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# Inspection of The Pier Head Preparatory Montessori School

3–4 Shadwell Pier Head, Glamis Road E1W 3TD

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Inspection dates:

7 to 9 December 2021

## **Overall effectiveness**

**Inadequate**

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The quality of education

**Inadequate**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Good**

Personal development

**Good**

Leadership and management

**Inadequate**

Early years provision

**Inadequate**

Overall effectiveness at previous  
inspection

Good

Does the school meet the independent  
school standards?

**No**

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Staff care for children well on a day-to-day basis. Classrooms are welcoming and secure spaces for learning. However, leaders have not made sure that they fulfil all of their statutory safeguarding responsibilities. This means that children are not kept safe.

Leaders are unclear about how they expect children to build up their knowledge and understanding in each area of learning. The curriculum lacks ambition. Children are not taught the knowledge they need to be prepared for the next stage of their education. Leaders do not routinely identify and support children who may need additional help with their learning.

Children typically enjoy the activities that staff provide. They like exploring different resources and equipment, both inside and outdoors. Staff encourage children to be curious and to make choices about what they would like to do. At times, however, staff do not help children to keep focused on their learning.

Staff are always on hand to encourage children to play together well. Staff sort out any disagreements and help children if they are feeling upset. Routines are clear, and staff expect children to show kindness towards each other. This helps to create a calm and respectful atmosphere in which children behave well.

## **What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?**

The quality of education is poor. The planned programme of learning is unsuitable for children's learning and development needs. Leaders have not identified what children need to know or be able to do. Not enough thought has been given to how children should secure and apply their understanding in each of the required areas of learning. These weaknesses prevent children from learning effectively and developing the knowledge they need for Year 1. Leaders have not made sure that the school complies with all of the learning and development requirements of the statutory framework for the early years foundation stage (EYFS).

The quality of education is also poor in Years 1 and 2. Although the school is registered to admit pupils in these year groups, leaders have not developed an appropriate curriculum. They have failed to establish how they will provide pupils with well-planned experiences in all aspects of their education, as required by the independent school standards (the standards).

Staff have little guidance on what children need to know and understand. This means that staff, many of whom are new to their roles, are not well supported to teach effectively. While staff provide children with a broad range of activities, these are not part of a planned sequence of learning. Important knowledge and skills are not taught or reinforced. Assessment is sporadic. Children access the same activities, irrespective of their age or stage of development. Leaders have not ensured that staff have the expertise to observe and assess children's learning accurately. This is

exacerbated by the absence of a planned curriculum against which staff assess children's development and achievements.

Children enjoy listening to adults read stories to them. They listen attentively and join in with familiar phrases and rhymes. However, leaders have not prioritised and planned for the development of children's early language. Teaching does not routinely develop and reinforce children's understanding of new words that they hear, for instance when listening to stories. Leaders have also decided to begin teaching some older children to read. However, leaders have not made sure that staff follow the school's own reading programme. This means that children have gaps in their developing phonics knowledge and misconceptions are not addressed.

Suitable arrangements are not in place to identify and assess children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders have not sought the advice and guidance they need from other agencies. Staff lack clear information on children's specific needs and how they can support children effectively.

Children behave well. They engage positively in the activities provided for them. Staff demonstrate and reinforce the attitudes they expect, and this helps to create a calm and orderly atmosphere. However, sometimes, adults do not help children to increase and sustain their concentration on the activities that they choose.

Leaders' work to promote personal development is good. Staff promote and praise turn-taking and listening to others. Children are encouraged to show respect to adults and to each other. At lunchtimes, for example, children sit together and behave considerately as they eat their meals. Children are taught about difference, including that others may have needs or ideas that are different from their own. They learn about people from different backgrounds and cultures. Leaders organise a range of educational visits, including to local places of interest. Plans for relationships education meet the relevant requirements of the standards.

Leaders' procedures for assessing and managing risks are poor. While classrooms are clean, tidy and secure, leaders have overlooked significant aspects of health and safety. This includes risks related to fire safety and educational activities. For instance, the fire risk assessment is not kept up to date. Leaders have not followed their own procedures for making sure that all fire safety equipment remains in working order. Suitable arrangements for checking on the safety of the water supply have not been made.

Leaders have not ensured that all of the required information is entered on the admissions and attendance registers. Records are incomplete and poorly maintained.

The proprietor and headteacher do not have sufficient awareness or understanding of their roles and responsibilities. They have an over-generous view of the school's strengths. They have not identified the weaknesses, including in the quality of education and, therefore, have not prioritised the right things for improvement. Leaders have not ensured that all of the independent school standards are met.

Staff enjoy working at the school. They said that leaders manage their workload effectively and listen to their ideas and opinions.

The school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

Leaders have not fulfilled all of their statutory safeguarding duties. They have not taken all the necessary steps to ensure that children are kept safe. Leaders could not provide evidence that all adults working with children have undergone barred list checks. They have not made sure that records of barred list checks are entered on the single central record, in accordance with statutory guidance. The statutory welfare requirements of the EYFS framework are not met.

Leaders have not followed guidance in relation to sharing all relevant information with the local authority when a pupil of compulsory school age is removed from the admissions register. Leaders were unaware of their duty to do so. This increases the risk of pupils going missing in education.

Leaders have not taken all the necessary steps to maintain the safety of the premises. Nevertheless, classrooms are well organised and free from hazards. Staff supervise children appropriately and make sure that they use equipment, such as scissors, safely. Staff have been well trained and understand their role in promoting children's welfare. This includes how to look after children's medical and first-aid needs. Records of accidents and provision of first-aid are well kept and accurate. Staff know what they need to do if they are concerned about the safety or well-being of a child.

Children are helped to understand how to keep themselves safe. For instance, staff talk to children about road safety, stranger danger and safe touch. The safeguarding policy is available on the school's website and includes the most recent government guidance.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and proprietor)**

- Leaders have not fulfilled all of their statutory duties relating to safeguarding. This means that children are not kept safe. Leaders must ensure that they keep accurate and complete records of attendance and admissions. They must notify and provide the local authority with all the required information when a pupil is removed from the school's roll. Leaders must also ensure that all pre-employment checks on staff are completed and recorded on the single central record. Leaders must ensure that procedures for assessing and managing risks are fit for purpose.

This will help leaders to ensure that the premises are safe and fully compliant with health and safety legislation.

- The early years curriculum is not sufficiently planned or sequenced. Children are not prepared well for their future learning. Leaders must put in place an appropriate programme of learning that is ambitious and meets the needs of all children on roll. They should identify clearly what children should learn and remember at each stage of their education. This includes making sure that children's learning is well sequenced, and that children learn and practise the knowledge and skills they need. This will help children to be ready to learn and understand more complex ideas later. Leaders should ensure that staff are well trained to teach, observe and assess children's understanding of the planned curriculum.
- Leaders have not put in place a curriculum for pupils in Years 1 and 2. Leaders must draw up suitable schemes of work that set out how pupils should develop their knowledge in each of the required areas of learning. Plans need to make clear how pupils' needs and starting points will be taken into account, and how pupils will be supported to build up their understanding progressively.
- Leaders have not made sure that children's needs are identified and catered for appropriately. This includes children who may need extra help with learning and those with SEND. As a result, children do not benefit from the support they need to learn and make progress. Leaders must establish effective approaches to assessing and planning for children's needs. They should ensure that they seek advice and guidance from external professionals, as necessary, so that these children receive the help that they need in order to learn successfully.
- Leaders do not have sufficient awareness or understanding of their statutory responsibilities. They have not made sure that the requirements of the independent school standards and EYFS framework are met. The proprietor needs to establish suitable procedures for holding leaders to account and identifying and addressing priorities for improvement.

## How can I feed back my views?

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The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the provider and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	136250
<b>DfE registration number</b>	211/6399
<b>Local authority</b>	Tower Hamlets
<b>Inspection number</b>	10210720
<b>Type of school</b>	Other independent school
<b>School category</b>	Independent school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	2 to 7
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	24
<b>Number of part-time pupils</b>	16
<b>Proprietor</b>	Emma Kohl
<b>Headteacher</b>	Claire McNally
<b>Annual fees</b>	£4,635 to £10,968
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 7481 0202
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.thepierheadprepmontessori.com">www.thepierheadprepmontessori.com</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:thepierheadprep@yahoo.co.uk">thepierheadprep@yahoo.co.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	9 to 11 January 2018

## Information about this school

- The Pierhead Preparatory Montessori School is an independent school that is located in Wapping, in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. The school is situated on the first floor of a community and activity centre.
- The school is registered to provide full-time education to 50 pupils aged two to seven. There are currently 24 children on roll aged from two to four years. No pupils of compulsory school age are currently on roll for this academic year.
- The school uses the statutory framework for the EYFS alongside the Montessori philosophy of education.
- The proprietor is responsible for governance at the school.
- The current headteacher was appointed in September 2020.
- No children have an education, health and care plan.
- The school uses no alternative provision.
- The school was last inspected in January 2018, when it was judged to be good.

## Information about this inspection

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The school has failed to meet the independent school standards. These are the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

This was the first routine inspection the school had received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders, and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

- Inspectors completed deep dives in these areas of learning: early reading, communication and language, mathematics, physical development, understanding the world, and expressive arts and design. To do this, they met with leaders, had discussions with staff, visited lessons and looked at children's work. Other areas of learning and subjects were considered as part of this inspection.
- Inspectors met with the proprietor.
- An inspector reviewed the arrangements for safeguarding by scrutinising records and through discussions with staff and children. Inspectors also toured the premises and looked at documentation and policies to check compliance with the standards and the requirements of the EYFS statutory framework.
- The views of children, parents and carers, and staff, as gathered through discussions and Ofsted's surveys, were considered.

## **Inspection team**

Nick Turvey, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Mark Phillips

Her Majesty's Inspector

## **Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements**

### **The school failed to meet the following independent school standards**

#### **Part 1. Quality of education provided**

- 2(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if–
  - 2(1)(a) the proprietor ensures that a written policy on the curriculum, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work, which provides for the matters specified in sub-paragraph (2) is drawn up and implemented effectively; and
  - 2(1)(b) the written policy, plans and schemes of work–
    - 2(1)(b)(i) take into account the ages, aptitudes and needs of all pupils, including those pupils with an EHC plan.
  - 2(2) For the purposes of paragraph 2(1)(a), the matters are–
    - 2(2)(a) full-time supervised education for pupils of compulsory school age (construed in accordance with section 8 of the Education Act 1996), which gives pupils experience in linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical and aesthetic and creative education;
    - 2(2)(f) where the school has pupils below compulsory school age, a programme of activities which is appropriate to their educational needs in relation to personal, social, emotional and physical development and communication and language skills.
- 3 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the teaching at the school–
  - 3(a) 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;
  - 3(c) involves well planned lessons and effective teaching methods, activities and management of class time;
  - 3(d) 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;
  - 3(g) demonstrates that a framework is in place to assess pupils' work regularly and thoroughly and use information from that assessment to plan teaching so that pupils can progress.

#### **Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils**

- 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.

- 11 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that relevant health and safety laws are complied with by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written health and safety policy.
- 12 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.
- 15 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that an admission and attendance register is maintained in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006[13].
- 16 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that-
  - 16(a) the welfare of pupils at the school is safeguarded and promoted by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written risk assessment policy; and
  - 16(b) appropriate action is taken to reduce risks that are identified.

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

- 18(2) The standard in this paragraph is met if-
  - 18(2)(a) no such person is barred from regulated activity relating to children in accordance with section 3(2) of the 2006 Act where that person is or will be engaging in activity which is regulated activity within the meaning of Part 1 of Schedule 4 to that Act.
- 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.

#### **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.

**The school failed to meet the following requirements of the statutory framework for the early years foundation stage.**

1.11 Practitioners must consider the individual needs, interests and development of each child in their care, and must use this information to plan a challenging and enjoyable experience for each child in all areas of learning and development. Practitioners working with the youngest children are expected to ensure a strong foundation for children's development in the three prime areas. The specific areas of learning provide children with a broad curriculum and with opportunities to strengthen and apply the prime areas of learning. This is particularly important in developing language and extending vocabulary.

1.12 Throughout the early years, if a child's progress in any prime area gives cause for concern, practitioners must discuss this with the child's parents and/or carers and agree how to support the child. Practitioners must consider whether a child may have a special educational need or disability which requires specialist support. They should link with, and help families to access, relevant services from other agencies as appropriate.

2.1. Assessment plays an important part in helping parents, carers and practitioners to recognise children's progress, understand their needs, and to plan activities and support. Ongoing assessment (also known as formative assessment) is an integral part of the learning and development process. It involves practitioners knowing children's level of achievement and interests, and then shaping teaching and learning experiences for each child reflecting that knowledge. In their interactions with children, practitioners should respond to their own day-to-day observations about children's progress and observations that parents and carers share.

3.7. Providers must have regard to the government's statutory guidance 'Working Together to Safeguard Children'. All schools are required to have regard to the government's 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' statutory guidance.

3.21. The daily experience of children in early years settings and the overall quality of provision depends on all practitioners having appropriate qualifications, training, skills, knowledge and a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Providers must support staff to undertake appropriate training and professional development opportunities to ensure they offer quality learning and development experiences for children that continually improves.

3.55. Providers must comply with requirements of health and safety legislation (including fire safety requirements).

3.56. Providers must take reasonable steps to ensure the safety of children, staff and others on the premises in the case of fire or any other emergency and must have an emergency evacuation procedure. Providers must have appropriate fire detection and control equipment (for example, fire alarms, smoke detectors, fire blankets and/or fire extinguishers) which is in working order.

3.68. Providers must have arrangements in place to support children with SEN or disabilities.

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Manchester  
M1 2WD

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