

Maria Montessori School

26 Lyndhurst Gardens, London, NW3 5NW

Inspection dates 12–14 March 2014

Overall effectiveness	Good	2
Pupils' achievement	Good	2
Pupils' behaviour and personal development	Outstanding	1
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

- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and older pupils all make good progress and achieve well owing to good-quality teaching.
- The range of subjects and activities in the Montessori curriculum provide a very well-organised programme of engaging work.
- Pupils' behaviour and personal development are outstanding.
- The school fosters in pupils a positive attitude and love for learning, enthusiasm, perseverance and the ability to work and learn well.
- There is good provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety, including for safeguarding.
- Leaders have ensured that teaching and achievement are good.

It is not yet outstanding because

- Leaders know most of the school's strengths but there is limited self-review and there are few plans for bringing about further improvements, for example to teaching and learning, and consequently to pupils' rates of progress.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school requires improvement and must take action to meet 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

- This inspection was carried out with one day's notice.
- The inspectors observed 14 lessons, some accompanied by the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with the school's leaders, teaching staff and pupils. A range of documentation was examined, including policies, curriculum plans and risk assessments. The inspectors heard pupils read. The views expressed by 29 members of staff in the questionnaires were considered.
- Parents and carers made 58 responses to the Parent View questionnaires.

Inspection team

Jill Bainton, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Akwai Gill

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Maria Montessori School is an independent nursery and primary school registered for boys and girls aged from three to 12 years of age. The school opened in 1961 and is run by the Maria Montessori Training Organisation. It is located on five sites in London; the main site at Lyndhurst Gardens provides an Early Years Foundation Stage education as well as providing an education for pupils in Year 1 to Year 7. The other sites at Notting Hill, West Hampstead, Hornsey Rise and Bayswater provide an Early Years Foundation Stage education and Year 1 provision as they are registered for pupils aged from three to six years. In Bayswater, there is also an 'elementary stage', for pupils in Years 1 to 7. The Hornsey Rise site is registered on the Early Years Register for children aged from two to three years.
- Maria Montessori School is part of the Maria Montessori Institute, which is the Association Montessori Internationale (AMI) teacher training centre in the United Kingdom.
- The Montessori approach to education is based on realising the potential of each pupil through engaging them in a developmental programme for each individual pupil which matches very closely to each pupil's specific learning needs. Teachers act as guides and facilitators in supporting pupils as they pursue the programme of work set for them or which they have chosen for themselves.
- There are 216 on roll, 120 attend full time and 96 part time. In addition, 10 children attend the registered provision for childcare for children under three years of age. There are 102 children in receipt of nursery government funding. No pupils have a statement of special educational needs.
- The main Lyndhurst school site in Hampstead uses local sports facilities.
- The school was last inspected on 16 February 2011 and the childcare provision in Hornsey Rise was previously inspected separately on 16 May 2013.
- The school aims 'to serve children's immediate needs while engaging a love of learning and independence of spirit and a sense of responsibility and care for the world in which we live'.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
 - introducing a better system so that leaders can evaluate more accurately the school's strengths and weaknesses in specific areas and plan more precisely for further improvements in teaching and learning and other aspects of the school's work.
- The school must meet the following independent school standards.
 - Ensure that there is suitable accommodation for the medical examination and treatment of pupils (paragraph 23B(1)(a)).
 - Provide accommodation for the short-term care of sick or injured pupils, which includes a washing facility and is near to a suitable toilet facility (paragraph 23B(1)(b)).

Inspection judgements

Pupils' achievement

Good

Pupils' achievement is consistently good, with some excellent achievement in numeracy and literacy. The pupils achieve well as a result of consistently high-quality teaching and a good Montessori curriculum, which effectively meets the pupils' needs. While the achievement levels of mathematical understanding and literacy are high, the school also lays great emphasis on the pupils developing a love for learning. Achievement is high in writing with many older pupils writing at length, especially in connection with their research projects. Many older pupils confirmed how much they gained from being at a Montessori school in developing their love of learning.

The children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are making good progress towards the early learning goals; some of the older children have exceeded them. The most able can read well and with understanding, using very good phonic skills to sound and blend their letters based on the excellent Montessori strategies for teaching letter recognition. Children in the early years setting develop a very thorough numerical understanding, with younger children counting and matching their numbers well using practical apparatus and elementary pupils multiplying and dividing fractions competently. Staff compare how well the children are making progress towards achieving or exceeding the early learning goals according to national expectations.

Most pupils acquire very competent reading skills using Montessori reading materials and a wide range of literature, including poetry. Pupils' numeracy skills are very well developed. Pupils also learn well, for example, in developing their investigative learning skills, including simple science experimentation. They also develop a wider range of skills, for example, by taking part in end-of-term drama productions, in singing and dancing, and by playing percussion instruments. The older pupils develop good physical skills through having regular activities at a local sports centre and on-site for physical education, with the younger pupils making effective use of the outdoor play and learning areas at each site.

Following the Montessori system, the school does not carry out any formal testing. Inspectors' judgements on achievement were reached by reviewing a range of evidence including the school's own observations and views about pupils' progress, visits to classrooms, the quality of work in pupils' books and through discussions with both pupils and staff. Pupils move on to a variety of schools with some gaining places at selective secondary schools.

Pupils' behaviour and personal development

Outstanding

Pupils' behaviour and personal development are outstanding. There is a very friendly, welcoming atmosphere at all branches of the school and the pupils confirm that they are very happy and enjoy coming to school. Attendance is excellent and pupils say they have lots of friends. Pupils enjoy choosing their own work programme within the wider-planned Montessori curriculum and confirm that staff are always available to help and support them. They are adamant that there is no bullying at the school and all the pupils mix very well together. Older pupils especially enjoy the opportunity for visits outside school linked to their own research projects. For example, a group of pupils, parents, carers and staff are going to Geneva very shortly as representatives for The Montessori Model United Nations and pupils are busy researching and writing their presentations. Younger children are purposefully engaged in choosing their own activities for example, with washing up and making tea being great favourites alongside choosing their own snacks.

Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The well-structured activities encourage excellent social development, for example, with the youngest children becoming increasingly able to work by themselves, learning how to wait patiently for their turn to use equipment. The older pupils become increasingly self-confident as they move through

the school. A wide range of visits outside school helps to increase their awareness about different world religions and public institutions and services. They develop a very positive awareness of the wider community through using local facilities such as sports amenities and shops. Pupils gain very rich cultural and social experiences by supporting local and national charities. Leaders ensure that when controversial and political issues are considered steps have been taken to offer a balanced presentation of opposing views.

Quality of teaching

Good

Teaching is consistently good enabling the pupils to make sustained good progress. Teaching and learning follows a Montessori approach with staff acting as facilitators to guide pupils' learning, creating 'dynamic links to the environment'. Classrooms are very well equipped with a wide range of Montessori equipment. Staff carefully present the knowledge, ideas and skills to be learnt and pupils then have the opportunity to explore the information and develop the skills for themselves. Their understanding is monitored closely by staff. Pupils use information and communication technology (ICT) well to extend their learning and the extensive library is very well used to develop very good research skills.

Each pupil works at their own pace through planned activities and progress is monitored by the teacher. Staff provide effective support and provide high levels of challenge especially in English and mathematics. Pupils are encouraged to take on more complex tasks. Pupils respond by working hard, concentrating well and they learn with enthusiasm. Older pupils especially enjoy being able to pursue their own interests with writing stories being a favourite activity. A 'work cycle' lasts around three hours with opportunities for outside breaks. Relationships between pupils and staff and amongst pupils themselves are very positive. Effective questioning encourages the pupils to think for themselves and their responses help to develop very good language skills. The majority of pupils have an extensive vocabulary and can express themselves very well. Staff mark the pupils' work informally alongside them.

Continual assessment of pupils' learning through staff observations is an integral feature of the programme. Staff record the activity undertaken, the level of engagement and when work was completed. Once each term every pupil is observed in considerable depth, to find out about the pupils' engagement, their interest and application. The information gained is then used to plan the next round of work. In this way, each pupil is given individual tasks suited to their understanding and level of development, which builds on their previous learning. Parents and carers are given the opportunity to attend twice-yearly consultation meetings. The parents and carers of pupils in the elementary sections are given detailed written reports annually.

Quality of curriculum

Good

The Montessori curriculum is good and helps all pupils to learn and make good progress. It has a strong impact on the pupils' learning and achievement. A broad framework of work is laid down by the Association Montessori Internationale based on five areas: practical life skills, sensory skills, language, mathematics and culture. Staff plan a range of activities designed to meet each pupil's developmental needs within a carefully planned learning environment. The structure of each day encourages pupils to organise and complete their work according to their own schedule and at their own pace. Programmes of study are based on a wide range of Montessori materials including many natural materials and work for children is carefully prepared to ensure that all the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage are met.

In the 'elementary classes' for pupils in Year 1 and beyond, the focus of the earlier work is for pupils to consolidate their literacy and numeracy skills while being introduced to other subjects which are integrated through a series of stories that represent the broad historical backdrop of the evolution of the earth. Pupils develop their understanding of how the world was created, through work in science, history, geography, botany and zoology. They explore the history of civilisations,

their belief systems, art, drama, music and inventions. All study involves literacy and, where possible, numeracy. As the pupils develop they make greater use of their skills to pursue research more fully into subjects given to them or where they show a particular interest. There are regular opportunities for sport. Personal, social, health and citizenship education is embedded well within the life of the school. The calm, nurturing environment reflects the values of the school and promotes kindness, respect and a consideration for others.

A range of after-school clubs in French, Mandarin and chess, and visits including to a recycling centre, a poetry library and a talk on astronomy, enrich pupils' experience. The pupils 'take the initiative' in helping to organise visits such as to the British Museum. Visitors are a regular feature of school life and help to give the pupils an understanding of wider society.

Pupils' welfare, health and safety

Good

Provision for the pupils' welfare, health and safety is good owing to the rigorous procedures and strong commitment to keeping the pupils safe. All the independent school regulations are met. There are detailed policies and procedures, which are implemented effectively by staff. A regular review of school policies and procedures is conducted. Senior staff on each site have undertaken the required training for child protection and all other staff have been trained to a high standard. Policies relating to the pupils' welfare are clear and up-to-date and include child protection, anti-bullying, behaviour, and health and safety.

All the required checks are made on staff to ensure their suitability to work with children and the information is recorded on the required single central register of staff appointments. Several members of staff are trained in safer recruitment and all the necessary checks are made prior to any appointment. Staff have received training at the appropriate level in first aid and accidents are methodically recorded. There is careful attention given to the health and safety and security of the pupils. Detailed risk assessments are undertaken for activities both on and off site. The admission and attendance registers meet the regulations. Pupils are encouraged to take regular exercise through the planned physical education programme, regular outdoor play and to eat healthily.

Leadership and management

Good

The leadership and management are good and enable the pupils to learn and achieve well. The proprietors have ensured that almost all of the statutory regulations for independent schools are met. The implementation and management of the Montessori programme of study and teaching are good. Good procedures ensure the welfare, health and safety of all pupils on all five separate sites. All the school's policies and procedures are clear, meet requirements and are available as required for parents and carers. The complaints procedures meet requirements. All the premises and accommodation provide attractive, stimulating environments. However, the medical facilities do not meet the regulations on every site.

The headteacher is relatively new in post and currently undertakes a significant amount of teaching so has limited time to fully fulfil her leadership role. A process of annual staff appraisal takes place and staff have frequent opportunities for further training. Montessori mentors evaluate the work of the teaching staff regularly to ensure that they are implementing the Montessori principles correctly and effectively.

A development plan has been devised; however, there is insufficient focus on some specific aspects of the school's work. While leaders are aware of many of the school's strengths, systems for rigorously evaluating the school's performance in all areas and for then drawing up a precise plan to drive forward improvement are underdeveloped.

Many parents and carers commented favourably on the school, confirming how well their children had settled in, the considerable progress they had made and how well the staff understood and supported them. All parents and carers who responded to the online questionnaire would strongly

recommend the school to others. Staff morale is very high, as seen in the positive response in the questionnaires.

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 the quality of education has serious weaknesses.

School details

Unique reference number	131978
Inspection number	441435
DfE registration number	202/6399

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	Nursery and primary Montessori school
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	3–12
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	216
Number of part time pupils	96
Proprietor	Maria Montessori Institute
Chair	Richard Partridge
Headteacher	Lizzie Kingston
Date of previous school inspection	16 February 2011
Annual fees (day pupils)	£9,921–£10,630
Telephone number	020 7435 3646
Email address	schools@mariamontessori.org

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate
Store St
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2014

