

Lymington Montessori School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique reference number EY350662
Inspection date 24/02/2011
Inspector Jacqueline Munden

Setting address South Baddesley Village Hall, South Baddesley, Lymington,
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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

Lymington Montessori School has been registered since 2007. It is a privately owned school that serves the local community and the surrounding areas. It operates from two open plan rooms, on two floors in a converted building in South Baddesley, near Lymington in Hampshire. There is a fully enclosed garden to the side of the building outdoor play. A smallholding to the rear of the premises is used for growing produce and caring for animals that include a dog, guinea pigs and chickens. Between the months of April to July the school also cares for orphaned lambs and sometimes sheep. The school is open from 8.15am to 5pm Monday to Thursday, and from 8.15am to 1pm on Friday for 48 weeks of the year.

The school is registered on the Early Years Register and both the compulsory and voluntary parts of the Childcare Register. A maximum of 72 children aged from one year to under eight years may attend the school at any one time. There are currently 61 children on roll aged from one to five years, all of whom are in the early years age group. The school receives funding for the provision of free early education to children aged three and four years. It supports children with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and who speak English as an additional language. The school operates according to the Montessori philosophy.

There are nine members of staff who work with the children, one of whom is also employed as the cook. Of these, seven hold relevant childcare qualifications and one is currently training for an appropriate qualification. The school also employs administrative staff.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is outstanding.

The outstanding commitment of the leadership and management to continuously improve outcomes for children is significant in the great success of this setting. The well qualified and enthusiastic team of practitioners focus on promoting each child's wellbeing, learning and development at all times. Extremely effective partnerships with parents and others involved in children's care and learning are forged which ensures they are all fully included and their individual needs met exceptionally well. As a result, children are safe and secure and consistently make excellent progress. Overall, stringent systems are in place to ensure children's good health is secured.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

To further improve the high quality early years provision the registered person should consider:

- completing planned maintenance to the paintwork in the kitchen to fully promote children's good health.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

The school is exceptionally well managed and organised which results in all aspects of the setting operating efficiently which has a significant impact on children's care and development. All practitioners have an excellent understanding of their roles and responsibilities and take an active part in safeguarding children. Recruitment and vetting procedures are extremely thorough to ensure that all adults who work with children are suitable to do so. There are robust procedures for reporting on child protection concerns and all are confident about their responsibilities and what action to take should they have a concern. An extremely high focus is placed on ensuring children are kept healthy and safe as they prepare and cook foods and take an active role on the farm. Rigorous risk assessments are conducted with effective steps taken to reduce hazards where necessary, and children are helped in learning how to keep themselves safe. Robust procedures are followed regarding hand-washing as well as ensuring livestock are appropriately guarded against disease; although the planned maintenance to some paintwork in the kitchen is yet to be completed. Children benefit from home cooked meals made from organic produce, much of which is grown on the premises. Their medical needs are met effectively as practitioners are trained in the use of EpiPen and first aid. The comprehensive range of policies and procedures that underpin the setting's good practice, are regularly updated to ensure they always meet regulation and to protect children. Meticulous records are maintained to ensure each child's health and welfare are fully promoted, and to track and plan for their learning and development. The principle and manager have a clear vision for the setting. They are forward thinking and always put the needs and interests of children and their families at the heart of planned developments. Rigorous systems of self-evaluation bring about continuous improvements that greatly benefit children and provide a fully inclusive environment. This means the school sustains exemplary practice. For example, it continues with plans to further develop the farm and in helping children learn the cycle of 'seed to plate to compost to ground' that it promotes. Indoors, a kitchen area has now been provided in the younger children's area ensuring they all have opportunities to contribute to the group and learn skills as they prepare vegetables for lunch. The setting continuously reflects on its practice and welcomes feedback from parents and outside agencies.

Great value is placed on developing successful partnerships with parents and sharing information about the child's needs and preferences. This is a key strength in the setting as practitioners strive to develop this further. A dedicated parent's room has been provided to encourage and welcome them in to the school. Immense support is offered by the highly skilled practitioners to parents. For example, some parents attend evening and weekend workshops to learn more about the Montessori principles the school works to and the Early Years Foundation Stage. Parents speak glowingly and knowingly about the staff, the environment and their child's developmental progress. For example, children are extremely

confident and independent. Parents feel their children particularly benefit immensely from the sense of responsibility they learn in caring for the plants and animals on the farm. They feel totally included as their whole families become involved in caring for the chickens at weekends; they join planned events such as 'The big dig' when they work on the farm, and on projects such as constructing the log cabin in the play area. Parents have many opportunities to be involved in their children's learning including contributing to the very effective system used to record their development and help make plans for their next steps. There are excellent systems in place to liaise with other providers of the Early Years Foundation Stage so that children who attend more than one setting benefit from a collaborative approach to their care. The extremely high focus and commitment to promoting equality and diversity is significant in ensuring all children are valued and included. Those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and who speak English as an additional language are welcomed into the setting and supported very effectively. Children benefit greatly from the vibrant and easily accessible environment. All areas are superbly organised and well resourced providing stimulation and challenge to every child, both indoors and outside. Practitioners meet each week to review the environment and to plan how they will meet every child's specific development needs. Adaptations are made and additional resources provided such books with texture for those with visual impairment.

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

Children thrive and delight in their time in the safe, rich and enabling environment. They all develop excellent attitudes towards learning and make rapid progress in all aspects of their learning and achievement in relation to their starting points. This is because practitioners recognise them each as unique and place them at the centre of all they do. Children feel safe and secure as their individual learning and welfare needs are planned for and met exceptionally well. A combination of systems is used very effectively to monitor children's progress, and to plan for the next stage in all areas of their learning and development. This ensures the early Years Foundation Stage is fully implemented alongside the Montessori approach to education. The excellent planning of the entire learning environment provides a stimulating and challenging place for children to explore and learn. Children learn extremely good skills for the future as they are involved in purposeful activities; they are focused and highly motivated to play and learn. This is due to the extremely strong emphasis placed on children becoming confident and independent from a very young age. Each child participates in all the activities available and uses real equipment at a manageable size for them to aid this. For example, those aged from 16 months learn to pour water from a small jug into a small glass and plant potatoes on the farm. This results in children developing very high levels of enjoyment and achievement in all aspects of the areas of learning.

The vast amount of time children spend outdoors has a significant impact on their welfare and learning as it provides an abundance of opportunities for them to use their imagination, to be inventive and resourceful as well as learning about the

natural world. When going outdoors, children get into appropriate clothes, demonstrating great independence as they dress. They enjoy and learn through a wide and varied mix of experiences, some adult directed such as planting seeds as well as the naturally occurring cyclical opportunities linked to the seasons, weather and nature. For example, on walks in the local rural environment children excitedly explore the puddles that have increased in size since their last visit; they observe their reflection in the still water and note the change as the water is stirred. Some splash enthusiastically in the puddles while others explain that by walking through the water very slowly, we don't get wet. Children use their own ideas to extend a running game; using their knowledge of traffic lights to change the commands from stop and go to red and green. Children develop great determination to succeed and stamina. For example, they insist on carrying the backpack for the entire walk and the very young walk considerable distances. Children are greatly encouraged in learning about healthy lifestyles. On the farm, children collect eggs from the hens, counting them as they do so. They learn about caring for living things as they carry out regular tasks such as providing water for the animals and cleaning the hen house and guinea pig hutch. At certain times of the year, the school cares for orphaned lambs. Children are fully involved in the caring process. They measure the water and feed to make up the bottles and feed the lambs. Children learn about healthy eating and good lifestyle habits as they grow, harvest and eat their fresh produce. Most are eager to eat the vegetables they have participated in tending and preparing for lunch. Children are very aware of the need to wash their hands when returning the house to get rid of germs to prevent them from getting ill. Children develop large muscles and gross motor skills as they dig the soil and climb and balance on the equipment in the garden.

Indoors, children enjoy singing and moving to music. All children are fully involved in preparing their own foods for snack and the vegetables for lunch developing self-care skills and coordination. Children enjoy creative play and are equally happy when sitting alone using the ink markers and writing their names in cards as when working collaboratively with others using clay to make a cup. Children use a wide range of resources that develop their skills in information, communication and technology. For example, when making a book, children use the electric laminator and ring binder machines. They use computers for researching a topic they are interested in and follow life in the bird box on the farm through the web cam. Children play an extremely positive contribution to their school and personal development. Practitioners seek their opinions in ways children can easily respond to. For example, they reflect on photographs of previous activities and make suggestions of what they would like to do in the future. Children demonstrate a very caring and polite attitude such as when helping another child to put on their coat and saying please and thank you. Children learn to manage their own behaviour and to express their feelings well. For example, through planned sessions with adult support, children learn how to tell peers they don't want their work to be disturbed. They learn about the wider world and those living in it through charitable events. For example, the school raises money which is sent to help children in other countries. This is achieved through a vast effort made by volunteers, parents. For example, a monthly cake sale is held at which cakes made by the children are sold and by selling surplus produce from the farm is sold. Visitors from an African village have visited the school showing children the vessels in which they collect water. This provides children with vivid examples of how

others live. Children learn exceptionally well how to assess risks around them and how to keep safe such as using tools appropriately on the farm. They learn to follow safe procedures when crossing the road on outings and discover how to evacuate the building when they press the fire alarm.

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?	1
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement	1

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
The effectiveness with which the setting deploys resources	1
The effectiveness with which the setting promotes equality and diversity	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding	1
The effectiveness of the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement	1
The effectiveness of partnerships	1
The effectiveness of the setting's engagement with parents and carers	1

The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage

The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
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Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
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	1
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

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