

Chalfont St Peter Montessori School

Tithe Barn Youth Centre, Sandy Rise, Chalfont St. Peter, GERRARDS CROSS, Buckinghamshire, SL9 9TR

Inspection date

09/01/2013

Previous inspection date

Not Applicable

The quality and standards of the early years provision

This inspection:

1

Previous inspection:

Not Applicable

How well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend

1

The contribution of the early years provision to the well-being of children

1

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

1

The quality and standards of the early years provision

This provision is outstanding

- The setting successfully offers a mixture of Montessori and mainstream early years educational approaches to provide children with a high quality curriculum covering all areas of learning. First class record keeping shows children are making huge strides in their learning while having fun and gaining skills to prepare them for the transfer to school or the next step in their learning.
- Parents are overwhelmingly positive in their praise for the setting. They say their children are extremely happy and make excellent progress. The setting fully engages parents and carers by holding a weekly toddler group 'called Mum's and Mini's, hosting regular parents meetings and has a thriving Parent Teacher Association. Communication with parents is exceptional.
- Children have outstanding opportunities to develop their physical skills during a variety of outdoor plays sessions. Here they socialise with one another as they play team games, learn new skills, such as pedalling a tricycle or sweep the terrace using child-sized brooms.
- The inspirational leadership and management of the Principal means all aspects of the setting are outstanding. She has a clear vision of how she intends to continue making improvements and is fully supported by the strong professional hard working staff team.

Information about this inspection

Inspections of registered early years provision are scheduled:

- at least once in every inspection cycle. The current cycle ends on 31 July 2016
- more frequently where Ofsted identifies a need to do so, for example where provision was previously judged as inadequate
- brought forward in the inspection cycle where Ofsted has received information that suggests the provision may not be meeting the legal requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage; or where assessment of the provision identifies a need for early inspection
- prioritised for inspection where we have received information that the provision is not meeting the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage and which suggests children may not be safe
- at the completion of an investigation into failure to comply with the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Inspection activities

- The inspector completed a joint observation with the principal of the Montessori School during outdoor play.
- The inspector took into account the views of parents spoken to throughout the inspection.
- The inspector observed activities both inside and outside.
- The inspector held a meeting with the principal.
- The inspector reviewed children's records in order to establish whether progress is being made.

Inspector

Sonjia Nicholson

Full Report

Information about the setting

Chalfont St Peter Montessori School registered in 2004 under private ownership, but re-registered in 2012 as a limited company. It operates from the Tithe Barn Youth Centre in

the village of Chalfont St Peter in Buckinghamshire. Children attend from the village and surrounding areas. The setting is registered on the Early Years Register and children attend from the age of two years until they transfer to school.

The setting is open each weekday, with sessions from 9.00am until 12.00pm and 12.30pm until 3.30pm. Children can also attend the breakfast club which runs from 8.00am until 9.00am or the out of school club from 3.30pm until 4.00pm. There is also the facility for children to stay for a packed lunch. On Fridays from 9.30am until 11.30am the setting operates a Montessori playgroup 'Mum's and Minis', where parents can stay with their child under two years to play and gain an introduction to the Montessori principles of education. The setting follows these principles but supplements children's learning with mainstream approaches. There are systems in place to support children with special educational needs/or disabilities, or those who speak English as an additional language. The setting is in receipt of funding for the provision of free early education for three year olds and some two year olds.

Access to the premises is via a ramp from the car park which leads to the building used solely by the setting. Children have use of the main classroom, a smaller playroom, toilets and a foyer. There is a separate office, toilet and kitchen for staff use only. The outdoor area consists of an enclosed paved terrace with raised beds for planting flowers and vegetables, an exploratory area and a lawn for the hutch containing the setting's two guinea pigs. Children also have access to the large enclosed basketball court which is accessed via the car park. The Youth Club building is used for extra curricular activities, such as the playgroup and a children's fitness group.

Nine staff work with the children; seven of whom hold appropriate childcare qualifications. One has Qualified Teacher Status, one holds level 6, three hold level 4, one hold level 3 and one holds level 2. Two members of staff are currently undertaking training to gain their level 3 qualification. There are currently 56 children on roll. The setting receives support from the Buckinghamshire Early Years and Childcare team and have links with Chalfont St Peter Children's Centre which operates from the Youth Centre. It has its own active Parent Teacher Association.

What the setting needs to do to improve further

To further improve the quality of the early years provision the provider should:

- consider reviewing the way staff communicate with children at the end of outdoor play sessions to ensure all children are fully aware of what is going on.

Inspection judgements

How well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend

Children are extremely motivated to learn and relish the rich varied learning opportunities available to them. Staff have a first rate knowledge of both the Early Years Foundation Stage framework and Montessori teaching methods and are very confident in their delivery of the high quality curriculum. They are knowledgeable about the aims and objectives of planned activities and as a result children gain confidence and skills that prepare them extremely well for transfer to school. Staff know the children extremely well and identify their individual needs by making systematic observations which they use to plan children's next steps in learning and specific activities. For example, helping them recognise and count numbers up to 10.

Record keeping is thorough, accurate and shows children reach the expected levels of development for their age and in many cases exceed them. Staff have made a considerable effort to update their development records in light of the revised Early Years Foundation Stage framework and link the seven areas of learning to the Montessori programme of learning. They have also given great thought as to how they gather evidence to contribute to the written progress check for two year olds. Several of these assessments have been completed and parents have been fully involved in the process. Highly successful strategies engage all parents in their child's learning. Through weekly newsletters staff keep them informed about the wide range of forthcoming planned themes and activities. They provide an information sheet with ideas to share at home and details about various pieces of Montessori equipment so they understand how it works and what children learn from it. Where children attend another setting there are highly effective partnerships in place to share relevant information so they receive a consistent learning experience. For example, staff arrange visits or telephone calls to discuss areas of interest or to catch up with any changes. Carers including grandparents, nannies and au pairs are encouraged to share what they know about children in the daily record book.

Children have extensive opportunities to develop their physical skills both inside and outside. They enjoy running freely on the basketball court which provides plenty of space for them throw and catch bean bags and balls, jump in and out of hoops, balance on stepping stones and use a selection of wheeled toys, from push-a-long scooters to tricycles with pedals. At the end of this session staff call out directions to the children so they know it is time to stop playing. However, this is not entirely successful as not all children respond which means staff then have to then speak to them individually. There are innovative ways of helping children communicate. For example, staff create books using photographs and speech bubbles containing children's comments about visits from parents to celebrate festivals, such as, Eid el Fitr and American Thanksgiving. Regular French lessons take place to help children learn and use new vocabulary. Staff offer a weekly language group for those children who have a speech and language delay, where English is an additional language or if they are shy and would benefit from time in a smaller group. These short sessions concentrate on both speech and listening skills using a variety of fun exercises, games, stories and activities. Children initiate conversations with adults and use language imaginatively to extend role play situations. For example, they pretend bean bags are cards and 'deliver' them to staff and children, saying 'This is a

Happy New Year card from Father Christmas'.

The contribution of the early years provision to the well-being of children

Children are very happy and settled in this dynamic setting. They develop secure attachments to their key person who provides a strong base for them to increase their independence and explore their surroundings. Children clearly enjoy the company of the staff with one child exclaiming 'I like hanging out with you'. Staff are highly skilled at helping children settle and offer plenty of cuddles and verbal reassurance which means children feel comfortable and gain confidence to join in at their own pace. They encourage parents to make a 'Comfort Card' for their child with photographs of family members, friends and pets which children can access if they need some reassurance or want to talk about their home life. This is a great link between the setting and home and helps boost children's confidence. Many parents attend the 'Mum's and Minis' toddler group as an introduction to the setting. Here they gain details about the Montessori approach and information about how to support their child's transition from home to the setting. Parents feel the settling-in process is handled well with an informal new parents evening held during the first few weeks of term, followed by more formal parents meetings which are held throughout the year. Other initiatives to involve families include separate termly breakfasts for both mums and dads and a teddy bears picnic which siblings can attend.

Children's behaviour is exemplary with any minor incidents, such as children having difficulty learning how to share toys, managed effectively by staff. Staff promote positive behaviour and help children learn to respect one another and the environment. For example, they encourage children to tidy toys and equipment away after use. Through Montessori practical life activities, children develop independence and learn to manage their personal needs extremely well. For example, they attempt to put their coat and boots or shoes on with adult encouragement and use the toilet and wash their hands unaided. There is a well-established nappy changing routine in place that means germs do not spread and staff fully support parents who wish to toilet train their child. During each session, staff are aware of which children may need extra help with their toileting needs. High priority is given to children's safety and ensuring they feel safe. In the event of a fire there is appropriate equipment in place and an evacuation drill has been devised which children practise regularly so they know how to leave the building quickly and safely.

Children's understanding about the importance of a healthy diet and need for exercise is fully promoted through the nutritious snacks they are offered and daily opportunities to participate in outdoor play. All staff complete food hygiene training so they are competent to prepare snacks. Children enjoy a variety of tastes and textures. These include bread and butter, cucumber, Satsumas, oatcakes, pepper or apple, with water or milk to drink. Staff display photographs of snack items to help the children who have difficulty with verbal communication make their needs known by pointing at the pictures, which reinforces their learning. As part of the settings drive to promote good oral hygiene and healthy eating they have completed the 'Smile Plus Award' training. This has hugely influenced their practice. Staff have amended their 'Healthy Eating' policy and reviewed the way children's birthdays are celebrated by encouraging those parents who wish to

send in a treat for everyone to consider items, such as stickers, instead of sweets. A member of staff takes responsibility for healthy eating and is available to share information about nutritious options with parents who provide a packed lunch for their child. Cooking takes place each week and children learn many skills, including how to handle utensils safely. They incorporate fruit and vegetables children have grown into their recipes, which are all nut free and adapted to ensure dietary needs are met.

Children play in a very safe environment where staff undertake regular risk assessments which are maintained in writing. In the case of a serious incident, a 'lock down' procedure has been devised but this has never been used. Staff are vigilant in their supervision of the children and follow established routines to keep them safe, such as accompanying children across the car park to the basketball court. The stimulating and welcoming environment supports children's all round development. Through a mixture of high quality Montessori and mainstream early years equipment and resources, children are encouraged to make independent choices and gain new skills. This is fully achieved as everything is stored with children's access in mind. Great emphasis is placed on children playing outdoors. They have use of various areas, including the terrace where gardening activities take place and children enjoy sweeping using child sized brooms. To the rear there is an investigation area where children can dig and explore natural materials, such as stones and bamboo guttering to enhance their understanding of the world. Staff capture children's enjoyment and value their efforts by taking photographs which are displayed in the classroom and foyer, along with examples of their work.

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

The leadership and management provided by the settings' principal are outstanding. She is passionate about her role and is an inspirational role model for the staff team. Parents value her 'genuine love of the children' and appreciate the support she offers to them and their children. The principal highly values the strong effective staff team. She recognises their individual skills and delegates roles accordingly. For example, one member of staff is the setting's Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator while another acts as Health and Safety Officer. There is a robust system in place for monitoring and evaluating the educational provision to ensure all children make progress and their individual needs are met. The principal successfully manages staff performance by undertaking frequent peer observations and hosting regular staff meetings and individual supervision meetings. This is in addition to a comprehensive training programme, which ensures staff systematically update their knowledge and gain new skills to enhance their practice.

The setting continually strives to achieve excellence. The principal has a clear vision of how to move the setting forward. She sets achievable goals and through rigorous and effective on-going self-evaluation ensures they are met. For example, the setting has gained the Buckinghamshire Quality Assurance Award and is currently working towards accreditation to the Montessori Schools Association. Since re-registration, they have developed exceptionally well by continuing to build links within the local community, particularly the Children's Centre on-site, and focussed on improving the provision for two

year olds. Staff have also worked hard to develop and enhance the outdoor area. For example, they have created a space for children to explore which has been left as natural as possible to allow them to decide how they want it to work. Raised beds that allow children to plant and nurture fruit, vegetables and flowers at their level and a play house have been purchased. Additionally, the approach to the building now has a sensory planting area, greenhouse and grassed area for the setting's two guinea pigs.

Quite uniquely the setting has its own Parent Teacher Association (PTA) which organises events, such as the Christmas Fayre, to raise funds for projects to benefit the setting, for example, a canopy to provide shade during the summer months. The PTA also holds regular coffee mornings so parents can socialise and form new friendships. Children are also involved in supporting local community projects like the volunteer-run village library. They make regular visits to the church including performing a Nativity play to family and friends. The principal is keen to follow the Montessori belief that children should view themselves as "citizens of the world" and involves them in raising funds for an overseas charity. For example, they have shared recipes and photographs from home to include in a cookbook recently published and sold to enable the purchase of books for a school and foster home in Africa.

The setting establishes firm partnerships with external agencies to secure appropriate interventions for children to ensure their diverse needs are met. For example, they work closely with the Specialist Teaching Service, physiotherapists, occupational therapists and an Educational Psychologist. Staff are keen to disseminate good practice and regularly welcome other staff from different settings, such as members of a local nursery who visited to see the Montessori approach in practice.

Parents are overwhelmingly positive in their praise of the setting and staff team. A selection of parents and carers spoken to during the inspection were all extremely happy with the care and education provided. They particularly commented on the 'fantastic' 'welcoming' staff who are 'very caring and nurturing', 'very supportive and reassuring' and 'know the children very well'. They also feel the staff are 'so approachable', 'take the time and effort to think about things' and provide good support for them as parents. Many parents like the structure of this 'child-friendly' setting and feel the Montessori approach encourages children's independence and confidence, with one parent commenting her child 'is learning new things every day'. One parent says their child has made 'brilliant progress' while another says they have 'seen a big difference' in their child's development. Feedback in the form of the daily communication book is 'very useful' and staff give parents 'lots of updates and information about children's development'. There are ample opportunities for parents to communicate with staff and many comment on the use of electronic mail which is highly effective. All parents said they would recommend the setting to others.

All aspects of the setting are highly organised. There is an abundance of meaningful documentation covering all areas that exceeds requirements. It is professionally presented, accurately completed and stored confidentially to protect children's identity. There are a number of wide-ranging policies and procedures in place to further safeguard children, such as ensuring mobile telephones and cameras are not used within the setting. All staff undergo child protection training and consequently have a clear understand their

role and responsibility.

What inspection judgements mean

Registered early years provision

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	Outstanding provision is highly effective in meeting the needs of all children exceptionally well. This ensures that children are very well prepared for the next stage of their learning.
Grade 2	Good	Good provision is effective in delivering provision that meets the needs of all children well. This ensures children are ready for the next stage of their learning.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	Satisfactory provision is performing less well than expectations in one or more of the key areas. It requires improvement in order to be good.
Grade 4	Inadequate	Provision that is inadequate requires significant improvement and/or enforcement. The provision is failing to give children an acceptable standard of early years education and/or is not meeting the safeguarding and welfare requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. It will be inspected again within 12 months of the date of this inspection.
Met		The provision has no children on roll. The inspection judgement is that the provider continues to meet the requirements for registration.
Not Met		The provision has no children on roll. The inspection judgement is that the provider does not meet the requirements for registration.

Inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Sections 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006 on the quality and standards of provision that is registered on the Early Years Register. The registered person must ensure that this provision complies with the statutory framework for children's learning, development and care, known as the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Setting details

Unique reference number

EY451075

Local authority

Buckinghamshire

Inspection number	806940
Type of provision	Sessional provision
Registration category	Childcare - Non-Domestic
Age range of children	2 - 5
Total number of places	25
Number of children on roll	56
Name of provider	Chalfont St Peter Montessori Limited
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
Telephone number	07973 165 821

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Type of provision

For the purposes of this inspection the following definitions apply:

Full-time provision is that which operates for more than three hours. These are usually known as nurseries, nursery schools and pre-schools and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage. They are registered on the Early Years Register and pay the higher fee for registration.

Sessional provision operates for more than two hours but does not exceed three hours in any one day. These are usually known as pre-schools, kindergartens or nursery schools and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage. They are registered on the Early Years Register and pay the lower fee for registration.

Childminders care for one or more children where individual children attend for a period of more than two hours in any one day. They operate from domestic premises that are usually their own home. They are registered on the Early Years Register and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Out of school provision may be sessional or full-time provision and is delivered before or after school and/or in the summer holidays. They are registered on the Early Years Register and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage. Where children receive their Early Years Foundation Stage in school these providers do not have to deliver the learning and development requirements in full but should complement the experiences children receive in school.

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