

# River House Montessori School

Independent school light-touch inspection report

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Reporting inspector	Anne Duffy HMI

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## Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.<sup>1, 2</sup>

This was a light touch educational inspection which focused principally on the quality of education provided by the school; its provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; the arrangements for safeguarding pupils and the improvements the school has made since its last inspection.

## Information about the school

River House Montessori School is an independent, coeducational day school for pupils aged from 3 to 11. It was opened in 1994 near Canary Wharf in East London and moved to its present site near Millharbour Docks in 2009. It intends to extend its provision to include students of secondary age from September 2011. The school follows the broad principles of Montessori methods of teaching and learning. It aims to provide a safe and friendly environment, where each child is encouraged to stretch towards and reach their own potential, academically, emotionally and socially. At the time of the inspection there were 261 pupils on roll. None of these has a statement of special educational needs. One hundred and thirty nine pupils receive free education for three and four year olds. Breakfast, after-school and holiday clubs are available to pupils.

The school last had a full inspection in January 2008 when it met all but two of the regulations.

## Evaluation of the school

River House Montessori School provides a good quality of education and care for its pupils and for the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The aims of the school are met well. Curricular provision is good and meets the needs of the pupils well; pupils are highly motivated and make good progress. Teaching and assessment are good. The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good as is their behaviour. The strong concern for pupils' safeguarding is reflected in the good procedures for welfare, health and safety. The school has addressed the two unmet regulations from the last inspection and now meets all the regulatory requirements.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga\\_20020032\\_en\\_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga_20020032_en_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162)

<sup>2</sup> [www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga\\_20050018\\_en\\_15#sch8](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga_20050018_en_15#sch8)

## Quality of education

The quality of the curriculum is good. It combines Montessori approaches with key elements of the Early Years Foundation Stage and the National Curriculum to create a good breadth of provision. Good opportunities are provided for pupils to become independent learners, to use information and communication technology and, where appropriate, to extend their learning beyond that expected of others of the same age. Curriculum policies are reviewed regularly, monitored closely and they support class planning well. Provision for art, music and drama is very strong and the teaching of French throughout the school adds to the range of pupils' achievements. Lunchtime and after-school clubs further enrich the curriculum. A good feature of the educational provision is the opportunity provided by events such as World Book Week for pupils of different age groups to work together. Here, older and younger pupils collaborated to create books and plays and all enjoyed the 'scene of crime' setting devised to help the police catch Jack when he escaped from the beanstalk! The school strives to provide opportunities for pupils to develop their physical skills but, while they are adequate, these are somewhat limited by the constraints of the building and its outside facilities. While good efforts are made to address this by providing activities outside the school premises, such as swimming, pupils themselves would like greater scope to develop a wider range of sporting skills.

Teaching and assessment are good. From the time they join the Nursery, pupils are very keen to learn and make good progress overall, with many making exceptional progress. Teachers know their pupils well, have high expectations and encourage pupils to work hard. Some parents expressed concern about recent high staff turnover. Nevertheless, pupils have continued to make good progress. Relationships between staff and pupils are good and, as a result, pupils are very responsive to instructions, confident to ask and answer questions and offer their views. Pupils' behaviour in lessons is good overall and lessons generally keep a brisk pace with no interruptions. Class teachers have good subject knowledge, they plan lessons carefully and teaching assistants make a strong contribution.

Pupils' work is regularly marked and they have the opportunity for a follow-up discussion with their teachers. However, marking does not always provide pupils and their parents and carers with sufficient information about how work could be improved. The school has introduced a new approach to assessment for literacy, numeracy and science and this has had a very positive impact upon teachers' knowledge of how their pupils are progressing on an ongoing, rather than annual, basis. Pupils would welcome more opportunity to contribute to this and there is scope for them now to have a greater input into evaluating their own progress and how much they have learnt in lessons. Where this has happened, for example as a result of the whole-school reading sessions, they have responded well.

## Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is good. Parents and carers say that their children enjoy school and this is evident in their good attendance, behaviour and attitudes to learning, and in the way they respond

to staff and to each other. Pupils know the difference between right and wrong. During the inspection parents, carers and pupils expressed concern about behaviour. Inspectors found pupils to be polite, confident and respectful of one another. Pupils' spiritual awareness is enhanced by music, art and opportunities to reflect upon their own behaviour and the needs of others. From an early age, pupils learn to take responsibility for the resources which they use in class and at play, and demonstrate an increasing ability to share these and to negotiate. The school supports pupils' acquisition of the key skills of numeracy and literacy effectively and pupils become skilled users of information and communication technology, further developing skills which will support their future economic well-being. There is a rich cultural mix represented and celebrated within the school population. Pupils extend their knowledge and awareness of different lifestyles and cultures, as well as public services and institutions, through different projects, assemblies and whole-school events. The recent challenge for Red Nose Day resulted in pupils making from junk a wonderful range of costumes, complete with written instructions about how they should be constructed.

## **Safeguarding pupils' welfare, health and safety**

The school makes good provision for ensuring the welfare, health and safety of the pupils and the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Procedures for the recruitment of staff and safeguarding are secure. A good number of staff are trained in first aid and the arrangements for fire and other emergencies are sound. Up-to-date risk assessments are in place for teaching, for external areas and for educational visits and pupils are safe in and around the school premises. There is a new and appropriate plan in place which demonstrates how the school intends to further improve facilities for adults and children with disabilities. The provision of fruit at snack and play times encourages healthy eating and the personal, social and health education curriculum promotes other aspects of healthy living well. Pupils are encouraged to walk, cycle or use scooters to travel to school and those who do clearly enjoy this. The school provides all groups of pupils with sufficient opportunities for outdoor play and learning although this is somewhat limited by the outdoor space available. Temporary fencing which is currently in place around the playground is due to be replaced in the near future. The school's diligence in ensuring that all the children and pupils are safe is evident but some parents and carers would like a more relaxed and open approach to their own access to staff and teaching areas at certain times of the day.

## **Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

The overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. Good provision is made for children's learning and development with resulting good outcomes; many aspects of this provision are outstanding. The curriculum provides a wide range of well-planned activities and experiences which effectively promote children's learning. As a result, children enjoy the activities on offer and make good and often outstanding progress. Children's speaking, listening and reasoning skills are very well developed, including among the very youngest learners.

Teaching is good. Staff create a warm, welcoming and stimulating environment in which children enjoy learning. Daily assessments of children's progress are effectively used for weekly and medium-term planning.

The children's personal development is outstanding. They are confident and use their well-developed language skills to explain their work with evident enthusiasm. As well as enjoying making cakes and biscuits, they eat healthy snacks provided at snack times and there is good space for them to move around inside their classrooms. This is rather more limited, although adequate, outside because the outdoor area is sometimes used by other classes. Secure procedures are in place for children's care.

Leadership and management are good. The coordinators of the Reception and pre-school classes work very closely together to ensure high quality assessment, recording and provision. Links with parents and carers are good. There are regular opportunities for parents and carers to discuss their children's progress with staff. However, some miss the day-to-day contact that they previously had with their children's nurseries and would welcome ongoing feedback on a more informal basis. They also expressed concern that the effective communication which exists between the school and parents and carers in the Early Years Foundation Stage is not always continued through into the primary school.

## **Compliance with regulatory requirements**

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 ('the Regulations').

## **What the school could do to improve further**

While not required by regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

- consolidate and extend the recently introduced approach to assessment so that marking consistently informs pupils about how well they are doing and how they could improve their work
- extend opportunities for pupils to engage in outdoor activities and sports, beyond the school setting where necessary.

### **Early Years Foundation Stage:**

- extend good practice in the involvement of parents and carers in their children's learning and experience within the Early Years Foundation Stage through into the primary school.

## Inspection judgements

Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
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### The quality of education

Overall quality of education		✓		
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils		✓		
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs		✓		
How well pupils make progress in their learning		✓		

### Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		✓		
The behaviour of pupils		✓		

### Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils		✓		
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### The quality of the Early Years Foundation Stage provision

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage		✓		
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage		✓		
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage		✓		
Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage		✓		

## School details

<b>School status</b>	Independent		
<b>Type of school</b>	Montessori pre- and primary school		
<b>Date school opened</b>	1994		
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11 years		
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed		
<b>Number on roll (full-time pupils)</b>	Boys: 121	Girls: 107	Total: 228
<b>Number on roll (part-time pupils)</b>	Boys: 22	Girls: 11	Total: 33
<b>Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs</b>	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
<b>Number of pupils who are looked after</b>	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£8,625		
<b>Annual fees (childcare)</b>	£5,875		
<b>Address of school</b>	Great Eastern Enterprise Centre 3 Millharbour London E14 9XP		
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 7538 9886		
<b>Email address</b>	jpearson@river-house.co.uk		
<b>Principal</b>	Sarah Greenwood		
<b>Proprietor</b>	River House Montessori School Ltd		