

# Clapham Montessori

Inspection report for early years provision

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	144049
<b>Inspection date</b>	22 January 2008
<b>Inspector</b>	Susan Marriott / Diane Mary O'Neill
<b>Setting Address</b>	St Paul's Community Centre, St. Paul's Church, Rectory Grove, London, SW4 0DX
<b>Telephone number</b>	0207-498-8324
<b>E-mail</b>	
<b>Registered person</b>	Rosalind Bowles
<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?

Clapham Montessori opened in 1991 and operates from St Paul's Community Centre, in the London Borough of Lambeth. The nursery comprises a first floor classroom with en-suite toilets plus a large hall on the ground floor which is used for physical and musical activities. The kitchen, dining area and additional toilets are also situated on the ground floor. All children have shared access to an adjacent garden area.

A maximum of 26 children may attend the setting at any one time. The setting is open each weekday from 09.15 to 15.45, during school term times only. There are currently 28 children aged from two years six months to under five years on roll. Of these, 18 children receive funding for early education. Children mostly come from the local residential area. The nursery is able to support a number of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and also supports a number of children who speak English as an additional language.

The setting employs seven staff. Of these, five staff, including the manager hold appropriate early years qualifications. They adhere to Montessori teaching principles and hold Montessori

teaching qualifications. The setting receives support from a qualified teacher and the local authority.

## **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION**

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

The provision is satisfactory.

Children stay healthy because staff show a good knowledge of the setting's procedures for health and hygiene and are committed to consistent implementation of the agreed procedures. Sick children are excluded from the provision to minimise the spread of infection and the premises are maintained in a clean state. Children are learning about the importance of personal health and hygiene. They are developing independence in this area and developing responsibility for themselves. For example, children wash their hands after using the toilet as a matter of course and are able to explain to the inspector that this is to get rid of germs. However, hand washing before eating food is not always effectively supervised by staff and this may compromise their health and well-being. Children receive appropriate treatment in medical emergency because most staff hold current and suitable first aid qualifications and the first aid box is accessible and suitably stocked. However, some dressings are out of date and may no longer remain sterile, presenting the potential for cross infection. Staff conscientiously record all accidents and include the relevant details to protect children's welfare.

Children benefit from healthy snacks. The snack rota includes plenty of fruit. Snack time is being used to good effect as a learning time for children, promoting social skills and increasing development of independence. For example, children access the snack table and they pour their own drinks, demonstrating competent hand to eye co-ordination. Children do not become thirsty whilst playing because they have independent access to a drinks tray and a water container. They can pour drinks of water at any time during the session.

All the children enjoy sufficient daily indoor and outdoor activities which enable them to develop control of their bodies and improve their physical skills through a generally appropriate level of challenge. Children get outside in the fresh air on fine days and enjoy their time in the church garden. Indoors, children use the downstairs hall for games and vigorous play and lots of Montessori materials help to promote children's small muscle development. For example, children learn to manipulate the buttons and fastenings on the practical life dressing frames and transfer water between containers.

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

The provision is good.

Children are well cared for in a warm and welcoming environment which is purpose designed to promote the development of children's independence. Children quickly learn to manage their own personal hygiene in the accessible and purpose-designed toilet facilities where staff provide support if required. Children make choices and learn to take responsibility for equipment and their surroundings. They work in a well-organised practical environment where low-level, open shelving offers easy access to the learning materials, in line with basic Montessori philosophy. The setting is equipped with mostly specialist Montessori materials. Any non-Montessori items are carefully selected to bring natural materials to children's range of understanding and to be suitable and stimulating for children, in line with the philosophy of the nursery. All equipment is checked daily and any damaged items are thrown away.

Children are kept very safe in the school because staff give excellent priority to security issues. Children's safe arrival and departure is particularly well monitored and children are very well-supervised at all times. Doors and gates are bolted and the front door has a bell to alert staff to the arrival of visitors. Staff record fire evacuation procedures and carry out drills with suitable frequency to ensure the safety of the children. Staff monitor visitors to the setting by keeping a visitors book. The setting has begun to document risk assessments on both a termly and daily basis. The garden is always thoroughly checked before use. Children learn to keep themselves safe in the setting through the Montessori 'Grace and Courtesy' activities. For example, children are shown how to do things such as how to tuck a chair under the table and how to carry a chair safely. Children learn how to walk in the classroom and how to carry scissors safely.

Children's welfare is properly safeguarded because they are protected by vigilant and caring, informed adults who understand current child protection policies and procedures in line with those of the Local Safeguarding Children Board. The owner has received suitable training in this field and relevant and current reference information is readily accessible. Information about safeguarding children is appropriately shared with parents.

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

The provision is good.

Children are happily and gainfully employed in this small, friendly and traditionally Montessori school. They learn to be tidy and to mix with other children, whilst gaining a foundation in the primary school subjects. Children develop very good concentration and independence skills. Children enjoy their play and learning because staff are confident, enthusiastic and skilled in their childcare practice. Staff provide a broad range of worthwhile activities, both indoor and outdoor, which actively engage children throughout the school in the learning process. Children actively participate in the purposeful activities and clearly enjoy the busy atmosphere. Children have clear routines to their sessions and follow set procedures for certain activities which help them feel secure. For example, children know that they will sit in the circle on arrival, sing welcome songs together and that staff will take the register. Staff have an awareness of the 'Birth to three matters' framework and try to pull this into their principles and practice. The needs of the younger children are met through highly individualised learning which comes from Montessori philosophy. Staff provide positive role models for children and give sensitive support to all children. Children are happy, settle quickly and relate well to other children and staff, who encourage and build children's vocabulary through timely interaction as they support play. Staff get to know the children very well and skilfully adapt their level of language and questioning to reflect each child's stage of development.

### **Nursery Education**

The quality of teaching and learning is good. All staff have a competent knowledge of Montessori teaching methods and deliver a varied programme of structured Montessori activities which provide an overall balance across all six areas of learning. Children are making good progress towards the early learning goals given their ages and starting points. They generally display high levels of involvement and gain a sense of achievement, self-confidence and self-esteem through spontaneously chosen activities. Older and more able children maintain their interest in the activities due to the skilful intervention of staff who re-direct their learning appropriately. Staff work together as a very effective and committed team, deploying themselves to support children's learning with general sensitivity and respect.

Planning builds appropriately on the Foundation Stage guidance whilst being cross-referenced to the Montessori materials. Children choose their own 'work' and the staff circulate around the classroom to support, encourage and extend learning as appropriate for the needs of the individual children. Conscientious observations of children's learning are made and written up regularly, contributing towards the assessment system. Examples of work are dated and provide useful evidence for assessment. Staff evaluate activities effectively and use this information to monitor the quality of the provision. However, the assessment system reflects the Montessori system and is not matched to the terminology of the stepping stones. It does not enable children's progress to be readily tracked through the stepping stones in line with funding requirements. The manager admits that the assessment records often do not provide useful information to the receiving school, because school staff do not always understand the links between Montessori and the Foundation Stage.

Staff use clear and skilled teaching techniques which they confidently adapt to suit the various ages of children at this setting. Children enjoy good, trusting relationships with staff who get down to their level and engage in meaningful questioning, conversation and discussion which develops their learning. Children make decisions about what they want to do from the activities which have been presented and introduced to them. They work through the activities at their own pace, receiving intervention and assistance from staff as required. The children have a long 'work cycle', being mostly interested and motivated to learn independently. Children generally resolve their own arguments and are kind and thoughtful. For example, some children were observed sitting in a group and negotiating between themselves as to how to play a game. Snack time is a generally positive and effective learning time for the children. They learn good manners, courtesy and develop their independence through pouring their own drinks and serving snack to their friends.

Children make good use of the multi-sensory resources to develop their language and literacy. Appropriate emphasis is given to the development of children's speaking, listening, reading and writing skills. Staff model language clearly and children express themselves well. Children learn about the alphabet using the sandpaper letters and develop their phonic knowledge. Children are eager to read and write and they enjoy recording their ideas and keeping samples of their work. They enjoy a wide range of songs and rhymes which support their awareness of language. Staff read lots of stories during the day and the children listen attentively. Children learn about numbers, use mathematical language and solve simple problems through the use of the Montessori materials. For example, children learn about simple fractions as they use the 'Insets'. They sort, order and grade the colour slides. Children use maps, land and water moulds, globes and pictures to learn about land forms and continents. A wide range of construction toys enables children to build and fix pieces together, improving manual dexterity. They talk with staff at snack time, about events in their lives and those of their families. They enjoy dance, music and French lessons from visiting teachers.

Children enjoy an adequate range of indoor and outdoor activities to promote physical development. Children's manual dexterity develops well through the use of the Montessori dressing frames, where children learn to manage various fastenings including zips, buttons, and laces. However, staff do not yet maximise their use of the outdoor space as a resource to support children's learning across all areas. Improvements have been made to the range of outdoor resources and the rotation of various activities, but staff do not always leave enough time for outdoor play. They do not always sufficiently plan these sessions to promote the progression of children's physical skills. For example, children run about the green space with little direction or purpose. Staff initiate a game of 'What's the time, Mr Wolf?' and miss the opportunities to count the number of steps taken. Children explore paint and print, using their

own ideas to create their own pictures and enjoy messy, 'sensorial' play with natural materials. Children begin to use imagination playing alongside others. For example, whilst playing 'I spy' with the miniature objects, children put their fingers inside different shoes and pretend to be princesses.

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

The provision is satisfactory.

Children learn about equality through play activities and learn to respect the rights of others. Children are learning to feel valued and good about themselves, and are learning to appreciate others' similarities and differences. Children develop their understanding and appreciation of others through simple planned activities that promote a greater awareness of the wider world. Children participate in art and craft activities connected with celebrations and taste cultural foods. Many of the Montessori materials reflect diversity, global trends and positive images of disability.

Children who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive proactive support. Their varying needs are recognised and met sensitively. Children's individual needs are discussed with parents in detail. Any special requirements or information are discussed and consistent communication and information exchange takes place. Children who may have learning difficulties receive appropriate intervention and referrals to suitable professionals outside the provision.

Staff adopt a consistent and positive approach to the management of children's behaviour. Clear boundaries are established at the children's level of understanding. The children have written their rules which include not bothering other people or children who are working. Children have an understanding of the effect of their behaviour on others around them and take responsibility for themselves. Staff provide excellent role models for children by being calm and polite. Staff praise children freely, ensuring that they develop confidence and self-esteem and understand when they have done well. However, staff do not always record incidents of concerning behaviour and share this information with parents. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The relationship between the parents and the setting is actively promoted, effectively supporting children's well-being, development and progress. A two-way flow of information, knowledge and expertise supports children through a mutually positive relationship. Information is available for parents on a daily basis because the hallway is used for display. Parents are warmly welcomed into the provision and are well supported by staff during the settling-in process through induction sessions. Staff encourage parents to share information about their children and they are able to see their child's records and regularly contribute to them if they wish. When working well, this arrangement of two-way sharing benefits the child and enhances their learning. This underpins their progress in the school and consequently their ability to fully contribute to the provision. The partnership with parents of children who receive nursery education is good.

### **Organisation**

The organisation is satisfactory.

The established and experienced staff team are well supported by the owner who oversees the management of the nursery and this safeguards and promotes children's care and welfare. The owner works alongside her staff team and therefore has a 'hands-on approach' to every aspect of the nursery operation.

Organisational procedures ensure that all staff have a clear understanding of their role and responsibilities. Induction procedures are planned and work in practice when new staff are employed. Children are grouped appropriately with effective use of space and resources. Registration systems record the hours of attendance of children and staff, but the register is not always promptly updated during the day to secure their safety.

The leadership and management of the nursery education is good. The staff team are well qualified and dedicated to the concept of quality childcare and education. Staff are passionately committed to the Montessori philosophy and work hard to demonstrate how these teaching methods support children's progress towards the early learning goals. Staff follow children to the activities which engage their interest and provide effective support for learning. This promotes positive outcomes for children. Staff demonstrate a genuine affinity with children; they respect children's feelings, value their comments and clearly enjoy their company. Documentation is clear and accessible. Staff clearly and confidently speak about their procedures to follow in the event of a range of scenarios. Planning and assessment systems secure and progress children's learning. Overall, children's needs are met.

### **Improvements since the last inspection**

At the last inspection of day care, three recommendations were raised with the provider. These involved ensuring that children are escorted on stairways at all times, that the door to the toilet is made safe and that the kitchen and ground floor hall are cleaned to a satisfactory standard, with electric wires made safe or inaccessible to children. Staff implement a written procedure for using the stairs and ensure that children hold the lower-level handrail. The setting has reviewed the use of the available premises and has removed the necessity for children to be using the stairs frequently. The setting has created an innovative washroom area on the first floor, en-suite to the classroom, using mobile sink units and portable toilets. Children can now easily access this area independently and the actions taken have improved children's independent personal care skills and their health and safety.

At the last inspection of nursery education, the setting was asked to review the organisation and selection of resources for physical development to ensure a greater balance between adult-directed and child-led activities during boisterous indoor and outdoor play. The setting ensures that children go outside to play each session and rotates available equipment. This has led to further improvement of the nursery education for children. However, the provision and planning of physical play continues to incur a recommendation following this inspection.

### **Complaints since the last inspection**

Since the last inspection 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):

- ensure that children regularly wash their hands before snack and handling food and that the contents of the first aid box are replaced as necessary
- ensure that the register consistently shows hours of attendance.

#### 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):

- ensure all children have access to sufficient outdoor play on a regular basis. Improve planning to progress this aspect of children's learning and develop the use of outdoor play to reflect the six areas of learning.

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)