

# Little Acorns Montessorri School

Inspection report for early years provision

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**Unique reference number**

EY312157

**Inspection date**

18/01/2010

**Inspector**

Lindsay Hare / Alison Reeves

**Setting address**

The Bob Williams Building, Lincoln Field, Bushey,  
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**Telephone number**

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**Type of setting**

Childcare on non-domestic premises

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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Sections 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006 on the quality and standards of the registered early years provision. 'Early years provision' refers to provision regulated by Ofsted for children from birth to 31 August following their fifth birthday (the early years age group). The registered person must ensure that this provision complies with the statutory framework for children's learning, development and welfare, known as the *Early Years Foundation Stage*.

The provider must provide a copy of this report to all parents with children at the setting where reasonably practicable. The provider must provide a copy of the report to any other person who asks for one, but may charge a fee for this service (The Childcare (Inspection) Regulations 2008 regulations 9 and 10).

The setting also makes provision for children older than the early years age group which is registered on the voluntary and/or compulsory part(s) of the Childcare Register. This report does not include an evaluation of that provision, but a comment about compliance with the requirements of the Childcare Register is included in Annex B.

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## **Description of the setting**

Little Acorns Montessori School registered in 2005 and operates from two rooms within a building on the Lincolnsfield site in Bushey, Hertfordshire. The large hall is used for children from two to five years of age. The smaller room is used by children from a year to two and a half years of age. A maximum of 41 children under eight years may attend the school at any one time. The school is open each weekday from 9.00am to 3.30pm term time only. A breakfast club operates from 8.00am until 9.00am and an after school session from 3.30pm until 6.00pm. All children share access to an outdoor play area.

The provision is registered on the Early Years Register and on both the voluntary and compulsory parts of the Childcare Register. There are currently no children on roll within the older age group.

There are currently 39 children on roll, all of whom are in the early years age range. There are seven members of staff employed, including the manager and of these, six hold appropriate early years qualifications. The setting follows Montessori principles. It receives support from the local authority.

## **The overall effectiveness of the early years provision**

Overall the quality of the provision is good.

Children are making good progress in their learning and development as they are provided with experiences and activities that cover all areas of learning and that follow the Montessori principles. There are robust procedures in place to protect children and they are gaining a good awareness of how to keep themselves safe. Although children's health and well-being is generally promoted, staff do not fully support children's understanding of having a healthy lifestyle. Children are developing a keen awareness of the local community and the wider world. Most of the policies and procedures are clear and detailed although some contain irrelevant information, referring to the National Standards. The setting's self-evaluation is developing, highlighting areas for improvement, although it does not take into account the views of others.

## **What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?**

To further improve the early years provision the registered person should:

- encourage children's understanding of a healthy lifestyle and the effects of physical activity on their bodies
- review the policies and procedures to ensure that they relate to the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and contain up to date information
- improve the system of self-evaluation to take into account the views of parents and staff.

## **The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision**

Children's welfare is promoted well as there are sound safeguarding procedures which are available to both staff and parents. Most staff have completed 'safeguarding children' training and there is a robust system in place for ensuring all adults are vetted which is updated and reviewed annually. High priority is given to keeping children safe. There is a detailed procedure regarding collection of children by authorised persons only and effective precautions in place to prevent children escaping. Comprehensive risk assessments of the setting and local outings mean that children can move around in a safe, secure environment, where hazards have been minimised.

Staff show an awareness and have a good understanding of equality and diversity, enabling them to provide a service which is inclusive for all. For example, parents are invited in to share information about their religion, culture or job, with the children. The setting communicates well with all parents, enabling them to work together in partnership. Parents are provided with information displayed on a notice board, daily diaries for the younger children and regular newsletters. There are lots of opportunities for parents to visit and share in their children's progress, for example, parents are invited to consultations and open mornings and workshops to demonstrate how the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is delivered through Montessori activities. The setting also has some links with other professionals who regularly visit the nursery and provides a written 'transition' record for schools when children leave. The written policies and procedures are clear and detailed for parents, although some contain irrelevant information and relate to the National Standards instead of the EYFS.

The provider has indicated an understanding of the strengths of the provision and some areas for improvement, although there is no system in place for regular monitoring and reflection of the setting or meaningful involvement of staff or parents in the self-evaluation process. An action plan has already been developed to address some issues identified and the staff are able to contribute some of their ideas and suggestions at staff meetings. Plans are well targeted to bring about further improvement.

## **The quality and standards of the early years provision and outcomes for children**

Children make good progress in their learning and development. Staff have clearly linked the Montessori activities to the EYFS and how they cover the six areas of learning to enable them to assess children's progress towards the early learning goals. Children are highly motivated and purposeful, showing good levels of concentration as they independently set out, work with and put away the various Montessori activities available to them. There is a calm atmosphere and children behave well.

Children are warmly welcomed. Staff focus on the individual child, valuing and

using knowledge and the experiences of those families attending. For example, making their own family trees and introducing a culture table using artefacts that parents have provided and celebrating festivals such as Hanukkah which reflect the cultural backgrounds of the children attending. Children use resources independently and with skill as they operate the CD player and listen to music and stories on headphones. They explore the local environment, the woods and recycle the food waste from their snack to take to the animals at the nearby farm.

There are lots of opportunities for children to recognise and form letters, making marks and writing their name on their pictures. Children recreate stories from memory, using the picture clues and join in with action rhymes. The Montessori activities enable children to measure and begin to make the links between numerals and their corresponding value. Children can access the outside area and enjoy sweeping up the leaves and scrubbing the bikes. They develop small muscle skills, using small tools, tweezers, pegs and pouring to and from various containers. Children are able to freely paint, manipulate dough and dress up. They play musical instruments and participate in familiar songs and rhymes.

Children are developing a good understanding of how to keep themselves and others safe as they practise fire drills and wear high visibility jackets, using, the lollipop sign to reinforce their awareness of traffic when out walking in the local area. Staff regularly model behaviour, for example, demonstrating what might happen if they leave their chair out instead of tucking it under the table and making children think about the consequences of their actions. Parents provide all meals, which are well-balanced and the setting has information available on ideas for nutritious packed lunches. However, staff miss opportunities to discuss healthy lifestyles with the children to develop their understanding further. For example, there is no discussion with children about washing their hands or the effects of physical activity on their bodies.

## Annex A: record of inspection judgements

### The key inspection judgements and what they mean

*Grade 1 is Outstanding: this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality*  
*Grade 2 is Good: this aspect of the provision is strong*  
*Grade 3 is Satisfactory: this aspect of the provision is sound*  
*Grade 4 is Inadequate: this aspect of the provision is not good enough*

### The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

<b>How well does the setting meet the needs of the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?</b>	2
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement	2

### The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

<b>How effectively is the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed?</b>	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
The effectiveness with which the setting deploys resources	2
The effectiveness with which the setting promotes equality and diversity	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding	2
The effectiveness of the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement	2
The effectiveness of partnerships	2
The effectiveness of the setting's engagement with parents and carers	2

### The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage

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### Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

<b>Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	2
The extent to which children achieve and enjoy their learning	2
The extent to which children feel safe	2
The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which children make a positive contribution	2
The extent to which children develop skills for the future	2

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## **Annex B: the Childcare Register**

The provider confirms that the requirements of the compulsory part of the Childcare Register are:	Met
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The provider confirms that the requirements of the voluntary part of the Childcare Register are:	Met
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