

Inspection of Albany Montessori School

Sea Cadet Hall, Westminster Lodge, Holywell Hill, ST. ALBANS, Hertfordshire AL1 2DJ

Inspection date: 8 November 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
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Behaviour and attitudes	Good
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Personal development	Good
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Leadership and management	Good
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Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding
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What is it like to attend this early years setting?

The provision is good

Children and parents are warmly welcomed as they arrive. They are greeted by friendly staff who help children to settle quickly and engage in a range of enticing activities. Attentive key persons quickly respond to children's emotional needs by offering them cuddles and calming story times. This helps children to develop positive relationships with staff and promotes children's emotional well-being.

Children are curious and keen learners. They make good use of the Montessori resources in the play environment. For example, children build structures using the 'brown stairs' and 'pink tower' blocks together. Staff encourage children to compare the size and shapes of the blocks. This supports children to widen their understanding of mathematical concepts. Children enjoy their time outside. They develop their physical skills as they ride bicycles and scooters up and down ramps. Children show care and consideration for the natural world as they fill up their watering cans to water plants. They say they are 'watering plants to help them grow'.

Children behave well. Younger children follow staff's instructions to roll up and put away their mats independently before moving on from their play. Older children are helpful as they sweep dried rice into piles when classical music begins to play at tidy-up time. Children are learning to share and take turns. Staff are supportive and challenge children to think about how they can resolve their conflicts.

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

- Managers are highly passionate and reflective to provide an inclusive setting that follows a Montessori philosophy curriculum. The organisation of the environment incorporates a Montessori design which allows children to explore a holistic and organic style of play. For example, young children practise using cutlery as they scoop marbles into bowls. Repetition and practice allow children to embed their learning, which they progress in successive activities and challenges.
- Staff's interactions with children are positive and meaningful. They know their key children well and ask parents to complete 'Welcome to my world' information forms before children begin. Staff understand the different range of experiences children have, which they build on. For example, staff recognise the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on children's interactions outside of the home environment. They quickly identify gaps in children's learning and refer them to outside professionals for additional support. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported well by staff who sensitively care for their individual needs.
- Children benefit from inspiring staff who teach them to develop a love of stories and singing. Children are engrossed in story times that are skilfully led by staff.

For example, staff passionately tell the story of Guy Fawkes. Children keenly volunteer to re-enact the story and dress up as guards, King James and Guy Fawkes. They learn new words such as 'parliament' and the 'Tower of London'. This helps children to gain a good understanding of the history of the world in which they live. Children eagerly join in with music sessions. They enjoy singing familiar songs as staff play the guitar. They sing, gently sway and giggle to the songs they sing at different speeds. This gives children time to relax and be calm.

- Overall, teaching is good. Children have some opportunities to learn and practise independence skills, such as washing their hands and putting on their own shoes. However, staff do not always make use of occasions such as mealtimes to further develop children's learning. For example, staff do tasks that children could attempt for themselves, such as chopping up their own fruit and tidying away their lunch boxes. Staff do not always supervise mealtimes effectively to ensure children are only eating their own food.
- Staff feel supported by managers. They are keen to extend their knowledge through training. This helps staff to feel confident in their roles.
- Parents speak highly of the setting and staff. Parents of children who speak English as an additional language say they make good progress in their speech and language development. They appreciate the effective communication methods used to share information.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The management team and staff have a broad knowledge of child protection issues. They can identify the signs and symptoms which may indicate that a child is at risk of harm. Staff know who to contact if they have concerns about a child's safety and welfare. Managers ensure staff have access to regular training to keep their knowledge up to date. They implement robust recruitment and vetting procedures for all new staff. Managers ensure staff remain suitable for their role and provide regular supervisions and appraisals.

What does the setting need to do to improve?

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

- review snack times and mealtimes to ensure children are supervised effectively and to provide more opportunities for children to develop their independence skills.

Setting details

Unique reference number	EY490518
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10236679
Type of provision	Childcare on non-domestic premises
Registers	Early Years Register
Day care type	Sessional day care
Age range of children at time of inspection	2 to 4
Total number of places	34
Number of children on roll	36
Name of registered person	Good Way To Spend The Day Ltd
Registered person unique reference number	RP534681
Telephone number	07432 669751
Date of previous inspection	7 February 2017

Information about this early years setting

Albany Montessori School registered in 2015. The setting employs 12 members of childcare staff. Of these, eight hold appropriate early years qualifications at level 2 or above, including the manager who holds a qualification at level 7. The setting operates from Monday to Friday, during term time only. Sessions are from 9am until 3.15pm, and extended care hours are 7.30am until 5.15pm.

Information about this inspection

Inspector

Rachael Small

Inspection activities

- This was the first routine inspection the provider received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the provider and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the provider.
- The manager and the inspector completed a learning walk together.
- The inspector observed the quality of teaching, indoors and outdoors, and assessed the impact of this on children's learning.
- The inspector reviewed relevant documentation, including evidence of staff's suitability and first-aid certificates.
- The inspector held discussions with the staff and children at appropriate times during the inspection.
- The inspector spoke to parents and took account of their views.
- The manager and the inspector conducted a joint observation.

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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