

River House Montessori School

Independent School

Inspection report

DCSF Registration Number	211/6385
Unique Reference Number	100303
Inspection number	320377
Inspection dates	17-18 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Jackie Cousins

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

River House Montessori School is an independent, co-educational day school for pupils aged from 4 to 11. The school follows Montessori methods of learning. It was opened in September 1994; this is the school's first published inspection report. The school is located near Canary Wharf in east London. There are currently 77 pupils on roll. A breakfast and after-school club are available to pupils. A pre-school operates on the same site for pupils aged from 2.5 to 4 years.

The school aims *'to provide a safe and friendly environment, full of opportunities, in which children are able, without stress, to reach their full potential emotionally, socially and academically.'*

Evaluation of the school

River House Montessori School provides a good quality of education and meets its aims effectively. During the last thirteen years the founders of the school, ably supported by staff, have successfully built up the school. Good care, welfare, health and safety systems underpin pupils' outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils make effective progress mainly because teaching and learning are good. Most parents are pleased with all the school offers and the way that it is run. The school meets all but two of the regulations.

Quality of education

The curriculum is good because it focuses effectively on the development of pupils' literacy, speaking and listening, mathematics, scientific skills and all other areas of learning. Good provision for pupils' personal development allows them to become independent and thoughtful young people. Performances are 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 by specialist teaching in French, music and physical education on a weekly basis. Older pupils are introduced to the recorder and a few have individual tuition for piano. Visitors and visits enhance the curriculum effectively. Effective programmes of study are in use for pupils in the Foundation Stage. Good schemes of work for Years 1 to 6 are in place for all subjects. The

provision for pupils who are gifted and talented is developing and because the school is always looking for ways to improve, it is planning to extend this aspect.

Teaching and assessment are good. Effective teaching allows pupils to achieve well. 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. Teachers' planning is monitored very thoroughly by one of the senior leaders. They are successful in encouraging pupils to be independent and think for themselves. Good teaching methods develop pupils' key skills. For example, in one outstanding literacy lesson where characters and story lines were explored, objectives for the lesson were shared extremely effectively. This means that pupils were very clear about what was expected of them. Resources are utilized effectively, for example when pupils learn to word process using laptops. Good teacher subject knowledge means that pupils develop their knowledge and understanding of the world well. For example, they learn successfully about where evaporation would happen at the quickest rate in a room. The use of written and oral feedback for pupils is successfully developed. Occasionally, teaching does not use the ends of lessons well to develop pupils' evaluative skills, for example in the review of their work and progress.

Pupils make good progress in most areas of learning. Year 6 pupils achieve well when they write thoughtfully about their feelings of homesickness. They write formal letters effectively to a London museum. Mathematical work develops their basic skills well and they use complex methods to solve problems. Year 2 books show that pupils make good progress in their creative development when they write stories about a 'Magical Adventure'. Many of these pupils use connectives and adjectives effectively and spell simple and more complex words accurately.

Assessment activities are used well. In the Reception classes all areas of learning are assessed effectively using good record sheets. For Years 1 to 6 assessments are carried out successfully in reading, spelling, writing, mathematics and science. Pupils' progress is beginning to be tracked effectively in basic skills from year to year.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Their multicultural development is a significant strength and this is evident in the ways in which they discuss others' beliefs. For example, pupils discussed the festival of Divali in considerable depth and they demonstrated their extremely high level of respect for the diversity found in our society. Their spiritual development is strong because staff inspire pupils successfully. The school places a high priority on involving pupils from all backgrounds and this ensures that all pupils work well together. Racial harmony is achieved very successfully.

Pupils are keen to come to school and their attendance is regular and usually prompt. Pupils are exceptionally courteous and enthusiastic when they speak about

what they enjoy doing in school. For example, one said, *'I really enjoy speech and drama lessons because the teacher makes it so much fun.'* 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-esteem and their assurance as to their own worth. Relationships in class and throughout the school are particularly good. Pupils feel very confident and secure in offering their opinions. This contributes well to the development of their good communication skills. Behaviour is good. Pupils have outstanding attitudes to learning and their well-developed skills in literacy and numeracy contribute significantly to securing their future economic well-being.

Pupils' contribution to the community is good. Their views are collected through informal class discussions. Older pupils have written letters to the senior leaders and some of their requests are acted upon. Provision for pupils' moral and social development is highly effective. Pupils have a very deep understanding of the challenges faced by people who are blind and how much they rely on guide dogs. They have good opportunities to contribute to the school community through a range of posts of responsibility. Older pupils designed and made extremely good story books for Reception children. They have a good understanding of public institutions. There are good links with the local community, together with the various charitable activities in which the school is involved.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

Pupils' welfare, health and safety are good. Their personal needs and welfare are extremely well supported by all staff and effective policies. Arrangements to settle children into the Reception classes and other year groups are good. Teachers are available at the beginning and end of every day to discuss any concerns with parents. Pupils are consistently encouraged to lead healthy and safe lives. They eat healthy snacks because the school provides fruit and vegetables every day. Older pupils have taught physical exercise sessions for at least one and a half hours a week and this is extended to two and a half hours in the summer term. Throughout the year younger ones have two and a half hours of structured physical education. Furthermore, they play with equipment at break and lunch times, which encourages them to be fit. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe in school and out. They know about how to cross the road safely. This is because visitors' and teachers' knowledge and expertise are used to very good effect to explain safety challenges. Health and safety issues are checked carefully and are sorted out effectively by the school. The school complies with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 2002 and has a three-year accessibility plan. Risk assessments are carried out satisfactorily.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

Procedures for checking on the suitability of staff are robust, and meet all current requirements. The single central record of such checks also meets requirements.

School's premises and accommodation

The school's premises and accommodation are good and assist pupils to learn effectively and safely. The building is in good order. Classrooms are a satisfactory size and quality. The school has rooms dedicated to the development of pupils' skills in music and art. Fifteen laptop computers are used effectively. There is an outside play area and a sound range of equipment is available at break times. Reception pupils have a small play area where they can extend their learning in the fresh air. A nearby park is available to pupils for sporting activities. Good displays on the walls celebrate pupils' achievements. The school does not have a suitable medical room and as a result pupils are not able to rest in an appropriate place when they are unwell.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The partnership with parents is good. Many parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaires were totally positive. One parent said the school provides a, *'friendly atmosphere, consistent and gentle encouragement to learn which has helped my child to discover and use her potential and achieve excellent academic results.'* Good information is available to parents about transferring to each stage of education, including the step from pre-school to Reception. Additional information is sent to parents regularly in newsletters. Daily contact and an open-door policy between staff and parents mean that parents' concerns are sorted out effectively. Parents' meetings are held every term. Reports are sent out at the end of the summer term but pupils' progress is not reported satisfactorily in all areas of learning. This means that parents do not have sufficient information on the rate of progress their children are making.

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. The school has received six written complaints some of which were small concerns submitted by e mail in the last year and in the light of these minor amendments were made to 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)).

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

- provide particulars of pupils' progress in reports to parents (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 point for development:

- develop the use of the ends of lessons so that pupils deepen their understanding of how to evaluate their own and others' work.

School details

Name of school	River House Montessori School
DCSF number	211/6385
Unique reference number	100303
Type of school	Montessori primary school
Status	Independent
Date school opened	September 1994
Age range of pupils	4-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 45 Girls: 32 Total: 77
Annual fees (day pupils)	£7,125-£11,980
Address of school	15/16 Heron Quay London E14 4JB
Telephone number	0207 538 9886
Fax number	0207 538 9886
Email address	jpearson@qaroad.fsworld.co.uk
Headteacher	Ms Janet Pearson
Proprietor	River House Montessori School Ltd
Reporting inspector	Jackie Cousins AI
Dates of inspection	17-18 January 2008