

Inspection of Little Acorns Montessori School

Building 21, The Lincolnsfield Centre, Bushey Hall Drive, Bushey, Hertfordshire
WD23 2ES

Inspection date: 13 January 2023

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| 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 | Good |
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What is it like to attend this early years setting?

The provision is good

Children make good progress in this calm and nurturing environment. They are confident learners and eagerly explore the well-organised environment. Children are very well behaved. They have clear expectations from staff. From an early age, children learn to be respectful of their environment and know to tidy toys away after they have finished with them. Children build meaningful friendships with each other and develop positive social skills. They wait patiently for their turns on equipment and chat as they play, pretending to make meals of pizza and cupcakes for each other.

Children become deeply engaged in their play. Babies delight as they explore shakers with glitter. Older children develop strength in their hand as they mould coloured dough into different shapes. They use tools for a purpose as they use rolling pins to roll the dough and cutters to make shapes. Children are independent. They quickly master self-care skills, such as handwashing and dressing themselves. Children learn how to set the table for lunch and scrape and wash their plates up after eating. Children develop a clear understanding of size and number as they explore the Montessori resources. They learn to match counters to written numbers and play with blocks, sorting them into size order.

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

- The manager and staff work well together. They are passionate about delivering high-quality care and education to the children, following a Montessori philosophy curriculum. Leaders have clear learning goals for children in each room. Staff know their key children well and plan meaningful experiences based on children's interests. This helps children to make good progress.
- Staff gather detailed information about the child and invite parents into the setting when children first start. This helps families form secure attachments with their key person. As children move through the nursery, staff work closely together. They share learning goals and information about the child. This helps children transition smoothly throughout the setting.
- Children make excellent progress with their communication and language. Babies bounce along as staff sing nursery rhymes to them. Toddlers confidently name the colours of pegs as they peg them onto a basket. Staff take every opportunity to introduce new words. For example, children learn the word 'sea lion' as they pretend to go on a sea life adventure.
- Staff provide children with opportunities to explore digital technology. Babies play with toy laptops and older children use electronic tablets to trace letters with their fingers and play games. Staff supervise children when using these devices. However, they have not yet considered how to teach children to keep themselves safe when using technology.

- Partnerships with parents are strong. Staff keep parents fully up to date with their children's learning and development with consultations and daily feedback. They offer parents workshops on children's development, such as potty training and the importance of books. Parents report that they value the dedication, care and attention that staff provide to their children.
- The manager regularly reflects on the setting and has a strong drive to continually improve the outcomes for children. The setting's outdoor area is currently undergoing a refurbishment to make this more inviting for children to explore and learn. Staff receive effective supervision, where safeguarding and staff well-being are discussed. They benefit from a range of training opportunities, which helps further raise their teaching skills.
- Children make excellent progress in their physical development. Babies pull themselves up on equipment to build strength in their legs. Staff clap and cheer as babies confidently try and take steps independently. Older children have opportunities to use a soft-play centre, which supports development of their larger muscles and physical skills.
- Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported. Staff closely monitor children, and work with professionals to ensure that children receive focused support. Staff support parents to access speech and language courses, which help to improve their understanding of how to support their child. This helps children to make the best possible progress they can from their starting points.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff show a good understanding of their responsibilities to protect the welfare of children. They complete regular safeguarding training to keep their knowledge up to date. Staff are confident in recognising the signs and symptoms of potential abuse and neglect, including when children may be at risk from extremist views, for example. They are aware of how to report any concerns, including allegations made against staff. New staff have a robust induction and become familiar with all policies and procedures, including safeguarding policies. The manager ensures that suitability checks are carried out on all staff.

What does the setting need to do to improve?

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

- develop opportunities for children to learn how to keep themselves safe when using digital technology.

Setting details

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| Unique reference number | EY312157 |
| Local authority | Hertfordshire |
| Inspection number | 10265142 |
| Type of provision | Childcare on non-domestic premises |
| Registers | Early Years Register, Compulsory Childcare Register, Voluntary Childcare Register |
| Day care type | Sessional day care |
| Age range of children at time of inspection | 0 to 4 |
| Total number of places | 40 |
| Number of children on roll | 69 |
| Name of registered person | Little Acorns Montessori School Limited |
| Registered person unique reference number | RP910201 |
| Telephone number | 01923 230705 |
| Date of previous inspection | 25 May 2017 |

Information about this early years setting

Little Acorns Montessori School registered in 2005. The setting follows Montessori principles. It employs 11 members of childcare staff. Of these, eight hold appropriate early years qualifications at level 2 or 3, including two who hold a degree in early years, and the manager has a Master's degree in education. The setting 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 setting provides funded early education for two-, three- and four-year-old children.

Information about this inspection

Inspector
Emily Woodhead

Inspection activities

- This was the first routine inspection the setting received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the manager and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the setting.
- The manager joined the inspector on a learning walk. She talked to the inspector about the curriculum.
- The inspector observed the quality of education being provided, indoors and outdoors. She discussed children's progress with staff.
- The manager and inspector carried out a joint observation.
- The inspector looked at relevant documentation. This included evidence of staff suitability, safeguarding documents, and staff supervision records.
- The inspector spoke to parents during the inspection to gain their views of the setting.

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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