



Office for Standards
in Education

Meadowbrook Montessori School

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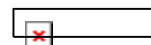
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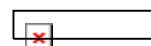
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Introduction and summary

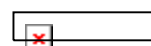


Purpose and scope of the inspection



This inspection was carried out by the Office for Standards in Education under Section 163 of the Education Act 2002 in order to advise the Secretary of State for Education and Skills about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Information about the school

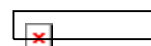


Meadowbrook Montessori School was founded in 1990 by the present proprietors. The primary section of the school is located in a modern building with seven and a half acres of grounds close to the village of Warfield. The pre-school department, including nursery and reception pupils, is based in a Victorian village school building at Haley Green. This is within sight of the primary department's building and has its own substantial grounds. The school is north of Bracknell in Berkshire. There are 110 pupils on roll, 48 boys and 62 girls, aged between 3 and 11. Thirty-six of these pupils attend the pre-school on a part-time basis. Most pupils live within a radius of fifteen miles.

Pupils leave the primary school for a variety of destinations. Most pupils go on to independent schools; a number are awarded scholarships each year. Others transfer to maintained schools.

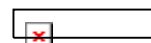
The aims of the school include providing pupils with 'a thirst for knowledge, a love of work and an ability to set high expectations for personal learning and achievement'. The school emphasises strongly the responsibilities its pupils have towards others, the environment and the wider community. It aims to encourage in them the values of tolerance, respect and kindness, and to help pupils become confident, self-reliant and independent young people.

Summary of main findings



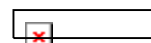
The school provides a good range of curricular and extra-curricular activities which are well supported by its application of Montessori principles and the National Curriculum. Almost all of the teaching is at least satisfactory with nearly half being good or better. The pupils are encouraged very effectively to become independent learners. Overall their behaviour and social skills are exceptionally good and they show a high level of respect for others.

What the school does well



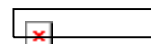
- pupils acquire excellent social skills and learn to cooperate well. They are encouraged to develop a strong awareness of what is right and wrong, and take full responsibility for their actions;
- pupils become confident, independent learners who take a pride in their work, especially in its presentation; and
- staff relations with pupils are extremely caring and supportive, and this is valued by parents. They have high expectations of pupils' behaviour, their attitudes to one another and the wider school community. Pupils respond very positively to expectations and standards of behaviour are excellent in the classroom and outside.

What the school must do in order to comply with the regulations



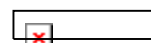
- attend to safety and security matters as set out in section 5 of this report;
- ensure that the information for parents meets current requirements as set out in section 6 of this report; and
- redraft the existing complaints procedures to fulfil the requirements as set out in section 7 of this report

Next steps

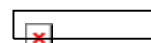


- monitor the consistency of the teaching of all year groups and where part-time teachers are involved;
- examine the relationship between some of the specialist teaching, the Montessori curriculum and the aspects of the National Curriculum subjects taught in the school in order to carry over good practice and to plan for greater variety in teaching styles;
- ensure minor, temporary, potential hazards already identified by the school are dealt with; and
- provide more challenging tasks for the higher ability pupils.

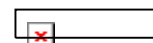
Compliance with the regulations for registration



1. The quality of education provided by the school



The quality of the curriculum



The school follows the Montessori curriculum together with aspects of the National Curriculum and the Foundation Stage Curriculum. The curriculum is broadened by good use of specialist teachers. The cultural aspect of Montessori work is particularly well supported by the National Curriculum (NC) in English, mathematics and science in upper primary classes. There is a range of curriculum documents used in school which effectively support the teaching of subjects over one or two year cycles to take account of any mixed-age classes. The quality of the curriculum and its match to pupils' needs is satisfactory overall with several good elements.

In the pre-school department there is variation in the quality of activities. Some are very good, as seen in self-directed letter formation and in mathematics where pupils work with numbers to 20 and subtraction to 10. French in the pre-school department is very well taught with good pace and a lively, varied approach. This quality contrasts with the less successful themes and activities which sometimes use inappropriate materials. Other activities had successful elements, but missed opportunities for developing work based upon the pupils' own experiences.

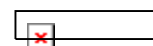
In the primary department aspects of science beyond botany, simple physiology and biology are under-emphasised, although themes from the recent stimulating science workshops were to be developed during a forthcoming science week. There is satisfactory provision for Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the classrooms and pupils use the equipment with confidence.

The school provides specialist teaching support for the Kodaly approach to music. However, there is no specialist musician to support the choir, which sings tunefully and with great enthusiasm. There are a number of outdoor sporting activities provided by specialist teachers, although team games are limited by the number of pupils. Specialist teachers also teach swimming, gymnastics, music (including one-to-one instrumental lessons), French, art and technology.

There is a very good programme of extra-curricular activities which includes clubs for multi-cultural dance, drama, chess, judo, Brazilian football, gym and ICT. There is also a range of educational visits provided for the pupils. Those in the upper primary go on residential trips. The school provides a rich programme of educational opportunities from outside agencies, including science workshops and visits by theatre and dance companies.

Where pupils have identified special educational needs, good support is provided. This includes well-planned, individual intervention programmes delivered on a one-to-one basis within the primary department. Pupils entering the school during the primary phase are given appropriate additional support to help them settle in.

The quality of the teaching and assessment



Almost all of the teaching is at least satisfactory with nearly half being good or better. There are very few incidences of unsatisfactory teaching.

All the staff form positive relationships with their pupils and know them very well, and this helps the pupils to feel secure and to try hard. Mutual respect is evident in all interactions between staff and pupils during teaching sessions and at more informal times. The staff manage the pupils extremely effectively and pupils listen attentively to teachers and each other.

In the most effective teaching there is good pace and variety linked to appropriate activities for the age group, so that the pupils make satisfactory progress. Teaching encourages the pupils to produce well-presented work on themes and topics which they develop in small, collaborative groups or individually. However, teaching is unsatisfactory where the pupils are inactive for periods

of time in lessons because learning outcomes have not been planned.

The staff are very well organised and manage the classes very effectively with a sufficient and appropriate range of resources accessible to the pupils. In a successful Year 4 English lesson on comprehension, sufficient copies of the story were available for the pupils, key questions were prepared and a flip chart was used to scribe the pupils' responses. This extended their independent work on inference in text.

Lessons are introduced carefully using a selection of published resources supplemented by those prepared by the staff. The pupils are clear about what they have to do and are given a high level of responsibility for planning the completion of their work programme. This is particularly appropriate for the upper primary aged pupils.

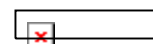
Teachers give frequent praise for good achievement and behaviour. Pupils are given opportunities to compliment each other either in class meetings or spontaneously. Staff mark books promptly with evaluative feedback to the pupils on what needs to be done to improve during lessons. Teachers provide for the pupils' different attainment levels through varying expectations of work to be produced. However, this does not always offer sufficient challenge for the higher ability pupils.

Assessment in both departments of the school is used to check pupils' progress and to identify the next steps. A range of assessment procedures is used including NC tests, Qualification and Curriculum Authority optional tests and the Richmond assessments and the NC tests are externally assessed. The results are shared with individual pupils' parents, but are not published. The Foundation Stage Profile is used effectively for reception pupils but is also used unnecessarily for the three year olds for whom it is not intended. The school's Montessori pupil progress report is also used thoroughly to assess pupils in the pre-school department and this is duplicated by other assessments made by the school. Use of the school's progress report continues into the primary department providing a summary of tasks completed rather than a detailed evaluation of the quality of pupils' work. Teachers use assessment very effectively to determine the level of independence which pupils demonstrate, for example, when preparing work to display during their presentation to the group. There is a thorough assessment procedure for pupils with special educational needs which ensures that areas for development are identified and targeted for appropriate support.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

2. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils



The school is successful in promoting its aims for pupils' personal development and is particularly effective in developing the pupils' social skills and behaviour.

Festivals and other events, such as UNICEF Day, are celebrated in such a way as to provide satisfactory religious and cultural experiences for the pupils. These are enhanced by the support of parents and visitors from other cultures and countries. Indian dance was presented to both the pre-primary and primary age pupils who were able to join in, and a parent supported this work through her own experience of Diwali. Several of the pupils are bilingual and all are encouraged to learn about different cultures.

Adults promote pupils' moral development very effectively and consistently through their positive models of behaviour towards them and towards the other adults with whom they work. They promote a sense of care and respect for one another which is reflected in the behaviour of the pupils. The consequent behaviour of pupils is excellent and a strength of the school. Pupils take

responsibility for organising the ways in which they will work, especially in the older classes. They select materials, following the very good models of preparation provided by the adults in all classes, and are able to plan and present their work to the rest of the class or group. Pupils are aware of right and wrong and act appropriately, showing consideration for others and support for one another.

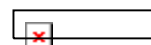
Pupils' social development is promoted very successfully and the pupils respond positively to the many opportunities provided to share and co-operate with each other through their work. Relationships are very good within and between year groups. Pupils can gain others' attention, for example, by ringing a small bell, asking the class to listen and then request quieter working if the noise is too obtrusive to enable them to hold a discussion or to concentrate quietly. The requests are put sensibly and positively and the class responds well to this.

Pupils are articulate and confident when talking to visitors, to whom they extend a warm welcome. They are encouraged to see themselves as members of a community working and playing together. They discuss any issues which arise as a means of resolving any difficulties, taking responsibility for any problems they might have caused and accepting apologies as a means of ending disputes. The school is very well ordered as a community, with pupils, staff and other adults supporting and respecting one another within the overall ethos of Montessori education.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

3. The welfare, health and safety of the pupils



There is a caring, family atmosphere in the school and relationships are very good. The parents believe that their children are treated fairly and with respect.

There is very good overall provision, supported by appropriate policies to promote good behaviour, to address child protection issues and to ensure that health and safety issues are attended to promptly. Incidences of bullying are extremely rare and are dealt with appropriately in line with the school's policy. The school follows a positive behaviour policy and any sanctions applied are clearly recorded with a copy sent to parents for information. The parents then have an opportunity to respond to the actions taken by the school.

Attention is paid to matters of health and safety with regular risk assessments of the premises carried out by the proprietor. The primary department building has a ramp at the entrance and the school plans to enhance the disabled access and facilities.

Attendance is good, and the attendance and admission registers are kept appropriately. The school completes and monitors accident books effectively. First Aid provision is good. The school has a clear policy and seven staff are qualified in First Aid in the pre-school department and nine in the primary department. Although there is no sick room, if pupils are ill there is a comfortable, quiet area provided in each classroom where pupils may wait until collected by parents. Pupils are well supervised while on school premises at both sites during outdoor activities and at break times.

Regular fire drills are carried out with an appropriate log kept of practices and alarm tests. A satisfactory fire report was issued following the fire officer's most recent visit to the school in 2004.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff

☐

The school is privately owned. The proprietor acts as bursar, and day-to-day management, including educational policy formulation is the responsibility of the headteacher.

Staff have access to in-service training organised by Bracknell Forest Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership. Recently this has included training for the introduction to the Foundation Stage Profile. These are valuable opportunities which extend the staff's regular visits to other Montessori schools and maintained schools and their use of Montessori training opportunities.

All staff have been subject to a check with the Criminal Records Bureau and have been confirmed as being suitable to work with children. Appropriate checks are also made prior to staff being appointed to confirm their previous employment history, medical fitness, qualifications and professional references.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

5. The suitability of the premises and accommodation

☐

The accommodation at both sites is of a good standard and is generally very well maintained. The space inside the two school buildings is efficiently organised and appropriate to the age of the pupils.

Classrooms are suitable in size for the numbers of pupils in them. There is a good range of sturdy, accessible storage within each classroom. The rooms and the communal areas contain colourful, interesting and informative displays celebrating pupils' work.

The specialist accommodation for music and for pupils with special educational needs is suitable for the purpose. There are a sufficient number of toilets and washrooms, although the present arrangement where older girls sometimes use adult toilets should be re-organised within existing provision for pupils. There are sufficient lockers and storage for games kit and outdoor shoes within the cloakroom areas in the school.

The primary department site has extensive grounds which include a sports pitch, mature trees and a pond. The school is surrounded by fields. For safety and supervision reasons the pupils have restricted access to parts of the grounds during breaks and at lunchtimes. A number of features to ensure safe outdoor play were reported to the school including the perimeter of the field which is unfenced in part as is the pond. There is an appropriate surfaced play area on each site containing a good range of wooden, fixed play equipment which is well used and appropriately supervised.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

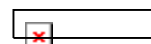
No.

What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?

In order to comply with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:

- *attend to the security matters identified in relation to the grounds and buildings (paragraph 5(d));*
- *ensure sufficient access so that emergency evacuations can be accomplished safely for all pupils, including those with special educational needs (paragraph 5(g)); and*
- *make the whole primary department site available for full, safe use, including outdoor play (paragraph 5(t)).*

6. The quality of information for parents and other partners



The school provides detailed information to all parents, prospective parents and other interested parties, including making available all policies and other information. There is a useful and informative termly newsletter which includes articles about Montessori work and which reinforces the school's ethos and rationale, as well as items of school news and events.

The responses to the questionnaire sent to parents prior to the inspection indicated very high levels of satisfaction with the school. Parents' additional comments indicated their strong support for the school's approach to organisation, to discipline and to the staff's commitment to individual pupils' progress. A minority expressed concern about the infrequency of homework and how far it relates to current classwork.

At present the usual residential address and telephone number of the proprietor are not provided although he can be contacted via the school. Although the school has not received any formal complaints during the past year, this is not recorded as part of the complaints procedure.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

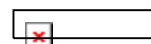
The school meets all the requirements except two.

What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?

In order to comply with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:

- *the usual residential address and telephone number of the proprietor (paragraph 6(2)(b)); and*
- *ensure that parents and prospective parents are aware of the availability of:*
 - *- details of the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure*
 - *- during the preceding school year (paragraph 6(2)(j)).*

7. The effectiveness of the school's procedures for handling complaints



The school has a complaints procedure which is made available to parents. However, this only addresses in detail the procedure for informal complaints. It does state that complaints will be dealt with confidentially. Although this procedure has served the school adequately in the past, it does not satisfy current regulations. It does not provide for a panel to hear written complaints, with one

that the panel findings and recommendations should be made available to those concerned and a record kept of the outcome and the stage at which they were resolved.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

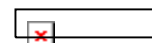
No.

What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?

In order to comply with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:

- *sets out clear time scales for the management of all parts of the complaints procedure (paragraph 7(c));*
- *makes provision for written complaints to be heard by a panel of at least three people who have not been directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint (paragraph 7(f));*
- *ensure that, where there is a panel, one person should be independent of the management and running of the school (paragraph 7(g));*
- *allows parents to attend the panel hearing and, if they wish, to be accompanied (paragraph 7(h));*
- *provides for the panel to make main findings and recommendations, copies of which should be provided to the complainant, proprietor, headteacher and, where relevant, the person complained about (paragraph 7(i)); and*
- *keeps written records of all complaints, indicating whether they were resolved at the preliminary stage, or whether they proceeded to a panel hearing (paragraph 7(j)).*

School details



Name of school:	Meadowbrook Montessori School
DfES ref number:	867/6006
Type of school:	Day
Status:	Independent
Age range of pupils:	3 - 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll (full-time pupils):	Boys 36, Girls 38, Total 74
Number on roll (part-time pupils):	Boys 12, Girls 24, Total 36
Annual fees (day pupils):	£2,385 - £2,955 (part time);
	£5,250 - £5,850 (full time)
Address of school:	Meadowbrook Montessori School Malt Hill, Warfield BRACKNELL Berkshire RG42 6JQ
E-mail address:	mbrookuk@aol.com
Telephone number:	01344 890869
Fax number:	01344 890869
Headteacher:	Mrs Serena Gunn
Proprietor:	Mr Paul Watkins
Lead Inspector:	Mrs Susan Wheeler HMI
Dates of inspection:	8 - 12 March 2004

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