

# The Montessori Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

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| <b>Unique reference number</b> | 300795  |
| <b>Inspection date</b>         | 23/06/2011  |
| <b>Inspector</b>               | Cathleen Howarth                                      |
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| <b>Email</b>                   |   |
| <b>Type of setting</b>         | Childcare on non-domestic premises                    |

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## 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*.

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## **Description of the setting**

The Montessori Nursery opened in 1966. It is privately owned and operates from a large Victorian property in the Ecclesall area of Sheffield. The play rooms are situated over five levels and the attic room is now used as a quiet area, which includes a well-resourced library and sensory area. Children have access to enclosed outdoor play areas.

The nursery is open weekdays during term time from 8.30am to 4pm and children attend for a variety of sessions. The nursery is registered on the Early Years Register to provide care for a maximum of 70 children, of whom six may be under two at any one time. Currently there are 90 children on roll, of whom 60 receive funding for early education. The nursery supports children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and they support children who speak English as an additional language. The nursery is not currently accredited by the Montessori Accreditation Board.

The proprietors employ 11 members of staff to work with the children. Of these, 10 hold appropriate early years qualifications. The manager is currently working towards a degree and the deputy has attained Early Years Professional Status (EYPS). Two other members of staff are working towards EYPS. Links have been made with other Early Years Foundation Stage providers.

## **The overall effectiveness of the early years provision**

Overall the quality of the provision is good.

A noticeable feature of the setting is inclusive practice, which is firmly embedded in all aspects of the provision. The manager sets high standards and the cohesive staff team meet the individual needs of children well in a calm, friendly and relaxed atmosphere. Recommendations are raised to enhance children's learning and development although overall, systems that demonstrate reflective practice are usually effective. As a result staff have good capacity to make independent and continuous improvements.

## **What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?**

To further improve the early years provision the registered person should:

- develop more opportunities for children to experience the wider community
- improve continuity in the Oak Room through a consistent balance of adult-led and freely-chosen, or child-initiated, activities delivered through indoor and outdoor play.

## **The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision**

The manager is the safeguarding coordinator and she has devised and implemented effective systems to safeguard children, including relevant training for staff. There are robust selection, recruitment and vetting procedures in place. The friendly, supportive camaraderie between staff promotes a warm and welcoming atmosphere.

The manager has successfully implemented an effective staff induction and appraisal system to effectively promote staff's personal professional development. Staff increase their knowledge and skills through collaborative team work, such as problem solving, work-shadowing, coaching and mentoring and through regular team meetings. They are supported by the committed proprietors who provide hands-on assistance.

Space, time and resources are effectively organised and used. Before each session begins resources are checked in relation to health and safety. They are thoughtfully arranged to encourage children to use them. Toys, books, materials and equipment are regularly rotated to provide variety for children. Activities are well supported. The inclusive ethos at the nursery promotes a strong sense of belonging. Staff have in-depth knowledge of each child's background and needs, through an established key person system and through informal networking. This ensures each child's individual and family identities are nurtured, respected and celebrated. Through age-appropriate activities, such as food tasting, art and crafts, music and movement, and dressing up, and by successfully reinforcing school themes and topics, children learn about people's differences. They clearly value their own cultural and religious heritage and as a result they value others and they integrate well.

Staff have developed specialist knowledge and skills to enable them to meet the needs of children who have health difficulties and special educational needs and /or disabilities. Overall, children behave well and staff consistently praise good behaviour.

There are good levels of engagement at the setting. Relationships and working in partnership with parents is effective. Staff maintain meaningful relationships with parents and foster trust, openness and respect, whilst keeping the focus on the children's welfare and development. Parents are routinely involved in decision making on key matters affecting their children, through well-established formal and informal systems. They commend staff for the way in which they deliver a consistently good service.

Staff are committed and experienced in interagency working. They take a lead role in establishing and maintaining links with other professionals and transition arrangements are good. They work collaboratively through the special educational needs coordinator in order to narrow any achievement gaps. Provision for children who speak English as an additional language is good. For example children enjoy singing and talking through the microphone, which clearly helps to develop

confidence and communication skills.

There are effective systems for self-evaluation, which highlight areas of the provision to be developed, like continuing to develop the provision for outside play. Currently preparations are under way for the end of term summer picnic.

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

Staff have secure knowledge and understanding of the Early Years Foundation Stage. Overall, they promote children's learning and development well through systems that show children's individual progress is good in relation to their starting points and capabilities. Staff record observations of children at play to find out about their natural interests, capabilities and preferred learning styles. They track children's progress and link pictorial examples of what children have achieved in well-maintained learning journals for parents to view. They evaluate stimulating and challenging activities with the children, taking into account their age and stage of development. The information obtained in the children's learning journals is effectively used to plan a broad range of interesting activities, which support children to take the next step towards the early learning goals in the six areas of learning. Overall, teaching methods are effective and, when it is appropriate, staff are able to maintain children's attention for long periods by using soft toys and similar props. All children are encouraged to have a go and they are confident learners who have developed a positive attitude towards learning.

All children show a strong sense of security and feel safe within the setting. Good childcare practices help children thrive in a safe, familiar, stable and predictable environment and this is firmly established through the key person system. However, there are limited opportunities for trips and outings, which hinder children's understanding of the wider community.

Healthy lifestyles are positively promoted and children engage in a wide range of physical activities, both indoors and outdoors. Staff are vigilant and ensure the food provided for children is varied, nutritious and complies with children's dietary requirements. There is continuous provision for children to relax, sleep or play quietly without being disturbed and this includes the well-resourced sensory area in the attic.

Children are usually encouraged to take responsibility for themselves and they develop self-help skills, like putting on coats before they play outside. However, sometimes in the Oak Room the adults approach is not consistent and children's play becomes overly directed, which hinders children's overall development. Overall, staff understand the uniqueness of each child and their differences, such as ethnicity, culture, religion and home language, are valued and respected. The concept of sustainability and looking after the environment is promoted well. Children are keen to recycle materials from home and they use them for model making at the nursery.

Children are engrossed in their play. For example, they enjoy art work and various

other table top activities in addition to dressing up and playing outside. Children's development in communication, numeracy and literacy and the use of information and communication technology is also good. For example, the use of programmable resources is part of the continuous provision. Effective measures like these provide firm foundations for children to develop knowledge, understanding and skills that are required for later life.

## 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

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|--|---|
| <b>How well does the setting meet the needs of the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?</b> | 2 |
| The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement                                     | 2 |

### The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

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|--|---|
| <b>The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>            | 2 |
| The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement         | 2 |
| The effectiveness with which the setting deploys resources   | 2 |
| The effectiveness with which the setting promotes equality and diversity                             | 2 |
| The effectiveness of safeguarding  | 2 |
| The effectiveness of the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement | 2 |
| The effectiveness of partnerships  | 2 |
| The effectiveness of the setting's engagement with parents and carers                                | 2 |

### The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage

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|--|---|
| The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage | 2 |
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### Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

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| <b>Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage</b> | 2 |
| The extent to which children achieve and enjoy their learning    | 2 |
| The extent to which children feel safe                           | 2 |
| The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles            | 2 |
| The extent to which children make a positive contribution        | 2 |
| The extent to which children develop skills for the future       | 2 |

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