

Sunflower Montessori Nursery School

Causeway Farm, Middleton, SAXMUNDHAM, Suffolk, IP17 3NH

Inspection date	22/04/2014
Previous inspection date	04/07/2011

The quality and standards of the early years provision	This inspection:	1
	Previous inspection:	1
How well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend		1
The contribution of the early years provision to the well-being of children		1
The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the early years provision		1

The quality and standards of the early years provision

This provision is outstanding

- Superb teaching strategies mean children make excellent progress in all areas of learning. Children are taught in a most exciting, well-resourced indoor and outdoor learning environment.
- Children are exceptionally well protected because the nursery implements comprehensive safeguarding procedures. Robust recruitment, staff induction and supervision processes are in place, ensuring all staff are suitable, work effectively as a team and are extremely committed to provide high quality care and education.
- The manager and her staff team share a clear vision and ethos for the nursery, consistently striving for excellence. Staff are highly motivated and celebrate the achievements of the children they care for. Close monitoring ensures continuous improvements are made, leading to outstanding practice that is worthy of dissemination to other settings.
- Children's emotional well-being is supported exceptionally well. This is because they have formed meaningful attachments to the adults caring for them. This enables them to develop confidence and engage in their surroundings, actively learning.
- Staff work very closely with parents to ensure excellent continuity of care and learning for all children.

Information about this inspection

Inspections of registered early years provision are:

- scheduled at least once in every inspection cycle – the current cycle ends on 31 July 2016
- scheduled more frequently where Ofsted identifies a need to do so, for example where provision was previously judged inadequate
- brought forward in the inspection cycle where Ofsted has received information that suggests the provision may not be meeting the legal requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage or where assessment of the provision identifies a need for early inspection
- prioritised where we have received information that the provision is not meeting the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage and which suggests children may not be safe
- scheduled at the completion of an investigation into failure to comply with the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

The provision is also registered on the voluntary and compulsory parts of the Childcare Register. This report includes a judgment about compliance with the requirements of that register.

Inspection activities

- The inspector observed activities in the indoor and outdoor learning environments.
- The inspector carried out joint observations with the manager.
- The inspector held discussions with the manager, staff and children.
- The inspector viewed a sample of the children's development records.
- The inspector viewed a sample of documentation, including evidence of staff checks, qualifications, policies and procedures and other documentation in relation to health and safety checks.
- The inspector took account of the views of parents spoken to on the day of the inspection and from responses to questionnaires supplied by the nursery.

Inspector

Lynn A Hartigan

Full report

Information about the setting

Sunflower Montessori Nursery School was registered in 1991 and is on the Early Years Register and the compulsory and voluntary parts of the Childcare Register. It is situated on Causeway Farm in Middleton near Saxmundham, Suffolk and is managed by the owner. The nursery serves the local area and is accessible to all children. It operates from a classroom within a farmhouse and children have access to an enclosed garden and large covered barn for outdoor play. The nursery employs seven members of childcare staff, all of whom hold appropriate early years qualifications at level 3. Two members of staff hold Early Years Professional status and one member of staff holds Qualified Teacher Status. The nursery opens each week day, from 8am until 6pm, during school term. Children attend for a variety of sessions. There are currently 65 children attending who are in the early years age group. The nursery provides funded early education for two-, three- and four-year-old children. It supports a number of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The setting works in line with the Montessori educational philosophy and has achieved accreditation through the Montessori Evaluation and Accreditation Board.

What the setting needs to do to improve further

To further improve the quality of the early years provision the provider should:

- enhance the already excellent opportunities for communication by providing a relaxed, cosy space in the indoor learning environment where children can develop spoken language through sustained conversations between children and adults.

Inspection judgements

How well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend

All children at Sunflower Montessori Nursery School make outstanding progress. This is because the manager and all staff members work exceptionally well together to provide an outstanding learning environment for children. The staff have a superb understanding of how children learn and teaching practices are strong. Children are able to play and learn in an exciting setting. A stimulating and challenging programme of activities covers all areas of learning both indoors and outdoors. The organisation of the day means children experience an abundance of free play. Adult-led activities also support children's learning superbly. For example, children are fascinated with letters and numbers, so they are offered a variety of activities to support their growing interest. They sit and concentrate for some time proficiently using resources, such as number bars, and complete simple adding and subtraction mathematics. Children have a wealth of opportunities to practise practical skills. They are taught how to pour, match and sort objects using the easily accessible resources. Children have great fun using containers of sand on pulleys to learn about weight and measurement. The opportunities for their individual creativity and

imagination are endless. They use fabric and props to dress up as their chosen superhero. They paint freely and know to write their name on their pictures and younger children use named stickers and take great pride in showing their work. Some children learn to read and thoroughly enjoy their time sitting with staff and sharing their story books. A well-stocked book area in the barn is well used and children understand that a story has a start, middle and end. They take great care of their toys and resources. They are taught to tidy away after each activity and leave the equipment organised ready for their friends. Staff take account of the children's interests and characteristics of learning. They use this information and observations to plan effectively for the children's next steps in learning. Examples of children's work, photographs and precise observations in their learning folders provide parents with a delightful record of children's time at the nursery. These also demonstrate the excellent progress children make in readiness for school, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Children demonstrate confidence and enthusiasm to engage in everything that is offered within the nursery. This includes children attending for the first time. High priority is given to developing children's language and communication skills. Language is used in every activity and staff introduce new words into their conversation extending vocabulary. They sit with excitement as a group outdoors, while a staff member reads a story. They are encouraged to contribute and predict the outcome. Children enjoy singing in a group and confidently chat to visitors in the nursery. A cosy space indoors would enhance the already excellent practice and provide opportunities for children to sit and chat freely within the indoor classroom. There is huge potential for learning in the outdoor classroom. This is because staff plan challenging, exciting and fun activities that enable children to explore, be creative and use their imagination. Children take great care of their plants, herbs and vegetables they have grown. They know they can fill their watering cans using the water butt. They excitedly talk about the different smell of the herbs. They take care of the nursery chickens and feed the rabbit with staff supervision. They are taught how to manage their personal needs and know to wash their hands when they have touched the pets.

Superb partnerships have been established with parents and anyone who has shared care. This contributes to the successful continuity of care and learning children receive. A two-way flow of information is encouraged. A nursery website, and social network page, newsletters and arranged meetings ensure parents' views are considered and they are fully informed regarding their child's progress. The manager strives for excellence and sustains an inspirational nursery. Teaching strategies are worthy of dissemination.

The contribution of the early years provision to the well-being of children

Children arrive thrilled to be at the nursery. They are overjoyed to see the staff and their key person after the Easter break. This is because they are welcomed into the nursery by happy, motivated and smiling staff who show genuine delight when greeting the children. The key person relationship is central to maintaining very positive relationships with the parents. The cosy, home-from-home family atmosphere means children settle very quickly and enables them to feel exceptionally secure and happy. The staff strive to maintain excellent relationships with their key children and their families. They ensure children's

unique needs are discussed, documented and supported, for example, individual dietary and health needs. Children's individual learning styles and interests are superbly supported. Transition from home to the nursery is successfully managed as children attend the seedlings toddler group that operates once week at the nursery. This means children are very familiar with the nursery and the staff and this positively supports their seamless settling in.

The manager and her staff are passionate about their roles in providing inspiring and exciting learning environments. They recognise the value of teaching outdoors and provide children with a wealth of opportunities both indoors and outdoors. Children flourish and make continued progress in their learning as they play and explore. They have fresh air daily as they move freely from the indoor classroom to the garden and outdoor barn. They understand about the effects of weather on their bodies and are encouraged to make decision for themselves. For example, children question whether they need their coats. Staff are skilful as they encourage children to think and make decisions. They use open-ended questions, such as 'how did it feel when you went outdoors?' and 'would it make you more comfortable if you had a coat on?'. Children are very independent learners. They are taught and supported to independently dress themselves and take care of their own personal needs. They confidently explain the need to wash germs away before having lunch and after stroking the rabbit. Children exercise and develop physically as they run at speed in the barn, and build dens and structures using large blocks. They use ride-on toys and negotiate space well. All children understand the need to listen and take instruction to keep themselves safe and help them learn. The manager has been exceptionally proactive in establishing links with local and other rural primary schools that children may attend. For example, reception teachers are invited to visit and observe children at the nursery. Children attend special assemblies and shows at the local primary school. These experiences contribute to a smooth transition from nursery to school.

The Montessori ethos is strong and children are positively encouraged to follow their own interests, discover and make decisions. They independently decide when they are hungry or thirsty and are very familiar with managing snack time for themselves. They skilfully pour water or milk from glass jugs and select fruits and vegetables to eat. A menu is displayed for them. While the nursery is based within a farm, all drinks and snacks are bought from the local supermarket or grown by the children. Children play in a vibrant setting where nature is all around them. They play outdoors if they choose in all weathers, and these opportunities play a significant role in their learning experiences. The staff have an excellent knowledge of the children's individuality and know that outdoor learning has a positive impact on the children's well-being. Staff observe children's emotional behaviour when outdoors and understand the importance for children who need to be physically active. Children do not visit the farm but squeal with delight as they watch the cows moving around the fields outside. They watch from the window and confidently explain what is happening. Organised outings, such as visits to the bird sanctuary take place. A thorough risk assessment is completed and parents are responsible for their children.

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

Safeguarding children is paramount and the manager and staff team are confident in their knowledge of child protection issues and the policy and procedure to follow should they have any concerns. Safeguarding training has been completed by all members of staff to further enhance their knowledge. The manager is passionate in her approach and is absolutely committed to provide children with a safe environment. Children's safety is promoted through the implementation of robust daily risk assessments to ensure they play in a safe environment. Staff are deployed effectively to ensure children are supported and supervised at all times. The manager retains staff as they feel valued and are fully supported in their own personal development, which supports continuity for the children. A robust policy is in place for recruiting new members should the need arise. All staff members have completed appropriate checks to ensure they are suitable to work with children. The nursery manager and owner's husband is the farmer and he has also completed checks, safeguarding and first aid training as he often visits the nursery to share the farm news. Children delight in his stories and show enthusiasm and excitement when they see him in the fields on his tractor. Overall the staff team are highly qualified; several members have an early years degree and one is a qualified teacher. Many of the staff have also completed Montessori training. The manager is forward thinking and fully appreciates the importance of knowledgeable staff and the impact this has for children's learning. Effective systems are in place to provide high quality supervisions and appraisals for staff.

Staff morale is high and all share the same dedication and commitment towards the children. They have very high expectations for all children in their care and consistently celebrate the children's achievements, however small. As a result, all children progress exceptionally well, including children who may require additional support. There is a comprehensive self-evaluation process in place and all staff reflect and evaluate the quality of care and education offered. The manager drives further improvement and has action plans in place for continuous improvement. As children leave the nursery to continue their learning at school, parents complete a leaver's questionnaire. These detail the parents' and children's absolute gratitude to the staff. Parents comment on their child's excellent progress they have made while attending the nursery. The manager rigorously monitors all children's progress, using both the Early Years Foundation Stage guidance and the Montessori guidance for learning. The nursery recently again received accreditation from the Montessori Evaluation and Accreditation Board. This ensures there are consistently high teaching practices and children's progress is maximised.

Partnership working with both the parents and outside agencies is fully embedded in everyday practice. Relationships with parents are nurtured through attendance at the seedlings toddler group. If support is required to ensure each child reaches their potential, this is swiftly identified. For example, completion of progress checks at age two years assist this process. Parents are continually consulted with regard to their child's sustained progress. Parents are provided with meaningful information as they are provided with policies and procedures and regular newsletters. This ensures they have an up-to-date understanding of how the nursery operates. A complaints policy is in place should parents wish to highlight any concerns, however all comments are extremely favourable. Parents often choose to keep their child at the nursery until after their fifth birthday as they feel their children are progressing so well in this rich learning environment. Parents spoken to

at the time of the inspection express their complete satisfaction with every aspect of the nursery.

The Childcare Register

The requirements for the compulsory part of the Childcare Register are **Met**

The requirements for the voluntary part of the Childcare Register are **Met**

What inspection judgements mean

Registered early years provision

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	Outstanding provision is highly effective in meeting the needs of all children exceptionally well. This ensures that children are very well prepared for the next stage of their learning.
Grade 2	Good	Good provision is effective in delivering provision that meets the needs of all children well. This ensures children are ready for the next stage of their learning.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	The provision is not giving children a good standard of early years education and/or there are minor breaches of the safeguarding and welfare requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. It will be monitored and inspected within twelve months of the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	Provision that is inadequate requires significant improvement and/or enforcement action. The provision is failing to give children an acceptable standard of early years education and/or is not meeting the safeguarding and welfare requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. It will be monitored and inspected again within six months of the date of this inspection.
Met		The provision has no children on roll. The inspection judgement is that the provider continues to meet the requirements for registration.
Not met		The provision has no children on roll. The inspection judgement is that the provider does not meet the requirements for registration.

Inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under sections 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006 on the quality and standards of provision that is registered on the Early Years Register. The registered person must ensure that this provision complies with the statutory framework for children's learning, development and care, known as the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Setting details

Unique reference number	260949
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	966571
Type of provision	
Registration category	Childcare - Non-Domestic
Age range of children	0 - 17
Total number of places	32
Number of children on roll	65
Name of provider	Lucy Smith
Date of previous inspection	04/07/2011
Telephone number	01728 648352

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Type of provision

For the purposes of this inspection the following definitions apply:

Full-time provision is that which operates for more than three hours. These are usually known as nurseries, nursery schools and pre-schools and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage. They are registered on the Early Years Register and pay the higher fee for registration.

Sessional provision operates for more than two hours but does not exceed three hours in any one day. These are usually known as pre-schools, kindergartens or nursery schools

and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage. They are registered on the Early Years Register and pay the lower fee for registration.

Childminders care for one or more children where individual children attend for a period of more than two hours in any one day. They operate from domestic premises, which are usually the childminder's own home. They are registered on the Early Years Register and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Out of school provision may be sessional or full-time provision and is delivered before or after school and/or in the summer holidays. They are registered on the Early Years Register and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage. Where children receive their Early Years Foundation Stage in school these providers do not have to deliver the learning and development requirements in full but should complement the experiences children receive in school.

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