

Tilsworth Montessori School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique reference number

EY270686

Inspection date

16/03/2011

Inspector

Susan Marriott

Setting address

The Leys, Dunstable Road, Tilsworth, Leighton Buzzard,
Bedfordshire, LU7 9PU

Telephone number

01525 211055

Email

tilsworthmontessori@hotmail.co.uk

Type of setting

Childcare on non-domestic premises

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2011

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Sections 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006 on the quality and standards of the registered early years provision. 'Early years provision' refers to provision regulated by Ofsted for children from birth to 31 August following their fifth birthday (the early years age group). The registered person must ensure that this provision complies with the statutory framework for children's learning, development and welfare, known as the *Early Years Foundation Stage*.

The provider must provide a copy of this report to all parents with children at the setting where reasonably practicable. The provider must provide a copy of the report to any other person who asks for one, but may charge a fee for this service (The Childcare (Inspection) Regulations 2008 regulations 9 and 10).

The setting also makes provision for children older than the early years age group which is registered on the voluntary and/or compulsory part(s) of the Childcare Register. This report does not include an evaluation of that provision, but a comment about compliance with the requirements of the Childcare Register is included in Annex B.

Please see our website for more information about each childcare provider. We publish inspection reports, conditions of registration and details of complaints we receive where we or the provider take action to meet the requirements of registration.

Description of the setting

Tilsworth Montessori Nursery School opened in 2004 and is privately owned. It operates from a domestic property situated in the village of Tilsworth, on the southern side of Leighton Buzzard, Bedfordshire. The nursery has sole use of a large classroom attached to the owner's home, along with kitchen and toilet facilities. It also has use of the enclosed rear garden. The nursery is open each weekday from 9.15am to 12.15pm during term time only. The nursery school is registered on the Early Years Register and the compulsory part of the Childcare Register to provide a maximum of 20 places for children aged from two to eight years. There are currently 14 children aged from two to under five years on roll. Of these, 11 children receive funding for nursery education. Children attend for a variety of sessions and come from the local area. The owner works with three members of staff, all of whom hold appropriate early years qualifications.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is outstanding.

The owner has assembled a truly enthusiastic staff team of high calibre. They work very hard to reconcile the Montessori philosophy and the essence of the Early Years Foundation Stage, creating a very welcoming nursery with a lovely atmosphere. The nursery is an exceptionally safe, secure and stimulating place to be for the young children who attend. Their individual needs are fully met within this highly inclusive setting. Children make rapid progress in their learning and development and have tremendous fun in the process. Passionate, committed leadership and honest, realistic self-evaluation secure the setting's excellent capacity for continuous improvement.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

To further improve the high quality early years provision the registered person should consider:

- enhancing the experiences for boys that build on their interests and value their strengths as active learners and problem solvers.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

Children's care, learning and welfare are significantly enhanced by the clear vision of the owner and the highly effective way in which the nursery is led and managed. The nursery follows the philosophy of Maria Montessori and staff are appropriately trained and qualified. Current safeguarding requirements are robustly met and all staff are suitably cleared to work with children. Security measures are superb and ensure the safety of children and staff. Staff are extremely vigilant and alert the owner to the presence of any unidentified person arriving at the

premises. Visitors are always asked to produce identification and their presence is suitably recorded. Thoroughly detailed risk assessments are carried out visually on a daily basis and written assessments are devised for every area of the nursery and every type of outing. Regular practise of fire drills secures the safety of children and staff. Standards of hygiene are outstanding across all aspects of the nursery provision. All required documentation is readily accessible and effectively underpins the exceptionally safe and efficient management of the setting.

The owner works in genuine partnership with other Early Years settings in the area, who help one another and provide advice and support to each other to benefit the children. There is clear evidence of strong parental engagement and highly effective working relationships with partner professionals, which enable the nursery school to tailor activities to the individual needs of children in their care. The nursery extends partnership working to other professionals outside the setting to support children with special educational needs and/or disabilities when appropriate. The nursery is fully inclusive and meets the needs of all children, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who have English as an additional language. Policies and procedures are consistently implemented to promote equality and eliminate discrimination. The nursery is continuously extending resources and artefacts to incorporate a wide range of cultures, religions, disabilities and ethnic backgrounds, and challenges any prejudicial attitudes by staff, parents or children.

The owner is passionately committed to her vocation and receives enthusiastic support from her dedicated and loyal staff. They deploy themselves in a highly effective manner to ensure that children are constantly well-supervised as they move around the indoor and outdoor environment. Continuing staff development is vitally important in this vibrant nursery and the resulting enhancement of staff skills and knowledge contribute substantially towards the rapid progress the children make. The owner accesses most of the training, cascading the information to staff to ensure that the improved skills and knowledge stay in her setting if and when staff move on. The training log is amended to include information regarding the impact of the training, confirming highly effective, reflective practice. Staff demonstrate an exceptionally high level of knowledge and understanding of the Early Years Foundation Stage, thereby securing excellent learning and development outcomes for children. The nursery makes outstanding use of the space available and ensures that the six areas of learning are reflected equally outside as well as indoors. Parents are actively encouraged to share their skills, knowledge and culture with the children.

The organisation of the daily routine ensures that staff are always available to give daily feedback to parents and carers about children's activities and progress. A vast array of useful information is available in the entrance hallway for parents. Activities are evaluated daily and observational notes are recorded in an extremely manageable format to enable staff to track children's progress and identify the next steps in their learning. Exceptionally effective planning systems ensure that the next steps are collated and fed back into the subsequent plans. Action taken following the last inspection has further developed the use of the outdoor areas and this has led to improved outcomes for learning. The owner has identified that further enhancement of activities for boys, which value their strengths as active

learners and problem solvers, is practicable. Consequently, the setting has developed exceptionally reflective practice to monitor the quality of provision for children, demonstrating the nursery's outstanding capacity for continuous improvement.

The quality and standards of the early years provision and outcomes for children

Children are extremely well supported in their learning within this delightful nursery. The owner and her staff provide a superior learning environment which significantly promotes children's progression towards the early learning goals. The nursery is exceptionally well presented, light, bright and child-friendly, with an extremely high standard of display and presentation which demonstrates pride in the nursery and in children's achievements. The sessions have a set structure that the children know and can feel comfortable with, and always involve time when they can choose to play inside or out. The owner is successfully complementing the indoor Montessori environment with outdoor play and exploration, in line with the spirit and ethos of the Early Years Foundation Stage. For example, an area of the garden has been fenced off to enable free-flow indoor and outdoor play during the sessions. Boys and girls engage in activities requiring hand-eye coordination as they do their 'ironing' and peg the 'washing' out to dry. Children demonstrate increasing skills and control in the use of mark making implements as they chalk on the picket fencing and slabs and paint the walls with paintbrushes dipped in water. Children show curiosity and interest in the features of objects and living things as they discover hidden plastic creatures in the sand. They describe and talk about what they see with excitement as they blow bubbles in the wind. Some children excitedly become involved in a 'road-making' game as they shovel the shingle with 'workmen's spades'.

Play and exploration is planned and purposeful, with a balance of adult-led and child-led activities that results in children being critical, creative and active learners.

Children form good relationships with adults and peers. They work as part of a group, taking turns and sharing fairly. For example, children cooperate well as they 'sweep' with a broom and clear up the sweepings with a dustpan and brush. Children develop exemplary social skills and are well mannered and polite. For example, they shake hands with staff as they leave the session. Children are well behaved as staff set consistent, clear boundaries for expected behaviour. When some children notice that others are not 'doing any work' staff skilfully redirect them, making suggestions and encouraging them to make active choices. They choose to make 'treasure maps' and are reminded of the other children's right to work in peace.

Children count reliably up to ten as they order the spindles and use their fingers to trace sandpaper letters, naming some of the initial sounds such as 'a' for apple and 't' for tennis. The high adult to child ratio ensures an excellent level of support for children's language development, and circle time is used in a highly effective way to develop children's concentration and counting skills. For example, they repeat a familiar rhyme to get rid of any wriggles and focus upon sitting still. Children help

to count the number of friends present and then count backwards and 'blast off' when they get to zero. Staff ask each child to take one shoe off. They talk about pairs of gloves, shoes and socks. Then each child is asked to choose a shoe from the assortment in the middle and make a pair by matching it with one being worn by their friends. This activity engages even the most challenging children and they bask in the copious praise which is given for every successful match. Children notice and comment that some shoes have been polished because they are shiny and all contributions to the discussion are valued and acknowledged positively and with enthusiasm.

Children find out about and identify some features of living things, objects and events they observe. For example, they complete life cycle puzzles, talking about changes involved when a tadpole becomes a frog, an egg hatches into a bird and a seed grows into a poppy. During the inspection, children are excited to find a ladybird and staff encourage them to put the insect carefully into the magnifier so they can see the features more closely before setting it free in the garden.

Children show an interest in the world in which they live. For example, a man came to talk to the children about his job as a train driver and photographs show children dragon dancing at Chinese New Year. Children learn about recycling materials and love to fill their watering cans from the water butt which collects the rainfall from the barn roof in the garden. They explain that the water butt is empty because they have used all the water and there has not been any rain for the past few days. Children experience the life cycle of the apple trees in the garden. They rake the leaves and collect the twigs in winter, see the blossom in spring, watch the apples grow in the summer and make apple crumble with the harvest in the autumn. Children enjoy a frosty walk in the early morning sunshine, noticing the crispy leaves and crunchy ice. Having made footprints on the grass and touched the ice, children bring ice into the classroom and time how long it takes to melt.

Children have plentiful opportunities to develop their physical skills. For example, they stand on their carpet spots in readiness to begin their aerobic exercise workout. They run on the spot, stop, and breathe in and out. Children then join in with the 'Follow me, copy me' song and some who do not want to play are gently supported by staff, who sit with them and involve them in discussion about the game. Snack time is a social occasion which effectively fosters children's independence. They pour their own drinks and help themselves to a choice of a digestive biscuit, rice cake or breadstick. Children know the rules and explain to the inspector that 'you take only one'. Then children take turns to serve their friends with fruit. Staff sit and talk with the children about healthy eating and keeping safe. For example, there is a discussion about why it is necessary to sit still when eating. Children suggest that they 'might choke' because food could accidentally 'go down the wrong way'.

A photographic record supplies evidence of how the garden is used in a highly effective way to promote children's progress towards the early learning goals. Social skills are developed through preparing the vegetable patch, helping to spread the sheet for snack and enjoying snack under the shade of the tree. Communication, language and literacy skills are promoted as children use pencils, hunt for treasure, look at books and sing together. Children's knowledge of volume and measurement is promoted through water play with containers, and calculation

skills develop as children count and keep score through play with skittles and quoits. Mathematical language is extended as they go 'through the tunnel'. Knowledge and understanding of the world develops as children enjoy a visit from the post lady and the fire brigade. They grow sunflowers and plant, grow and water vegetables. They study insect life with magnifiers. Physical skills are actively promoted as children ride trikes and jump in puddles. They weave on the picket fence and throw balls into nets. They bounce on the space hoppers and play in the snow. There are opportunities to slide, climb, kick balls, run, enjoy egg and spoon races with friends and balance bean bags. Children's creativity is promoted outdoors as they paint with water, use tools, dance with ribbons, make bark rubbings and use the 'red rods' creatively.

High quality planning is in place which takes good account of children's interests, ensuring that each child receives an enjoyable and challenging experience across the areas of learning. Staff evaluate activities effectively and give very good priority to promoting children's progress. They support children's learning with gentle questioning and develop learning appropriately. During work linked to a story, children learn about the life cycle of bread and how flour is made. A farm project provides the context to learn where food comes from and to learn about wool. A staff member demonstrates her knitting skills and some of the children try this craft. Children learn about the planets and make their own books. Children learn about the colours of the stars and know, for example, that when a star glows blue it is very hot. Work includes learning about various festivals around the world, including Harvest, the Aboriginal Moon Festival and the Buddha Festival.

The nursery aims to give the children a wide variety of learning experiences which will encourage them to develop their own confidence and self-esteem, enabling them to develop friendships and encouraging them to make their own choices in what they want to do. Throughout their play and learning, staff encourage all the children to respect others around them and to understand that everyone has different needs and feelings, helping them to understand when something may have gone wrong and why and how they can help to make it better. Staff maintain lively levels of interaction with children of all ages and effectively meet their daily care needs with dedication. Children learn to stay safe as they are reminded to take care as they come down the stairs and to hold onto the handrail in case they slip. Children are encouraged to adopt healthy habits, such as, washing hands, blowing noses and putting tissues in the bin. This is managed by gentle and supportive encouragement, increasing the child's independence and highlighting why these things are important. For example, children are encouraged to use wipes after snack to clean their hands and faces before leaving the table. Children develop good habits, become independent learners and develop collaborative skills, problem solving abilities, creativity and creative thinking because they are happy, relaxed, supported and challenged by this stimulating, age-appropriate environment.

Annex A: record of inspection judgements

The key inspection judgements and what they mean

Grade 1 is Outstanding: this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality
Grade 2 is Good: this aspect of the provision is strong
Grade 3 is Satisfactory: this aspect of the provision is sound
Grade 4 is Inadequate: this aspect of the provision is not good enough

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

How well does the setting meet the needs of the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	1
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement	1

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
The effectiveness with which the setting deploys resources	1
The effectiveness with which the setting promotes equality and diversity	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding	1
The effectiveness of the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement	1
The effectiveness of partnerships	1
The effectiveness of the setting's engagement with parents and carers	1

The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage

The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
--	---

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The extent to which children achieve and enjoy their learning	1
The extent to which children feel safe	1
The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which children make a positive contribution	1
The extent to which children develop skills for the future	1

Any complaints about the inspection or report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

Annex B: the Childcare Register

The provider confirms that the requirements of the compulsory part of the Childcare Register are:	Met
---	-----

The provider confirms that the requirements of the voluntary part of the Childcare Register are:	Met
--	-----