

Sunflower Montessori Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	260949
Inspection date	26 September 2007
Inspector	Glenda Kathleen Field
Setting Address	Causeway Farm, Middleton, Saxmundham, Suffolk, IP17 3NH
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Registered person	Lucy Smith
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 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?

Sunflower Montessori Nursery opened in January 1991 and is privately owned. The setting operates from two rooms on Causeway Farm in Middleton near Saxmundham, Suffolk. All children have access to a secure outdoor play area.

The nursery is open Monday to Friday from 08.00 to 18.00 during term times only. A maximum of 24 children may attend the nursery at any one time. Children have access to a secure, enclosed outdoor play area. There are currently 40 children on roll. Of these 27 children receive funding for nursery education. The nursery supports children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language.

Six staff are employed, including the manager, all of whom hold appropriate early years qualifications. The nursery receives support from the local authority. The nursery provides learning experiences for children based on the Montessori philosophy.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children learn to understand simple, good health and hygiene practices through well established routines. For example, staff ensure children wash and dry their hands appropriately before eating and after using the toilet. Children's well-being is effectively promoted because staff are well informed about children's health care matters and all the required documentation and consents are in place to support this. Children's health is well promoted because staff have attended first aid and food hygiene training to ensure they are aware of the correct procedures to follow to maintain children's health and prevent the spread of infection. However, the table used for children to enjoy a snack is not cleaned between use and children eat directly from the table. This potentially compromises children's health.

Children's dietary needs are met through the provision of nutritious snacks, which take account of their individual dietary needs and preferences. Children enjoy choosing snacks which include a good range of fresh fruit and vegetables. Milk and water is also offered at snack time. Children have access to drinking water throughout the session, which they freely help themselves to, ensuring they are not thirsty.

Children enjoy an extremely broad range of physical play experiences that contribute to a healthy lifestyle. They have excellent opportunities to develop a positive attitude towards physical play, both indoors and in the outdoor play areas. Children develop control of their bodies while competently using wheeled toys, bats, balls and the newly added 'movement cascade'. This consists of gutter pipes which children place at different heights; water and other objects are then added, enabling children to view their travel through the system. They demonstrate increasing control while using equipment, such as scissors, threading activities and a variety of mark-making tools to help them develop their hand-eye coordination.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a safe and secure environment where staff take positive steps to minimise risks to children. For example, carrying out daily visual safety checks and ensuring the entrance to the provision is kept secure to prevent unauthorised access. In addition, staff practise emergency evacuations with the children and ensure all fire exits are kept clear. The indoor and outdoor environment is well laid out so children can move around safely and independently under staff supervision.

Children have access to a good range of safe and suitable toys and equipment that are well-maintained and meet safety standards. Toys and equipment meet the needs of all children and help to create a very stimulating indoor and outdoor environment. Child-accessible storage units and the broad range of activities set up by staff encourage children to initiate their own play and follow their own interests. Children are kept safe on outings because the group follows sound procedures with high adult to child ratios to promote children's safety.

Children's welfare is safeguarded because staff have attended child protection training and are aware of the correct procedures to follow if they have a concern. A statement is in place which includes a procedure to be followed should an allegation be made against a member of staff.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are encouraged to feel settled and confident by the warm and welcoming environment. They have a good sense of belonging which has developed through environmental factors. For example, displays of their work within the playroom, and a well paced session routine which meets individual children's needs. Children are able to independently choose activities from the low-level shelving storage boxes and floor based containers. They enjoy listening to stories and engaging in messy play. Children show good levels of concentration, especially when exploring the sand with their fingers. Children use mark-making resources, such as paint brushes, chalks, pencils and crayons, to develop their understanding of how these work.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff have sound knowledge of the Foundation Stage curriculum and children are making good progress towards the early learning goals. Plans are in place and cover all areas of the Foundation Stage curriculum. However, there is no record kept of focussed activities that take place to enable staff to make the best use of these activities to promote the learning of all children. Children's assessment records are regularly updated and clearly set out using the stepping stones leading to the early learning goals. Children can access the outdoor environment when they wish throughout the day to support their physical development.

Children relate very well to each other and adults, confidently expressing their needs and ideas. Children concentrate for long periods of time on self-chosen tasks, persevering to practise their skills. They share resources, cooperate with each other and demonstrate very good personal independence skills. For example, they access the toilet themselves, wash and dry their own hands, put on painting aprons and pour their own drinks throughout the day. Children have high levels of confidence and self-esteem, they respond well to the positive messages given to them and their behaviour is good.

Children are highly confident communicators, initiating conversations and speaking to a familiar audience. This is due to the high quality of adult interaction. For example, a child eagerly told the inspector the names of her parents and sisters and the friendly relationship they all had with their neighbours. Children enjoy listening to well-read stories. They participate enthusiastically, recalling key elements of the story to demonstrate what they know. Staff use good questioning skills to encourage children to think. Children have excellent opportunities to practise their fine motor skills with a range of resources. Some children are able to write their own names correctly and clearly. A child used the letter 'S', this being the first letter of her name, she then added a dot to the top curve and legs and feet to the bottom curve. On completion of this she said to the inspector, 'that's a bird'.

Children are proficient at counting and are beginning to recognise numerals. Staff develop children's understanding of simple calculations through planned and spontaneous activities. Most children are able to count up to ten and some beyond. For example, a child whilst completing a transport floor puzzle, correctly identified to the inspector the number of passengers on the bus. Children have excellent opportunities to learn about shape, weight, measure and position, using the appropriate vocabulary and this knowledge is developing well. Children recognise and recreate patterns and are beginning to use mathematical concepts to problem solve.

Children use their observational skills to explore the environment and nature. The setting has recently added a sensory garden to enable children to see, smell and touch a variety of flora and fauna. Children are learning what is needed to help things grow by planting tomatoes, marrows, courgettes and sunflowers. Children were seen to water the plants. Visitors to the group further support their learning, for example, the dental hygienist, police and local vicar. Children enjoy investigating interesting objects and have excellent opportunities to take part in simple experiments, such as the outdoor movement cascade. They have regular opportunities to use information technology. Children enjoy talking about past and present events in their own lives and have good opportunities to learn other cultures and beliefs.

Staff plan good opportunities to encourage children to develop their coordination and balancing skills. Children demonstrate control and good coordination, moving confidently during ballet and music and movement sessions and running, hopping and skipping in the outdoor area. They have very good opportunities to manipulate small tools and utensils in a variety of activities with increasing control. They are developing a good awareness of healthy practices, particularly healthy eating, and are beginning to understand the effects that activity has on their bodies.

Children enjoy exploring colour and texture through a range of media and materials. They make particularly good use of the free painting activity. A child told the inspector that they had used yellow and blue paint to make the colour green. Children join in enthusiastically, singing familiar songs and have good opportunities to listen to music, including music from other cultures. The Montessori equipment encourages them to use their senses when exploring objects and materials.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children are happy and settled. They gain confidence and self-assurance through making choices about activities, including having good access to resources. Children are helped to understand the diversity of the wider world as they celebrate festivals. They enjoy visitors to the setting from members of the local community, such as a dance teacher, local vicar, police and dental hygienist. Children with learning difficulties benefit from the effective systems in place which ensure that their specific needs are met. For example, close liaison takes place with the local authority support teachers and parents, and extra support is provided by the setting if necessary.

Children behave well as they are made aware of what is appropriate behaviour. They respond well to the consistent boundaries set and the encouragement to behave well given by the caring staff. Older children begin to take responsibility and manage their own behaviour as they offer to help adults and friends.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and emotional development is fostered because they are developing confidence and self-esteem, behave well and are developing a good understanding of right and wrong. Children relate well to each other and staff, and are developing an understanding of their community through visitors to the setting and outings made. Children are beginning to show an appreciation of other cultures and beliefs through topics and activities offered.

The partnership with parents and carers is good. They are warmly welcomed into the setting by friendly and approachable staff. Parents are informed about how the nursery operates and the activities provided through written notices, newsletters and displays. The setting obtains information about the children's needs, and their achievements on settling in at the nursery.

Children's progress is fostered by regular discussions to ensure that parents know how their children are developing and how they can contribute to their children's progress. They, and their children, are supported through the settling in time. Therefore, children's care is enhanced through a good working partnership.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children are cared for by staff who are experienced, well qualified and have a clear understanding of the needs of children. Staff are effectively deployed to maintain adult to child ratios. Clear induction procedures are in place. The setting is well organised to provide for the needs of all children. Children have opportunities within the daily routines, including outside play, to develop in all areas of learning. Detailed policies and procedures are in place, ensuring the efficient management of the provision and which promote the welfare, care and learning of children.

The leadership and management is good.

Children benefit from the strong leadership and management of the setting. Staff have clear roles with a clear procedure in place to use them as a basis for appraisal. Good teamwork is developed and systems are in place to ensure clear communication takes place between staff and management. Training needs are identified and opportunities provided for staff to access relevant courses, thereby enabling staff to continue their knowledge and provide good care for children. The quality of care and education is monitored to ensure strengths and areas for improvement are identified, with management and staff working together to act upon them for the well-being of children. Overall children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection, the setting agreed to introduce a staff appraisal to assist with the monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning taking place. Staff now have annual appraisals identifying training needs, thus enabling staff to continue their knowledge. It was also agreed to increase opportunities for children to use information and communication technology. Children now have use of a computer laptop, tape machines, headphones, beat box and metal detector. The setting also had plans in place to improve the outdoor play area. The area now has a covered area enabling children to play outside when the weather is not too kind. Additions to the outdoor area also include a movement cascade, magnetic writing and counting boards. These measures have enhanced the care and education that children receive.

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

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

- improve hygiene practises at snack time with regard to children eating directly off the table and also the cleaning of the table between use

The quality and standards of the nursery education

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

- ensure that focussed activities are evaluated.

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