

Walthamstow Montessori School

Penrhyn Hall, Penrhyn Avenue, Walthamstow, London E17 5DA
St John's Church, Brookscroft Road, Walthamstow, London E17 4LH

Inspection dates

7–9 June 2017

Overall effectiveness	Inadequate
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Inadequate
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Inadequate
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Inadequate
Outcomes for pupils	Inadequate
Early years provision	Inadequate
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- The proprietor has not ensured that all the independent school standards are met.
- Leadership and management are inadequate. Leaders do not know the independent school standards. As a result, many requirements were not known about until this inspection.
- There are no arrangements for governance, and performance management arrangements for staff are weak. There is a clear lack of capacity in the school's leadership team to secure improvements. The committed proprietor, who is also the school's principal, has far too much to do.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are inadequate. There is no formal assessment system, so it is not possible to know how much progress pupils have made from their starting points. Pupils' individual targets are not personalised and challenging enough, especially for the most able pupils.
- Teachers do not plan activities that consider pupils' prior attainment and learning needs. As a result, pupils do not make enough progress and outcomes are inadequate.
- Safeguarding is not effective. The recruitment process is insufficiently robust. Some of the required vetting checks on new staff are not completed. The records of checks on staff are incomplete or absent altogether.
- Pupils' personal development and welfare are inadequate because leaders do not implement appropriate safeguarding arrangements. Therefore, pupils' welfare is compromised.
- Pupils' behaviour requires improvement. Some teachers do not feel confident enough to challenge pupils when they choose to ignore instructions in lessons.
- Early years provision is inadequate because children do not make enough progress.

The school has the following strengths

- The proprietor, who is also the school's principal, is dedicated to her school and determined to improve standards rapidly.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school and feel safe.
- Staff are overwhelmingly positive and committed to their school.
- A clear majority of parents would recommend the school to others.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school must take action to meet the requirements of the schedule to The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and associated requirements. The details are listed in the full report.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of leadership and management and pupils' welfare by ensuring that:
 - all the independent school standards are met
 - an urgent review of safeguarding practice, especially the safer recruitment process, is undertaken and changes made to ensure that statutory guidance is fully implemented
 - a rapid review of leadership and governance is undertaken and changes made to ensure that leaders and governors work effectively together to raise standards
 - the quality of teaching is monitored closely and linked to a regular and effective review of teachers' performance.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and pupils' outcomes by:
 - ensuring that lessons are appropriately challenging and meet the needs of all groups of pupils, especially the most able, so that they can make at least good progress
 - implementing an assessment system that tracks pupils' progress in all subjects from their various starting points in order to provide accurate and reliable information that can then inform teaching
 - providing teachers with consistent and effective training in teaching and assessment.
- Improve pupils' behaviour by providing teachers with appropriate training that empowers them to challenge pupils when they ignore instructions.

The school must meet the following independent school standards:

- Ensure that the written policy on the curriculum, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work, which provides for the matters specified in sub-paragraph (2) is implemented effectively (paragraph 2(1), 2(1)(a)).
- Ensure that the written policy, plans and schemes of work take into account the ages, aptitudes and needs of all pupils, including those pupils with an education, health and care plan (paragraph 2(1)(b), 2(1)(b)(i)).
- Ensure that a programme of activities is provided for pupils below compulsory school age which is appropriate to their educational needs (paragraph 2(2), 2(2)(f)).
- Ensure that all pupils have the opportunity to learn and make progress (paragraph 2(2)(h)).
- Ensure that teaching enables pupils to acquire new knowledge and make good progress according to their ability so that they increase their understanding and develop their skills in the subjects taught (paragraph 3, 3(a)).
- Ensure that teaching involves well-planned lessons and effective teaching methods, activities and management of class time (paragraph 3, 3(c)).
- Ensure that teaching shows a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the pupils, and ensures that these are taken into account in lessons (paragraph 3, 3(d)).

- Ensure that a framework is in place to assess pupils' work regularly and thoroughly, and that information from that assessment is used to plan teaching so that pupils can progress (paragraph 3, 3(g)).
- Ensure that a framework for pupil performance to be evaluated, by reference to the school's own aims as provided to parents or national norms, or to both, is in place (paragraph 4).
- Ensure that arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school and have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State (paragraph 7, 7(a), 7(b)).
- Ensure that the school's behaviour policy is implemented effectively (paragraph 9, 9(b)).
- Ensure compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (paragraph 12).
- Ensure that an admission and attendance register is maintained in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (paragraph 15).
- Ensure that the welfare of pupils at the school is safeguarded and promoted by ensuring that a written risk assessment policy is effectively implemented and that risk assessments are specific and that appropriate action is taken to reduce risks that are identified (paragraph 16, 16(a) and 16(b)).
- Ensure that no person appointed as a member of staff at the school carries out work in contravention of a prohibition order, an interim prohibition order or any direction made under section 128 of the 2008 Act or section 142 of the 2002 Act, or any disqualification, prohibition or restriction (paragraph 18(2), 18(2)(b)).
- Ensure that appropriate checks are carried out in respect of each person's medical fitness (paragraph 18(2), 18(2)(c)(ii)).
- Ensure that overseas checks are completed for staff, as appropriate (paragraph 18(2), 18(2)(e)).
- Ensure that the single central register of vetting checks contains accurate information about all the checks that are required to check that staff members are suitable to work with children (paragraph 21(3), 21(3)(a)(ii), 21(3)(a)(iii), 21(3)(a)(iv), 21(3)(a)(viii), 21(3)(b)).
- Ensure that suitably equipped medical rooms are available at both school sites to administer first aid to pupils, which are near a toilet and include a washing facility (paragraph 24(1), 24(1)(a), 24(1)(b)).
- Ensure that, where the parent is not satisfied with the response to a complaint outlined in 33(e) a formal procedure is established for the complaint to be made in writing which makes provision for a hearing before a panel appointed by or on behalf of the proprietor, and consisting of at least three people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint (paragraph 33, 33(f)).
- Ensure that where there is a panel hearing of a complaint, one panel member is independent of the management and running of the school and allows for a parent to attend and be accompanied at a panel hearing if they wish (paragraph 33, 33(g), 33(h)).
- Ensure that the complaints panel makes findings and recommendations; and a copy of those findings and recommendations is provided to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about; and is available for inspection on the school premises by

the proprietor and the headteacher (paragraph 33, 33(i), 33(i)(i), 33(i)(ii)).

- Ensure that a written record is kept of all complaints that are made and whether they are resolved following a formal procedure, or proceed to a panel hearing; and correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them (paragraph 33, 33(j), 33(j)(i), 33(j)(ii), 33(k)).
- Ensure that the proprietor and persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently, they fulfil their responsibilities effectively and actively promote the well-being of pupils (paragraph 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b), 34(1)(c)).
- Ensure that the statutory early years welfare requirements relating to suitable people and disqualification are met (paragraphs 3.9, 3.10, 3.11, 3.12, 3.14, 3.15, 3.16, 3.17, 3.18).

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- The effectiveness of leadership and management is inadequate because leaders have not ensured that all of the independent school standards are met.
- The proprietor is also the school's principal. Her very small leadership team, which includes the head of school, currently lacks the capacity to discharge its responsibilities effectively. Leaders have failed to keep abreast of the many changes in statutory guidance since the school's last full standard inspection.
- The school's curriculum covers all the required areas of learning. However, while there are planned programmes for each subject, they focus on the content to be taught and do not take into account pupils' starting points, individual needs, interests and abilities. As a result, teaching does not ensure that all pupils have the opportunity to make at least good progress, especially the most able pupils.
- The school does not have an effective system to identify pupils' starting points or to check on their progress. Leaders and teachers do not know how well pupils are doing or are expected to do and, as a result, do not have enough information to provide pupils with effective support and challenge.
- The systems in place for the monitoring of teaching are weak and the performance management process is insufficiently robust. Many staff are working, some for a year or more, without formal review of the quality of their teaching. Consequently, teachers do not receive the advice and guidance necessary to improve their work.
- Training and development opportunities for staff are limited. Notably, the proprietor was surprised when teachers demonstrated misconceptions about what they should or should not do in their teaching practice. There is an urgent need for a consistent approach to teaching and assessment across the school.
- The school's promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a relative strength. Plans to teach pupils about different faiths, cultures and to respect and care for others are adequate and form part of the planned programme for personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education. These plans include appropriate coverage of equality, fundamental British values and the preparation of pupils for life in modern Britain. However, the planning documentation for PSHE needs to be adapted to suit the school's own context.
- The school has an appropriate system to record any incidents of misbehaviour or bullying, although none have occurred to date. However, incidents of low-level disruption were observed in lessons. In these cases teachers made no attempt to challenge pupils when they were deliberately ignoring or refusing to follow basic, reasonable instructions.
- The school's complaints policy does not meet requirements because it does not include the possibility of a formal complaint being considered by a complaints panel. The school also does not keep a suitable complaints log. Inspectors were told there have been no formal complaints since 2012.
- Most parents report that they are generally happy with the work of the school, confirming that their children enjoy coming to school and feel safe. However, a significant minority

would not recommend the school and identify as particular issues the school's leadership and its lack of readiness to deal with concerns they raise.

Governance

- Governance is inadequate.
- The school is governed entirely by the sole proprietor, who is also the principal. The lack of external support and challenge has meant that the proprietor and the head of school have not kept up to date with changes in legislation and improvements in practice for a long time.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are ineffective.
- Although leaders have succeeded in ensuring that there is a safe learning environment in which concerns are raised quickly by staff, safeguarding is not secure for several reasons.
- Some checks on the suitability of staff to work with children have not been carried out in accordance with statutory guidance. The single central register of vetting checks does not meet statutory requirements because there are omissions and some checks are not recorded.
- Prior to the inspection, checks on whether staff have been disqualified from providing childcare had not been undertaken. These were completed during the inspection.
- The safer recruitment process is not robust. Reference requests do not explicitly ask referees whether there are any concerns about applicants working with children. The interview process is also not recorded with sufficient rigour.
- Staff who spoke to inspectors were not clear whom they should speak to in the event of an allegation against the proprietor; but they said correctly that they would refer to the school's safeguarding policy. However, this policy had to be revised twice during the inspection, partly because its guidance on allegations was unclear and partly because it did not reflect the latest statutory guidance, 'Keeping children safe in education', September 2016.
- Admission and attendance registers do not meet requirements. The admission register does not include all the required information and attendance registers do not record whether a pupil's absence is authorised or unauthorised. There is no system to review pupils' attendance, identify patterns or consider attendance levels compared to national figures.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Inadequate

- Teaching, learning and assessment are inadequate because expectations are too low.
- While long-term plans set out the content for all the necessary areas of learning, they do not support planning for progression over time. As a result, teachers provide activities which do not match pupils' varying needs and abilities.
- The school does not have an assessment system that measures pupils' progress. Pupils

are set termly individual targets, but these are inconsistent and lack precision and challenge. The termly reviews of these targets do not provide reliable information about pupils' progress and attainment. In pupils' workbooks and 'learning journeys' there is little evidence that pupils are making good progress. There is little evidence to suggest that they are consolidating and building on their previous knowledge or skills.

- Much valuable learning time is wasted. For example, when asked why a most-able child was given easy work to choose, the teacher's response was that if harder activities were available they might overwhelm the other children. This is a poor excuse and inspectors were told this is not in line with the school's agreed approach to teaching and learning.
- The planning for and deployment of additional adults require improvement. Teaching assistants could spend much more time intervening to support pupils' learning.
- Teachers' questioning of pupils is of variable quality and sometimes does not provide pupils with sufficient time to think about their response. Where questioning is stronger, it is clear that teachers know pupils' abilities, allowing them time to think carefully and so deepen their understanding.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Inadequate

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is inadequate.
- Pupils are not safe because the arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.
- At the Penrhyn Hall premises, young children are changed on the floor of the staff toilet, which is also the dedicated medical room. This is not appropriate. A separate area for both the changing of children and attending to sick pupils is required.
- There is need for a thorough risk assessment of both premises. Fire safety is an additional concern as full emergency lighting checks have not been undertaken. Risk assessments of trips are adequate.
- Arrangements for the promotion of pupils' personal and social development are strong. Pupils enjoy playing and learning in the well-resourced, attractive outdoor area. They enjoy making things, planting flowers and going on frequent trips to different parts of London. The school's work to support charities, involve parents and celebrate diversity is strong and contributes to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Pupils do not always listen to teachers or respond well to instructions; and teachers sometimes do not challenge this. Instead, they ignore it and carry on with those who choose to engage. This is unhelpful as it teaches pupils that they can do as they please.
- Pupils' attendance is unknown as it is not systematically tracked, monitored or reviewed. It is not known whether pupils' absences are authorised or unauthorised, as this is not recorded.
- Pupils are generally very confident, articulate and willing to share their views. They are

welcoming, inquisitive and happy to share their work and demonstrate their reading skills. They do not misbehave or engage in bullying.

Outcomes for pupils

Inadequate

- Outcomes for pupils are inadequate. The school is unable to demonstrate pupils' progress as it is not measured in any subject.
- Pupils are not assessed, so their starting points are unknown. Curriculum plans make no reference to pupils' aptitudes and specific needs, such as those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities or those who are most able. Pupils' individual targets are not specific or challenging enough.
- The teaching of reading, writing and mathematics is not sufficiently strong to enable pupils to make adequate progress. Teaching is not challenging enough and expectations are too low. For example, in mathematics a very able child who could count into the thousands with an inspector had a current target to count numbers less than 20 and was completing activities that were far too easy for him.
- The content of pupils' workbooks and 'learning journeys' reflects inadequate progress over time.

Early years provision

Inadequate

- The provision for children in the early years has significantly declined. The leadership of the early years provision is inadequate. As a result, the related independent school standards are not met. Statutory welfare requirements are also not met in paragraphs 3.9, 3.10, 3.11, 3.12, 3.14, 3.15, 3.16, 3.17 and 3.18.
- As children in the early years learn alongside pupils in the main school, all the concerns identified elsewhere in this report are applicable. Of particular concern is the lack of childcare disqualification checks completed for staff. These were completed during the inspection.
- Children are motivated, interested and their behaviour and engagement show that they feel safe. However, teaching, learning and assessment are inadequate and children make inadequate progress. For example, in 2016, information provided by the local authority showed that none of the pupils in receipt of public funding reached a good level of development at the end of the early years foundation stage. This was not known about or understood by the school's leaders.

School details

Unique reference number	134579
DfE registration number	320/6064
Inspection number	10008548

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, 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	Other independent school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	116
Number of part-time pupils	50
Proprietor	Lorna Mahoney
Principal	Lorna Mahoney
Annual fees (day pupils)	£2,160–6,750
Telephone number	020 8523 2968
Website	www.walthamstowmontessori.com
Email address	e17montessori@aol.com
Date of previous inspection	23 March 2010

Information about this school

- The Walthamstow Montessori School is an independent, non-selective nursery and preparatory school for boys and girls aged between three and 11 years. It opened in April 2001.
- It is located in the London Borough of Waltham Forest. The lower school is located at the Penrhyn Hall premises and includes separately registered provision for children aged two. The elementary and upper preparatory classes are located nearby on the site at St John's Church.
- Currently there are 145 pupils on roll, 116 attending full time and 50 attending part time. Of the 93 children in the early years foundation stage, 29 are under three and 64 receive public funding under the government's nursery education scheme. The early years

provision was last inspected in September 2016 and was judged to be good.

- A few pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities; none have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan. Almost half of pupils are bilingual or speak English as an additional language.
- The school provides registered daily breakfast and after-school childcare provision for pupils of all ages.
- The school aims 'to create a stimulating, caring, happy and safe environment for all the children in our care; to create a developmentally appropriate curriculum to meet the needs of each child in line with the Montessori philosophy of education'.
- The school's last standard inspection was a 'light touch' visit in March 2010, when the overall effectiveness was judged to be good. Since that time, an unannounced emergency inspection took place in March 2013. It identified unmet independent school standards and was followed up with an unannounced progress monitoring inspection in November 2013. This inspection judged the school to be meeting the independent school standards. As a result, the Department for Education confirmed the school would return to the standard inspection cycle in December 2013.
- The school's website meets the requirements of the independent school standards.

Information about this inspection

- This full standard inspection took place with one day's notice.
- Inspectors observed a range of teaching and learning at both school sites. Much of this was conducted jointly with the proprietor.
- An inspector heard pupils read and inspectors spoke to pupils both formally and informally throughout the inspection.
- Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work and the school's information about pupils' progress.
- The inspection took account of 38 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and the lead inspector spoke to a parent on the telephone.
- Inspectors had several meetings with the proprietor, head of school and teachers.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of documentation, including all school policies, logs, evidence of staff training and information related to safeguarding and health and safety.
- The inspection took into account the 16 questionnaires completed by staff.
- The lead inspector spoke with the local authority's designated officer (LADO).
- The inspectors also considered additional information and evidence in relation to the independent school standards and toured both premises.

Inspection team

James Waite, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Karen Matthews	Ofsted Inspector

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

Parent View

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 and as part of the inspection.

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.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

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 and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/ofsted.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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

© Crown copyright 2017