

# Garden City Montessori School

269 Icknield Way, Letchworth Garden City, Hertfordshire SG6 4UE

**Inspection dates**

17 November 2017

**Overall outcome**

**The school meets all of the independent school standards that were checked during this inspection**

## Main inspection findings

### Part 1. Quality of education provided

#### *Paragraph 3, 3(a), 3(d)*

- The previous inspection highlighted that leaders' monitoring of teaching, learning and assessment was not robust enough to ensure that the school was sufficiently meeting the needs of all pupils. In addition, systems and processes for tracking progress were not rigorous enough to ensure that all pupils were making the progress of which they were capable.
- In the school's action plan, the proprietor proposed to train current staff in the Montessori education system and establish and implement a robust system for staff evaluation. Plans to strengthen the tracking of all pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics were detailed within the school's priorities.
- A change in staffing structure along with relevant training to develop teachers' practice have strengthened the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the school. There is now sufficient challenge to support pupils to make good and better progress.
- Leaders have now introduced effective systems for tracking the progress of all pupils over time. Teachers can confidently talk about individual pupils, the good progress they are making and the next steps needed to help them to progress further.
- All teachers know individual pupils well and can explain where specific individuals both struggle and excel. Teachers use what they know about pupils and their observations and tracking information to form an accurate view of each pupil's needs. Teachers then adapt teaching and learning appropriately.
- Children and pupils in all three classes were keen to share their learning. For example, one child demonstrated a systematic approach to show her understanding of place value. She was able to explain how the resources she was using were helping her to make tens, twenty and thirty.
- In the Nursery and primary class, teachers' assessment of children's and pupils' progress is recorded electronically against the early years curriculum and the Montessori objectives. The system immediately identifies where children and pupils are in their learning and highlights those who are not making sufficient progress. These children and

pupils are then given additional support that helps them catch up.

- The recently appointed elementary teacher applies a systematic approach to her teaching, learning and assessment processes. She tracks pupils' progress against the national curriculum for each pupil. She uses her own knowledge of the individual pupils to set activities, which she knows will stretch them.
- Planning takes into consideration pupils' interests. For example, pupils had chosen cars as their project and model cars were being used as a resource to help them visualise mathematical concepts during a number task. In almost all activities, pupils are asked to explain and extend their thinking. Pupils choose appropriate resources to support their own learning. They are asked to reflect on what they think went well over the course of the week and how they think they could improve. As a result, pupils are very aware of what they are learning and what they needed to do to improve.
- Pupils are making good and better progress from their different starting points. Where pupils are not achieving age-related expectations, they soon catch up because of the precise support provided by carefully planned activities.
- Leaders have ensured that this independent school standard is now met.

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

### *Paragraph 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b)*

- This standard was not met at the inspection in February 2017 because the proprietor had not ensured that all of the independent school standards had been met and had breached the conditions of the school's registration.
- In the school's action plan, the proprietor proposed to ensure that the independent school standards are met by ensuring that leaders establish clear lines of accountability, and by developing governors' knowledge and skills further through training and by sharing good practice.
- Governors are now strategic in their approach and have established clear lines of accountability. The school's action plan is closely aligned to the areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection report. Governors have developed a separate committee responsible for managing the financial aspects of the school. Since the previous inspection, governors have recruited a governor with additional knowledge and experience in education to ensure compliance with the independent school standards. Therefore, they have now ensured that the governing body has a range of appropriate skills to support and challenge school leaders.
- Further governor training is planned for the autumn term. Governors have ensured that they work more closely with school leaders on a regular basis, on all aspects of school improvement. As a result, they know how the quality of teaching and assessment affects how well pupils achieve. Governors now confidently hold leaders to account for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across all three classes.
- Governors have much improved knowledge and understanding of what needs to be in place to ensure that the outcomes for all pupils are good and better. Governors' minutes show that they now receive a detailed report from the head of school and school priorities are discussed at each meeting. They work closely with school leaders on areas

of school improvement as detailed in the school's action plan.

- Governors make regular visits to monitor leaders' progress against the school priorities and therefore have an accurate view of the school. They can talk confidently about the improved quality of teaching, learning and assessment. They have evaluated the new systems for tracking and assessing the progress pupils make in all classes and have accurately identified the next stages for improving systems further.
- Governors are committed to the continuing professional development of all staff. Leaders have reviewed the staff performance system and staff performance is measured against appropriate targets. Leadership has been strengthened through the distribution of responsibility, ensuring that the head of school has enough time dedicated to the running of the school. New leaders have embraced these responsibilities, as demonstrated in positive outcomes for pupils.
- Leaders have ensured that this independent school standard is now met.

## **Compliance with regulatory requirements**

The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements that were checked during this inspection. This included the standards and requirements that the school was judged to not comply with at the previous inspection. Not all of the standards and associated requirements were checked during this inspection.

### **The school now meets the following independent school standards**

- The proprietor must ensure that the teaching at the school:
  - 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
  - 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 (paragraphs 3, 3(a), 3(d)).
- 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:
  - demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently
  - fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently (paragraphs 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b)).

## School details

Unique reference number	142413
DfE registration number	919/6001
Inspection number	10043074

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, 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	Other independent school
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	2 to 12
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	36
Number of part-time pupils	9
Proprietor	Letchworth Garden City Church
Chair	John Draper
Headteacher	Sarah Cummins
Annual fees (day pupils)	£5,235 to £9,225
Telephone number	01462 480126
Website	<a href="http://www.montessorigc.com">www.montessorigc.com</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:info@montessorigc.com">info@montessorigc.com</a>
Date of previous standard inspection	21–23 February 2017

## Information about this school

- Garden City Montessori is an independent day school. It opened in January 2015 with four pupils. Over the past two years, the school has grown in size. There are currently 36 pupils on roll.
- A very small number of pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proprietor is the Elim Four Square Gospel Alliance. The governing body is made up of staff from the school and representatives from the church.

## Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out at the request of the registration authority for independent schools without notice. The purpose of the inspection was to monitor the progress the school has made in meeting the independent school standards and other requirements that it was judged to not comply with at its previous inspection.
- The inspector examined a wide range of documents. These documents included the school's school improvement plans, school policies, information about the curriculum, safeguarding documents, minutes of governing body meetings and information about the progress of pupils.
- The inspector visited all classes to observe learning throughout the school.
- The inspector looked at a pupils' work, including pupils' journals, individual achievement folders and photographic evidence.
- The inspector spoke with pupils throughout the inspection about their learning.
- The inspector looked at the school's single central record of employment checks.
- The inspector met with teachers, support staff, the vice-chair of the governing body and the business operations manager.

## Inspection team

Cindy Impey, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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