

Inspection of Holly Trees Montessori Nursery

Holly Trees Montessori Nursery, Newland Street, Witham, Essex CM8 2AS

Inspection date: 18 November 2021

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Inadequate

Behaviour and attitudes

Inadequate

Personal development

Inadequate

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Not applicable

What is it like to attend this early years setting?

The provision is inadequate

Children are not well cared for. At times, there are insufficient staff available to meet children's needs. Children are not provided with learning opportunities that capture or sustain their interest.

The nursery follows a specific approach to learning and children have free access to a range of good-quality Montessori resources. However, very few staff are trained and experienced in this method of teaching. In addition, toddler children are not provided with sufficient opportunities to use their physical skills or to fulfil their enquiring minds. Children are not appropriately supported or guided in their learning. As a result, they frequently become bored and disinterested. Many children wander aimlessly or cry. Some run around or climb on furniture.

Children's health is not protected as staff do not follow robust enough sickness policies to prevent the spread of infection. Children and staff's attendance is not accurately recorded. This means that there is no secure record of those on site should staff need to carry out an emergency evacuation with the children.

Despite these weaknesses, all children enjoy healthy meals and snacks. When the youngest babies are in their allocated baby room, they receive kind and caring interactions from staff. They are cared for in a calm environment, by a core staff team, who have experience of caring for babies.

What does the early years setting do well and what does it need to do better?

- The provider and leaders do not ensure that sufficient staff are on site for the number of children being dropped off in the mornings. This time is extremely busy and chaotic. Children are greeted at the main door and taken into one of three rooms being used to group the children. There is little handover to the staff in the rooms before staff return to the main door to collect the next child. Often during this period of the day, the minimum adult-to-child ratios are breached, which compromises children's safety. When staff call in sick, there is no effective contingency plan to ensure that additional staff are brought in to cover. Staff work very long days, often with little or no breaks.
- The provider and leaders do not ensure that new staff receive a thorough enough induction to prepare them for their roles and responsibilities, including safeguarding children. In addition, leaders rely too heavily on the use of very young staff. They give them responsibility for key children and count them in the overall ratio. The adult-to-child ratios for children aged under two and those aged two and under three years, are insufficient, meaning that their needs cannot be effectively met.
- Staff and leaders do not ensure that an accurate record is made of the children

attending and the names of their key persons. This compromises safety, especially with regards to evacuating the building in an emergency.

- When children are unwell, staff do not follow sufficient procedures to ensure that they are isolated from other children. As a consequence of these poor practices, the nursery experiences the spread of illnesses, such as sickness bugs.
- The nursery is equipped with predominantly Montessori resources. Children are able to freely access these resources and some do. However, as very few staff are trained in this method of teaching, they are not able to show the children how to use the equipment. Children are frequently seen wandering aimlessly, looking for something to do. They have limited access to creative and messy play materials. Staff do not demonstrate that they understand what children need to learn. They do not deliver the intended learning.
- Children do have access throughout the day to a well-planned garden, with a range of learning opportunities. However, the routines that staff follow to get the large groups of children ready to go outside, such as finding and putting on wellington boots, takes a considerable amount of time. Children can queue in the hallway for over 10 minutes, waiting for all of the children to be ready. The ineffective management of the daily routines mean that staff are constantly busy trying to fit everything in and have little time to form close and meaningful relationships with the children.
- The nursery closed during the COVID-19 pandemic. The manager kept in contact with the families through regular telephone calls. On return to opening, some procedures were reviewed and implemented, such as the drop off and collection arrangements. Parents now drop their children at the main door where they are greeted by staff who take them into their nursery rooms. At the end of the day, staff take the children back to their parents at the main door. New parents are usually shown around the nursery when there are no children present.
- Parents spoken to are generally happy with the nursery. They comment on how their children enjoy their experiences and most are satisfied with the communication between the nursery and home. Some comment that they are happy with the nursery, although their children have been constantly ill since attending. Other parents say that when they have raised issues with the manager, she has dealt with their concerns quickly and effectively.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

Some staff and managers demonstrate a secure understanding of safeguarding. They update their knowledge, for example, through online training. These staff show that they would know what action to take if they had concerns about the safety or welfare of children. However, some newer and less-experienced staff have not received sufficient training or induction to help them to understand how to safeguard children. Managers do not always follow safer recruitment procedures when appointing new staff. Proof of some of the checks undertaken are not available for inspection.

What does the setting need to do to improve?

The provision is inadequate and Ofsted intends to take enforcement action.

We will issue a Welfare Requirements Notice requiring the provider to:

	Due date
implement effective systems, which are consistently followed, to ensure that staff are suitable to fulfil the requirements of their role	07/12/2021
ensure that newly appointed staff are suitably inducted to understand their roles and responsibilities and make sure that all staff have the appropriate training, skills and knowledge so that they can offer quality learning and development experiences and safeguard children	07/12/2021
ensure that key persons tailor the children's care to meet their individual needs, building relationships with their parents, helping children to become familiar with the setting and offering a settled relationship	07/12/2021
ensure staffing arrangements meet the needs of all children and that staff are appropriately deployed, particularly when children are dropped off in the mornings, to ensure that children's needs are met	07/12/2021
ensure that staff, who are aged under 17 years of age, are not given responsibility for children or used to meet minimum adult-to-child ratio requirements	07/12/2021
ensure that minimum adult-to-child ratios are met when caring for children aged under two years and that there is at least one member of staff for every three children	07/12/2021

ensure that minimum adult-to-child ratios are met when caring for children aged two years and there is at least one member of staff for every four children	07/12/2021
ensure that there are appropriate procedures for responding to children who are ill or infectious and that these are adhered to if children become ill	07/12/2021
ensure that there is an accurate record of the names of children being cared for on the premises, which shows their hours of attendance and the names of each child's key person.	07/12/2021

To meet the requirements of the early years foundation stage, the provider must:

	Due date
ensure that staff consider the individual needs, interests and development of each child in their care, using this information to plan challenging and enjoyable experiences for each child in all areas of learning and development	21/12/2021
ensure that staff know and understand what they want children to learn and the most effective ways to teach it. Ensure staff stimulate children's interests, respond to children's emerging needs and guide their development through warm, positive interactions, along with secure routines for play and learning.	21/12/2021

Setting details

Unique reference number	2563245
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10214076
Type of provision	Childcare on non-domestic premises
Registers	Early Years Register, Compulsory Childcare Register, Voluntary Childcare Register
Day care type	Full day care
Age range of children at time of inspection	0 to 4
Total number of places	142
Number of children on roll	176
Name of registered person	Holly Trees Montessori Limited
Registered person unique reference number	2563244
Telephone number	01376 514333
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable

Information about this early years setting

Holly Trees Montessori Nursery registered in 2020. The nursery employs 29 members of childcare staff. Of these, 16 hold appropriate early years qualifications at level 2 and 3 or above. The nursery opens from Monday to Friday, all year round. Opening times are from 7am until 6.30pm. The nursery provides funded early education for two-, three- and four-year-old children.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors

Lynn Hughes
Dawn Pointer

Inspection activities

- We carried out this inspection as a result of a risk assessment, following information we received about the provider.
- This was the first routine inspection the provider received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the provider and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the provider.
- The inspectors viewed all areas of the provision and discussed the safety and suitability of the premises.
- The manager and inspectors completed a learning walk together and discussed the curriculum and what it is they want children to learn.
- Children spoke to the inspectors during the inspection.
- The inspectors observed the quality of education being provided, indoors and outdoors, and assessed the impact that this was having on children's learning.
- The manager and the inspector carried out a joint observation together.
- The inspector spoke to several parents during the inspection and took account of their views.
- The inspectors looked at relevant documentation and evidence of the suitability of staff working in the nursery.

We carried out this inspection 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.

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