

Inspection of The Montessori Place

45 Cromwell Road, Hove, East Sussex BN3 3ER

Inspection dates: 12 to 14 July 2022

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Early years provision

Outstanding

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Outstanding

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are very positive about their school. Some described it as 'blissful'. More than one parent described it as 'a wonderful school'. Other parents described it as 'magical' and 'extraordinary'. Inspectors found it to be exceptional in many ways.

Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe here. They commented that they do not have problems with bullying or harassment. They reflected that if this was the case, the 'community' would not work, and that 'community and respect' are at the heart of this school.

Pupils love the mixed-year group approach to different phases of the school. One said that she learns much from both younger and older peers alike. Younger children attending both of the school's 'children's houses' are equally happy.

Despite the outwardly idyllic nature of the school, expectations of what pupils can achieve in life are high. This does not just mean academically. Pupils are taught to be independent but are expected to contribute positively to all aspects of the school. Older pupils in particular are given a high degree of freedom. However, they understand well that freedom comes with associated responsibility, and they rise to the challenge brilliantly.

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

This is an outstanding school that continues to improve. School leaders have successfully overseen a gradual expansion over time. There are more pupils than ever before. The age range has crept slowly upwards over the last few years. Importantly, the three co-directors of the school continue to work as an effective group. They have ensured that all the independent school standards continue to be met.

Pupils in both elementary and young people's communities are achieving well as they move through the school's unique curriculum. The first cohort to sit A-level qualifications are predicted to achieve well this year. A levels or not, students in the sixth form speak with affection about their time at the school. Younger children do equally well because of the high quality of early years provision.

Teaching staff, known as guides, ensure that there is a strong sense of purpose in classrooms. Common characteristics seen in lesson visits showed pupils working collegiately in small groups, high-quality support for pupils who need additional help, and a highly consistent approach in teaching between the different phases and locations of the school.

The school's curriculum provides each pupil with a unique journey. It allows pupils to follow their own interests. It also provides the basis for them to master the literacy and numeracy skills they will need to become independent learners across a range of subjects. The curriculum has adequate breadth. Staff are experts in their fields.

They understand how pupils learn. They assess the progress pupils make well. They also ensure that pupils access appropriate guidance for their future education and career pathways.

Pupils love books and reading. Younger children enjoy the daily stories, rhymes and songs they are exposed to. They learn to value the written word because staff bring books to life for them. Pupils in the school's two elementary communities enjoy the way guides link reading and comprehension to daily drama and role play exercises. Because it is fun and enjoyable, pupils are not hampered or held back when mastering the important skills of reading with fluency and expression that these activities bring.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) do equally well here. This is because of the planned support they receive from staff, as well as the encouragement of their peers. This is typified by an example of a pupil who loves orthography. Her peers enjoy her setting them words to 'explore and say and spell' correctly, because, they said, she understands how to 'differentiate' for her older or younger 'friends'. Parents are also positive about the school's work to support pupils with SEND.

All staff have high aspirations of what pupils can achieve. It is common for younger pupils to understand and tackle mathematical problems associated with GCSE-level work. Inspectors were interested to see that younger pupils could confidently discuss scientific concepts that might commonly be introduced to much older pupils.

On one classroom visit, the lead inspector enjoyed learning from a group of pupils studying the history of the earth. This included their detailed timeline stretching back over 4.5 billion years. Pupils talked keenly about what they had gained from their recent trip to Natural History Museum. Additionally, they were confident and eager to share what they had learned with the rest of their community in a planned presentation that afternoon.

The school's distinctive ethos contributes much to pupils' personal development. Younger children experience a nurturing environment that focuses on developing language and physical coordination, as well as awakening their interest in the world around them. Older pupils learn about the benefits of cooperation. Their wider curriculum gives them an age-appropriate understanding of relationships, equalities and respect for different faiths and cultures.

The school's personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) programme is bespoke to the school. It includes aspects such as relationships and sex education at an age-appropriate level. Staff are also skilled at adjusting the PSHCE programme if required. This means that they can react to real-life issues that face pupils, particularly older pupils, at the school.

Staff are very positive about the school. Dedicated and well informed, they speak highly of the respect that leaders show them. All who completed the staff survey are proud to work at the school. The large majority of parents who responded to the

parent survey were equally positive about the uniqueness of the school. All parents who responded to the survey think that their children do well at the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Staff work well to keep pupils safe because they are knowledgeable and vigilant. Their safeguarding training is ongoing. Leaders supplement this with useful updates, including training delivered by independent, external experts.

Leaders understand the extra focus on safeguarding needed as the school expands. Staff know that older pupils are likely to face additional challenges in wider society. Staff are proactive in their assessment of risk. They understand the potential problems pupils might encounter in and out of school. This includes when using social media. It also includes the everyday risks associated with working in the school's extensive gardens and grounds.

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	136947
DfE registration number	846/6018
Local authority	Brighton and Hove
Inspection number	10202280
Type of school	Other independent school
School category	Independent boarding school
Age range of pupils	3 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	155
Number of part-time pupils	None
Proprietor	The Montessori Place Limited
Chair	Robert Gueterbock
Headteacher	Robert Gueterbock
Annual fees (day pupils)	£5,826 to £16,853
Telephone number	01273 773 764
Website	www.themontessoriplace.org.uk
Email address	info@themontessoriplace.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	19 to 21 September 2017

Information about this school

- This is a Montessori school, led by Montessori principles and practice, following the training and guidance of the Association Montessori Internationale.
- The school's previous standard inspection took place in September 2017. The school had a successful material change inspection in October 2020 as a result of the proprietor requesting an increase in the number and the age range of pupils.
- The school is governed by a board of three directors who are also the directors of the proprietor company. Each director plays a full role in teaching at the school.
- The school operates from two sites. One in Hove and one at Eason's Green.
- There are three communities at the original site in Hove. The Infant Community, which provides for children up to the age of three, is registered and inspected separately and was not part of this inspection. The Children's House at Hove caters for children aged three to six, and the Elementary Community at Hove is for pupils aged six to 12.
- The school's other site, Eason's Green in Framfield, also has a Children's House and an Elementary Community. In addition, a Young People's Community caters for ages 12 to 18.
- At the time of the inspection, too few students were attending the school's sixth-form provision for inspectors to make a meaningful judgement on the quality of sixth-form provision.
- The school's boarding provision accommodates up to 45 residential pupils. The boarding provision was not part of this 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.

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- This was the first routine inspection the school 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 of the school.
- Inspectors held a wide range of meetings with the headteacher, senior leaders, and teaching and support staff. The lead inspector had a meeting with the chair of the board of directors and two other directors.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, science and PSHE. Deep dives included visiting lessons, looking at pupils' work,

and talking to leaders, teachers (known as guides) and pupils about how teaching in these subjects builds on pupils' knowledge over time. The lead inspector also heard pupils read to a known adult.

- Inspectors toured the premises and accommodation on both sites of the school. They checked a range of policies and documents, including the school's single central record. They also reviewed the school's website and other records regarding the welfare, health and safety of pupils and staff linked to the independent school standards.
- Inspectors gathered evidence to explore the impact of pupils' behaviour, the school's wider curriculum offer and how leaders support staff with their workload.
- Pupils were talked to throughout the inspection to gain their views about the school. This included three formal meetings with different groups, including students from the sixth form.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents submitted through Ofsted's online parent survey. Ofsted's staff and pupils surveys were also taken into account.

Inspection team

Clive Close, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Sue Bzikot

Ofsted Inspector

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