

Inspection of Colchester Montessori Day Nursery

49 William Harris Way, Colchester CO2 8WJ

Inspection date: 24 July 2025

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not applicable

What is it like to attend this early years setting?

The provision is good

Children thrive in this nurturing and enriching environment, where staff place their and their families well-being, at the centre of everything they do. Children show high levels of confidence and strong caring attachments to staff as they chat about their morning, before hanging up their belongings and self-registering their attendance. A secure key-person system and bespoke settling-in routines are a strong point. For example, some children who find drop-offs difficult find comfort in the familiarity of wearing the 'special helper' lanyard upon arrival and help staff set up activities. Consequently, children settle swiftly and remarkably smoothly, in ways that are meaningful and reassuring to them.

Children have superb attitudes to learning and are inquisitive and motivated learners. They concentrate well at group times and display a great deal of patience. They develop good listening and attention skills in readiness for school. The well-designed curriculum provides a range of opportunities for children to be active, independent and make choices in their play. Children frequently play cooperatively. Attentive staff are positive role models and provide meaningful praise as children take turns on the slide. This reinforces children's understanding of safe and positive behaviours expected of them.

What does the early years setting do well and what does it need to do better?

- Children have constant access to activities that allow them to learn through experimentation, both indoors and outdoors. Children enjoy exploring the textures and scents of citrus fruits in water and strengthen their fine motor skills as they manipulate dough. They press shells into dough and giggle in amazement as they reveal a pretty pattern underneath. Staff are skilful at using questions to prompt interesting discussions and check recall and understanding of what children are learning.
- Staff use rhyming books and familiar stories to help children develop a lifelong love of reading. Staff read a story about a bear to children outdoors to inspire their imagination and develop a sense of the natural and creative world around them. Children begin to repeat phrases from the story such as 'I'm not scared' with the enthusiastic, fun-loving staff. However, staff do not always make the best possible use of real-life resources available or extend on learning opportunities that naturally occur to help children discover and develop deeper connections to the world around them.
- The professional training opportunities in place for staff support them in building on the quality of their teaching. The supportive management team regularly provides staff with supervision sessions and appraisals, which help them reflect on their practice. Staff report excellent well-being and feel supported in their role. Staff and parents can nominate individual staff members for employee of

the month, which helps them feel valued.

- Staff gather detailed information from parents about what their child already knows and can do before they start. Ongoing assessments of children's progress ensure that any gaps in learning are identified early. Staff work closely with parents and other professionals such as speech and language therapists. This means all children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress in their learning and development, particularly in their communication and language development.
- Parents applaud daily communication, both face to face and on the online platform, about their child's day. Staff support parents in borrowing home-learning packs to continue their children's learning at home.
- Children skilfully develop their independence from an early age. Staff implement merry tunes to help children recognise and learn efficient self-care practices, such as washing their hands before eating. Learning progression is clearly evident as the older children are accomplished with tasks such as setting the table, pouring their own drinks and serving their own food.
- Family picture boards and culturally relevant resources throughout the nursery promote a sense of identity and belonging. During group time, children can share their backgrounds and experiences, which helps them to learn about diversity. At the end of discussions, staff encourage children to hold hands to sing a friendship song. This plays a significant role in supporting unity and kind and respectful behaviours.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts children's interests first.

What does the setting need to do to improve?

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

- continue to strengthen teaching skills that build on children's curiosity and understanding of the world to help them achieve their highest possible learning outcomes.

Setting details

Unique reference number	2751883
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10414714
Type of provision	Childcare on non-domestic premises
Registers	Early Years Register, Compulsory Childcare Register, Voluntary Childcare Register
Day care type	Full day care
Age range of children at time of inspection	0 to 4
Total number of places	98
Number of children on roll	80
Name of registered person	Headstart Colchester Limited
Registered person unique reference number	2751882
Telephone number	07530436030
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable

Information about this early years setting

Colchester Montessori Day Nursery registered in 2023 and follows the Montessori philosophy and method of education. The nursery employs 16 members of childcare staff. Of these, 11 hold an appropriate childcare qualification at level 3 and above, including two with qualified teacher status. The nursery is open from 8am to 6pm, Monday to Friday all year round, apart from bank holidays. The nursery provides government-funded early years education for all eligible children.

Information about this inspection

Inspector
Louisa Taylor

Inspection activities

- The manager and the inspector completed a tour of the nursery, both indoors and outdoors, to understand how the early years provision and curriculum are organised. They also discussed the safety and suitability of the premises.
- The inspector observed the quality of teaching during activities indoors and outdoors and assessed the impact that this had on children's learning.
- The inspector carried out a joint observation of group activities with the manager and also discussed self-evaluation.
- The special educational needs coordinator spoke to the inspector about how they support children with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Children communicated with the inspector during the inspection. The inspector spoke with parents and carers during the inspection and took account of their views.
- The inspector held a meeting with the management team and also discussed self-evaluation. The inspector looked at relevant documentation, such as evidence of the suitability of the staff working in the nursery and a selection of other records.

We carried out this inspection 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.

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