

Lymington Montessori School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY350662
Inspection date	11 October 2007
Inspector	Anne Mitchell
Setting Address	South Baddesley Village Hall, South Baddesley, Lymington, Hamps, SO41 5RP
Telephone number	01590 678 881
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Registered person	Lymington Montessori 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.

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?

Lymington Montessori School has been registered since 2007. It operates from two open plan rooms, on two floors in a converted building in South Baddesley. There is a fully enclosed garden to the side of the building and a smallholding to the rear for outdoor play and activities.

The setting is registered to care for up to 72 children from one to under eight years of age. There are currently 52 children on roll. Of these, 24 are in receipt of nursery funding. The setting supports children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and for whom English is an additional language.

The nursery is open from 08:15 to 17:30 Monday to Thursday, and from 08:15 to 13:00 on Friday. The setting is open throughout the year. There are nine members of staff working with the children, all of whom either hold, or are working towards, an early years qualification. The school operates according to the Montessori philosophy and receives support from a teacher/mentor from the local authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Children's physical and emotional health is significantly enhanced by the excellent opportunities for outdoor play. Children are encouraged to work and play outside and can do so in all weather. There is a fully enclosed garden to the side of the building with a broad range of resources and equipment to provide children with choices in their play. The newly constructed 'play trail' includes a climbing wall and cargo net, monkey bars, stepping platforms and balance beams. To the rear of the property children work on the setting's farm, caring for the chickens and planting and harvesting organic fruit and vegetables. A low level sink and soap dispenser, located by the path back to the building, ensures children can wash their hands after they have been working in the garden or handling the chickens.

Children's health is a high priority within the setting. Effective policies and procedures regarding children's health and welfare are followed conscientiously to promote children's wellbeing. From a very early age children know that they need to wash their hands after using the toilet and before meals. They do so alongside staff who demonstrate thorough hand hygiene routines. They help children to understand why this is important through encouragement, 'Can you make lots of bubbles? Let's wash those germs away!' Children are very independent in their personal care using child sized toilets and low level washbasins.

Children's wellbeing is fully supported by the very clear and up to date documentation to record accidents and medication. These are held confidentially and parents sign all documents to keep them informed of their children's welfare. A well stocked first aid kit is available in each room and taken on outings to ensure children can be treated promptly and effectively in the event of an accident. The majority of staff hold current first aid certificates.

Children's emotional wellbeing is exceptionally well promoted as they develop close and warm relationships with staff and the other children. Great emphasis is placed on community and children are caring and sensitive to one another.

Children's dietary health is exceptional. The setting works in close partnership with a local organic farm who have supported the children and staff in growing and producing their own fruit and vegetables. Children are fully independent at snack time and they lay their place at the table, pour their own milk or water and choose from healthy foods such as rice cakes and dried raisins. From a very early age children help themselves and each other, squeezing fresh orange juice as an alternative drink at snack time, for example. At breakfast, lunch and tea children benefit from organic food. They are fully involved in the process, and understand where their food comes from and all children are involved in preparation. They prepare the crumble for pudding, for example. A two-year-old has fun scrubbing a potato clean. He smiles broadly at an adult and tells them 'I washing a tato'. When asked what will happen to the potato, he replies proudly 'It's for our lunch'. Mealtime is a happy and sociable time and staff sit together with the children eating with them. This provides children with excellent role models and initiates discussions about good manners and healthy eating. Food is nourishing and varied. It smells wonderful and is attractively presented and appealing. Children tuck into cottage pie with vegetables, or pasta with a tomato sauce. Deserts include fresh water melon slices, or fresh blackberry and apple with natural yoghurt. Children eat with obvious enjoyment, many having second helpings. The meals are well received by all age groups in the setting and with equal enthusiasm.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Children's safety is paramount. The premises are very secure and the door is effectively monitored by staff at key times when children arrive and are collected. Children are always collected by authorised persons as there are rigorous systems in place, such as the use of passwords and photograph ID. Visitors to the setting are recorded and fully monitored.

Children's safety is significantly enhanced as all areas they use are checked through thorough risk assessments. Radiators are guarded, sockets covered and gates prevent access to the top of the stairs. Children learn about keeping themselves safe from a very early age. They use real glasses and china plates for food and drink, and know that they must stand back if a glass smashes. They learn to sit nicely on their chairs and to give one another space during small group activities. Children are able to take controlled risks. They understand the rules about climbing on the cargo net and using the monkey bars and use proper tools to dig the garden. Staff provide excellent role models and involve children in discussion about safety. Children select their own resources from low level shelving units. They carry equipment carefully on trays and return them once they have been used.

Children are very well protected from harm and neglect. Staff have an excellent understanding of child protection issues. They are clear about their responsibility to protect children and follow comprehensive policies and procedures which are also shared with parents. Staff are confident and clear about possible signs and symptoms of abuse and the procedures to follow to ensure children are safeguarded.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Children arrive at the setting with enthusiasm and joy. They thrive in the vibrant and welcoming environment. The nursery is inviting and spacious and children are immediately drawn to their chosen activity. Children demonstrate high levels of concentration and will remain at an activity for long periods of time. Younger children have good opportunities to cuddle up with a key member of staff to look at books and read stories. They experiment with paint using brushes, or their hands to explore the colour and texture. Children's language and vocabulary is very well developed through the meaningful interaction with staff. Children are able to explore their environment freely and especially enjoy the outdoor environment. Toddlers busily fill their watering cans from the outside tap and become engaged in watering the flowers. One child experiments in the water tray, putting in stones and grass seeing which floats and which sinks. Throughout the nursery, with all age groups and both inside and out, children are continuously industrious, happy and very well occupied.

Nursery Education.

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. The dedicated and enthusiastic staff team always put the children first, and are committed to providing challenging activities that link to children's individual interests and stage of development. They consistently make excellent use of their time to support the children in their learning. The setting follows the Montessori ethos and staff have a very secure understanding of how this links to the Foundation Stage curriculum. Staff have a clear and comprehensive understanding of child development and complete regular and detailed observations on each child to monitor their progress. Adults present each piece of equipment to the children and then allow them to explore it in their own time. Consequently,

children have excellent opportunities to develop their own skills and take pride in their achievements.

Staff meet together every Friday to discuss children's progress and plan activities. Activities are child focussed and are successfully planned to support and develop children's individual interests. Staff complete 'work curves' for each child which demonstrates when each child's level of concentration is at its peak, and highlights their specific interests. Staff expertly adapt individual activities to encourage children to take the next steps in their learning and development. Children with specific requirements and with English as an additional language are very well supported. Staff liaise closely with the parents and carers to meet the children's needs.

Children are making rapid progress in all areas of learning. Children are exceptionally confident, eager to get involved in activities and motivated to learn. They show excellent independence in their personal care, and love to help squeeze the orange juice for themselves and their friends at snack time. Children are considerate and caring towards each other. For example, a child sensitively puts their arm around a younger child as a greeting when they come into the garden to play. Another child sits with a toddler to help them put their shoes back on. Children co-operate very well during small group activities and take turns. They are clear about the boundaries and know why they are important. A child waiting to use the climbing wall tells an adult 'I'm waiting for my turn. If too many people climb up we might get all muddled up and hurt someone!' They are extremely polite, always remembering to say please and thank you. Children demonstrate high levels of concentration. One child completes a complex floor puzzle alone, remaining focussed and interested for over half an hour.

Children have highly developed language and vocabulary through the excellent interaction with the staff and their peers. They are articulate and enthusiastic. They talk about what they have grown on the farm and what they want to do when they are grown up. One child tells his friends 'I'm going to build big houses and little houses for different families'. Another says 'I'm going to be a farmer and I'll have some pigs'. Children have excellent listening skills promoted through the calm and ordered environment. They listen to staff and to each other with interest. Children use writing materials to write and make marks freely throughout the session. One child wants to write his name on his art work, so the member of staff encourages him to find his name card to copy. Children visit the book area regularly, alone or with friends and enjoy looking at books.

Children are developing secure skills in early mathematics. They use the Montessori equipment to develop a hands-on approach to provide children with a secure understanding of the concept of number. Many children count beyond 10 with confidence. Children are developing their understanding about shape and measure through some of the sensorial activities the setting provides. They are confident in their understanding of mathematical language and problem solving as they use the 'red rods' for grading. One child attempts the activity again and again, finally getting it right and proudly shows a member of staff his achievement.

Children are provided with excellent opportunities to explore the natural environment. They are fully involved in the planting, nurturing and harvest of a range of organic crops in the farm. Information and communication technology is introduced to children through their practical use of a digital camera. Children take turns to take the camera home to take photos of their favourite places. One child brings back photographs of the local swimming pool he visits and staff help children to put the photographs onto the computer. Children are developing an mature sense of time and place. They are aware of the time it takes from planting the seeds in the farm, watching the plants develop and later harvesting the crops.

Children explore colour and texture through free painting activities where they use different sized brushes, fingers and hands to create works of art. They create imaginative models with salt dough and paint them when they are dry. Children use their imagination well in all areas of their play. In the garden two children decide to be a Jack-in-the-box, curling up small and then jumping up. Staff allow children the freedom and space to be creative. When asked what his favourite thing was, one boy replied 'I like the 'Brown Stair'. I like making bulldozers with it'. Children enjoy singing and do so with real enthusiasm. They choose their favourite songs and practise for the Christmas concert, singing beautifully to the accompaniment of a piano.

Children's physical development is exceptional. Their small muscle control and hand/eye co-ordination is effectively supported as they use a range of tools and resources such as small brushes to clean the vegetables, scissors, hole punches and small jugs to pour water. They use button, buckle and lacing frames to practice the skills they need to be independent in their personal care. Children also enjoy weekly yoga classes, which promotes their children's physical and spiritual health.

Children's large muscle control is very effectively promoted as they spend lots of time on the farm and in the well resourced garden. This provides children with excellent challenges and opportunities to climb and balance. Children work with determination to dig and weed the vegetable and flower beds ready for planting. They work together to clean out the chickens and replenish their feed.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Children flourish in this environment. They are very happy and settled and are warmly welcomed into the setting. Children demonstrate a true sense of belonging. The sense of community which the staff have worked hard to achieve is very evident as children proudly show visitors their nursery, their new 'play trail' and their farm. One child takes an adult to each of the tractor tyre planters to show what is growing there. Children are eager to show visitors their chickens. They talk with excitement and enthusiasm about collecting the eggs and recall the lambs that they bottle fed through the summer.

Children's individual needs are effectively met by the staff who develop individual plans for each child's development, based on their interests and skills. Children learn about the wider world and cultural diversity through practical and tangible experiences. The nursery have made close links with a children's project in Kenya. The people who run it have visited the nursery and shown the children pictures of the school and the children who attend. Children now sell the excess vegetables they grow to raise money for the project. There are plans to help children learn more about recycling their toys and clothes, and these too will be sent over to Kenya to benefit the children there.

Children's behaviour is exemplary. They follow clear and reasonable guidelines to promote their health and safety, and that of the nursery community. An adult sits on the bottom step, and a child gently reminds them that they shouldn't sit on the step, as the younger children might bump into them. Children learn about 'Grace and Courtesy' to help them understand the importance of good manners and respect for others. Staff are excellent role models for children's behaviour, talking to the children and to each other with respect. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Partnership with parents and carers is outstanding. Parents receive clear comprehensive information about the nursery through the parent handbook which details the setting's policies and procedures. They are kept up-to-date with changes and weekly activities through frequent newsletters, and the information displayed on the notice board. They are kept well informed of their child's progress through regular parent evenings. The setting hosts social events where parents can meet together and enjoy watching videos of their children being busy through the nursery day, and photographs of them working on the farm and enjoying the garden. This provides additional reassurance for parents whose children have recently started at the group.

Staff and management are dedicated to building a strong partnership with parents, and provide evening meetings to discuss the Montessori methods for different age groups. Plans are in place to develop an anti-natal group at the setting as well as a link for new parents. Parents are very happy with the level of care and education provided. One parent states that they are '...overwhelmed by the dedication shown towards the child's development and stability' and recognises the '...wonderful care and guidance...' the nursery provides.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides care and education. Children's care is significantly enhanced by the exceptional organisation. There are rigorous and robust systems in place to ensure children are cared for by suitably checked and qualified staff. The staff work team is strong and committed. They work effectively together to promote children's health, welfare and learning opportunities. Staff demonstrate a strong commitment to training and personal development and are effectively supported and encouraged by the management team.

Positive outcomes for children are assured through the worthwhile policies and procedures, which are followed by staff and support the smooth running of the setting. Documentation is very well organised, and kept confidential and secure. Records are clear, accurately maintained and easily accessible for staff.

Staff organise the open plan rooms very effectively to provide the various areas to meet the Montessori curriculum. Children are able to freely access an excellent range of activities. Opportunities are maximised through excellent use of both indoor and outdoor environment. High staff ratios ensure children are well supported in their play and learning, and staff are skilled in allowing children space and time to experiment and explore their environment independently.

Leadership and management is outstanding. The owner and educational director are dedicated to providing a strong and harmonious environment where children thrive and develop to their full potential. Their enthusiasm is infectious and consequently the staff team are happy and settled in their roles. The management team continually evaluate their practice to ensure continued improvements to the nursery education, and have plans to develop partnerships with local nurseries, arts institutes, musicians and cultural communities to further promote outcomes for children.

Improvements since the last inspection

Not applicable.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since registration 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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The quality and standards of the nursery education are outstanding.

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