

Maria Montessori School

26 Lyndhurst Gardens, London NW3 5NW

Inspection dates

12–14 December 2017

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders and members of the board of directors work well as a team. They ensure that the school meets all of the independent school standards.
- The proprietor and the board of directors provide strong support to ensure that the school continues to improve.
- Leaders have successfully created a culture that encourages pupils to become confident and self-motivated learners who achieve well.
- There is strong support for teachers. Consequently, the quality of teaching is good and pupils make good progress.
- The curriculum is engaging and deepens pupils' knowledge and skills across a wide range of subjects.
- Pupils have a thirst for learning and their behaviour is outstanding. Pupils feel very safe and their personal development and welfare are exceptional.
- The school is effective in promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils are taught well about values such as tolerance and respect.
- Staff are highly committed and are proud to work at the school. Staff morale is high.
- Children make good progress in the early years because of the strong care and support and the effective teaching they receive. Children are prepared well for Year 1.
- The outdoor area in the early years is not effectively used to support and extend children's learning. This also slows progress in their physical development.
- Expectations of pupils' quality of writing are not consistently high. Sometimes there is lack of feedback on how pupils can improve their work.
- Some pupils lack the skills to read unfamiliar or difficult words to improve their reading, particularly the lower-attaining pupils.
- Leaders do not have a clear enough system to track and assess the progress of different groups of pupils across the curriculum.
- The school improvement plan lacks arrangements to enable the board of directors to check the effectiveness of actions taken by leaders.

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.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that:
 - teachers have consistently high expectations of the quality of pupils' writing and provide clear guidance on how to improve
 - pupils have effective strategies to read difficult or unfamiliar words to improve their reading skills, particularly the lower-attaining pupils.
- Improve the early years provision by ensuring that:
 - the outdoor area is used effectively to support and extend children's learning, including their physical development.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - leaders have clear systems to track and assess the progress of different groups of pupils across the curriculum
 - the school improvement plan has clear time scales for tackling weaknesses, with arrangements for the board of directors to check the effectiveness of actions taken.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders, proprietors and the board of directors are ambitious for pupils. They work together successfully to make sure that the requirements of the independent school standards are met in full.
- Leaders ensure that staff receive good support and training to improve their classroom practice. The headteacher checks the quality of teaching and uses the performance management system well to improve teaching. Montessori mentors also evaluate the quality of teaching and learning on a regular basis to ensure that teachers are implementing the Montessori principles effectively. Staff value the professional development opportunities that they receive.
- Leaders have established a strong culture of respect, support and tolerance. There are positive relationships between leaders, staff and pupils. Staff morale is high.
- Leaders, including the board of directors, addressed the weaknesses identified in the previous inspection and ensure that the school continues to improve. For example, the school's self-evaluation now clearly identifies the strengths and areas for improvement.
- The curriculum is rich, broad and balanced. The engaging curriculum helps pupils to be independent and inquisitive and explore the areas of learning that interest them. Within the framework for learning laid down by the Association Montessori Internationale, pupils develop their knowledge, skills and understanding well across a range of subjects. The curriculum is enriched by various extra-curricular activities such as art, chess, drama, sport and music. Pupils also benefit from learning Mandarin and French.
- British values are actively promoted. Pupils know about the rule of law and democracy. They visit the Houses of Parliament in Westminster and vote for the charities they want to support. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 had the opportunity to discuss and debate the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and the dangers posed by radicalisation and extremism. Some of them researched the rights of disabled people and the Disability Discrimination Act.
- Pupils show respect for people from different cultures, including those with protected characteristics, and an appreciation of diversity. The school's work to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is effective. Overall, pupils are prepared well for life in modern Britain.
- Leaders are yet to fully implement a clear system for tracking and assessing the progress of different groups of pupils in different subjects across the school.
- The school improvement plan lacks clear timescales for actions to be taken to address weaknesses. The arrangements for checking the effectiveness of actions taken by leaders, particularly by the board of directors, also lack clarity.
- The large majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, are supportive of the school's leadership. Most parents stated that they would recommend the school to another parent.

Governance

- The school has a skilled and knowledgeable board of directors. The directors are highly committed to the school and ambitious for the pupils. They visit the school regularly to find out for themselves how the school is running and how well pupils are learning.
- Directors know the school well, including its strengths and areas for development. They work with school leaders effectively to ensure that all of the independent school standards are met and that the school continues to improve. They support and challenge senior leaders well.
- The board is involved in any decisions about teachers' pay awards and directors carry out the headteacher's appraisal effectively. They set challenging targets for the headteacher, including targets for improving pupils' outcomes.
- Directors are trained on safeguarding, including the safer recruitment of staff. They work with leaders well and have good contact with parents to ensure that safeguarding is effective and that children are kept safe.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school has reviewed its safeguarding policies and procedures to take into account current government requirements. The safeguarding policy is available to parents on the school's website. Leaders have successfully created a vigilant and safe culture in the school and they work well with parents and external agencies to keep pupils safe.
- Leaders ensure that appropriate risk assessments are undertaken to keep pupils safe, including within the school and when pupils go on visits.
- All staff are appropriately checked for their suitability to work with children. Leaders ensure that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality.
- All staff have received training on safeguarding and child protection procedures, based on current statutory guidance. Staff know the correct procedures to follow if they have concerns in relation to a child's safety. Staff and the board of directors have been trained in, and are familiar with, the government's 'Prevent' duty to protect pupils from extremism and radicalisation.
- All parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, said that their children feel happy and safe at school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Leaders ensure that staff receive strong support to improve their classroom practice so that the quality of teaching and learning is consistently good. Staff are highly trained and skilful in using Montessori teaching methods, working principally to facilitate pupils' learning.
- Resources are used well to engage pupils. There is a calm, supportive and purposeful environment for learning. Pupils show high levels of concentration and a strong appetite

for learning. Pupils work and learn at their own pace. Staff make good use of questioning to test and reinforce pupils' understanding.

- Working relationships and mutual respect between staff and pupils are consistently strong. Staff know individual pupils well and monitor their progress closely to identify any gaps in their knowledge and understanding. They use this information well to plan pupils' learning. This ensures that pupils make good progress across a range of subjects, including English and mathematics.
- There is effective support for the small number of pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. This is also the case for pupils who speak English as an additional language. Consequently, these groups of pupils make good progress.
- The most able pupils are sufficiently challenged with work that makes them think hard. They show a great deal of independence and use a range of resources to research their own ideas and extend their learning.
- The teaching of mathematics is strong. Pupils are able to use different methods of calculation well to solve a range of mathematical problems. Pupils showed confidence in using numbers, as seen in Year 1, where pupils correctly used division.
- The teaching of reading is not consistently strong. Consequently, some of the pupils, particularly the lower-attaining pupils in Years 1 and 2, lack the strategies to read difficult or unfamiliar words.
- Teachers' expectation of pupils' written work in English are not consistently high and some work goes uncorrected. Consequently, some pupils continue to make mistakes. Some pupils' written work is poorly presented. Pupils' work also showed inconsistency in teachers' challenge to pupils to improve their skills by writing at length in English and other subjects.
- The very large majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, said that their children make good progress at school.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Staff are highly committed to ensuring that there is strong and effective support for pupils to promote their welfare, mental health and well-being. Pupils show resilience, confidence and independence as successful learners.
- There are strong working relationships between staff and pupils and between pupils. Pupils are well cared for and the environment is supportive and nurturing. Pupils interact exceptionally well with each other. They typically support one another in lessons, particularly when their classmates are about their learning. In lessons, older pupils sometimes work with younger pupils to help them with their tasks.
- Pupils said that they feel very safe at school. Pupils are taught well about how to stay safe, including when crossing roads and using the internet. Older pupils also know about the dangers of cyber bullying and what to do should it happen. Pupils said incidents of bullying are very rare. They are very confident that, should any bullying occur, it will be

dealt with quickly and effectively.

- There are good risk assessments for buildings and school trips. This ensures the safety and well-being of pupils. Leaders work closely with a range of agencies, including educational psychologists, to meet the needs of pupils.
- Pupils have regular, small-group discussions about a range of topics, including their learning, safety and aspects of their school life. These discussions are facilitated by a member of staff. Pupils are eager to share their ideas and feel that they are listened to.
- Pupils enjoy the healthy cooked food at school and some know the ingredients that the cooks use. They are eager to lay out the tables with plates and cutlery and take responsibility for cleaning the tables and the floor after their meals. Pupils know how to lead healthy lives and have regular physical activities to keep themselves fit.
- Almost all parents who responded to Parent View and all those who inspectors spoke with said that their children are safe and well looked after at school.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils are very courteous, polite and friendly. They are exceptionally well mannered and show respect for staff, visitors and each other. Pupils behave exceptionally well in lessons, during lunch time and around the school.
- Pupils show respect for diversity, including for those with protected characteristics, and are taught well about other faiths, beliefs and cultures.
- Pupils understand the school's behaviour policy well, including any sanctions. Staff ensure that the behaviour policy is consistently applied throughout the school. There have been no exclusions since the previous inspection.
- Attendance is in line with the national average and improving. Pupils are punctual to lessons and rates of persistent absence are very low.
- Almost all parents who responded to Parent View agreed that the school makes sure that pupils are well behaved. All staff responding to the staff survey agree.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- The work in pupils' books and the school's own observations show that most pupils currently at the school are making good progress in a range of subjects.
- Pupils' progress in mathematics is good. Pupils are regularly provided with challenging work where they have to use their skills to solve a range of mathematical problems. For example, pupils in Years 5 and 6 made good progress with measuring angles, showing good understanding. Pupils' progress in calculation is particularly strong and they show confidence in using different methods in making their calculations.
- Pupils enjoy reading and often read their own work to others. Older pupils read confidently and with good expression. However, some lower-attaining pupils in the lower years lack the strategies to read difficult or unfamiliar words. This slows their progress in reading.

- Pupils show good skills in writing for different purposes, including letters and poetry. However, they do not routinely write at length in English and other subjects to improve their writing skills. They sometimes make the same mistakes in their work over time. This slows their progress.
- The most able pupils are provided with work that is usually challenging. For example, a group of pupils in Years 5 and 6 discussed and made notes about the work of the United Nations General Assembly. They went on to discuss trade agreements and imports and exports, showing curiosity and a growing awareness of world issues and economics.
- The small number of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities receive good support. So, too, do pupils who speak English as an additional language. Consequently, these groups of pupils make good progress.
- In line with the Montessori system, there is no formal testing to enable comparisons to be made with pupils' outcomes nationally. Additionally, the cohorts of pupils leaving Year 6 are too small to make any meaningful judgements on outcomes. However, the available evidence suggests that pupils' progress and attainment are broadly good. Some of the Year 6 leavers gain places at selective schools.
- The large majority of parents who responded to Parent View agreed that their children make good progress.

Early years provision

Good

- Children in the early years make good progress in all the areas of learning. This is because they receive high-quality care and support and consistently good teaching by committed staff. Children typically develop the skills and understanding needed to prepare them well for Year 1.
- Children show a great deal of independence and confidence as they make their own choices about their learning. They interact and collaborate very well with each other. They are inquisitive and their behaviour and attitudes to learning are strong. Children are used to routines and they follow instructions closely. The engaging and nurturing environment ensures that children make strong progress in their personal, social and emotional development.
- Leaders ensure that staff are highly trained and that the quality of teaching is consistently strong. Staff monitor the progress of children closely and so can provide guidance when children select activities and resources to support their learning. Children's engagement in activities is closely observed and recorded. This enables staff to plan for the next stage of children's learning.
- The small number of children who have SEN and/or disabilities receive strong individual support and make good progress. This is also the case for children who speak English as an additional language.
- The small number of children who are under three years old receive good care and support. These children interact well with other children and staff respond effectively to their needs. Parents are provided with detailed feedback on their development.
- The most able children are provided with challenging work to make them think hard and extend their learning. For example, some of the most able pupils were able to name the

different continents and multiply numbers.

- There are some good examples of early writing; for example, children have previously written instructions for making bread. Children enjoy reading and sharing books in the book corner.
- Children talk confidently about their learning. For example, some children talked about the need for recycling to stop plastic getting into the sea. Another group discussed how to keep healthy and could list some foods that are not healthy.
- Children enjoy learning about different cultures and faiths, particularly those of the children in their classes. Children learn about respect for people, including those with protected characteristics by considering different types of families.
- Communication with parents is through meetings, informal discussions and a regular newsletter. Staff work closely with parents to gather the information they need about the children. The parents who spoke to inspectors were very positive about the early years provision.
- Leadership of the early years is strong. Leaders know the early years' strengths and areas for improvement. For example, they know that that the outdoor provision needs further resources to support and extend children's learning. Leaders ensure that staff training is effective to bring continuous improvements in the quality of teaching.
- Staff are trained well to keep children safe. Leaders and staff work together well to ensure that safeguarding is effective. There are no breaches of statutory welfare requirements.
- The school meets the independent school standards in relation to the early years provision.

School details

Unique reference number	131978
DfE registration number	202/6399
Inspection number	10035794

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 category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	2 to 12
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	170
Number of part-time pupils	49
Proprietor	Maria Montessori Institute
Chair	Richard Partridge
Headteacher	Lizzie Kingston
Annual fees (day pupils)	£11,685–£12,975
Telephone number	020 7435 3646
Website	www.mariamontessori.org
Email address	schools@mariamontessori.org
Date of previous inspection	12–14 March 2014

Information about this school

- Maria Montessori School is an independent nursery and primary school registered for boys and girls aged from two to 12 years of age. The school opened in 1961 and is run by the Maria Montessori Training Organisation. It is located on six sites in London: Hampstead, West Hampstead, Notting Hill, Bayswater, Holland Park and Hornsey Rise.
- All Children House sites offer provision for early years and Year 1 pupils. Currently, the Hampstead and Bayswater sites have early years provision and provision for pupils from Years 1 to 6.
- Parents have an option to send their children to pre-nursery or nursery either part time or

full time. All children in the Reception attend full time.

- Maria Montessori School is part of the Maria Montessori Institute, which is affiliated to the Association Montessori Internationale (AMI). This is also the Montessori teacher training centre in the United Kingdom.
- The Montessori approach to education is based on realising the potential of each pupil by engaging them in a developmental programme for each individual pupil, matched closely to each pupil's specific learning needs. Teachers act as guides and facilitators in supporting pupils as they pursue the programme of work set for them or which they have chosen for themselves.
- There are 170 pupils on roll, out of which 49 are part time. In addition, 13 children attend the registered provision for childcare for children under three years of age.
- The main Lyndhurst school site in Hampstead uses local sports facilities.
- The school was last inspected in March 2014.
- The school aims 'to serve children's immediate needs while engaging a love of learning and independence of spirit and a sense of responsibility and care for the world in which we live'.
- There are few pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. There are few who speak English as an additional language. There are very few most-able pupils.
- No pupils have a statement of SEN or education, health and care plan. There are no disadvantaged pupils.
- By the end of the inspection, the school met the statutory requirements for the publication of information on its website.

Information about this inspection

- This full standard inspection took place with one day's notice.
- The inspectors observed teaching and learning in all six sites of the school in all year groups. A few were joint observations with the headteacher.
- The inspectors held meetings with pupils from the ages of six to 10 to discuss their learning and views about the school. The inspectors also heard pupils in Years 1 and 2 read and discussed their reading with them.
- The inspectors checked pupils' books and the school's own information on pupils' progress. Inspectors scrutinised the single central register of pre-employment checks on staff, and looked at pupils' attendance and behaviour records. They also examined documents and policies in relation to the independent school standards, including safety and safeguarding policies and procedures.
- The inspectors met with the headteacher, the board of governors, a proprietors' representative, elementary lead teachers and leaders of early years, staff and parents.
- There were 32 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. All of the written comments that were included on Parent View were also taken into account. In addition, inspectors spoke to some parents during the inspection about their views. Inspectors also considered 20 responses to the staff survey.

Inspection team

Avtar Sherri, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Helen Bailey	Ofsted Inspector
Tim McLoughlin	Ofsted Inspector

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