

Brighton and Hove Montessori School

67 Stanford Avenue, Brighton, East Sussex, BN1 6FB

Inspection dates

25–27 September 2013

Overall effectiveness

Adequate

3

Pupils' achievement

Adequate

3

Pupils' behaviour and personal development

Good

2

Quality of teaching

Adequate

3

Quality of curriculum

Good

2

Pupils' welfare, health and safety

Good

2

Leadership and management

Adequate

3

Summary of key findings

This school is adequate because

- Pupils' make expected progress from their individual starting points. However, some are capable of making better progress.
- Despite a good, well-planned curriculum, teaching and the support pupils receive is not always good enough to ensure they are motivated, or guided in their learning to select suitably challenging activities.
- Not enough time and focus is provided for the headteacher to routinely monitor the quality of teaching and to analyse how well pupils are progressing.
- The school's improvement plans need to be reviewed and updated to make sure that the school is clear about what and how it needs to improve.
- Sometimes the use of phonics to break down words is not always used effectively enough to help a few pupils make sense of letters and sounds.
- Pupils' handwriting and presentation of their work is not always good enough.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils are happy at school, feel safe and are looked after very well. Behaviour is good. The school ensures that children are at the centre of everything it does.
- The few pupils with additional needs are catered for well. They progress well because of the well tailored support and learning activities provided.
- The school has very positive relationships with parents and carers who value the work of the school to make it a caring, stimulating place.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school requires improvement and must take action to meet schedule 1 of The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, as amended by

The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Information about this inspection

- The school was given one day's notice of inspection.
- A total of 11 part-lessons, 'learning sessions' and other activities were seen and two teachers were seen teaching. Individual pupils were heard to read and pupils' work and activities were scrutinised.
- Informal discussions were held with individual pupils, the head teacher and other staff.
- School policies and procedures were reviewed, including the procedures to safeguard pupils. Three members of staff answered the Ofsted's questionnaire, 12 parents and carers provided opinions on Ofsted's Parent View website and seven parents spoke to the inspector.

Inspection team

Wendy Forbes, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is a Montessori independent non-selective, mixed day school for pupils aged three to 11 years. Located in the residential Five Ways area in the City of Brighton, the school is situated in a converted Victorian house.
- The school originally opened in 1985. In September 2011 it reduced in size. There are currently 25 pupils on roll aged from three to 10 years in the main school. All but one child who currently attend the school are aged between three and six years. The school shares the building with its Montessori pre-school for two-year old children, which was not inspected on this occasion. Together, the school and pre-school are registered for a total of 32 pupils and children.
- One pupil has a statement of special educational needs.
- There is a very small number of pupils who are disabled or who have special educational needs who do not have statements.
- There are very few pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- The school uses additional facilities, including the local park for physical education and Brighton and Hove Council's Forest School Out-reach facilities.
- The school provides before- and after-school child care facilities for those who attend the school and a few pupils from other local schools. This was not part of this school inspection.
- Since the last inspection there have been a significant number of staffing changes. In an effort to provide continuity to learning during this interim period the head teacher has covered many of these staff absences personally.
- The school's previous light-touch inspection was in June 2010. There was an interim monitoring inspection in November 2010.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and strengthen the support pupils receive so that all make good progress in their learning by:
 - ensuring that pupils are always provided with, or able to select activities that motivate and challenge them
 - ensuring all adults who support pupils to learn are actively engaged in helping them
 - providing more help for pupils whose handwriting and presentation work are not as good as it might be
 - ensuring that phonics is well used to help pupils, particularly those at the early stages of reading to do so competently.
- Ensure leadership and management are more effective and robust by:
 - making sure there are planned opportunities to monitor the quality of teaching
 - regularly analysing and sharing with staff, information about how well pupils are doing
 - reviewing and updating the school's improvement plan so there is a clear picture of what needs to be improved and how
 - providing opportunities for staff to update their knowledge and understanding of phonics.
- **The school must meet the following independent school standards:**
 - Provide accommodation for the medical examination and treatment of pupils

- (paragraph 23B(1)(a))
- Modify current accommodation for the short-term care of sick and injured pupils to include somewhere for pupils to lie down (paragraph 23B(1)(b)).
 - Update the school prospectus with the name, address and contact details of the proprietor both in term time and during holidays (paragraph 24(1)(a)).
 - Make available to parents information about the school's policy and procedures on exclusions; English as an additional language; spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; health and safety, including educational visits; promotion of good behaviour; the number of staff employed at the school, including temporary staff and a summary of their qualifications; (paragraph 24(1)(b)).
 - Make the school's complaints procedure available to parents (paragraph 25(b)).

Inspection judgements

Pupils' achievement

Adequate

Pupils' achievement is adequate because teaching is adequate. Pupils are not always encouraged to select the most challenging range of learning activities. This means that the pace of learning is sometimes slower than it might otherwise be with some pupils not making the progress of which they are capable.

Information gathered by the school about how well pupils are achieving indicates learning and development are in line with those seen nationally by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. Standards are sometimes higher than this, particularly in communication skills. The standards of most other pupils across the rest of the school in literacy and numeracy are similar to those seen nationally and sometimes higher, particularly in reading, speaking and listening.

The very small number of pupils who have special educational needs make better progress than their peers, because of the carefully planned activities and individual support they receive. The very few pupils whose first language is not English become more confident and fluent reasonably soon after starting school. This is because of the care and time taken to build their confidence and make them feel part of the school.

Handwriting and presentation in most subjects are generally good but are not always so. Phonics, which is the breaking down of words into sounds to help with reading, is generally used effectively. As a result most pupils are beginning to read well with some reading slightly above standards of similar-aged pupils in other schools. Those pupils who the inspector heard read were fluent, confident and enjoyed their stories or non-fiction writing. However, occasionally errors made by some pupils in sounding out letters and sounds are not always corrected quickly enough by adults, which can sometimes slow the progress of a few at the early stages of reading.

Pupils' behaviour and personal development

Good

Pupils' behaviour and personal development are good and have improved since the last inspection. The most significant feature is pupils' growing confidence as they spend time in the school. Pupils quickly become eager participants in their learning and increasingly ready to ask questions and give opinions. A major reason for this is the school's Montessori approach, which places emphasis on pupils making decisions for themselves. Most pupils behave well in class, around the school and in the street as they walk to the local park for physical activities. There are few occasions when pupils annoy or interfere with another pupil in some way, but adults deal with these very quickly should they occur by bringing pupils together to understand what has happened. Pupils confirm there is no bullying. There is a good understanding of what constitutes bullying. The support for

pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. Pupils are tolerant of each other.

The school's emphasis on developing a caring, valuing ethos ensures pupils with different nationalities and backgrounds play and work together happily. They are beginning to look at the wider world outside school. Pupils in the Elementary class have recently been finding out about different countries and beginning to discuss social aspects. Cultural development is encouraged by visits to places such as a Buddhist temple. There are opportunities to learn about public institutions in England through, for example, visits by the police and fire and rescue services. Religious, political and similar issues are presented to pupils in a balanced way.

Pupils' personal development is not outstanding because, although pupils are keen to learn and enjoy, there are times when they are not always actively engaged in their learning, occasionally sitting passively listening to adults or wandering around learning areas without purpose. Pupils, particularly older ones enjoy opportunities to organise activities to develop their independence, planning a school trip or participating in a school event. Pupils have positive attitudes to learning reflected in their good attendance.

Quality of teaching

Adequate

The quality of teaching is adequate; some is better, although it is not yet good enough to promote good achievement. This, and some less well-focused learning support sometimes limits pupils' opportunities to do better. A few activities focus on what will be done rather than what will be achieved. Sometimes errors in learning, for example in developing phonic knowledge, go uncorrected. As a result progress is sometimes slower than it otherwise might be. However, the few pupils with additional needs and those who speak English as an additional language are catered for well. This is because these pupils are provided with individual support and activities which allow them to progress at an appropriate rate, building their confidence in their own ability to do well.

There is a well-planned Montessori curriculum combining well with the Early Years, and an appropriate range of resources, which pupils enjoy and which make a good contribution to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children work co-operatively. Their social skills develop well and they are provided with opportunities to play and work both inside and outdoors. When good teaching was observed, teachers made sure that learning activities and the pace of learning is appropriate to help them progress well. An example of this was seen in the Children's House where children experienced the challenge of constructing a 'Binomial cube'. Children read happily together or enjoy time to work together sweeping-up or tidying up class areas.

However, throughout the school not all adults find the appropriate level to challenge pupils in their learning. Some pupils' progress over time is adequate. Learning has been affected by some disruption to learning over time through staff absence. However, the head teacher's sterling efforts to provide continuity in pupils' learning are helping to improve the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement.

Quality of curriculum

Good

The quality of the curriculum is good. Most pupils say they enjoy school and the activities it offers and the independence it promotes. Morning activities are based on the Montessori curriculum which covers five main themes - 'the education of the senses'; 'exercises in practical life'; 'mathematics'; 'literacy' and 'culture'. Such themes cover the areas of learning required by the independent school regulations; for instance, the cultural element includes science, history and geography. These subjects also appear in themes; for example, the ability to interpret a graph is part of 'education of the senses'. In the Early Years Foundation Stage there is effective correlation between the Early Years and Montessori curriculum which is helping to improve achievement. The

development of communication, language, literacy and mathematics are given appropriate prominence. In the afternoons pupils are provided with an interesting range of opportunities to do projects on different themes such as the planned out-reach Forest School curriculum and there is also time for music, physical activities and French. This well-planned, interesting curriculum effectively supports pupils' personal development and encourages a love of learning. Before school, there is a breakfast club providing not only food but also an opportunity for pupils to do other activities. In the late afternoon, there is also an after-school club with a wide range of activities on offer, almost all of which are successfully chosen and undertaken by pupils with minimum adult intervention. These well-organised sessions help to develop pupils' social skills promote their independence.

Pupils' welfare, health and safety

Good

The quality of provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is good overall. All regulations are met. An improvement since the last inspection. The school has a relevant range of policies, including those for child protection, behaviour, health and safety and anti-bullying. The broad content of these policies is good and the policies are understood by staff.

Recruitment procedures are effective and the results of checks on staff and others are correctly recorded in a single central register. Staff training in child protection is up-to-date as is staff training in first aid. Admission and attendance registers are completed correctly.

Risk assessment of the building is thorough, including daily checks by staff, regular checks by commercial companies and a fire safety check by the local authority. Risk assessments, including visits outside of school, are well-documented. Pupils are well supervised at all times, including when they visit local parks and out-reach centres.

Pupil having a growing awareness of how to stay healthy. This was well illustrated by a group of younger pupils who had no difficulty in sharing their thoughts about why it was important to eat fruit and vegetables, as they prepared their morning snacks. Pupils love playing on the excellent, albeit rather large outside play equipment and respond well to opportunities for physical activity in the nearby park.

Leadership and management

Adequate

Leadership and management are adequate. It is not good because recent procedures to strengthen the quality of teaching have not yet brought about good achievement throughout the school. Improved systems for gathering information about how well pupils are doing have improved since the last inspection. Early Years and external consultants have supported the school well in establishing clear information-gathering systems and rationalising the Montessori and Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum as well as establishing how to improve the quality of teaching. A recently appointed co-ordinator has ensured that information about pupils' progress is now well-documented helping to provide a clearer picture of achievement. However, these systems have yet to have a significant impact on teaching or pupils' achievement.

Since the last inspection the head teacher has worked tirelessly, with integrity and diligence to ensure the school meets almost all regulatory standards providing a safe and caring environment for the pupils. However, due to the pressures of staff absence, covered almost entirely by the head teacher, limited time has been available to observe lessons, analyse progress information or review improvement plans, limiting the school's capacity to improve in recent time. Indications are that this is improving.

Almost all regulations for independent schools are met. The school premises offer appropriate accommodation for pupils to be taught securely and safely. There is a dedicated medical room on the second floor. However there is no provision for pupils to lie down and there is no separate

provision for those who might need medical examination or treatment. Parents, carers and a local authority are provided with regular, appropriate reports on pupils' progress. The school documentation covers all required areas. However, it does not routinely make available to parents and carers some school policy documents and procedures including the complaints policy. Nor does it publish the number of staff employed at the school and provide a summary of their qualifications or the proprietor's out-of-hours contact information in the school's prospectus, as required.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of education and significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 2	Good	A school which provides a high quality of education that exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 3	Adequate	A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of education it provides.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school where minimum requirements are not met and/or the quality of education has serious weaknesses.

School details

Unique reference number	133348
Inspection number	422749
DfE registration number	846/ 6023

This inspection was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Montessori Primary
School status	Independent School
Age range of pupils	3–11 years
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	25
Number of part time pupils	3
Proprietor	Daisy Cockburn
Headteacher	Daisy Cockburn
Date of previous school inspection	29 June 2010
Annual fees (day pupils)	£6,450
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