

Little Learners Montessori School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique reference number 250087
Inspection date 11/01/2010
Inspector Teresa Marie Taylor

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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.

Please see our website for more information about each childcare provider. We publish inspection reports, conditions of registration and details of complaints we receive where we or the provider take action to meet the requirements of registration.

Description of the setting

Little Learners Montessori School has been registered since 1995. It is privately run and is situated in St Helen's Church located in the centre of Solihull. The setting has the use of two playrooms and associated facilities. A maximum of 37 children may attend at any one time. The setting is open from 8.30am to 3.00pm, term time only. Children have the use of the church grounds for outdoor play.

There are currently 31 children on roll. Of these 16 receive funding for early education. The setting is also registered on the compulsory part of the Childcare Register. Children attend for a variety of sessions. The setting is able to support children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and also children for whom English is an additional language.

The setting employs four staff all of whom hold appropriate early years qualifications. The owner/ manager is also a qualified Montessori teacher and holds Early Years Professional Status.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is good.

Children are very happy and extremely confident in this child centred environment where they feel safe and supported by the staff. The setting follows the Montessori philosophy and has successfully combined this with the Early Years Foundation Stage as a result, children are progressing very well in all areas of learning. Parental involvement in the setting is actively encouraged. Well documented observations, assessments and developing self evaluation systems significantly enhance children's learning and development. Children's uniqueness and individuality is recognised and managed exceptionally well. Well written policies and procedures securely underpin the groups practice and copies are provided for parents, however, the daily register is not completed accurately. Effective partnerships with parents and other settings ensure information relating to individual children's progress and needs is shared effectively.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

To fully meet the specific requirements of the EYFS, the registered person must:

- ensure the daily record of the children looked after includes their hours of attendance (Documentation)(also applies to the compulsory part of the Childcare Register). 15/01/2010

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

- ensure a record of risk assessments is maintained on the premises and available for inspection.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

Staff have a strong commitment to safeguarding and are very well informed about procedures to keep children safe. All staff undertake regular safeguarding training to keep up to date and they fully understand the requirements of the Local Safeguarding Children Board. The majority of policies, procedures and documentation for the effective and safe running of the setting are well organised and effectively implemented. There are sound recruitment procedures and individual staff development plans ensuring children are provided with safe and well trained staff. The staff successfully promote all areas of equal opportunities and inclusion, ensuring children are given a broad understanding of the wider world. The indoor and outdoor environments are subjected to thorough risk assessments to ensure any potential hazards to children are minimised, however, the full risk assessments are not retained on the premises. A regular checking and cleaning schedule ensures children are kept safe and the risk of cross infection is minimised.

The staff have a clear vision for the future of the setting and have identified areas they wish to improve. These include, improving their links with local schools and continuing to be analytical about their provision to improve the outcomes for children. The staffs commitment to continuous improvement is very good. They are proactive in obtaining the opinions of both parents and children and continually reflect on their practice to ensure the best possible care and learning opportunities are provided for the children. The group appropriately addressed the recommendations from the last inspection which ensures parents have access to up dated information regarding the complaints policy, staff have a clearer understanding of the safeguarding procedures and parents are encouraged to have more involvement with their children's learning. Communication both with parents, children and several other settings the children move on to are a strength. Parents have access to daily discussions, children's individual learning journey folders, open days, a web site and regular planned meetings to discuss children's individual learning, development and to plan for their next steps. They are actively encouraged to be fully involved in all aspects of their child's care and learning. Arrangements are in place for school staff to attend the setting on a regular basis and several schools take up the invitation to see the children and learn about the Montessori approach to early education. This greatly improves the transition arrangements for children moving on to school. The group also have clear procedures in place to liaise with other agencies to support children with special educational needs or disabilities to ensure all individual needs are met.

The staff actively promote the uniqueness and individuality of each child. They provide a wealth of age appropriate activities and resources to ensure all children can participate in all play opportunities regardless of gender, background, ability or disability. Staff actively encourage children to be proactive in their own learning and begin to identify their own learning and development needs. All children and

families are highly valued and parents are provided with annual questionnaires encouraging them to comment on any area of their child's care and learning and to take an active part in the setting.

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

Children make excellent progress as they enjoy a wide range of stimulating and enjoyable activities. They are very settled and relaxed and are given a high level of support that ensures that they develop fully as individuals. The combination of the Montessori philosophy and the Early Years Foundation Stage ensures children are provided with an excellent range of creative learning experiences which keep them involved and eager to learn. Information is obtained about children's starting points and well written observations and assessments ensure all aspects of individual needs are met successfully and children's progress is excellent in relation to their starting points in all areas of learning and development.

Children are very confident when exploring the environment both indoors and outside. They play a full and active role in their own learning, make choices, decisions and extend their own activities with the staff providing excellent support. A wide range of activities and resources help them to understand the wider world as they explore the outdoor environment, discuss other cultures, abilities and disabilities, have a wide range of natural and domestic resources, celebrate festivals and have a range of posters and displays regarding emotions and nationalities. They are given clear rules regarding behaviour with staff being excellent role models. As a result children behave very well, understand each other's limitations and have superb self-esteem. They freely express their feelings, ask for help when they need it and willingly share. Children play both independently and together, understand why they need to share and have very good communication skills this enables them to develop skills for their future. They make excellent progress in their communication, language, problem solving and number skills as they enjoy a range of challenging and exciting experiences. For example, one child wished to explore numbers. He was provided with paper to write out the numbers 1-10. He struggled with the number three and was given sandpaper numbers to feel and trace with his finger, he then successfully completed all the numbers. Another child used a programmable toy to work out how many moves it would take to reach three different items placed at different distances apart. Throughout all activities staff encourage children to count, name colours and through careful questioning encourage children to analyse what they are doing and what the outcome of their actions will be. Fine motor skills are encouraged through a range of Montessori resources designed to develop personal skills. For example, using buttons, managing clothing and laces.

Children have a strong sense of belonging in the security of the group. They show they feel safe and are confident in asking why visitors are present, accepting the reasons given and then including them in their activities. Children understand they must put away any resource they have been using before accessing another and even the youngest children manage this very well. They freely share their news and ideas and there is clear affection between the children and staff. Children

show their understanding of keeping themselves safe through their good behaviour, consideration of each other and show they understand safety rules such as not throwing sand or carrying large play equipment around. They learn effectively about personal safety through well planned topics and the clear explanations given by staff. For example, when moving through the car park to the outdoor play area staff use the analogy of traffic lights to encourage children to observe any cars present and decide if it is safe to carry on walking.

Children show they understand about a healthy lifestyle as they make informed choices about what they eat as they choose from a selection of fruit at snack time. Staff discuss healthy eating both at snack time and during activities with good displays available for children to refer to. Children know that physical exercise is good for them as staff discuss the effects of exercise including, the increase in their heart rate and breathing. They have access to an excellent range of physical play resources including, children's gym equipment, balance beams and balls and regularly enjoy music and movement activities. Children's general good health is promoted as they make the most of the fresh air and the outdoor play available to them every day regardless of the weather with staff taking the opportunity to discuss the weather, appropriate clothing and textures particularly the current snow covering the play area.

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

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

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

How effectively is the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed?	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

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The extent to which children achieve and enjoy their learning	1
The extent to which children feel safe	1
The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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:

Not Met (with actions)

The registered provider does not meet the requirements of the compulsory and or voluntary part/s of the Childcare Register.

To comply with the requirements of the compulsory part of the Childcare Register, the registered person must take the following action/s by the specified date:

- take action as specified in the early years section of the report (Records to be kept). 15/01/2010