

St. Mark's Montessori

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	138251
Inspection date	15 October 2007
Inspector	Lindsay Ann Farenden

Setting Address	St. Mark's Church, St. Mark's Place, London, SW19 7ND
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Telephone number	07956346938
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Registered person	Hilda Galustian
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Type of inspection	Integrated
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Type of care	Full day care
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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. Mark's Montessori school opened in 1998. It operates from rooms within St Marks Church in central Wimbledon. All children share access to a secure enclosed outside area. It serves the children and families from the local area and beyond. The nursery is open five days, Monday to Friday from 09:30 to 12:30 and from 09:30 to 15:15 for some days a week, term time only.

There are currently 26 children aged from two to under five years on roll. Of these 17 receive funding for nursery education. The nursery supports children with special needs and children who have English as an additional language.

The nursery employs five staff. Four of the staff including the Manager have the Montessori Diploma. There are also three visiting teachers for French, Ballet and Yoga.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children's health is promoted because they play in a very clean environment and are encouraged by staff to follow good hygiene routines, such as washing their hands after using the toilet and disposing of tissues hygienically after use.

Children's dietary needs, allergies and medical history are obtained from parents when children first start and on a regular basis and this information is known and fully acknowledged by staff. To protect children's health, pack lunches are stored appropriately. Snack time is very well organised and enhances children's self help skills and independence. They can choose when they want to have their snack, pour their own drinks and select and cut the fruit of their choice with small knives. Children place their name cards in a box to show staff they have had their snack. Children have an excellent awareness of foods that are good for them and not so good for them through regular discussions during circle times and talks from a visiting nutritionist.

Accidents are dealt with effectively because a qualified first aider is always present throughout each session and well stocked first aid boxes are in place. The sharing of accident records with parents enables them to watch for any further systems that may occur. Written permission to seek emergency medical treatment is requested, which ensures children's welfare in the event of a serious accident where parents are unable to be contacted. Prior written parental consent for staff to administer medication to ensure children are given the correct dosage is obtained. Children who are infectious do not attend, thus preventing the spread of contagious illnesses.

Children have regular access to fresh air and enjoy a well planned range of physical activities, which contributes to their good health. Good use is made of the garden, where they are able access excellent climbing apparatus, ride wheeled toys, crawl through tunnels, jump in and out of hoops and play ball games. This fully supports children physical development and climbing skills. Children are keen and excited to move their bodies in a variety of ways during music and yoga sessions.

Children confidently use a very wide range of tools, which develop their fine motor skills and eye and hand co-ordination, for example, Montessori resources, pencils, paint brushes, scissors and glue sticks.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The two classrooms offer children a very welcoming child-orientated environment. They are bright and attractive with children's work, posters and soft toys displayed throughout. The organisation of the Montessori equipment and play resources on low shelving units means they are easily accessible to children and develop their independence. Children's individual needs are met by the provision of equipment for them to eat and play. For example, there are low level tables and child size tables.

Children's safety is assured as staff are vigilant about protecting them from harm. They play in a safe environment as risk assessments take place to identify hazards and action taken to minimise them or ensure they are inaccessible to children. There are very effective security arrangements in place for the children's arrival and departure, which includes supervision of the entrance and ensuring the main door is secure once children have arrived. All visitors are

identified before entering and the visitors' book ensures staff are aware of who is on the premises at all times. Children are very well supervised due to the excellent deployment of staff both in the classrooms and the garden area. Staff give high priority to helping children to understand how to keep themselves safe. For example, they gently remind them not to run inside as they may fall and are encouraged to carry resources such as scissors and pencils carefully.

Fire fighting equipment and smoke alarms are in place and emergency exits are kept unobstructed. Children and staff practise the emergency fire evacuation procedures on a termly basis. This helps them become familiar with the routine in the event of an emergency.

Children are protected from abuse and neglect as the setting has effective child protection procedures in place to safeguard children. Senior staff have attended training in safeguarding children and cascade this information to other staff. This gives top priority to children's safety and welfare.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children excitedly enter the nursery school and are greeted by warm and friendly staff. Staff are very effective at supporting children who are less confident to settle, by letting them sit next to them at circle time and rewarding them with a sticker for not crying. All children relish at being in the nursery school and very enthusiastically choose from toys and Montessori resources from low level shelves which enables them to develop their independence and learn to have respect for the resources. Children very much enjoy 'show and tell' time. They proudly talk about the toys they have bought in and respond to questions asked by staff about them. They enjoy singing and move their bodies with great expression to action rhymes and music. Younger children benefit a great deal from playing alongside the older children, who often demonstrate and help them use the Montessori equipment and play resources.

Children love outdoor play which is well planned. They busily pretend to write and make marks in the role play area set up as post office. Children enjoy dressing up, painting the bench with water and learning numbers in a fun way, as they throw a large die and then put plastic ladybirds in a row relating to the number on the die.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children make very good progress because staff plan a stimulating range of activities and experiences which promote children's learning. They are supported by very enthusiastic staff who have a secure understanding of the Foundation Stage and an excellent knowledge of the Montessori teaching methods. Staff evaluate activities regularly to make sure they are successful and the learning intentions for children are met. Staff spend time with the parents getting to know each child's skills and use this with their frequent rigorous observation to ensure they are supported in their next step of learning. This ensures that each individual child is fully challenged in their learning to reach their full potential.

Children show kindness and consideration to each other as they play together, sharing and taking turns. For example, children happily do puzzles together and know they have to wait until someone has finished before they can go the play dough table or use the easel. Children show good self help skills as they confidently select their own resources and mat to play on and when they have finished place them back where they belong.

Children show very high levels of independence, as the exceptionally good layout of the resources and Montessori equipment actively encourages children to experiment and develop their own interests and curiosity. They show very good levels of concentration as they explore a varied range of activities and experiences.

Children have good relationships with staff and each other and confidently answer questions and talk about their home experiences in groups. Children's listening skills are very good. They listen and take turns when speaking in groups. Staff facilitate group sessions very well, as they keep them short and keep children's full attention. Children avidly listen to stories and really enjoy looking at books. They turn the pages carefully re-telling the story to each other. Sometimes they visit the library which extends their interest in books. Children are able to sound and name a number of letters. They are keen to mark make with writing materials freely available and some more able children are able to correctly form letters. Most children are able to hold a pencil appropriately and very enthusiastically trace over their names.

Children learn about nature as they plant seeds, water them and watch them grow. They do art activities, such as making pictures of apple trees during the seasons. Information and communication technology sessions take place on a regular basis where children have lots of opportunities to explore programmable resources and have access to a lap top computer.

Children use all their senses to explore colour, texture and shape from a wide range of Montessori equipment and express themselves creatively through a variety of media. Children very much enjoy rolling and moulding play dough and access sticking activities throughout each session. They paint their own unique pictures and recall the combinations of paints that cause the change of colour. Children also make things during planned art activities, such as making flowers and trees as part of the current topic. Children enjoy music and respond enthusiastically during ballet sessions, showing very good expression using their bodies to capture imagined experiences, for example, pretending to be on a roller coaster and make candy floss.

Staff demonstrate the use of the Montessori resources very well to enable children to develop their calculation skills. They gain an awareness of volume and capacity as they use a variety of containers to pour water and dry ingredients, such as rice from one to another. Children aged three years confidently count up to 10 and above. Some more able children are beginning to do simple additions. They use problem solving skills to complete puzzles, name and match shapes and discuss size.

Children benefit from outings in the local community relating to projects, for example, visiting the post office to post letters and the nearby fruit and vegetable store. Children learn about people's different jobs, such as police officers visiting and talking to them about road safety and stranger danger.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

All children are welcomed and play a full part in the nursery school because staff value and respect their individuality and the family context for each child. Children with disabilities are treated fairly and their learning needs are fully recognised and procedures are in place to ensure they learn at their own pace. Staff take time to talk to children about differences using the disability play figure images. Children with English as an additional language are well supported, as staff find out key words from their own language. Some staff are able to speak other languages, so are able to help them communicate.

Children's behaviour is very good. They benefit significantly from staff who are excellent role models. They are calm and patient with the children and offer them continued positive praise and encouragement. This ensures they develop very high self esteem and feel valued. Children are very aware of the daily routines and what is expected of them, as the rules of the nursery school are discussed with them every week.

Children have many excellent opportunities to learn about the lives of each other and the wider world. At each child's birthday group discussions take place about their continent and country of origin. Montessori materials are used to do this and parents are asked to provide some items relating to this, such as clothing or an ornament. Parents are also asked to join the discussion group if they wish. This is an excellent way of helping children to learn and respect each other's differences. Children also sing the 'hello song' in different languages, which makes each child feel their own language is valued. Children are provided with a good range of books and resources which give positive images of culture, gender and disability, which are fully integrated in to every day activities. For example, children played with figures reflecting disability and a toy wheel chair with the play dough. Children explore globes and a puzzle of the world and match photos with positive images of parents and children from different countries with it. They learn about different monuments from around the world through picture cards. Children's spiritual, moral, social, cultural development is fostered.

Partnership with parents is good. Parents and children are greeted by friendly staff with smiles and positive comments. Informal discussions with parents take place on a daily basis and individual meetings with staff once a term keep them very well informed of their child's developmental progress. Parents are invited to social occasions, such as a picnic with their children in the summer and a children's ballet at Easter. The policies and procedures are available to parents at all times and these include the complaints procedure. Parents are provided with advice on how to get further support on managing children's challenging behaviour. Feedback from parents indicate they are very happy with the nursery school. Comments include, 'the nursery a school is lovely, the staff are very caring, kind and approachable' and their children really look forward to coming each day.

The partnership with parents of children who receive nursery education is good. Parents are kept very well informed about projects, activities taking place each day and the letter and number children are learning each week from notices which are prominently displayed each day. Parents are given excellent information about the Montessori approach to learning, although information about the Foundation Stage curriculum is not fully developed.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children's care is enhanced by the excellent organisation of the provision. The two classrooms which are child-orientated within the church premises mean that children are cared for and learn in small groups. The displays of children's work show that staff value their contributions and efforts.

All legally required documentation which contributes to children's health, safety and well-being is in place. It is accessible for inspection and is stored confidentially but is not always presented in a neat manner. Children benefit from caring staff that all have a Montessori teaching qualification. The high staff ratios mean that children receive excellent support. There are suitable contingency plans in place for absences to ensure children always have appropriate

supervision. The recruitment procedures ensure staff working in the nursery school are suitable to do so.

Leadership and management is good. Staff are led by a manager who is an excellent role model and is totally committed to providing children with a calm, happy Montessori learning environment. She conducts ongoing observations of staff's performance and the impact of this on children's learning. She uses this information to enhance teaching practices. The manager also monitors that planning is recorded and followed through and children's developmental observations to ensure they are fully supported in making good progress. Regular discussions with the manager and staff meetings provide opportunities to discuss practice and ideas. The manager ensures she and staff attend regular training courses to keep up to date with current child care practices to continually enhance the education provided for children.

Children flourish in this most delightful early years setting, where they are cared for by dedicated staff that thoroughly enjoy being with them and value each child as an individual. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

Recommendations were made at the inspection and have been fully met. Since the last inspection the use of paper towels ensures children carry out hygienic hand washing procedures. The water temperature is now set at an appropriate temperature for children's safety. Documentation has been improved and all necessary details are recorded. The learning intentions and evaluations of the activities takes place and children have the use of programmable toys and a computer on a regular basis. This further ensures children's welfare and provides them with further learning opportunities.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since 1 April 2004 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 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 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):

- continue to develop the presentation of records and documentation

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):

- provide parents with further information on the Foundation Stage and early learning goals

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