

Smiths Children Montessori St Luke's Church

Inspection report for early years provision

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Setting address	St Luke's Church (United Reformed with Church of England), Victoria Road, Cambridge, Cambridgeshire, CB4 3DZ
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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

Smith's Children's Montessori Nursery was registered in 2011 and is privately owned. It is located in the St Luke's Community Church close to Cambridge city centre. Children have use of a large first floor group room, with adjacent toilets and kitchen. There are enclosed areas for outdoor play. The nursery is registered on the Early Years Register to accept up to 45 children in the early years age group, of these, six may be under one-year-old. There are currently 27 children on roll within the early years age range. The nursery accepts children eligible for early years funding. There are a small number of children on roll with English as an additional language.

Opening times are 8am until 6pm each weekday. The nursery is open all year round with the exception of one week at Christmas and all bank holidays. Including the manager, there are six staff working directly with the children. The manager holds a Foundation Degree in Early Years and has a Montessori teaching qualification. Four other members of staff hold appropriate early years or teaching qualifications.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is satisfactory.

Good partnerships with parents mean children feel secure in the setting and have their individual welfare needs met. Children eat healthy and nutritious meals and enjoy active exercise in the fresh air. Staff supervise children effectively, which enables children to play safely. Children make satisfactory progress towards the early learning goals, but systems to identify children's individual learning needs are not fully effective. Evaluation of the quality of the provision is evolving and shows the setting has the capacity to make further progress.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

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

- ensure the observations of children's achievements, interests and learning styles are used effectively to develop unique learning plans for each child
- review the environment to ensure resources and activities are accessible, interesting and attractive, enabling children to be independent and extend their own learning; this is with particular reference to younger children
- develop partnerships with others who care for the children to ensure there is continuity of care and learning.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

Staff know what action to take in the event of allegations of child abuse. Safeguarding policies and procedures are part of the induction process so staff understand their roles and responsibilities. Robust recruitment procedures ensure adults are safe and suitable to work with the children. Written risk assessments and daily checks of the premises help keep children safe. Staff are conscientious about supervising the children as they play, both indoors and out. They are particularly vigilant in the outdoor areas and on outings, for example, ensuring children are properly supervised as they clamber on large equipment. All essential documentation is in place, including appropriate parental permissions. This supports the safe management of the nursery.

The rooms used by the children are clean and well maintained. High quality furniture and room dividers provide children with an attractive and flexible environment. Staff deploy themselves adequately to provide children with appropriate support through the day. Routines for babies are fluid, with staff enabling children to eat and sleep according to their individual needs. Adults working with older children are responsive to requests for further resources, for example, children are provided with play animals to go with a farm building. For younger children and babies accessible resources are more limited. This hinders their ability to develop independence and consolidate their learning.

The setting works well with parents, who indicate they are pleased with the quality of the care given to their children. Parents say they are made welcome and enjoy the daily verbal communication with staff. They say their children enjoy coming to the nursery and that they settled in well. Parents are well informed about the provision through comprehensive policies and procedures. A developing website keeps them up-to-date with events and changes. The nursery has tentative links with some local providers such as a nearby independent school, but has not fully developed effective ways to share information with others who care for the children. Although there are no children currently on roll with special educational needs and/or disabilities there are appropriate systems in place to support them, such as a recently trained special educational needs coordinator. Children who speak English are supported well by multi-lingual staff who know about children's backgrounds and languages. Staff collect key words and phrases and make up visual cards that help children communicate effectively. Displays of art work and the children's photographs give them a sense of belonging.

Most staff are new to the setting and are still settling into their roles. The owners have ensured mandatory training has been prioritised, such as first aid and child protection, which helps to ensure children's health, welfare and safety. Regular meetings and social gatherings are planned to help develop teamwork. Systems for self-evaluation are sufficient to show the setting has a satisfactory capacity for further improvement. Staff are involved in the process, for example, they note ideas for good and developing practice so they can review the action plans at team meetings.

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

Children enjoy their time in the nursery and show good relationships with staff and each other. They behave appropriately and understand the rules for sharing, for example, as three-year-olds take turns bouncing on a small trampet, those waiting count the bounces loudly so they know when it is their turn. Older children are beginning to understand how to use the Montessori equipment, for example, they know they should place resources on the mats, and replace them when they have finished. Staff regularly praise the children, which promotes their self-esteem.

Staff have a developing understanding of the Early Years Foundation Stage and are beginning to use their knowledge to observe what children do. Whilst the observations are plentiful and identify children's aptitudes and interests they are not used effectively enough to plan for the next steps in children's learning. Lack of planning overall means it is difficult to track each children's progress and therefore ensure they each reach their full learning potential. However, staff know the children well and there is good liaison with parents. This means activities and resources mainly meet children's developmental needs, enabling them to make satisfactory progress towards the early learning goals.

Children enjoy mark-making with pencils, crayons and paints. There is a reasonable selection of books, and older children access these readily. Children are beginning to recognise numbers, and some can assign numbers to objects, such as two blue crayons, or one giraffe. Older children use their imaginations as they pretend to be dogs and bark to be fed. Babies have their own quiet sleep room where they snuggle up to an adult and cuddle soft toys.

Children have daily opportunities to play outside and be active. They benefit from a good sized garden where they play games and use equipment, such as, hoops and balls. At times the garden is used by others in the church community, so children regularly go for walks to other local play areas. Staff talk to children as they walk, pointing out things of interest, such as dogs or unusual trees and plants. Staff provide simple foods and drinks so children enjoy a relaxed picnic under the trees before they play. Children show their delight as they shriek with pleasure when an adult pushes them on the swings. Children have some opportunities to learn about growth and change as they plant courgettes and carrots.

Children enjoy a good range of healthy meals and snacks. Menus are varied and take into account children's dietary needs. Food is organic and locally sourced where possible and therefore of good quality. It is freshly prepared each day on the premises and is well presented so it looks and smells appetising. As a result, children enjoy their meals and most eat with relish. Hygiene in the setting is promoted well; children show they understand the importance of washing their hands prior to eating or after using the toilet because staff provide good role models. Staff help children learn to keep themselves safe, for example, they teach children to cross roads safely and they all practise the fire drill at regular intervals.

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?	3
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement	3

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	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	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding	2
The effectiveness of the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement	3
The effectiveness of partnerships	3
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

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The extent to which children achieve and enjoy their learning	3
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	3
The extent to which children develop skills for the future	3

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