

The Little House

Inspection report for early years provision

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Inspector	Rachel Ruth Britten
Setting address	The Cobbles, Lower Peover, WA16 9PZ
Telephone number	01565 722917
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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

The Little House Montessori Nursery was registered in 1993. The setting is privately owned and operates from a house in the village of Lower Peover. Children are cared for on the ground floor. There are secure areas available for outdoor play. A maximum of 14 children aged two to five years may attend the setting at any one time. The setting is open on a sessional basis for five days a week during term time. The current hours are between 9.30am and 12.30pm on Tuesdays and Fridays, and 9.30am and 4pm on Monday, Wednesday and Thursday. A summer school operates for two weeks during the summer school holidays for children aged up to eight years. Children attend from the local community and surrounding areas.

There are currently 20 children on roll aged from two to four years. All of these are within the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). The setting does not receive funding for nursery education. The care offered to children aged over five years to eight years at the summer school is registered by Ofsted on the compulsory and voluntary parts of the Childcare Register. The setting is not currently supporting any children with special educational needs and disabilities. However, it is currently supporting children who speak English as an additional language.

The setting employs three members of staff including the manager. One of these has Qualified Teacher Status. One member of staff is qualified to level 3 in early years. The remaining member of staff is planning to undertake an Early Years degree. The setting receives support from the local authority early years advisory team.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is outstanding.

The setting meets the unique needs of each child with outstanding success. Dedicated, skilled staff establish close bonds with each child, facilitating each one's welfare and development through individualised experiences and discovery. The provider-manager is passionate about the Montessori method and demonstrates excellent individualised teaching, using outstanding resources in an immensely accessible and stimulating environment. Children are excellently safeguarded and have an outstanding understanding of how to be safe, healthy, independent, responsible and participative. Overall, partnerships are good, especially where children have particular needs and when they are being prepared for the transition to school. Self-evaluation and daily staff review ensure that there are continuous improvements which build upon the setting's already good provision.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

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

- involving parents more closely in their child's progress by jointly making initial starting points assessments and thereafter by sharing summative and ongoing assessment documents and plans for the child's next steps
- developing the liaison and sharing of individual progress records, so that children receive complementary and consistent care when they attend more than one setting.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

The setting safeguards children and promotes safety extremely well. Staff are highly vigilant and employ robust registration, emergency evacuation, accident and medication administration procedures. Intrinsic to every session are teaching and routines which enable children to stay safe in their setting. The indoor and outdoor activity areas are regularly checked by staff using suitable risk assessments and maintenance issues are promptly highlighted and rectified to keep the environment and resources in very good working order. Locked doors and gates assure children's safety effectively. Regular walking trips locally familiarise children with how to enjoy outdoor physical play and nature safely and there are visits from the fire and police services to explain their roles. Policies are up-to-date and explain what happens about emergencies, child protection, complaints and lost or uncollected children. All adults are carefully vetted and understand their responsibility to notify any matters which may call into question their continuing suitability.

The provider-manager is extremely diligent and well organised, ensuring that policies and procedures are reviewed and continue to meet both EYFS requirements and the ethos of the setting. She conveys her passion for high quality provision through excellent day-to-day teaching example. All staff continuously celebrate and note the progress that each child is making. They are patient and consistent role models with insight and skill to support children's choices of learning materials. Resources are demonstrated by staff, but thereafter can be used by the child how they want, with clear responsibilities and adult support to tidy, clean and replace all items ready for others to choose. Staff are encouraged to undertake ongoing professional training which will most benefit the children, for example, regarding special educational needs, Autism and Asperger's Syndrome. They work closely with early years advisors, medical and therapy specialists and utilise the Ofsted self-evaluation form. This has prompted ongoing improvements, such as risk assessments, updated policies, and a form to establish parental permission and details of other providers involved with the child.

The setting is highly committed to supporting parents and building long lasting family links. The ethos of the setting and the application of the equipment are explained clearly and periodically demonstrated at parents' evenings. Parents are welcome to spend time in the setting to assist their child's settling in, or to share their talents, such as violin playing. Photos and art and craft work are both displayed and taken home. Staff share children's achievements and progress on a daily basis and an evidence record is completed and given to parents when each

child moves on. However, children's starting points, six-monthly summary reports and detailed assessment records are not routinely shared with parents. This means that parents are less well informed of the detail of their child's progress and needs for their next steps. Children's transition to school is skilfully facilitated because the Montessori way concentrates on developing a love of learning, confidence to initiate activities, and independence to complete tasks. This, and the social skills and routines learnt, prepare children well for school, supported by visits and good liaison with reception class teachers. Home liaison books are used to good effect where children have specialist input. However, relationships with some pre-schools and settings which children attend at the same time are as yet underdeveloped and do not maximise consistent and complementary childcare.

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

Adults support each child's learning and development outstandingly well, using the resources, space and their skills to the full. Children have a simple routine to their day and ample space and choice to use resources in a variety of ways, both indoors and out. Their progress is outstanding in the open plan, industrious atmosphere, where a genuine love and confidence to learn is fostered. Children mostly work on self-chosen activities independently or alongside others at small tables or on individual mats which they set out themselves. For example, children investigate the water, bubbles, bowls and whisks or match the animals to the countries of the world where they live. Children enjoy, and are in tune with, their environment, watching the birds and squirrels on the feeders and helping to prepare snack.

Children shake hands, say good morning to the adults and find their name card on arrival. They hang up their own coats and also put their name card in a basket to show they have been to the snack table for milk, fruit and a biscuit. They choose to look at books together and respond extremely well to the quiet, consistent guidance of adults who encourage them to take responsibility for all they do. For example, children fetch a tray to set out their paint pots, pour their own water and clean all the equipment afterwards, returning it to its place ready for another child to use. Adults question, challenge, demonstrate and encourage children throughout activities, so that they gain immensely from the teaching they receive as they do activities for themselves. For example, their problem solving, numeracy, literacy and knowledge and understanding of the world are excellent for their ages. Similarly, their social skills are highly developed too, as they learn to consider one another, share and help, for example, as they play group games, sing, and listen to one another's stories.

Children's creative and large physical skills blossom through the wealth of outdoor and community activities they take part in. They dance around the maypole, search for the fairy ring in the garden and perform a genuine nativity play in the church. They sledge and make snowmen, splash in the mud and grow flowers and vegetables. They experience farm animals and nature on regular walking trips and find out about their local community through visits from police, fire officers and war veterans. The vicar and local reception teachers are regular visitors, as are

parents who share their talents and knowledge, perhaps playing an instrument or showing how Diwali is celebrated in their mother country. Children make bread and baskets of food gifts for the harvest festival and make Christmas mincemeat, cakes and sweets for their sales.

Children's interests are observed closely and built upon with skill, so that they are confident and competent learners. Adults have high expectations of the progress each individual is capable of and celebrate this constantly, motivating themselves and the child to achieve even more. Detailed observation notes are made and evaluated and staff work extremely cooperatively to ensure that each one receives great challenge. Specific pieces of Montessori equipment are demonstrated and thereafter chosen by children, for example, to build their small movement dexterity and writing skills and their understanding of size, measure, fit, shape and construction. Children persist and become highly motivated to continue to progress as they choose threading, sewing, colouring between the small squares, sorting, using counters and number symbols, scissors, tweezers, pegs, and cloths. They take delight in being able to represent groups of counters from one to 10 under the relevant number symbol; make elaborate colour patterns of beads into necklaces and competently wipe up spillages of water.

The outcomes for children are outstanding in all aspects. Children make excellent progress in their social skills and behaviour and are learning independence and competence, for example, to polish their own shoes and bake cakes to share with their families. They delight in being active and understanding the natural world and community in ways that are healthy, safe and enjoyable. Simple habits, such as washing their hands before snacks and putting their chairs back under the table stand them in good stead. They feel a part of their community and world because they learn to enjoy, use and respect both things and the people around them. For example, they make necklaces from leaves they collect and are preparing for centenary celebrations alongside former pupils. There is a strong sense of history and ongoing community in the setting because former pupils return for holiday club activities and many come to see the children to share their experiences in the performing arts or in other countries. As a result, children have a strong sense of themselves and their potential, as well as the contribution they can make to those around them.

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

How effectively is the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed?	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	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	1
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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	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

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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