

Rainbow Montessori School

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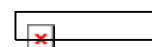
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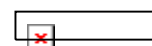
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Introduction and summary

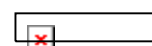


Purpose and scope of the inspection



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



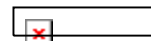
Rainbow Montessori School is an independent, co-educational day school for pupils aged five to twelve years. It is located in West Hampstead, north west London. The school was founded in 1982 as a nursery school by the present proprietor. It has since expanded to include another nursery school and in 1992, the preparatory school was opened on the present site.

The school embraces the Montessori philosophy and seeks to '*inspire pupils to learn with wonder and confidence*'. It also aims to provide a '*happy and calm atmosphere, with importance attached to the social and personal development of the child as well as academic progress*'.

Pupils come from a variety of backgrounds and cultures. There are 57 pupils on roll. Three pupils

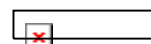
have a statement of special educational need (SEN), and the school gives additional learning support to 12 of the other pupils.

Summary of main findings



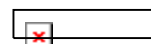
Rainbow Montessori School provides pupils with a high quality education through a broad and balanced curriculum. It makes very good provision for their intellectual, personal, social, physical, moral and spiritual development. The school has a positive ethos exemplified by the very good relationships between staff and pupils. It provides a safe environment in which pupils feel secure and valued. Very good teaching ensures that pupils achieve highly.

What the school does well



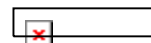
- it is very effective in providing a curriculum which inspires pupils to learn successfully;
- it provides pupils with very good teaching and as a result, pupils achieve very well;
- it uses assessment effectively to ensure that pupils make very good progress in their learning; and
- it helps pupils to develop into highly confident, independent and diligent young people.

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



- maintain the admission and attendance registers in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 1995;
- fit a washbasin in the room designated for use by pupils who are ill; and
- provide further information to parents as detailed in section 6 of this report.

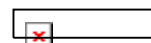
What the school must do to comply with the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2002



In order to comply with the requirements of the DDA, the school should:

- devise a three-year plan to improve the accessibility of the premises.

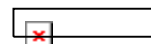
Next steps



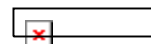
Whilst not required by the regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

- ensure that visiting part-time staff follow the school's behaviour management policy.

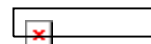
Compliance with the regulations for registration



1. The quality of education provided by the school



The quality of the curriculum



The school provides pupils with a broad and balanced curriculum, which ensures their intellectual, personal, social, physical, moral and spiritual development. The curriculum covers all the subjects of the National Curriculum. It is appropriately supported by schemes of work, plans and teaching resources and is extremely well implemented. It is based on the Montessori philosophy, which aims to provide pupils with an individualised education in which teaching is based on the child's assessed needs. The 'sensorial' curriculum ensures that pupils learn through a variety of materials and apparatus, which connects all their senses. All aspects of the curriculum are taught effectively through a cross-curricular approach.

Pupils make very good progress and achieve highly in all aspects of their learning. In some instances, their attainment is outstanding. For example, in mathematics, some pupils in the elementary classes (5 to 6 year olds) can multiply and divide three-digit numbers using appropriate materials. In English, they can identify prepositions, conjunctions, adverbs and use them correctly in meaningful sentences. By the middle primary years, using practical equipment, they add, subtract, multiply and divide with large numbers and by the age of eleven, they can do this mentally.

The school follows the nationally recommended SEN code of practice. Pupils with a statement of educational need have clear targets and are provided with very good support. Consequently, they make very good progress. The school has many pupils for whom English is an additional language. Most of them speak English fluently and the curriculum adequately supports the further development of their language skills.

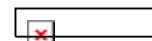
The personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme reflects the aims and ethos of the school. It is taught through three strands: the 'practical life' curriculum, a thematic focus on monthly festivals from around the world, and a specific learning module. The practical life curriculum encourages the successful development of independence, confidence and concentration through everyday tasks. Equally, the specific learning module develops effectively pupils' awareness of issues such as bullying, race and racism, and healthy living.

The school is very well resourced for the Montessori approach. There is a range of practical apparatus to support the development of language and mathematical skills. There is also an adequate supply of science equipment, musical instruments and books including some with dual

language. Pupils have access to computers, which they use to support their learning.

The curriculum is enhanced by specialist teaching in science and through the provision of specialist tuition in musical instruments, modern foreign languages, swimming and dance. With the exception of science, pupils have to pay extra for all specialist tuition. Pupils follow an extensive programme of school visits and trips, which support and enrich the curriculum, such as visits to museums, the National Gallery and the London Symphony Orchestra.

The quality of the teaching and assessment



The quality of teaching in the school is very good. It was good or better in 78% of the lessons graded. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen.

Lessons are well planned and teachers' subject knowledge is usually very good. Teaching involves constant dialogue with pupils at a challenging level. Pupils are given planned opportunities to reflect on their learning and they often bring into discussions their knowledge and experiences from everyday life. Learning is enhanced by teachers' effective use of questioning, which is a very positive feature of teaching throughout the school. Questions link pupils' prior learning with current learning. This allows them to make relevant and meaningful connections in their learning. Teaching methods are suitably matched to pupils' needs. In particular, the use of apparatus enables pupils to develop a good understanding of the basic ideas on which the rest of their learning is founded.

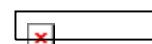
Most of the teaching encourages pupils to behave responsibly. Where teaching was only satisfactory, this was in lessons taught by visiting teachers who did not consistently apply the school's behaviour management policy.

Pupils are assessed using a range of methods. Their attainment in the early stages of learning and up to the mid-primary years is measured against their ability to use successfully, the practical apparatus that supports their learning and ensures their progression. As pupils get older and develop confidence in handling abstract ideas, they use apparatus less often. They are then introduced to more formal assessment systems such as mathematics and spellings tests. Teachers observe pupils regularly and keep detailed records of when they introduce apparatus and when pupils become confident in its use. Teachers' comments are evaluative and perceptive and provide pupils with feedback on what they do well and what they need to improve.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

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



The school makes good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Through the curriculum, it is very successful at helping pupils to develop into highly confident young people who have the ability to work independently with sustained concentration. Pupils demonstrate this independence in all aspects of their learning. From a very young age, they are able to choose appropriate materials and apparatus to support their learning. They work diligently and try hard.

The school's behaviour management policy is effective and helps pupils to develop positive

attitudes to each other and their learning. Pupils are well behaved, polite and have a clear sense of right and wrong. They report that there is no bullying in the school and clearly understand the school's high expectations in this area. Through the PSHE curriculum, and the thematic focus on monthly festivals, pupils develop a broad understanding of major world faiths such as Judaism and Christianity.

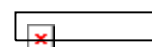
Pupils are encouraged to become responsible members of their community through a range of activities and initiatives. Older pupils have tasks and duties in school such as helping out at lunchtime and pupils of all ages take responsibility for tidying up and returning equipment. Pupils contribute to the life of the wider community by supporting charities such as the Macmillan Cancer Relief. They have also helped to raise money for victims of the 2004 Tsunami disaster in Asia.

Pupils develop a good general knowledge of public institutions and services in England through themes such as the 'Environment' and 'Me and My World'. Their knowledge in these areas is developed through visits to destinations as varied as the House of Commons and a local recycling centre. The pupils come from diverse cultural backgrounds and therefore they have many informal opportunities to develop an appreciation of and respect for their own and other cultures. Planned opportunities to enhance multi-cultural understanding have included a Martin Luther King celebration and studies of African music.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

3. The welfare, health and safety of the pupils



The school takes the welfare, health and safety of its pupils seriously and works hard to provide them with a safe, caring and attractive learning environment. Staff have very positive relationships with pupils and these help to create a school ethos in which the pupils feel valued, confident and secure. The school has comprehensive policies covering child protection, the safety of pupils on educational visits, behaviour, anti-bullying, First Aid and health and safety. Staff have received training on child protection and First Aid and there are appropriate procedures to ensure pupils are well cared for. The school carries out regular risk assessments and has due regard to fire safety. A record is kept of fire drills and fire alarm tests and there are clear procedures for keeping hazardous substances safely.

The school maintains admission and attendance registers but does not keep them in line with the requirements of the regulations. In the admission register, changes to pupils' addresses are not recorded permanently and pupils' names are not always listed alphabetically. In addition, changes to both registers are sometimes made in a manner, which obscures the original entry.

The school has a statement of intent regarding the DDA and has begun to review access to all parts of the school for disabled pupils and staff. However, it still needs to devise a three-year plan to increase the accessibility of the premises.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

The school meets all but one 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:

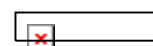
- maintain the admission and attendance registers in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 1995 (paragraph 3(9)).

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

In order to comply with the requirements of the DDA the school should:

- devise a three-year plan to improve the accessibility of the premises.

4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff

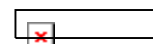


The school is owned by a sole proprietor who is also the principal. All staff except for foreign nationals have been subject to satisfactory clearance with the Criminal Records Bureau at an enhanced level. Teachers who are foreign nationals have been subject to equivalent checks with the appropriate authority in their own country. Prior to the confirmation of their appointment, the school requests character references and makes detailed checks to ascertain the identity, employment history, qualifications and medical fitness of staff. Staff also serve a three-month probationary period.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

5. The suitability of the premises and accommodation



The school is housed in a three-storey Victorian building with a recent side extension. The premises and accommodation are well suited to the needs of the school and its stated objectives. The teaching accommodation includes five classrooms, a resource room, a music room and a kitchen that doubles up as a science laboratory. The buildings are maintained in a good state of repair and the premises are kept clean and tidy. The interior décor of the school is very good. A clever and effective combination of natural light and colour make the school a very attractive learning environment for pupils. Classrooms are large enough for the numbers of pupils using them and contain suitable furniture for the age of the pupils taught there. Flooring and fittings are in good condition. Food is prepared off-site and served from the school kitchen, which is suitably equipped for that purpose. The outdoor play space is adequate in size. However, the tarmac is pitted and requires resurfacing. Whilst there is a room available for the use of pupils who are ill, it does not have a washbasin. The school has no facilities for physical education but makes use of local facilities for swimming, sport and games.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

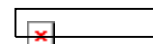
The school complies with all but one of the requirements.

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:

- fit a washbasin in the room designated for use by pupils who are ill (paragraph 5(l)).

6. The quality of information for parents and other partners



The school provides parents and prospective parents with comprehensive and helpful information through its prospectus and parents' handbook. The prospectus includes a detailed statement of the school's ethos, which links the Montessori philosophy of child development to the practical methods the school employs to achieve it. It also contains information on admissions, exclusions and details of the school's curriculum provision. However, it does not include details of the behaviour policy, or the school's policy on educational and welfare provision for pupils with statements and those for whom English is an additional language. Though the prospectus makes it clear that parents of pupils and of prospective pupils may request a range of other policies, the list does not include all the information that should be available to them. While the prospectus gives the details of the principal, it does not indicate that the principal is also the proprietor. The parents' handbook contains the full details of key school policies.

The school organises termly parents' conferences to discuss pupils' progress and provides parents with an end of year written report. The reports give parents clear and useful information about their children's progress, attainment, and what they need to do to improve.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

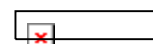
No.

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:

- parents and prospective parents with
- the full details of the proprietor (paragraph 6(2)(b));
- particulars of the school's policy on and arrangements for discipline (paragraph 6(2)(e));
- particulars of educational and welfare provision for pupils with statements and those for whom English is an additional language (paragraph 6(2)(f));
- make it clear that parents of pupils and of prospective pupils may request:
- details of the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year (paragraph 6(2)(j)); and
- details of the number of staff employed at the school, including temporary staff, and a summary of their qualifications (paragraph 6(2)(k)).

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

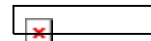


The school very recently reviewed its written complaints procedure and produced a new one, which has been sent to all parents. The school has a very positive relationship with its parents and in the past has dealt successfully with any complaints on an informal basis.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

School details



Name of school:	Rainbow Montessori School		
DfES ref number:	202/6390		
Type of school:	Montessori Preparatory		
Status:	Independent		
Age range of pupils:	5 -12 years		
Gender of pupils:	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils):	Boys 25,	Girls 32,	Total 57
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need:	Boys 3,	Girls 0,	Total 3
Annual fees (day pupils):	£6,825 - £6,912		
Address of school:	13 Woodchurch Road London NW6 3PL		
E-mail address:	rms@rainbowmontessori.co.uk		
Telephone number:	020 73288986		
Fax number:	020 76244046		
Headteacher:	Mrs Linda Madden		
Proprietor:	Mrs Linda Madden		
Lead Inspector:	Mrs Florence Olajide HMI		
Dates of inspection:	7 - 10 March 2005		

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