

# River House Montessori School

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

**Inspection date**

5 July 2023

**Overall outcome**

**The school does not meet all of the independent school standards that were checked during this inspection**

## Main inspection findings

### Part 1. Quality of education provided

*Paragraph 2(1), 2(1)(a), 2(1)(b), 2(1)(b)(i), 2(2), 2(2)(d), 2(2)(d)(i), 2(2)(d)(ii), 2(2)(e), 2(2)(e)(i), 2(2)(e)(ii), 2(2)(e)(iii)*

- At the previous inspection in May 2022, inspectors found weaknesses in leaders' curriculum thinking. Leaders had not given careful thought to the subject-specific concepts that pupils need to develop. There was no mathematics scheme of work for pupils in Years 7 to 9. Inspectors found weaknesses in the provision for pupils' personal development in the secondary phase. For older pupils, the programme for personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) did not include reference to the protected characteristics. Pupils in the secondary phase did not receive effective careers guidance. Leaders had not planned how to deliver effective and impartial careers guidance to help pupils make informed choices about their options for future education and careers.
- Leaders' action plan included a sample of curriculum maps for the secondary phase. The information of what would be taught was not detailed and leaders had not taken urgent action to ensure that the curriculum was fully planned. Leaders included an overview of their proposed PSHE curriculum from Year 1 to Year 11. They referenced the protected characteristics in the policy but did not include any further detail on how they would pay particular regard to these. Under the unit of work, 'Living in the Wider World', leaders set out how pupils would explore careers and further education, training and skills.
- Leaders have put more detailed curriculum planning in place. They have schemes of work in each subject for all year groups. Medium-term plans set out what will be taught each week in every subject, including for the secondary phase. Staff consider the individual needs of pupils carefully and tailor teaching to these needs.
- Leaders have put in place a suitable PSHE programme across the school. Curriculum plans reference the protected characteristics. While the PSHE programme is not fully embedded, leaders ensure that pupils in the secondary phase are receiving appropriate PSHE. This is mainly through their weekly 'life skills' lessons. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 are taught about the Equality Act and different forms of discrimination, for example.

- Leaders have taken effective action to make sure pupils in the secondary phase now receive accurate and up-to-date careers guidance. Pupils explore a range of career options and pathways into those careers. However, leaders have not made clear plans to ensure that careers information is presented impartially. As a result, some requirements continue to be not met.

*Paragraph 2A(1), 2A(1)(b), 2A(1)(d), 2A(1)(e), 2A(1)(f), 2A(1)(g), 2A(2)*

- At the previous inspection, leaders had not met their statutory obligations regarding relationships and sex education (RSE). Leaders were unaware that a written relationships and health policy is required or that consultation with parents and carers is necessary. They had not updated the PSHE curriculum to include the statutory RSE and health education content.
- Leaders' action plan included a suitable RSE policy and the updated PSHE curriculum overview of PSHE which included RSE. It was not clear from the completion dates when every pupil in the secondary phase would be provided with RSE.
- The RSE policy is on the school's website and written in line with statutory guidance. Leaders have incorporated RSE into the PSHE curriculum and pupils are taught content in an age-appropriate manner. In the secondary phase, staff have started to deliver the RSE curriculum. For example, pupils learn about healthy relationships. Some aspects of RSE are not taught as set out in the plans. Following parental consultation, parents have chosen to withdraw their children in the secondary phase from sex education. While the policy makes it clear that parents do not have the right to withdraw children from relationships education, leaders have decided that some aspects of RSE will be taught in Years 10 and 11 instead of in Years 7 to 9 as currently set out in curriculum plans.
- These requirements are now met.
- Some standards in this part continue to be not met.

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

*Paragraph 5, 5(b), 5b(vi)*

- At the previous inspection, inspectors found that older pupils were not provided with information about people with protected characteristics. This was due to weaknesses in the PSHE/RSE curriculum.
- Leaders have updated the PSHE curriculum in the secondary phase to include specific reference to all the protected characteristics. Pupils are taught about the Equality Act and different forms of discriminations.
- These standards are now met.

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

*Paragraph 7, 7(a), 7(b)*

- At the previous inspection, safeguarding was judged to be ineffective. Inspectors found that leaders did not have an accurate understanding of statutory guidance. Leaders had not reported safeguarding referrals swiftly enough to the local authority. No safeguarding policy was in place. Inspectors reported that record-keeping was chaotic. Not all information regarding the safety of pupils was easily accessible.

- The action plan included a new safeguarding policy that reflected the latest statutory guidance in 'Keeping children safe in education' (September 2022).
- Leaders have addressed the weaknesses in safeguarding identified at the previous inspection. The safeguarding policy is written in line with statutory guidance and is published on the school's website. Leaders have a clear system for recording concerns about pupils, logging concerns as they arise in chronological order. Detailed records are accessible and show that leaders are tenacious when following up concerns. They respond swiftly and make referrals to outside agencies where appropriate.
- Leaders provide suitable safeguarding training for all staff. They carry out all the required pre-recruitment checks on staff. Pupils continue to feel safe at school and well looked after by staff.
- These standards are now met.

#### *Paragraph 11*

- At the previous inspection, inspectors found that the arrangements for safeguarding, which includes health and safety, were not effective.
- The action plan included some information on leaders' procedures for health and safety, such as procedures for dealing with accidents and allergies. Sections had been updated at different times. The section on 'allergies' only referred to pupils in the primary phase.
- The school's health and safety policy contains very limited information. However, the 'policy and procedures manual' sets out clearly leaders' arrangements for a range of health and safety aspects, such as administering medication and handling accidents and emergencies.
- This standard is now met.

#### *Paragraph 14*

- Following parental complaints since the previous inspection, the Department for Education (DfE) asked inspectors to check the supervision of pupils. Concerns had been raised that pupils were not properly supervised at school.
- Leaders' arrangements to supervise pupils are suitable. Leaders ensure that they comply with statutory guidance for staff to pupil ratios in all year groups.
- This standard continues to be met.

#### ■ *Paragraph 16, 16(a), 16(b)*

- At the previous inspection, inspectors judged that pupils were at risk of future harm. The school's systems for risk assessment were not sufficient or robust enough. The DfE also requested, following complaints made against the school, that inspectors consider how leaders ensure that appropriate action is taken to reduce identified risks.
- In the action plan, leaders provided limited information on their plans to improve risk assessment. The policy provided was last updated in December 2019.
- Risk assessments show that leaders identify and consider risks to pupils. This includes when pupils are taken off-site for activities such as educational visits and sports. 16(b) continues to be met as a result. However, leaders do not have an appropriate and up-to-date risk assessment policy in place. They have not set out, for example, their

expectations for how risk assessments are carried out and how procedures will be monitored and reviewed.

- Standards in this part continue to be not met.

#### Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

##### *Paragraph 25*

- At the previous inspection, all standards in this part were met. Complaints have been made since then which raised concerns about the premises and its cleanliness. The DfE therefore requested that the premises were inspected with regard to health and safety.
- The school premises are suitably maintained and kept clean. Leaders take appropriate action to ensure that the site is hygienic and that health and safety standards are met.
- The standards in this part continue to be met.

#### Part 6. Provision of information

##### *Paragraph 32(1), 32(1)(c), 32(3), 32(3)(c), 32(3)(d)*

- At the previous inspection, the safeguarding policy was not up to date with statutory guidance and was not published on the school's website. Leaders had not ensured that all the required policies and arrangements were made available to parents.
- Leaders have written a safeguarding policy that reflects statutory guidance. This is published on the school's website.
- Leaders have added to the school's website a list of the documents that are in their 'policies and procedures manual'. These include policies on the curriculum, behaviour, anti-bullying, health and safety and first aid, which are available to parents on request.
- The standards in this part are now met.

#### Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

##### *Paragraph 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b)*

- At the previous inspection, inspectors found that leaders did not have sufficient awareness or understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Leaders had an overgenerous view of the school's strengths and had not identified actions to address specific weaknesses. Leaders had not ensured that safeguarding was effective.
- In the action plan, leaders' proposed actions to address these weaknesses were not specific and did not include clear deadlines. Leaders stated, for example, that they intended to discuss the inspection report and DfE warning notice with staff and consultants 'as necessary'. Success criteria were too broad to support leaders to check and evaluate the effectiveness of their work.
- Leaders have taken steps to address weaknesses in meeting the unmet standards identified at the previous inspection. However, there are still some unmet standards in Parts 1 and 3.
- The proprietor body has not established a means to fulfil their core functions, including holding senior leaders to account for the educational performance of the school and of the pupils, and the performance management of staff. Leaders do not have robust

systems in place to check the effectiveness of their work and to ensure that the school standards are met consistently.

- The standards in this part continue to be not met.

#### Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- At the previous inspection, leaders had not complied with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. No accessibility plan was in place.
- Leaders have written a suitable accessibility plan. This sets out leaders' accessibility audit under three areas: curriculum delivery, school design and delivery of materials. Leaders have used this audit to plan how to improve accessibility in each area.
- This standard is now met.

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

- At the previous inspection, these requirements were not met as safeguarding was judged ineffective.
- Leaders have ensured that the safeguarding and welfare requirements are now met. While there is no specific reference to the early years, leaders' arrangements include suitable arrangements to safeguard young children. For example, the policy makes it clear that staff and visitors are not to use mobile phones at the school or take photographs. Leaders have put in place detailed guidance on the procedures that staff must follow if they have any concerns about a child.
- The standards in this part are now met.

## **Compliance with regulatory requirements**

The school does not meet the requirements of the schedule to The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements that were checked during this inspection, as set out in the annex of this report. This included the standards and requirements that the school was judged to not comply with at the previous inspection. Not all of the standards and associated requirements were checked during this inspection.

## School details

Unique reference number	100303
DfE registration number	211/6385
Inspection number	10298208

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

Type of school	Other independent school
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	3 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	118
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	River House Montessori School Ltd
Principal	Sarah Greenwood (principal), Janet Pearson (acting principal)
Annual fees (day pupils)	Up to £21,280 (depending on hours)
Telephone number	020 7538 9886
Website	<a href="http://www.river-house.co.uk">www.river-house.co.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:jpearson@river-house.co.uk">jpearson@river-house.co.uk</a>
Date of previous standard inspection	10 to 12 May 2022

## Information about this school

- This is an independent day school for boys and girls aged three to 16. There are currently pupils up to Year 9 only.
- The school's teaching and curriculum are based on the Montessori principles.
- The principal was absent at the time of the inspection.
- The acting principal and principal are part of the proprietorial board. There are three other members of the board but they do not have any responsibility for the leadership of the school.
- Leaders do not use any alternative provision.

- Pupils may attend in 'core' school hours from 9am to 4pm or for 'extended' hours from 8am to 6pm. Extended provision also operates outside term time.
- A small number of pupils have an education, health and care plan.



## Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out at the request of the registration authority for independent schools. The purpose of the inspection was to monitor the progress the school has made in meeting the independent school standards and other requirements that it was judged to not comply with at its previous inspection.
- This was the school's first progress monitoring inspection since its previous full standard inspection in May 2022. It was conducted without notice.
- Following the previous inspection, the school submitted an action plan. It was judged to be not acceptable by Ofsted in June 2023 and was rejected by the DfE.
- This inspection focused on the school's compliance with particular requirements in Parts 1, 2, 3, 6 and 8 of the standards. In addition, in light of some concerns received, the DfE also requested that the inspectors consider whether particular standards in Parts 3 and 5 continue to be met.
- Inspectors met with the acting principal and other school leaders. Inspectors spoke with a group of staff and met with pupils from the primary and secondary phases. Inspectors sampled pupils' work and visited some lessons.
- Inspectors reviewed curriculum documentation, including that related to RSE and PSHE. Inspectors analysed a range of school policies and documentation relating to safeguarding and health and safety. Inspectors reviewed information on the school website. Inspectors checked the record of staff pre-employment checks.
- Inspectors checked the maintenance of the school premises and arrangements to supervise pupils.

## Inspection team

Jude Wilson, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Madeleine Gerard

His Majesty's Inspector

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

### **The school does not meet the following independent school standards**

*Standards that were not met at the previous inspection and remain unmet at this inspection*

#### **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 subparagraph (2) is drawn up and implemented effectively; and
- 2(2) For the purposes of paragraph (2)(1)(a), the matters are-
  - 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;

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

- 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

#### **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

### **The school now meets the following requirements of the independent school standards**

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

- 2(1) The standard in this part is met if-
  - 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) 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 those; and

- 2(2)(d)(ii) encourages respect for other people, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the 2010 Act 1;
- 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 2019 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.
- 16 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that–

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<sup>1</sup> The protected characteristics are set out in Chapter 1 of Part 2 of the Equality Act 2010.

- 16(b) appropriate action is taken to reduce risks that are identified.

### **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.

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

Leaders comply with schedule 10 of the Equalities Act 2010.

### **Statutory requirements of the early years foundation stage**

The safeguarding and welfare requirements are met.

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