

# Inspection of River House Montessori School

Unit C Great Eastern Enterprise Centre, 3 Millharbour, London E14 9XP

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Inspection dates: 10 to 12 May 2022

## **Overall effectiveness**

## **Inadequate**

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The quality of education

**Requires improvement**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Requires improvement**

Personal development

**Requires improvement**

Leadership and management

**Inadequate**

Early years provision

**Requires improvement**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

**No**

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

Staff in school care for pupils well on a day-to-day basis. Classrooms are a caring, nurturing environment where staff want pupils to be successful in their learning. Pupils say that they feel safe. However, leaders have not made sure that they fulfil all their statutory safeguarding responsibilities. Consequently, pupils are at risk of future harm as systems in place are not sufficient or robust enough to prevent this.

The curriculum lacks ambition. While pupils find learning interesting and enjoyable, the curriculum is not planned well enough. Consequently, pupils do not develop coherent understanding in all subjects. Staff encourage pupils to be curious and make choices about their work. As a result, pupils are hard-working and resilient. They work with focus and enthusiasm.

Pupils are happy and enjoy coming to school. They know that kindness is expected and valued in their school. Pupils in the early years and the primary phase say that, on the very few occasions when bullying does occur, it is sorted out quickly by staff. In the secondary phase, this is not as consistent. These pupils say that they just 'deal with it' rather than telling a teacher.

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

Children settle well in the early years. They are encouraged to become confident and successful learners. They experience a curriculum that follows the guidance of the early years foundation stage (EYFS), through the Montessori philosophy. Staff make sure that children learn to speak confidently and become proficient with numbers. They provide repeated opportunities for children to understand the value of numbers, using objects to practise counting. Teachers support this to make sure that learning is remembered. Leaders say that they want children to read and write well. However, the phonics programme is not delivered systematically enough to achieve this effectively.

Leaders are clear that they want all pupils to be fluent, independent readers. However, while pupils develop word recognition, leaders have not prioritised the full implementation of a phonics programme in a way that enables pupils to become fluent readers as quickly as possible. While a phonics programme is in place, it is not delivered systematically. Staff have not had recent training and, therefore, are not aware of all the latest requirements for the teaching of reading. Incorrect terminology is used by some adults, and this causes some pupils to develop misconceptions when reading aloud. Assessment identifies those at risk of falling behind. They are supported through daily interventions and provided with opportunities to practise building and reading words. In the early years, books used to teach reading are matched to the sounds that children know. However, in Years 1 and 2, this is not the case. As a result, pupils are not building fluency as well as they could. A love of reading is promoted across the school. Pupils enjoy reading and being read to.

Leaders want all pupils to be successful learners and achieve well, but they have not organised the curriculum to achieve this. They have ensured that the range of

subjects taught matches what is expected nationally. However, insufficient thought has been given to the subject-specific concepts that pupils need to develop. Except for mathematics, lessons are topic-based. They feature a series of activities linked to topics, but these are not well sequenced to make sure that pupils are building the core subject knowledge they need. As a result, while they remember key facts, their depth of understanding is weaker.

The leaders of each age-phase of the school do not collaborate effectively. Consequently, there is little whole-school oversight. Phase leaders do not have sufficient knowledge of how the curriculum develops outside of their phase. Mathematics is coherently planned in the primary phase, with small steps of learning identified from early years to key stage 2. Pupils build on prior knowledge and show strong understanding of mathematical concepts. In the secondary phase, however, while pupils are taught mathematics three times a week, no scheme of work is in place.

The secondary phase is not integrated into the life of the school. Pupils talk of being left out of certain activities, such as the summer games. Curriculum planning for the small secondary phase is weak. Leaders have not identified and addressed this weakness.

Staff help pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities to access the same learning as their peers. Their needs are accurately identified, and appropriate adaptations are made in lessons. Adults are deployed carefully. There is a caring, nurturing environment where inclusion is promoted and expected.

Typically, behaviour in classrooms and around the school is positive. Pupils are polite, well mannered and respectful. Close, nurturing relationships are apparent between teachers and pupils, particularly in early years and the primary phase. Clear routines are in place. Pupils know what is expected from them. However, record-keeping is poor and leaders do not always recognise when incidents are examples of inappropriate behaviour.

Provision to prioritise pupils' personal development is not consistent across the school. The personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum helps primary-aged pupils to understand the importance of keeping safe. It provides opportunities for pupils to develop resilience, independence and strength of character. Leaders have also made some careful decisions related to their context. For example, because of the school's location, pupils are taught about water safety and sailing lessons are provided in Years 5 and 6. However, the same thought has not been given in the secondary phase. Leaders have not met their statutory obligations regarding relationships and sex education (RSE) and health education. Leaders were unaware that a written relationships and health policy is required or that consultation with parents and carers is necessary. They have not ensured that the PSHE curriculum has been updated to include the statutory RSE and health education content. Consequently, older pupils are not provided with information about, healthy, respectful relationships and people with protected characteristics.

The small number of key stage 3 pupils do not receive effective careers guidance. No policy is in place and no careers guidance is being delivered. This means that

these pupils do not receive information about the full range of education and training options open to them.

Leaders do not have sufficient awareness or understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Leaders have an overgenerous view of the school's strengths. While they have identified continuity across the school as a weakness, they have not identified what needs to be done to address it. As a result, limited progress has been made. Leaders have not ensured that all 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.

Leaders do not comply with schedule 10 of the Equalities Act 2010. No accessibility plan is in place to achieve compliance. The school does not meet the statutory safeguarding and welfare requirements of the EYFS.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

Leaders have not fulfilled all their statutory safeguarding duties. They have not taken all the necessary steps to ensure that children are kept safe.

Leaders do not have an accurate understanding of statutory guidance. Staff have received appropriate training and understand their role in reporting concerns. However, leaders have not reported these referrals swiftly enough to the local authority. No policy is in place to inform staff and parents about how the school safeguards its pupils.

Record-keeping is chaotic and not all information regarding the safety of pupils is easily accessible. Consequently, pupils are at risk of future harm because the systems in place are not sufficient to prevent it.

Pupils are, however, helped to understand how to keep themselves safe. For instance, staff talk to pupils about road and water safety, stranger danger and staying safe online. However, older pupils are not taught about healthy and respectful relationships. This does not prepare pupils well enough for life in modern Britain.

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

- Leaders have not fulfilled all their statutory duties relating to safeguarding. This means that children are not kept safe. Leaders must ensure that safeguarding arrangements meet all the statutory requirements. They must also make sure that any referrals that need to be made are done so in a timely way. Records must be organised and updated promptly.

- Leaders do not have sufficient awareness or understanding of their statutory responsibilities. They have not made sure that the independent school standards are met. Shareholders need to establish suitable procedures for holding leaders to account and identifying and addressing priorities for improvement.
- The secondary phase is not given enough consideration by leaders. The curriculum in key stage 3 needs to be developed in detail so that teachers know exactly what should be covered across the full range of subjects taught, including PSHE and RSE and health education.
- Leaders must ensure that the teaching of phonics is consistent across the school. Staff in early years, and in Years 1 and 2, must have sufficient training to deliver the programme. The teaching of phonics needs to build on prior learning from Reception, to increase pupils' reading confidence and fluency. Books used to teach reading must be closely matched to the sounds pupils know to support this.
- The primary curriculum requires improvement. Leaders must make the curriculum more ambitious and better meet the needs of all pupils. They should identify clearly what should be learned and remembered at each stage of pupils' education. This includes making sure that learning is well sequenced, so that pupils are ready to learn and understand more complex ideas later.
- Leaders do not meet the statutory requirements for RSE and health education. Specific content has not been identified. Parents have not been consulted on what their children will be taught. Leaders should develop a RSE and health education policy that meets statutory requirements and consult with parents about it.
- Leaders should develop a clearly sequenced scheme of work for PSHE that is delivered across the school and ensure that staff are confident in delivering it.
- Pupils in the secondary phase do not receive any careers information. Leaders must put in place a policy and a plan to deliver impartial careers guidance. This should include opportunities for a range of education and training providers to speak to pupils about technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

## How can I feed back my views?

You can use 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	100303
<b>DfE registration number</b>	211/6385
<b>Local authority</b>	Tower Hamlets
<b>Inspection number</b>	10226754
<b>Type of school</b>	Other Independent School
<b>School category</b>	Independent School
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	213
<b>Proprietor</b>	River House Montessori School Ltd
<b>Acting Principal</b>	Janet Pearson
<b>Principal</b>	Sarah Greenwood
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	Up to £21,280 (depending on hours)
<b>Telephone number</b>	0207 538 9886
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.river-house.co.uk">www.river-house.co.uk</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:jpearson@river-house.co.uk">jpearson@river-house.co.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	1 to 3 May 2018

## Information about this school

- The River House Montessori School is an independent school located in Canary Wharf.
- The school's teaching and curriculum are based on the Montessori principles.
- Leadership is part of the proprietorial board – River House Montessori School Limited.
- Only two of the directors of the proprietorial board are responsible for the running of the school.
- The principal is currently on sabbatical and has been absent for an extended period.
- The acting principal has sole responsibility for the school at this time.
- The school uses no alternative provision.
- Pupils may attend in 'core' school hours from 9.00am to 4.00pm or for 'extended' hours from 8.00am to 6.00pm. Extended provision, for the full day, also operates outside term time.
- There are 213 pupils on roll. A small number of pupils have an education, health and care plan.

## 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 received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors met with the acting principal, school leaders and members of staff.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, history, geography and PSHE. For each deep dive, the inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspectors also looked at curriculum plans for computing and physical education.
- The inspectors considered early mathematics in the Nursery and Reception classes.

- The inspectors looked at a range of documents, including leaders' priorities for improvement.
- The inspectors reviewed the arrangements for safeguarding by scrutinising records and through discussions with leaders, staff and pupils.
- The views of pupils, parents and staff were gathered through discussions and Ofsted's surveys were considered.

### **Inspection team**

Samantha Ingram, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Sam Hainey

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)(d) personal, social, health and economic education which–
    - 2(2)(d)(i) reflects the school’s aim and ethos; and
    - 2(2)(d)(ii) encourages respect for other people, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the 2010 Act[9];
  - 2(2)(e) for pupils receiving secondary education, access to accurate, up-to-date careers guidance that–
    - 2(2)(e)(i) is presented in an impartial manner;
    - 2(2)(e)(ii) enables them to make informed choices about a broad range of career options; and
    - 2(2)(e)(iii) helps to encourage them to fulfil their potential;
- 2A(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor–
  - 2A(1)(b) ensures that every registered pupil who is provided with secondary education at the school is provided with relationships and sex education, except in so far as the pupil is excused as mentioned in sub-paragraph (2),
  - 2A(1)(d) in making arrangements for the purposes of paragraphs (a), (b) or (c), has regard to any guidance under section 80A of the Education Act 2002 that applies in relation to the provision of education by maintained schools,
  - 2A(1)(e) makes and keeps up to date a separate written statement of its policy with regard to the provision of education as required by each of paragraphs (a) and (b)
  - 2A(1)(f) consults parents of registered pupils at the school before making or revising a statement under sub-paragraph (e), and
  - 2A(1)(g) publishes a copy of the statement on a website and provides a copy of the statement free of charge to anyone who asks for one.
- 2A(2) Arrangements made by the proprietor for the purposes of sub-paragraph (1)(b) must ensure that where a pupil’s parent requests that the pupil is wholly or partly excused from sex education provided as part of relationships and sex

education, the pupil is so excused until the request is withdrawn, unless or to the extent that the head teacher considers that the pupil should not be so excused.

## **Part 2. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils**

- 5 The standard about the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils at the school is met if the proprietor–
  - 5(b) ensures that principles are actively promoted which–
  - 5(b)(vi) encourage respect for other people, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the 2010 Act.

## **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.
- 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.

## **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;
- 32(3) The information specified in this sub-paragraph is–
  - 32(3)(c) particulars of the policy referred to in paragraph 2;
  - 32(3)(d) particulars of arrangements for meeting the standards contained in paragraphs 9, 10, 11 and 13.

## **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.

### **Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010**

- Leaders do not comply with schedule 10 of the Equalities Act 2010.

### **Statutory requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

#### **Section 3. The safeguarding and welfare requirements**

- 3.2 Providers must take all necessary steps to keep children safe and well.
- 3.4 Providers must have and implement a policy, and procedures, to safeguard children. These should be in line with the guidance and procedures of the relevant local safeguarding partners (LSP). The safeguarding policy and procedures must include an explanation of the action to be taken when there are safeguarding concerns about a child and in the event of an allegation being made against a member of staff, and cover the use of mobile phones and cameras in the setting.
- 3.6 Providers must train all staff to understand their safeguarding policy and procedures, and ensure that all staff have up to date knowledge of safeguarding issues.

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