

# St Patrick's Montessori Nursery School

Inspection report for early years provision

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	144712
<b>Inspection date</b>	11 December 2007
<b>Inspector</b>	Josephine Geoghegan
<b>Setting Address</b>	91 Cornwall Rd, London, SE1 8TH
<b>Telephone number</b>	0207-928-5557
<b>E-mail</b>	<a href="mailto:gillian@st-patricks-nursery-school">gillian@st-patricks-nursery-school</a>
<b>Registered person</b>	Radius Educational Services Limited
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Integrated
<b>Type of care</b>	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](http://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 satisfactory. 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. Patrick's Montessori Nursery School opened in 1994 and operates from a Victorian infant school building in the Waterloo area of Lambeth. There are three group rooms and all children share access to an enclosed outside play area. The nursery is registered to provide full day care for 54 children under five years. They open from Monday to Friday all year round, except for one week at Christmas. Sessions are from 08:00 to 18:00.

There are currently 73 children from three months to five years on roll, including 13 children who are in receipt of nursery education funding. No children presently attend who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The setting currently supports nine children who speak English as an additional language. Children attend for a variety of sessions.

A team of 21 staff work with the children, of these nineteen staff hold either Montessori or Early Years qualifications. In addition, the setting employs a cook and a kitchen assistant. The teaching method is a combination of Montessori and the Foundation Stage. The school is accredited by Montessori Education (UK) limited.

## THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

### **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is outstanding.

Excellent systems are in place to promote children's good health; for example, children are offered a balanced and nutritious diet of freshly prepared meals and snacks that include vegetables and/or fruit with all meals and organic produce. Children have constant access to fresh water and younger children are offered drinks at regular intervals. Individual dietary routines are followed for younger children promoting consistency with their routine at home. Staff ensure all bottles and cups are labelled with children's names; bottles are sterilised and milk feeds are freshly made when needed, promoting good food hygiene practice.

Children are able to play in a clean environment where high standards of hygiene are maintained, for example, no shoes are worn in the baby room, enabling younger children to crawl on a clean floor; staff use disposable gloves and aprons during nappy changing routines and all children have their own bedding helping to stop the spread of infection. Children learn good hygiene habits through daily routines, such as washing their hands before meals and older children use the bathroom independently, developing their self care skills. Good systems are in place to ensure children's welfare is promoted in the event of an accident or illness as staff hold first aid qualifications and all required documentation is in place and used effectively.

Children have excellent opportunities to gain exercise and develop their physical skills; for example, they benefit from outside play at regular intervals throughout the day where they are able to use a wide range of play equipment, including climbing frames, wheeled toys and balls. In addition, they participate in weekly dance sessions with a peripatetic ballet teacher, enabling them to develop their physical control.

### **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is outstanding.

Children benefit from positive steps taken by the setting to promote high standards of safety; for example, a continuous system of risk assessments are implemented by staff, all fire safety equipment is in place, including an evacuation cot, and all children participate in regular evacuation drills. In addition, children benefit from safety flooring in the outside play area. Excellent systems are in place to promote security as the setting operates an intercom entry system, all internal doors are use a door code entry system and the outdoor play area is fully enclosed. Robust systems are in place to ensure sleeping babies are frequently checked, promoting health and safety.

Children are able to play in a well maintained setting where space is used effectively to meet the needs of the children; for example, younger children benefit from plenty of clear play-space to crawl and move freely between activities with resources stored in floor level units. Older children are able to make choices as toys and books are easily accessible and stored in low level units with clearly written labels and pictures. All group rooms are well equipped with a broad range of toys and equipment that are suitable for children's age and stage of development. All toys and equipment are of good quality and well maintained and include Montessori resources for older children. Children, staff and parents benefit from the welcoming environment created by lots of displays of children's creative work, photo's of them participating in a variety of activities and information about the setting.

Good systems are in place to ensure staff know what to do if they are worried a child is being abused; for example, clear policies, procedures and relevant information are easily accessible and staff attend training, helping to safeguard children's welfare.

### **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is good.

Children are provided with a broad and interesting range of activities throughout the day that promote learning in all areas, for example, all staff use a system of planning that shows regard to the Early Years Foundation Stage; they use a good balance of teaching methods which includes time for free-play, group activities such as story and circle times, outside play, focus activities and Montessori sessions for older children. In addition, children have opportunities to participate in dance, music and drama sessions with peripatetic teachers. Good systems are in place to track children's progress as all group rooms use a similar approach, including for children who receive nursery education, promoting consistency throughout the setting, for example, staff collate observations of children's progress and samples of their work and add details to tracking books; they use this information to plan children's individual next steps for learning. In addition, staff track older children's progress during daily Montessori teaching sessions, ensuring children use resources effectively, enabling them to progress through the Montessori cycle of learning.

Children in the baby room move freely; they explore and discover how things work as they use a wide range of cause and effect style toys, such as activity centres and musical toys. They enjoy using push along toys, enabling them to develop their walking skills and physical control. They are becoming skilful communicators as staff promote lots of meaningful interaction, for example while offering children choices and encouraging their interest in play. Children's individual needs are met well as staff are attentive and respond to children's sounds and gestures. Children under three in the pre-school room benefit from access to a wide range of activities, for example, they enjoy being creative while using paint and collage materials. They imitate cooking and eating while using play food and utensils in the home corner. Children show skilful use of large construction sets, for example as they build towers with bricks, developing their problem solving skills. They have good opportunities to develop their physical skills as they use large climbing equipment and wheeled toys during both inside and outside play. In addition, they have good opportunities to develop their hand and eye coordination as they use hand held tools such as sand scoops and glue sticks. Children actively participate in group times as staff use puppets and props to skilfully hold children's attention during song times; for example, staff use puppets while singing 'Old Mac Donald' and all children hold an animal while singing the jungle song and making the animal sounds, enabling them to develop their language skills and gain an awareness of nature.

### **Nursery education**

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff use a range of assessment and planning methods to ensure appropriate challenges are set for children. They make good use of time and resources, enabling children to be purposefully engaged in play. Children have good opportunities to develop their social skills, for example, during circle time as they take turns to tell their news and express their feelings. They develop their self care skills as they use the bathroom independently and put on their own coats and shoes. They are able to make choices as they select resources and work independently. In addition they help themselves to snacks and pour their own drinking water, however, their independence is limited at meal times as staff serve the food and drinks. Children are happy, settled and eager to learn; they freely

engage in conversations with each other and staff, developing their language skills. Children are developing good writing skills with many children able to write their own names with clearly formed letters. Good systems are in place to help children learn about letters and the sounds they make, for example, as they complete the date and weather chart during circle time and use magnetic letters with staff during the Montessori session. Children use books independently and purposefully, developing their reading skills.

Children have good opportunities to be creative, for example as they engage in role-play in the outside playhouse and practise for the group Christmas production. They are able to explore and experiment using a wide range of media such as paint, collage and drawing materials, developing their free creative expression. Children enjoy singing and actively sing familiar songs from memory. Children show a good understanding of number, for example, they recognise numerals and can count accurately in excess of ten. Children are developing good problem solving skills as they use a wide range of Montessori materials such as grading blocks and cubes, knobbed cylinders and geometric shapes effectively. In addition, they use practical life resources to develop their awareness of weight, space and measure and their physical control.

Children have good opportunities to develop their knowledge and understanding of the world; for example, they learn about cultures and beliefs through planned activities relating to a variety of festivals. They are able to explore objects and learn about nature as they use a range of natural resources and participate in projects about animals. Children participate in local outings, developing their awareness of the environment. However, they are not provided with enough opportunities to use the computer and develop their awareness of technology. Children have good opportunities to develop their physical skills, for example, they show skilful use of hand held tools such as scissors; they use climbing equipment with confidence and show good coordination and spatial awareness while using wheeled toys.

### **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is outstanding.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered well. They have good relationships with each other and staff. Younger children benefit from secure relationships with staff who offer lots of cuddles and attention, enabling them to feel self assured. Older children are developing good social skills, for example, they are able to share, take turns and play cooperatively; they take responsibility for putting away toys after use and respond appropriately to well established daily routines, such as lining up to go outside.

Partnership with parents is outstanding. Parents have excellent opportunities to gain awareness of activities and events that children participate in, for example, extensive photos are displayed and photo albums are available in the reception area and group rooms. They are offered regular news letters and kept well informed about children's progress through regular meetings and written reports. Staff are welcoming and discuss children's needs with parents when they arrive, such as food and sleep requirements of babies, ensuring a smooth transition from home to nursery. All staff make time to inform parents of their child's day when they are collected; parents of younger children are offered a written daily information sheet and parents of older children view the group room diary. New children benefit from a gradual settling in procedure, enabling them to feel secure when their parents leave. In addition, parents are provided with information about the setting as a wide range of policies and procedures are easily accessible.

Good systems are in place to ensure children's individual needs are known, such as any allergies, dietary or medical needs and languages spoken. Good systems are in place to ensure children

who use English as an additional language are supported within the setting, for example, staff ensure they know familiar words from the child's home language and some staff are dual language speakers. Although no children presently attend who have identified learning difficulties and/or disabilities systems are in place to ensure care promotes inclusion, such as staff working with parents and outside agencies to ensure children's needs are met. Children develop their understanding of equality through use of resources that promote diversity and planned activities relating to a variety of festivals. They show a sense of belonging as they are keen to greet each other and to say goodbye when they leave. Their self esteem is enhanced by displays of photos and their creative work and posters showing positive images of people in the community.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is satisfactory.

Leadership and management of the setting is satisfactory. This is due to a breach of regulations as the provider has failed to inform Ofsted of a change of the directors and ownership of the company within the required timescale.

Children are cared for in a clean, bright and well organised environment. They are able to develop their independence as they make choices of resources that are well organised and easily accessible in all group rooms. Good use is made of time as all children are offered a broad and balanced programme of activities that promote learning. However, opportunities are limited for children to gain awareness of technology or develop their independence at mealtimes.

Excellent systems are in place to ensure staff are well deployed; for example, the manager and deputy are both supernumery and two full time staff are employed to cover in any group room as needed, enabling ratios to be met and children to be supervised by familiar staff at all times. Staff attend regular meetings to ensure planning and evaluation of care and education are effective; they show a commitment to the development of the quality of the service as all staff have good opportunities to attend relevant training courses. Children's welfare is safeguarded as all required documentation is in place, such as records of children and staff details, attendance and any accidents or medication administered. A broad range of policies and procedures are in place to support the management of the setting. Robust systems are in place to ensure staff are suitable to work with children, for example, vetting checks are completed and all staff participate in a continuous system of appraisal. Staff maintain high levels of communication throughout the day, ensuring children are supported while creating a relaxed atmosphere. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

## **Improvements since the last inspection**

At the last inspection the setting was asked to provide opportunities for children's own creative work to be displayed and develop partnership with parents to ensure they receive daily feedback about their child's achievements and to ensure they are provided with Ofsted details within the complaints procedure. Staff attended a training session regarding children's creativity and ensure their work is displayed throughout the setting. They have developed systems to improve daily feedback, such as the information sheets for younger children and the group room diary for older children and staff are available to discuss children's achievements when they are collected. In addition, a poster is displayed showing ofsted details and a complaints or compliments box is available in the reception area. Regarding nursery education, the setting was asked to improve opportunities for children to write their names on their own pieces of work and to develop opportunities for children to gain awareness of maths through everyday

situations. The setting now ensures children are encouraged to write their names on their own work and staff attended in-house training to ensure they are all aware of taking every opportunity to develop children's maths skills.

### **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.

## **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 satisfactory. 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 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):

- develop knowledge and understanding of regulations to ensure ofsted are informed of significant events within the required timescales.
- extend opportunities for children to develop their independence at mealtimes (also applies to nursery education).

#### **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):

- extend opportunities for children to develop their understanding of technology (also applies to care).

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](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)