

Sakutu Organisation Montessori

346 Dollis Hill Lane, London, NW2 6HL

Inspection dates	9–11 October 2013	
Overall effectiveness	Good	2
Pupils' achievement	Good	2
Pupils' behaviour and personal development	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Quality of curriculum	Good	2
Pupils' welfare, health and safety	Good	2
Leadership and management	Good	2

Summary of key findings

This school is good because

- Pupils make good progress in all subjects, including English, mathematics and science. As a result, their overall achievement is good.
- Pupils' personal development is good. They are becoming confident, knowledgeable people.
- The teaching is good. The use of Montessori methods to allow pupils carefully guided choice in their learning works well.
- The headteacher and her staff have a very clear idea of what works well in the school and what needs improving.
- Staff maintain effective, close contact with parents and carers, and this helps teachers' understanding of pupils' needs.

It is not yet outstanding because

- Although most pupils' handwriting and presentation of their work is good, this is not always the case. Because of this, in mathematics for example, pupils sometimes lose track of how they have arrived at their answers.
- Occasionally, when pupils are taught together in a class, the most able are not challenged enough.
- Occasionally, teachers give pupils too much information rather than pupils finding it out for themselves. This hinders pupils' progress.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets schedule 1 of The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, as amended by The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Information about this inspection

- The school was given a day's notice of inspection.
- The inspector attended three half-day teaching sessions which included some teaching of the pupils in a class and other teaching and learning when the pupils worked alone or in groups on topics they had chosen from a selection provided by teachers.
- The inspector also spent half a day looking at the school's documentation and safeguarding arrangements.
- The inspector spoke with pupils, staff and parents and carers. Two responses from staff to Ofsted's staff questionnaire were taken into account. Too few parents and carers responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View) for their responses to be taken into account.

Inspection team

Paul Armitage, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Sakutu Organisation Montessori is an independent, primary, co-educational, day school in Dollis Hill, North London. It is located in a medium-sized urban house with a garden. It opened in 2000.
- The school is registered for nine pupils aged three to 11 years but there are currently seven pupils aged five to nine years on the school's roll. There are no pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage. None of the pupils has a statement of special educational needs and none is disabled. Pupils come from European, African, West Indian and Asian ethnic heritages.
- The proprietor also operates a nursery in the same accommodation as the school. It is called Queens Park Montessori. All Early Years Foundations Stage children are educated in the nursery, including those in the Reception Year. It is inspected separately by Ofsted and was not inspected on this occasion.
- Pupils attend the local swimming pool, tennis courts and a local park. The last sports day was held at a sports centre in Kilburn.
- The school was last inspected in January 2010.
- The school's aims reflect the educational philosophy of Maria Montessori. It aims 'to increase pupils' independence and intellectual development, offering the maximum freedom within a structured environment'.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of pupils' handwriting and the presentation of their work so that there is consistent high quality.
- When teaching the whole class together, ensure that the most-able pupils are suitably challenged, and provide more opportunities for pupils to pose their own questions on a topic and find out the answers.

Inspection judgements

Pupils' achievement

Good

Pupils' achievement is good. This due to the good teaching and pupils' keenness to learn.

Pupils' progress is regularly assessed using Montessori criteria which are set out as learning steps that become progressively more challenging. This assessment shows that rates of progress vary between the small number of pupils but overall, they do well in the wide range of subjects offered by the school. There is no observable difference in the achievement of pupils from the range of ethnic heritages in the school.

In class, pupils are confident with number, shapes and handling data. Younger pupils know their times tables and are skilled in doing calculations involving money. Older pupils are becoming competent in simple fractions and calculations involving percentages and decimal points. In English, pupils of all ages are avid readers and two were seen quietly reading simplified versions of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* and *The Tempest* before lessons began. They are increasingly proficient in writing. Poems written by pupils entitled 'A Poem to be Spoken Silently' were sensitive in the subject matter and well crafted. Pupils practise their handwriting and, as a result, it is improving but there is still a need for it to be better. The presentation of work in both mathematics and English varies. Some very well-presented work was seen when younger pupils drew pictures and then wrote beneath them what the pictures represented, but in mathematics older pupils are sometimes confused because they have not set out their workings clearly enough.

Alongside the use of the Montessori assessment criteria, the school uses commercial tests which allow comparison with national norms. The tests are used at various times during pupils' time in school and they confirm the good overall achievement. Success is also confirmed by the fact that leavers easily gain places in local independent and maintained secondary schools.

Pupils' behaviour and personal development

Good

Pupils' behaviour and personal development are good. Attendance is good because they have good attitudes and are keen to learn. This can be seen most clearly when they make choices from a range of learning activities on offer. They then apply themselves well to the task with much concentration. They are well mannered in their relations with adults, and patient and supportive of fellow pupils. A very good feature of the school is that older pupils regularly help younger pupils with their work and talk to them if they are unhappy. In consequence, behaviour is good with only the occasional minor disagreement. The school safeguards its pupils well and has effective procedures for dealing with and eliminating bullying. Such incidents are very rare and quickly dealt with by teachers. Pupils recognise different types of bullying and say that they are confident in turning to adults for support and help.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They clearly grow in confidence as they grow older. This is something that parents and carers recognise and comment on positively. Those interviewed by the inspector were very pleased with pupils' keenness to learn, their academic achievement, and also their greater understanding of themselves, other people and what goes on in the community.

Pupils' ability to reflect and to develop moral perspectives and points of view is especially noteworthy; for example, in relation to environmental issues. The school regularly celebrates the major religious and national festivals, such as last year's Royal Jubilee. For this year's Mother's Day, the pupils cooked cakes. The ethnic diversity of the school is celebrated by activities such as pupils creating cards and making handprints for Diwali. Pupils have also had the chance to understand how and why Muslims pray and how they prepare for prayer. Christmas is celebrated

through music, art and dressing up as key characters in the Christmas story for a performance.

At the last inspection, the school was criticised for not being sufficiently community oriented. The school has now successfully addressed this weakness, largely through developing charity work. Pupils collect money to send to the poor in Barbados and they bring in clothes to send to Africa. There are also links with an Afro-Caribbean charity in Hackney. Because of the pupils' diverse backgrounds, staff are very careful to ensure respect for the many different cultures represented. Staff are careful to ensure that the school presents balanced views.

Quality of teaching

Good

The quality of teaching is good. Teachers have good subject knowledge as well as the necessary skills to engage pupils, so that the teaching is effective and pupils enjoy learning. The small number of pupils per teacher means that teachers have a good knowledge of how well pupils are doing. Teachers also use information from assessment effectively to adjust their teaching and ensure that the pupils achieve good outcomes. Teachers and pupils respect one another and this is a significant reason why lessons are calm and much enjoyed by everyone.

Lessons are generally organised in two ways, based on Montessori principles. For parts of the school day, pupils are given a range of activities from which they can choose. The options are carefully chosen by staff to ensure that they reflect the curriculum and provide sufficient challenge, appropriate to the needs of the pupils. So, for example, the options available one morning included completing a literacy test, building an electrical circuit, and matching sounds to pictures and the location of countries in jigsaws. In all these activities, pupils made good progress.

At other times, the teaching is more formal with teachers addressing and working with all the pupils in a lesson. This happens mainly in English and mathematics. The ages and abilities of the pupils are wide and this poses a challenge for the teacher to ensure that pupils do work that is appropriate for them. For the most part, this works well and ensures that all make good progress. However, just occasionally in these more tightly structured lessons, opportunities are lost to challenge the most-able pupils even more. In addition, in these lessons teachers tell pupils too much, so that pupils do not ask enough questions about what they are doing or find out answers for themselves, and this limits their progress.

Resources are used well, including the use of information and communication technology (ICT), especially in topic work. Marking of pupils' work is helpful and informative.

Quality of curriculum

Good

The quality of the curriculum is good. It is broad and balanced and covers all the required areas of learning. Prominence is given to English, mathematics and science, the latter taught by a teacher who visits the school twice a week. The science curriculum is noteworthy for the very successful way it covers all the key areas of science that pupils will study in secondary school.

Pupils also study the humanities, art and technology. There are regular opportunities to cook and to sew. French is taught by a visiting teacher. ICT is used primarily as part of regular coursework. Personal, social and health education is taught within projects and also at 'circle time'. The school uses off-site facilities for much of its physical education, though some use is made of the school garden. Music, which is mainly piano tuition, is taught by a teacher who works in a number of different schools.

A particularly strong feature is the way in which the Montessori approach encourages flexibility in the curriculum so that teachers are able to adjust it to support the needs of individual pupils. A good example is the way in which an aspect of geography studied can reflect the cultural background of a particular pupil. Another good example is the cross-curricular projects undertaken

by all pupils. These are flexible in terms of content and they are also adjusted to take into account academic needs. This was clearly evident in one pupil's study of plants in a science project.

The curriculum is supplemented by a good range of visits, including to the Natural History Museum, the Science Museum and a theme park.

Pupils' welfare, health and safety **Good**

Provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is good. The school has all the required policies, including those for child protection, health and safety and behaviour. There is now a suitable anti-bullying policy which is much improved since the last inspection. The policies provide appropriate guidance to staff and are successfully implemented.

Staff, including the designated person, are suitably trained in safeguarding at the required levels and the required frequency. There are an appropriate number of first aiders. Pupils are properly supervised. Checks on the recruitment of staff are undertaken correctly and details of the checks are properly recorded in a single central register. The school has recently reorganised personnel files, allowing it to maintain the register more easily.

Risk assessments are thorough, with the results properly recorded, including those for visits outside school. Attendance and admission registers are correctly maintained.

Staff place considerable emphasis on pupils learning how to be healthy. Pupils are only allowed to eat fruit and vegetables at break and the school has talked a lot with parents and carers to ensure that packed lunches are equally healthy. Pupils are also clear about the importance of regular exercise and much enjoy the regular visits to the swimming pool and park.

Leadership and management **Good**

The quality of leadership and management is good. The headteacher and her staff have established a strong, successful ethos which ensures that pupils are happy, interested in learning and are achieving well.

The headteacher is very clear on the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Assessment information on pupils' academic achievements, the curriculum and other guidance provided by Montessori provide a good basis for self-evaluation. A good knowledge of parents' and carers' opinions also contributes well to this self-evaluation.

There is no formal staff appraisal but the small number of teachers and the open-plan accommodation mean that there is much sharing of experience between them, and frequent discussion of what teaching has gone well and what has not.

The positive attitudes of staff and pupils ensure that behaviour is good and that pupils are preparing well for their life as sensitive, well-informed adults. Ensuring equality is a strong, positive feature of the school and this is especially significant given the diversity of the pupils.

The accommodation and the complaints procedure meet the regulations. The school provides, or makes available, all the required information. The small prospectus is particularly useful because there is no website. Parents and carers receive regular reports on their child's progress and these reports are very much appreciated.

The proprietor has ensured that all the independent school regulations are met.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of education and significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 2	Good	A school which provides a high quality of education that exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 3	Adequate	A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of education it provides.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school where minimum requirements are not met and/or the quality of education has serious weaknesses.

School details

Unique reference number	132068
Inspection number	420180
DfE registration number	304/6078

This inspection was carried out 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.

Type of school	Montessori primary school
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	7
Number of part time pupils	0
Proprietor	Filmah Doherty
Headteacher	Filmah Doherty
Date of previous school inspection	27–28 January 2010
Annual fees (day pupils)	£4,500
Telephone number	020 7372 7335
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