

St Matthews Montessori School

Inspection report for early years provision

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Inspection date

14/06/2010

Inspector

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Type of setting

Childcare on non-domestic premises

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Sections 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006 on the quality and standards of the registered early years provision. 'Early years provision' refers to provision regulated by Ofsted for children from birth to 31 August following their fifth birthday (the early years age group). The registered person must ensure that this provision complies with the statutory framework for children's learning, development and welfare, known as the *Early Years Foundation Stage*.

The provider must provide a copy of this report to all parents with children at the setting where reasonably practicable. The provider must provide a copy of the report to any other person who asks for one, but may charge a fee for this service (The Childcare (Inspection) Regulations 2008 regulations 9 and 10).

The setting also makes provision for children older than the early years age group which is registered on the voluntary and/or compulsory part(s) of the Childcare Register. This report does not include an evaluation of that provision, but a comment about compliance with the requirements of the Childcare Register is included in Annex B.

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Description of the setting

St Matthews Montessori School is run by Willow Tree Education Ltd. It opened in 1982 and operates from the hall within St Matthew's Church, Ealing Common, in the London borough of Ealing. A maximum of 26 children may attend the nursery at any one time. It is open each weekday from 9:15am to 3:15pm during term time. Children have access to an outdoor play area. The nursery follows the Montessori teaching ethos.

There are currently 46 children aged from two to under five years on roll, some in half-day places. The setting is in receipt of funding for the provision of free early education to children aged three and four. The setting is registered on the Early Years Register, compulsory and voluntary part of the Childcare Register.

The nursery employs eight staff, of whom seven hold appropriate early years qualifications, with one staff member working towards a qualification.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is good.

The school provides a caring, nurturing environment in which each child is valued and respected as a unique individual. Effective partnerships are formed with parents to ensure the needs of the children are met appropriately. Staff combine the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage and the Montessori principles effectively to ensure children make good progress in their learning and development. The management team and staff are committed to continuously evaluating their provision and building upon their achievements for the benefit of the children and their own professional development.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

To further improve the early years provision the registered person should:

- provide children with the opportunity to routinely access equipment, such as a computer, to enable them to develop the necessary skills to operate information and communication technology and to begin to learn the purpose and function of such equipment
- help children gain confidence in their own way of representing ideas through encouraging inventiveness, in order to support their excursions into imaginary worlds.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

The management team are fully aware of their duty to safeguard the well-being of all the children in their care. Staff attend child protection training courses regularly

to keep their knowledge up-to-date. Therefore, they would recognise signs of possible abuse, and follow the correct procedure to report concerns. The provider/manager has a robust recruitment procedure in place to check the suitability of all the staff she employs to work with children. She is also aware of her duties in relation to passing on relevant concerns about the suitability of existing staff, or potential staff members, to the Independent Safeguarding Authority, should the need arise. Risk assessments are conducted on all areas of the premises to identify and minimise potential dangers to children. The maintenance of all the required documents and records also contributes towards ensuring children are safeguarded.

Staff gain good knowledge of the children's background and needs because of the effective way they work in partnership with parents. There is a constant two-way flow of relevant information between the parent/carer and the child's key person to ensure the care provided is appropriate and consistent. Parents have ready access to their child's development file and are invited to add their comments to the record. Newsletters are issued regularly by email or hard copy, to inform parents of forthcoming events and topical issues. In addition, parents and family members are welcome to share their skills and knowledge with the children. For example, a parent spoke to the children about her work as a dentist, and others demonstrated musical instruments, such as the trumpet and cello. These experiences help children learn about the world around them. All parents that were spoken to as part of the inspection process stated that they were happy with the level of communication with staff about their child's progress and development, and that they considered that the children were safe and secure within the school.

Effective partnerships are fostered with other agencies involved with the care and education of children requiring additional support, to ensure the best outcome for the child is achieved. The provider/manager understands the importance of working closely with other settings children attend that also deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage. This contributes toward children making good developmental progress as it establishes a coherent and consistent approach.

The provider/manager is fully committed to developing the existing good practice of her school to further enhance outcomes for children. She has a motivated staff team to whom she is able to communicate her plans effectively. Ideas and initiatives for development are welcomed from staff, parents and the local authority development worker. The management's 'open-door' policy enables parents to pass on their views and comments at any time for consideration. Positive action has been taken to tackle the weaknesses identified at the last inspection, resulting in improved record keeping relating to staff and improvements to the creative and physical development programmes. The provider/manager's plans for the future include working towards all staff holding appropriate early years qualifications. She has also identified that the children do not currently have access to information and communication technology. Therefore, they are not able to begin to learn the skills necessary to operate such equipment efficiently in the future. However, this is high on her development plan to address.

Following Montessori principles, all play resources and equipment are easily accessible for the children to promote their independence. They know exactly

where each item is located on the open-fronted shelves and that they can help themselves to items of their choice. They also learn that they are expected to tidy the equipment away when they have finished. Staff keep a watchful overview of their key children, allowing them to explore the equipment freely at their own pace, and then stepping in to give support and guidance appropriately to enable each child to make progress in their learning.

The quality and standards of the early years provision and outcomes for children

The management team and staff have a good knowledge of the Early Years Foundation Stage requirements. Children are observed at play in order to assess their stage of development in each of the six areas of learning and the Montessori learning programme. From the findings, the next step in each child's unique learning journey is identified. This information is then used to plan learning experiences tailored to each child's particular needs. The children's development files clearly demonstrate, through the assessments and photographic evidence, that they make good progress in all areas. Children become active learners as they show enthusiasm to join in activities and persevere until the task is completed. A recent popular project was 'The Solar System'. Children learnt the names of the planets and the position of each one from the sun. They relate these facts enthusiastically when questioned. As a result of this, the children were then encouraged to learn about 'Looking after our world and each other'. One area focussed on the importance of recycling waste at home and at school to contribute towards sustainability. Although the school has obtained new resources to develop children's creativity in several areas, children are constrained in some art and craft activities. For example, staff pre-cut flowers, stars and rockets for the children to decorate, with the result that they all look very similar. This limits children's imagination and prevents them giving free rein to their creativity.

Numeracy and communication skills are well promoted at the school. Montessori equipment is well used and enjoyed by the children to help them learn to match and sort, and gradually acquire counting and problem solving skills. A comfortable book corner with a good selection of books is available, along with plenty of opportunities for them to mark-make and to develop pre-writing skills. Older children are able to write their names. Phonics are used to help build up the sounds of words to assist with reading and writing. Children's emotional and social development is well fostered due to the Montessori principle of encouraging children's independence. Children arrive happily at the school, and immediately settle down to a task/activity of their choice. The atmosphere in the school is calm. Children move around purposefully and steadily from activity to activity. They contentedly undertake tasks within the 'work-cycle' period by themselves or with a group of others.

Children's health is well supported at the school. Healthy snacks are provided, such as fresh fruit breadsticks and milk. Staff ensure that any particular dietary needs are respected. Parents supply their child's packed lunch and advice is given about what to include and what to avoid in order to reinforce healthy eating. Children enjoy regular opportunities for physical exercise in the open air. The garden allows

them to pedal run around and join in parachute games. In addition, the weekly ballet lessons and Physical Education sessions assist children's physical development, and help them begin to understand that exercise can be fun.

Children learn to value and respect diversity. A parent was invited to read the Diwali story and enabled the staff and children to experience Dandia dancing, the traditional Indian dance to celebrate Diwali. They also acknowledge Eid, Chinese New Year and Christmas by making traditional decorations and food. In addition, a visit from one of the fathers to read and sing to the children enabled the children to see a man in a non-traditional role in order to broaden their view of society.

Children learn how to keep themselves safe as they participate in regular evacuation drills to learn how to behave in the event of an emergency. They also learn how to move and handle furniture and equipment safely, such as scissors and chairs, without endangering themselves and others. Children feel secure and confident because they quickly learn what is expected of them within the structured and well-established routine. New children and their parents are supported well by staff to ensure a smooth settling period is achieved. Parents commented at the inspection that their children settled very quickly due to positive nurturing by staff.

Annex A: record of inspection judgements

The key inspection judgements and what they mean

Grade 1 is Outstanding: this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality

Grade 2 is Good: this aspect of the provision is strong

Grade 3 is Satisfactory: this aspect of the provision is sound

Grade 4 is Inadequate: this aspect of the provision is not good enough

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

How well does the setting meet the needs of the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	2
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement	2

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

How effectively is the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed?	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
The effectiveness with which the setting deploys resources	2
The effectiveness with which the setting promotes equality and diversity	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding	2
The effectiveness of the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement	2
The effectiveness of partnerships	2
The effectiveness of the setting's engagement with parents and carers	2

The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage

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Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The extent to which children achieve and enjoy their learning	2
The extent to which children feel safe	2
The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which children make a positive contribution	2
The extent to which children develop skills for the future	2

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Annex B: the Childcare Register

The provider confirms that the requirements of the compulsory part of the Childcare Register are:	Met
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The provider confirms that the requirements of the voluntary part of the Childcare Register are:	Met
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