

# Little Elms Montessori Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

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**Unique reference number** EY270613  
**Inspection date** 31/10/2011  
**Inspector** Anne Sheldon

**Setting address** Elm Court Youth & Community Centre, 363 Mutton Lane,  
Potters Bar, Hertfordshire, EN6 3BP  
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**Type of setting** Childcare - Non-Domestic

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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*.

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## Description of the setting

Little Elms Montessori Nursery registered in 2004. It operates from Elm Court Youth and Community Centre, in Potters Bar, Hertfordshire. The nursery has sole use of four rooms, within this large building during opening hours. The nursery has access to a fully enclosed outside play area.

Little Elms is registered on the Early Years Register to care for a maximum of 40 children, aged two to five years, at any one time. There are currently 29 children on roll. The setting is in receipt of funding for early education. The nursery is open each weekday, term time only, from 9am until 3pm, five days a week. Children come from the local and surrounding areas. The nursery currently supports children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and also supports children who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery employs nine staff, including the manager and co-owner, the majority of whom are suitably qualified. A specialist teacher comes in once a week to teach French. The nursery receives support from a qualified teacher, the Pre-School Learning Alliance and the local authority.

## The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is satisfactory.

Children enjoy their time in this welcoming setting where they display good behaviour, building strong relationships. Children's welfare and safety is generally well promoted and they are making good progress from their starting points in all six areas of learning. Staff know the children well and use their knowledge effectively to meet individual needs. Strong partnerships with parents and carers help them to be involved in their children's care and education. However, arrangements to cover manager absence are not effective. Staff evaluate their practice to identify improvements for the provision.

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

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

- ensure that there is a named deputy who is able to take charge in the absence of the manager at all times 14/11/2011
- take reasonable steps to identify hazards to children and to ensure that these are kept to a minimum; with particular reference to the outdoor area. 14/11/2011

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

- update the safeguarding children policy in line with Local Safeguarding

- Children Board (LSCB) guidance and procedures
- improve the opportunities for fresh air and physical exercise for all children

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

The setting's safeguarding policy has not been reviewed recently and does not meet Local Safeguarding Board requirements. However, staff know how to recognise signs of abuse and are clear on how and where to report any safeguarding concerns in order to keep children safeguarded. As the building is shared with the community centre, staff take considerable precautions throughout the day to ensure children stay safe. Children are accompanied to the toilets and reasonable precautions are taken for allowing access to playrooms. Daily checks are carried out of the environment, however, potential risks, in the outdoor area, are not identified and the associated hazards are not reduced as a result.

The hard working staff team are passionate about improving outcomes for the children in their care. They have a deep knowledge and understanding of the Early Years Foundation Stage, which is used effectively to support progression and learning. In the absence of the manager, there are no clear arrangements for the management of the setting. The deputy is room-based and does not have oversight of the setting in the manager's absence. The staff team evaluate their room practice regularly and make effective improvements, such as, the addition of an auditory area.

Partnership with parents is effective and supports children's development and learning. Parents are involved in their children's learning and are kept fully informed of their progress. They provide useful information when children start which helps staff to get to know children well. These are used as starting points to assess children's progress. Noticeboards and newsletters inform parents of any forthcoming events. They are invited to open days twice a year so that they can take part in activities their children experience and review the comprehensive learning journals. Parents comment that 'their children are privileged to attend the setting.' The nursery has established effective partnerships with local schools which fully supports children's transitions. Good relationships with other agencies and professionals, which include inviting all professionals supporting children to the setting, mean that children receive the support they need to make progress. The nursery has recently completed their Hertfordshire Quality Awards.

A varied range of resources are well laid out so that children can make informed independent choices. Resources are well maintained and support all six learning areas. There are times during outdoor play for example, when staff deployment does not fully support children because of the vast space. Older children do not always have access to outdoor play. The individual needs of children are supported effectively by staff who know children well and plan thoughtfully for each child.

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

Children are inquisitive, engaged and excited by learning. They are happy and well settled in this caring environment. Good behaviour is given a high priority and staff have high expectations of children and because they know exactly what is expected of them, children respond positively to this expectation. Children are encouraged to respect one another, to share and play co-operatively and to adopt good manners. Children's self-esteem is promoted as they are offered opportunities to talk about themselves, their families and recent experiences. Staff actively promote equality and diversity and draw on the expertise of parents who visit the setting to share their own cultures with the children.

An effective key-person system supports the forming of close relationships between staff and children. This supports the development of self-confidence and self-esteem well. Staff know their key children very well and support their development and learning effectively. A comprehensive system of observation, assessment and planning is used well to foster effective planning for children's next stages of development across all six learning areas. This ensures progression for children from their starting points. There is a good balance between adult-led and child-initiated play. Adults are sensitive and thoughtful and know when to lead and support children and when to observe and foster independent learning. For example, when children are building a block tower, a member of staff allows them to recall and place the appropriate size bricks in order, fostering the development of self-esteem.

Children are articulate communicators. Care is taken by staff to use correct terminology and children have learnt the word 'prehistoric' for example, from a song they sing about dinosaurs. Story telling is exciting and children are developing a love of books as they listen, act out and predict what will happen next at story time. Good opportunities are planned for children to recognise their names and letters of the alphabet and as a result, children are making good progress in their development of communication, language and literacy skills. Mathematical understanding is fostered through activities, such as, counting songs, drawing numerals and shape recognition and matching. Children are learning about the world around them through real experiences. Outdoor play for younger children provides opportunities to actively explore real objects and to collect and compare pine cones for example.

Children make healthy choices at snack time and choose from crackers and a variety of fruits which are provided by parents. Staff discuss healthy food and ensure that any dietary requirements are met. Good use is made of snack time to encourage children to take responsibility for setting tables and giving out crockery. Hand washing routines are well established and staff take effective measures to minimise the risk of infection and the spread of disease. Younger children have exciting opportunities to play movement games with staff outdoors and to move freely. Older children do not always have the opportunity to experience fresh air or to exercise during their day, as they do not access the outdoor area daily. Children are learning to keep themselves safe as staff remind them to hold on to bannisters

when climbing stairs for example. Children learn about a wide range of festivals through story-telling, craft activities and cooking. There is a strong ethos of respect within the setting and children are learning to respect one another.

## 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>	3
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement	3

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

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
The effectiveness with which the setting deploys resources	3
The effectiveness with which the setting promotes equality and diversity	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding	3
The effectiveness of the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement	3
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

The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
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### Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

<b>Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	3
The extent to which children achieve and enjoy their learning	2
The extent to which children feel safe	3
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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