

Brighton and Hove Montessori School

67 Stanford Avenue, Brighton, East Sussex BN1 6FB

Inspection dates

17 December 2019

Overall outcome

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

Main inspection findings

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraphs 6, 7, 7(a), 7(b), 32(1), 32(1)(c)

- At a material change inspection carried out on 21 May 2019, standards relating to safeguarding were found to be unmet. The proprietor, who is also the headteacher and designated safeguarding lead, was insufficiently familiar with safeguarding guidance. Record-keeping of safeguarding concerns was weak. The school's safeguarding policy met requirements in terms of the areas it covered but was not being implemented effectively. Nor did it reflect closely the school's practice or arrangements to safeguard pupils.
- As required, the proprietor submitted an action plan to the Department for Education (DfE) indicating how she intended to address all identified weaknesses. This plan indicated that all policies regarding the welfare, health and safety of pupils would be checked and revised. The proprietor committed to establishing and publishing a whistle-blowing policy. The plan provided for additional training for staff. It also identified actions to update systems for keeping safeguarding records and strengthen links with other professionals.
- Leaders and staff have now received a range of helpful safeguarding training. Both the designated safeguarding lead and deputy hold a current certificate at the required level. In addition, both have attended update training in some form. Either or both have committed to attending regular local authority safeguarding network meetings. The headteacher reports that the first of these she attended proved to be a very useful source of information.
- The headteacher is putting the additional training to good use in different ways. For example, she is exploring how to use additional training about safeguarding pupils online to update the school's curriculum.
- The headteacher attended further training to prepare her to train school staff in safeguarding during staff development days at the start of this academic year. Staff have also completed further online training, including about the 2019 updates to 'Keeping children safe in education'. Records show that there is now an increased knowledge and awareness among staff. This can be seen through both their raising of concerns and

their following of correct procedures to act on them.

- Record-keeping systems relating to safeguarding are now fit for purpose. The proprietor chose to introduce an electronic system to record and organise safeguarding records. Leaders and staff have been trained in its effective use and have made a good start to putting their learning into practice. Leaders are growing in confidence and, where necessary, reaching out more to other professionals and agencies for guidance about the protection of pupils.
- As part of the overhaul of safeguarding procedures, the proprietor has introduced a suitable whistle-blowing policy. It is readily available to staff and other interested parties. This gives clear avenues for raising concerns, both within the school and with suitable organisations beyond.
- The school now has an updated safeguarding policy published on its website. It is in line with guidance issued by the Secretary of State and now reflects the context and practices of the school much more closely.
- The proprietor has ensured that the standards contained within these paragraphs are met.

Part 4. Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

Paragraphs 17, 18(1), 18(2), 18(2)(b), 18(2)(e), 18(3), 18(4), 18(4)(a), 18(4)(b), 18(4)(c), 21(1), 21(3), 21(3)(a), 21(3)(a)(ii), 21(3)(a)(iii), 21(3)(a)(viii), 21(3)(b)

- The material change inspection found the school's single central record did not meet requirements. The school's action plan detailed additional training about this important aspect of keeping pupils safe. By the time the proprietor submitted the plan, she indicated that all relevant action had been promptly taken and that all checks were in place.
- All required checks have been completed and recorded on the single central record. This includes details of both barred list and prohibition from teaching checks. Those responsible for carrying out the checks have followed guidance for carrying out further checks on staff who have lived or worked abroad.
- Leaders understand what is required to check the suitability of potential new recruits to the proposed governing body.
- The standards contained within these paragraphs are now met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraph 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b), 34(1)(c)

- At the last inspection, the proprietor had not ensured that all the independent school standards were met. The proprietor was not sufficiently familiar with guidance associated with running an independent school. Weaknesses in safeguarding meant that the well-being and safety of pupils were at risk.
- The action plan the proprietor submitted to the DfE pointed towards leadership and management training for the proprietor and other key staff. The plan also recorded that the headteacher had attended meetings with an experienced mentor to develop her understanding of school leadership and the requirements of the independent school standards. Despite this, Ofsted's evaluation found weaknesses in the proprietor's action

plan. It was judged that some key actions relating to safeguarding had not been carried out with enough urgency.

- The proprietor, other leaders and staff have responded positively. They have taken the opportunity to begin a review of all statutory policies and practices to ensure that they are fit for purpose.
- Leaders have used their action plan well to guide and support their actions to ensure that all standards are now met. Arguably, some actions could have been carried out sooner. However, there is no evident complacency or disregard in the timeliness. What is clear is a diligent, steady approach to ensure that all standards are met.
- Two other factors are particularly encouraging. Firstly, there is clear evidence of a more systematic approach to the school's leadership. Secondly, the willingness of the headteacher to engage in additional training and develop available support networks. For example, she has strengthened links with the local authority and developed contacts with other headteachers through attending local meetings. She is also partway through the local authority's training programme for new headteachers.
- The headteacher has welcomed visits from the local authority to explore safeguarding arrangements and other leadership and management matters. Leaders have acted promptly on advice generated through these visits.
- The school's use of the local authority's safeguarding audit is another example of a more systematic and self-sustaining approach. Leaders have completed this audit in a thorough and self-critical way. From this, leaders assessed which gaps were most pressing and tackled these in priority order. There are no concerning matters outstanding. Furthermore, leaders have used it to hone in on some of the detail, such as making sure that safeguarding responsibilities are properly reflected in leaders' job descriptions.
- The proprietor's plans to form a governing body are at an early stage. She has sought informal advice from the local authority and begun to sound out possible governors. The proprietor is thinking very carefully about what the make-up and role of the governing body should be. She is determined that it will be reflective and supportive of the school's core ethos and act with integrity.
- Considering the additional leadership training and increasingly systematic approach to ensuring that standards are continually met, the requirements of this paragraph are met.

The school's application to make a material change to its registration

- When the proprietor previously requested a material change to increase the number on roll, plans were not far enough advanced. The renovation of the upper floor into which the proprietor proposed to extend the school had not begun. The implications for arrangements for the welfare, health and safety of pupils had not been fully considered.
- Preparations are now much more advanced but still not complete.
- The rooms the proprietor proposes to use to accommodate an additional 20 pupils have now been decorated and fitted with new flooring suitable for classroom use. Shelving on the stairs that previously posed a potential fire safety hazard has now been removed. Acoustics and lighting are likely to be adequate.

- There is an additional single toilet on this floor in a lockable room with an integral washing facility. Originally, the proprietor proposed to divide this room into two cubicles, but this is no longer the case. The proposed ratio of toilets per pupil is still in line with guidance considering the age of pupils.
- The proprietor commissioned a fire safety risk assessment by an external specialist which was conducted in October. This report made a number of recommendations to reduce risk. Among a number of areas needing attention, it found that, currently, fire safety signs do not comply with requirements. Additional fire extinguishers are required. It also recommended additional work to strengthen the fire resistance of some internal doors. Internal escape routes are not adequately lit.
- The proprietor is in the process of tackling these issues. Signage has been obtained and is ready to be installed once work is complete. Estimates have been obtained for other aspects of the work, some of which is due to take place during the school holidays.
- The proprietor is clear that further action is required before the upper floor can be accommodated. She proposes providing the DfE with evidence of the completion of this work in due course.

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

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 6 The standards about the welfare, health and safety of the pupils at the school are those contained in this part.
- 7 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that:
 - 7(a) arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school; and
 - 7(b) such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.

Part 4. Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

- 17 The standards about the suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors are those contained in this part.
- 18(1) The standard in this paragraph relates to the suitability of persons appointed as members of staff at the school, other than the proprietor and supply staff.
- 18(2) The standard in this paragraph is met if:
 - 18(2)(b) no such person carries out work, or intends to carry out work, at the school in contravention of a prohibition order, an interim prohibition order, or any direction made under section 128 of the 2008 Act or section 142 of the 2002 Act, or any disqualification, prohibition or restriction which takes effect as if contained in either such direction;
 - 18(2)(e) in the case of any person for whom, by reason of that person living or having lived outside the United Kingdom, obtaining such a certificate is not sufficient to establish the person's suitability to work in a school, such further checks are made as the proprietor considers appropriate, having regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.
- 18(3) The checks referred to in sub-paragraphs (2)(c) and (except where sub-paragraph (4) applies) (2)(e) must be completed before a person's appointment.
- 18(4) The checks specified in sub-paragraphs (2)(d),(e) and (f) do not need to be carried out where the new member of staff ("M") has worked in:
 - 18(4)(a) a school or a maintained school in England in a position which brought M regularly into contact with children or young persons;
 - 18(4)(b) a maintained school in England in a position to which M was appointed on or

after 12th May 2006 and which did not bring M regularly into contact with children or young persons; or

- 18(4)(c) an institution within the further education sector in England or in a 16 to 19 academy in a position which involved the provision of education or which brought M regularly into contact with children or young persons, during a period which ended not more than three months before M's appointment.
- 21(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor keeps a register which shows such of the information referred to in sub-paragraphs (3) to (7) as is applicable to the school in question.
- 21(3) The information referred to in this sub-paragraph is:
 - 21(3)(a) in relation to each member of staff ("S") appointed on or after 1st May 2007, whether:
 - 21(3)(a)(ii) a check was made to establish whether S is barred from regulated activity relating to children in accordance with section 3(2) of the 2006 Act;
 - 21(3)(a)(iii) a check was made to establish whether S is subject to any direction made under section 128 of the 2008 Act or section 142 of the 2002 Act or any disqualification, prohibition or restriction which takes effect as if contained in such a direction;
 - 21(3)(a)(viii) checks were made pursuant to paragraph 18(2)(e),
 - including the date on which each such check was completed and the certificate obtained; and
- 21(3)(b) in relation to each member of staff ("S"), whether a check was made to establish whether S is subject to a prohibition order or an interim prohibition order, including the date on which such check was completed.

Part 6. Provision of information

- 32(1) The standard about the provision of information by the school is met if the proprietor ensures that:
 - 32(1)(c) particulars of the arrangements for meeting the standard contained in paragraph 7 are published on the school's internet website or, where no such website exists, are provided to parents on request.

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
 - 34(1)(c) actively promote the well-being of pupils.

School details

Unique reference number	133348
DfE registration number	846/6023
Inspection number	10129913

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.

The school has applied to the Department for Education (DfE) to make a 'material change' to its registration. At the DfE's request, we checked whether the school is likely to meet the relevant independent school standards if the DfE decides to approve the change. This part of the inspection was carried out under section 162(4) of the Education Act 2002.

Type of school	Montessori school
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	2 to 12
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	42
Number of part-time pupils	14
Proprietor	Daisy Cockburn
Headteacher	Miss D Cockburn
Annual fees (day pupils)	£7,818 to £8,873
Telephone number	01273 702485
Website	www.brighton-montessori.org.uk
Email address	info@brighton-montessori.org.uk
Date of previous standard inspection	5–7 June 2018

Information about this school

- The school is a Montessori mixed day school for pupils aged between two and 12 years of age. The school operates from a large converted Victorian house and gardens. There are currently 42 pupils on roll.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The headteacher is also the sole proprietor of the school.

- The school's most recent standard inspection was conducted from 5 to 7 June 2018. The overall effectiveness was judged to be good.

Information about this inspection

- Since the previous standard inspection, the proprietor applied to increase the school's capacity from 45 to 65 pupils. At the DfE's request, Ofsted conducted a material change inspection on 21 May 2019. This inspection found that standards were unlikely to be met if the change was implemented. It also found unmet standards relating to the school's existing operation.
- The DfE required the proprietor to produce a statutory action plan detailing the steps that would be taken to meet the unmet standards. On the DfE's behalf, Ofsted evaluated the action plan on 26 September 2019. Taking account of that assessment, the DfE took the decision on behalf of the Secretary of State to reject the action plan.
- This inspection was also carried out at the request of the DfE as the registration authority for independent schools. 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 material change inspection. This was the first progress monitoring inspection.
- This inspection was conducted without notice.
- The inspector held discussions with the proprietor, who is also the headteacher, other leaders and staff. He examined updated arrangements for safeguarding pupils and reviewed other documents and records relating to the relevant independent school standards. He toured the premises, including those proposed to house the increased number of pupils.

Inspection team

Clive Dunn, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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