

St Helens Montessori School

St. Helens, Lower Road, East Farleigh, Maidstone, Kent, ME15 0JT

Inspection date

Previous inspection date

06/10/2014

Not Applicable

The quality and standards of the early years provision

This inspection:

2

Previous inspection:

Not Applicable

How well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend	2
The contribution of the early years provision to the well-being of children	2
The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the early years provision	2

The quality and standards of the early years provision

This provision is good

- Staff use the Montessori method of teaching and skilfully relate it to all areas of learning, helping children to make good progress in their development.
- The partnership with parents is very strong as parents can talk to staff and share ideas. This supports children's consistent care.
- Children can be very independent in their play, selecting activities and taking care of their personal belongings.
- Children benefit from a good quality learning environment with extensive outdoor facilities and a wide range of specialist teaching.

It is not yet outstanding because

- Behaviour management is not consistent, in that some staff do not use positive methods to support children to solve problems.

Information about this inspection

Inspections of registered early years provision are:

- scheduled at least once in every inspection cycle – the current cycle ends on 31 July 2016
- scheduled more frequently where Ofsted identifies a need to do so, for example where provision was previously judged inadequate
- brought forward in the inspection cycle where Ofsted has received information that suggests the provision may not be meeting the legal requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage or where assessment of the provision identifies a need for early inspection
- prioritised where we have received information that the provision is not meeting the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage and which suggests children may not be safe
- scheduled at the completion of an investigation into failure to comply with the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

The provision is also registered on the voluntary and compulsory parts of the Childcare Register. This report includes a judgment about compliance with the requirements of that register.

Inspection activities

- The inspector observed children at play in each of the nursery rooms.
- The inspector carried out a joint observation with the manager.
- The inspector examined a range of documentation.
- The inspector gathered the views of parents.

Inspector

Susan McCourt

Full report

Information about the setting

St Helen's Montessori Nursery School opened as a nursery in 1989. It was registered in 2006 as a school. The nursery operates from two upstairs rooms in a converted coach house in the grounds of the owner's home in East Farleigh, in Kent. There are currently 35 children aged from two to five years on roll. The setting welcomes children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who are learning English as an additional language. The school also offers specialist teaching in sports, swimming, French and music amongst others. The group opens five days a week during school term times. Sessions are from 9.25am until 12.35pm or 1pm until 4.10pm with some children staying for full days. There are nine staff who work with the children. Six of these are qualified as Montessori teachers and three are in training.

What the setting needs to do to improve further

To further improve the quality of the early years provision the provider should:

- support all staff to use consistent behaviour techniques, particularly to support children's independent problem solving.

Inspection judgements

How well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend

Staff have a good understanding of how to meet the learning and development requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. Staff follow the Montessori method of teaching and have a strong awareness of how it relates to all aspects of the seven areas of learning. They support children's play using a good balance of child-initiated and adult-led play, which means that children are independent learners. It also means that children learn from specific teaching when practising a new skill. This helps them to make good progress in their learning and development given their starting points and capabilities.

Staff have good teaching skills. When children start at the nursery, they quickly learn how to be independent in the play environment. Staff show children where to keep their personal belongings and how to select activities from around the room. Children enjoy taking charge of their activities and settle to purposeful play as a result. Staff guide children with new activities. For example, a child who had some number boards began placing single numerals next to each other to create numbers from ten to 19. Staff saw that he was struggling with one aspect of this, and intervened to guide him so that he could be successful. The child continued to complete the activity and was proud of his achievement. This considerate approach to guiding children fosters their self-esteem. Children gain mature mathematical skills and are skilled at building towers using blocks of increasing size, or counting in units and tens. Children gain strong reading and writing

skills. They explore letters of different textures and learn about the sounds they represent. Children notice the different sounds within a word and become skilled at finding the letters which spell the word as a result. Children enjoy looking at books and regularly take them home to share with their family. Children benefit from a wide range of craft activities. Children make holes in card to sew shapes using needles and wool. Staff teach the children how to use tools safely so that they can learn about how to keep themselves safe. Children also paint and make craft items as part of general play and project work. For example, children make different things to represent butterflies at each stage of their life cycle. In this way, children gain skills across different areas of learning such as understanding the world and expressive arts.

Staff work with parents when children first start to gather information about children's starting points and care needs. Staff then introduce children to the methods and materials they use and make an initial assessment. This helps them to identify children's next steps for learning and begin a programme of play and learning. Staff make daily observations of children's progress which means that their development is carefully fostered. Staff make regular summary reviews of children's learning which they share with parents. Parents meet with the key person to discuss progress before the key person writes the report. This puts parents' views at the heart of the review and supports a strong partnership. The key person writes the progress check when children are aged two. These reviews and progress checks track children's learning against expected levels of development in each area of learning. This helps staff to work on any achievement gaps that children may have, and also means they can set appropriately challenging play to build on children's strengths. Children's records show that children make good progress in their learning.

The contribution of the early years provision to the well-being of children

Staff are very effective key persons for children. They know each child's individual care needs and share this information with other staff so that they can all provide consistent care. Staff create a quiet and purposeful atmosphere which helps children settle to activities. Children benefit from the thoughtful approach staff take if children need their comfort items such as favourite dolls. This helps the more vulnerable children to feel secure and reassured. Staff create an interesting learning environment with good quality play materials easily within every child's reach. The garden and outdoor areas are very inviting and provide children with a wide range of play activities across the whole curriculum. For example, they have an outdoor classroom with a good range of play equipment available. Staff also arrange a great variety of specialist activities with peripatetic teachers in gardening, French and drama, for example. This provides children with an interesting timetable.

Children have good opportunities to learn about healthy lifestyles. They plant a variety of foods in the garden and harvest what they grow. Additionally, children have won the Bronze Award from the Kent Wildlife Trust, for their wildlife garden. Parents provide food for snacks and meals and children independently select their plates and cups when eating. Children pour their own drinks of water or milk, and also clear their plates and wash up. This gives children good self-care skills. Children follow good hygiene practices and staff

have well-established routines to minimise the risk of cross-infection. Children spontaneously cover their mouths when they cough, and put used tissues in the bin. Children's physical development is fostered very well. Children carry trays of materials to the table, and roll and unroll mats to play on. Children have opportunities to learn to swim or play sports with specialist teachers. This helps to build their strength and physical development. Children have strong skills in their small muscle development as they frequently use small tools such as needles and thread. Children learn good skills in managing their own safety as staff make sure they use banisters and are careful on the stairs, for example.

Children's behaviour is good. Staff have a clear policy on behaviour management which guides them to deal positively with children. For example, when a child was kicking at his bag, staff suggested he save his strong kicking foot for playing with a ball, as he might damage his bag. This helps children to understand consequences and appropriate behaviour. However, some staff do not follow this policy and use negative language. This means that children do not get consistent messages and may not be clear about what is expected of them or how to seek their own solutions. Children enjoy taking responsibility for their activities and personal belongings. They are very considerate of their friends and have a strong understanding of how to take turns and share. For example, seeing that their friend has an activity that they want, they spontaneously say they will play something else while they wait. Overall, this means that children have good skills for their future learning.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the early years provision

The manager has a good understanding of how to meet the safeguarding and welfare requirements. Staff are recruited using the school's procedure, which includes suitability checks. Staff whose suitability checks are not clear at the time of starting work have no unsupervised contact with children. There are clear policies and procedures for staff to follow should they have any concerns about the welfare of a child. Staff understand the policies and know who they report to and how to keep records. They understand that the welfare of the child is paramount. Managers carry out risk assessments which results in safety procedures for staff to follow. For example, staff support children to use the stairs very safely following the practice they have established. Staff and managers keep the required documentation up to date, which underpins children's well-being.

Managers use a wide range of methods to support the ongoing improvement of the nursery. Staff benefit from a supportive induction and probationary process which establishes shared working methods and understanding of the aims and objectives of the nursery. Staff have various options to upgrade their qualifications, do short courses, or work with colleagues who act as mentors. Staff receive good support to recognise their strengths and areas for development, which they discuss with managers at reviews and appraisals. Managers also support staff to carry out peer reviews and reflect on their practice. The manager consults with parents, staff and children when writing self-evaluations of the nursery. Their ideas are incorporated into action plans and in this way,

staff enhance the music curriculum, for example, or add equipment and resources outside. The manager monitors the work of staff by examining the children's learning records. This means that staff's work is moderated, and the manager can identify where achievement gaps have implications for resources or teaching methods.

Parents enjoy a strong partnership with staff. They share information at handovers and in review meetings. Parents also join the parent association which organises events in the nursery and creates a strong sense of community. Parents greatly value the staff's teaching and care of the children. They appreciate how children progress in their social and personal skills, and also how staff are always available to discuss any issues. Staff have a good understanding of how to work in partnership with other professionals where children have additional needs. They liaise with other carers to make sure that staff are providing consistent care for medical and emotional needs. Children benefit from the close partnerships that staff have built with the school on site and other schools in the area. This means that children are familiar with their new teachers and are confident in transferring to school.

The Childcare Register

The requirements for the compulsory part of the Childcare Register are **Met**

The requirements for the voluntary part of the Childcare Register are **Met**

What inspection judgements mean

Registered early years provision

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	Outstanding provision is highly effective in meeting the needs of all children exceptionally well. This ensures that children are very well prepared for the next stage of their learning.
Grade 2	Good	Good provision is effective in delivering provision that meets the needs of all children well. This ensures children are ready for the next stage of their learning.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	The provision is not giving children a good standard of early years education and/or there are minor breaches of the safeguarding and welfare requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. We re-inspect nurseries and pre-schools judged as requires improvement within 12 months of the date of inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	Provision that is inadequate requires significant improvement and/or enforcement action. The provision is failing to give children an acceptable standard of early years education and/or is not meeting the safeguarding and welfare requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. It will be monitored and inspected again within six months of the date of this inspection.
Met		There were no children present at the time of the inspection. The inspection judgement is that the provider continues to meet the requirements for registration.
Not met		There were no children present at the time of the inspection. The inspection judgement is that the provider does not meet the requirements for registration.

Inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted 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.

Setting details

Unique reference number	127587
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	813712
Type of provision	Full-time provision
Registration category	Childcare - Non-Domestic
Age range of children	2 - 5
Total number of places	30
Number of children on roll	35
Name of provider	Marie-Elise Jeannelle Dening-Smitherman
Date of previous inspection	not applicable
Telephone number	01622 721 731 or 01622 726 219

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Type of provision

For the purposes of this inspection the following definitions apply:

Full-time provision is that which operates for more than three hours. These are usually known as nurseries, nursery schools and pre-schools and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage. They are registered on the Early Years Register and pay the higher fee for registration.

Sessional provision operates for more than two hours but does not exceed three hours in any one day. These are usually known as pre-schools, kindergartens or nursery schools

and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage. They are registered on the Early Years Register and pay the lower fee for registration.

Childminders care for one or more children where individual children attend for a period of more than two hours in any one day. They operate from domestic premises, which are usually the childminder's own home. They are registered on the Early Years Register and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Out of school provision may be sessional or full-time provision and is delivered before or after school and/or in the summer holidays. They are registered on the Early Years Register and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage. Where children receive their Early Years Foundation Stage in school these providers do not have to deliver the learning and development requirements in full but should complement the experiences children receive in school.

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