

Westwood Montessori

Inspection report for early years provision

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Inspection date	07/03/2007
Inspector	Lynn Clements
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Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Full day care

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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 provider must give a copy of this report to all parents with children at the setting where reasonably practicable. The provider must give a copy of the report to any other person who asks for one, but may charge a fee for this service (The Day Care and Childminding (inspection) (England) Regulations 2005 No 2300 Regulations 5 and 6).

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?

Westwood Montessori was registered in 2006. Westwood operates from a purpose built converted farm building on the outskirts of Thaxted. The pre-school offers care to children from the local and surrounding communities. It is the sister pre-school of Maynard Montessori which is situated in the grounds of Stebbing primary school.

Westwood Montessori is registered to provide care for a maximum of 60 children at any one time. There are currently 52 children on roll. This includes 30 funded children. Staff have strategies in place to support children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

The nursery is open from 09.00 to 15.00 each week day during term time only. Children attend for a variety of sessions.

The nursery employs seven members of staff. Of the staff four, including the manager hold appropriate early years qualifications. Three staff are working towards recognised qualifications. The setting receives support from the local authority and Pre-school Learning Alliance.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are beginning to learn about the importance of personal hygiene through regular daily routines. They wash their hands after using the toilet and before eating or joining in cooking activities. However, opportunities for them to engage in discussions with members of staff about why they need to wash their hands are limited. Children currently use the same hand towel to dry their hands after washing which increases the risk of cross contamination. A clear sick child policy is implemented in practice and shared with parents to prevent the spread of infection. Up-to-date records are in place to ensure children's individual needs are met and respected. Staff obtain clear written instructions from parents about medicines and all relevant permissions are in place to protect children in an emergency. All members of staff have completed first aid training enabling them to respond and care for children appropriately in the event of an accident.

Children benefit from the sound knowledge and understanding held by staff with regard to childhood nutrition. They enjoy healthy snacks, with fresh fruit or vegetables every day. Diverse fruit and vegetable tasting days provides opportunities for children to explore their personal likes or dislikes. Parents are encouraged to support the schools healthy eating programme by providing suitable packed lunches. Children also learn about foods which are good for you and those which are not so good as they discuss healthy eating during topics, join in cooking activities and grow

their own fruits and vegetables in the settings garden. They learn to lead a healthy lifestyle; taking part in regular exercise such as playing in the garden or taking nature walks in the surrounding country side. Children use large apparatus with increasing control and show good spatial awareness as they ride wheeled toys and negotiate the available space both inside and outside. They manipulate malleable materials, such as, play dough, pulling and stretching it into various shapes or creating 3D models, such as, duck ponds. They enjoy outings to local wildlife parks, zoo's and farms which provide opportunities for them to learn about the world on their door-step.

Staff have completed the 'Birth to three matters' training which they have successfully implemented in their practice to support younger children. They have also introduced 'Bridging the Gap' which enables children to move smoothly from the 'Birth to three matters' framework into the Foundation Stage when they reach their third birthday.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The very good organisation of the play space along with thorough daily risk assessments of all child accessible areas ensures the environment remains safe for children. Toys and resources are regularly checked and cleaned so they remain in good condition for the children to use. The provision of excellent child accessible storage in every classroom encourages children to extend their own play and learning. Staff support and encourage children to care for their environment by adopting the Montessori philosophy of tidying away between each activity; this also ensures the play space is kept free from tripping hazards and helps children to learn about the importance of doing things for themselves.

Children are supervised at all times. Staff take positive steps to help them understand how to keep themselves safe. For example, they practise fire escape routines so everyone knows what to do in the event of an emergency. While out and about children learn about the importance of 'road safety'. Staff make the most of other opportunities to help children learn about keeping themselves safe, for instance, during cooking activities children learn about 'hot oven' and 'sharp knives'. Clear child collection procedures are implemented in practice. Staff never allow children to leave with adults they have not met or agreed with parents that it is safe to do so. Security systems are in place to prevent children leaving the building unescorted and visitors are checked prior to entry to protect children from harm.

All staff have completed relevant safeguarding children training and this is up-dated regularly. They have a good knowledge and understanding of child protection procedures and how to make referrals to social services if they believe a child is at risk. Staff act in the best interests of the child at all times to ensure their welfare remains paramount

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children respond well to new challenges by questioning and using their own initiative. They negotiate with each other as they join in small world play, organising where the village huts and fences will go in their African village. Children join in Montessori practical life experiences, pouring, mixing and discussing their ideas of home. However, opportunities for children to develop their ideas based real or imagined experiences in high quality on-going role play scenarios are limited. Large group activities are organised by well by staff and include children of all ages. Props are used during group story times engaging the children's interest and participation well as they talk about the different exotic fruits 'Handa' collects on her walk through the jungle.

Children under three years follow a programme of activities based on guidance contained in the 'Birth to three matters' framework and the Montessori philosophy. Staff have completed training and use the framework to inform practice. Children take part in planned and free flow activities designed to help them make progress. They are very confident in the setting and in their relationships with each other and staff.

Staff encourage children to be confident and independent. They listen and value what children say, they talk with them about what they are doing and have high expectations of what they can achieve.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children are making good progress towards the early learning goals. Staff have a clear understanding of the Foundation Stage. Manager's have recently introduced the 'Keep Track' system which enables staff to monitor children's progress through the stepping stones towards the early learning goals using traditional Montessori methods and activities in conjunction with play and everyday resources. Records of assessment are in place and observations are made by staff which enables them to identify children's next steps for learning to ensure they are making good progress. Differentiation and evaluation of activities is in place to support and challenge children.

Children throughout the setting are independent as they make choices about the activities they investigate or deal with their personal needs. They learn to care for each other, sharing resources and taking turns. Children select and share books. They excitedly use the pictures as clues to the story line when re-telling narratives. They know that reference books provide information about the wider world and topics which interest them. Staff support their emergent writing and reading skills through simple phonics and rhyming words. Children use writing for a purpose as they make their marks when making 'passports' or writing their names on their creations. They show curiosity as learners, observing the changing seasons of the year. Registration time provides opportunities for children to share their news from home or join in topic discussion. Children investigate change as they begin planting

and growing fruits and vegetable. However, opportunities for them to investigate information communication technology are limited. Children discover the wider world around them, exploring other cultures and customs, such as, Africa or Chinese New Year. They taste exotic fruits and foods exploring the textures, tastes and smells. Children join in simple songs and rhymes, matching movements to music. They create their own music as they bang African drums and try out various instruments to see what they can do.

Children develop their understanding of numbers as they join in various activities or count each other at registration and snack time. They learn to sequence using the colours and matching different shades. Children explore simple fractions as they share out play-dough so everyone has an equal share. Staff are directly involved in children's learning and all children are treated with equal concern. Children move freely around the classroom, joining in activities which interest them. Children respond well to staff and are willing to try new activities without fear of failure.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Children have a secure understanding of the wider society and different cultures. Staff introduce them to a diverse range of customs and communities throughout the world during topics and discussions. Staff provide artefacts for the children to explore and examine, for instance, children carry baskets of fruit on their head or feel what it's like to have their doll babies strapped to their backs just as people do in Africa. Children develop their thoughts and ideas about the wider world as they use maps and globes with increasing confidence. Visitors to the setting include parents and carers who share their skills and resources helping to bring the curriculum to life. Staff work exceptionally hard as a team to ensure there is no bias in their practice in relation to gender, race or disability.

There are very clear and effective procedures in place to support children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Support for families is exceptional as staff join net-working meetings and attend reviews in the best interests of the child. One-to-one funding is sought and put in place as required to ensure children make progress and can attend the setting safely and confidently. Staff are pro-active and adopt a multi-agency approach as they work closely with other professionals . Excellent procedures are in place for children leaving the setting and moving into mainstream school. Staff work closely with the receiving teachers to aide smooth transitions for children and their families.

Relationships are extremely good at all levels. Children are valued as individuals and they develop positive attitudes towards others. They learn to respect each other and share resources. They negotiate turn taking to ensure everyone has a fair chance. Children benefit from the consistent routines and a secure approach to their care. For example, they talk with each other and members of staff about being kind to each other. Staff validate positive behaviour using plenty of descriptive praise and encouragement which raises children's confidence and self esteem.

Parents are respected and open communications both written and verbal take place regularly to support all children. Forums are organised to ensure everyone has a voice. Notice boards provide excellent information for parents concerning all aspects of the pre-school. Policies and procedures are displayed. Newsletters and emails are sent out regularly encouraging parents to share their skills and experiences when helping during sessions. Children's needs are being met well because staff work closely with parents and carers which enables all children to achieve and provides continuity between home and the setting. Prior placement information is sought from parents and carers enabling staff to get to know children and plan for their individual needs. Information about the curriculum's offered are discussed with parents and further information is made available in the welcome pack.

Partnership with parents and carers of nursery funded children is good. Records of assessment are in place. Parents and carers have opportunities to come not the setting to view and discuss their child's records. However, there are currently no formal systems in place which enable parents or carers to make written comments or observations in their children's records of assessment to provide key workers with a picture of the whole child. Parents are encourage to share resources and join in activities. Information about the Foundation Stage curriculum is made available helping them to see for themselves steps in children's learning. Parents views and opinions are valued by the staff. Both staff and parents work closely together to support their children during the formative years.

Staff are directly involved in children's learning and all children are included and treated with equal concern. Children learn to share and help each other. They encourage others to join in their games and make room for them at the snack table or activities. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

All regulatory policies and procedures are in place and up-dated as required. Systems for recording the arrival and departure times of children and staff are in place to ensure children are safely accounted for at all times. Robust vetting systems are implemented in practice to protect children. There is a clear operational plan which is up-dated regularly and shared with parents and carers.

Children are cared for by staff who have a very good knowledge and understanding of child development. The majority of staff have completed early years and Montessori training and hold relevant qualifications. Staff induction procedures are in place and monitoring systems, such as, appraisals and staff meetings are implemented to support new and existing members of staff. Attention to on going professional development enables staff to keep their practice up-to-date. All policies and procedures are implemented in practice to promote positive outcomes for children.

Leadership and management of nursery funded children is good. The provider and managers are very responsive to the needs of children, parents and staff. Individual training budgets are in place to support all members of staff. Regular staff meetings take place to support the delivery of the Foundation Stage curriculum in conjunction with the Montessori philosophy. Managers monitor classroom practice to ensure all staff continue to work appropriately with children. Overall, children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

Not applicable

Complaints about the childcare provision

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.

THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE AND NURSERY EDUCATION

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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):

- increase opportunities for children to develop their understanding about personal hygiene; ensure positive steps are taken to promote the good health of children with regard to hand drying facilities
- increase the current opportunities for children to access role play scenarios enabling them to develop their imagination based on real and imagined experiences; this also applies to nursery education

The quality and standards of nursery education

To improve the quality and standards of nursery education further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- increase opportunities for children to explore information communication technology
- further develop opportunities for parents and carers to share, at their leisure, children's assessment records, enabling them to make written comments and observations about their children's achievements at home.

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 2473)* which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk