

Brighton and Hove Montessori School

Independent School

Inspection report

DCSF Registration Number	846/6023
Unique Reference Number	133348
Inspection number	316920
Inspection dates	2-3 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Jackie Cousins AI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002 (as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005).

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, in order to advise the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Information about the school

Brighton and Hove Montessori School is an independent, non-selective, day school for boys and girls aged between 2 and 9 years. It opened in 1985 for younger children. Provision for younger pupils from 2 to 4 years of age was inspected in June 2007 by Ofsted Children's services. The main school for older pupils has not been inspected since it was registered in 2001. Currently, there are 43 pupils on roll in the main school. The school is located in two buildings, a community hall and several rooms in a house. Most of the younger pupils use the community hall. Some younger and older pupils use the house. An after-school and holiday club are used by pupils from the school and some local children.

The school aims to 'Create an environment to meet the needs of the children to learn independently within a child-centred community. Respect the diversity of ethnicity within the school.'

Evaluation of the school

Brighton and Hove Montessori School provides a satisfactory quality of education and care and it meets its aims successfully. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They make sound progress mainly because teaching and learning are satisfactory. Pupils from all backgrounds and abilities are integrated effectively into school life. Parents are particularly pleased with all the school offers and the way that it is run. The school meets all but one of the regulations.

Quality of education

The curriculum is satisfactory. The school's Montessori-based curriculum is well founded, satisfactorily planned for pupils' learning, and offers sound breadth. Good aspects of the curriculum relate particularly to the areas of linguistic, mathematical, scientific, human and social, aesthetic and creative development. Visits and drama activities enrich pupils' school lives. For example, pupils thoroughly enjoyed making props and acting out a play based on the story of 'Red Ridinghood'. Pupils' physical development has been provided for satisfactorily in the last school year. The provision has included a strong emphasis on the development of games skills and has included coaching in football, cricket, rugby and athletics. Planning for the development of pupils' skills in physical education and dance is currently in abeyance

during the induction of a new member of staff. Provision for pupils to learn information and communication technology (ICT) is satisfactory. The school makes creative use of a few laptops, tape recorders and digital cameras as appropriate to a Montessori classroom. Pupils use the Internet satisfactorily for research. For example, older pupils find out about the history of aeroplanes and space travel. However, rather limited planning is in use for some aspects of ICT.

Teaching is satisfactory and as a result pupils make satisfactory progress. Photograph albums celebrate pupils' achievements well. Small class sizes enable teachers to give pupils a considerable amount of individual attention. Teachers have high expectations of pupils and consequently the more able are suitably challenged. Some good teaching was seen during the inspection which was effective in encouraging older pupils to be independent and think for themselves. Time is used well because pupils select for themselves what they do from some specially created Montessori activities. Good teaching methods develop pupils' basic skills. For example, Year 2 and Year 3 pupils learn to recognise multiples accurately and find the lowest common multiple of a number. Resources are utilized satisfactorily, as when younger pupils learn to weigh objects and say whether they are less or more than a specific weight. Sound teacher expertise means that pupils develop their knowledge and understanding of the world. For instance, they learn about when dinosaurs lived using a time line correctly. The use of individual targets is not as good as it could be and therefore pupils are not clear about how to improve their work.

Assessment activities are used satisfactorily. All areas of learning are assessed appropriately using Montessori record sheets. From Reception to Year 3 the assessment of pupils is carried out soundly in reading, writing and mathematics. However, pupils' progress in basic skills is not tracked effectively from year to year.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is good. The school's very strong emphasis on securing pupils' personal development ensures that they have a good sense of living in a multicultural society. For example, there are regular celebrations of festivals from a range of faiths and cultures. In addition, the school has pupils from a number of minority ethnic backgrounds and festivals from their different cultures are studied in detail. This helps to develop a sense of tolerance and respect. The school places a high priority on involving those from all backgrounds and so all work well together. Pupils show sensitivity to the needs of others and racial harmony is achieved effectively.

Pupils are keen to come to school and their attendance is good. Pupils are courteous to visitors and explain enthusiastically all the things they enjoy doing at school. They are encouraged to develop independence in their learning and are always ready to show initiative in lessons. Small class sizes contribute significantly to pupils' self-confidence and their assurance as to their own worth. Pupils have good attitudes to

learning. Their well-developed skills of independence and sound skills in literacy and numeracy contribute significantly to securing their future economic well-being.

Pupils' contribution to the community is good. Their views are collected regularly through class discussions and their most helpful requests and ideas are acted upon. Pupils have good opportunities to contribute to the school community through the wide range of responsibilities which they take on. Good links with the local community mean that pupils are involved in various activities, including raising money for charities and church services.

Behaviour is satisfactory. In lessons it is good because staff know pupils very well and manage them effectively. Relationships are good. Behaviour during breaktime and walking to and from the park for lunchtime play is satisfactory. The school has some pupils that present particularly challenging behaviour and these are managed well by both teaching and support staff.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

Pupils' welfare, health and safety are satisfactory. Their personal needs and welfare are well supported by all staff. Arrangements to settle them into the school are good. Teachers are available at the beginning and end of every day to discuss any concerns with parents. Health and safety issues are checked carefully and are managed effectively by the school. Risk assessments are carried out satisfactorily. Pupils are strongly encouraged to lead healthy and safe lives. They eat fruit and vegetables because they are expected to bring them in for snacks. They have time to run and play actively every day in the park. Pupils use equipment at break and lunch times which encourages them to be fit. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe in and out of school. For example, they know about how to cross the road safely. The school complies with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 2002 and has devised an accessibility plan for how the premises could be adapted over three years. In recent years the designated person and staff have not undertaken the required refresher training in child protection but they are clear about how pupils at risk would be supported.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

Procedures for checking on the suitability of staff are robust. An organised single central record contains information on staff, sports' coaches and volunteers and meets current requirements.

School's premises and accommodation

The school's premises and accommodation are sound and assist pupils to learn in safety. The building is in good order. Classrooms are of a satisfactory size and quality. A fenced and gated garden and a sound range of equipment are available for break times. A nearby park is used for sporting and physical activities. ICT equipment is of a satisfactory quality.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school's partnership with parents is particularly good. Virtually all parents who responded to questionnaires were totally positive. One parent said, *'The teaching methods help children to develop skills by encouraging them to enquire and think for themselves. This is great for not only broadening their horizons but also gaining confidence'*. The prospectus covers all the requirements and offers good information on the curriculum. Additional information is sent to parents regularly in newsletters. Daily contact and an open door policy between staff and parents result in their concerns being sorted out effectively. Parents' meetings are held every term. Reports are sent out at the end of the summer term.

Procedures for handling complaints

A good complaints policy is in place with a detailed explanation of how quickly complaints will be reported on to parents. No complaints were received in the last year.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended January 2005, with the exception of those listed below.

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety (standard 3) and must:

- ensure that the designated person and staff receive regular refresher courses in child protection (paragraph 3(2)(b)).

What the school could do to improve further

While not required by the regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

- develop a system to track pupils' progress from one year to the next
- improve the use of individual targets so that pupils are clearer about the key skills they are working towards
- develop the planning to ensure that pupils develop their skills in all aspects of ICT and physical development effectively.

School details

Name of school	Brighton and Hove Montessori School
DCSF number	846/6023
Unique reference number	133348
Type of school	Montessori school
Status	Independent
Date school opened	2001
Age range of pupils	2-9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 9 Girls: 3 Total: 12
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 19 Girls: 12 Total: 31
Fees (day pupils)	£1,890 termly
Address of school	67 Stanford Avenue Brighton East Sussex BN1 6FB
Telephone number	01273702485
Fax number	01273702485
Email address	info@brighton-montessori.org.uk
Headteacher	Ms Daisy Cockburn
Reporting inspector	Jackie Cousins AI
Dates of inspection	2-3 October 2007