

Nursery Education Inspection Report

BRIGHTON & HOVE MONTESSORI SCHOOL

Inspection Number: 1141718

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INSPECTION OF NURSERY EDUCATION INSPECTION REPORT

Name of setting:	Brighton & Hove Montessori School
Setting number:	521735
Address:	67 Stanford Avenue
	Brighton

Postcode:	BN1 6FB
Person responsible for the day-to-day management of the setting:	Daisy Cockburn
Position:	Headteacher
Name of RgNI:	Deirdre Wilkins
RgNI's Registration number:	24274
Date(s) of inspection:	17/1/2000
Inspection number:	1141718

The inspection took place as part of a national programme of inspection of the educational provision for four year olds. It was commissioned by the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED), a department of central government.

NURSERY EDUCATION INSPECTION REPORT

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

The purpose of the inspection is to identify strengths and weaknesses so that providers can improve the quality of educational provision and help children to achieve the Desirable Outcomes for children's learning on entering compulsory education, (ie by the age of five). It is also to assure parents and the public that nursery education funded by the state is of an acceptable quality. The inspection report must be made available to all parents.

If the setting has been inspected previously, an action plan will have been drawn up to tackle issues identified. This inspection, therefore, must also assess what progress has been made in the implementation of this plan.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SETTING

The Brighton & Hove Montessori School was established in 1985, and since then has grown from a small Montessori school operating from a church hall to a fully functioning 'Children's House' (this being the name given to Dr Maria Montessori's first school). The school moved to larger premises in 1991 and has sole use of two floors in a large Victorian terraced house in the leafy, residential suburbs of Brighton. The school is adjacent to a park and playground. Most families attend from Brighton and Hove, although some families travel further to attend. There is a wide diversity of cultures and backgrounds. Children with special educational needs are welcomed.

The main aim of the school is to create and maintain a Montessori environment to meet the developmental needs of each child. The school is working towards the standards established by Montessori Education Ltd. (U.K.).

The school is open from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. from Monday to Friday, for 38 weeks per year. There are also out of school and holiday clubs. There are 35 children currently attending the Montessori school, their ages ranging from two and a half to six years. Among these are fourteen four year olds who are receiving government funding. There are no other four year olds. None of these have English as an additional language, although there are some bilingual children. There are no funded four year olds with special educational needs attending at present.

The Montessori philosophy and method are promoted in the school where altogether five staff works with the children during the week. Four of these are Montessori trained and the other member of staff is a specialist music teacher. The staff/pupil ratio is usually 1:10. All four year olds attend every morning. Some also attend in the afternoon.

The school is a non-profit making organization. It is linked with the Association Montessori International (A.M.I. U.K.) and Montessori Education (U.K.). There is a long-term project underway to apply for state funding in order to create the first state-funded Montessori primary school in this country.

Since their last inspection in the autumn of 1997, the class for six to twelve year olds has been suspended due to pressure of space and scarcity of suitably trained Montessori teachers. It is hoped to recommence this group in September 2000 in a larger premises.

1.MAIN FINDINGS OF THE INSPECTION

The strengths and weaknesses of the educational provision provided

The Brighton and Hove Montessori School provides a very happy, stimulating and productive environment. Most children are likely to achieve in the desirable learning outcomes by the time they are five years old and some will progress further. There are many strengths in most areas of learning, including personal and social development, mathematics, language and literacy and knowledge and understanding of the world. There is a good partnership with parents and Montessori apparatus is imaginatively used.

Children's personal and social development is a strength and is fostered very well in this calm, caring environment, with its purposeful Montessori atmosphere. Children are encouraged to show initiative as they experiment with resources, such as shells and the Montessori apparatus. Independence is encouraged at all times and children are lively, talkative and well-behaved. They work and concentrate well during the 'work cycle' time. They show care and consideration for others, especially younger children and those from different cultures and beliefs. Children share and take turns, for example with the painting easel and during snack time, when they independently choose to drink their juice and eat their biscuit. Children show both self-respect for staff and for each other. They are very friendly and polite to visitors, shaking hands to greet their teacher at the start of the day.

The programme for language and literacy is excellent and is a strength of this school, especially in its emphasis on reading and early word building. There are good opportunities for discussion, especially at news group time. Children are encouraged to speak clearly and to use an increasing vocabulary, for example where they talk about their paintings and drawings. Children are learning the sounds and shapes of letters, with good use of the Montessori sandpaper letters and moveable alphabet. Four year olds are writing their names and other words with appropriate use of upper and lower case letters. They listen well to stories, songs and rhymes and talk enthusiastically about their homes and families during group time.

The programme for mathematics is also excellent and is another strength of this Montessori school. There is very good practical provision with the use of Montessori apparatus. Children are encouraged to think mathematically, for example during number songs and rhymes. Children have good opportunities to develop an awareness of number operations such as addition and subtraction. Number puzzles, games, rhymes and songs also encourage an awareness of numbers.

The programme for knowledge and understanding of the world is another strength of this school, especially in its careful planning of projects throughout the year. Interest and scenic tables encourage

children to examine and question. Children like to draw and paint their homes and families. Children use a wide range of technological resources, although the use of a computer is not included in the curriculum at present.

The programme for physical development is good and has been developed since the last inspection. There is good use of dance, music and movement and outdoor apparatus in the garden and nearby park. Children show good awareness of other children and of the space around them both while moving around the classroom and while doing gymnastics in the nearby hall. The opportunities for children to develop large muscle skills have been well developed since the last inspection. Children also have good opportunities to climb and balance.

The programme for creative development is very good. There are many stimulating opportunities for creativity, especially in music, dance, movement, art and craft. Children have good opportunities to play imaginatively inside and outside, especially with the use of Montessori 'practical life' activities. Children are encouraged to write, draw, chalk and paint freely. Displays and interest tables are attractive and very stimulating, including embroidery, free paintings, drawings and samples of early writing.

The planning of the programme is detailed and good. This has been well extended since the last inspection and is carefully recorded. Planning promotes the six areas of learning. The Montessori curriculum is linked to the desirable learning outcomes. There is coordination between the planning for each classroom. There is particular emphasis on personal and social development, language and literacy, mathematics and knowledge and understanding of the world. Creative and physical development are also imaginatively planned. It is clear from planning what children should learn from activities, how children will be grouped and staff deployed.

The quality of teaching is very good, and sometimes excellent. This is a strength of the Montessori school. Staff demonstrate good knowledge in the six areas of learning, especially in personal and social development, language and literacy, mathematics and knowledge and understanding of the world. Teaching in creative and physical development also promotes the outcomes. Staff organise their teaching effectively during the day and especially during the 'work cycle' in the mornings when they are mobile and sensitive to the needs of individual children. They provide a stimulating range of activities, some of which are teacher directed and some child initiated. Children are stimulated, happy and busy throughout the day. Staff are gentle, warm, calm and friendly. They are well deployed in the classrooms both upstairs and downstairs, and use effective teaching methods while interacting with the children.

Staff have developed a good assessment process and make detailed notes and records of the use of Montessori apparatus for each child in all areas of learning. These have been well extended since the last inspection and include how children have responded to the activities provided and what this says about the children's knowledge and understanding and what they need to learn next. Daily observations are discussed informally with staff and parents. Boys and girls have equal access to all activities, when present. Some four year olds do not attend all the afternoon sessions.

Staff are aware of the DfEE's 1994 Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Children with Special Educational Needs. Although there are no four year olds at present attending with special educational needs, staff have experience of working with children with special educational needs and of liaison with parents and professionals, such as speech therapists. There are daily discussions among staff and regular staff meetings where the needs of individual children are discussed. The staff supervisions and monitoring programme works well with observation and discussion. Staff are encouraged to attend training courses, including Montessori workshops.

Resources are very good and effectively support the programme. Accommodation is good: two classrooms downstairs and a large classroom upstairs. The school is set in an attractive Victorian house. Toilets and cloakroom are adjacent. The best possible use is made of space and displays and

resources are attractively displayed. There is an adjacent church hall for gymnastics. The outside play area is attractive with a climbing frame and several linking gardens with trees, flowers and shrubs. A pond has been developed since the last inspection. There school has access to the nearby park and climbing apparatus. As a point for consideration, resources for the downstairs library are to be extended.

Partnership with parents is good. The partnership contributes effectively to the learning outcomes of the children. Parents speak highly of the school and some families travel ten to fifteen miles in order to attend. Parents receive helpful information about the educational provision. Parents feel well informed about their child's educational progress and are able to contribute to assessments. They feel involved in their children's learning. Good progress has been made in the development of the information given to parents about the curriculum, staffing, reporting, record keeping and the daily timetable in the brochure. This has been well developed since the last inspection.

Good progress has been made on all aspects of the implementation of the action plan that was drawn up by staff following their last Ofsted inspection in December 1997.

2.KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION

There are no significant weaknesses to report, but the following points for development should be considered in the action plan:

to continue to observe individual children and extend assessments in order to identify children who might have special educational needs.

as an ongoing development of provision, to develop and extend resources in the downstairs 'library'.

The provider must draw up an action plan within 40 working days of receipt of this report showing how the key issues detailed above will be addressed. The action plan must be made available to all parents. An evaluation of the action taken will form part of the next inspection.

3.SUMMARY OF JUDGEMENTS

A. QUALITY OF EDUCATIONAL PROVISION

Personal and social development	Promotes the desirable outcomes
Language and literacy	Promotes the desirable outcomes
Mathematics	Promotes the desirable outcomes
Knowledge and understanding of the world	Promotes the desirable outcomes
Physical development	Promotes the desirable outcomes
Creative development	Promotes the desirable outcomes

B. CHILDREN'S SPIRITUAL, MORAL, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT IS FOSTERED APPROPRIATELY.

C. PROGRESS IN IMPLEMENTING THE ACTION PLAN IS GOOD

D. OUTCOME AND RECOMMENDATION OF THE INSPECTION

Taken overall, the quality and standards of the educational provision are acceptable in promoting the desirable outcomes for children's learning. The action plan should show how the provider will

address the key issues within 12 months of the inspection.

It is recommended that the next inspection occurs within two to four years.

4.CONTENT OF THE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMME

The strengths and weaknesses of personal and social development

The educational programme for personal and social development is very good and is a strength of the Montessori school. It promotes the children's learning.

The promotion of good behaviour is a strong feature of the school's work. The clear and consistent daily routines, such as 'group' and 'news time', effectively promote the children's awareness of right and wrong. They sit still and listen very well at story time and take turns well during small group work, such as building the 'broad stairs' and during an 'I spy' game. They effectively share the Montessori equipment during the 'work cycle' time, and behave appropriately during larger group activities such as songs and rhymes. The staff treat all children gently and calmly, with consideration and respect. They value their work and oral contributions to group discussions. This is most successful in developing children's confidence and self-esteem. There are many worthwhile opportunities for children to learn to treat living things with care and concern, For example, they feed the goldfish, grow and look after the plants in the garden and observe the toads in the pond. The children treat the school's property and the Montessori equipment with respect; they help tidy up and clear away their work, putting it back on the shelves after use. They handle delicate equipment carefully, such as the 'golden beads', and help to keep the classroom clean and tidy, brushing and washing up and hoovering the carpet. They learn to show respect for the local environment as they go for nature walks to the nearby park.

Children have good opportunities to respond to a wide range of cultural and religious events, including Brighton festival and carnival, Christmas, Easter, Diwali, Eid, Iranian New Year, and birthdays. Children are expressive and show joy and wonder while running in the hall during gymnastics and while singing and dancing in the classroom. The children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered appropriately in the calm Montessori atmosphere where children have good opportunities to be quiet and peaceful. Children attend from many different cultures and backgrounds and have good relationships with each other, showing respect and kindness. High staff expectations and the purposeful learning environment effectively promote the children's ability to work independently, to concentrate and persevere with more challenging tasks using the Montessori apparatus. The Montessori ethos is expressed in the words "Help me to do it myself", and staff actively encourage independence as children also show initiative as they choose and select their work from the shelves. Children are developing good independence skills. For example, children collect their own water for painting, peg up the paper and put on their aprons by themselves. They are personally independent; they change their shoes, wash their hands, put on coats and slippers.

The strengths and weaknesses of language and literacy

The educational programme for language and literacy is excellent and successfully promotes the children's learning.

Strong emphasis is placed on developing children's speaking and listening skills, especially during 'group', 'news' and 'story' times. Children also listen attentively to songs and rhymes. There is a peaceful atmosphere during these group times and children are encouraged to talk about their experiences using interesting vocabulary. for example, children talk about the foggy, frosty weather and how they are waiting for the water to freeze in their science experiment. Children also love to

talk about their paintings and their houses and families. Children listen carefully to adults during small group activities, following instructions carefully and confidently talking to visitors about recent experiences. Individual work with staff also encourages children to learn new vocabulary as they work with the Montessori apparatus, for example the 'sandpaper letters' and 'moveable alphabet'. Children have worthwhile opportunities to role play during practical life activities, such as polishing, pairing and washing up. They also enjoy using money and making up stories whilst 'shopping' for vegetables. Children have excellent opportunities of write and draw freely and are encouraged to write their names and build words and sentences using the Montessori 'moveable alphabet' and 'sandpaper letters' to help them.

Children successfully use the carefully selected and rotated range of books in the book corner and 'library'. They also use reference books to support their learning, for example on the topic of the Antarctic. They can recognise their names and those of other children and good use of labelling of displays enables them to begin to recognise familiar words. Some children are beginning to read. Pre-reading phonic books and games are well used to promote learning, such as they object box. They can recognise many letters of the alphabet by shape and sound, confidently suggesting other words which begin with the same sound during the 'I spy' game.

Successful use of songs, stories, poems and rhymes enable children to recognise and associate sounds with patterns in rhymes. Children write their names clearly on their work with the correct use of upper and lower case letters. They are learning the use of capital letters and some punctuation. The use of the Montessori geometric 'insets' encourage writing skills and pencil control. Samples of good early writing and drawings are on display.

The strengths and weaknesses of mathematics

The provision for mathematics is also excellent and it promotes the desirable learning outcomes, especially in its use of Montessori apparatus and method.

The children have many worthwhile opportunities to use mathematical language to describe shape, position, size and quantity as they use the 'geometric cabinet', 'insets' and 'geometric solids'. They are also learning to name their sand prints of geometric shapes, for example 'square' and 'circle'. Children use threading wooden beads, shells, 'number rods' and the 'broad stair' to recreate mathematical patterns. Good opportunities are provided for children to sort and count, match, order and sequence using everyday objects, such as shells, money and vegetables. They are also learning to match the geometric shapes to the geometric solids. During 'group time', children enjoy singing and playing number games and rhymes including the 'speckled frog' song. They are developing an awareness of subtraction as they count the 'frogs' and 'take one away'.

Children can count and recognise numbers up to ten and above. Montessori equipment such as 'cards and counters', the 'spindle box' and 'number rods' are all helpful in encouraging children to recognise and use numbers. They are also beginning to record numbers and additional and subtraction sums in their work books, 'Sandpaper numbers' also help children to recognise and write numbers. They are beginning to solve problems and good practical activities are introduced, such as shopping, weighing and measuring and recording the weather and date on a chart. The 'binomial cube' and 'golden beads' are well used to increase mathematical knowledge and understanding. Children have good opportunities for more advanced mathematics, learning to count in tens, hundreds and thousands.

The strengths and weaknesses of knowledge and understanding of the world

The educational programme for knowledge and understanding of the world is excellent and is another strength of this nursery. It promotes the children's learning very well.

The children are most successfully encouraged to talk about their families and past and present

events in their lives, especially during 'news' and 'group' times. They enjoy describing their paintings and the ice melting experiment which they hope to do in the future. Very good use is made of photographs, posters, books and pictures to promote discussion about experiments, projects and celebrations of cultural festivals. Children have good opportunities to explore and talk about their environment on nature walks to the park and playground and in the stimulating garden and pond. They cross the road to visit the nearby church hall for gymnastics and use the local letter box to post letters. The Montessori school takes part in the Brighton festival and procession every year. There are also many worthwhile opportunities to explore the features of living things, both in the gardens and in the classroom, where the children care for plants and goldfish. They have observed the toads, hedgehog, cat, grass snake and birds in the garden and in the 'wilderness' nearby. A dog visits the school for the children to observe and handle.

There are some very good opportunities for children to explore the features of natural and made objects as they handle shells, bulbs and stones on the nature table. Children are encouraged to draw and write about animals, trees and plants and the results of experiments. Art and craft work is related to topics such as Antarctica. Puzzle maps, photos, posters with penguins and icebergs help successfully to stimulate children's knowledge and curiosity. Children have stimulating opportunities to look at similarities, patterns and change, while making sand prints, pairing different substances and mixing paints. Children are curious, and at group time they have excellent opportunities to question why the ice is going to melt or why the water has not frozen in the jar which they left outside. There is a good range of materials, which children can select independently from the shelves, for model making, cutting and building. Although the Montessori ethos does not support the use of computer technology in this school, there is a wide range of technological resources to support the children's learning; for example, an electricity circuit with bulb, magnets, magnifying glasses and weighing scales. Children also have access to the telephone and tape recorder.

The strengths and weaknesses of physical development

The provision for physical development is good and it successfully promotes the desirable learning outcomes.

Since the previous inspection, more emphasis has been placed on this area of the curriculum, and all aspects are now effectively included in the planned programme. Gross motor skills, especially balancing and climbing, are well promoted. Good teaching ensures that the children continue to make good progress with their physical skills while they are in the school. Effective use is made of music and movement activities and the Montessori balancing exercise of 'walking on the line' to music. Children move confidently, imaginatively and with increasing control. They develop an awareness of space and safety of others as they walk around the classroom and run, skip and stretch during gymnastics in the church hall. The children use the wide variety of large and small equipment with increasing skill. Regular outdoor sessions are available both in the gardens around the school and in the nearby park, during which they can play on climbing frames, slides and swings.

Good attention is given to enabling the children to develop small muscle skills as they handle the Montessori apparatus, for example the 'knobbed cylinders' and 'golden beads'. They have good opportunities to use scissors and to sew, plait, thread and polish to develop the use of their hands in preparation for writing. Their pencil control is good and their writing and drawings are of a high standard. There is a very good range of tools and construction materials for the children to work with safely and with increasing control.

The strengths and weaknesses of creative development

The educational programme for creative development is very good, and it promotes the desirable learning outcomes.

Effective use is made of a wide variety of activities, involving music to encourage children to explore sound. 'Walking on the line' is played to accompanying recorded music from other countries. The music is played quietly to encourage the children to listen carefully. A phonic 'I spy' game also encourages discussion about the sounds of letters and rhymes. There are many stimulating opportunities for movement, music, dance and art and craft. A visiting museum visited the school to give a cello recital for the children. The children explore colour, texture, shape, space and form in their art and craft work. The explore colour effectively whilst mixing paint and as they print with fruit. Children are enthusiastic about their free paintings and drawings and like to talk about them at group time. Model making is encouraged, such as making lanterns and clay and dough modelling takes place regularly. The practical life activities provide children with good opportunities to explore texture and shape while they pour sand and lentils and experiment with water. Children have worthwhile opportunities to take part in imaginative play as they do the practical life activities, polish and keep the classroom tidy. They also play imaginatively in the playground and garden. Role play is encouraged with singing and miming games. They respond imaginatively to stories, poetry and rhymes. There is a satisfactory range of activities and materials for use in creative activities. Children have excellent opportunities to express their feelings and ideas through their creative work. Stimulating displays of the children's own free drawings, paintings and early writing support learning in creative development.

5.PLANNING OF THE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMME

The strengths and weaknesses of the overall planning of the educational programme

The planning of the educational programme is good and it is successful in promoting the children's learning.

The planning system has been extended in detail since the previous inspection to include what children will learn, how they will be grouped, what they will do and the resources needed. A note is made on how to extend those who learn and finish quickly. The long term topic and project plans show stimulating ideas for activities. Priority is given every day to promoting personal and social development, language and literacy and mathematics, which are the strengths of this Montessori school. This is reflected in the children's high achievements in these areas. According to Montessori principles, the 'prepared environment' exists permanently on a day-to-day basis. Children have excellent opportunities to show initiative and make independent selection of activities and resources. The programme is flexible according to the individual needs of each child. The staff coordinate their planning very well to ensure that each topic covers the desirable learning outcomes effectively. There are clear arrangements for grouping, both upstairs and downstairs, and good staff deployment. Daily conferring and weekly staff meetings ensure continuity of planning.

6.QUALITY OF TEACHING AND ASSESSMENT

The strengths and weaknesses of teaching and assessment

The quality of teaching and assessment is very good, and sometimes excellent, and has a positive impact on the promotion of the desirable learning outcomes.

The staff show commitment and enthusiasm and are part of a long established and effective team. They have created a calm, attractive and stimulating environment. All aspects of the provision are well organised. The clear, consistent routines, lunch and 'snack' and 'group news' times, and consistently high expectations of the staff, are most effective in promoting good behaviour and developing children's confidence, independence and self-esteem.

The staff work both individually and in small groups and they liaise well to ensure that their Montessori teaching approach is consistent. The environment provides a balanced curriculum which

clearly links Montessori philosophy with the desirable learning outcomes. Staff demonstrate a secure knowledge and understanding of the desirable learning outcomes and they promote them effectively with sensitive interaction with the children. A good emphasis is placed on learning through discussion during group times. This is successful in developing children's speaking and listening skills and extending their vocabulary, for example while looking at the paintings of the artist Miro. Staff use questioning effectively and encourage children to think and directly promote mathematical thinking. They are encouraged to count, and through practical activities and games develop an awareness of number operations, such as addition and subtraction. The programme of activities for each day is carefully organised, and the teachers ensure that good use is made of all opportunities to extend the children's knowledge, understanding and skills while using the Montessori apparatus and practical life activities. There are good opportunities for children to initiate activities, with good staff interaction, when needed. Staff are observant and mobile in the classroom.

Assessment of children's attainments and progress has been well extended since the previous inspection, with the use of observation and listening techniques. Assessment records, including the use of Montessori apparatus, is regularly recorded and covers all six areas of learning. The assessment process is part of the planning cycle to include plans for the more able children.

The nursery uses effective methods of monitoring and improving teaching. Regular staff meetings enable all aspects of planning and children's progress to be kept under review. Each member of staff has an explicit contract and job description, including Montessori approaches. Initiative, skills and creativity are all well used to form a dynamic, interactive team who monitor each other with observation and discussion. There is a good on-going staff training programme. Evaluations are made on a daily basis through discussion. This is effective in improving the quality of teaching.

The strengths and weaknesses of equality of access and opportunity

The equality of access and opportunity is good. According to the Montessori philosophy, all children have equal access to all activities and are freely encouraged to select their work from low shelves. The staff also expect every child to take part in all group activities when present. Some four year olds do not attend in the afternoon sessions of physical development and music, although some of these activities also take place in the morning. All boys and girls have equal access to the equipment and resources in all areas, including language and literacy and mathematics. There is a clear equal opportunities policy which the staff adhere to. All the children are treated sensitively, and their family and cultural backgrounds are valued and respected. The staff make good use of positive images, such as photographs and posters, to draw children's attention to similarities and differences between people and how they live. The staff are beginning to adapt day-to-day activities to meet the needs of children who learn more quickly or more slowly. This is a point to consider for further development in this inspection. The activities planned are relevant to the needs of individual children.

There are no funded four year olds with special educational needs (SEN). Although the records of assessment are sufficiently detailed to be a useful tool in the early identification of any such children, they are not based on sufficiently detailed observational records in order to monitor their progress carefully. This is a point to consider for further development in this inspection. There is a written policy for the assessment and identification of children with special educational needs and staff have a sound knowledge of the DfEE's 1994 Code of Practice. At present, there are no children who speaks English as an additional language, although some children are bi-lingual. The small group and individual teaching methods are appropriate to meet the needs of any such children.

The strengths and weaknesses of the learning resources and accommodation

The resources and accommodation are used well and have a positive impact on the children's progress in learning.

There is a good range of high quality resources, especially the Montessori equipment and apparatus, which is sufficient to promote learning in all six areas. There are also sufficient resources to meet the needs of all children, including any with special educational needs or any who speak English as an additional language.

The staff make good use of the resources to promote the children's learning in all areas of the curriculum. In personal and social development, a wide range of stimulating resources is used well to enable the children to show sensitivity towards other cultures and beliefs and to respond to religious or cultural events. They are also well used to enable children to choose their own activities, and to make decisions about which materials they would like to use. Resources are well used in creative development to give children good opportunities to express their own ideas and communicate their feelings. In mathematics, the Montessori equipment is used effectively to promote mathematical understanding, use of language and awareness of addition and subtraction. Montessori language apparatus is also used effectively to promote language and literacy skills, such as early writing, reading and clear discussion. Improvements since the last inspection have resulted in a good range of large equipment being available in the hall, park and garden to promote the children's physical development. The resources are sufficiently accessible to the children in all of the classrooms to enable them to select their own activities and materials to support their learning.

The teaching rooms are attractively laid out and welcoming, with a comfortable book corner. It is used flexibly to provide a wide range of activities each day which covers all areas of the curriculum. Very good use is made of all the available space on the two floors of this house, and stimulating displays both of the children's own work and photographs, posters and other items of interest. There are several linking gardens with a patio area and several grassed areas. The nearby park is also used for nature walks and for physical play on the apparatus.

7.PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS AND CARERS

The strengths and weaknesses of the partnership with parents and carers

The partnership with parents is generally good, and has a beneficial effect on their children's learning.

The Montessori school makes parents feel very welcome, and they are involved in their children's learning in many worthwhile ways. The brochure for parents includes details of Dr Maria Montessori, her life and philosophy and, since the last inspection, has been developed to include more details about the curriculum. The brochure also includes details of staffing, daily policies, record keeping and timetables. The front door and surrounding windows are used as notice boards for parents to be kept well informed of day-to-day activities. There is also a description in the brochure of a "Typical morning in the Children's House".

Parents speak highly of the school and feel well-informed about their children's attainments and progress in learning. There are day-to-day discussions with parents and they are welcomed into the school at the start or ending of the day to discuss any problem. There is a 'Parent's Handbook' and new parents can visit to observe a whole morning in the school. Parents are encouraged to join in with activities and the school is proud of its involvement with the local community, taking part in Brighton's festival and carnival procession. Some parents volunteer to demonstrate special skills, for example playing the cello and puppetry. Written reports are only given if requested by parents, but parent evenings, telephone calls and letters keep parents in close contact with their children's progress. Parents are encouraged to apply Montessori theory and practice at home. Parents are welcome to contribute to assessments with their child's teacher. The children's own work is taken home each day. Attractive displays also enable parents to see their children's work.

8.IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ACTION PLAN

Implementation of action plan

There were four key issues arising from the previous OFSTED inspection. Overall, good progress has been made in the implementation of the action plan.

The first key issue required that the Montessori school extend its written plans to include what children are expected to learn, how they will be grouped, what they will do, the resources needed and how to extend those who learn and finish quickly.

Overall, good progress has been made in the implementation of the first key issue which required the Montessori school to develop written documents. Planning documents are clear and detailed. The desirable learning outcomes in the six areas of learning are clearly recorded and linked to the Montessori curriculum. It is clear what children will be expected to learn, how they will be grouped, what they will do and what resources are needed.

The second issue was to extend assessments of children to include how children responded to the activities provided and what this says about the children's knowledge and understanding and what they need to learn next. Good progress has been made in the implementation of this issue. Staff have worked hard to develop a detailed assessment process with careful written notes on each child. However, as part of their ongoing development, this remains a point for consideration.

The third issue was to provide gross motor skills, especially in balancing and climbing, by planning the activities rather than regarding them as purely recreational. Good progress has been made in the implementation of the third key issue, where staff have planned carefully and in detail to include physical development activities throughout the week in their planning. Children have movement and music, gymnastics and walks to the park to use the climbing apparatus.

The fourth key issue was to include more details about the curriculum, policies and staffing, reporting, record keeping and the daily timetable in the brochure. Good implementation has been made on this issue, where the brochure has been developed to include these details for parents.