

Brighton and Hove Montessori School

67 Stanford Avenue, Brighton, East Sussex BN1 6FB

Inspection dates

5–7 June 2018

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher leads with a calm confidence. She has a clear vision for the school. Her dedication has ensured that it has improved since the last inspection.
- Staff work as a close and supportive team. Communication is strong. Collaborative working is the norm, creating capacity in classrooms and impacting positively on pupils' outcomes.
- Teachers know individual pupils well. They put this knowledge to good use, planning and facilitating learning that ensures that pupils make good progress across the school.
- The pastoral care of pupils is excellent. The school's ethos ensures that the personal development and well-being of pupils are always given the highest priority.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are very positive. They enjoy coming to school because learning is fun, relevant and interesting for them.
- The proprietor, who is also the headteacher, has ensured that all of the independent school standards are met.
- Parents and carers are very supportive of the school. They feel that they are welcome and they appreciate how the headteacher and staff involve them in the day-to-day life of the school.
- Staff generally use questioning well to confirm pupils' understanding. However, key opportunities to extend pupils' learning are sometimes missed, slowing their progress.
- On occasion, the pace of learning slows because activities for older pupils are not challenging enough, or pupils are not clear about the purpose of the activity they are undertaking.
- The school is reviewing systems to monitor pupils' academic and personal development. Staff know the importance of completing planned changes without delay.

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?

- Further refine the school's system to monitor the academic and personal development of pupils so that it becomes a better tool for staff to assess pupils' progress and plan next steps in learning.
- Increase the progress pupils make as they move through the school by:
 - ensuring that levels of challenge are appropriate, especially for older pupils
 - maximising opportunities to extend learning when chances present themselves
 - ensuring that pupils understand what they are learning and why.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher is passionate about the school and provides the very best possible for its pupils. She knows the school well and has created a genuinely caring and nurturing environment where pupils thrive and enjoy learning.
- All staff are considered as leaders. Because of the size of the school, staff contribute to most aspects of day-to-day and strategic leadership. Communication is a strength. Teaching and support staff work as a collegiate team, which impacts positively on all aspects of leadership and management of the school.
- Pupils enjoy the curriculum and the opportunities it provides for them to learn. Following the Montessori Method, much of the learning is child-initiated, especially for younger children. Older pupils told the inspector how they enjoy learning about the world around them and discovering new things each day.
- Much of the learning is practical and based on real life. Opportunities to develop pupils' mathematics and English skills are woven through planned activities or through pupils' own projects. The development of pupils' social skills is given a high priority. As a consequence, pupils are confident and articulate and make good progress across a range of subjects.
- Teachers ensure that pupils experience a wide breadth of subjects through their long-term planning. This includes ensuring that pupils have a rounded understanding of equality, tolerance and respect for the faiths, cultures and lifestyles of others. Pupils understand democracy. They know that keeping to the rules is important. They know that their actions impact on the environment and the lives of others.
- The extra-curricular aspect of learning is a particular strength of the school. Visits into the local environment are daily events. The school's involvement in the local community garden is a good example of this. Trips to the beach, woods, Parliament and London museums in connection with pupils' project work are regular occurrences.
- The headteacher has identified that systems to assess and monitor pupils' progress need to be updated. She is determined to ensure a smooth transition between the current and proposed systems so that the quality of pupils' learning is not impacted on negatively.
- School leaders are effective in ensuring that all of the independent school standards are met.

Governance

- Arrangements for governance are effective. Because of its small size and the manner in which it is led, the school does not have a formal governing body. However, all staff play a role in governance. This includes non-teaching support staff, who are very involved in the day-to-day running of the school, as well as maintaining a strategic overview of aspects such as safeguarding.
- The proprietor ensures that the unique context of the school does not get in the way of ensuring that all of the independent school standards are met. External monitoring of the

quality of education is provided by an independent consultant. This means that staff are subject to appropriate levels of professional scrutiny and their development as practitioners focuses on improving their classroom practice.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The culture to ensure that pupils are safe and cared for is very strong. Staff are aware of their responsibilities to protect children and are trained at an appropriate level. Because communication is strong, staff are well informed about individual pupils' needs.
- The school site is well maintained and secure. Routines at the start and end of the school day are sound. The school complies with all elements of the independent school standards regarding the welfare, health and safety of pupils. This includes publishing a suitable safeguarding policy on its website.
- Pupils told the inspector that they feel safe and well cared for in school. All staff who replied to the staff survey expressed the opinion that they feel pupils are safe at the school. This was also the case with the many parents who spoke to the inspector or who replied to the Ofsted online parent questionnaire.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Classrooms are happy and vibrant places. Teachers know pupils exceptionally well. Relationships between pupils and adults are positive and built on mutual respect and understanding. The culture of community and family is strong. Parents value this aspect of the school and speak warmly and with conviction about the positive impact that the quality of teaching and learning has on outcomes for their children.
- Teachers, including the headteacher, have good knowledge and understanding of the school's unique ethos and approach to teaching and learning. Their focus is constantly on facilitating independent learning, while stimulating pupils' natural desire to be inquisitive. Consequently, pupils' academic progress and personal development are equally strong.
- The quality of teaching and learning is equally good in each of the school's two phases. Younger children in 'children's house', aged two to six, benefit from good levels of adult support. Older pupils in 'elementary class', aged six to 12, follow a tailored programme of learning specific to each individual. Collaborative learning is very evident in each class.
- The school's few pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities do well here because staff understand their needs and plan learning that stimulates and encourages them to become successful learners. This is also true of pupils who join the school speaking English as a second or third language. Small class sizes, good teaching and excellent collaboration between pupils mean that most make strong progress with their spoken and written English over relatively short periods of time.
- Teachers track pupils' academic and personal development well. As a result, they are able to target support when required. However, levels of challenge are sometimes not as high as they could be, especially for older pupils. When this is the case, the pace of learning slows. This is also the case when staff miss opportunities to extend learning during lessons or when pupils are given tasks to complete without fully understanding why they

are doing them or what they are learning about.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. Staff focus intently on ensuring the social development of pupils. Pupils' welfare, health and safety are of paramount importance. As a result, pupils thrive at school and are very happy.
- The curriculum and the way it is delivered support pupils' emotional development well. Pupils often watch each other and are happy to share their learning with their peers. Collaboration is encouraged. Consequently, pupils are not afraid to make mistakes and show excellent attitudes to all they do at school.
- Pupils learn about healthy lifestyles and staying fit as part of the curriculum and the extra-curricular activities they access. Visits to local recycling facilities and projects about reducing waste help them understand how people's lifestyles impact on the environment. This all helps build pupils' respect for themselves and the community they live in.
- Pupils are taught about keeping safe in and out of school. They understand the potential dangers of using the internet. Many lessons, such as crossing the road, are practical, building on knowledge learned in the classroom.
- Pupils told the inspector that there is never any problem with bullying because 'People at the school are kind' and 'We know that bullying is unacceptable.'

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They enjoy coming to school. They told the inspector that 'Everybody is very friendly, especially when you first start.' As a result, attendance is good and examples of poor behaviour are rare.
- Pupils are generally kind and accepting of each other. They are polite and welcoming to visitors to the school. Younger children are able to take turns and work together with increasing confidence. Older pupils enjoy the freedom that the curriculum gives them, as well as additional responsibilities such as being lunchtime monitors.
- Older pupils talk openly about how much they enjoy being responsible for managing their own time. Most exhibit mature attitudes for their age. However, they also acknowledge that, on occasion, learning slows because of the low-level off-task behaviour of some pupils. Classroom visits showed this to be the case, although staff deal with such instances well.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Most pupils make good progress in a range of subjects because the quality of teaching and learning is consistently good. Staff know pupils well. They constantly assess how well pupils are engaged in learning and intervene when pupils are at risk of falling behind or when motivation slips. As a result, most pupils achieve well.

- Pupils enjoy the challenge of being in charge of their own learning. Most develop a love of learning over time and are keen to find out about new things. This is especially the case with pupils who have attended the school from an early age, who are confident as independent learners.
- Pupils who are new to the school also make good progress. This is particularly the case with older pupils who arrive at the school with little or no knowledge of English. Phonics provision is a strength. Children learn to read books with confidence and enjoy writing and sharing their own stories.
- Pupils enjoy mathematics. Much of their learning in mathematics is supported by accessing a wide range of special resources. Written calculations are encouraged as pupils become more proficient. More complex reasoning and problem-solving activities, many of which are based on real life, are introduced as pupils become more proficient.
- On occasion, levels of challenge are not as high as they could be. This is generally when pupils lack motivation or when staff miss opportunities to move learning on at a more rapid pace. When this happens, progress slows.

Early years provision

Good

- The quality of provision in the early years mirrors that of the rest of the school. Children make good progress from their different starting points because the quality of leadership and of teaching and learning is at least good. All of the independent school standards are met in relation to the early years.
- Children join the school from varied backgrounds and with a wide range of ability. Some start aged two, with tailored provision to meet their individual needs. Others join in-year or at the beginning of what would be Reception in a mainstream school. Sound induction procedures and knowledgeable, sensitive staff enable smooth transitions into the school. This is particularly the case for younger children who struggle emotionally in the first instance.
- The curriculum in the early years meets the needs of children well. Relationships in the classroom are strong. Children feel safe and cooperate with each other well. Their behaviour is good because routines are well established and expectations are high.
- Parents are very positive about the early years provision. They appreciate how staff care for their children and the access they have to leaders and teaching staff when needed. Parents feel that their children's personal, social and emotional needs are well met because staff understand the developmental needs of young children very well.

School details

Unique reference number	133348
DfE registration number	846/6023
Inspection number	10020938

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	35
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Daisy Cockburn
Headteacher	Daisy Cockburn
Annual fees (day pupils)	£7,401
Telephone number	01273 702 485
Website	www.brighton-montessori.org.uk
Email address	info@brighton-montessori.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	25–27 September 2013

Information about this school

- The school is a Montessori non-selective, mixed day school for pupils aged between two and 12 years of age. The school operates from a large converted Victorian house and gardens.
- The headteacher is also the sole proprietor of the school. The school has no formal board of governors.
- The school is registered for 45 pupils. At the time of the inspection, there were 35 pupils on roll aged between two and 11.
- The school operates in two phases. 'Children's house' is for children between the ages of two and six. 'Elementary class' is for pupils aged from six to 12.

- The school operates a before- and after-school club which parents use for childcare purposes.
- The school was last inspected in September 2013, when the overall effectiveness was judged to be adequate and some of the independent school standards were found not to be met.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector carried out a number of classroom visits during the inspection. Some were accompanied by the headteacher. During classroom visits, the inspector assessed pupils' learning, looked at their work and talked to them about the progress that they were making. The inspector also accompanied older pupils on a visit to a local park.
- A wide range of meetings were held with the headteacher. The school's administrator was present at some of the meetings. A meeting was also held with the school's two class teachers. The inspector met with a small group of pupils to discuss with them their views of the school.
- The inspector met with parents throughout the inspection. The inspector also received nine letters or emails from parents. He assessed the three responses and accompanying free-text messages to Ofsted's online parent questionnaire, Parent View. The inspector also talked to members of the local community who work closely with the school.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour in classrooms and as they moved around the school, including at the start and finish of the school day.
- The inspector took into account the five responses to the staff survey.
- The inspector scrutinised a wide range of documents, records and policies, including those regarding safeguarding and other aspects of the independent school standards. Records of visit and emails from the school's independent consultant, the school's own self-evaluation, improvement planning and information about pupils' outcomes were also taken into consideration.

Inspection team

Clive Close, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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