

Green Gables Montessori School

Independent school inspection report

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| DCSF registration number | 211/6386 |
| Unique Reference Number (URN) | 131198 |
| URN for registered childcare and social care | EY338966 |
| Inspection number | 344682 |
| Inspection dates | 28–29 January 2010 |
| Reporting inspector | Jill Bainton |

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002, The inspection of registered provision was conducted under Section 49(2) of the Childcare Act 2006.

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A¹ of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005², the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The inspection of registered provision³ was conducted under Section 49(2) of the Childcare Act 2006.⁴

Information about the school

Green Gables Montessori School is an independent day school and nursery for boys and girls aged from three months to eight years. It is registered with Ofsted Children's Services to provide full day care for 80 children. The primary department was registered in 1996. There are currently 80 children in total on the school roll with 30 in the nursery and reception classes and 44 who are under three years of age. There are 22 children who are in receipt of nursery government funding. The last inspection of the full day care was in May 2007. The nursery is open from 8am to 6pm for 48 weeks of the year. The school is held in part of St George's in the East Church in East London. The school adheres to the Montessori philosophy of education.

Its mission is to, 'help the child help himself... to cultivate his natural desire to learn and to encourage thinking for themselves'.

Evaluation of the school

Green Gables Montessori School provides a good quality of education and meets its aims. The parents are very supportive of the school. Using the Montessori and Early Years Foundation Stage curricula and with good teaching the children make good progress. The overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. The provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and welfare, health and safety of the children is good. Much of this success is due to the new headteacher. The arrangements to safeguard children are good. The school has addressed the regulations not met at the last inspection and now meets all but two of the regulations for registration.

¹ www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga_20020032_en_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162

² www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga_20050018_en_15#sch8

³ Schools which provide childcare for children from birth until the term in which they reach their third birthday must register this provision separately with Ofsted.

⁴ www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2006/ukpga_20060021_en_4#pt3-ch2-pb4-l1g49

Quality of education

The school provides a good quality of education, including for the Early Years Foundation Stage. The curriculum is good and enables children to take charge of their own learning. The Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum is good and effectively implemented. The range of learning activities is planned so that each child is able to progress at an individual pace. Staff in the primary class are trained in Montessori methods. The planning follows Montessori methods, with appropriate time allocations for teaching literacy and numeracy, again using Montessori apparatus and approaches. The Montessori model comprises English, mathematics, practical life skills, sensory experiences and cultural aspects that cover history, geography and science, physical education which includes weekly swimming, art, design and technology, drama and music. The Montessori curriculum encompasses cultural and religious tolerance and prepares pupils well for life in a diverse society. Personal, social and health education is a central tenet of Montessori education and underpins the life of the school. There is a well-formulated policy to support this aspect of the curriculum. Provision and resources for information and communication technology (ICT) have been improved since the last inspection. The curriculum is enhanced through a range of visits, which complement the Montessori topics. Recently older children have visited the Museum of Childhood, the London Aquarium and the Discover Story Centre. The school offers after-school provision where the children can participate in the planned range of activities.

The teaching and assessment are good, including in the Early Years Foundation Stage, where they enable children to make good progress. The staff are trained in the Montessori approaches to teaching and learning and act as facilitators for the children, who are aware that the staff are there to help them and they do not hesitate to ask for help. The teachers understand the children's levels of competence. They match the work well to their needs and give support when appropriate; they are careful not to intervene unless it is necessary. They teach the children good work habits and routines so that they are able to use and care for materials, equipment and their environment in ways that contribute strongly to their progress. This enables them to become effective learners at an early stage. Learning is good and children work independently on their tasks at their own pace. They say that they enjoy their learning, making comments such as, 'It is fun... I like playing.' The resources are very good and used effectively to support learning.

The assessment of the children's progress is good. In line with Montessori principles, teachers assess children continually, recording their progress in acquiring appropriate skills. This information then directly influences future planning. However, several recent changes of staff have resulted in some incomplete records for older children. The staff are trying to address this and to ensure that the recording of the Montessori activities is accurate and reflects the practice. The children make good progress. Parents are kept well informed through termly written reports and regular consultation evenings.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The school makes good provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of all its children including those in the Early Years Foundation Stage. This is a happy, friendly school where all are encouraged to enjoy life. Younger children play together happily with the older ones who are given small tasks of responsibility, such as keeping a watchful eye on the younger children at lunchtime. All children are very well known as individuals by staff and relationships are very positive at all levels. Behaviour is good. The preparation for their future education is promoted through the curriculum and attendance is good. The staff are positive role models and children understand and follow the simple school rules without fuss. They gain an understanding of the world around them and express awe and wonder, for example, when they find worms in the wormery and collect beautiful coloured leaves in the garden. They regularly raise money for charities, including the recent Haiti emergency. The older children are being introduced to services and institutions in England through their topic studies and visits to places of interest. There is an atmosphere of cultural harmony at the school.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

Provision for safeguarding the welfare, health and safety of all children, including those in the Early Years Foundation Stage, is good. The very friendly and caring ethos in the school ensures that all children feel valued and safe. They report that there is no bullying and that staff care for them well. Procedures for safeguarding the children are robust. The school has an appropriate policy and staff have received training in line with current guidance. There is a suitable first-aid policy and a number of staff are trained in first aid. There are careful plans for ensuring fire safety: fire drills are held regularly and recorded, fire-fighting equipment is checked annually and a fire risk assessment is in place. The attendance and admission registers are kept according to the regulations. The school has a three-year plan for increasing accessibility, which meets the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 2002. The children demonstrate an understanding of a healthy lifestyle and are encouraged to eat healthily, enjoying the organic, wholesome school lunches and taking regular exercise.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school carries out appropriate checks prior to the appointment of all staff and checks their suitability to work with children. They take up both professional and character references on staff prior to appointment, but have not retained these for all staff. All the required information is held on a single central register.

School's premises and accommodation

The premises and accommodation are suitable and conducive to learning. The welcoming rooms are attractive and well resourced. They are warm and comfortable for the children of all ages and provide a nurturing environment. The premises are well-maintained and decorated. The school has use of a very spacious outdoor play area, which is very well equipped and used frequently to support learning. Good use is made of local facilities such as a swimming pool. The school currently has no facility, which contains a washbasin with running hot and cold water, for children who are ill.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school provides the parents and carers with a good range of information through its website and a parents' information handbook. Parents are very supportive of the school and a very large majority responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire making comments such as: 'This is an excellent educational establishment', 'I am proud that my daughter attends it', 'I am delighted with the progress my son has made', 'every year it gets better and better', and 'the Nursery provides a caring environment.'

Procedures for handling complaints

The school has a set of procedures, which meet the regulations. Parents confirmed that they are aware of them.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

The Early Years Foundation Stage is effective in meeting the needs of the children including those under three years old and babies. The children, both those over and under three years of age, make good progress in all areas of learning. The warm and welcoming, well-resourced and stimulating environment helps the children to develop confidence and feel safe and secure. A strength of the provision is the wide range of Montessori resources that children, including those over and under three years old and babies, use to extend their learning. The curriculum, which incorporates the use of Montessori apparatus, provides a wide range of activities and experiences, which promote learning effectively. French is taught from the toddlers age range upwards. Swimming is taught to children from three years old.

Teaching is good. Weekly planning is generally good, but it does not consistently identify the learning outcomes for the activities. Staff assessments highlight what children can do and their progress is regularly tracked. A wide range of activities in all six areas of learning is offered which the older children enjoy, but in some rooms there is insufficient monitoring of the uptake of activities to ensure that all children have experiences in each area. Teaching assistants are effectively deployed to support children's learning. In line with Montessori practice there is an emphasis on independent learning, but some opportunities to extend learning through adult-led

activities are missed. Staff make good use of opportunities to extend children's language and ideas by getting involved in and talking about the Montessori activities that they choose. This helps to develop children's speaking, listening and reasoning skills.

Staff are very dedicated and look after the toddler and babies groups very well ensuring that they become independent learners. These younger children and babies enjoy eating their snacks and lunches and are given opportunities to become more independent. After sleep time, they choose from a wide range of toys and materials. They use rattles and shakers to accompany their singing of 'Old MacDonald had a farm'. The under-threes and babies are well cared for in a stimulating environment.

The children's personal development is good. They are caring for each other, and work and play harmoniously. Children happily share equipment, concentrate and work cooperatively due to the thoughtful way that staff have organised the resources. Healthy lifestyles are promoted particularly well due to the use of the outside area and the healthy snacks and lunches that all children enjoy. All adults ensure that the welfare and well-being of each individual child, toddler and baby is supported well. A very strong partnership with parents allows all children to settle quickly, including those from minority ethnic groups. Parents are encouraged to become involved in their children's learning and are given regular information about the curriculum. They receive information about their children's progress through meetings with staff and end-of-year reports.

The leadership and management are good. The headteacher has a clear understanding of the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum and has appropriately identified the plans to monitor and improve the provision.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended ('the Regulations'), with the exception of those listed below.⁵

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

- retain all references relating to staff appointments (paragraph 4(2)(a)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the premises and accommodation (standard 5) and must:

⁵ www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si2003/20031910.htm

- provide facilities for pupils who are ill which meet the regulations. (paragraph 5(l)).

The school's registered provision for childcare meets the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006.

What the school could do to improve further

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

- Ensure that all assessment information is up-to-date on all pupils and used to inform future planning.
- Clearly identify what the children will learn from the planned Early Years Foundation Stage activities and how it will be monitored, and ensure that there is a good balance between teacher-led and child-initiated activities.

Inspection judgement recording form

| | | | |
|-------------|------|--------------|------------|
| outstanding | good | satisfactory | inadequate |
|-------------|------|--------------|------------|

The quality of education

| | | | | |
|--|--|---|--|--|
| Overall quality of education | | √ | | |
| How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils | | √ | | |
| How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs | | √ | | |
| How well pupils make progress in their learning | | √ | | |

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

| | | | | |
|--|--|---|--|--|
| Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | | √ | | |
| The behaviour of pupils | | √ | | |

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

| | | | | |
|--|--|---|--|--|
| The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils | | √ | | |
|--|--|---|--|--|

The quality of the Early Years Foundation Stage provision

| | | | | |
|---|--|---|--|--|
| How good are the outcomes for children in the EYFS? | | √ | | |
| What is the quality of provision in the EYFS? | | √ | | |
| How effectively is the EYFS led and managed? | | √ | | |
| Overall effectiveness: how well does the school meet the needs of children in the EYFS? | | √ | | |

The quality of boarding provision *(leave blank if not applicable)*

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|----------------------------------|--|--|--|--|
| Evaluation of boarding provision | | | | |
|----------------------------------|--|--|--|--|

School details

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|---|--|-----------|-----------|
| Name of school | Green Gables Montessori School | | |
| DCSF number | 211/6386 | | |
| Unique reference number (URN) | 131198 | | |
| EY URN (for registered childcare only) | EY338966 | | |
| Type of school | Nursery and Primary | | |
| Status | Independent | | |
| Date school opened | 1996 | | |
| Age range of pupils | 3 months – 8 years | | |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed | | |
| Number on roll (full-time pupils) | Boys: 18 | Girls: 15 | Total: 33 |
| Number on roll (part-time pupils) | Boys: 2 | Girls: 1 | Total: 3 |
| Number of pupils aged 0–3 in registered childcare provision | Boys: 20 | Girls: 24 | Total: 44 |
| Annual fees (day pupils) | £7,560–£10,860 | | |
| Annual fees (childcare) | £ 9,720–£11,888 | | |
| Address of school | St Georges in the East 16, Cannon Street Road London E1 0BH | | |
| Telephone number | 0207 488 2374 | | |
| Fax number | 0207 488 2375 | | |
| Email address | info@greengables.org.uk | | |
| Headteacher | Mrs G Ivory | | |
| Proprietor | Mrs J Brierley | | |
| Reporting inspector | Jill Bainton | | |
| Dates of inspection | 28–29 January 2010 | | |