

Maria Montessori School

Independent School

Inspection report

DCSF Registration Number	202/6399
Unique Reference Number	131978
Inspection number	320365
Inspection dates	5-6 February 2008
Reporting inspector	John Seal 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).

Inspection of funded nursery education was carried out under Schedule 26 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

Inspection of day care was carried out under the Children Act 1989: Part XA (as introduced by the Care Standards Act 2000) and, where funded nursery education is provided, under Schedule 26 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

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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

The Maria Montessori School caters for 117 boys and girls aged from 3 to 11 years. The school is situated in a five storey Victorian town house in the London Borough of Camden. The school opened in 1961 on the current site. In recent years it has expanded to include provision for pre-school and reception pupils (known as Children's Houses) on three other sites in West Hampstead, Bayswater and Notting Hill. This is the school's first published report by Ofsted.

Evaluation of the school

Maria Montessori School provides a good quality of education and care. Curricular provision is good and meets the needs of all pupils. Teaching is good and supports pupils in making good progress. The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding as is their behaviour. The quality of care is good with secure procedures for the pupils' welfare health and safety. The school meets all but one of the regulatory requirements.

Quality of education

Curricular provision is good. It is well balanced, broad and relevant. It is clearly founded on the Montessori principles and practices. The six areas of learning in the Foundation Stage are well underpinned by the Montessori approach to pupils' individual progress and independent learning. There are thorough and detailed education plans and evaluations for each pupil which are well used by staff to ensure good progress. The curriculum is thoughtfully adapted to meet the needs of pupils of all abilities. Outside agencies are used well to implement effective support strategies for children with special needs. A real strength of the curriculum is the emphasis on encouraging pupils to develop their research skills. However, insufficient use is made of information and communication technology (ICT) to extend pupils' technological and research skills.

Personal, social and emotional development is a real strength of the provision. Pupils' interpersonal skills are well developed. The curriculum is extended by providing pupils with the opportunity to learn French, Greek, Mandarin Chinese, to play the cello and take part in yoga and swimming lessons. Educational visits are well planned

to areas of interest such as the local library. Learning resources are of good quality and well organised for easy access.

The quality of teaching and assessment is good. Pupils are well supported by the detailed and conscientious assessments made of their progress and approach to learning. Teachers are able to make careful observations, because of the well-structured plans and activities. As a result, children work independently and with concentration. There are stimulating displays of natural objects, for example, plants and bulbs and samples of seeds, with microscopes available for making close observations. Younger children show the ability to concentrate well when working by themselves. A great strength of the provision is the emphasis upon pupils developing an individual approach to learning. This often results in pupils showing evidence of developing a real love of specific subjects. As a result, pupils make good progress because they are proud of their work and consequently become skilled in evaluating it. Pupils write comments such as 'I need to practice my long division' in their records. Their progress over time is good. For example, older pupils' written presentation and ability to make mathematical calculations develop to a high standard.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The provision for the children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Parents say that their children enjoy school very much. The staff encourage and demonstrate calm and positive relationships; because of this, pupils' attitudes towards others and the school community at large are exemplary. Pupils know the difference between right and wrong and are respectful towards other children and adults. Their behaviour is outstanding. Pupils demonstrate positive attitudes towards their learning; for example many continue their work during extended periods of concentration.

Pupils show thorough enjoyment in learning and pride in their work. They enjoy school and this is reflected in their good attendance. They take responsibility for their work and access a variety of resources in order to complete their work programme. This develops pupils' self-confidence in both their learning and working with others. Their development of skills and knowledge for their future economic well-being is well supported by the good literacy, numeracy and social skills. The school effectively develops pupils' knowledge and understanding of public institutions. For example, older pupils visited the Bank of England. Pupils demonstrate thoughtful maturity through contributing to the school and wider community, for instance they visit the local elderly people to learn to knit. The school effectively develops pupils' respect of others cultures and beliefs by introducing them to different religious festivals and providing books and other information to support their research.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

Provision to ensure the children's welfare, health and safety is good. There are good procedures to assure the children's safety during emergencies. Staff are trained in First Aid, and fire drills are regularly undertaken, with details logged appropriately. Risk assessments are routinely undertaken before children have out-of-school visits. Overall, risk assessments have been carried out on the building and grounds to ensure the safety of children and staff. Pupils feel very safe in school. They can approach staff confidently if they have any problems. The school places great emphasis on promoting a healthy lifestyle. Children are encouraged to be physically active and to use the outdoor learning environment as much as possible. The meals at lunchtime are extremely well cooked, healthy and nutritious. The school has an effective policy and a three-year plan to show how it intends to improve its facilities for adults and children with disabilities.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school checks all staff to ensure their suitability to work with children, and keeps a single central register of staff as required.

School's premises and accommodation

The premises and accommodation enable pupils to feel and be safe and to progress with their learning. The school has used the space available well to provide good learning environments. The main school is situated on two floors of the town house which also contains accommodation for Montessori training. The site is used for many of the younger children and all the older 'Elementary' children. Other Early Years settings are based in three rented rooms which are used for lessons during the day. Although all the sites support learning in safe environments, the teaching materials and equipment are stored away out of school hours. Good outdoor development has taken place on the main school site with some creative use of space for pupils to play and learn. The school is aware that there are no appropriate facilities for pupils who are ill. There are however, plans for a medical room in the school's next building project.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school provides clear, accurate and up to date information for parents, prospective parents and others in the prospectus and parents' handbooks. Parents receive detailed written reports about their children's progress as well as through a range of formal and informal meetings and conferences. A very high proportion of parents are pleased with the school. One parent said: 'He's settling in and the staff have been fantastic with him; he is very happy to go to school'.

Procedures for handling complaints

There is a good policy and set of procedures in place. The school places great value on its effective informal resolution of any problems that arise. Feedback from most parents indicated that they were aware of the procedures.

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 premises and accommodation (standard 5) and must:

- provide appropriate facilities for pupils who are ill (paragraph 5 (l)).

What the school could do to improve further

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

- further enrich the curriculum by developing pupils' skills and knowledge in all areas of ICT.

Inspection of funded nursery education

Effectiveness of the funded nursery education

Leadership and management are good. Secure systems are in place for monitoring and maintaining the quality of teaching as head teachers observe and work alongside the staff. The person with overall responsibility for the early years curriculum knows the children really well and is able to effectively manage planning for all children to succeed.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff have a clear knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage of learning and implement this effectively. Teaching methods, such as open-ended questioning and mutually respectful relationships, help children to achieve. Staff have high expectations for children's learning and follow their interests to ensure support and effective challenges. They are developing independence and become highly involved in activities.

Children are developing good reading and writing skills. They have many good opportunities to involve themselves in problem solving activities. Children enjoy planting, and growing herbs and seeds. They are extremely proud of their art work, for example, Aboriginal paintings. Children participate in practical life activities as they wash and scrub tables. They are developing control of their bodies as they move to music and explore outdoors.

Children's social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is fostered. They are learning about the world they live in, and other people's cultures and beliefs as they participate in festival celebrations and activities. However, children's awareness of disabilities is not fully promoted. Children enjoy tranquil moments as they listen to music and poetry. Their behaviour is very good; they are polite and well mannered.

Partnership with parents and carers is good. Parental involvement is encouraged and this has a positive effect on how the children learn as they transfer new skills between school and home life. Parents are given their child's Foundation Stage profile at the end of the reception year. This clearly demonstrates the good progress children make during their time at the school.

The needs of all children are being met.

Recommendations or actions to improve the funded nursery education

To improve the quality and standards of the nursery education the registered person should take account of the following recommendations:

- provide opportunities to raise children's awareness of disabilities.

School details

Name of school	Maria Montessori School		
DCSF number	202/6399		
Unique reference number	131978		
Unique reference number (funded nursery education)	EY240912		
Type of school	Montessori day school		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1961		
Age range of pupils	3-11		
Gender of pupils	mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 30	Girls: 28	Total: 58
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 26	Girls: 33	Total: 59
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 1	Girls: 0	Total: 1
Number of children receiving funded nursery education	Boys: 24	Girls: 25	Total: 49
Annual fees (day pupils)	£3390 - £7710		
Address of school	26 Lyndhurst Gardens London NW3 5NW		
Telephone number	0207435 3646		
Fax number	0207431 8096		
Email address	schools@mariamontessori.org		
Head of Schools	Mrs Lynne Lawrence		
Proprietor	Mrs Isabel Raphael		
Reporting inspector	John Seal HMI		
Childcare inspector	Kim Mundy		
Dates of inspection	5-6 February 2008		