

Little Sponges Montessori

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique reference number	EY413470
Inspection date	18/01/2011
Inspector	Marcia Robinson
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Type of setting	Childcare on non-domestic premises

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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).

The setting also makes provision for children older than the early years age group which is registered on the voluntary and/or compulsory part(s) of the Childcare Register. This report does not include an evaluation of that provision, but a comment about compliance with the requirements of the Childcare Register is included in Annex B.

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Description of the setting

Little Sponges Montessori Nursery is privately owned and registered in 2010. The nursery is located in a residential street on the Greenwich/Blackheath borders in the London borough of Greenwich. It operates from a detached three bedroom house. The whole of the property is used for nursery purposes. The ground floor of the property is open-plan and comprises of a large through room which runs straight into a conservatory. This in turn leads onto a raised and partly covered decked outdoor play area. Beyond the decking is an enclosed garden area, a small brick building at the end of the garden provides a role play area and separate storage space. There is a kitchen to one side of the main play room and children have access to one ground floor toilet with hand washing facilities available for their use. On the first floor bathroom facilities for staff, an office and a further play room is available for children.

The nursery is registered on the Early Years Register and the compulsory part of the Childcare Register. A maximum of 12 children, aged from two to under eight years old may attend the nursery at any one time. There are currently 60 children in the early years age group on roll who attend a variety of sessions. The nursery currently supports a number of children who speak English as an additional language. The nursery operates two sessions, over five week days, between the hours of 12:00pm and 12:30pm to 3:00pm respectively, during term time only. There are four staff employed including the provider/manager and an administrator. Of these, two hold relevant qualifications and one member of staff is currently working towards achieving the Montessori Diploma. The nursery uses a combination of traditional teaching and Montessori methods. They also receive support from an early years advisor in the local authority.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is good.

Overall, the setting successfully promotes all aspects of children's welfare, learning and development. Staff work very well together to provide a very warm, nurturing and inclusive environment where children are settled and happy. Children are valued as individuals and feel a good sense of belonging within the nursery as their individual needs are consistently met. Staff get to know their key children's abilities very well through the strong partnerships formed with their parents, although these relationships are continuing to be developed with parents and all other providers delivering the Early Years Foundation. Children are eager to explore and investigate in their play and learning; they are supported exceptionally well to achieve and enjoy at a high level through an exciting variety of meaningful play experiences. Staff attend further training and the nursery has forged good links with an early years professional from the local authority, which ensures continuous improvement is effectively maintained.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

To further improve the early years provision the registered person should:

- develop systems to monitor children's access to fresh drinking water throughout the day
- increase the involvement of parents in agreeing and reviewing their child's next steps.
- improve the recording of the daily attendance register to ensure it is promptly recorded as children arrive.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

Children's welfare is effectively safeguarded. Most staff have attended relevant safeguarding training and the policies and procedures available to staff and parents are extensive. These are well understood by staff and the designated person. The care of the children is well supported as the majority of staff have appropriate qualifications and hold current first aid certificates. Children are safeguarded by the setting's robust recruitment, vetting and induction procedures, ensuring the staff's suitability to work with children. This impacts positively on the high quality of care and education offered, as well as children being kept safe. A comprehensive range of policies and procedures, which have been recently updated, are used effectively to underpin the nursery's good practice. Detailed documentation clearly records children's starting points, interests and achievements. However, on the day of inspection, the daily attendance register was not promptly recorded as required. The quality of risk assessments is very good and includes assessments for the premises, outings and for all aspects of journeys and travel to places such as the library and trips to the fire station. This is complemented by daily risk assessments and a good range of safety equipment such as safety gates positioned at the top and bottom of the stairs as well as radiator covers fitted throughout the nursery. This ensures all risks to children are eliminated.

Effective use is made of space, time and resources so that children benefit from their play and learning experiences. For example, resources are organised well to challenge children's ability at their level, for example with the varied Montessori equipment, which encourages their confidence in trying out new resources and activities. Furthermore, staff work very well together as a team and staff deployment is effective in ensuring that children benefit from good levels of individual support.

The manager and staff reflect on the learning and development opportunities they offer. This is through the manager's ongoing commitment to the professional development of her team, encouraging training in all areas. This has recently included training in health, safeguarding and Every Child A Talker course. All staff are involved in completing detailed self-evaluation of themselves, which they use

effectively to identify areas for development. Regular team meetings, appraisals and visits to model classrooms in the local borough helps staff to keep their childcare knowledge and understanding up to date. There is also close partnership with local authority professionals who provide support and advice whenever needed.

The manager is enthusiastic and demonstrates a passion for the nursery, the staff, children and parents. A self-evaluation system to systematically identify the setting's strengths and areas requiring further improvement is in the early stages of development and the setting aims to actively use this as a working tool towards ensuring continued improvement. They have begun by seeking feedback from parents through the use of questionnaires and the regular review and update of records, policies and procedures. All staff are involved in completing detailed self-evaluation of their own professional development, which they use effectively to identify areas for their professional development. Actions taken are well targeted to improve outcomes for children, for instance, ongoing improvements to the range of resources available, which means children benefit as their individual needs and interests are well considered. Staff know the children's backgrounds and needs very well and this helps them to identify any possible barriers to achievement. They take positive steps to remove any barriers, such as by working closely with parents to ensure they understand the family's culture and value their home language. The nursery also supports a number of children who speak English as an additional language by using a range of dual language books and Makaton sign language. Parents benefit from a variety of information about the setting, for instance through regular newsletters and verbal discussions when children arrive and leave, they are very happy with this day to day communication. Many parents make good use of the regular informal opportunities to see their child's file and discuss their progress. However, the setting is planning to implement assessment review meetings so all parents can be actively involved in this ongoing process. Nonetheless, the number of parents spoken to on the day of inspection were very happy with the service provided and all complimented the high level of care and education provided by a committed and dedicated staff team. The nursery liaises with other agencies and professionals including other early years providers delivering the Early Years Foundation Stage. They have established close links with some of the local schools to ensure children receive the support they need and benefit from continuity in their learning and care, although the manager plans to develop effective links with all the other Early Years Provisions that children attend.

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

Staff have attended training on the Early Years Foundation Stage, and demonstrate a very good understanding and commitment to implementing it extremely well. Their comprehensive knowledge of individual children fosters a firm feeling of trust and security. Children achieve well at this setting due to the range of well planned and exciting activities and the staff team who use their skills and knowledge to provide a high quality learning environment. For example, props are used well to help foster children's natural curiosity; children are delighted when

they sing a song about 'who is here today' and 'who's special' and are invited to peep into a basket with a mirror in the bottom. This gives children a real sense of belonging. Children's behaviour is exemplary. They are fully engaged and there is little opportunity for children to become disinterested or bored because they are well stimulated throughout the day and are clear on expectations and boundaries which are consistently applied. This is positively supported by interesting and fun stories such as the 'Naughty bus' which helps children learn through positive messages about morals, good manners and safety. They develop a sensitive awareness of diversity and an understanding of the needs of others. This is achieved through a wide range of activities and resources which promote a positive outlook of the wider world. This includes inviting parents and carers into the setting to share their customs and religions with the children. Children's communication skills are successfully fostered, resulting in competent speakers and listeners. There is a wide range of books available, which are clearly enjoyed by the children both independently and with stories staff read to them throughout the day. Children participate in interesting and imaginative creative experiences, which effectively nurture their self-expression whilst having a lot of fun. The staff rarely miss an opportunity to extend their learning as they effectively use open-ended questions to develop children's critical thinking. Extensive opportunities to foster children's problem solving skills, and to nurture their knowledge of shapes and numbers are provided through every day experiences and resources. Children are inquisitive and inspired to explore the natural world as they dig and plant vegetables in the garden and enjoy watching them flourish. This is complemented by good opportunities for children to play with natural materials such as wood and fabric. Ample opportunities are provided for children to use information and communication technology to support their learning. Children's contributions are highly valued with their chance to give their views and opinions about the nursery during circle time and through attractively displayed examples of their work, posters and photos of children engaged in a wide range of activities is available for both children and parents to admire. The staff have developed individual files for children, which include observations and photographs linked to the areas of learning. Identified next steps in children's learning are clearly used to inform future planning. Staff are constantly reviewing this system to ensure files show a true reflection of children's progress. This includes starting to involve parents in the ongoing process, including their input into agreeing and reviewing their child's next steps in learning as this does not consistently happen at the moment.

Children remain safe and healthy through appropriate procedures in place to ensure they adopt good hygiene and safety practices. Risks and hazards are sensitively discussed with children so that their sense of safety and responsibility is developing well. For instance, they practise regular fire drills and manoeuvre their chairs to sit around the table when preparing for activities. Children are taught by example and learn about people who help us through planned topics and talks on safety from their trips to the local Fire Station. The Montessori philosophy is successfully embedded and the curriculum effectively links every area of the Early Years Foundation Stage principles. They demonstrate a good understanding of personal hygiene through established and well organised daily routines, such as independently washing their hands before eating and after using the toilet. This learning and understanding is well supported by pictorial displays in the bathroom which means children need little prompting from staff to wash their hands at the

appropriate times. Children have a healthy diet of a selection of fresh fruit for snacks including new tastes such as mangoes and fresh drinking water which is served at mealtimes and accessible to children throughout the day. However, their intake of fresh drinking water is not always consistently monitored. Staff consistently engage children in conversations about the importance of healthy eating and exercise such as, why milk is good for them. They also have fun as staff use a stethoscope and encourage children to listen to the pace of their heart beating as they are actively involved in action rhymes. This ensures they make the links to enhance their learning and understanding. Children develop their knowledge of their local community as they go for walks to the library and have visitors, such as the dentist, into the setting. Clear accident and sickness procedures are in place; these ensure that the nursery is able to take prompt and suitable action when necessary, for instance to ensure that children are not at risk of infectious illnesses. Children are cared for in a clean environment where good hygiene and food preparation procedures ensure the health of the children.

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?	2
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement	2

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
The effectiveness with which the setting deploys resources	2
The effectiveness with which the setting promotes equality and diversity	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding	2
The effectiveness of the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement	2
The effectiveness of partnerships	2
The effectiveness of the setting's engagement with parents and carers	2

The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage

The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
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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	2
The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which children make a positive contribution	1
The extent to which children develop skills for the future	1

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Annex B: the Childcare Register

The provider confirms that the requirements of the compulsory part of the Childcare Register are:

Met