

Walthamstow Montessori School

Independent School

Inspection report

DfES Registration Number	320/6064
Unique Reference Number	134579
Inspection number	301644
Inspection dates	7-8 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Jackie Cousins 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

Walthamstow Montessori School is an independent, non-selective, day school for boys and girls aged between 2 to 9 years. It opened in April 2001. Currently there are 76 pupils on roll. Pupils from all backgrounds and abilities are integrated into school life. It is located in one building which has an area for playtimes and physical education with an all weather surface. A nearby park is available for the school's use and two tennis courts are rented every week in the summer and autumn terms. An athletics' ground is hired once a year for sports' day. A breakfast club for pupils is available every day for one and a half hours.

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 need of each child which are in line with Montessori philosophy of early education.'*

Evaluation of the school

Walthamstow Montessori is a good school and it meets its aims effectively. It has some outstanding features. During the last six years the principal and head of school have successfully built a school where excellent provision for the welfare, health and safety of pupils means that their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils' make good progress mainly because teaching and learning are good. The skills pupils learn here prepare them well for the next stage of education and their future lives. Parents are really pleased with all the school offers and the way that it is run. The school meets all but one of the regulations.

Quality of education

The curriculum is good because it focuses effectively on the development of pupils' literacy, speaking and listening, mathematics, science skills, together with all other areas of learning. Good provision for pupils' personal development allows them to become independent, confident and thoughtful young people. Assembly is used well to promote pupils' self-confidence and speaking skills. Provision for pupils who find learning more difficult is good because individual education plans are used well to support them. The curriculum is enhanced for older pupils with specialist teaching in

French, science, recorder, violin, clarinet, music, art, dance and physical education on a weekly basis. Concerts twice a year allow pupils to develop their singing, drama and performance skills well. Visitors and visits enhance the curriculum effectively such as when pupils visited an RAF museum. Pupils learn about how to keep themselves safe when crossing the road successfully because of the good use of resources. There are clear programmes of study for pupils in the Foundation Stage. Good schemes of work for Years 1 to 4 are in place for literacy, numeracy and science. However, the frameworks for planning information and communication technology (ICT) do not consistently outline the key skills for Years 3 to 4 which will be built on each year.

Teaching and pupils' progress are good. Small class sizes enable teachers to give pupils a considerable amount of individual attention. Teachers have high expectations of pupils and challenge more able pupils well. They encourage pupils effectively to be independent and think for themselves. Time is used well because pupils decide when and what they will do from the Montessori activities selected by staff. For example, pupils do one challenging literacy activity and when the teacher has seen their work they move straight onto a practical numeracy activity. Good teaching methods develop pupils' basic skills. For example children in Reception learn to add numbers together accurately because practical activities are used well. Resources are utilized effectively such as when pupils learn to dance and sing songs from the musical 'Bugsy Malone' in the large hall. Teachers have good expertise and thus enable pupils to develop their knowledge and understanding of the world well. For example, they learn about small creatures such as spiders and their structure. Occasionally, teachers' planning for main activities is rather brief and does not record effectively the key skills that pupils will learn. The use of teachers' feedback and pupils' specific individual targets is not always effective in outlining what pupils have done well and could do to make their work even better.

Assessment activities are used well. In the nursery and reception classes all areas of learning are effectively assessed using Montessori record sheets. For Years 1 to 4 pupils' assessment is carried out effectively in reading, writing, speaking and listening and mathematics and science, although pupils' progress is not tracked effectively from year to year. Assessment records for ICT are limited.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Their social development is a significant strength and this is evident in their excellent behaviour. Pupils are keen to come to school and their attendance is high. Pupils are exceptionally courteous and enthusiastic in their approach to visitors. They are encouraged to develop independence in their learning and are always ready to show initiative in lessons. Small class sizes contribute significantly to pupils' self-confidence and their assurance as to their own worth. Relationships in class and across the school are particularly good. Pupils show great respect in their response to each other. They feel very confident and secure in offering their opinions. This contributes

well to the development of their good communication skills. Pupils have outstanding attitudes to learning and their well developed skills in literacy and numeracy contribute significantly to securing their future economic well-being. They show sensitivity to the needs of others and the school places a highly priority on involving pupils from all backgrounds and so all pupils work well together. Racial harmony is achieved very well.

Pupils' contribution to the community is good. Although there is no formal school council, pupils' views are collected through annual questionnaires and informal class discussions and some of their requests are acted upon. Older pupils have good opportunities to contribute to the school community through a range of posts of responsibility. There are good links with the local community, together with the various charitable activities in which the school is involved. The school is particularly effective in ensuring that pupils celebrate the diversity of cultures in the school community and in the local area. Pupils' cultural development is extremely good and is promoted well through the curriculum and extra-curricular activities and through the wide range of visits made by pupils.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

Provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is outstanding. Their personal needs and welfare are exceptionally well supported by all staff. Arrangements to settle children into the Nursery and other year groups are very good. Teachers are available at the beginning and end of every day to discuss any concerns with parents. Health and safety issues are carefully checked and are effectively sorted out by the school. Risk assessments are carried out thoroughly. Pupils are encouraged well to lead healthy and safe lives. They eat fruit and vegetables because the school provides them every day and encourages older pupils to try unfamiliar fruits and eat them together. Physical exercise sessions are taught for at least two and a half hours a week. Pupils play with equipment at break and lunch times which encourages them to be fit. They know how to keep themselves safe in school and out, and how to cross the road safely. This is because visitors' expertise is used really well to explain safety challenges. The school meets the requirements of all the regulations. It has good policies on health and safety and first aid. It maintains registers of pupils' attendance and logs fire drills as laid out in regulations.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

Procedures for checking the suitability of staff to work with children are robust, and meet all current requirements.

School's premises and accommodation

The school's premises and accommodation are sound and assist pupils to learn effectively and safely. The building is in good order. Classrooms are of a satisfactory

size and quality. Four computers are used satisfactorily. However, two of these are in the school office and are not easily used by pupils. An all weather surface play area is securely fenced and a good range of equipment is available for break times. A nearby park and tennis courts are available to pupils for sporting activities. The school's outdoor area is effective in offering pupils space to play and enjoy small ball games because of its all weather surface. Good displays on the walls celebrate pupils' achievements. High quality dragonfly collages by the younger children were displayed attractively in the main hall during the time of the inspection.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The partnership with parents is particularly good. Virtually all parents who responded to questionnaires were totally positive. One parent said: 'I have two children at the school who run to the school door and disappear into their classrooms I am amazed at what they have learnt The school achieves this by welcoming the children each morning, developing and nurturing confidence and a desire to learn.' The prospectus covers all requirements and offers good information on the curriculum. Additional information is sent to parents regularly in newsletters. Daily contact and an open-door policy between staff and parents mean parents concerns are sorted out extremely effectively. Parents' meetings are held every other term. Reports are sent out at the end of the summer term but pupils' attainment and progress in Years 1 to 4 are not reported in all subject areas.

Procedures for handling complaints

A good complaints policy is in place with a detailed explanation of how quickly complaints will be reported on to parents. One complaint has been received in the last year. It has been investigated and no changes were made to school practices.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the provision of information for parents, carers and others (standard 6) and must:

- provide parents whose children are in Years 1 to 4 with an annual written report of the progress and attainment of each child in all main subject areas taught (paragraph 6(5)).

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:

- improve the quality of teachers' feedback and use of individual pupil targets so

- that they are clearer about how to improve their work
- develop a system to track pupils' progress from year to year
 - improve ICT resources, the scheme of work for Years 3 to 4 and assessment records.

School details

Name of school	Walthamstow Montessori School		
DfES number	320/6064		
Unique reference number	134579		
Type of school	primary		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	2001		
Age range of pupils	2-9		
Gender of pupils	MI		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 8	Girls: 8	Total: 16
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 28	Girls: 32	Total: 60
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 2	Girls: 0	Total: 2
Annual fees (day pupils)	£1,200 to £4,500		
Address of school	Penryhn Hall Penryhn Avenue Walthamstow London E17 5DA		
Telephone number	0208 523 2968		
Fax number	0208 523 2968		
Email address	e17montessori@aol.com		
Headteacher	Ms Janet Arnold		
Proprietor	Ms Lorna Mahoney		
Reporting inspector	Jackie Cousins AI		
Dates of inspection	7-8 June 2007		