

# St Andrew's Montessori School

Independent School

Inspection report

DCSF Registration Number	991/6234
Unique Reference Number	117660
Inspection number	320006
Inspection dates	29-30 January 2008
Reporting inspector	David Rzeznik HMI

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 Children, Schools and Families about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

## Information about the school

St Andrew's Montessori School is a small, independent day school in Watford. The headteacher is also the proprietor of the school, which provides full- and part- time education and day care. It also provides before and after school care. The care provision was subject to a separate inspection by a child care inspector in October 2004. This is the first inspection report on the school since it opened in 1991.

The school is divided into four parts. The Nest provides full- and part-time day care for children aged from 6 months to 3 years. The Children's House (Foundation Stage) is for children aged from 3 to 5+ years. Children can attend part-time or full-time. Most of the children in this class occupy government-funded places. Lower Elementary is for pupils aged from 5 to 8 years and all attend full-time, whilst Upper Elementary is for pupils aged from 8 to 11 years and all attend full-time.

All of the teachers are Montessori trained and use Montessori teaching methods. There are 67 pupils on roll and over half are aged 5 years or under. A significant minority have learning difficulties and have arrived in school in the past academic year. A small number have a statement of special educational need.

The school aims *'to provide an outstanding care and education for boys and girls from babyhood'*.

## Evaluation of the school

St Andrew's Montessori School is a good school that successfully fulfils its aim to educate pupils in the Montessori philosophy. Pupils are happy and enjoy being there. Effective teaching and a good curriculum ensure that pupils make good progress academically and in their personal development. Pupils are well behaved and a particular strength is their ability to work independently and show initiative. They are well cared for on a day-to-day basis; however, staff vetting procedures and some health and safety procedures are not wholly effective and the provision of information to parents and others does not fully meet requirements.

## Quality of education

The curriculum is good. The school follows the Montessori curriculum and combines it with elements from the National Curriculum to good effect. Provision results in all

pupils, particularly those with learning or emotional and behavioural difficulties, making good progress in their basic and personal skills.

In the Children's House staff plan a wide range of interesting and worthwhile activities that children enjoy. A good balance is reached between the teaching of basic skills by adults and children learning through free choice and independent play. The weakness in curriculum planning identified in the child care inspection report has been remedied. There is now a suitably balanced programme of activities and parents are informed about the provision and how well their child is progressing.

The curriculum is broad and balanced and is underpinned by sound Montessori schemes of work. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties is good and their individual educational plans are used effectively to ensure that their specific learning needs are met well. In the main, good attention is paid to ensuring that subject matter is matched closely to pupils' individual capabilities. The Montessori approach provides pupils with plenty of opportunities to work independently and to make decisions about what work is tackled and when. The methods used develop pupils' initiative and self-confidence effectively. French is taught throughout the school and this further develops pupils' linguistic skills and awareness of other cultures. Information and communication technology lessons are timetabled but in the lessons observed, and in the work scrutinised, the use of computers for research and investigative work was limited. Weekly yoga and regular swimming sessions enrich provision and ensure that pupils keep fit and healthy. Visits to museums, theatres and farms broaden pupils' knowledge and understanding of the world at large. Piano lessons, horse riding, ju-jitsu and one-to-one learning support are available at an additional cost.

The quality of teaching is good and pupils make good progress given their original starting points. Assessment is satisfactory overall and is good in the Children's House. The three- to five-year-olds get off to a very good start because teaching is good and the curriculum is well matched to their needs and interests. In the rest of the school provision is effective. Teaching is characterised by very good relationships between staff and pupils. Work is generally well matched to pupils' capabilities. Pupils are actively encouraged to show initiative by thinking and learning for themselves. As a result, they have a thirst for knowledge and stick at tasks because they can control the direction of their learning. One pupil remarked *'I really enjoy school because you get to do lots of different things and I learn better that way.'* Where teaching is less effective it is because work is insufficiently challenging and lessons lack pace. As a result pupils' interest wanes and they do not make the progress of which they are capable.

The school uses national assessments to measure pupils' attainment at ages 5, 7 and 11 years. Pupils' progress is also soundly assessed against Montessori curriculum targets. Marking is inconsistent and generally is not sufficiently developmental. The older pupils are unclear as to how well they are doing and what they must do to

improve. Pupils are not yet sufficiently involved in assessing their own performance to identify their individual strengths and weaknesses.

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

Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Through its Christian ethos, the school is effective in nurturing and developing pupils' awareness of their own and others' beliefs. Good opportunities are provided for reflection and prayer. For example, during an assembly pupils reflected on the meaning of the feast of the presentation of Jesus in the temple. The celebration of festivals such as Diwali and Chinese New Year successfully extend pupils' knowledge and understanding of cultural diversity. Pupils understand right from wrong and show respect for others' needs and feelings. They enjoy school as demonstrated by their regular attendance. Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning and their behaviour is good. They say that bullying is rare and that any inappropriate behaviour is dealt with effectively. Pupils raise funds for charities such as Bernardo's and Action Medical Research. They also support children in Tibet. These activities enable pupils to exercise social responsibility and understand their moral obligations to those less fortunate than themselves. However, links with nearby schools and the local community are underdeveloped. This restricts pupils' ability to participate and make a difference in the immediate vicinity. Whilst pupils feel confident in approaching and talking to staff, there is a lack of formal mechanisms through which they can participate in decision making.

## Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

Provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is satisfactory. Pupils are well cared for on a day-to-day basis and are effectively supervised at all times. The school promotes healthy eating by providing nutritious meals and health snacks, and also encourages regular physical exercise. Procedures for fire safety and first aid are good. Sound risk assessments are carried out for the premises and for classroom activities. The school has a written policy for educational visits but it is not effectively implemented. For example, risk assessments are not undertaken for all off-site activities. The child protection policy is not comprehensive enough. Procedures are unclear in the event of a member of staff being accused of abuse and staff vetting arrangements are not sufficiently robust. The school fulfils its duties under the Disability Discrimination Act 2002.

## Suitability of the proprietor and staff

With one exception, all staff have been subject to a check with the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) to ensure their suitability to work with children. The school has applied for the relevant CRB check to be carried out and is awaiting clearance, but meanwhile no List 99 check has been completed before confirming the member of staff's appointment. The school has acted quickly to remedy the situation and is in the process of gaining a List 99 check for the member of staff concerned. Before

appointing staff, the school carries out the necessary checks to confirm their identity, qualifications and past employment history, but a medical fitness check is not undertaken. The school does not keep the required single central register of all recruitment and vetting checks for staff.

## School's premises and accommodation

The premises and accommodation are good and enable safe and effective learning. The school is located in Garston Manor House, a grade 2 listed building that has been converted effectively for educational use. The property is also the proprietor's home. At times the premises are used for non-educational purposes. Activities are organised to ensure that pupils' welfare is properly safeguarded. The classrooms are bright, airy and of a good size. The school is set in extensive grounds and there is plenty of outside space for recreation and physical activities.

## Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school handbooks and supplementary leaflets contain useful background information about Montessori education and details about how the school is organised and particulars of the curriculum provided in each phase. Not all of the required information is provided to parents and others. The areas of non-compliance are noted below. Annual reports are of satisfactory quality. The school does not send to the local authority (LA) an annual account of the income received and the expenditure incurred by the school for pupils whose education is wholly or partly funded by the LA. Information is supplied to the LA on pupils with a statement of special educational need for the purpose of the annual review of the statement.

## Procedures for handling complaints

There is a written complaints procedure that meets regulatory requirements. The school has received one formal complaint in the past 12 months.

## 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 provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety (standard 3) and must:

- produce and implement a comprehensive child protection policy which pays regard to the Department for Children, Schools and Families guidance (paragraph 3(2)(b))

- ensure that robust risk assessments are undertaken for all educational visits and that actions and outcomes are formally recorded (paragraph 3(2)(c)).

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

- prior to the confirmation of the appointment of all staff, carry out an appropriate check to confirm their medical fitness (paragraph 4(2)(a))
- ensure that prior to confirmation of their appointment, all staff and others who work in school have been subject to a check with the CRB, or List 99, to confirm their suitability to work with children (paragraph 4(2)(b))
- ensure that the register records for each member of staff in post on or after 1 August 2007 the checks made (and certificates obtained where relevant) of their identity, qualifications (where required); whether an enhanced CRB was obtained and where appropriate establish an individual's right to work in the United Kingdom to ensure that the person is not working in contravention of section 142 of the Education Act 2002 (paragraph 4C(2 and 3))
- ensure that the register is capable of being reproduced in legible form (paragraph 4C(9)).

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

- ensure that parents and parents of prospective pupils are provided with particulars of educational and welfare provision for pupils for whom English is an additional language (paragraph 6(2)(f))
- ensure that parents and parents of prospective pupils are aware that they may request particulars of policies relating to bullying, child protection and health and safety (paragraph 6(2)(h))
- ensure that parents and parents of prospective pupils are aware that they may request particulars of academic performance during the preceding year (paragraph 6(2)(i))
- ensure that parents and parents of prospective pupils are aware that they may request details of the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding year (paragraph 6(2)(j))
- ensure that parents and parents of prospective pupils are aware that they may request details of the number of staff employed at the school, including temporary staff, and a summary of their qualifications (paragraph 6(2)(k))
- ensure that where a pupil who is registered at the school is wholly or partly funded by the local authority, an annual account of income received and expenditure incurred by the school in respect of that pupil is submitted to the local authority and on request to the Secretary of State (paragraph 6(7)).

## School details

Name of school	St Andrew's Montessori School		
DCSF number	991/6234		
Unique reference number	117660		
Type of school	Primary Montessori		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1991		
Age range of pupils	6 months-11 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 20	Girls: 13	Total: 33
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 14	Girls: 20	Total: 34
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 2	Girls: 0	Total: 2
Annual fees (day pupils)	£1,151 to £7,047		
Address of school	Garston Manor High Elms Lane Watford Hertfordshire WD25 0JX		
Telephone number	01923 681103		
Fax number	01923 681103		
Email address	standrewsmont@hotmail.com		
Headteacher	Mrs Sheila O'Neill		
Proprietor	Mrs Sheila O'Neill		
Reporting inspector	David Rzeznik HMI		
Dates of inspection	29-30 January 2008		