

# The Pier Head Preparatory Montessori School

3 Shadwell Pierhead, Glamis Road, Wapping E1W 3TD

## Inspection dates

9–11 January 2018

|  |                    |
|--|--------------------|
| <b>Overall effectiveness</b>                 | <b>Good</b>        |
| Effectiveness of leadership and management   | <b>Good</b>        |
| Quality of teaching, learning and assessment | <b>Good</b>        |
| Personal development, behaviour and welfare  | <b>Outstanding</b> |
| Outcomes for pupils                          | <b>Good</b>        |
| Overall effectiveness at previous inspection | Good               |

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- Senior leaders have high expectations for children’s learning. There is an unwavering focus on developing children’s life skills.
- The school’s teaching successfully instils a love of early reading and extends children’s speaking and listening skills. Teachers consistently develop children’s enthusiasm for listening to and discussing stories.
- The school successfully promotes children’s spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Children benefit from a rich curriculum with many opportunities to develop their creativity.
- Staff support children’s emotional well-being extremely well. Familiar routines and consistent approaches to teaching help children settle quickly and become confident learners.
- The school has a strong partnership with parents and carers, who highly value the inclusive ethos of the school and the individual attention that their children receive.
- Personal development, behaviour and welfare are outstanding. Children’s behaviour is exemplary. They are self-assured and articulate, demonstrating immense respect for each other and adults.
- Effective observation, planning and assessment support staff well to help children make good progress. Many have developed skills that are well above those expected for their age.
- Senior leaders ensure that the school meets the independent school standards.
- Leaders check the quality of teaching and learning with routine informal feedback to staff. However, leaders do not use performance management as well as they could for the professional development of staff.
- The most able children receive limited challenge to develop their reading and writing skills across the curriculum.

### Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 (‘the independent school standards’) and associated requirements.

## **Full report**

### **What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Strengthen the quality of teaching and learning by ensuring that the most able children are challenged to develop their reading, writing and mathematics skills across the curriculum.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management of teaching so that leaders use performance management to set clear objectives for staff that align closely to their professional development.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- The proprietor and headteacher have high expectations of what children can achieve. They have established a culture of mutual respect with the well-being of children at the heart of the school's work.
- The headteacher and proprietor work in close partnership. They have increased leadership capacity by giving responsibilities to other staff. For example, there is a new designated safeguarding lead. Teachers lead weekly planning sessions as part of a regular cycle of increased responsibility.
- The proprietor has ensured that the school meets all of the independent school standards.
- The curriculum design effectively promotes learning across subjects and the early years foundation stage areas of learning, alongside the areas of Montessori education. The national curriculum is used appropriately to teach pupils in key stage 1. Children thrive in a safe and stimulating environment with well-thought-out opportunities to develop their practical and sensorial skills. There is an unwavering focus on the development of children's speaking and listening skills, which underpin all areas of learning.
- Children benefit from exciting extra-curricular activities, such as learning French and Mandarin, and adventurous pursuits, including canoeing. Leaders provide children with strong after-school provision that parents highly appreciate.
- Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted very well. Children benefit from taking part in activities with a local school to broaden their experiences. Regular story sessions promote children's thinking about moral issues. For example, while exploring the story of 'The Tortoise and the Hare', children confidently discussed opposing views as to whether it is better to 'go slow and steady' in life. Children have many opportunities to explore a range of religious festivals.
- Leaders check the progress pupils are making carefully. They know children and parents extremely well. Staff share the progress that children make regularly with parents, both informally and through formal reports.
- At the time of the inspection, no children were identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders are aware of how to seek advice from external specialists should there be a need. A minority of children in the school have emotional needs related to low self-esteem and confidence. Leaders support these children very well.
- Parents told inspectors that they appreciate highly the work of leaders to ensure that their children settle well to school life. Parents say that their children become independent learners and gain life skills which they use at home. They offered as examples how well their children take greater responsibility for dressing themselves and tidying up at home.
- Staff receive regular informal feedback on how to improve their teaching. Staff collaborate well and share planning routinely. However, leaders do not use an appraisal cycle so that staff have precise objectives on how to improve their teaching further, linked to their training.

## Governance

- The school does not have a governing body.
- The proprietor holds responsibility for governance. She takes an active role within the school and ensures that policies are kept up to date. Leadership capacity has been strengthened by increasing the responsibilities that staff have in the day-to-day running of the school.
- The proprietor also teaches in school and is held in high regard by staff and parents.

## Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders ensure that staff receive appropriate training and that pre-employment checks are thorough. The designated safeguarding leads have recently completed their training with the local authority. Leaders have strong relations with health visitors and ensure that all children have the two-year health check. Regular contact with parents allows staff to have a good understanding of individual families.
- The proprietor ensures that policies are updated and reflect the latest guidance. Staff have a good understanding of the various signs that may indicate that children are at risk of harm and a clear understanding on the procedures to follow should they have a concern.
- Children feel safe and well cared for. Staff ensure that children follow clear routines on how to move around the site safely. For example, while walking down the stairs, staff and children sing in unison, reminding themselves about the importance of walking slowly and holding the handrails. Children respond to these reminders very well.
- Leaders ensure that the site is secure and that risk assessments are in place to ensure that children are kept safe while taking part in activities, such as canoeing.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

**Good**

- Consistently effective teaching by all adults contributes to the good progress children make over time. Adults regularly assess children and provide interesting tasks that are well matched to their needs.
- Staff form strong working relationships with children. Adults meet and greet children individually, helping children to settle and feel valued. They have clear expectations of what children can achieve and constantly remind them of the need to make positive choices.
- Regular story times act as a catalyst for children to develop strong language skills. Adults read with expression and enthusiasm and engage children's concentration through role play and good questioning. Children use these rich opportunities to build on their own creativity. For example, a group of boys retold a story they had just heard and used props in a doll's house to make up their own story.
- Staff promote new vocabulary very well. They are clear in their instructions and routinely sing with children to embed early language skills. Children respond very positively to this as they repeat new words and phrases with confidence. This is especially helpful for those children who are learning to speak English as an additional language.

- Adults systematically work to develop children’s early writing skills. For example, during direct teaching sessions, they regularly check and provide feedback to children about using the correct pencil grip. Children explore different ways of working, confidently making choices about which resources to choose. For example, children enjoyed using clothes pegs and water sprays that helped them to strengthen their grip, supporting their early mark-making skills.
- Staff observe children’s movement and choices carefully. They intervene in a timely manner if children are off-task and encourage them to try a range of activities. Good questioning and reinforcement of language by adults allows children to be very clear on what they are learning. For example, following gentle guidance by the teacher, a child was able to use the word ‘half’ independently when making two equal-sized towers.
- Teachers encourage even the youngest children to develop early phonics skills. Children enjoy making choices, for example using sensory resources such as ‘sandpaper letters’, and teachers reinforce the sounds through repetition. As a result, children are quick to learn, for example by recognising the same sounds in their names. Children further develop their phonics skills through discussion and opportunities to practise saying and writing learned sounds.
- In mathematics, children are challenged to learn early number skills well. Good questioning by adults enables children to investigate and explore number patterns. For example, children were encouraged to use the vocabulary of ‘more than’ and ‘less than’ during an investigation.
- The most able and older children are not given enough opportunities to develop their fluency in reading or writing or to deepen their understanding in mathematics. The books they read do not match their reading abilities, and opportunities to develop their writing skills in all areas of the curriculum are limited. The tasks they are given in mathematics do not stretch their thinking. As a result, they do not make the progress of which they are capable.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Outstanding**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school’s work to promote pupils’ personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Children are polite, respectful and exceptionally welcoming to visitors. They listen carefully to each other and willingly challenge different viewpoints in a mature manner.
- There is a whole-school approach to make children feel welcome. Parents value highly the support their children receive in order for them to settle quickly. Staff members act as role models and have excellent routines to develop children’s self-esteem. For example, adults and children sing ‘goodbye, goodbye’ enthusiastically when any child is about to go home. This helps children to develop great respect for their peers and enables even the youngest children to thrive in a supportive environment.
- Children are reminded about safety as they move sensibly across the school. They go to different ‘zones’ in an orderly way. When getting ready to go outdoors, adults encourage children to dress by themselves, while keeping a close eye on those that need extra help.
- Children are encouraged to take ownership of their learning. They confidently make

positive choices, such as tidying up and using water to clean 'dirty areas' while engaging in role play. Children are helpful and enjoy taking responsibilities, especially during snack time.

- Adults give children many opportunities to learn about safety outside school. For example, children receive guidance while canoeing from qualified instructors. In class, children learn about 'those who keep us safe', including the important roles of the fire services and the police.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of children is outstanding.
- Children of all ages learn and play together, demonstrating great mutual respect. They use equipment both indoors and outdoors in the 'garden' very sensibly.
- Children develop extremely positive attitudes to their learning. For example, they listen attentively to stories and show immense concentration when attempting to write their own names.
- Leaders have taken appropriate steps to ensure that children's punctuality to school has improved. Through sharing new routines with parents, leaders ensure that children are ready for their learning on time. As a result, the number of children arriving late to the school has fallen.
- Poor behaviour is extremely rare and staff liaise with parents on a regular basis to ensure that any concerns are addressed immediately. Parents agree that the behaviour of children is exemplary.

## Outcomes for pupils

## Good

- Children make good progress across the school from their different starting points. Staff know individual pupils very well and strong support ensures that any children at risk of falling behind receive the right support. Children are well prepared for the next stages of their education.
- Children's development of language and their speaking and listening skills are particular strengths. They are highly articulate. Older children, in particular, engage in mature and thoughtful conversations about their learning. Children develop strong understanding of a range of stories. Many children begin predicting what happens next in a story and older children can discuss key themes with confidence.
- Early phonics skills are strong and most children have skills above those expected for their age. Younger children are beginning to identify simple sounds while the older children can blend sounds and read words by breaking down the sounds.
- Children's early mathematics is well developed. Younger children are able to identify numbers and older children are increasingly able to discuss tasks. However, the most able children do not get enough time to deepen these skills through more challenging tasks.
- In early writing, children benefit from planned opportunities to write their names and initial sounds. Many have developed pencil grips that are above age-related expectations. The most able children have neatly formed and legible handwriting but do not have extended opportunities to apply their skills across the curriculum. As a result, their

formation of sentences is not as well developed as it could be.

## School details

|                         |          |
|-------------------------|----------|
| Unique reference number | 136250   |
| DfE registration number | 211/6399 |
| Inspection number       | 10041400 |

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                 | 2 to 7   |
| Gender of pupils                    | Mixed  |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 40   |
| Number of part-time pupils          | 7  |
| Proprietor                          | Emma Kohl  |
| Headteacher                         | Julie McCormick  |
| Annual fees (day pupils)            | £6,960–£13,880   |
| Telephone number                    | 02074 810202   |
| Website                             | <a href="http://www.thepierheadprepmontessori.com">www.thepierheadprepmontessori.com</a> |
| Email address                       | <a href="mailto:thepierheadprep@yahoo.co.uk">thepierheadprep@yahoo.co.uk</a>             |
| Date of previous inspection         | 24 February 2015   |

## Information about this school

- The Pierhead Preparatory Montessori School is an independent day school that is located in Wapping, east London. It opened in 2009 and provides pre-school and childcare from 8.00 a.m. to 6.00 p.m. When children reach the age of four and a half they attend full time. The school is situated on the first floor of a community and activity centre.
- There are currently 40 children on roll aged from two to seven years, two of whom are in key stage 1 and five of whom are under three years of age.
- The school aims to 'educate the whole child and honour the diversity of each individual'. It uses the national curriculum alongside the Montessori philosophy of education.
- The proprietor is responsible for governance at the school. The proprietor and



headteacher teach full time at the school.

- No pupils have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan. Pupils come from a diverse range of cultural heritages and many speak English as an additional language.
- The school was last inspected in February 2015 and was judged to be good in all areas.
- At the beginning of the inspection, the school did not meet all the requirements on the publication of specified information on its website. Leaders ensured that this was rectified by the end of the inspection.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspection was carried out with one day's notice.
- Inspectors scrutinised records of children's progress and examples of their work in journals and books.
- Meetings were held with the proprietor, headteacher and members of staff to discuss the school's procedures and improvement plans. Inspectors spoke with children and parents to hear their views.
- A range of documentation was scrutinised relating to safeguarding. The school's single central record, pre-employment checks and risk assessments were reviewed.
- There were five responses to the staff questionnaire. Inspectors took into account 30 responses to the Parent View questionnaire and eight written responses.

## Inspection team

Noeman Anwar, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Grace Marriott

Ofsted Inspector

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