

Albany Montessori School

Inspection report for early years provision

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| Unique reference number | EY339063 |
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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

Albany Montessori School is privately owned and opened in 2006. It operates from the back hall of the Methodist Church in the Fleetville area of St Albans, Hertfordshire. There is no outside play provision, however the children and the staff walk to a nearby park to play on a broad range of equipment. They also have use of additional rooms and the large church hall which is used for physical play. The provision is accessible to parents and children with limited mobility.

It is open Monday to Friday during school term times. Sessions are from 9.00am to 3.00pm on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. Morning sessions on Tuesday and Thursday run from 9.00am to 12:00 Noon. Children can attend for a variety of session which may include lunchtimes and younger children generally attend the afternoon sessions.

The pre-school is registered on the Early Years Register, the Childcare and voluntary registers. A maximum of 26 children may attend at any one time. There are 54 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 ten members of staff including the owner/manager who holds a Montessori Diploma and a Post Graduation Certificate in Education qualification. Some members of staff hold relevant teaching and care qualifications. The setting has regular input by a qualified teacher and liaises with Young in Herts., support services. They are taking steps towards completing a quality award system.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is good.

The dedicated manager and her team successfully work together and recognise the uniqueness of each child so that an inclusive practice is promoted. Staff are knowledgeable and well supported to continue with professional development. Children are safeguarded and positive strategies ensure their personal, social and emotional development are extremely well supported. Staff ensure that all children enjoy a wide range of planned activities that are tailored to suit their interests and most of their learning needs. The partnership with parents and others is exceptional and ensures that all adults work together to support and meet children's individual needs. All associated with the nursery are involved in the rigorous monitoring process. So that continuous improvement is at the heart of the provision.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

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

- develop further the environment so that it is rich in signs, symbols, numbers and words that take into account children's different interests, home backgrounds and cultures
- develop further the system for outings so that the indoors is taken outdoors every day (unless circumstances make this inappropriate, for example unsafe weather conditions).

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

The manager is passionate about her work. She is well qualified and experienced, she is a good role model and has a clear understanding of her role and that of her staff. Children's safety is given a high priority, policies and effective procedures such as the management of walking to the local park contribute to this. Effective risk assessments for all areas including outings ensure any identified risks to children are minimised. Children are safeguarded and all staff have a good understanding of the procedures to follow if they have concerns about a child in their care. Clear vetting procedures ensure that all staff working with children are suitable to do so. Training is highly valued and supported so that outcomes for children are consistently improved. Staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities including key person duties, some staff members have additional qualifications such as speech and language which contribute successfully to children developing high levels of confidence. Staff deployment is generally good and there are suitable contingency plans in place to cover for absences. Monitoring is a key strength of the setting, the manager believes in continual reflection involving all those connected so that actions are well targeted in bringing about sustained improvement. All the recommendations raised at the previous inspection have been carefully considered and comprehensively addressed.

There is a highly positive relationship with parents and carers. They are provided with tailored guidance and information about how the Montessori methods of teaching interlink with the Early Years Foundation Stage. Strong methods of communication ensure parents are extremely well informed about their children's progress and how they can support their children's learning. Parent's knowledge and skills are highly valued as they are welcome to purposefully enhance their children's sessions. For example, baking activities lead by parents, the sharing of festivals celebrated and the introduction of exotic animals and reptiles create excellent and stimulating learning opportunities for the children. Purposeful notices on doors, current photographs on walls and high quality individual learning journals provide further opportunities to ensure parents are extremely well informed about their children's progress and well-being.

The provision actively promotes an inclusive practice and the manager is highly committed to working in partnership with others so that individual needs are met. She takes a lead role in establishing effective working relationships with teachers where children are due to attend resulting in a smooth transition to school. In addition, links with professionals such as health visitors ensures strategies to support children can be quickly implemented. All required records are very well maintained and detailed information gathered ensures staff have a good

knowledge of children's individual needs and backgrounds. The local environment is generally well used so that children learn about the world around them and interesting topics effectively support this. Children have opportunities to learn French and Mandarin. Some steps are taken to close identified achievement gaps are taken such as the organisation of the resources such as the home area so that it is appealing to all children and the daily opportunities for physical play in the large hall.

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

Children are provided with stimulating opportunities to help them make good progress across all areas of learning and development. Planning is flexible, responding to the children's interests. For example an interest in sea life developed a topic of 'under the sea' and a current interest in exotic animals creates the current topic of 'The Rainforest'. Adult's expertise and good knowledge of the learning and development requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage ensures these interests are effectively used to help children make good progress towards the early learning goals. A systematic approach is used to make sensitive observations of the children during the adult and child-led activities. These are evaluated and used to inform further steps in the children's learning. An effective key worker system ensures children are helped to settle and become familiar with the routine of the group. Children play well independently and in groups becoming active, curious and inquisitive learners. They confidently select their 'work' from the wide range of resources such as construction, board games, painting and sand play. They use magnifying glasses to explore items such as shells and beans. Children develop a sense of responsibility by setting out their chosen play materials and help to pack these away when they are finished playing with them. Those attending the morning session discuss in detail animals and people who may live in the rainforest. Children are helped to develop high levels of self-esteem and some are confident to respond to the open questions delivered in the large group activities such as circle and registration times.

They delight in playing in the imaginative home area which is re-created to reflect a home in the rainforest and some are able to recall particular names of people and their homes who live there. Activities are adapted to suit the needs of the younger children who attend the afternoon sessions. During both times children are motivated and eager to learn through a balanced range of adult-led and child-initiated activities. Children's play during construction is well supported as staff use some open questions to help children problem solve and effective use of the Montessori equipment ensure children develop early numeracy skills. Books and tools to support mark making and literacy skills are easily available, children enjoy experimenting with an aqua drawing mat which provides added interest. Notices and symbols to extend the children's understanding of print and meaning are few in number apart from the labels on the Montessori furniture. Books can be borrowed to take home which supports children's interest in reading. The manager is in the process of adding dual language books to the collection so that home languages are acknowledged and supported. Children enjoy daily exercise indoors in the large hall, they learn to roll hoops, manoeuvre wheeled toys and to play ball

games indoors. Once a week they visit the nearby park for physical play and some local walks are also taken occasionally. This promotes their good health and develops physical skills although some children not attending on these days potentially spend all their time indoors.

Children's health is well promoted as they learn the importance of good personal hygiene. They can easily help themselves to tissues and know where to dispose of these. Social skills are promoted during lunch periods and they show good levels of managing their own behaviour. For example, children confidently use sand timers to resolve their own disputes about taking turns at popular activities such as the sand table.

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

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| 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

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| How effectively is the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed? | 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 | 2 |
| The effectiveness of safeguarding | 2 |
| 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

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| 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

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| Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage | 2 |
| The extent to which children achieve and enjoy their learning | 2 |
| 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 | 2 |

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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

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