

# Sheriffhales Montessori Pre-school

Inspection report for early years provision

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**Unique reference number** EY429886  
**Inspection date** 24/02/2012  
**Inspector** Patricia Webb

**Setting address** Sheriffhales Village Hall, Sheriffhales, Nr Shifnal, TF11 8RA

**Telephone number** 07890206514  
**Email** sleepingbeauty12@btinternet.com  
**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**

Sheriffhales Montessori Pre-school has been registered since 2011 operating under private ownership. It is an established setting that re-registered due to a change of premises. It is sited in the village hall in Sheriffhales in Shropshire. The preschool serves the local area and follows the Montessori ethos. There is a fully enclosed area available for outdoor play with additional use of the adjacent school's playground facilities. The pre-school is open each weekday during term time only from 9am to 1pm. Children are able to attend for a variety of sessions.

The pre-school is registered by Ofsted on the Early Years Register. A maximum of 26 children in the early years age range may attend at any one time. There are currently 18 children on roll. The pre-school supports children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and has systems in place to support children from families where English may be an additional language.

There are four members of staff employed to work directly with the children, all of whom hold appropriate early years qualifications. The owner/manager holds a foundation degree in Early Years. Most staff have received specific training in delivering Montessori practice. The pre-school receives support from the local authority and is a member of the Pre-school Learning Alliance and the Montessori Schools Association.

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

Overall the quality of the provision is outstanding.

Every child is supported in making exceptional progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The pre-school offers a vibrant and highly stimulating environment where children excel as they gain confidence, knowledge and develop skills for the future. The owner and her staff team work extremely well to ensure that children have wonderful experiences in their early development and learning that they will remember for many years. There is a very strong commitment to ongoing improvement through rigorous and analytical self-evaluation and reflective practice.

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

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

- extending inclusive practice further by implementing non-verbal communication strategies, such as sign language as part of regular routines.

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

The owner and staff of the setting are extremely committed and enthusiastic practitioners who place the child's engagement and connection with their world at the heart of everything they do. Children's safety and well-being are key elements to the provisions as staff have a thorough knowledge and understanding of safeguarding procedures. Parents are made fully aware of the setting's duty of care to act in a child's best interests with regard to any child protection concerns. Staff recruitment procedures are followed stringently and regular appraisals ensure that staff's ongoing suitability is assured. Staff plan for children to engage in a vast range of activities, some of which involve the use of tools and equipment. Consequently, the risk assessments carried out are rigorous and robust, thereby assuring children's safety without thwarting their innate exploratory impulses.

The vibrant environment evolves as result of the practitioners' very clear drive to continually question and evaluate everything they do. This leads to informed priorities for further improvement in order to further enhance the experiences for children. For example, having moved to the new premises, the practitioners are eager to exploit and capitalise on the beautiful and exciting outdoor surroundings to promote children's awe and wonderment of their world. The views and opinions of all involved are sought and contribute to the identification of aspects for future development. Every child is highly valued and respected as practitioners encourage them to develop a very strong sense of who they are and their place in their world. Children who may require additional support benefit from individualised interaction from the adults and the setting is wholly inclusive to all. The setting has strategies in place for developing non-verbal communication, such as posters and pictorial prompts. Staff have not as yet extended this to introduce other strategies, such as, simple sign language that enable children to gain skills for the future whilst supporting children with developing language skills.

Partnerships with parents are excellent. Parents express deep satisfaction with the way in which their children are making progress. They share their children's achievements at home with the setting, displaying some comments on the 'star board'. 'Fluffy Bear' also visits each child's home regularly and the family adds to the record of activities the toy participates in. Parents can also add comments to children's developmental records. Practitioners discuss children's needs to assess exactly what expectations and development each parent is seeking for their child. The transition process is of particular interest to the owner as children grow and move through their various developmental stages. There are excellent relationships in place with the adjacent school and with other professionals who may be involved in individual children's support. Such considerations contribute to each child being supported and enabled to cope with changes and variation in their needs.

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

Each morning, the blank canvas of the bright and airy hall is transformed into a rich and inviting learning environment. Children take a key role in this process as some set about getting tables and chairs ready, knowing that the work they are doing helps to prepare the setting for active play and the adult delivery of experiential learning. Extremely skilled staff undertake very thorough and pertinent observations and assessments of children's progress, using the information to frame the next steps for each child.

Budding 'Woodland Trust Nature Detectives' explore their environment, drawing staff's attention to the ladybirds home found in the chestnut fencing and discover the beauty to be seen in a spider's web on a frosty morning. A discussion about how food could be cooked if there was no kitchen resulted in children participating in a 'forest school' style activity, using, under supervision from the staff, a small camping stove to cook some noodles outside. Activities such as this are extremely well-planned to ensure children's safety but to also allow them an element of risk so that they can gain skills in assessing hazards for themselves. They hone their climbing skills and confidence as they explore the school play facilities, use their rural surroundings on walks and use wheeled toys and obstacles to develop steering and manoeuvring skills. Their innate creativity is fostered as they form ice sculptures, manipulate dough and mud and become absorbed in their construction and design activities. They develop their imagination through role play and dressing up and this is reciprocated in the home for some children. For example, a child attends the session dressed as a favourite animated cowboy figure and participates in all activities whilst still 'in character'. They celebrate birthdays in line with Montessori principles. As a group they all participate, using the birthday globe and the candle to signify the child's time on earth and the passage of the earth around the sun.

Children gain a full awareness of maintaining their health and well-being. They understand about personal hygiene following well-practised routines. Minor accidents are few and are managed effectively and with care by staff who hold valid first aid qualifications. Parents are kept fully informed of any changes to their child's health. Children become acutely aware of their own safety. They use proper crockery for snack and drinks, pouring from the china jug into platter cups with care. They use tools and utensils properly as the practitioners have the utmost confidence in children's abilities and competencies. Under sensitive supervision by the adults children operate the microwave oven to melt the fat for the bird feeders they are making. Staff use such activities as learning opportunities, for example, they consider the number of minutes the fat must melt for, take care opening the microwave door and consider the temperature of the fat during the melting process. Children attending this inspiring setting benefit from the adults belief in the children's skills, abilities and innate eagerness to learn about their world.

## 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>	1
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement	1

### 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>	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

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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	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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