

Inspection of Brighton & Hove Montessori School

67 Stanford Avenue, Brighton BN1 6FB

Inspection dates: 21 to 23 February 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Early years provision

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Inadequate

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

At Brighton & Hove Montessori School, pupils learn to respect themselves, others and the environment. They are keen to attend this inclusive school, and pupils of all ages enjoy playing and learning together. New pupils are helped to settle quickly. As one pupil commented, 'Everyone is welcome in our school.'

Leaders are keen for pupils to achieve strongly, but this ambition is not consistently realised. Pupils do develop a love of learning, but their achievement is variable across different subjects, including in reading. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are supported to achieve well.

Staff have high expectations of behaviour, and pupils respond positively to meet these. They are kind and polite towards others. Pupils learn to be independent and to be responsible from a young age. They are taught to take good care of learning resources and the classroom environment. Bullying is rare. Pupils are confident that staff listen and help them to sort out any friendship worries.

Pupils enjoy visiting the park next to the school for playtimes and physical education lessons. They benefit from different trips, including to Brighton Museum. Pupils like visiting the local library to choose new books.

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

Staff help pupils to develop highly positive attitudes to learning and to know how to behave. Staff explicitly model how pupils should conduct themselves and how to establish and maintain relationships with others. From the youngest age, pupils learn to help each other and follow the clear routines. Staff calmly and quickly support pupils to focus if they disengage. This creates a positive environment in which pupils concentrate well, whether working on their own or when working with others. They are motivated to study and keen to discuss their learning. One three-year-old proudly shared his picture of a rose and commented, 'Plants need water and light to help them grow.'

Leaders carefully promote the importance of being respectful. Pupils learn to respect themselves through being encouraged to remain active, reduce screen time and to eat a healthy diet. The youngest children enthusiastically prepare fruit snacks for everyone, and older pupils help to make vegetable soup for everyone to share at lunchtime. They learn to respect others by debating and discussing different issues. This includes learning about diverse beliefs and religions. Pupils learn to respect the environment through responsibly completing chores to help with the smooth running of the school and by litter-picking in the local community. Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive, and many appreciate the value that leaders place on promoting pupils' personal development. One parent, reflecting the views of many, commented, 'They instil kindness in our children and help them to prepare for real life.'

Staff emphasise consideration for others through the well-sequenced personal, social, health and economics lessons. These are used from early years onwards. Pupils are supported to develop a secure, age-appropriate understanding of important issues such as consent, equality and different types of relationships. As a result, the statutory guidance to teach relationships education is fully met. Staff help pupils to gain useful careers information. They provide helpful guidance to pupils to develop their understanding about the next stage of education and possible pathways to different careers.

The teaching of reading is variable. Children get off to a great start when they first join the school as staff prioritise developing their language and communication. They teach children rhymes and songs to expand their vocabulary and to improve their listening and speaking skills. The teaching of phonics is less effective, and pupils are not given books to read that closely match the sounds they have learned. This means that pupils do not learn to read with fluency as quickly as they could, and this slows their learning in other areas of the curriculum. However, the oldest pupils enjoy the challenge of reading more complex books with confidence. Staff routinely read aloud different stories to pupils. This includes books about important issues, such as managing emotions and being inclusive.

Leaders' work to develop other subjects is inconsistent. They have established well-sequenced curriculums in some subjects, such as mathematics. Staff follow this planning closely and make highly effective use of the resources to support pupils to achieve well. In other subjects, for example science, the curriculum is strongly developed in the Elementary Group, but less so for younger pupils. Leaders have not yet identified in all subjects the precise knowledge and skills they intend pupils to learn and remember.

Staff use strong subject knowledge to guide pupils in their learning and explain new concepts clearly. They carefully check pupils' understanding before introducing new content, and this helps pupils to build on their previous learning. Staff support pupils with SEND well by accurately identifying their needs and carefully adapting their teaching. Leaders aim that their approach to learning should enable pupils to develop a deep understanding in some areas of the curriculum, especially about the natural world. However, staff expectations of pupils' written work are not consistently high enough. Sometimes, the quality of pupils' work does not reflect their comprehensive knowledge. This means that some pupils may not be sufficiently prepared for their next stage of education.

The proprietor recognises that although the independent school standards are met, there is work to do to improve the school. She has appointed governors to support her in bringing about needed improvements. The members of the small governing body are new but bring renewed energy and direction, which has strengthened leaders' capacity to improve the school. They are ambitious for equality and diversity issues to remain strongly promoted. Governors are beginning to hold leaders to account to improve the quality of education from early years onwards. Staff appreciate the support and care from governors and leaders to manage their workload and well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders publish a detailed safeguarding policy on the school's website. They provide high-quality training and routinely check staff's understanding. Staff report concerns, and leaders are quick to act to ensure that pupils get the support that they need.

There are examples of minor weaknesses in record-keeping. Some records are in different locations, so the chronology is not consistently clear. This does not leave pupils at risk of harm and is easy to put right.

Leaders ensure that safer recruitment procedures are closely followed, including making sure that the required checks are completed before adults start working at the school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- Arrangements for recording safeguarding concerns are not as robust as they could be. As a result, information is stored in different locations, which could lead to important information being overlooked. Leaders need to make sure that systems are in place that enable them to review all aspects of the school's work effectively to keep pupils safe.
- The teaching of early reading lacks precision. This means that some pupils are not learning to read as quickly as they should. Leaders should ensure that staff are equipped with expert knowledge to teach children to read and that pupils read books that are closely matched to the sounds they have learned to develop their accuracy and fluency.
- The planning for some subjects is underdeveloped. As a result, pupils' learning is variable. Leaders should ensure that they set out precisely what they intend pupils to learn and remember from early years onwards and ensure that staff have consistently high expectations, so that pupils' written work reflects their detailed knowledge and understanding.
- The governing body is recently established. Consequently, leaders have previously not been held to account, and rigorous improvements to the quality of education have not been implemented. Governors should ensure that they continue their strong start to challenge leaders to bring about the required improvements.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	133348
DfE registration number	846/6023
Local authority	Brighton and Hove
Inspection number	10267079
Type of school	Montessori
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	2 to 12
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	23
Number of part-time pupils	7
Proprietor	Daisy Cockburn
Headteacher	Daisy Cockburn
Annual fees (day pupils)	£8,709
Telephone number	01273 702485
Website	www.brighton@info.org.uk
Email address	info@brighton-montessori.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	19 to 21 October 2021

Information about this school

- The school is a Montessori, mixed-day school for pupils between two and a half and 12 years of age. Pupils are split into two groups: the Children's House for children up to age six and the Elementary Group for pupils of ages six to 12. There are currently 23 pupils on roll.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.
- The headteacher is also the sole proprietor of the school.
- The school's most recent standard inspection was in October 2021, when it was judged to be inadequate due to the independent school standards not being met. It subsequently received one progress monitoring inspection in September 2022. The inspector found that leaders had taken appropriate action, and the independent school standards were met.

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. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors met with the headteacher and other school staff.
- The lead inspector also met with members of the governing body, including the chair.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics, science, and art and design. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors spoke with staff and pupils. The lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead to review their knowledge, records and actions. The inspectors also looked at safeguarding records and actions and reviewed information about the safer recruitment of staff.
- To make wider judgements, inspectors spoke to staff and groups of pupils from different year groups and observed behaviour in classrooms and at lunchtime.
- The views of staff and pupils, including in the responses to Ofsted's online staff survey, were considered.
- The responses to Ofsted Parent View, including written comments, were also taken into account.

Inspection team

Laurie Anderson, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Jo Brinkley

His Majesty's Inspector

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