

St Matthews Montessori School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY344600
Inspection date	17 May 2007
Inspector	Susan Elizabeth Tovey
Setting Address	St Matthews Church Hall, North Common Road, London, W5 2QA
Telephone number	07956 222959
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Registered person	Willow Tree Education Ltd
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Full day care

ABOUT THIS INSPECTION

The purpose of this inspection is to assure government, parents and the public of the quality of childcare and, if applicable, of nursery education. The inspection was carried out under Part XA Children Act 1989 as introduced by the Care Standards Act 2000 and, where nursery education is provided, under Schedule 26 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004; the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding; and, where nursery education is provided, the *Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage*.

The report includes information on any complaints about the childcare provision which Ofsted has received since the last inspection or registration or 1 April 2004 whichever is the later.

The key inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality

Good: this aspect of the provision is strong

Satisfactory: this aspect of the provision is sound

Inadequate: this aspect of the provision is not good enough

For more information about early years inspections, please see the booklet *Are you ready for your inspection?* which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE AND NURSERY EDUCATION

On the basis of the evidence collected on this inspection:

The quality and standards of the care are good. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are good.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

St Matthews Montessori is a long established school which is privately owned. It first opened in 1982 and was registered in 2006. The school operates from a church hall in Ealing in the London borough of Ealing. A maximum of 26 children may attend the school at any one time. There are currently 48 children from two to under five years on roll. Of these, 32 children receive funding for early education. The school supports children who speak English as an additional language and serves families from the local and wider community.

The school is open each weekday from 09:00 to 15:15 term time only. There is access to an outside communal garden area for children's outdoor play. The school works with the Montessori and the Early Years Foundation Stage teaching methods for children aged two to four years old. The school employs seven staff, five staff including the principal hold appropriate early years qualifications.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children learn good hygiene practices as part of their daily routine. Most children are independent in their self-help skills whilst staff provide appropriate levels of support for younger children as they are developing the ability to do this. Children wash their hands at appropriate times and understand the reasons for doing so. Many children put on aprons for messy play and outdoor clothes, often persevering to do this independently. There are suitable procedures in place to ensure good standards of cleanliness and to promote good hygiene throughout the school and thus minimise risk to children. Most staff have relevant first aid training and the children are well cared for, due to efficient procedures in place, for first aid, accidents and medication.

The children are provided with healthy snacks and bring their own packed lunches. Their individual dietary needs are clearly known and followed by the childcare staff. Snack and meal-times are well organised. The children and staff sit at the table and eat in a relaxed and social atmosphere. The staff encourage the children to engage in conversation with their peers; as a result the children are increasing their social skills. Children are developing their independence as they help themselves to fruit at snack time and pour their own drinks.

Children move freely around the hall with good levels of co-ordination and awareness of others. The outside play area is temporarily not available. Although, staff ensure that children have opportunities to be active indoors. For example, ballet, yoga and music and movement sessions are offered weekly. These activities enable children to explore different ways of moving their bodies. However, there are limited opportunities for children to develop climbing and balancing skills.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The staff provide a warm welcome to the children and their parents. Children benefit from the welcoming surroundings as staff greet them and their parents warmly; this ensures they feel secure and content. Space is well organised and used effectively to allow children opportunities to be active, engage in table top and floor activities. They enjoy opportunities to relax and share books in a comfortable environment with child size seating and cushions.

Children have access to a wide range of good quality toys and Montessori equipment, which are appropriate for their age and development. Resources and equipment are arranged in low level storage units which enables children to choose and access resources easily. This means that their independence skills are well promoted. All the furniture and play equipment is clean and in good condition to ensure children are not harmed.

Children receive very good levels of supervision as correct ratios are maintained at all times. However, the record of staff in the building at any one time is not always clear, which could compromise safety. Children work and play happily in an environment where staff have an excellent awareness of security. Staff are alert to potential hazards and risks are minimized. Children are learning to keep themselves safe as staff reinforce simple safety rules. For example, children are reminded to carry their chairs correctly and to tuck their legs and arms in whilst

sitting on the floor, to avoid them being trodden on. They have regular opportunities to practise the fire evacuation procedure.

Staff have a good understanding of the signs and symptoms of child abuse and know what action to take if they have concerns about a child in their care which helps protect children and safeguard their wellbeing. Records are used to record any concerns and are stored securely for confidentiality.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are happy and secure within the environment. The school follows the Montessori philosophy and younger children are provided with very good opportunities to explore and investigate a wide range of interesting activities. All children are developing their independence as they choose an activity from the low shelves and return them when they have finished. They gain good self-esteem as staff praise their efforts and celebrate their achievements. Children enjoy the balance of activities available to them which helps them progress in all areas of development. They spend their time purposefully, for example, they paint, use their imagination as they play in the cafe and sit sensibly together as they listen to stories. Staff work together to plan activities which give all children opportunities to develop their skills. Planned documents show how activities are successfully linked to the Foundation Stage curriculum and the Birth to three matters framework. Children have excellent relationships with staff and each other. Children make good progress in their social skills as the staff provide a caring environment which teaches children the importance of being kind and considerate to each other. Older children provide good role models to the younger children as they offer help and guidance with activities, often inviting them to come and play a game. Younger children particularly enjoy the sensorial Montessori equipment where they investigate and explore. For example, a child spends time carefully pouring water from one jug to another, then uses the sponge to soak up any spills.

The staff team have attended Birth to three training and this is used to plan suitable activities for younger children and to monitor their progress and achievements.

Nursery Education.

The quality of teaching and children's learning is good. Children benefit from a well balanced curriculum as staff have a good understanding of the Foundation Stage. They have a very good knowledge of incorporating Montessori teaching methods into the curriculum. Planning of the curriculum is linked to the stepping stones and identifies clear learning intentions for individual children. Staff have developed individual portfolios where children's progress is recorded and the next steps of learning is clearly identified. Staff provide a good balance of adult directed learning and allowing children time to play alone. They are skilled in extending children's vocabulary by asking open ended questions to make children think. Children learn right from wrong, through the school's ground rules. Staff give clear explanations, reminders to consider each other and games and activities that involve waiting and turn taking. Children have good opportunities to gain independence, as they pour their own drinks and arrange their packed lunch on a plate.

Children's attitudes to learning are very positive, they are highly engaged and motivated throughout their time at the school. The children spend extended periods of time concentrating

on their chosen task. For example, as they sit looking at the 'Under the Sea' book together, totally absorbed while studying the pictures of the marine life.

Children enjoy using the Montessori equipment and spend time concentrating, as they polish objects and moving pasta from one container to another. Children spend time exploring textures such as sand, and using magnets. They use numbers confidently in their play and when using equipment. For example, children use Montessori beads to learn about simple addition and subtraction techniques. Children use numbers in practical situations such as counting how many children are sitting at the table during snack time. They confidently use mathematical language such as more than or less than.

Children learn about living things as they talk about their South African Snail. They watch the snail moving in the tank and know that it likes to eat lettuce. A group of children use the globe to show where they live and where they have visited. Children engage freely in conversation with others. They enjoy exploring books, both individually and in small groups throughout the day. Children are captivated during story time and they eagerly await what happens next. The children can explore mark-making as a writing and drawing activity. Most children can write their own names, others attempt with the support of staff on their art work. Some children identify written letters and sound these out to complete a three and four letter word game.

Children develop their co-ordination and fine motor skills as they transfer objects from one container to another using tweezers and tongs, thread cotton reels and beads and complete peg boards. They cut with scissors and manipulate dough using their hands and the different tools available to them. Children have good opportunities to develop their knowledge of colour and shape whilst painting at the easel. Although, children participate in a range of art and craft activities, opportunities to freely develop and explore their own ideas are limited. Children thoroughly enjoy singing especially in small groups in different languages and participating in regular music and movement sessions.

Staff use a range of teaching strategies to reinforce and further develop children's knowledge and skills. Children benefit from good relationships with the staff, who constantly reassure they are doing well. Staff regularly observe, monitor and record children's progress in a variety of ways and use these to identify individual targets for the children to work towards. Staff have realistic expectations of children and good individual knowledge helps children to consolidate their learning before moving onto the next stage. As a result, children's individual needs are effectively supported and sufficient challenges are provided to help them achieve their individual potential.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

The setting is very welcoming and children attend from a variety of ethnic backgrounds. Children who have recently joined the setting have settled well. They have developed positive relationships with the staff and are keen to talk with them and ask questions. Children learn about themselves and the wider world through planned activities and discussions; taking part in various celebrations such as Eid and Diwali. Children are provided with a good range of resources that reflect positive images of diversity such as puzzles, books, maps, globes, and artefacts from different countries. This positive approach fosters children's social, moral, spiritual and cultural development. Staff have experience of supporting children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and work in close partnership with parents and outside agencies to meet individual needs. This ensures that children's individual needs are well met.

The children's behaviour is very good; they know what is expected of them and are clear about what is right and wrong. They have a good understanding of the boundaries and behaviour expectations of the school. They are learning to be polite to one another through the role models provided by the staff, who encourage the children to say please and thank-you. The children are confident and show good self-esteem, responding well to praise and encouragement.

The school's partnership with parents is good. Children benefit from an excellent relationship between their main carers and staff. As good communication links result in consistent care being provided to meet each individual child's needs. Parents are warmly welcomed into the school and encouraged to be involved with their child's learning. They receive regular and detailed information about school practice via verbal exchanges and information displayed. They are invited to view their children's records at any time. Parents have access to the school's policies and procedures.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Excellent teamwork contributes to children having positive, play and learning experiences at the school. Staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities and work cohesively together to ensure the sessions run smoothly. They are vigilant to children's needs and ensure children are well supervised and ratios met. Staff are efficient, professional and organise a stimulating environment in which children focus well on learning through well supported, purposeful play. They have a good understanding of how children learn and update their skills by regularly attending external training. Policies and procedures work in practice to promote children's health, safety, enjoyment, achievement and ability to make a positive contribution. Most documentation to support these areas are well maintained, although the method of recording the number of staff present in the building at any one time is not always clear.

The leadership and management of nursery education is good. Staff are experienced and knowledgeable about the Foundation Stage and Montessori curriculum, which has a positive impact on the children's achievements. The principal has sound leadership qualities and she is supported by a very experienced and skilled team. Staff receive regular supervision and are encouraged to attend further training to enhance their knowledge and skills.

Children are making very good progress towards the early learning goals. Practice is continually monitored and evaluated and records maintained of these reviews. Staff are committed and dedicated to ensuring good standards are maintained and have identified areas for further improvement. The new principal has identified gaps in the physical play resources offered to children to develop their climbing and balancing skills. An action plan is in place to address this. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

Not applicable

Complaints since the last inspection

Since registration there have been no complaints made to Ofsted that required the provider or Ofsted to take any action in order to meet the National Standards. The provider is required to keep a record of complaints made by parents, which they can see on request. The complaints record may contain complaints other than those made to Ofsted.

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WHAT MUST BE DONE TO SECURE FUTURE IMPROVEMENT?

The quality and standards of the care

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure the record of number of staff in the building is easily accessible in emergencies

The quality and standards of the nursery education

To improve the quality and standards of nursery education further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- look at ways of providing more opportunities for children to develop and explore their own ideas through free creativity.
- increase the opportunities for large scale movement, including climbing and balancing.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the leaflet *Complaints about Ofsted Early Years: concerns or complaints about Ofsted's role in regulating and inspecting childcare and early education* (HMI ref no 2599) which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk