

Wood Street Montessori

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	147650
Inspection date	07 February 2008
Inspector	Naomi Bold
Setting Address	Ewen Hall, United Reformed Church, Wood Street, Barnet, Herts, EN5 2QY
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Registered person	Audrey Errichiello
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?

Wood Street Montessori opened in 1999. It operates from premises located within Ewen Hall, United Reformed Church in Barnet. The setting is close to Barnet town centre. A maximum of 24 children may attend the setting at any one time. The group is open each weekday during term time only. Operating hours are from 09:30 to 12:20 on Tuesday, Thursday and Friday and until 15:30 during the rest of the week.

There are currently 18 children aged two to five years on roll. Of these 12 receive funding for nursery education. Children come from the local and wider catchment area. The setting is able to support children with special educational needs and English as an additional language.

The setting employs eight staff, the manager, three full time staff, two supply staff, a music teacher and a French teacher. All full time staff including the manager hold relevant early years qualifications. The setting follows the Montessori method of teaching.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Children benefit from a highly nutritious and varied diet. Snack time includes fruit and vegetable sticks that are arranged in an enticing and attractive manner. Packed lunches are provided by parents and carers and the setting offers a range of advice and guidelines on what they should bring to the setting to avoid allergies and unhealthy foods.

Strong routines ensure that children learn to keep themselves healthy. Staff appoint daily 'special helpers' who are rotated throughout the group. These children wipe the tables before snack time and help to tidy the main play areas. This is indicative of the setting's strong commitment to promoting children's independence in daily hygiene routines and personal care. Children take individual responsibility for their personal care as they all understand that they must wash their hands before snack time and after messy play. Children are able to get tissues themselves and know to put these in the bin afterwards. All children get involved in snack time, handing out plates and cutlery and this helps them to treat meals and snacks as a social and enjoyable occasion. As a result of staff's gentle reminders, children's table manners are excellent.

Children are strongly protected from cross infection as staff have an extremely responsible attitude towards identifying and communicating any illnesses to parents. The parent's notice board includes information on any illnesses at the setting and also illnesses that are prevalent in the local community. Sensitive procedures are in place to seek parent's consent for administration of prescribed medicines and these are sensibly recorded to protect children from the risk of over-dosage.

Children have plentiful opportunities for outdoor play which contribute to their good health. They are expertly supported by staff who plan an extensive range of physical activities both indoor and out. They thoroughly enjoy using a range of high quality play equipment, climbing, jumping and balancing. Children's confidence in the physical ability increases as they undertake a series of well planned activities, developing large and small muscle skill using the excellent range of equipment.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Children are consistently protected while in the setting by thorough security measures and clear evacuation procedures and policies. Doors to the setting are bolted on the inside whenever children are present and they are only opened by members of staff. Staff thoroughly vet all visitors to the setting, requiring identification from all unknown persons. Visitors are clearly recorded which cements the setting's ability to provide accurate information about persons on the premises in the case of a fire or child protection case. Children are accompanied at all times when they leave the main play spaces and this informs their continuing safety.

Children are learning rapidly about how to keep themselves safe as the staff arrange a large number of activities designed to help children experience road and personal safety measures. For example children enjoy dressing up as lollipop people and use the sign to stop children on bikes at a crossing in the garden. A local safety roadshow and visits from local emergency services provide children with opportunities to become personally involved in protecting themselves. This helps to represent serious messages in an enjoyable and interactive way.

Children take extreme care when working with equipment such as threading needles and scissors. Children are able to explain why they must take care with such equipment, explaining to the inspector that they must sit down when using needles as 'they are sharp.'

The main play space is large and extremely welcoming, stocked with an attractive range of toys and equipment. All equipment is in good order and children are able to move with confidence between well spaced workstations. The setting carries out rigorous risk assessments to identify and minimize all hazards and the staff demonstrate an extremely cautious attitude towards protecting all children in their care.

Children's welfare is thoroughly safeguarded as all staff in the setting are extremely aware of signs and symptoms of abuse and neglect. Policies and procedures that relate to child protection are extremely detailed and sensitive. These underpin the setting's careful approach towards sharing difficult information with parents. Parents and carers are fully informed about the setting's responsibility to report concerns to the appropriate bodies. The setting has taken care to guarantee that the immediate needs of the child are paramount in the case of any referral and this is reflected in the child-centric policies and procedures.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Children thoroughly enjoy their time in the setting. They enter with great enthusiasm and settle quickly to a range of enticing tasks, set out by staff. Children are thoughtful and independent learners and their curiosity is developed by staff's pertinent questioning. This contributes to the excellent progress that children are making in the setting. Progress can be clearly traced through a series of extremely detailed observational records and evaluative individual records. Regular music lessons are warmly received by all children. They sit enthralled while the music teacher helps them learn a series of simple songs in a range of languages. Staff take all opportunities to extend activities spontaneously, for example the music session includes stories and songs about Chinese New Year. Staff take out a Chinese dragon that children have made. Children take part in dragon dancing lead by the music teacher. They form a line and squeal with enjoyment as they stamp to the tambourine beat and move the dragon around the room.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Children are making excellent progress towards the Early Learning Goals as they are taught by staff who have taken care to marry outstanding knowledge of the Foundation Stage Curriculum and the Montessori methods that they use. Children are exposed to a vast array of resources that thoroughly cover the six areas of learning. Workstations around the room provide children with many opportunities to explore different aspects of their world, including a nature table, magnets and magnifying glasses. Children are extremely curious when looking through magnifying glasses and make the connection that the glass makes things bigger. Threading, drawing and cutting activities give children lots of opportunities to develop their small muscle skills. Children enjoy cutting shapes from paper and threading beads to make necklaces. Staff manage the children's learning by offering careful support and gentle encouragement to make sure that children experience a full range of activities throughout free learning sessions. Counting songs, rhymes and number games weave mathematical development throughout the day's sessions. Children are able to confidently count to 10 and beyond and can explain what happens when one is taken away. Much of children's learning is freely experienced and this contributes heavily to children's enthusiastic attitude towards their time at nursery. Children's high concentration levels ensure

that they are able to explore activities for maximum results and this heavily underpins their rapid progress in relation to their starting points.

Observational records are extremely detailed and demonstrate how well staff know the children in their care. Children's excellent progress is underpinned by a simple and effective planning system which demonstrates that observational assessments clearly inform the next steps for all children. All staff are involved in the planning process. Numerous observations about each child contribute to planning demonstrating that all staff have great knowledge of all children who attend the setting. This informs the well-rounded approach towards meeting the learning needs of all children.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Children thrive because staff treat them as individuals with their own concerns and needs. For example when a child's lunchbox had been forgotten a member of staff explained to them that their parent was going to bring this in, recognising that they may be agitated by this. This care for children's individual requirements is a particular strength of the setting and as a result children are able to develop confidently and to make strong relationships with staff and each other.

Respect for diversity is woven throughout all aspects of the provision. All opportunities are taken by staff and regular visitors to make cultural, religious and ability differences a recognisable part of children's every day lives. Stories, books, small world play, dolls and pictures ensure that children are constantly exposed to positive images of all members of society. This inclusive attitude has a very positive impact on their ability to make firm friendships and value differences in others. Children's social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is fostered.

Children demonstrate extremely high levels of self-control and control their behaviour extremely well. They sit and concentrate for tasks and group activities for long periods of time and sit closely to other children in the group. Staff rarely have to intervene in disputes. Behaviour management policies and procedures are extremely comprehensive and shared with all parents and carers. Consequently, expectations of behaviour can be firmly managed from the moment a child joins the setting which cements consistent boundaries.

The setting has an extremely responsible attitude towards caring for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Policies and procedures are extremely detailed and sensitively written and clearly demonstrate how the setting is able to meet the needs of a wide range of children.

The partnerships with parents and carers is outstanding. An informative notice board and the welcoming attitude of the staff help parents and carers to feel that they are part of the setting. Regular notes and newsletters inform parents about all things that happen at the nursery. Parents regularly offer support to the setting and their involvement is thoroughly encouraged by staff. They regularly bring resources for a range of sessions and activities including any cultural or religious resources that they might have access to. Parents have many opportunities to become involved in their children's learning as they are able to attend a number of sessions. Plans and assessment records are all shared with parents on a regular basis and this ensures that they are able to take an active part in their children's learning. Regular shows, welcome days and extremely approachable and open staff cement the strong links between parents,

carers and the setting. This strongly supports the excellent continuity of care that children receive and underpins their rapid progress.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

Children thrive as they are cared for by thoroughly vetted and qualified staff. Staff are all suitably qualified and the manager has enabled them to attend an excellent range of useful training courses. Their increased knowledge thoroughly informs their outstanding practice. Resources and daily activities are deftly managed to ensure that the needs of all children are met throughout the setting. Policies and procedures are extremely detailed and clearly adapted to the specific requirements of the setting. This provides a very solid base for staff to extend their practice. Children learn and play confidently as they are cared for by staff who work effectively as a cohesive team and are all consistently aware of their individual roles and responsibilities. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

The leadership and management of nursery education is outstanding. The manager is an extremely experienced and conscientious Montessori teacher who has taken great care to ensure the setting also meets the requirements of the Foundation Stage Curriculum. The manager has created an effective staff team who work extremely well together to make sure that all children's individual learning needs are met. A detailed and effective planning process ensures that observations of individual children are used to inform daily plans to ensure that next steps for children's learning are always met. This has a demonstrable influence on children's excellent progress towards the Early Learning Goals.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection two recommendations were raised that concerned improving the location of the fire evacuation procedure and improving the range of large scale motor development. The setting has taken a number of steps to improve practice. The fire evacuation procedure has been enlarged and is now placed in a prominent position. The setting has purchased a wide range of high quality large play equipment to allow children to develop their large muscle skills but climbing, balancing and jumping. These improvements contribute to the continuing safety and achievement of children in the setting.

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