

Grantham Farm Montessori School

Independent school inspection report

DCSF registration number	850/6079
Unique Reference Number (URN)	133964
URN for registered childcare and social care	110151
Inspection number	348783
Inspection dates	10 June 2010
Reporting inspector	John Seal HMI

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under section 162A of the Education Act 2002¹, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005², the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The inspection of registered provision³ was conducted under Section 49(2) of the Childcare Act 2006.⁴

This was a light touch inspection which focused principally on the quality of education provided by the school; its provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; the arrangements for safeguarding pupils; and the improvements the school has made since its last inspection.

Information about the school

Grantham Farm Montessori School is an independent day school. It admits boys and girls from two and a half to seven years. The school has a separately registered child care provision for under-threes. There are five children under three years of age on roll but during the inspection there was one child attending. There are currently 40 children on roll in the school, which is the maximum the school is registered for, of whom the majority are in the Early Years Foundation Stage. At the time of the inspection, there were 23 children in the Nursery and four children in the Reception class. Twenty six children are funded under the Nursery Scheme. The aims of the school are 'to provide high quality Montessori Education in a happy stimulating environment, preparing every child for a successful life in the 21st Century'.

The school is situated in a specially converted barn located near the village of Baughurst in Berkshire close to the Hampshire border. The school opened in 1985. There are no pupils with a statement of special educational needs and nearly all of them are of White British origin. The school was last inspected in October 2007.

Evaluation of the school

Grantham Farm has maintained its provision of an outstanding quality of education. The highly caring, dedicated and passionate leadership of the headteacher has ensured a strong focus on continuous improvement and meeting the school's aims very well. As a result, all the regulatory requirements are met, as at the time of the last inspection. The effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage is outstanding,

¹ www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga_20020032_en_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162

² www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga_20050018_en_15#sch8

³ Schools which provide childcare for children from birth until the term in which they reach their third birthday must register this provision separately with Ofsted.

⁴ www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2006/ukpga_20060021_en_4#pt3-ch2-pb4-l1g49

including the provision for under-threes. The outstanding teaching and assessment are supported by an excellent curriculum. Consequently, the children make outstanding progress. Children's behaviour is excellent, as is the school's promotion of their welfare, health and safety.

The school's safeguarding procedures are very secure. The premises and grounds are exceptionally well developed, maintained and cared for, creating an oasis of calm; a key feature in the development of the children's outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school is highly regarded by the parents and carers, and one parent wrote, 'This is an excellent warm, friendly environment.' The areas for improvement from the previous inspection regarding the range of outdoor play equipment and privacy for the older children in the washrooms have been addressed successfully.

Quality of education

The overall quality of education is outstanding. The excellent curriculum effectively blends the Montessori approach with the areas of learning from the Early Years Foundation Stage and National Curriculum subjects. All areas of the curriculum are planned in detail to meet the needs of every child, including the under-threes. There is a very strong emphasis on the development of children's basic skills in English, mathematics, and information and communication technology. Children's personal, social and health education is outstanding. It pervades all aspects of their school life, through their learning activities and in conversations with adults. The school enriches the curriculum with French and music which is taught by a specialist teacher. Sporting activities are supplemented with swimming for the older children during the summer term which is in the school's own well-maintained pool. To extend the curriculum, the school organises educational visits for the older children, to local museums and other places of interest, and invites visitors to talk to the children; these have included someone portraying 'Cezanne' to demonstrate painting and a fishmonger from a local supermarket. Although the school does not directly provide extra-curricular activities, it recognises and celebrates the richness and breadth of activities the children take part in outside school which include horse riding and karate.

Teaching and assessment are outstanding. During a lesson on nouns, one of the older children was heard to say 'This is fun!'; this encapsulates the learning at Grantham Farm. For all children, from the Nursery through to Year 2, learning activities are extremely well structured and resourced. Excellent and expert use of Montessori materials support the children's sensory development. Lessons are well planned, with many exciting and practical activities which suit the needs of all children. Lessons provide children with many opportunities to discuss their learning and develop their speaking and listening skills. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use questioning skilfully while fostering positive relationships. As a result, all children, from the youngest to the oldest, make outstanding progress.

The outstanding assessment processes are thorough, detailed and support each child's excellent progress. There are detailed and informative records kept for all children, including detailed assessments of the six areas of learning throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage. These records are highly effective in supporting the planning of future learning and production of informative and regular written reports to parents and carers.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Pupil's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding from the registered provision and Early Years Foundation Stage onwards. The school has a warm, welcoming and friendly atmosphere. As a result, all children are happy and keen to learn. The very young children in the Nursery have a strong start to school and this is maintained throughout their time in the setting. Children's spiritual development is considered carefully and the 'Spiritual Garden' designed by the children is a haven of peace and tranquillity having pride of place during outdoor activities. There is a series of well-planned and organised events to mark religious festivals throughout the year, thereby effectively fostering children's good awareness of different religions and cultures. These have included Diwali and the Chinese New Year. However, opportunities to explore the cultural diversity of different communities nationally and globally are less well developed. In addition to very high standards of basic skills, children of all ages work well together. They are patient and tolerant of each other, often showing great maturity in taking turns and offering advice demonstrating strong development of skills that will serve them well in their future lives. Children's attendance is high and their behaviour exemplary. The children enjoyed learning about the police and fire services to foster their understanding of public institutions. Children of all ages enjoy contributing to the school community; for example, through taking responsibility for the tidiness of the different learning areas and making sure they wipe their feet as they move from outdoor learning to the classroom. The children are encouraged effectively to think about others; as a result, they have raised funds for the local hospice and made a poppy wreath for Remembrance Sunday.

Safeguarding pupils' welfare, health and safety

The provision for all the children's welfare, health and safety is outstanding. This includes the childcare provision, Nursery and Reception. The school pays close and rigorous attention to ensure that the procedures and policies for safeguarding meet the current government regulations for staff training for child protection. All staff have had the required checks before their appointment to the school. These are recorded in the Single Central Register. The school has robust health and safety procedures and matching risk assessments. Children's safety is paramount and there are no reported incidents of bullying and no exclusions. Children have a very good awareness of how to live healthy lifestyles through healthy meals and are constantly

active throughout the day. The school has a secure development plan to support the regulatory requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

The overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage is outstanding. This includes the under-threes provision which meets the requirements of the Early Years Register very well. Children's outcomes are outstanding. All children settle in exceedingly well because of the exceptionally strong relationships the school develops with parents and carers. Children enjoy coming to school and make outstanding progress in all areas of learning. The curriculum in the Nursery makes detailed provision for the development of the children's knowledge of phonics, with very successful outcomes. The children develop an understanding of the shape and sound of the letters and their numerical skills are well developed. By the end of Reception, children's skills and knowledge are much higher than typically expected for their age.

The school meets the needs of the children in an exceedingly sensitive and caring manner. Provision is outstanding in both the indoor and outdoor environments. The attention to detail by the staff ensures that planning of activities is effectively linked to meticulous assessments of children's progress. Their prior knowledge is built upon, so that they grow rapidly in confidence. As a result, children readily engage in their chosen activities on arrival, with no time wasted, and demonstrate high levels of independence, confidence and sustained concentration beyond their years. Children take a genuine interest in their learning and make rapid progress. Children's creativity is very well fostered by painting, cutting, sculpting, and music and movement. Leadership and management are outstanding. The proprietor's dedication to the school is palpable. Her quiet and calm leadership clearly inspires her staff to give of their best. Links between all areas of the Foundation Stage are robust, so that there is an easy transition from Reception to Year 1.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended January 2005.

The school's registered provision for childcare meets the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006.

What the school could do to improve further

While not required by the regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development.

- Strengthen the links with the local and wider community to enhance children's awareness of the cultural diversity of the United Kingdom and beyond.

Inspection judgement recording form

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
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The quality of education

Overall quality of education	✓			
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils	✓			
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs	✓			
How well pupils make progress in their learning	✓			

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	✓			
The behaviour of pupils	✓			

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils	✓			
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The quality of the Early Years Foundation Stage provision

How good are the outcomes for children in the EYFS?	✓			
What is the quality of provision in the EYFS?	✓			
How effectively is the EYFS led and managed?	✓			
Overall effectiveness: how well does the school meet the needs of children in the EYFS?	✓			

School details

Name of school	Grantham Farm Montessori School		
DCSF number	850/6079		
Unique Reference Number (URN)	133964		
EY URN (for registered childcare only)	110151		
Type of school	Montessori		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1985		
Age range of pupils	2–7		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 8	Girls: 3	Total: 11
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 16	Girls: 13	Total: 29
Number of pupils aged 0-3 in registered childcare provision	Boys: 3	Girls: 2	Total: 5
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Annual fees (day pupils)	£ 5,850		
Address of school	Baughurst Tadley Hampshire RG26 5JS		
Telephone number	0118 9815821		
Fax number	0118 9820989		
Email address	school@granthamfarm.org		
Headteacher	Mrs Shaunagh de Boinville		
Proprietor	Mrs Shaunagh de Boinville		
Reporting inspector	Mr John Seal HMI		
Dates of inspection	10 June 2010		