

Inspection of Brighton & Hove Montessori School

67 Stanford Avenue, Brighton BN1 6FB

Inspection dates: 1 to 3 October 2024

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Early years provision

Good

Overall effectiveness at previous
inspection

Requires improvement

Does the school meet the independent
school standards?

No

What is it like to attend this school?

Staff get to know pupils as individuals and support them to follow their own interests effectively. They adjust provision well so that pupils can work at their own pace and take the time they need to complete pieces of work. Pupils and their parents value this aspect of the school's work. However, sometimes, the expectations of staff for what pupils learn and achieve needs to be higher.

The school expects pupils to behave with 'courtesy and grace' at all times. Younger children, who learn in the 'Children's House', begin to learn how to work and play alongside others in a considerate and caring way. They learn how to take care of their classroom. Older pupils, in the 'Elementary Class' take pride in carrying out their daily 'chores' to help care for their classroom. Pupils see school as a safe place, and their attendance is high.

Staff consistently prioritise pupils' emotional wellbeing and happiness. They work with each pupil patiently and kindly. As a result, pupils who find learning challenging grow in self-confidence and, over time, demonstrate a willingness to persist when they find learning hard. While the school has prioritised the quality of education that pupils receive, the proprietor has not ensured that all staff have the knowledge and expertise they require in other areas, including health and safety.

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

The school has a very broad curriculum that encompasses a wide range of subjects, including art, art history, music, biology, computing, design technology, cosmic studies, geography, geometry, history, language, mathematics and physical education. The curriculum in each subject has been thoughtfully sequenced. Careful links are made between each subject with the aim of helping pupils to build a deep and interconnected body of knowledge. Teachers have strong subject knowledge in the subjects that they teach.

Staff in the 'Children's House' have a very good understanding of child development and ensure that each child follows an early-years curriculum that aligns with their age and starting points. Children's personal, social and emotional development is a top priority, and each child is very carefully nurtured and supported. Alongside this, staff work to systematically build every child's language and vocabulary.

Early reading and writing are taught in tandem. Staff help each child to develop their knowledge of phonics, before children practice writing simple words containing the letter-sounds they have learned. Alongside, children regularly practise reading books that match the sounds they have learned. A wide range of stories are shared throughout each day. Staff are alert to any children who are struggling to learn to read, including children who may have SEND. These children receive effective support. An increasing number of older pupils have joined the school at an earlier stage of learning to read. The school ensures that these pupils get the right support to catch up in reading.

Pupils, particularly those who have been at the school for longer, are well prepared to transition to the 'Elementary Class' when they reach Year 2. Staff in the elementary class tailor teaching precisely for each pupil. Pupils work with teachers to carefully track their own progress through the school's planned curriculum. Older pupils have a strong understanding of their own strengths and unique talents. Staff also help them to identify those areas that they need to work on to achieve their next steps.

The curriculum is very carefully adapted for pupils with SEND. Teachers are very sensitive to how feedback will impact pupils' self-esteem. Pupils' misconceptions and errors are always noticed, and teachers reteach content pupils have not yet mastered. This is done gently and thoughtfully. This helps all pupils, but for pupils with SEND in particular, it preserves and supports their self-esteem. All pupils, including pupils with SEND, are building their knowledge of the school's planned curriculum over time. Pupils produce some work of very high quality. However, the school's expectations of what pupils can do and achieve are not always high enough. Teachers do not ensure that older pupils apply their knowledge to sufficiently challenging activities. As a result, the work that pupils produce does not always reflect what pupils know and can do.

Pupils' personal development is central to the school's work. There is a clear curriculum for personal, social and health education. The school teaches relationship and sex education sensitively and ensures ongoing engagement with parents on what is taught. There is a carefully planned programme of trips and visits that enrich the planned curriculum. For example, pupils enjoyed visiting the British Museum to see the Rosetta Stone as part of learning about the history of writing.

Despite the improvements made to the quality of education, leadership and management requires improvement. This is because the proprietor has not established clear systems to ensure that the Independent School Standards (the standards) remain consistently met. Responsibility for health and safety, for example, has been delegated to school leaders. However, the proprietor has not ensured that school leaders have the requisite knowledge and expertise to carry out this role effectively. The governing board has become more established over the past year. However, there is a lack of clarity about the responsibility delegated to the board by the proprietor, and exactly who is responsible for what. As a result, the oversight of overall school performance by school leaders and those responsible for governance is not sufficiently strong. The school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve? (Information for the school and proprietor)

- The proprietor has not ensured clear systems for oversight and governance of the school's performance, including ensuring that the standards remain consistently met. As a result, the school is not ensuring that its performance, and improvements made, are sustained over time.
- Those responsible for implementing the school's health and safety policy on a day-to-day basis do not have the knowledge and expertise required to carry out all aspects of their role effectively. As a result, some key checks are not being made. The school should ensure those responsible for health and safety get the right training to carry out their roles confidently, effectively and proactively.
- The school does not consistently ensure that older pupils apply their knowledge to sufficiently challenging activities. As a result, the work that pupils produce does not consolidate their learning well enough. The school should ensure that teachers design activities that enable pupils to produce high-quality work that reinforces their learning.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

School details

Unique reference number	133348
DfE registration number	846/6023
Local authority	Brighton and Hove
Inspection number	10342033
Type of school	Other Independent School
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	2 to 12
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	21
Number of part-time pupils	6
Proprietor	Daisy Cockburn
Headteacher	Daisy Cockburn
Annual fees (day pupils)	£9963
Telephone number	01273 702485
Website	www.brighton-montessori.org.uk
Email address	info@brighton-montessori.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	21 to 23 February 2023

Information about this school

- The school is a Montessori, mixed-day school for pupils between two and 12 years of age. Pupils are split into two groups: the Children's House for children up to age six and the Elementary Group for pupils of ages six to 12. There are currently 21 pupils on roll.
- The headteacher, who is also the sole proprietor of the school, has retired from her day-to-day role but retains financial control of the school. Ownership of the school has not been transferred to a new party. The school's bursar is currently the acting head of school.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

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

The school has failed to meet the independent school standards. These are the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the third routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors met with the head of school and the head of curriculum. The lead inspector met with the chair of the governing board and spoke with the proprietor.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, the inspector held discussions about the curriculum, visited lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. For the early reading deep dive, inspectors listened to pupils reading.
- The inspectors considered pupils' behaviour and attitudes throughout the inspection and discussed the school's analysis of pupils' behaviour and attendance with leaders.

- The inspectors considered personal development through all deep dives. They met with leaders to discuss the school's personal development programme. The inspectors talked to pupils about the school's personal development programme.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors spoke to parents at collection time and considered all responses to Ofsted's Parent View. Staff did not respond to the staff survey, but inspectors spoke to staff and considered their views carefully.

Inspection team

Alice Roberts, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Alan Johnson

Ofsted Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school failed to meet the following independent school standards

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 11 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that relevant health and safety laws are complied with by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written health and safety policy.

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

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