

# Lexden Montessori

Inspection report for early years provision

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**Unique reference number**

EY338060

**Inspection date**

07/07/2010

**Inspector**

Hazel Meadows

**Setting address**

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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

Lexden Montessori is privately owned and run by Lexden Montessori Ltd. The nursery opened in 2006 and follows Montessori practice. It operates from the ground floor of the owner's home and is situated close to Colchester town centre. A securely enclosed garden is available for outdoor play.

The setting is registered on the Early Years Register and may care for no more than 24 children in the early years age range at any one time. There are currently 31 children on roll in the early years age range. It is also registered on the compulsory and voluntary parts of the Childcare Register. The setting supports children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and children who have English as an additional language. It is open five days a week, from 8am until 6pm, currently term-time only. From the end of July 2010 the nursery will open for 48 weeks of the year and will offer a holiday club facility.

Lexden Montessori employs three staff. All of the staff and the proprietor have a Level 4 Montessori Diploma qualification. The manager has an Early Years honours degree. The setting is registered to accept government funding for three and four-year-olds and receives support from the local authority.

## The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is good.

Children are happy and settle well at this vibrant and welcoming setting. They enjoy a diverse and imaginative variety of play and learning experiences and are making excellent progress through the Early Years Foundation Stage. Inclusive practice is well promoted and each child's individuality is valued. Positive partnerships are established with parents and carers, ensuring children receive consistent support regarding their care, development and learning. Most documentation and procedures which are in place promote children's welfare. Ongoing self-evaluation promotes improvement and supports continuous development.

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

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

- ensure all staff have an up-to-date knowledge and understanding of safeguarding children issues and that the safeguarding policy is in line with Local Safeguarding Children Board guidance and procedures
- review written policies to ensure they relate to the setting, contain up-to-date information and are applied in practice.

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

Staff are watchful of the children and attentive to their safety. Written risk assessments are undertaken for the premises and for outings, to minimise risks to children. There are effective procedures for emergency evacuation in place, which is regularly practised and logged. Appropriate procedures are in place to ensure staff's suitability to work with children and all staff are clear of their responsibilities to protect children. Staff have a sound awareness and understanding of safeguarding issues, although only one member of staff has attended any safeguarding training. The leadership is reviewing its written safeguarding policy but local safeguarding contact details are available should staff have concerns about a child.

The committed and experienced staff team work cooperatively to ensure the smooth running of the setting. Staff development is actively encouraged with a commitment to training to enhance practice. Regular staff meetings and ongoing discussion ensures all staff are involved in the setting's development. Staff continually reflect upon practice and self-evaluation is ongoing, which promotes the setting's continuous improvement of their childcare practice. For example, re-scheduling the circle time and differentiating some activities for the younger children. Comprehensive details are obtained about each child to support their welfare and signed, written consents are in place to ensure children are cared for according to their parents' wishes. Most records are securely kept and accurately maintained. The written policies are currently under review as they do not always relate to, or reflect the practice of, the setting.

The group has a positive attitude and approach towards diversity and promotes inclusive practice with the children, staff and parents. Staff liaise with other childcare or health professionals, if required, to ensure any additional support for children is implemented at an early stage. They also work closely with parents of children for whom English is an additional language, to ensure they are well supported. Staff establish positive partnerships with parents which is conducive to children's welfare and continuity of care. Open communication is promoted both verbally and via newsletters, weekly diaries and notices. Parents are offered regular opportunities to talk in more depth with their child's key person and to review their child's development records. A termly 'Child Interest Week' encourages parents to share about their child's recent interests and activities. Most comments received from parents during the inspection are positive. Parents state their children are happy at the setting and have made good progress. The setting is proactive to establish links with the schools that children are due to attend and teachers are invited in to meet the children. This aids and promotes smooth transitions for the children into nursery or full-time school.

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

Children are keen to come into the setting and enthusiastically explore the activities available. High quality and plentiful resources, predominantly made of natural materials, are easily accessible on low-level shelving, encouraging children's independence. The Montessori equipment is supplemented by creative activities, such as, role play, cookery, yoga and drama, plus a broad variety of craft activities. Well-deployed staff play alongside the children to support and enhance their learning and development and to encourage conversation. Children are each allocated a key person but all staff get to know the children very well as individuals. Close discussions with parents and an 'All About Me' booklet, completed by parents when their child starts at the setting, offer staff an insight into each child's individuality. A personal photo album of each child's family network provides a valuable link with home and also promotes discussion and conversation with individuals and as a group. Children's awareness and appreciation of diversity is promoted well through the positive attitude and approach of the staff to include and value all and this is further reflected in some of the books and activities.

Children form open and trusting relationships with staff and one another and many know each other's names. They are developing positive self-esteem and are very confident and articulate communicators, freely approaching and talking to staff and visitors. Children's behaviour is very good and positive behaviour is acknowledged and praised. Children are offered clear explanations to help them learn to manage their own behaviour, and a Golden Rules photo book helps them to understand the basic rules within the nursery. Staff are positive role models, treating children with kindness and respect, helping them feel valued and secure. Photos of the activities in nursery provide a visual timetable which helps all children to understand the routine. Children learn to recognise their own names as they find their own tray and help themselves to pencils to write their own name on their paintings. Children are encouraged to think and discover for themselves and develop good problem solving skills, which is well supported by much of the Montessori equipment. Also, an older child was aware that it would be easier for all the children to watch an activity around a small table if they all stepped back from the table. Staff encourage children to be active learners and are skilled to know when to step back and give children time to think and work things out without adult intervention. The experienced staff successfully combine the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage with Montessori principles and practice. Very regular observations are recorded in each child's 'Learning Journal' to monitor their progress and to identify individual future learning goals, which are incorporated into the planning. The 'Learning Journals' are supported by photo scrapbooks which offer a delightful record of the extensive range of activities each child has experienced at the setting.

Staff have very good understanding of the importance of children learning through play and first hand experiences. They plan a weekly focus with an engaging range of activities to broaden children's learning and experiences. However, staff are flexible to follow and support children's own ideas, imaginations and interests,

which may lead to other spontaneous activities. During a focus on science, activities included exploration with magnets, doing volcano experiments and exploring water pressure and flow and gravity. Children flourish as they play in the natural outdoor area. Here they plant and care for flowers and vegetables and hunt for sticks in the garden. Outdoor experiences are extended by outings to nearby parks, fields and woods. Children concentrate and persevere as they engage with activities promoted by Forest Schools, such as, making beads and mini-beast creatures out of natural materials. The activities promote development across all areas of learning and the setting is planning to incorporate more Forest Schools activities and principles, to further enhance children's learning and build upon their natural curiosity.

Children have daily opportunities for fresh air and exercise, promoting a healthy lifestyle. They go on regular outings and enjoy the inviting garden area. They delight playing on the custom-built playhouse and develop confidence, competence and coordination with climbing and balancing and riding the bikes. Children learn good hygiene practice through regular routines and explanations, such as, hand washing after using the toilet and prior to eating, supported by photos of the hand washing routine. The setting provides a good variety of healthy and nutritious snacks, promoting children's understanding of healthy eating and is vigilant regarding any allergies or intolerances. Children's independence is well promoted as they pour their own drinks and help themselves to the rolling snack and wash up their own cup after their snack. Water is readily available, ensuring the children are well hydrated. Staff encourage parents to provide healthy options and the use of cool packs in the children's packed lunches.

## 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	1
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>	1
The extent to which children achieve and enjoy their learning	1
The extent to which children feel safe	2
The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which children make a positive contribution	1
The extent to which children develop skills for the future	1

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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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