

Montessori School

Independent School

Inspection Report

DCSF Registration Number	812/6003
Unique Reference Number	134713
URN for registered childcare and social care	EY205540
Inspection number	330044
Inspection dates	7 October 2008
Reporting inspector	John Coleman HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002 (as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005). The inspection of childcare was conducted under Section 49(2) of the Childcare Act 2006.

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, in order to advise the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The inspection of registered provision¹ was conducted under Section 49(2) of the Childcare Act 2006.

This was a light touch inspection (LTI) which focused principally on the quality of education provided by the school; its provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; the arrangements for safeguarding pupils and the improvements the school has made since its last inspection.

Information about the school

Montessori School and The Children's House (Nursery) are located in a rural location adjacent to a working farm in north-east Lincolnshire. The school was opened in 2004 and is housed in a former coach house, now restored and converted, which was until 2003 the site of the Nursery, which is now a short distance away in a purpose-built, award-winning building. Childcare is provided for children aged up to three and from three to five in the Nursery. Additionally, a before- and after-school club operates in the main school building and full day care is also provided in holiday periods. The school was last inspected in February 2005 and the childcare provision in April 2008.

The school provides a curriculum based firmly on the principles of Dr Maria Montessori and seeks to blend this with both the Foundation Stage curriculum and the National Curriculum for Key Stages 1 and 2. The children are mostly of white British heritage and one child has a statement of special educational need, for which the local authority provides some support.

The Montessori School is a training centre for Montessori teachers and has received many nationally recognised awards for the high quality of management in the Nursery. The setting received Investors in People in 2004.

¹ Schools which provide childcare for children from birth until the term in which they reach their third birthday must register this provision separately with Ofsted.

Evaluation of the school

Montessori School provides an outstanding quality of education for its children. This is because the leadership is hugely successful in bringing about sustained improvement since the last inspection. The quality of teaching is consistently outstanding and provides a rich and broad outstanding curriculum so that children make outstanding progress in their personal and academic development. Children develop extremely well as independent learners and show high levels of maturity and responsibility. The school meets all the regulations for independent schools. The Children's House is outstandingly effective in providing for children's needs in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). The school's registered provision for childcare fully meets the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006.

Quality of education

The curriculum and other activities are outstanding in meeting the range of needs and the interests of all of the children. The school fully meets its aims to provide a broad and diverse curriculum, which is informed but not led by the National Curriculum and is primarily based on the principles of Montessori teaching. The aims of the curriculum include, *'encouraging children to develop at an appropriate rate which is free from pressure, in a prepared environment designed to cater for children's developmental needs and different learning styles'*. The timetable organises a Montessori work cycle in the mornings and EYFS topic work or National Curriculum subjects in the afternoons. The Montessori work cycle includes practical life, sensory work, language, mathematics, culture (history, geography, botany, biology and art) and science. All of the learning areas of EYFS are provided. Children have lessons in the National Curriculum subjects of history, geography, French, art, design and technology, science and music. The children learn computer skills such as how to use email and to enable them to research on the internet. Curriculum planning is of a very high quality and is displayed all over the school and in the Nursery. School plans are successful in outlining key skills to be learned, together with specific learning outcomes in each subject. Opportunities are identified for learning in different subjects. Learning activities are planned well and are designed to enable children to learn through investigation and exploration. Plans are matched well to the National Curriculum and EYFS and also integrate Montessori learning activities very successfully. The curriculum is enriched by a good range of visits to places of educational interest. Recent trips have included Chester zoo, Lincoln castle and a Viking museum. Additionally, the school regularly invites visitors into school to talk to the children about a variety of topics, as with the local vicar, who was very involved in the recent celebration of the harvest festival. Excellent use is made of the local environment including the school grounds, which provide outdoor play and opportunities to study plants and animals. The children also enjoy visits to the neighbouring farm to learn about livestock and the growth of crops. In response to

parental questionnaires issued by the school, the extra-curricular activities provided this term offer a wider range of opportunities. The children who spoke to inspectors said that they enjoyed book club, homework club and IT club. The school has plans to introduce football, violin and French. Previously there was a rather limited range.

The quality of teaching and assessment is outstanding in meeting the full range of children's needs. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection. The school leaders provide a strong, clear vision for classroom practice and staff show complete commitment to implementing this. As a result, classrooms are bright vibrant environments in which learning is organised very well and children's independence in learning is developed successfully. Staff know their children extremely well, they understand their needs, and this means that the activities and tasks provided are exactly what the children require to build on previous learning and to challenge them further. The way in which adults in the school treat each other and the children is an inspirational role model to the children. Consequently, children respond with near perfect behaviour and demonstrate a very positive attitude to learning. The benefit of this is that children show interest in their work and concentrate hard so that they get the most out of everything the teachers provide for them. In keeping with Montessori methods teachers adopt a role as 'director' and steer away from giving too many instructions. Teachers are excellent at guiding, prompting and supporting the children to learn as they undertake the carefully prepared activities in each lesson. All staff are skilled in their use of questions which helps children to build their learning systematically, in a step-by-step way. The children are articulate and socially adept and this leads to many opportunities where they learn from each other in pairs or small groups as they discuss and develop their ideas. Resources are very good and the practical Montessori apparatus is very well used to provide interesting learning experiences for the children.

Teachers assess children's progress rigorously. There are daily monitoring records which are then evaluated weekly and monthly. The results of this work are used very effectively to plan for each child's learning needs. The assessment records are matched against planned learning outcomes using Montessori and National Curriculum levels. However, the school does not use National Curriculum levels to analyse progress or report to parents. A computer software program is used in the Foundation Stage to record and track the progress which children make and gives the school's leadership a sharp and incisive view of this. Presently the school is working with the University of Lincoln to develop a similar system throughout the main school.

Children make outstanding progress in their learning because of the high quality of the curriculum, their superb attitudes to school and lessons, and the outstanding overall quality of teaching. This represents substantial improvement since the last inspection. Children enter the main school, many from the Nursery, with skills which are generally better than those expected for children of similar age. In the Foundation Stage they learn rapidly so that the school's assessments show that when they complete the year in which they turn five years, they have skills and knowledge which are significantly greater than most children of similar age. Throughout the main school children make outstanding progress and develop independent learning skills which stand them in very good stead for when they move

on to secondary education. In particular, they acquire very high levels of speaking and listening skills and demonstrate an admirable range of vocabulary and very good ability to articulate their ideas.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The quality of provision for children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Staff have very high expectations of children's behaviour and they respond superbly well, as it is outstanding. The school promotes this by providing excellent role models from staff, who treat each other and the children with courtesy and respect and in return children follow suit. Children's spiritual development is promoted well and their self-esteem and confidence are built up very successfully because staff continually see the best in children's achievements. There is an emphasis on praising children's efforts. Lessons frequently inspire their thoughts and imagination through the use of natural materials and engender in them an empathy with the world in which they live. Children's social development is very well promoted through the everyday tasks and routines which are established securely. Children work harmoniously together with very high levels of co-operation as they sweep, clean and tidy their classrooms. Resources are carefully returned by children to their storage place and they take great pride and responsibility in carrying out these tasks. Relationships are first class between children and with staff. Children say that they feel safe and can turn to a member of staff if they need help. No bullying is seen in the school. Children enjoy all aspects of school life and their attendance is excellent. Cultural development is good, aided by the curriculum coverage of topics in history, geography and art. Artists-in-residence are a feature of the school along with regular visits, the result of which can be visibly seen in the many artistic displays of children's work around the school. British culture is explored through topics such as the Victorians. Children learn about other faiths and beliefs through the celebration of religious festivals such as Divali and Eid, and through aspects of the history and geography curricula. The children have a strong appreciation of racial diversity. Children show a good understanding of public services, and benefit from visits to learn about the emergency services and local councillors.

One parent's response to inspectors is representative of the very positive view in which the school's performance is held: *'My daughter loves coming to school which is my main priority. She seems to be making fantastic progress with her school work, but for me the most important thing she has gained is a quiet confidence in herself and her ability to do any given task. She remains shy but she now has a self-belief, which I think is due to the wonderful teaching she receives. She is treated very much as an individual and I feel that the staff have a lovely relationship with her.'*

Safeguarding pupils' welfare, health and safety

The school makes all suitable checks and undertakes all safeguards to ensure that children are kept safe and free from harm. The overall welfare, health and safety of

children is outstanding. The school complies with all the required regulations. Policies and staff training are in place and up-to-date. The school has a suitable plan regarding the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 2002. The school successfully encourages children to develop healthy lifestyles. Regular exercise is a part of the curriculum and includes swimming. Drinking water is always available, home-cooked meals are prepared on site and children are reminded of the need for hand washing as a good, hygienic habit. The school is a smoke-free environment, risk assessments are in place and staff provide attentive supervision of children at all times.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

The Children's House is outstandingly effective in providing for children's needs in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). Outstanding provision ensures at least good progress across all the areas of learning. Outcomes are also at least good for each of the *Every Child Matters* areas of being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, positive contribution and economic well-being. Every child is recognised as unique and planning is strongly related to their starting points and capabilities. As a result, children's learning and development are very good. Provision for their physical and individual emotional well-being is outstanding. The self-evaluation of the leadership is accurate and is used very well to secure on-going improvement.

Children achieve outstandingly well because of the high quality of teaching and learning, the provision of motivating and stimulating environments and the warm, secure relationships between staff and children. There is a wide range of capabilities represented in the Children's House, and all children make outstanding progress so that by the end of the Foundation Stage the vast majority achieve at a level above those expected for similar children. Staff support learning exceptionally well. Regular observation and detailed assessment maximise children's achievement and progress. Play is very purposeful and there is a good balance of activities guided by adults and those initiated by the children. The Children's House meets all the welfare requirements. The provision for children's personal development and well-being is outstanding. Children show a very high level of enjoyment and fully engage in the many interesting and stimulating activities. They learn routines quickly, such as washing hands and setting the table. Children become inquisitive learners, developing probing investigative skills. They communicate well with each other in groups and with the adults who care for them. Outstanding leadership and management are provided by the two directors and their management team. They are never complacent, as was seen following the very recent full inspection of the provision, which judged the setting as outstanding with no issues for development. Despite this highly commendable outcome the team has action plans to make further improvements and undertake rigorous monitoring to ensure that the high quality is sustained.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended January 2005.

The school's registered provision for childcare meets the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006.

What the school could do to improve further

While not required by the regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

- improvement of the analysis of children's achievements in the National Curriculum areas for learning so that children, and their parents, are clearer about the children's rate of progress
- extension of the range of extra-curricular opportunities available for all children, including those in EYFS, after school.

Inspection Judgement Recording Form

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
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The quality of education

Overall quality of education	✓			
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils	✓			
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs	✓			
How well pupils make progress in their learning	✓			

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	✓			
The behaviour of pupils	✓			

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils	✓			
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The quality of the Early Years Foundation Stage provision

How effectively are children in the Early Years Foundation Stage helped to learn and develop?	✓			
How well do children achieve in the Early Years Foundation Stage relative to their starting points and capabilities?	✓			
How good are the personal development and well-being of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	✓			
What is the quality of welfare, health and safety of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	✓			
How effectively is the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed?	✓			
What is the overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage including, where relevant, the quality of childcare?	✓			

School details

Name of school	Montessori School		
DCSF number	812/6003		
Unique reference number	134713		
EY URN	EY205540		
Type of school	Montessori		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	2005		
Age range of pupils	0-11		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 16	Girls: 18	Total: 34
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 13	Girls: 18	Total: 31
Number of pupils aged 0-3 in registered childcare provision	Boys: 24	Girls: 25	Total: 49
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 0	Girls: 1	Total: 1
Annual fees (day pupils)	£5000		
Weekly fees (childcare)	£154		
Address of school	Station Road Stallingborough NE Lincs DN41 8AJ		
Telephone number	01472 886000		
Email address	enquiries@thechildrenshouse.org.uk		
Headteacher	Mrs T Ellerby		
Proprietor	Theresa Ellerby and Sylvia Archer		
Reporting inspector	John Coleman HMI		
Dates of inspection	7 October 2008		