

Meadowbrook Montessori School

Independent school standard inspection report

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Reporting inspector	Michèle Messaoudi

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

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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.^{1, 2}

The inspection of registered provision was conducted under Sections 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006.^{3, 4}

Information about the school

Meadowbrook Montessori School is a day nursery and primary school for children aged from two to 11 years. It was founded in 1990 by the present proprietor. The primary section of the school is located in a modern building with large grounds, close to the village of Warfield, near Bracknell in Berkshire. The pre-primary department, including Nursery and Reception children, is in a Victorian school building with its own substantial grounds. There are currently 104 children on roll, 10 of whom are identified as speaking English as an additional language. There are no children with a statement of special educational needs. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, there are 49 children, 17 of whom are of Reception age. The 32 children in the Nursery all attend part-time and are aged between three and four years. There are 43 children in receipt of free nursery education. The school provides childcare for children aged between two and four years from 12.00 to 3.15 pm daily, during term time only. No children under the age of three were present at the time of inspection. The school also provides a three-week holiday club for any child attending the school. The school is registered on the Early Years Register and on both the compulsory and voluntary parts of the Childcare Register. The school was last inspected as an independent school in July 2008, with a further inspection of the early years provision in October 2009.

The school aims to: 'provide a happy, inspirational community environment that recognizes and nurtures the individual and where a culture of high expectation is the norm; empower children to maximize their potential; feed their boundless thirst for knowledge and celebrate their enquiring minds'.

Evaluation of the school

Meadowbrook Montessori School provides a good quality education, meets its aims and has the overwhelming support of parents and carers. Children make outstanding progress in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development throughout the

¹ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents.

² www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents.

³ Schools which provide childcare for children from birth until the term in which they reach their third birthday must register this provision separately with Ofsted.

⁴ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/21/contents.

school, owing to an outstanding curriculum, and they make at least good progress in their learning owing to good teaching. Their behaviour and attitudes to learning are outstanding. Safeguarding arrangements meet requirements and the provision for children's welfare, health and safety is good. The overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage, including the registered provision for children aged from birth to three years is good. The school has made good progress in rectifying shortcomings reported in the last inspection and now meets all of the regulations for independent schools and the requirements of the Childcare and Early Years Registers.

Quality of education

The curriculum, previously judged to be good, is now outstanding throughout the school. It is exemplary in that it is directly relevant to children's needs, has an extremely positive impact on their personal development and makes very good provision for their basic skills. This has been noted by many parents and carers. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, it successfully combines the Montessori curriculum with the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage framework. It develops children's independence, curiosity and concentration extremely well, so that when they move up to Year 1, children are competent learners with particularly good skills in reading, speaking, listening and numeracy. Outdoor learning is an integral part of the curriculum but more so during the spring and summer months, owing to the absence of a covered area. Children enjoy a rich variety of experiences through a thematic approach that makes their learning more coherent. All children learn French through play, which supports their language and cultural development extremely well, and, from the age of four years, they learn to swim.

The primary school has developed a curriculum that combines the Montessori principles and approach with elements of the National Curriculum. It is constructed to provide children with an all-round education, with a strong emphasis on practical learning. The curriculum has widened since the last inspection, with the introduction of drama that makes a strong contribution to children's creative and communication skills. The school has significantly improved its provision for information and communication technology, which is now good, by purchasing digital cameras for all age groups and smart boards and additional computers for the primary classes. Children benefit greatly from specialist teaching in art, drama, music, physical education, swimming and French. Good planning ensures clear progression of children's learning year-on-year and it includes a programme tailored to prepare those who wish to move on to selective secondary schools. The provision for children who have special educational needs is extremely well coordinated and so these children make at least good progress. Children who speak English as an additional language benefit enormously from excellent opportunities for developing speaking and listening skills and they make rapid progress in English. The programme of personal, social and health education is exceptionally good and it reflects the Montessori ethos of the school. It includes activities aimed at preparing the older children for interviews at selective schools. The curriculum is extremely well enriched by a wealth of visits, cultural activities and after-school clubs.

The quality of teaching and assessment is good throughout the school. Most teachers and classroom assistants have Montessori teaching qualifications and share a common understanding of the Montessori approach. Teaching and learning are monitored robustly and lucidly, which informs the training needs of individual staff and the priorities for school improvement. Staff have very high expectations of behaviour and work. They prepare an orderly learning environment in which all children can easily access resources and quickly develop excellent working routines. Staff use multi-sensory resources very effectively to support children's learning, meet their varying needs and develop their independence. They use open-ended questions very effectively to make children think more deeply, probe their understanding and challenge them. Where the teaching is outstanding, lessons are conducted at a brisk pace that helps to maintain a consistently high level of challenge so that children make excellent progress. Where the teacher talks for too long or allows too much time for transitions, the pace of learning drops and children make less progress than they otherwise could.

Teachers know the children well both academically and socially. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, accurate assessments of children's learning help staff to plan challenging activities to move children on towards the expected goals. Children gain a good understanding of how to improve through constructive oral feedback and, in the primary school, through subject-specific learning targets which they help to formulate. However, as identified by the school, marking does not consistently deepen children's understanding of how best to improve their work and does not systematically relate to the targets which children need to achieve to make even better progress. The school has improved its systems for tracking children's progress. However, it recognises that the current format is not sufficiently user-friendly because it does not give an instant picture of each child's rate of progress. This hinders teachers' understanding of how they can use information from assessments to plan work that further challenges children. Owing to an outstanding curriculum and good teaching, children make at least good progress. Most gain a place at a secondary school of their first choice.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding throughout the school. The staff provide a warm and secure environment in which all children can flourish and develop the qualities of independent learners and responsible citizens. Children's exceptionally positive attitudes to school are reflected in their high levels of attendance, and active participation in lessons and in school clubs. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children play and work with concentration, exercise choice responsibly and complete a task before moving on to another. When asked what they like best about their school, the older children say, 'living together as a community', 'working as a team', 'being confident in our work', and 'having teachers who treat us fairly'. Children gain a strong sense of community, responsibility, worth and emotional well-being through the school ethos and 'community meetings', where their views are explored and conflicts are resolved through discussion. From the

Nursery onwards, children are taught to respect others and their environment and to reflect on the impact of their actions. On both sites, younger and older children play together, which extends their social skills and sharpens their awareness of others' needs. They develop a very keen sense of right and wrong and teachers consistently model and expect respectful relationships. Children show very high levels of self-discipline and their behaviour is outstanding throughout the school.

Teachers' nurturing enables children to develop very high levels of self-confidence and self-esteem and excellent communication skills that are evident when they make presentations, lead 'peer teaching' sessions, give constructive feedback to peers and work in groups. Children are reflective, considerate and courteous. They contribute to the smooth running of the school by following school rules, living in harmony with peers of diverse cultural backgrounds, tidying up after activities, helping around school as monitors and recycling materials. They participate in presentations for parents and carers. They raise funds for charity by helping to run a bazaar. The skills and qualities which they develop reflect outstanding personal development and prepare them extremely well for the future. Through a wide range of educational visits, workshops and cultural activities, as well as childcare provision, children explore new things, discover new talents, enhance their physical, creative, thinking and communication skills and familiarise themselves with public institutions. By visiting the local church for Christingle and learning from visitors about Eid and Chinese New Year, they gain a growing awareness of cultural diversity.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Children' welfare, health and safety, previously judged to be satisfactory, are now good throughout the school. This has been achieved by forming a board of volunteers that supports the headteacher in these matters. The school has remedied deficiencies in risk assessments of the premises and activities reported in the last inspection and it now meets all the requirements of the Childcare Register and for safeguarding children. The staff's understanding of their duties and responsibilities in matters of child protection is underpinned by a detailed child protection policy and training at appropriate levels and intervals. Procedures for appointing staff and volunteers pay due regard to the latest guidance. The anti-bullying and behaviour policies are up to date and are implemented consistently. The school has a satisfactory level of fire safety. A sufficient number of staff on each site have received first aid training that is appropriate for the ages of the children. Accidents and dispensation of medication are suitably recorded.

All adults are deployed well to support children's learning and welfare and, in the Early Years Foundation Stage, the key person system ensures that each child can turn to at least one adult in confidence. Children say they feel very safe 'because teachers protect us'. They learn how to keep safe through daily reminders, the 'practical life curriculum', learning to swim and be safe near water, sessions on internet safety and visits from the police. Children are encouraged to eat and drink healthily, to develop good hygiene routines and to exercise vigorously. Many join after-school sports clubs.

The school has a three-year plan that meets the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

The school carries out the appropriate checks on the staff and proprietors to ascertain their suitability to work with children before confirming their employment. These checks are recorded on a single central register as required.

Premises and accommodation at the school

The premises provide a warm and homely atmosphere and extensive grounds in which safe and effective learning can occur. Deficiencies reported in the last inspection have been remedied. The school has identified the need to provide a covered area to allow all-weather outdoor learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Local facilities are used effectively for swimming.

Provision of information

Parents, carers and others receive a wealth of clear, accurate and up-to-date information which meets requirements, and parents and carers praise the school's open door policy. They feel well informed of their children's progress through clearly written biannual reports and through three formal meetings with teachers.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The complaints procedures meet all requirements to handle complaints promptly and fairly.

Registered provision for children aged from birth to three years

The overall effectiveness and leadership and management are good and the good provision secures good outcomes for all children. Close partnerships with parents and carers promote children's learning and welfare well, and the support of families is often enlisted to reflect the diversity of the school community.

Safeguarding arrangements meet requirements. Procedures are securely in place to ensure that children's behaviour is managed extremely well and that children are treated fairly. Consequently, children are well cared for and safe. Planning and other documentation indicate that children are encouraged to eat healthily, to observe hygiene routines and to tidy up after activities. Many opportunities are provided for children to learn through play and they achieve a good level of development in most areas of learning. Learning French supports their language and cultural development very effectively.

The curriculum is outstanding and staff make very effective use of resources, educational visits and activities to develop children's independence and exploration

skills. Outdoor learning is served well by extensive grounds but restricted in bad weather by the absence of a covered outdoor area. Because of good and often vibrant and energetic teaching, children make good progress in their learning and outstanding progress in their personal development. They make excellent progress in their communication skills because staff continuously provide opportunities for children to be engaged in conversation. Accurate assessments of individual children's development guide the planning of activities that meet their needs closely. The staff are a cohesive team and are suitably qualified. Their self-review is mostly accurate but not underpinned by a sharp analysis of how they can help children to make even better progress towards the expected goals. All the requirements of the Early Years Register are met.

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:

- enable children, as already identified by the school, to make even better progress by:
 - ensuring marking consistently helps children to improve and reach expected goals
 - further refining the systems to track children's progress to make them more user-friendly throughout the school
 - sharpening teachers' understanding of how they can use information from assessments and self-review to plan work that further challenges children throughout the school and better enables them to reach expected targets and goals
- provide, as identified by the school, a covered area so that the younger children can enjoy outdoor learning whatever the weather.

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 registered provision for children aged from birth to three years

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

School status	Independent		
Type of school	Montessori school		
Date school opened	1990		
Age range of pupils	2–11 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 44	Girls: 28	Total: 72
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 16	Girls: 16	Total: 32
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Annual fees (day pupils)	£4,335 to 8,555		
Annual fees (childcare)	£22.50 per child per session (12.00-3.15)		
Address of school	Malt Hill, Warfield, Bracknell, Berkshire RG42 6JQ		
Telephone number	01344 890869		
Email address	administrator@meadowbrookmontessori.org.uk		
Headteacher	Ms Serena Gunn		
Proprietor	Mr Paul Watkins		

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.

22 January 2012



Dear Children

Inspection of Meadowbrook Montessori School, Bracknell RG42 6JQ

Thank you for welcoming the inspection team so warmly when we visited your school recently. We greatly enjoyed meeting you, seeing you learn and talking to you. You go to a good school where adults work very hard to prepare an excellent learning environment and to help you develop as independent learners and responsible citizens.

You make good progress in your subject areas and exceptional progress in your personal development. You enjoy school a great deal and your attendance is very good. Your teachers and teaching assistants care for you well. We were really impressed by your ability to teach your peers, give constructive feedback and resolve conflicts through discussion. Your teachers know you well as individuals and teach you well. You are extremely well behaved, get on very well with each other and make an excellent contribution to school life. You feel safe and understand the importance of eating and drinking healthily and taking exercise.

In order to make your school even better, we have asked the school to:

- help you to make even better progress by showing you more systematically how to improve your work, finding a method of showing more clearly how much progress you make from term to term and helping your teachers to give you even more challenging work
- provide a covered area for the children in the pre-primary school so that they can enjoy outdoor learning in any weather.

You will help your teachers to achieve this if you continue to work as hard as we saw during the inspection.

Yours sincerely

Michèle Messaoudi
Lead inspector