

Little Acorns Montessorri School



The Bob Williams Building, Lincoln Field, Bushey, Hertfordshire, WD23 2ES

Inspection date	14 May 2015
Previous inspection date	18 January 2010

The quality and standards of the early years provision	This inspection:	Good	2
	Previous inspection:	Good	2
How well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend		Good	2
The contribution of the early years provision to the well-being of children		Outstanding	1
The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the early years provision		Good	2
The setting meets legal requirements for early years settings			

Summary of key findings for parents

This provision is good

- The staff team demonstrate a good knowledge of how children learn. They have worked hard to link the Montessori method with the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. They seamlessly blend the two approaches and, as a result, all children make good, and often excellent, progress in their learning and development.
- Children form very secure attachments with staff. They have high levels of confidence and self-esteem, because they are truly valued by all staff and supported to reach their potential. Children are respectful to adults and other children alike. They have a strong sense of belonging and self-worth due to the individual, focused attention they receive.
- Children are safeguarded well. Staff supervise them closely at all times and have a good understanding of safeguarding procedures. They manage risk effectively to provide a safe and secure environment. As a result, children are protected from harm.
- Staff are excellent role models for the children. Children are aware of the high expectations of the setting and respond positively by behaving very well.
- Staff provide accessible and extremely well-organised resources. This allows children to make their own choices in what they do and, therefore, direct their own learning.

It is not yet outstanding because:

- Staff do not always seek detailed information from parents about children's prior learning and development, when they start at the school.
- The manager does not monitor staff's written assessments of children's progress regularly enough to ensure that an accurate picture of what children can and cannot yet do is readily available for parents and other staff.

What the setting needs to do to improve further

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

- strengthen partnerships with parents further, in order to gain more information about children's prior achievements at home, so that staff can plan even more effectively from the very start
- build on the already established system for monitoring staff records of children's progress, for example, by introducing a regular check on all written assessment documentation to ensure that it is up to date.

Inspection activities

- The inspector toured the premises and observed the quality of teaching in the classrooms.
- The inspector met with the manager and spoke with staff and children at appropriate times during the inspection.
- The inspector looked at a selection of children's records, planning documents and policies.
- The inspector undertook a joint observation with the manager.
- The inspector checked evidence of the suitability and qualifications of staff working with children and discussed the school's self-evaluation and action plan.
- The inspector took account of the views of the parents spoken to on the day of inspection.

Inspector

Lucy Sumner

Inspection findings

How well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend. This is good

Children are curious and eager to take part in the wide range of explorative and investigative activities that staff provide for them. Activities have set objectives and children work hard to complete each task, skilfully supported by staff who either lead or facilitate the learning. Teaching is consistently good, as staff interact and intervene with purposeful conversation and pertinent questions. Older children are able to read and write simple words and talk about the properties of two-dimensional shapes. Babies delight in winding up a jack-in-the-box and making him pop up over and over again. Staff ensure parents are fully involved in their child's learning through the daily sharing of information, regular meetings and workshops. However, they are less thorough about gathering information about children's prior learning and development when they join the school. This does not help staff to have a secure basis upon which to plan activities most pertinent to each child, from the start. All children have a can-do approach to their learning and are extremely well prepared for school, due to the positive and challenging experiences they receive.

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

Children are clearly very happy and content at the school. Settling-in procedures and preparation for other points of transfer between the two rooms and on to school are robust. The environment is extremely welcoming and enticing. Children know exactly what is expected of them and they approach their play and learning with great self-control and maturity beyond their years. Staff have excellent strategies for managing behaviour and thank children who are being kind and well behaved. Children play happily on their own or harmoniously alongside or with their friends. They are very cooperative and know how to share and take turns. Children learn about keeping healthy and follow very good hygiene practices, such as washing their cups regularly. Independence is promoted at all times and children of all ages do as much for themselves as they can. They learn important life skills, such as, doing up zips, laces and buttons. Children can lay the table and prepare a snack.

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

Staff are well qualified. They undertake regular update training in the Montessori method. They are encouraged to seek other professional development that enhances their already good knowledge of how young children learn and develop. The manager effectively uses peer observation and supervision meetings to monitor staff performance. Staff feel well supported. The manager has a good overview of the quality of staff's written records of children's progress. However, checks on these are occasionally missed. As a result, although all staff know very well what children have achieved and in what areas they need to develop further, the written records do not always reflect this. There are effective systems in place for the ongoing evaluation of the service provided. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the care their children receive. They really appreciate the various events and updates that help them better understand Montessori methodology.

Setting details

Unique reference number	EY312157
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	856711
Type of provision	Sessional provision
Registration category	Childcare - Non-Domestic
Age range of children	1 - 5
Total number of places	51
Number of children on roll	58
Name of provider	Little Acorns Montessorri School Ltd
Date of previous inspection	18 January 2010
Telephone number	01923 230705

Little Acorns Montessori School was registered in 2005 and is privately owned. The school follows Montessori principles. The school employs eight members of childcare staff. Of these, four hold appropriate early years qualifications at level 3 and three hold Montessori qualifications at level 5. The school opens from Monday to Friday during term time. Sessions are from 9am until 4pm. A breakfast club operates from 8am until 9am and an after school session runs from 4pm until 6pm. The school provides funded early education for two-, three- and four-year-old children.

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