

# Casa Montessori Day Care of Children

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**Type of inspection:**  
Unannounced

**Completed on:**  
23 February 2023

**Service provided by:**  
Montessori Methods Ltd

**Service provider number:**  
SP2013012156

**Service no:**  
CS2017362892

## About the service

Casa Montessori is registered to provide an early learning and childcare service to a maximum of 64 children not yet attending primary school at any one time. Of those 64 no more than 20 are aged under 2 and no more than 3 children are aged up to end of primary 2. The service is in partnership with City of Edinburgh Council and offers funded early learning and childcare to eligible children.

The service is accommodated in a Victorian house which is situated in the city centre of Edinburgh. The nursery consists of six playrooms situated across three floors and a secured back garden. The service is close to local shops and parks and has good transport links.

## About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on Monday 20 February between 09:45 and 17:00 and Tuesday 21 February 2023 between 09:45 and 15:30. The inspection was carried out by one inspector from the Care Inspectorate.

To prepare for the inspection we reviewed information about this service. This included previous inspection findings, registration information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered since the last inspection.

In making our evaluations of the service we:

- spoke with children using the service
- spoke to staff and management
- received feedback from 24 parents
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents.

Feedback was given to the management team and a representative from City of Edinburgh Council via video call on Thursday 23 February 2023 between 10:30 and 11:45.

## Key messages

The service delivers the Montessori curriculum, centred on activities of everyday life. Such experiences supported children to independently lead their own learning through freedom of choice and self-motivation.

The value-based culture meant that very good staff practice placed importance on the rights of the child. This meant that children were valued, respected, and included in the life of the service.

Highly skilled staff complimented the positive outcomes that children gained from a breadth of interesting opportunities.

Very good play opportunities developed children's skills in language, literacy and numeracy.

The service was well led by management who promoted a clear shared vision for the nursery and had high aspirations for children and families.

Parents felt valued because they were informed and included in their child's learning.

## From this inspection we evaluated this service as:

In evaluating quality, we use a six point scale where 1 is unsatisfactory and 6 is excellent

|  |               |
|--|---------------|
| How good is our care, play and learning? | 5 - Very Good |
| How good is our setting?                 | 5 - Very Good |
| How good is our leadership?              | 5 - Very Good |
| How good is our staff team?              | 5 - Very Good |

Further details on the particular areas inspected are provided at the end of this report.

## How good is our care, play and learning?

## 5 - Very Good

We evaluated this key question as very good because there were major strengths in supporting positive outcomes for children.

### QI 1.1: Nurturing Care and Support

The kind and compassionate staff had built strong relationships with children and families. Through skilled interactions staff promoted children's confidence, which positively influenced their learning and development. Care and learning routines were individually planned to support children's needs. This meant that children's needs, wishes and choices were prioritised. As a result, all children were happy, settled and purposefully engaged in their play.

The value-based culture meant that very good staff practice evidenced placing importance on the rights of the child. This meant that children were valued, respected, and included in the life of the service. Parents recognised that staff supported children's emotional wellbeing and one parent told us, "I feel staff have a helpful understanding of behaviour and emotions, not classifying them as either good or bad but describing them and looking at what they are communicating. They are also very respectful of the children, giving children the time and space to explore ways of doing things."

Snack and mealtimes were sociable, unhurried and relaxed. Staff recognised these times as rich opportunities to promote close attachments with children. Food choices were nutritious, reflected current best practice guidance and were appropriate for children's individual cultural and dietary needs. Fresh water was available throughout the day and children were encouraged to remain hydrated. Independence skills were promoted as children self-served their food and poured their own drink. Supportive staff sat with children and role modelled good table manners and encouraged them to try the healthy food options available. This supported children to develop healthy eating habits. Rich conversations at lunch time helped children to develop language and social skills. This highly responsive approach ensured children were developing a broad range of lifelong learning skills. Parents comments showed that they were satisfied with the meals provided and one parent said, "We are very happy with the menu and snacks that are provided at Casa and it was a big reason why we chose Casa. They use good quality and sustainable ingredients, such as, fruit and veg from a farm veg box, and involve the children in growing their own produce and serve a nutritious menu."

All children had a personal plan, and these were regularly reviewed and updated with children and parents. This meant that children's current needs were considered, responded to and planned for. Meaningful current information detailed in personal plans supported children's overall care, learning and wellbeing needs. Parents' views, knowledge and expertise of their children were recognised and as a result, staff knew children's needs, wishes and preferences well. We asked parents if they had an opportunity to discuss their child's individual needs with the service. One parent told us, "We are asked to provide input into the plan around twice a year, leaving ample opportunities to share our own observations and concerns. Children are also encouraged to contribute in a lovely, child-friendly way."

### QI 1.3 Play and learning

Children were meaningfully and actively involved in leading their play and learning through a balance of spontaneous and planned high quality experiences. This promoted children's choice and independence. Children led their play by self-selecting Montessori work cycles that were available to them.

A parent told us, "We are impressed with our child's independence, their ability to dress and care for themselves, participate in household activities such as tidying and cleaning, or playing independently."

Creative approaches successfully engaged children's imagination and enriched their play and learning. There was a wealth of open ended natural play resources in the playrooms and outdoors. Children used their imagination to develop creative and social skills. For example, two children were playing a game about a 'gas leak' and wondered what they should do. One child said, "Quick, check the engine." Experiences were supported by knowledgeable staff who knew when to stand back and allow children to direct their own play. Similarly, staff knew when it was appropriate to ask open ended questions to extend children's thinking.

Very good play opportunities developed children's skills in language, literacy, and numeracy. For example children could choose from a variety of language and maths work cycle trays. This supported them to develop their understanding of such concepts at a time and pace that was right for them. Parents appreciated the very good play opportunities offered and said, "The Montessori curriculum is endless, and my child engages with so many things at Casa. She loves practical work, outdoor time, letters, building, and socialising with peers and staff." One child told her parent, "Fun! Fun! It's fun Mommy. Just fun. I love Casa because it's fun. Because I love the people that play with me."

Key staff worked proactively with children, families, and other professionals to identify appropriate next steps and strategies for children who required additional support. This information was used consistently and effectively by all to ensure positive outcomes and enhanced opportunities. Staff implemented support measures to build children and family resilience where needed. This reduced potential barriers for some children's learning and support them to reach their full potential.

Planning approaches were child centred and responsive to children's interests and life experiences. Staff made good use of current best practice documents such as: Realising the Ambition (Education Scotland, 2020). As a result, children were progressing at a pace that was right for them and were happy and confident. Staff were continually working on improving their skills when planning, recording and tracking children's individual learning. This would support them to consider gaps in areas of learning for all children.

Parents were informed and included in their child's learning. The open door policy invited them into the setting and encouraged parents to share their skills with the children. Recently a parent came in to play their violin to the children. Parents felt valued and told us, "We are excited that know the setting is able to offer parents to go observe their child's classroom for 20 minutes to see them interacting with peers and engaged with activities."

## How good is our setting?

## 5 - Very Good

We evaluated this key question as very good because there were major strengths in supporting positive outcomes for children.

### QI 2.2 Children experience high quality facilities

The setting was comfortable, furnished to a high standard and welcoming. The playrooms were visibly clean, bright and inviting. Children had ample space for their needs, and resources were displayed in a manner which helped develop children's independence. This meant that they were easily accessible to enable children to self-select resources of their choice. The well considered layout of playrooms gave a strong message that children were valued, with freedom of choice to lead their play and learning.

Management were planning the further development of the younger playrooms to enhance cosy and nurturing spaces to provide the youngest children with spaces where they could relax and be comforted by staff. A parent told us, "I particularly like the calm atmosphere at Casa."

The indoor and outdoor environments were sensitively structured to take account of children's age and stage of development. Spaces reflected children's interests with appropriate resources and materials to support learning. Open ended, real life and natural objects were being used to promote children's curiosity and imagination. Staff understood the value of these resources for children's play and were able to model use to extend play and learning experiences.

Playrooms were situated on all three floor of the setting. This restricted free flow access to the outdoor play space. Staff worked hard to ensure that all children had daily access to outdoors and children were skilled at safely managing to use the stairs. Management planned to continue to monitor the daily use of the outdoor space for all children. Children shared with their parent how much they loved being outside and one parent said, "My child really loves everything out in the garden, moving stuff around, playing with water and looking at the wildlife they see there."

All children benefited from daily access to the outdoor play space and also regular visits in the local community. The recently developed outdoor play area and resources were planned to provide very good play and learning opportunities. Children could engage in imaginative role play, creative play, develop positive risk taking skills and appreciate the benefits of nature. Parents appreciated that children were outside and in the community. One parent said, "Casa embraces outdoor learning; in the garden, with the 'Links for Art' sessions and on trips to the library. I can see how these develop my child's confidence and resilience as well as her curiosity and wonder."

Safety checks of the setting were carried out regularly by the designated health and safety officer. Regular monitoring, maintenance, and repair of the setting and equipment kept children safe and protected for hazards which could cause harm. For example, the newly installed security door at the entrance to building. This prevented unauthorised access to the premises and ensured that children were not able to leave the service unnoticed. Similarly, robust infection prevention and control and food safety practices provided high levels of safety for children. These were supported by effective quality assurance.

## How good is our leadership?

**5 - Very Good**

We evaluated this key question as very good because there were major strengths in supporting positive outcomes for children.

### QI 3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well

Management were extremely invested in the continuous improvement of the service. They promoted and sustained a clear shared vision and expectations that reflected the wishes of children, families, partners, and the wider community. Strong leadership supported staff to have high aspirations and confidence in their capacity to support children and families to reach their full potential. Staff were encouraged to reflect on their practice and were confident in making required changes needed to improve experiences for children and their families. As a result, the requirement and all areas for improvement made at the previous inspection had been met and children were being given very good opportunities to progress in their learning and development. A parent said "Casa Montessori is a special and valuable resource in our community. We appreciate the hard work of the owners to continue to improve their service and we trust them fully with our children."

As part of the service improvement journey, staff enthusiastically embarked on leadership roles to enhance outcomes for children. These included an outdoor lead and positive discipline lead. Both roles enhanced opportunities for children to develop their emotional resilience and wellbeing.

Children and families benefited from the culture of continuous improvement. An improvement plan, which was regularly monitored, outlined progress of planned developments. Management ensured that high-quality learning through play was at the heart of improvement planning. Managers and staff were reflective, with a commitment to self-evaluation, which was evident in their responsive and planned approaches. This impacted positively on enhanced outcomes for children and families.

Management were effectively monitoring, using quality framework documents and audit tools to benchmark the service and identify and address areas for improvement. As a result, improvements made had resulted in better opportunities for children. For example, enhanced outdoor learning experiences boosted confidence, social skills, communication, motivation and physical skills. One parent told us "My child loves the nursery garden, as they are free to play and make observations about the natural world."

Children's views and opinions about their care, play and learning was a strong focus and highly valued by staff. This helped them to feel respected and included. Similarly, parent's views were sought about planned changes and improvements made to the service. Parents felt included and that their opinion was valued. They told us, "Parents are informed via the App and via email of the improvement plan and we get asked to fill out surveys about the service from time to time."

### How good is our staff team?

**5 - Very Good**

We evaluated this key question as very good because there were major strengths in supporting positive outcomes for children.

#### QI 4.3 Staff deployment

Effective deployment of the skilled staff team ensured high-quality outcomes for children.

Parents appreciated the support that staff gave to their children and a parent told us, "They have always looked after our child with love and care, as well as fostering him with an independent spirit and love of learning."

Management recognised the importance of running a service with highly experienced staff as essential to the wellbeing of children. There was a commitment to hiring additional skilled staff to support the ethos of the setting and continuity of care for children. Parents confirmed this by saying, "The service hires experienced and caring staff who really bond with children. We love this nursery, it is a second home for our child. They are a thriving, happy, chatty child and it is mostly thanks to the amazing team of professionals."

Highly skilled staff with different areas of expertise complimented the positive outcomes that children gained from a breadth of interesting opportunities. This included the introduction of yoga exercise, which was led by a staff member who had specific training in developing motor skills. Such experiences resulted in children being given high quality experiences to support their overall development. A parent told us, "We would like to emphasise our appreciation and gratitude for the teachers' care, love, stimulation and creative approaches to our child's care and education."

Staff valued the very good professional and personal support that they received from management. The support included staff being offered a well-planned package of professional development opportunities and staff wellbeing meetings. This promoted a culture where staff were happy, wanted to remain in the service and had good attendance at work. This resulted in continuity of care and learning for children. A staff member said, "I am really well supported by the management team, they are so unbelievably supportive. I could not have wished for more compassion and understanding, they are amazing. I am lucky to work somewhere where people are down to earth and lovely people."

## What the service has done to meet any requirements we made at or since the last inspection

### Requirements

#### Requirement 1

The provider must ensure that by 12 April 2022 children are safe and protected. In order to achieve this the provider must ensure that any future employees are recruited in a safe manner in line with best practice and that all relevant checks are carried out in a timeous manner.

This is to comply with The Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (Requirements for Care Services) Regulations 2011, Scottish Statutory Instrument 2011/210 Regulation 9.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards which state that: 'I am confident that people who support me have been appropriately and safely recruited' (HSCS 4.24).

**This requirement was made on 14 February 2022.**

#### Action taken on previous requirement

The management team had introduced a comprehensive recruitment and induction system. As a result, all staff were safely recruited.

**Met - within timescales**



## What the service has done to meet any areas for improvement we made at or since the last inspection

### Areas for improvement

#### Previous area for improvement 1

To ensure children have the right care at the right time. The provider should ensure that where strategies are identified by parents, the service or other professionals, these must be consistently implemented. The impact of these strategies must be recorded and regularly evaluated to ensure that they are having a positive impact and meeting children's needs.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards which state that: "If I am supported and cared for by a team or more than one organisation, this is well-coordinated so that I experience consistency and continuity" (HSCS 4.17).

**This area for improvement was made on 14 February 2022.**

#### Action taken since then

Clear strategies were in place for all children who required extra support. These were identified and reviewed in partnership with parents and other appropriate professionals. Staff took responsibility for supporting key children in their care to constantly implement the strategies. The impact of strategies were recorded and regularly evaluated to ensure that they were having a positive impact and meeting children's needs.

**This area for improvement had been met.**

#### Previous area for improvement 2

To ensure children are kept safe the provider should ensure that all staff are knowledgeable about their responsibilities to keep children safe and confident in the procedures to be followed should a safeguarding concern arise.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards which state that: 'I am protected from harm, neglect, abuse, bullying and exploitation by people who have a clear understanding of their responsibilities' (HSCS 3.20).

**This area for improvement was made on 14 February 2022.**

#### Action taken since then

Management had invested a lot of time developing training opportunities for the staff team. A child protection lead member of staff oversaw training. All staff had completed advanced child protection awareness and clear procedures were in place. As a result, staff could confidently tell us about the procedures, should a safeguarding concern arise.

**This area for improvement had been met.**

## Previous area for improvement 3

To promote children's learning, development and play, the service should review the outdoor play spaces and resources. This should result in activities and experiences consistently engaging children's interests, offering depth and challenge as they play.

This is to ensure care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards, which state as a child, 'I can direct my own play and activities in the way that I choose, and freely access a wide range of experiences and resources suitable for my age and stage, which stimulate my natural curiosity, learning and creativity' (HSCS 2.27).

**This area for improvement was made on 14 February 2022.**

### Action taken since then

Since the last inspection there had been a strong focus on improving the outdoor space. This resulted in activities and experiences being available to consistently engage children's interests, offering depth and challenge as they played.

**This area for improvement had been met.**

## Previous area for improvement 4

To ensure children are cared for in a safe and secure environment all areas of the services should be robustly risk assessed. These should be reviewed regularly to identify potential hazards and minimise the risk of harm.

This is to ensure care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards, which state that: 'My environment is secure and safe' HSCS 5.17.

**This area for improvement was made on 14 February 2022.**

### Action taken since then

Robust risk assessments and safety checks of the setting were carried out regularly by the designated health and safety officer. Regular monitoring, maintenance, and repair of the setting and equipment kept children safe and protected from hazards which could cause harm.

**This area for improvement had been met.**

## Previous area for improvement 5

To ensure that children receive care that is right for them, the manager should ensure that staff are deployed in a way that meets children's needs. This should include, but is not limited to, considering staff skills and knowledge of children when organising staff duties.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'My care and support meets my needs and is right for me' (HSCS 1.19), and 'my needs are met by the right number of people' (HSCS 3.15).

**This area for improvement was made on 14 February 2022.**

**Action taken since then**

Effective deployment of the skilled staff team ensured high-quality outcomes for children. Management recognised the importance of running a service with highly experienced staff as essential to the wellbeing of children. There was a commitment to hiring additional skilled staff to support the ethos of the setting and continuity of care for children.

**This area for improvement had been met.**

**Previous area for improvement 6**

To support children's wellbeing and promote the continued development and improvement of the service, the manager should ensure that a routine and robust quality assurance system is in place. This should include, but is not limited to:

- accident/incident reviews;
- risk assessments;
- personal plans;
- monitoring staff practice; and
- safer recruitment.

This is to ensure care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'I benefit from a culture of continuous improvement, with the organisation having robust and transparent quality assurance processes' (HSCS 4.19).

**This area for improvement was made on 14 February 2022.**

**Action taken since then**

Management were extremely invested in the continuous improvement of the service to support children's wellbeing. A routine and robust quality assurance system was in place which evidenced improvements made to the quality of service and outcomes for children.

**This area for improvement had been met.**

**Previous area for improvement 7**

To enhance children's experiences, the provider should develop a more systematic support and supervision process. This should include, but is not limited to, appraisal and monitoring staff practice. Regular reviews should be planned to assess progress and identify training needs appropriate to their role.

This is to ensure care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards which state that: 'I have confidence in people because they are trained, competent and skilled, are able to reflect on their practice and follow their professional and organisational codes' (HSCS 3.14).

**This area for improvement was made on 14 February 2022.**

**Action taken since then**

Management had introduced an systematic support and supervision process. This included appraisal and monitoring of staff practice. Regular reviews were planned to assess progress and identify training needs appropriate to staff roles and responsibilities.

**This area for improvement had been met.**

## Complaints

There have been no complaints upheld since the last inspection. Details of any older upheld complaints are published at [www.careinspectorate.com](http://www.careinspectorate.com).

## Detailed evaluations

|  |               |
|--|---------------|
| How good is our care, play and learning?           | 5 - Very Good |
| 1.1 Nurturing care and support                     | 5 - Very Good |
| 1.3 Play and learning                              | 5 - Very Good |
| How good is our setting?                           | 5 - Very Good |
| 2.2 Children experience high quality facilities    | 5 - Very Good |
| How good is our leadership?                        | 5 - Very Good |
| 3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well | 5 - Very Good |
| How good is our staff team?                        | 5 - Very Good |
| 4.3 Staff deployment                               | 5 - Very Good |

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