

Albany Montessori School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique reference number EY431076
Inspection date 02/03/2012
Inspector Karen McIntyre

Setting address St. Albans Sea Cadets, Westminster Lodge, Holywell Hill,
ST. ALBANS, Hertfordshire, AL1 2DJ
Telephone number 01727 860 443 / 07432 669 751
Email albanymontessori@ntlworld.com
Type of setting Childcare - Non-Domestic

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

T: 0300 123 1231

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2012

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Sections 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006 on the quality and standards of the registered early years provision. 'Early years provision' refers to provision regulated by Ofsted for children from birth to 31 August following their fifth birthday (the early years age group). The registered person must ensure that this provision complies with the statutory framework for children's learning, development and welfare, known as the *Early Years Foundation Stage*.

The provider must provide a copy of this report to all parents with children at the setting where reasonably practicable. The provider must provide a copy of the report to any other person who asks for one, but may charge a fee for this service (The Childcare (Inspection) Regulations 2008 regulations 9 and 10).

Please see our website for more information about each childcare provider. We publish inspection reports, conditions of registration and details of complaints we receive where we or the provider take action to meet the requirements of registration.

Description of the setting

Albany Montessori School is privately owned and registered in 2006 but re-opened in new premises in August 2011. It operates from the St. Albans Sea Cadets building within the grounds of Westminster Lodge in St Albans, Hertfordshire. The setting has use of a reception area, main hall, one side room, kitchen, cloakrooms and toilets. An enclosed area is available at the front of the property for outdoor play.

The setting is open Monday to Friday during school term times. Sessions are from 9.15am to 3pm on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday. Morning sessions operate on Thursday from 9.15am to 12.15pm. An early bird session operates from 8.30am to 9.15am, Monday to Friday. Children can attend for a variety of sessions which may include lunchtimes and younger children generally attend the afternoon sessions. It is registered on the Early Years Register. A maximum of 34 children may attend at any one time. There are 43 children on roll aged from two to five years. The setting makes provision for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and for those who speak English as an additional language.

There are 14 members of staff including the owner/manager who holds a Montessori Diploma and a Post Graduate Certificate in Education qualification. Some members of staff hold relevant teaching and care qualifications. The setting has regular input by a qualified special needs teacher and liaises with Young in Hertfordshires support services.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is outstanding.

An exceptionally welcoming and inclusive environment is provided for children. The children's well-being is paramount and staff show a genuine desire to promote the best standard of care for them. There are excellent opportunities for child-initiated learning and this is supported by highly effective staff deployment, which ensures that children make excellent progress. Partnerships with parents and carers are excellent and they are actively involved. The setting has developed strong links with some local schools and other professionals involved in the care of the children. The self-evaluation process is comprehensive, rigorous and reflects all areas of provision, which demonstrates that management and staff work cohesively to develop their practice and support the children.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

To further improve the high quality early years provision the registered person should consider:

- continue to develop the outdoor environment to provide further stimulating activities for the children.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

Children are extremely well protected because staff have an excellent knowledge of safeguarding. The children's welfare is paramount and this is evident in highly comprehensive policies and procedures and exemplary daily practice. Risk assessments are detailed and effectively managed to ensure children play in a safe environment. Evacuation procedures are carried out regularly to enhance children's awareness of safety. Staff ensure children exit the building from different locations so they are aware of all emergency exits. Staff deployment is excellent and security during drop off and collection times is extremely well managed. In addition to this, staff recruitment and vetting procedures are extremely thorough which ensures a high calibre of staff is employed. These robust measures ensure children remain secure in this setting as all aspects of safety are given utmost priority.

Relationships with parents and carers are first class and they are actively involved in their children's learning and development. During registration, children's starting points are recorded on their registration forms. This includes information about their close family, personal preferences, milestones achieved and cultural festivals celebrated at home. This information is used as a starting point to settle individual children and identify appropriate 'next steps.' Staff greet parents with genuine warmth and spend time communicating with them at the beginning and end of each session. Parents complete an assessment of their children once a term, which informs staff of changes to family life or developmental milestones. These are used to ensure staff have a holistic understanding of individual children and are integrated into planning. Parents express sincere gratitude and total confidence in the setting. For example, parents comments include 'My child wants to come here at the weekend' and 'I am absolutely delighted'. Children benefit from these extremely positive professional relationships as staff gain a wealth of information to cater for the children's needs.

The nursery receives support from a local authority special needs coordinator, who visits regularly. This teamwork supports staff in developing appropriate challenges for individual children and providing advice for parents. They work closely with speech and language therapists to provide continuity of care for the children. Management develop links with a children's centre and some local schools to assist smooth transitions when children move on.

Management demonstrate a deep desire to enhance the setting for the children. They intend to develop the outdoor area to provide further stimulating activities. They plan to accomplish more links with local schools and commence a local authority evaluation scheme. These measures enhance the setting as management continue to evaluate the outstanding level of care they provide for the children.

They are truly dedicated to ensuring children thrive in their care and receive the best possible outcomes.

The quality and standards of the early years provision and outcomes for children

Children are warmly welcomed and show a great interest and eagerness to begin to play from the moment they arrive. Children who are uncertain are helped to settle with staff support. They are very familiar with daily routines. For example, children stop when the bell rings and begin to tidy away. These measures help to gain their trust and enhance their security and well-being. Children make excellent progress in all areas of their learning and development because staff provide highly stimulating activities. These are based on frequent observations, robust assessments and carefully considered planning, which means the children make rapid progress and feel secure.

Children are fully engaged in play because they are supported by toys and materials that interest them. Staff are highly skilled in delivering the Early Years Foundation Stage. They use their expertise to combine this with the Montessori method of education. As a result, children experience rich, highly stimulating activities and opportunities that are varied and promote equal opportunities. For example, staff provide books showing a wide range of lifestyles and cultures. Children use chalks and pens to make marks on large white boards and on the pavement outside. There are computers to explore, opportunities to practise putting on outdoor clothing and activities that involve counting mats for circle time. There is a wide selection of materials that promote equality and diversity. These include pictures, posters, maps, puzzles, flags, musical instruments and calendars that depict race, gender and disability. The majority of children are engaged throughout circle time because it is interactive. They listen to each other speak and communicate confidently in the group situation.

Staff carry out frequent and accurate observations of children. These are used along with parents' comments to assess individual needs and plan appropriate challenges. As a result, during the work cycle, children receive levels of challenge that match their needs extremely well. For example, children independently match numerical symbols with their quantity. Staff give praise and offer support at various stages depending on individual needs and requests. Consequently children are extremely confident and self-assured learners. The environment is extremely well organised to provide space to move around freely. Staff provide excellent opportunities for children to play on the floor stand or sit at tables or lay on large soft cushions. These provide for individual preferences and they support children to become active learners who make rapid progress.

The outdoor space caters for all areas for learning and development. However, management and staff identify that this is an area they need to develop. They intend to provide a wider range of materials and equipment which will further enhance the children's outdoor experience.

Children understand and develop excellent healthy habits because the staff are

extremely positive role models. For example, staff get down to the children's level and demonstrate how to blow a nose. Children undertake regular physical activity and have access to a small enclosed outdoor area. They show great delight in playing outside and are able to select materials for outdoor play. For example, children manage to take their own scooters into the garden at playtime, which encourages them to be independent and active. Snack is served throughout the day and this consists of raisins, water, diluted fruit juice and fruit. Children wash hands independently and use disposable paper towels to help prevent cross infection. During lunchtime children and staff sit at tables. They discuss the healthy contents of their lunchboxes, which demonstrates a thorough awareness of a healthy diet and its benefits

Children behave exceptionally well and demonstrate a deep understanding of boundaries. Staff behaviour management skills are exceptional; they deal with unacceptable behaviour in a calm, swift and consistent manner. Consequently, children show a great awareness of other peoples' needs and are extremely happy and secure in this nursery. They support less able children to stand from sitting position, help find shoes and offer tissues to those who need one.

Children are given many highly stimulating opportunities to develop skills for the future. They communicate confidently as they know their views and ideas are valued by staff. Members of staff respond positively, listen to the children and respond to their needs. Children use a photocopier with minimal adult support and are confident and curious with information technology. These skills ensure they remain inquisitive about the world around them and are secure to approach new challenges with a great amount of confidence.

Annex A: record of inspection judgements

The key inspection judgements and what they mean

Grade 1 is Outstanding: this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality
Grade 2 is Good: this aspect of the provision is strong
Grade 3 is Satisfactory: this aspect of the provision is sound
Grade 4 is Inadequate: this aspect of the provision is not good enough

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

How well does the setting meet the needs of the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	1
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement	1

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
The effectiveness with which the setting deploys resources	1
The effectiveness with which the setting promotes equality and diversity	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding	1
The effectiveness of the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement	1
The effectiveness of partnerships	1
The effectiveness of the setting's engagement with parents and carers	1

The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage

The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
--	---

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The extent to which children achieve and enjoy their learning	1
The extent to which children feel safe	1
The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which children make a positive contribution	1
The extent to which children develop skills for the future	1

Any complaints about the inspection or report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

