they need to 'turn the handle this way' to operate the paper shredder.

Children explore a wide range of materials, pouring lentils, wood shavings and beans from one vessel to another. They use water to wash the cars outside and clean brass and mirrors with household cleaning materials. They build with a range of construction materials, forming a tower with rods and are competent at identifying written numerals to 20. They use the language of mathematics in their everyday lives, commenting that they have 'more' or 'need another one' as they talk to adults about what they are doing.

The staff working with funded children all have a satisfactory knowledge of the Foundation Stage curriculum and a very good understanding of how young children learn. They have an excellent knowledge and understanding of the Montessori teaching philosophy and use resources effectively to promote learning according to Montessori methodologies. They skilfully extend children's thinking through sensitive questioning to help them learn through everyday practical experiences.

Staff have developed satisfactory systems to monitor children's progress. Regular observations of children are recorded by the Directress and used to plan the next steps for individual progress. However, planning is not displayed to enable all staff working in the room to know what activities are to be used with children on a daily basis and children's assessments are not linked to the early learning goals or stepping stones. As a result, the Foundation Stage areas of learning are not covered in a systematic way and some opportunities to promote learning are missed. For example, opportunities for children to develop their creativity and tell their own stories through role play are missed; children have limited opportunities for children to learn about information and communication technology and staff do not always encourage children to write for a purpose at activities or in role play. This affects learning.

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

The provision is good.

Children show a strong sense of belonging as they greet key-workers and each other upon arrival at the nursery each morning. They eagerly hang up their coats and join in with activities

that are on offer. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. They share resources extremely well and adults encourage children to respect each other's needs. Children spontaneously use conventions such as 'please' and 'thank-you' in their conversations with each other. They work together co-operatively during group activities and learn to care for others through activities such as serving each other at lunch time. They discuss how they should 'put the tiny caterpillar on the leaf and not in the bin' because 'that's very kind'. Adults help children to learn what is expected of them by clearly explaining to children what they want them to do in a way that they can understand. Children learn about the world they live in: they look at books and use resources that reflect a wide range of cultural and religious diversity to help them develop positive attitudes towards all members of society. They talk about their families and what they do at home in their conversations at activities, which helps them to learn about each other's family culture and traditions.

There is a suitable system in place to support children with learning difficulties and/or disability. Staff have developed a consistent strategy to help children who speak English as an additional language and use their 'home language' to build on what they already know.

Although children choose what activities they want to take part in and move around the indoor environment freely, choosing resources independently, they are not able access the outdoor area independently. This affects their ability to pursue their own interests in their preferred learning environment. This impacts upon learning.

Parents receive clear information about nursery activities; the attractive notice boards in all areas of the nursery ensure that they are well informed and have the opportunity to be fully involved in the day-to-day lives of their children. Staff record good information when children first start at the setting to help children to settle well so that they can become confident and independent. Parents are provided with 'At Home with Montessori' books and daily diaries of what children do in the nursery to help them to support their children's learning at home.

The partnership with parents and carers of children who receive early education is good. The effective key-worker system enables parents to share information on a daily basis. Regular written reports, with key-workers' observations of children's achievements, enables parents to be well informed about their children's progress. However, parents observations of what children achieve at home are not used to inform children's assessment records. This affects staff's ability to plan the next steps by building on everything that children enjoy and do well.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is inadequate.

Although all of the legally required documents, which contribute to children's health, safety and well-being are in place, these are not always well maintained. This has the potential to impact on children's ongoing good health and some regulations are breached. For example, the system for checking that staff are suitable to work with children is not robust and as a result, essential checks are not carried out on some members of staff. In addition, the premises are not secure and accidents are not properly recorded. This impacts on children's overall safety and well-being.

However, the person in day-to-day charge of the nursery is very experienced and well qualified. She delegates responsibility for the care of the younger children to well qualified staff who use their experience to provide a stimulating environment and help children to learn through first hand experiences. Staff attend regular training to help them to develop their practice

across all areas. For example, training such as first aid and child protection is well organised to make sure that staff are up-to-date with current best practice. Attention to detail in the presentation of activities and the holistic approach to learning supports children's independence and decision making very well. The calming atmosphere in the nursery helps children to feel relaxed and promotes a sense of general well-being.

The leadership and management of early education is good. The person leading the provision for early education has a good knowledge of how children learn, enabling her to plan and deliver the Foundation Stage curriculum. Regular team meetings take place to help staff to be clear about their role in supporting children's learning and as a result, adults work well together as a team. Staff have received training in the Foundation Stage and have a sound understanding of how the activities contribute to children's progress towards the early learning goals. However, curriculum plans do not yet cover all areas of the Foundation Stage in a broad and balanced way and children do not access the outdoor area independently. This impacts upon learning.

Overall, children's needs are not met.

### **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 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 inadequate - notice of action to improve. The registered person does not meet 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, the registered person **must** take the following actions:

- ensure that there are effective procedures in place for checking that staff are suitable to work with children
- make the premises secure so that children can not leave the premises unsupervised and members of the public are unable to enter without invitation
- keep a record, signed by parents, of all accidents.

These actions are set out in a *notice of action to improve* and must be completed by the date specified in the notice.

### **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):

- improve the system for planning and assessing children's progress: make sure plans show clear links to the early learning goals and stepping stones; use key-worker and parents' observations of what children enjoy and do well to inform planning for individual learning that covers all aspects of the Foundation Stage in a systematic and balanced way (this also applies to care)
- improve children's independent access to the outdoor play area so that they can pursue their own interests and develop new skills in their preferred learning environment.

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)