

# Inspection of Walthamstow Montessori School

Penryhn Hall, Penryhn Avenue, Walthamstow, London E17 5DA

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Inspection dates: 4–6 February 2020

## **Overall effectiveness**

**Inadequate**

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The quality of education

**Inadequate**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Requires improvement**

Personal development

**Requires improvement**

Leadership and management

**Inadequate**

Early years provision

**Good**

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

**No**

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Children make a good start to their learning in the lower school situated on Penrhyn Avenue. However, the school is failing its pupils in the upper school on Brookscroft Road, where the quality of education is poor. These pupils are not prepared well for the next stage in their learning.

In the upper school, teachers do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve. The effective practice in the lower school is not sustained in the upper school. Staff do not have the knowledge to teach all subjects well. This has hindered their planning and teaching. Pupils who struggle with their reading do not catch up quickly enough. Pupils do not consistently focus on their learning.

Leaders have created a calm and nurturing environment in the lower school. Children here behave well. They develop strong relationships with adults and each other. Children work well together in class. They enjoy planned activities, for example in learning outside in the forest area or speaking with visitors, including politicians. Leaders support the well-being of staff. Staff morale is good.

Pupils feel safe in the school. They trust adults to deal with any concerns. They know how to behave, and incidents of bullying are rare.

Parents and carers are very supportive of the school. Comments such as, 'Staff care passionately about the children,' and, 'This is a very good school for early learners' were typical.

## **What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?**

Most children in the early years foundation stage do well. Adults in the lower school encourage children to love reading. The youngest children have a wide exposure to books and stories. Phonics is taught from the start and is effective. Teachers check that reading books match the children's current phonic knowledge. They share storybooks. Pupils read with adults as part of a daily routine. Staff encourage and support parents to help their children with their reading.

However, in key stages 1 and 2, reading is not prioritised. Phonics is not taught effectively to support those pupils who find reading difficult, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils do not read to teachers with the frequency stated in the school's policy. Stories are not read regularly to them. The books that are available to read do not build on pupils' interests. As a result, pupils do not sustain their love of reading.

The principal knows every child well. She is passionate about her approach to how she feels pupils learn best. The curriculum plans in the lower school are ambitious for all children, including those with SEND. Teachers use appropriate materials to support learning. For example, three- and four-year-old children use a range of different

telephones, cameras and remote controls as part of role play. Outside, children enjoy making a bug hotel.

In key stages 1 and 2, the curriculum plans lack ambition. In history for instance, pupils do not know the importance of chronology in history. Pupils show that they have remembered some key facts about what they have learned, for example, knowing facts about the Great Fire of London. However, their learning in history does not build on previous learning. This is because learning is not planned well to teach important concepts. Consequently, pupils are not clear about historical concepts such as continuity and change.

Staff focus on developing children's core personal qualities. Adults are responsive to children's needs and areas of interest, including those with SEND. From an early age, children move independently between activities and engage purposefully. For example, adults support two-year-olds to practise turn-taking and sharing. All adults model the 'grace and courtesy' ethos of the school. Leaders have recently introduced a personal, social, health and education (PSHE) scheme for the upper school. This helps pupils in their social and moral development. Opportunities to learn about different faiths and cultures are celebrated throughout the year. However, teachers do not follow the scheme consistently. Instead, they mainly respond to pupils' interests. This does not always help pupils in their spiritual and cultural development.

The newly formed advisory group has yet to meet and agree its role. The principal is also the proprietor and is currently acting as interim chair of this group. Consequently, there is no effective process to hold school leaders to account for the quality of education. Leaders have not checked well enough that the curriculum is being implemented effectively in the upper school. Leaders do support the well-being of staff. Staff morale is good.

Leaders have not ensured that teachers in the upper school have had enough support to teach the full range of national curriculum subjects effectively. At times, pupils become bored with their work and disengage from their learning. Upper school pupils have not experienced any of the computing curriculum since a teacher left last year.

Leaders have not ensured that the school meets the requirements of all the independent school standards for the quality of education and leadership and management. Areas for improvement identified in the last inspection report have not been addressed. These included: ensuring that the advisory group held school leaders to account; strengthening the curriculum to enable pupils to learn about information and communication technology; and improving the monitoring of the quality of education. These issues continue to be areas for improvement.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have a good understanding of their statutory responsibilities. Staff receive regular training. They know how to raise concerns if they need to.

Leaders teach pupils about keeping safe when they use the internet. They know about the potential risks of social media. Older pupils have had training in the past on internet safety. This had not been updated recently at the time of the inspection.

Leaders have taken prompt action to address all risks. For example, the outdoor learning area in the upper school was closed. This was because of possible danger from an old tree in the school grounds.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **Information for the school and proprietor**

- Pupils in the upper school do not achieve well enough. Leaders have supported staff through some generic teacher training. However, staff in the upper school do not have the subject knowledge to be able to teach subjects and phonics in depth. Leaders should urgently address this lack of expertise. A comprehensive training programme for staff should be developed to deepen their knowledge and understanding.
- Leaders have a vision for an ambitious curriculum. They acknowledge that further development is required. A sequential approach to curriculum delivery should be developed, especially in the upper school. Leaders should work closely with all staff to develop a curriculum that effectively builds on pupils' experiences in the lower school.
- School leaders have not been held to account well enough. The school has not made sufficient progress since the last inspection. The advisory group members must agree their role and hold school leaders to account for the quality of education.
- Leaders have made sure that there are plans for each subject. However, some subjects are not taught sequentially. This means that pupils' knowledge in these subjects lacks depth. Leaders should ensure that planning in all subjects enables pupils to develop a deep knowledge and understanding of these subjects.
- Pupils learn phonics in the lower school. They do not learn to use their knowledge of phonics in the upper school to read words well enough. Many pupils are not fluent when reading. Teachers do not help them to catch up quickly if they struggle. Leaders should plan regular opportunities for pupils to practise reading texts with fluency. They should ensure that pupils read a variety of books in depth to expand their vocabulary. Storytime in the upper school should encourage a love of reading.
- History is taught through links to topics. The subject does not have ambitious aims. This limits pupils' knowledge and understanding of historical concepts. Leaders should identify the key knowledge and concepts that they expect pupils to learn in each class in history.
- Leaders have clear plans for what pupils should learn in PSHE. These plans help pupils to learn to be kind and respectful to others. Leaders should ensure that teachers implement the recently introduced PSHE scheme.

- Leaders should support teachers in the upper school to teach computing. This is because pupils need to learn the skills that they will need in the future.
- Leaders do not ensure that all the independent school standards are met. Strong systems should be promptly set up to check that an ambitious curriculum is being implemented effectively across the school. This should enable leaders to have clear evidence that all pupils receive a good quality of education.

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## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	134579
<b>DfE registration number</b>	320/6064
<b>Local authority</b>	London Borough of Waltham Forest
<b>Inspection number</b>	10122978
<b>Type of school</b>	Other independent school
<b>School category</b>	Independent school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	123
<b>Number of part-time pupils</b>	32
<b>Proprietor</b>	Lorna Mahoney
<b>Chair</b>	Lorna Mahoney
<b>Headteacher</b>	Wendy Palumbo
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£2,090 to £7,086
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 8523 2968
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.walthamstowmontessori.com">www.walthamstowmontessori.com</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:e17montessori@aol.com">e17montessori@aol.com</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	30 October – 1 November 2018

## Information about this school

- Walthamstow Montessori School is a non-selective nursery and preparatory independent school in the London Borough of Walthamstow. The school caters for pupils from age two to 11. There are very few pupils with SEND. No pupils are disadvantaged.
- The school's last standard inspection took place in October and November 2018, when the school was judged to require improvement. All the independent school standards were met.
- The school operates on two sites – a lower and an upper school, approximately a mile apart. The lower school is located at the Penrhyn Hall address. It includes separately registered and inspected provision for two-year-olds. Two classes, for

older pupils aged from five to 11, are located nearby in St John's Church, Brookcroft Road. The large majority of the pupils are under five years.

- The proprietor is also the principal of the school.

## **Information about this inspection**

We carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The school has failed to meet the independent school standards. These are the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- We looked in particular at the quality of the curriculum in reading, history, computing and PHSE. This involved visiting lessons, looking at curriculum plans and pupils' work, and holding discussions with pupils and teachers.
- We visited all classes in the school.
- We met with parents before school on both sites. We considered the responses from 48 parents to the parent survey.
- We met with pupils drawn from both the upper and lower school. These meetings were used to hear pupils read, find out what pupils thought about behaviour, bullying, safety, and to see what wider opportunities there were for learning at the school.
- We met with school leaders throughout the inspection. Meetings were held with teachers. The lead inspector also met with two members of the advisory group.
- We scrutinised a wide range of documentary information in order to check on the statutory requirements of the independent school standards.

## **Inspection team**

Rick Barnes, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

James Robinson

Ofsted Inspector

## **Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements**

### **The school failed to meet the following independent school standards**

#### **Part 1. Quality of education provided**

- 2(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if-
  - 2(1)(b) the written policy, plans and schemes of work-
  - 2(1)(b)(i) take into account the ages, aptitudes and needs of all pupils, including those pupils with an EHC plan; and
- 3 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the teaching at the school-
  - 3(a) enables pupils to acquire new knowledge and make good progress according to their ability so that they increase their understanding and develop their skills in the subjects taught;
  - 3(b) fosters in pupils self-motivation, the application of intellectual, physical and creative effort, interest in their work and the ability to think and learn for themselves;
  - 3(c) involves well planned lessons and effective teaching methods, activities and management of class time;
  - 3(d) shows a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the pupils, and ensures that these are taken into account in the planning of lessons;
  - 3(e) demonstrates good knowledge and understanding of the subject matter being taught;
  - 3(f) utilises effectively classroom resources of a good quality, quantity and range;
  - 3(g) demonstrates that a framework is in place to assess pupils' work regularly and thoroughly and use information from that assessment to plan teaching so that pupils can progress;

#### **Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools**

- 34(1) The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school-
  - 34(1)(a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently;



- 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently; and

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