

Inspection of Maria Montessori School

26 Lyndhurst Gardens, London NW3 5NW

Inspection dates: 21 to 24 June 2022

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Outstanding**

Personal development **Outstanding**

Leadership and management **Good**

Early years provision **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards? **Yes**

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are safe and well cared for. They settle in quickly, learn a lot and enjoy their time in school. Staff provide a nurturing and stimulating environment in which the school's Montessori philosophy is firmly embedded.

The school has five different sites across London. No matter which site pupils attend, all staff are totally committed to providing a high-quality education for all pupils. Pupils achieve well. When it is time to move on, pupils leave with the knowledge and skills they need for their future learning. They are very well prepared.

The way in which staff develop pupils' independence, resilience and personal and social development is a strength. Pupils are confident, motivated and eager to learn. Pupils of all ages demonstrate an impressive awareness of themselves and others. They are kind and considerate and always try their best.

Pupils' behaviour is excellent. Disputes, including incidents of bullying, rarely happen. This is because the school's ethos is all about helping pupils to understand what respect and tolerance look like in real life. Pupils develop a strong understanding of how to manage their feelings. When problems crop up, staff sort things out well. Older pupils develop the ability to handle things sensitively for themselves first before asking for adults to help.

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

From the start of the early years, pupils follow a well-established Montessori approach to the curriculum. Within this, leaders have considered carefully what pupils need to know and in what order. Pupils' learning is sequenced so that their knowledge and skills build securely as they move through the school.

Teachers have high expectations for all pupils. The curriculum is ambitious and sets out exactly what pupils need to know and remember. Pupils also have a certain degree of freedom in their learning. They enjoy being able to follow their own interests and to work in a way that suits them. This approach instils high levels of independence in pupils. Staff know how to encourage, support and intervene. No ceiling is put on what pupils might learn or find out. For example, pupils built on their previous learning in mathematics to create and interpret complex pie charts which incorporated speed, time and distance. Pupils routinely have opportunities to set themselves challenges and to solve problems. For example, pupils used their knowledge of volume, to work out how many life-sized cows could fit into a real jumbo jet.

Staff keep a close check on pupils' next steps to ensure that pupils build on what they have learned previously. Staff have strong subject knowledge. They are skilled in observing pupils' learning and know when to step in to guide pupils or address any misconceptions.

Some aspects of assessment are not as well developed. For example, the systems to check and monitor what pupils have learned and remembered in each subject are inconsistent. This sometimes makes it difficult for teachers to keep a track of what pupils have covered. It also makes it harder for teachers to share with parents and carers what pupils have learned. Leaders have introduced a new procedure to improve this in the early years, which is starting to make a difference. They are about to introduce this in the primary phase, including developing new ways to share pupils' learning with parents.

Staff understand the school's programme for helping pupils learn to read. It begins in the early years where children learn to hear the sounds around them and in spoken words. As they move into the primary phase, pupils develop the phonics knowledge they need to read and write fluently. Teachers make sure that reading books and other resources are matched to each pupil's place in the reading programme. Staff provide extra lessons for any pupils who need more help to catch up. Pupils enjoy reading a wide range of texts for pleasure.

Staff work effectively with specialist teachers and other external agencies to provide support to pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Not all staff have the expertise or confidence to identify and meet pupils' needs. Leaders have credible plans in place to sort this out, including training for all staff.

Pupils are highly motivated to learn. Right from the start, routines are well established and understood. This means that learning is hardly ever disrupted by poor behaviour. Instead, pupils are hardworking and resilient. Their confidence develops admirably so that when things get tricky, they have the skills they need to keep going and put things right.

Pupils get on very well with each other. Without being asked, they offer encouragement to their classmates. The mixed-aged classes enable older pupils to help the younger ones. They do this with pride. Pupils take impeccable care of their environment. They routinely offer to tidy things away and sweep the floors. Pupils are welcoming to visitors and enjoy offering them fruit and water.

Pupils like taking part in the school's clubs. These activities aim to develop pupils' talents across a range of areas, including in the arts, sports and through competitions. Pupils have the chance to plan their own enrichment opportunities too. For example, they organise their own educational visits to museums or places of interest. Pupils take responsibility for working out the costings, organising the transport and making decisions about journey times, routes and itineraries.

Older pupils host coffee mornings for parents. They manage the funds, buy the stock and serve the refreshments. They put any profits back into the school and use these for all sorts of causes, such as treats for the class pets. The school's careers programme supports older pupils to learn about their future choices.

The proprietor and those responsible for governance bring a wide range of expertise to the school. They provide clear and decisive strategic direction for the school. Leaders ensure that the school meets all the independent school standards and the requirements of the early years foundation stage. The school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and leaders implement the statutory relationships and sex education guidance effectively.

The school plays a key part in training teachers in the Montessori philosophy. Staff feel very well supported by leaders and each other. They said that leaders are mindful of everyone's workload. This makes the school a happy place to work.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Pupils said they feel safe in school. Staff are well trained to observe all aspects of pupils' all-round development, including any signs that they might be at risk from harm. Staff know what to do when they have concerns and leaders respond to these referrals quickly and appropriately. They work with other professionals, including children's services, to make sure pupils are safe.

Leaders ensure that pupils understand the possible risks they might face in school or when they are at home or out and about.

Those responsible for governance maintain clear oversight of what happens in school to keep pupils safe. The school's safeguarding policy is appropriate and incorporates statutory guidance. It is published on the school's website for parents to read.

What does the school need to do to improve? (Information for the school and proprietor)

- Staff have the knowledge and expertise to observe pupils' learning and identify their next steps. However, the use of assessment to check and monitor what pupils have learned across the curriculum is inconsistent. This means that it is difficult for staff to check what pupils have covered and what they know and remember. It is also difficult to share with parents exactly what pupils have learned. Leaders have introduced new procedures to improve the use of assessment. Leaders should ensure that all staff understand how to use these. Leaders should ensure that the use of assessment is fully embedded to check, monitor and share pupils' learning throughout the school, including in the early years.
- While some staff have expertise in meeting the needs of pupils with SEND, this is not the case throughout the school. This leads to inconsistencies in how well some pupils' needs are identified and met. Leaders should develop staff expertise and confidence in identifying pupils' needs and supporting pupils with SEND.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

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

Unique reference number	131978
DfE registration number	202/6399
Local authority	Camden
Inspection number	10210793
Type of school	Other independent school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	3 to 12
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	194
Number of part-time pupils	49
Proprietor	Maria Montessori Institute
Chair	Richard Partridge
Headteacher	Michel Capobianco
Annual fees (day pupils)	£11,685 to £12,975
Telephone number	020 7435 3646
Website	mariamontessori.org
Email address	schools@mariamontessori.org
Date of previous inspection	12 to 14 December 2017

Information about this school

- Maria Montessori School is an independent day school which follows the Montessori philosophy and approaches. It is located on five different sites in London:
 - 26 Lyndhurst Gardens, Hampstead, London NW3 5NW
 - 134 Abbey Road, London NW6 4SN
 - St Mary's Hall, 7 Ashley Road, Hornsey, London N19 3AD
 - All Saints Church Hall, 28 Powis Gardens, Notting Hill, London W11 1JG
 - St Matthew's Church, 27 St Petersburg Place, Bayswater, London W2 4LA.
- All sites offer provision for children aged three to six. The Bayswater and Hampstead sites offer further provision for pupils aged six to 12. Parents of nursery-age children can opt for part-time arrangements. Children in the Reception Year onwards attend on a full-time basis.
- The school's most recent standard inspection took place in December 2017. A new headteacher has been appointed since the previous inspection.
- The school does not use alternative provision.

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.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, senior leaders and those responsible for governance. Inspectors met with representatives of the proprietor body.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, history and personal, social and health education. These deep dives incorporated areas of learning in the early years, including 'understanding the world'. For each deep dive, inspectors spoke with leaders, sampled curriculum plans, visited sessions, spoke with pupils and staff. Inspectors discussed pupils' learning with staff and pupils and reviewed examples of pupils' work where this was available. Inspectors sampled the curriculum for a wide range of other subjects, including geography, physical education and science.
- Inspectors visited all five sites throughout the inspection. They met with staff from all sites.
- Inspectors met with some parents and considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including parents' free-text comments.
- Inspectors held meetings with pupils to discuss their views of school life and their learning.

- Inspectors met with the leaders responsible for safeguarding, looked at documentation related to safeguarding and reviewed the single central record of staff suitability checks.
- Inspectors toured all sites and looked at a range of policies and procedures to check the school's compliance with the independent school standards.

Inspection team

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