

Sunflower Montessori Nursery School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique reference number	260949
Inspection date	04/07/2011
Inspector	Sarah Johnson
Setting address	Causeway Farm, Middleton, Saxmundham, Suffolk, IP17 3NH
Telephone number	01728 648352
Email	sunflowernursery@tiscali.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

Sunflower Montessori Nursery School registered in 1991 and is privately owned and managed. It operates from a room within a farmhouse, situated on Causeway Farm in Middleton near Saxmundham, Suffolk. Children also have access to an enclosed garden area and large covered barn for outdoor play. The nursery school opens each weekday from 8am to 6pm, during school term times. Children attend for various sessions and live within a 20 mile radius of the setting.

The provision is registered on the Early Years Register and both the compulsory and voluntary parts of the Childcare Register. A maximum of 28 children may attend the nursery school at any one time. There are currently 50 children in the early years age group on roll, some in part-time places. The nursery school is currently supporting a number of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and has strategies in place to support children who have English as an additional language.

There are seven members of staff, including the owner manager. All staff hold relevant early years qualifications to at least level 3. One member of staff holds Early Years Professional Status and the manager is also working towards this. One member of staff holds Qualified Teacher Status. The setting operates in line with the Montessori educational philosophy and provides funded early education for three and four-year-olds. The nursery school has achieved accreditation through the Montessori Evaluation and Accreditation Board.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is outstanding.

Children make excellent progress as they engage in a wide range of stimulating play opportunities, covering all areas of their learning and development. Staff demonstrate unquestionable commitment to meeting the needs of all children and take highly effective steps to close any identified gaps in children's achievements. Children reap the benefits of the excellent partnerships formed between staff, parents and carers. Partnerships with outside professionals are very strong and lead to high levels of continuity of care for the children. Rigorous self-evaluation of the provision ensures that actions for improvement are very well-targeted and always ambitious.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

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

- updating the written complaints procedure to include the correct details for contacting Ofsted.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

Practice in relation to safeguarding children is exemplary at the nursery school. There is an expectation that all staff attend regular safeguarding training courses to ensure they are very knowledgeable in identifying possible cases of abuse and neglect. There are robust arrangements in place for the recruitment of staff, students and volunteers, including extensive checks to confirm their suitability to be in contact with the children. Highly effective risk assessments, together with the staff's intuitive awareness of safety, ensure that children play in an extremely safe and secure environment. Other written policies and procedures are reviewed regularly, although the complaints policy has not been updated to ensure parents are provided with the most current details for contacting Ofsted. Furniture, equipment and resources are wide ranging and of high quality, resulting in an environment that is very conducive to learning. The manager is taking well-considered steps to ensure the provision of resources remains sustainable. For example, she takes full advantage of a local supermarket community projects scheme to enable her to raise funds to purchase additional resources for the children.

Children experience excellent levels of continuity of care because of the staff's unquestionable commitment to working closely with parents and carers. The staff's welcoming and approachable manner ensures that all parents feel very confident in sharing information about their children. Parents are actively encouraged to visit the setting to share their expertise with the children. For example, children delight in watching a parent demonstrating his skills in apple pressing. Parents speak very highly of the progress their children make at the setting and feel extremely well informed through daily discussions and reading their children's learning journey records. The manager is very proactive in fostering excellent links with professionals from outside health and education agencies. For example, she values guidance from speech and language therapists when drawing up individual education plans for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

The success of the nursery school is underpinned by excellent leadership and management. Staff work as an effective team and are provided with an array of opportunities for professional development. For example, the manager proactively organises seminars from nationwide practitioners, covering aspects such as writing effective observations. The manager values the views of parents and follows these up very proactively. For example, when parents explain that they are anxious about supporting their child's mathematics skills, the manager links up with the local college to offer them a suitable adult mathematics course. Self-evaluation is ongoing and targets for improvement reflect the high expectations of all involved in the setting and their commitment to sustaining the outstanding quality of the provision.

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

Children adopt extremely healthy lifestyles whilst at the setting. They follow healthy practices, such as hand-washing routines, with very little need for support. This is because the facilities are easily accessible to them and there are several photographs of hand-washing displayed to act as a constant reminder. Healthy choices are provided at snack and mealtimes. Children confidently serve themselves and pour their own drinks.

Children flourish at the nursery school because their learning is effectively nurtured by the enthusiastic and knowledgeable staff. The daily routine provides children with an abundance of free play time which allows them space to explore, experiment and discover in the secure environment. As a result, they display superb levels of involvement in activities and are highly interested and motivated to learn. For example, children are able to self-select from a wealth of resources that inspire their practical skills, such as pouring, scooping, matching and sorting. They have respect for the nursery school environment as they help themselves to tools, such as watering cans, to tend to their plants and brooms to sweep up spillages. They show excellent negotiation skills as they work together to build a complex train track, testing different sections of the track to find the best fit. Children are developing their competencies exceptionally well in communication, language and literacy. They eagerly identify the phonic sounds when learning to read key words and then confidently match these to corresponding pictures. Some children extend their own learning when they decide to write the words for themselves. Interesting resources, such as shallow trays of cornflour gloop and sand, also inspire the younger children in the group to practise their early mark-making skills.

Children's access to the inviting outdoor area is very well promoted throughout the day, ensuring they benefit from plenty of fresh air and ample time to exercise. The outdoor environment is richly resourced to provide play opportunities across all six areas of learning. For example, groups of boys enjoy running, climbing and balancing as they move around vigorously and play at being knights in the castle. They bring more meaning to this imaginative play as they use their creative skills to make swords from rolls of paper. The natural world is used as a valuable tool in children's learning as they observe the process of frogspawn developing into frogs, and enjoy discovering which plants attract bees. Children establish highly positive relationships with their peers and play harmoniously together. They demonstrate a strong ability to control their own behaviour as they take turns with popular toys and follow important rules to keep themselves safe. For example, they remember to return the bicycles to the parking bays so others do not bump into them. Children are developing an appreciation of differences in people and the wider world. For example, they delight in dressing up in traditional Indian fabrics and sharing books featuring print in different languages.

Using skilful interaction all staff constantly and appropriately challenge and extend children's learning through clear language and open questions. They use an effective range of observation and assessment techniques to accurately record

each child's unique learning journey. These records are used effectively to build a meaningful picture of each child's learning from their starting points. The nursery school is based on Montessori philosophy and the manager has worked with the staff team to very successfully combine this with the Early Years Foundation Stage, ensuring that children's individual needs are exceptionally well met.

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