

# Green Gables Montessori Primary School

Independent School

Inspection report

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DfES Registration Number	211/6386
Unique Reference Number	131198
Inspection number	296817
Inspection dates	21-22 March 2007
Reporting inspector	Michèle Messaoudi AI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002 (as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005).

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## Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, 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

Green Gables Montessori Primary School is an independent school for boys and girls aged four to eight years. It is located in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. The primary school was set up in 1996 and moved to its present address in September 2006. It serves a diverse community that is also reflected in the staff. There are 11 pupils on roll, none of whom has a statement of educational need. Pupils are taught in two classes. The pre-school class is for children aged four years and the primary class for the five to eight year olds. A small minority of pupils have English as an additional language. The school adheres to the Montessori philosophy of education. Accordingly, its mission is to *'help the child help himself/herself.'* It aims to *'cultivate the child's own natural desire to learn and to encourage thinking for himself/herself as a person and to be aware of and respect cultural differences.'*

## Evaluation of the school

Green Gables Montessori Primary School is a good school that provides a good quality of education; meets its aims and enjoys a high level of parental satisfaction. It provides a good curriculum that is broad and balanced, places a high priority on pupils' personal development and ensures that their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Its provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is good. Teaching, assessment and progress are satisfactory overall. Whilst pre-school pupils make at least good progress, pupils in the primary class make at least satisfactory progress. The school complies with most of the regulations.

## Quality of education

The school provides a good curriculum that is broad and balanced and enables pupils to take charge of their own learning. The planning of the curriculum follows Montessori and Foundation Stage guidelines in the pre-school class, and Montessori guidance in the primary class. The curriculum comprises the Montessori areas of learning of practical life (care of self and of the environment), refinement of the senses, language and vocabulary skills, French as a modern foreign language, science, dramatic play, creative arts and music, development of number concepts and mathematical operations, as well as awareness of the environment geographically and historically. Provision for physical education is good and includes weekly tuition by a specialist and swimming lessons at the local sports centre. French and music are also taught by specialists. The grace and courtesy curriculum

promotes self-help, good manners, and other aspects of personal, social and health education. The quality, quantity and range of resources available are a real strength of the curriculum, in particular the specifically Montessori equipment. The sensorial apparatus and phonic materials enable pupils to learn reading and mathematical skills systematically. However, while other technology aspects are suitably covered, the use of information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum is under-developed. There is very good range of play equipment, and the school is awaiting clearance from the landlord to install a climbing tower on the playground.

The quality of teaching and assessment, whilst being satisfactory overall, is good in the pre-school class. The staff work as a cohesive team and are skilful in implementing the curriculum to develop independent learning in pupils. They prepare the classroom with well-chosen resources to provide ample learning opportunities within a planned theme. They have established excellent working relationships in their classes and pupils work well independently, in pairs or in groups. Good listening skills are fostered from the start, which helps pupils learn from each other as well as from the adults, and gives them space for personal reflection to arrive at an answer.

Teachers know their pupils well and are aware of their individual needs and aptitudes. As their planning is based on continuous assessment, they are also aware of pupils' prior attainment and use this information to assist pupils to build on their experiences. Where the planning is closely linked to the assessment of the activities previously undertaken by each pupil, the teaching helps individual pupils extend their learning through challenging questioning that enables them to make meaningful connections of a higher order. However, the planning and the assessments in the primary class are not always sufficiently detailed to identify the possible learning outcomes for each pupil in this mixed-age group. Consequently, there are missed opportunities to move pupils' learning on to the maximum of their potential.

The staff use a range of assessment methods to track pupils' progress. In both classes, pupils' achievement is measured against their proficiency in using the practical materials that support their learning and are designed to ensure its progression. In addition, the pre-school staff record detailed observations that identify individual pupils' next learning step in each area of the curriculum, following both the Foundation Stage and the Montessori guidelines. The school is looking into ways of widening the primary assessment framework to better support the planning of lessons and broaden the measure of progress.

As a result of the good teaching and assessment in the pre-school class, these pupils make at least good progress. The majority of them achieve the early learning goals by the age of five and some exceed them. Pupils in the primary class make at least satisfactory progress as an outcome of satisfactory teaching and self-motivation. Most move on to the school of their parents' choice.

## Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding, as reflected in pupils' excellent behaviour and exemplary personal development. 'The school is superb at developing maturity and responsibility in pupils,' comment some parents in their pre-inspection questionnaires, and the inspection confirms this. Through its general ethos and an effective personal, social, health education programme the school is highly successful in promoting pupils' spirituality through reflection, their self-motivation and self-discipline and the strong social skills seen in pupils of all ages. The staff are caring and nurturing, very respectful of each pupil's individuality, and provide excellent role models. Consequently, pupils attend well and are calm, happy, thoughtful and considerate. They contribute positively to their environment by fulfilling planned duties, managing their own learning and supporting their peers. They develop a good sense of citizenship by learning about 'people who help us' and recycling materials. They prepare well for their future economic well-being by developing self-confidence and strong team working and research skills.

Pupils prepare very well for life in a multicultural society by learning about world religions and various cultural practices, as well as by interacting with their peers who come from a variety of backgrounds. Their cultural development is promoted very well by an excellent range of multicultural resources, art and crafts and art appreciation, music, and the learning of French. However, it has not been enhanced by educational visits since the school changed premises, and this has been noted by some parents.

## Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is good. The staff create an ethos in which pupils feel secure and well cared for. There are effective procedures in place to minimise the risks incurred by all in the course of the school day. There have been no instances of bullying to date. However, the school has not yet reviewed its policies and procedures to safeguard pupils in compliance with the recent guidance. The nominated person and the staff have yet to receive the appropriate training. Since the completion of the building works, the school has not obtained evidence of having a satisfactory level of fire safety, as identified by a report from the fire authority. The curriculum strongly encourages pupils to adopt healthy lifestyles and to take regular exercise. Pupils have unlimited access to fruit, water and milk throughout the day. In addition, the school provides well-balanced and nutritious meals in a very pleasant dining room. The school fulfils its duties in accordance with the Disability Discrimination Act 2002 and is to draft a plan to show how it will improve its provision further.

## Suitability of the proprietor and staff

There is no rigorous recruitment procedure in place to ensure the suitability of staff to work with children. Consequently, not all staff have been checked by the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) or other appropriate authorities. Furthermore, the school has not consistently carried out the appropriate checks to confirm the identity, medical fitness, previous employment history and professional references of staff prior to confirmation of their employment. The school is already addressing this issue.

## School's premises and accommodation

The premises offer spacious teaching accommodation that has been refurbished to a very high standard of decoration and fittings. It has been designed to create a warm, welcoming, sociable and calming environment that promotes pupils' spiritual and social development. The outdoor provision is being developed in stages and the playground currently provides grassed and hard surfaces, with opportunities for pupils to take part in a range of physical play with natural materials.

## Provision of information for parents, carers and others

There is a wide range of information available to parents and others, including a recently updated prospectus, a parents' handbook, a staff handbook, a website and newsletters. Parents have the opportunity to meet their children's teachers formally every term to discuss their well-being and progress. They receive an annual report that details what their children can do in every area of learning. However, the reports do not indicate the pupil's next learning steps. Some parents do not feel sufficiently well informed of their children's progress. The school is already addressing this issue.

## Procedures for handling complaints

The school has recently updated its procedures for handling complaints. These meet requirements fully and the majority of parents say they understand them.

## Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended January 2005, with the exception of those listed below.

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the curriculum (standard 1) and must:

- ensure that lessons are well planned, particularly in the primary class (paragraph 1(3)(c)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety (standard 3) and must:

- prepare and implement written policies to safeguard and promote the welfare of children who are pupils at the school in compliance with Department for Education and Skills (DfES) guidance *Safeguarding children and safer recruitment in education* (2007) (paragraph 3(2)(b))
- demonstrate that it has a satisfactory level of fire safety, as identified by a report from the Fire Authority (paragraph 3(5)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of suitability of proprietor and staff (standard 4) and must:

- prior to the confirmation of their appointment, ensure that all staff at the school and any member of the body of persons named as the proprietor have been subject to a check with the CRB to confirm their suitability to work with children (paragraph 4(b))
- prior to the confirmation of the appointment of all staff, ensure that appropriate checks have been carried out to confirm their identity, medical fitness, previous employment history, character references and, where appropriate, qualifications and professional references and ensure that such information has been taken into account in determining whether their appointment will be confirmed (paragraph 4(c))
- where a foreign national is either the proprietor of the school, or is employed as a member of staff, and for whom a CRB check is inappropriate, ensure that that person is subject to checks for overseas teachers set out in DfES guidance *Child protection: preventing unsuitable people from working with children and young persons in the education service* (paragraph 4(f)).

## What the school could do to improve further

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

- Continue to widen the assessment framework in the primary class.
- Continue to develop the use of ICT.

## School details

Name of school	Green Gables Montessori Primary School
DfES number	211/6386
Unique reference number	131198
Type of school	Day primary school
Status	Independent
Date school opened	1996
Age range of pupils	4-8
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 6                  Girls: 5                  Total: 11
Annual fees (day pupils)	£7,800 for 39 weeks, 9.00am-4.00pm £10,080 for 48 weeks, 8.00am-6.00pm
Address of school	St Georges in the East Canon Street Road London E1 0BH
Telephone number	0207 488 2376
Fax number	0207 488 2375
Email address	info@greengables.org.uk
Headteacher	Mrs Virginia Hunt
Proprietor	Mrs Jacqueline Brierley
Reporting inspector	Michèle Messaoudi AI
Dates of inspection	21-22 March 2007