

The Montessori School

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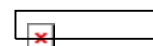
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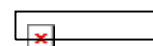
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Introduction and summary

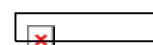


Purpose and scope of the inspection



This inspection was carried out by the Office for Standards in Education under Section 163 of the Education Act 2002 in order to advise the Secretary of State for Education and Skills about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

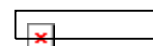
Information about the school



The Montessori School is situated on a working farm in the rural village of Stallingborough, North East Lincolnshire. The school is housed in a 19th century converted coach house. It is a small independent day school for boys and girls aged from 4 to 11 years, which has been providing education for twelve months. At the time of the inspection, there were nine pupils on roll. No pupils have been identified as having special educational needs.

The school follows closely the fundamental principles of Montessori education, which are Care of Self, Care of the Environment and Care of Others. The school aims to 'provide (an) excellent quality of education for children' and 'awaken children's interest and encourage in them a love of learning'. The Montessori practice during the primary years aims to provide a curriculum that helps pupils to become independent learners and 'to treat each child as a unique individual with respect for gender, ethnic origin, culture, religion and specific needs'.

Summary of main findings



The school provides an effective introduction to Montessori principles and a sound quality of education. The quality of teaching is satisfactory, with some good features. Lessons are underpinned by careful planning for individual children whom the staff know very well. The extensive assessment procedures effectively track pupils' progress and also support planning. The school has made considerable efforts to meet the requirements for registration for independent schools and is well placed to continue its development. Staff provide good role models for the pupils and show care for pupils' welfare and well-being. Parents are very supportive of the school and particularly appreciate its family values. The premises and accommodation are of good quality. The school meets nearly all of the regulations.

What the school does well

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- it promotes pupils' behaviour very well;
- it plans the curriculum thoroughly;
- the assessment of pupils' attainment and progress is effective;
- it promotes good relationships between staff and pupils;
- the provision for moral and social development is very good, the provision for cultural development is good; and
- the premises and accommodation are of a high standard.

What the school must do in order to comply with the regulations

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In order to comply with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should include in its handbook:

- details of its policy on and arrangements for exclusions ; and
- particulars of educational and welfare provision for pupils with statements and for pupils for whom English is an additional language.

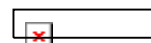
Next steps

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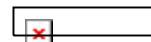
Whilst not required by the regulations, the school might wish to consider the following point for development:

- when planning, match more clearly the Montessori education curriculum for the pupils below compulsory school age to follow the nationally recommended guidance for the Foundation Stage.

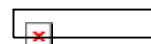
Compliance with the regulations for registration



1. The quality of education provided by the school



The quality of the curriculum

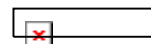


The school provides a satisfactory curriculum. It follows conscientiously the principles of Montessori education, which have been integrated very well with the National Curriculum. There are schemes of work for all areas of the curriculum. Each morning the pupils follow a three-hour work cycle planned effectively to meet their individual needs. The activities promote mathematical thinking, language skills, reading and writing skills and experience of information communication technology (ICT). The pupils work at their own pace, developing independent learning skills. Personal, social and health education is taught effectively through the Montessori Practical Life programme. In the afternoon session, the pupils follow programmes of study for science, history, geography, art, design and technology, physical education and music. A project for each term, for example, 'Transport' or 'Food', provides suitable opportunities for cross-curricular links. A specialist music teacher visits each week to teach the pupils to play recorders. The curriculum is enhanced by the teaching of French to the full age range. Information and communication technology (ICT) is taught appropriately as a subject in its own right and also supports learning in other subjects. Swimming is taught each week at a local pool and pupils are working towards accreditation.

Planning is thorough, with long-, medium- and short-term plans in place. The planning indicates the learning objectives and key skills to be taught. Each lesson is evaluated reflectively and the information gained is used to inform further planning. The medium- and short-term planning indicates how the needs of the age and ability range are to be met. The allocation of time for each subject is suitable.

The school's provision for extra-curricular activities is satisfactory. A dance class is held after school each week. The directors are investigating ways in which this aspect of school life can be developed further.

The quality of the teaching and assessment



The quality of teaching is satisfactory with some good features. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. The teacher knows the pupils very well and, helped by the small number of pupils in the class and an able teaching assistant, gives them a significant amount of individual attention. Teaching is positive, encouraging pupils frequently and praising them often. Pupils are expected to finish their tasks, and as a consequence, they complete an appropriate amount of work each day. To enhance the quality of experience for pupils, the school also makes good use of a specialist teacher for music.

The examples of good teaching seen were characterised by interesting practical activities, effective questioning to assess understanding and clearly differentiated activities for individual pupils. In lessons judged to be satisfactory, usually in lessons given to the whole class, the learning

objectives were sometimes too difficult for the youngest pupils.

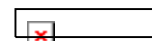
Lesson planning is good and carefully detailed with lesson objectives and the key skills to be taught. Good use is made of high quality resources to maintain the pupils' interest. The teacher and teaching assistant work well together and the pupils benefit from this positive relationship. The classroom is organised effectively and enhanced with interesting displays and examples of the pupils' work.

The school's assessment procedures are good. The teacher writes each pupil's programme into his/her personal diary each day. This is updated at the end of the day when the teacher records the progress made and provides each pupil with verbal feedback when necessary. This procedure is effectively supported by termly assessments in each subject. Montessori assessment records are updated each half-term. Marking is encouraging and praises pupils when they have made a particular effort. Parents are provided with termly reports. These comprise of a tick list for the acquisition of skills and an informative personal evaluation for each pupil. Parents' responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire indicate that they are kept well-informed about their children's progress.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

2. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils



The school's provision for the pupils' moral, social and cultural development is good and provision for pupils' spiritual development is sound. In line with Montessori principles, the school does not have specific provision for religious education, nor does it have daily assemblies or collective worship. The school celebrates Christian festivals such as Christmas, Easter and Harvest with the involvement of the local vicar, who also performed a 'wedding' ceremony to familiarise the pupils with the religious aspect of marriage. As part of a study of memories and Remembrance Day, the pupils visited Eden Camp. The pupils' spiritual awareness is further developed through investigation and exploration in science, art and music.

The school provides very well for the pupils' moral development. The pupils are involved in drawing up the school's rules and demonstrate ownership and responsibility for them. They clearly understand right from wrong and have a well-developed sense of justice and fairness. The staff are good role models. They promote consideration and respect for others.

Provision for the pupils' social development is very good and results in pupils interacting with their peers and adults in a friendly and courteous manner. They work and play amicably together and share resources equably. Pupils' behaviour is very good. The older pupils care for the younger ones and this enhances the family atmosphere found in the school. The pupils are given specific tasks to develop their sense of responsibility and their part in the day-to-day running of the school. A daily rota of tasks provides the pupils with experience of making snacks, washing up, feeding the fish and birds and keeping the classroom tidy. They respond very well and take their duties seriously. There are only rare breaches of the school's code of conduct, and the school manages such instances effectively. Meal times are pleasant social occasions with staff and pupils engaged in conversation. When playing outside, the pupils share the space well and interact sociably with each other and the staff on duty.

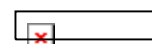
The school provides a good range of experiences to develop cultural awareness. To further develop understanding of their own culture, the pupils recently visited the National Railway Museum and the Trolley Bus Museum as part of their project on transport. An artist recently visited the school to work

with the pupils on a large canvas wall-hanging depicting fruit, part of this term's project on food. This project offers effective opportunities for the pupils to broaden their awareness of cultural diversity, as they study foods eaten around the world. They have been taught about the concept of 'fair trade'. The school has planned celebrations for Diwali, Hanukah and Ramadan which introduce the pupils to festivals of major world faiths. During the week of the inspection, the pupils celebrated Chinese New Year by making fortune cookies and they enjoyed a Chinese lunch.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

3. The welfare, health and safety of the pupils

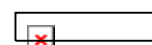


The school has a full range of policies in place to meet the requirements for welfare, health and safety. Child protection procedures fully meet regulations. Fire safety is satisfactory, although the school should ensure that fire drills are held at least termly. Staff are well deployed at all times, including when the pupils prepare their morning snack and during staff break times. There is a high adult:child ratio with at least two adults present at all times with the current nine pupils. Admissions and attendance registers are well maintained and the school fulfils its duties under the Disability Discrimination Act 2002.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff



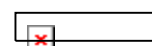
The school is wholly owned by Equalgrade Ltd, a limited company. It has two directors, one of whom is the headteacher.

The school has undertaken appropriate checks with the Criminal Records Bureau to ensure that all staff are suitable to work with children. There are effective procedures in place to check professional qualifications and medical fitness of staff prior to their appointment. The school also requires written references and proof of identity.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

5. The suitability of the premises and accommodation



The school premises have been converted from a 19th century coach house to provide good accommodation for the present and proposed numbers of pupils. The three classrooms are

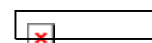
spacious, well-lit and organised appropriately to meet the needs of the age group. The classrooms are well equipped with high quality furnishings and washroom facilities are suitable.

The library and the ICT facilities share a room with sufficient space for both. The pupils use the hall at the nearby nursery for physical education. There is small enclosed grass and tarmac area which is used for break times and outdoor play.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

6. The quality of information for parents and other partners



The school provides detailed information to parents and other interested parties regarding its approach and curriculum in the prospectus and parents' handbook. In addition, policies are available for parents and carers on request. Each term, the school provides parents with informative reports on their child's progress. Regular newsletters keep parents up to date with school issues and the annual review is a useful précis of the school's work. However, neither the prospectus nor the parents' handbook contain particulars of the school's policy on and arrangements for exclusions, or particulars of educational and welfare provision for pupils with statements and for pupils for whom English is an additional language, although policies are available on both of these if requested.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

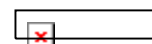
The school meets most but not all of the requirements.

What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?

In order to comply with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:

- details of its policy on and arrangements for exclusions (paragraph 6(2)(e)); and
- particulars of educational and welfare provision for pupils with statements and for pupils for whom English is an additional language (paragraph 6(2)(f)).

7. The effectiveness of the school's procedures for handling complaints

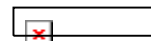


The school has a comprehensive complaints policy.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

School details



Name of school:	The Montessori School		
DfES ref number:	812/6003		
Type of school:	Day primary school		
Status:	Independent		
Age range of pupils:	4 - 11 years		
Gender of pupils:	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils):	Boys 3,	Girls 6,	Total 9
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need:	Boys 0,	Girls 0,	Total 0
Annual fees (day pupils):	£3,888		
Address of school:	Station Road, Stallingborough, N E Lincolnshire, DN41 8AJ		
E-mail address:	enquiries@thechildrenshouse.org.uk		
Telephone number:	01472 886000		
Headteacher:	Ms Theresa Ellerby		
Proprietor:	Ms Theresa Ellerby/Ms Sylvia Archer		
Lead Inspector:	Ms Cecile Corfield		
Dates of inspection:	7 - 10 February 2005		

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