

The Village Montessori Nursery School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	507891
Inspection date	29 June 2007
Inspector	Margaret Davie
Setting Address	Cock Lane, Bradfield, Reading, Berkshire, RG7 6HW
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Registered person	Jacqueline Diana MacLean
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	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.

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 outstanding. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are outstanding.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

The Village Montessori Nursery School opened in 1992. It is situated in the rural village of Bradfield Southend between Newbury and Reading and operates from a purpose-built building. A maximum of 30 children may attend at any one time. The nursery school is open during term-time only, from 09.15 until 15.15 on Monday to Thursday, except Wednesday, when it is open until 15.30. On Friday the nursery is open until 12.15. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 43 children aged from two and a half to under five years on roll. Of these, 33 children receive funding for early education. Most children come from the local area. The nursery currently supports children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

The nursery employs seven members of staff of whom six hold appropriate early years qualifications. Of these, three are working towards a further qualification. The nursery school was built and designed with Montessori principles in mind and most staff have had Montessori training.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Children thrive because staff have an excellent understanding of how to promote their good health. High quality adult support is helping them to gain a thorough understanding of good hygiene practices and encouraging their independence in their personal care.

The nursery is kept meticulously clean and children are asked to wear indoor shoes to keep the floors suitable for play. Children wash their hands independently, happily following routines which are well thought out to help them remember the importance of personal hygiene. For example, when they decide to have a snack, they know they are expected to put their name card on the table and then wash their hands before getting out their plates. This helps them to understand how to minimise the spread of germs.

Children help themselves to easily accessible water throughout the session and enjoy a very healthy selection of fruit and plain dry cereal at snack time. Only children who want to have a snack do so, however staff keep track of their eating habits by checking which of them has used their name card so that parents can quickly be alerted to any problems. Children help themselves to a snack and healthy drink, eating on a specially laid table and use an excellent range of suitable crockery which helps them to serve themselves. To prevent the spread of germs, children use spoons to help themselves to food. Children eat their packed lunch at tables laid with a cloth and napkins which promotes their good eating habits very well.

Children's health benefits from regular opportunities to play in the fresh air. Excellent use is made of the large outdoor area to offer them many opportunities for energetic play. They develop their physical skills by successfully challenging themselves to climb up the ladders and ropes, run in the garden holding streamers which make patterns in the wind or discover how to make a ball roll more quickly down a piece of guttering. They love being outside and get plenty of exercise, walking in the meadow, looking for birds and insects or on a mini-beast hunt around the grounds. A range of very good experiences help children to develop their fine motor skills, including learning to fasten buttons, poppers and belts on specially designed equipment.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Children are kept safe because staff are highly vigilant and make thorough risk assessments to reduce any potential hazards. The premises are bright and airy, very welcoming and organised to an excellent standard to allow children the freedom and flexibility to pursue their own interests. There is plenty of room for them to pursue an activity at a table or to spread their mats out on the floor. Children develop a high level of independence in the way they select and pursue activities and are therefore gaining an excellent understanding about their own limitations and how to protect themselves. They use an excellent range of equipment appropriate to their age, including many Montessori resources, to stimulate their play. The outdoor area is fully enclosed and staff check all areas for safety before children are allowed out to play. Outdoor equipment is in very good condition and highly stimulating and is therefore very suitable for their use.

Children are very well protected because all staff have attended recent training and have a clear understanding of child protection policies and safeguarding procedures.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Children are very happy at the nursery and participate enthusiastically in activities as soon as they arrive. Staff have an excellent understanding of how children of this age learn and develop and make very effective use of early years guidance, such as Birth to three matters, Foundation Stage Guidance and Montessori Guidance to plan suitable and stimulating activities. Children are encouraged to explore and investigate and develop independence appropriate to their stage of development. Younger children for example, delight in seeing how high they can build 'pink tower' and tell staff eagerly that their daddy is much taller.

Caring relationships develop children's self confidence and sense of trust. They relate very well to staff and approach them confidently if they feel they need help. This gives them the confidence to try new experiences. Children are completely enthralled and listen very carefully when hearing stories which supports their early communication skills very well. They begin to learn about the world around them when weeding the vegetable plot so that their plants do not become overgrown, and wonder what the pumpkins that are growing will taste like when they are ripe. They enjoy music sessions greatly, playing instruments to make their own music, sing simple songs and clap out rhythms.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Children are excited by the range of stimulating activities which are very well planned to meet their needs. Staff are very good role models and demonstrate very positive attitudes toward learning by presenting activities in a calm but highly interesting manner. They are enthusiastic about the activities children involve themselves in and this encourages a high level of motivation in the children. Staff talk to children about what they are doing and very skilfully enable them to extend their learning. Children playing on the bridge outside, were soon re-enacting the story of 'The Three Little Pigs' looking for solid and light objects to make their houses from, because of very effective intervention by staff.

Excellent resources in the language centre help children make very good progress in early writing skills and phonic recognition. Most can write their name and carefully copy words to develop their pencil control. They speak confidently and listen very well because they are given regular opportunities to come together as a whole group for social interaction. They talk about their own or other relevant news, such as the recent large amount of rainfall, and consider the implications this has on road safety. Children count confidently to five and many far beyond. They are familiar with different shapes and sizes, sorting shapes in the geometric cabinet and using rods to measure and compare lengths.

Children's knowledge and understanding of the world is excellent. They benefit tremendously from the school's ethos of exploration and investigation. They observe wildlife from the look-outs using telescopes and binoculars and use their senses to explore the texture, smell and taste of herbs, which they have grown. They carefully check on the progress of their emerging butterflies and stick insects and appreciate the importance of caring for their environment by helping to compost leftovers.

Children of all ages work together very well. Older children act as role models to help new children settle into routines when they first start and they help and support each other when using the computer. Their independence skills are excellent. They see to their personal needs such as dressing and undressing, visiting the toilet and washing hands and deciding when to have a drink and snack.

Staff start to find out about children's individual needs as soon as they begin attending the nursery. This information is built upon to ensure each child achieves as well as they can. Children initiate play and learn at their own pace, very ably supported by staff. Excellent systems are used to observe and record how well children are doing and as a result their individual needs are very well met.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Children's wellbeing is promoted exceptionally well. Staff make excellent use of the information they gather about children from observations and other assessments to ensure they are all treated as individuals. This makes all children feel highly valued. Each child is assigned a key worker, who is responsible for their overall welfare during their time at the nursery. This means children soon develop a high level of trust in adults who look after them and settle quickly. This very good awareness of each child's needs is not confined to their key worker, as staff work very well as a team, sharing their knowledge continually in order to support all children as well as possible.

Children with learning difficulties and disabilities make very good progress because staff consult with professionals and outreach teachers to ensure they get the individual support they need. Staff go to great lengths to adapt resources and activities to make them suitable. As a result these children play a full part in the life of the school.

Children's behaviour is excellent. Staff have high expectations of the children and set clear boundaries. Older children lead younger or new children by example. This results in a very calm learning environment in which children are free to follow their own interests. Children know their activity will not be disturbed once they have got it out, as long as it is left on a mat. This really encourages them to take their time and focus on their tasks for as long as they want. Children take a high level of responsibility for their own activities and as a result are learning that actions have consequences and gaining a clear understanding of right and wrong. They respond exceptionally well to any reminders from staff to treat each other with respect and kindness.

Children have very good opportunities to learn about themselves and each other. They reflect on their own importance by affixing their name to the oak tree in the garden and learn about the world around them through planned activities and visitors to the nursery such as at the Chinese New Year. As a result children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very well fostered.

Partnership with parents and carers is outstanding and this contributes significantly to children's wellbeing. Staff meet with parents before their child starts at the school to gather valuable information about how best to care for them and to discuss any specific needs or preferences. They meet informally with parents at the end of each session and regularly on more formal occasions, to ensure there is a continual two way flow of information to support children's needs.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

Children's care is significantly enhanced by the outstanding quality of organisation, leadership and management of nursery education. The head teacher and staff have a very clear sense of purpose and continually reflect on the provision in order to find areas for improvement.

The premises are very well organised. Space is very well thought out, both indoors and outdoors to maximise learning opportunities for children. The outdoor play area is used exceptionally well to encourage children's curiosity through exploration and investigation and contributes significantly to their well being.

Children benefit from very highly qualified staff who are committed to continuous improvement and development. The excellent staff appraisal system means they are fully conversant with all policies and procedures and encouraged to continually develop their own practice for the benefit of the children. This is evident in their commitment to further relevant training to ensure they can provide the best care possible to all children in the nursery.

The head teacher has excellent aims and a very clear vision for the school based on Montessori principles. There is a thorough focus on education with excellent planning in place to ensure children make appropriate progress towards the early learning goals. Practice is regularly assessed and adjusted to ensure it meets the highest standards. Parents are delighted with their children's achievements and are very satisfied with the information they get about how well their children are doing. They feel that their children are very well prepared to move on to more formal education. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides very well.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the time of the last inspection the nursery school was asked to devise and implement a policy outlining the action to be taken in the event of a child becoming lost. This has now been written and is understood by all staff and improves children's care and well being.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since the last inspection 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.

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WHAT MUST BE DONE TO SECURE FUTURE IMPROVEMENT?

The quality and standards of the care

No recommendations for improvement are made because the quality and standards of care are outstanding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education

No recommendations for improvement are made because the quality and standards of nursery education are outstanding.

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