



# Little Acorns Montesorri School

Inspection report for early years provision

**Unique Reference Number** EY312157  
**Inspection date** 21 March 2006  
**Inspector** Suman Willis

**Setting Address** The Bob Williams Building, Lincoln Field, Bushey, Hertfordshire,  
WD23 2ES

**Telephone number**

**E-mail**

**Registered person** Little Acorns Montesorri School Ltd

**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](http://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 satisfactory. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are satisfactory.

### WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Little Acorns Montessori School registered in 2005 and operates from 3 rooms within a building on the Lincolnsfield site. The large hall is used for children from 2 years and the two small rooms will be used by children under 2 years. The site is situated in Bushey within easy access to Watford and main road leading into London. A maximum of 30 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery is open each weekday from 09.00 to 15.30 term time only. All children share access to an

outdoor play area. From April the nursery will be registered to take a maximum of 6 children from 09.00 to 15.00.

There are currently 20 children from 2 to 5 years on roll. Of these, 13 children receive funding for nursery education. Children attend for a variety of sessions and are from a wide catchment area. The setting supports children with special needs.

The nursery employs 3 staff, including the manager. The manager and one other member of staff hold appropriate early years qualifications. The setting follows Montessori principles.

## **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION**

### **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is satisfactory.

Children have daily access to an outdoor play area where they are developing their large motor skills. They learn to use wheeled toys competently and enjoy jumping on the trampoline. Children move with control as they learn to stop and start using colour codes, red, yellow and green. When inside they move around the furniture carrying resources with ease. Consequently children are developing their physical skills and have access to regular fresh air. Children's learning of the importance of exercise would be further enhanced if the outdoor activities were planned into their daily routine. Children's small manipulative skills are developing as they confidently use the scissors, pencils and paint brushes.

Children are cared for in a warm, clean environment where staff promote suitable hygiene procedures. They know that after lunch they leave their part of the table clean by wiping the table and sweeping the floor. Children maintain their own personal hygiene as they independently wash their hands after outdoor play and after toileting, therefore cross infection is minimised. All documents relating to health such as permission to administer medication and emergency aid are in place thus ensuring that children's health needs are met at all times.

Children are well nourished, they visit the snack area as they wish during the morning session to enjoy a range of healthy, nutritious foods. For example, bowls of fresh fruit and vegetable pieces are available for self-selection and regularly replenished. Children bring packed lunches, and information for parents about healthy options are included in the parents pack. Information about any food allergies are included in the children's details, which in turn ensures that their individual dietary needs are always met.

### **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in a welcoming and secure environment. Risks to children are minimised because of the procedures staff have in place, such as ensuring that the

building is secure. Staff use their observational skills to monitor safety and are developing their written risk assessment and emergency evacuation procedures.

Children have independent access to a wide range of safe and suitable resources which are stored in low units, therefore children play and explore safely. Children mop up wet floors as they spill water, and understand that wet floors are slippery and could cause accidents. They know how to hold tables and chairs safely as they move them at lunch time. Staff are at hand to reinforce walking rules. Children are developing their knowledge of road safety as they go for walks to the woods and around the site. Consequently children are learning to keep themselves safe and avoid accidents.

Children are protected because staff have a sound knowledge of child protection issues. There are clear procedures in place to monitor visitors, and staff who are going through checks are never left alone with children.

### **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is good.

Children are happy and settled in their environment. They are greeted at the door by a member of staff and hang their coats and change into their slippers with ease. As they enter the nursery they are familiar with their setting and comfortably engage in their chosen activities. Therefore children are developing their confidence and self-esteem. Children's confidence is further developed as they sit in chosen small groups during snack time and make new friends.

Children use their own initiative and select their own play materials from the wide range of 'Montessori' resources. They are engrossed in developing their all round skills. For example some children enjoy developing their practical life experiences as they master skills such as sweeping, polishing and dusting. Others are developing their reading, writing and arithmetic skills by working with letters, words and numbers. Children's learning is extended as qualified Montessori staff use their observational skills to monitor, and intervene as necessary. They approach staff with ease, such as writing their names on their pieces of work.

### **Nursery Education**

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Staff have some knowledge of the Foundation Stage and are in the process of developing and linking this into their Montessori method of teaching. This will also enhance staff's planning to ensure that all the six areas of learning are covered at all times. They consult with parents to discover each child's starting point and link this into their individual planning. Children's written records of assessment clearly identify the progress children are making through the Montessori goals. These are used effectively to inform planning to support individual children's development.

Children are confident and greet each other with pleasure. Their behaviour is generally good and disputes are quickly resolved with good staff support. Children are independent and able to make choices. They are able to sustain their

concentration and complete tasks with ease. For example, a child uses pink building blocks to build a tower; once he has completed this, he tidies away before moving onto another area. Children enjoy the social experience of eating together and sharing personal experiences with each other while they have lunch.

Children are happy to participate in a wide range of activities which promote their all round learning. They enjoy being challenged by staff and are developing their language skills well. For example children enjoy finding words and matching them to items in the small sensory box. Some children recognise their names as they find their name cards while others are able to write their names in full without assistance. Children relax with a book in a rocking chair as they turn pages. They predict what happens next as they are read to. Therefore, children are extending their vocabulary and developing their writing skills. Children learn about numbers and the concept of maths through a variety of activities. They develop their understanding of quantity as they pour pulses, rice and water into jugs. They use cubes and triangles to create 2D and 3D shapes. Children count in units of tens and hundreds using bead blocks. They are able to recognise written numbers and know that '9' and '9' put side by side makes '99'. Consequently children are fully challenged and their knowledge extended.

Children explore different materials and learn about the natural world as they walk through the woods. Children have access to collage materials such as wool and different textured paper. Children explore their technology skills in the home corner as they use the cash register, walkie-talkie and play music of their choice on the tape recorder. They explore different tools as they work with wood. Their knowledge and understanding of the wider world is developed through maps of the world and activities covering the main festivals from other countries. Children learn about the past and present as they talk about the days of the week and delight as they guess correctly that they don't attend nursery on Saturday and Sundays. Subsequently children's knowledge and understanding of the world is continually developing.

Children explore colour and texture as they independently access paint and paper. They enjoy making collages using wool and strips of paper. They have access to musical instruments and one child enjoys playing bells to the nursery rhyme a group of children are singing.

## **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is good.

Children are cared for by staff who have a good understanding of individual children's needs. All cultural diversities are valued and promoted through the wide range of resources throughout the nursery. Children's details include personal information which enable staff to be prepared to meet each individual child's needs. They are familiar with the routine which enables them to feel secure. Children enjoy being given responsibilities such as handing out work at going-home time or laying the tables for lunch, thus helping to develop their self-esteem and boost their confidence.

Children and staff work harmoniously together. Staff provide a calm environment and speak to children in soft voices at all times. Children approach staff with ease when

needing help to complete their tasks. They make independent choices and take decisions; if they are unsure they are guided by a member of staff to a range of activities to choose from. Staff use their observational skills, and intervene as necessary to promote responsible behaviour by reminding children of the nursery rules. Children know that they must put away resources before moving on to the next activity. They are becoming aware of the needs of others as staff reinforce being kind to each other.

The nursery's positive approach fosters children's social, moral, spiritual and cultural development.

The partnership with parents is satisfactory. Parents are provided with information which explains the care and education that is provided for their children. They receive in-depth information about the Montessori methods of teaching and how it is promoted. However, parents do not receive information about the Foundation Stage curriculum. Consequently they are unable to fully support their children's development in all the six areas of learning. Parents are invited to parents evening twice a year where they receive information about the progress their children are making. Information is exchanged daily at the door and parents commented that they were very happy with the amount of information they receive and they are very pleased with the progress their children are making.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is satisfactory.

Children are cared for by a team of staff who are keen to develop their knowledge and understanding of child development. There is an effective system in place for recruiting staff, and induction for new staff. Students and visitors are given clear guidelines of the nursery's procedures, thus ensuring that children are protected and cared for by staff who have knowledge and understanding of child development. The adult to child ratio positively supports children's care, learning and play. Effective staff deployment contributes to children's good health, enjoyment, achievement and ability to take an active part in the setting. Staff are in the process of developing their written policies and procedures which will enhance their practice.

Leadership and management of the group is satisfactory. The manager and staff work very well together as a team. They are committed to improving their provision, and understand the importance of developing their knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage and the importance of providing activities which promote children's development in all the six areas of learning. This in turn helps to extend children's knowledge in all the areas.

The provision meets the needs of the range of the children for whom it provides.

## **Improvements since the last inspection**

There are no actions or recommendations outstanding from the registration visit.

### **Complaints since the last inspection**

There have been no complaints made to Ofsted since the last inspection. 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.

## **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 satisfactory. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are satisfactory.

### **WHAT MUST BE DONE TO SECURE FUTURE IMPROVEMENT?**

#### **The quality and standards of the care**

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- extend outdoor play to ensure that it is incorporated into their daily routine and that through their daily routine children learn the importance of exercise
- ensure fire procedures are displayed at all times

#### **The quality and standards of the nursery education**

To improve the quality and standards of nursery education further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- improve staff's knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage curriculum in order to ensure that all six areas of learning are covered
- develop information for parents to ensure that they are fully informed of the Foundation Stage curriculum.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the leaflet *Building better childcare: Compliments and concerns about inspectors' judgements* which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)