

Inspection of Little Acorns Montessori Ltd

Berkshire Guide Centre, Windlesham Road, Bracknell, Berkshire RG42 1GG

Inspection date: 28 February 2023

Overall effectiveness	Inadequate
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The quality of education

Inadequate

Behaviour and attitudes

Inadequate

Personal development

Inadequate

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Good

What is it like to attend this early years setting?

The provision is inadequate

Breaches of the safeguarding and welfare requirements, including weakness in staff recruitment and induction, do not adequately ensure children's safety. The arrangements to support children's learning and development are not sufficiently effective. As a result, children do not make the progress they are capable of. Staff working with the older children lack the skills and experience to support children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and to address unwanted behaviour. Planned activities are frequently disrupted, and intended learning does not take place. In addition, the individual needs of children with SEND are not met.

Staff do not provide all children with the encouragement they need to engage in activities and focus their attention. Children were observed wandering around the environment for considerable lengths of time without any adult intervention. These children were not included in basic routines of the day, such as lunchtime. Despite this, children form close friendships with their peers and strong bonds with key adults. They enjoy playing in the well-resourced outdoor area. During the inspection, they engaged well in activities provided by outside professionals.

The support for younger children is more effective. They progress well in their learning, including their communication and language. Younger children enjoy the activities on offer. For example, they enthusiastically use toothbrushes to remove marks made on pictures of teeth that are drawn on whiteboards. This helps to develop their understanding of the importance of good oral health and to practise the physical skills required to undertake these tasks for themselves.

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

- The provider does not ensure that the manager and staff are vigilant in implementing effective safeguarding practices. For example, the manager fails to recognise the importance of following up on any unexplained absences to ensure children's welfare.
- The provider does not have robust systems in place for the recruitment, induction and supervision of staff. Some staff do not have the training needed to fulfil their roles and responsibilities. This includes paediatric first aid and food hygiene. Some staff involved in serving food that is sent in by parents do not have a good enough knowledge of food hygiene procedures. For example, staff were observed reheating food in a microwave without a secure understanding of the safe cooking temperature.
- Newly qualified staff do not hold the full paediatric first-aid qualification needed in order for them to be counted in ratios. This means that the required adult-to-child ratios are not currently being maintained. However, to date, this has had

minimal impact, as there are other staff present each day with appropriate first-aid training.

- There is a significant gap in the skills and knowledge of staff in relation to supporting children with SEND following the departure of two key staff members. The manager has not taken prompt action to address this situation, and the needs of children with SEND are not currently being met well enough. Staff work with parents and professionals from relevant agencies who visit the nursery to support children with SEND. However, the manager, who is also the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo), does not make sure that the advice given by other professionals is used to consistently meet children's needs.
- The manager and staff are clear on what they want children to know and learn next. There are structured systems in place for children's individual learning and development. However, frequent incidents of challenging behaviour take staff away from supporting all children and disrupt children's learning and levels of engagement. During the inspection, staff were observed using physical interventions to manage unwanted behaviour. These incidents were not recorded and reported to parents, as required.
- The provision for babies is strong. Very young babies and toddlers are supported to develop good communication and language skills. For example, staff use sign language effectively to support children's understanding of simple instructions and social rules, such as sharing and taking turns.
- Parents feel that their children are well cared for. They enjoy receiving regular updates on their children's learning and development and value the ideas shared with them for home learning. This promotes parent partnership and supports children's progress. However, some parents feel communication regarding their child's individual needs could be improved.
- The setting's complaints procedures are not clear, and timeframes for responses have not been shared with parents and carers. Despite most parents and staff feeling confident in raising issues with management, there are some incidents where complaints have not been responded to within 28 days, as required.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

Not all staff have the training, skills and qualifications needed to keep children safe. Some staff do not have the required qualifications to be counted in ratios or be involved in the preparation and handling of food. Staff caring for babies and young children have the required knowledge of safeguarding specific to this age group. However, not all staff caring for older children receive specific supervision, coaching and support to understand their roles and responsibilities regarding safeguarding matters. Recruitment procedures are not sufficiently robust or effective in ensuring staff suitability and children's safety.

What does the setting need to do to improve?

To meet the requirements of the early years foundation stage and

Childcare Register the provider must:

	Due date
ensure that safeguarding procedures are robust and are implemented consistently by all staff	17/03/2023
implement robust recruitment systems to ensure that practitioners and any other person who may have regular contact with children are suitable	17/03/2023
provide staff with the training and support needed to be able to meet the needs of children with SEND	28/04/2023
implement appropriate arrangements for the supervision, coaching and support of all staff who have contact with children and families	17/03/2023
ensure that newly qualified staff who do not hold the required first-aid qualification are not counted in ratios	28/04/2023
ensure that all staff involved in the preparation and handling of food and drinks receive training and follow appropriate procedures	17/03/2023
ensure that children's behaviour is managed appropriately, and record all incidents where physical intervention is taken to manage a child's behaviour, ensuring that parents are informed	28/04/2023
ensure that written complaints are investigated and that the complainant is notified of the outcome of the investigation with 28 days.	28/04/2023

Setting details

Unique reference number	EY464703
Local authority	Bracknell Forest
Inspection number	10277950
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	71
Number of children on roll	71
Name of registered person	Little Acorns Montessori Limited
Registered person unique reference number	RP532743
Telephone number	01344 411928
Date of previous inspection	31 October 2017

Information about this early years setting

Little Acorns Montessori nursery registered in 2013. It is situated at the Guide Centre in Bracknell, Berkshire. The nursery follows the Montessori ethos. The nursery opens from 8am until 5pm, Monday to Friday, term time only. The nursery is in receipt of funding for the provision of free early education for children aged two, three and four years. There are 15 members of staff who work with the children. Of these, 12 hold relevant qualifications.

Information about this inspection

Inspector

Leanne Merritt

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 this into account in their evaluation of the provider.
- We carried out this inspection as a result of a risk assessment, following information we received about the provider.
- The manager and the inspector completed a learning walk together of all areas of the nursery and discussed the intention of the providers early years curriculum.
- The inspector talked to staff at appropriate times during the inspection and took account of their views.
- The SENCo spoke to the inspector about how they support children with SEND.
- The inspector observed the quality of education being provided, indoors and outdoors, and assessed the impact that this was having on children's learning.
- Parents shared their views of the setting with the inspector.
- The inspector looked at relevant documentation and reviewed 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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