ISI Independent Schools Inspectorate

School inspection report

21 to 23 May 2024

Henley-in-Arden Montessori Primary School

Memorial Hall

Station Rd

Henley-in-Arden

B95 5JP

The Independent Schools Inspectorate is appointed by the Department for Education to inspect association independent schools in England. Our inspections report on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards and other applicable regulatory requirements are met, collectively referred to in this report as 'the Standards'.

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Summary of inspection findings

1. Pupils make good progress, sometimes over short periods of time. They work at their own pace and feel positive about their learning as promoted through Montessori principles.

2. Individualised learning programmes enable all pupils to achieve well. This is because the work set is well matched to their learning needs.

3. Leaders and staff work with dedication and passion. Pupils are well cared for. They feel safe, secure and supported by effective pastoral systems.

4. Engagement with the local community enables pupils to demonstrate a positive approach to the value of service. They understand the demonstrable impact of their actions.

5. Pupils do not always use the skills and knowledge they have gained in one subject to support their understanding effectively in others.

6. Mutual respect, irrespective of culture, backgrounds and lifestyle, come as second nature to the pupils. They are tolerant and show high levels of understanding for those whose lives may differ to their own. Staff act as positive role models.

7. Pupils understand the importance of a positive approach to mental health. They readily cite individuals who they can talk to about any concerns or worries that they have.

8. The sense of community is tangible. It is based on respectful interactions between pupils of all ages and with staff.

9. Leaders' oversight of certain elements of safeguarding is not effective. It does not reflect statutory guidance in some areas. This includes the lack of delineation between the role of the proprietor and the designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and ensuring that training is up to date for all safeguarding leads. Additionally, aspects of the safer recruitment process are not thorough enough.

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The extent to which the school meets the Standards

- Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance are not met.
- Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society are met.
- Standards relating to safeguarding are not met.

Areas for action

The proprietor must ensure that:

- leaders and managers demonstrate good skills and knowledge consistent with their role
- they fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that the other standards are consistently met and
- they actively promote the wellbeing of the pupils

so that due regard is made to statutory safeguarding guidance to ensure:

- that the roles of the designated safeguarding lead and proprietor are separate
- that all pre-employment references contain information about the candidate's suitability to work with children
- that references supplied in support of a candidate's application are verified to check their authenticity and content
- that leaders give consideration to undertaking internet searches for prospective employees.

Recommended next steps

The proprietor should:

- ensure teaching supports pupils in making connections with previous learning, across subjects, to help them to apply their knowledge and skills effectively to new ideas.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

10. Leaders approach all aspects of school life with positivity and an enthusiasm that is recognised by all members of the school community. This is especially the case for staff and parents. Leaders generally fulfil their responsibilities but, in some areas, the oversight of the standards lacks rigour. Leaders have improved the recruitment process since the previous inspection. However, they do not pay due regard to current statutory guidance. This impacts negatively on both safeguarding and the safer recruitment process. Roles, including that of the safeguarding lead, are not defined well enough. This means that oversight of safeguarding is not effective.

11. Leaders ensure that all the required information is available to both current parents and parents of prospective pupils, mostly on the helpful and informative school website. For example, the school's policies and procedures for the management of behaviour, the curriculum arrangements and the name and contact details of the proprietor.

12. There is a suitable complaints process in place for parents. Since the previous inspection there have been no formal complaints made to the school. Most queries and concerns are dealt with at an informal level. This is because leaders make themselves available at the end and beginning of each school day so that any worries are dealt with swiftly and effectively.

13. The inclusive school community actively promotes individuality and equality. Leaders invest heavily in ensuring that everyone is happy and feels safe.

14. Risk in everyday activities is suitably assessed. Pupils' activities, for example, such as design and technology and outdoor learning, have appropriate risk assessments that ensure pupils' welfare. Pupils are encouraged, when appropriate, to assess risk for themselves, such as when climbing trees or climbing over stiles in the forest area. The school has considered, and risk assessed the potential for the radicalisation of its pupils through a Prevent duty risk assessment. Activities within the early years are suitably risk assessed to enable children to take part in a wide range of independent activities safely. Changes are made as appropriate to regular risk assessments, such as considering local roadworks when taking a walking trip from the school. Risks associated with areas within the school premises and grounds are reviewed regularly, including based on the analysis of any accidents reported.

15. Risk assessments exist for some pupils. The school liaises closely with parents to ensure that appropriate mitigation is in place while not precluding pupils from activities and trips.

16. The aims and ethos of the school, based on the Montessori philosophy, shine through all aspects of pupils' learning and personal development. Many policies reflect this philosophy and are typically implemented effectively.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance

17. Standards are not met consistently with respect to some pre-employment recruitment checks for staff, up to date training for safeguarding all safeguarding leads and ensuring that statutory guidance is ensuring there is suitable delineation between the roles of proprietorship and safeguarding leads.

18. As a result, Standards relating to leadership, management and governance are not met.

19. Not all the relevant Standards are met. A schedule of unmet Standards is included at the end of the report.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

20. Children in the early years are quietly confident in the classroom. They engage with other children and, on occasions collaborate with older pupils. The children are purposeful in their work. They move seamlessly between a range of activities. This can include transferring between similar activities, such as phonics tasks, or switching between literacy and numeracy. They show resilience and determination to complete tasks. Children use a range of skills to decode unfamiliar words. They have an extensive phonics knowledge. They use contextual clues to decode unfamiliar words successfully because they are well taught. Children build their numeracy knowledge and skills well as securing strong foundations of previous learning before moving on to more complex tasks.

21. Across the school, pupils approach their learning with positivity and enthusiasm. This stems from them feeling happy and secure in their rooms which are carefully set out by school leaders. Pupils develop a wide range of knowledge and skills because of the ambitious curriculum. Pupils make good progress, sometimes over short periods of time, such as in the content, quality and presentation during a letter writing exercise. Older pupils showed a secure knowledge of mathematical understanding as they explained square numbers and decimals, readily using the carefully selected resources available to them.

22. Pupils are not routinely able to apply their subject-specific knowledge and skills to other areas of learning. This means, for example, that they are not always able to make the connections across subjects to help them to remember more of the content that they are taught.

23. Pupils read well and enjoy a range of texts, many of which reflect a reading age more than the pupils' chronological age. Pupils show mature artistic skills such as when they used light and shade to expert effect on their leaf drawings. Pupils generally collaborate effectively using balanced discussions. As a result, they successfully complete tasks by working together.

24. Effective tracking systems enable identification of strengths and weaknesses in pupils' learning, based on the Montessori principles. A range of both formative and summative assessments are used to create a clear picture of pupils' achievements. The effective analysis of individual and group ensures effective planning to meet pupils' needs. The information held on pupils' progress covers all areas of the curriculum, including speaking and listening, physical education (PE) and the creative arts.

25. Pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) make good progress. Individualised support enables a swift acquisition of new language skills. This ensures positive outcomes for pupils, so they access all areas of the curriculum. In some cases, once pupils have developed these skills, their progress is more rapid than that of their peers. On occasions, when progress is not so rapid for some pupils, leaders consider other influences, such as whether special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) may be a factor.

26. When a pupil finds learning a challenge, their strengths and weaknesses are considered when planning support. This enables the pupil to receive targeted and scaffolded support taking into account prior attainment. A series of strategies enables pupils to have more independence and support to manage their own time and workload.

27. Parents are kept well informed of pupils' progress and development through both regular formal and informal contact with teachers. Teaching does not undermine fundamental British values, such

as democracy, tolerance and respect, but actively seeks ways to promote these to support pupils as they prepare for the next stages of their lives.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation

28. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 3: Pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing

29. Pupils feel happy, safe and secure in their learning environment. Behaviour is good and pupils understand the impact that their behaviour may have on others. Pupils demonstrate good behaviour in the playground. Collaboration between year groups ensures inclusivity. Pupils, for example, discussed the use of a football as a playground game. They decided that, on rotation, it is a good idea on some days, but not all the time. This is so that there is the time and space for other games. Incidences of bullying are rare. Pupils feel that they are well cared for and listened to. They know when to get help from a trusted adult and are keen to talk about their 'network hand', a visual aid to draw their attention to their chosen trusted adults.

30. Staff promote the core values of respect and kindness among the pupil body. The children describe effective relationships with ease. They appreciate the importance of friendship. Pupils are eloquent in discussing their increasing academic confidence and how, by engaging with the independent activities, this brings a sense of self-belief that they can then transfer to other areas of the curriculum and to sports.

31. Pupils understand the importance of diet and produce fact files on healthy eating. They explain with confidence what constitutes a balanced diet.

32. Pupils in the school understand protected characteristics such as gender, marriage, sexual orientation and religion. Leaders ensure that such topics are discussed so that pupils are aware that perceptions beyond the school may be different. A suitable personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme appropriately supports pupils' development in this area. It uses a published scheme with additional elements, such as wellbeing, safer internet day and bereavement, added to the programme so that these are always covered.

33. Relationships and sex education (RSE) is appropriately outlined in a relevant policy, available to parents. This indicates topics and the points at which they will be covered. Parents were consulted when creating the school's RSE policy and programmes of study. Parents of those pupils in Year 6 are informed prior to the age-relevant elements of the programme, such as body changes.

34. Pupils enjoy the opportunity to play volleyball and rounders in PE as well as doing exercise in the hall. They understand the need to for exercise so that they can be mentally, as well as physically healthy. Pupils in the playground are supervised effectively. Staff are suitably located so that pupils are within sight and sound of several members of staff at all times. Classrooms and communal areas are well supervised.

35. Premises and accommodation are suitably maintained to provide a safe environment for the pupils. All relevant checks and certification are in place, including those required by the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. There is sufficient outdoor space for play and for the provision of PE. There are suitable facilities with qualified staff for the provision of first aid.

36. Health and safety and the risks from fire are appropriately considered by leaders. Documentation demonstrates up to date records of maintenance. Fire risk assessments are acted on, including the provision of additional fire doors and the required maintenance of a fire register now in place. Fire evacuations are practised regularly, and suitable records kept.

37. First aid is administered in a timely fashion with all staff holding relevant paediatric first aid certification. Basic food and hygiene certificates are held by staff who handle food.

38. Appropriate admission records are in place. The necessary authorities are contacted when pupils arrive or leave at non-standard transition points. Attendance records are maintained appropriately. Any unexplained absences are followed up in a timely manner.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing

39. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 4: Pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society

40. Pupils have a well-developed sense of their role in society. They have developed a mature depth of understanding about their individuality and the impact that human qualities have on those around them. They mix well with one another and with the adults they encounter. They have good social skills.

41. Pupils' economic understanding is strengthened through handling money and learning about aspects such as currency conversion. Pupils understand the value of money, such as when deciding how much ingredients might cost when baking. Experience of pocket money and knowledge about savings all add to pupils' understanding. Expectations of completing chores for pocket money shows pupils how they can contribute to the lives of others beyond the financial incentive.

42. Pupils reflect on their learning and are happy to challenge ideas. In discussing equality, for example, pupils decided that not everyone should necessarily be treated equally. This is because they know that some people may have specific needs of which others need to be mindful. In their reflections, pupils showed their sensitivity and awareness of the needs of others, including those with protected characteristics. Pupils remember these principles that they are taught and use them appropriately.

43. Pupils display a strong cultural awareness. They celebrate the local and diverse community. This includes participating with the parental body when they come and share their festivals and cultures with pupils. Pupils appreciate the occasions to learn about cultural diversity such as Sikhism and Nigerian lifestyle and history.

44. Pupils are well prepared for life in British society through engaging with the wider community in a variety of meaningful ways. They understand the importance of giving back to their local society through events such as pond clearing and litter picking. They develop an understanding of the historical nature of their community, such as through the heritage centre in Henley when studying the Tudors. Pupils are fascinated by the age range of the buildings and develop timelines of their own. They love their connection with a local care home and engaging with residents in events. As a result, pupils now enjoy knitting as well. They have got to know the residents, forming bonds that give the pupils an insight into the lives of the elderly residents, while being able to talk with them about their own young lives.

45. Pupils' moral development is strong. They understand that negotiating through life involves give and take for the mutual benefit of all.

46. Pupils develop a secure knowledge of public institutions such as through talks from visiting parents about laws and how these are made and enforced. The school's site, alongside the fire station, enables pupils to understand the importance of the role of the emergency services. Pupils actively live the process of democracy as their school is used as a polling station. Leaders seize the opportunity to focus on this at relevant times. Celebrating events such as the platinum jubilee and the coronation of a new King strengthens pupils' understanding. Pupils love to share their thoughts on these events, which they do without hesitation.

47. The Montessori curriculum supports pupils understanding of the world. This is strengthened through trips and visits to cities such as Birmingham, where pupils can experience a setting that is very different to their own.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society

48. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

49. Safeguarding arrangements in the school are generally secure. However, there are some areas where procedures are not effective and do not reflect current statutory guidance. These relate to the lack of delineation between the proprietorship and designated safeguarding leads (DSL) roles. This means that oversight of safeguarding is not as rigorous as it should be. The school have already addressed this matter and have reorganised roles and responsibilities. It is too early to assess the impact of these changes.

50. At the time of the inspection the named DSL's training had lapsed in relation to guidance as set out both within the school's own safeguarding policy and within current statutory documentation. While safer recruitment procedures have been strengthened since the previous inspection, there remains elements of the process that do not fully reflect current statutory guidance. These relates to the safeguarding contents within references, the need to verify the content and source of references and the requirement to consider carrying out internet searches on prospective employees.

51. Leaders ensure staff are well trained on the Prevent duty. This forms an important part of the school's contextual safeguarding arrangements.

52. Safeguarding leads understand their responsibilities in keeping pupils safe from harm and take advantage of locally sourced training which means that local arrangements and thresholds are understood. Pupils understand the importance of staying safe, including online. They readily cite trusted adults to whom they can turn should the need arise.

53. Staff understand what to do should they have any safeguarding concerns. They have easy access to designated leads who will always prioritise the wellbeing of pupils in all their interactions. Staff also have a clear understanding of the procedures to follow relating to any low-level concerns relating to other staff members.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

54. Standards are not met consistently with respect to the training of safeguarding leads, delineation of roles and responsibilities and aspects of the safer recruitment process.

55. Not all the relevant Standards are met. A schedule of unmet Standards is included at the end of the report.

Schedule of unmet Standards

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

The following standards in this section of the Framework are not met.

Paragraph number	Standard
ISSR Part 8, paragraph 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
34(1)(c)	actively promote the wellbeing of pupils.

Safeguarding

The following Standards in this section of the Framework are not met.

Paragraph number	Standard
ISSR Part 3, paragraph 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.
EYFS 3.5	Providers must have and implement policies and procedures to keep children safe and meet EYFS requirements. Schools are not required to have separate policies to cover EYFS requirements provided the requirements are already met through an existing policy. Where providers are required to have policies and procedures as specified below, these policies and procedures should be recorded in writing. Policies and procedures should be in line with the guidance and procedures of the relevant LSP.
EYFS 3.7	If providers have concerns about children's safety or welfare, they must immediately notify their local authority children's social care team, in line with local reporting procedures, and, in emergencies, the police. Providers must also take into account the government's statutory guidance 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' and 'Prevent duty guidance for England and Wales'. All schools are required to have regard to the government's statutory guidance 'Keeping Children Safe in Education', and other childcare providers may also find it helpful to read this guidance.
EYFS 3.9	Providers must ensure that people looking after children are suitable; they must have the relevant qualifications, training and have passed any required checks to fulfil their roles. Providers must take appropriate steps to verify qualifications, including in cases where physical evidence cannot be produced. Providers must also ensure that any person who may have regular contact with children (for example, someone living or working on the same premises as the early years provision is provided), is suitable.

School details

School	Henley-in-Arden Montessori Primary School
Department for Education number	937/6106
Address	Henley-in-Arden Montessori Primary School Memorial Hall Station Road Henley-in-Arden Warwickshire B95 5JP
Phone number	01564 795722
Email address	contact@henleymontessori.co.uk
Website	www.henleymontessori.co.uk
Proprietor	Mrs Helen Everley
Headteacher	Mrs Helen Everley
Age range	4 to 11
Number of pupils	26
Date of previous inspection	12 to 14 May 2021

Information about the school

56. Henley-in-Arden Montessori Primary School is an independent co-educational school for pupils aged between 4 and 11, which includes a group of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. It shares the site with Merrydays Montessori Nursery, which is inspected separately. The primary school opened in 2007 to provide full-time education for up to 20 pupils aged between 4 and 11 years old. It is owned by a proprietor, who became principal in 2000. Pupils are taught in two classes.

57. The school has very few pupils who have SEND. No pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.

58. English is an additional language for six pupils.

59. The school states its aims are to successfully implement the philosophy, practices and curriculum of Maria Montessori through a holistic approach to education and enable children to learn at their own pace. The school strives for pupils to feel safe, secure, and confident; to become resourceful individuals and fulfil their potential within a nurturing environment, skilfully guided and supported by staff. It sets out to ensure pupils have time to reflect and be creative to promote socialisation, respect and enable them to live in harmony with others in the small society of their school. It aspires to establish positive relationships between peers, younger pupils and adults to create an effective partnership within the whole school community.

Inspection details

Inspection dates	21 to 23 May 2024

60. A team of two inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

61. Inspection activities included:

- observation of lessons, some in conjunction with school leaders
- observation of registration procedures
- observation of a sample of extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection
- discussions with the proprietor
- discussions with the head, school leaders, managers and other members of staff
- discussions with pupils
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

62. The inspection team considered the views of pupils, members of staff and parents who responded to ISI's pre-inspection surveys.

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- The Department for Education is the regulator for independent schools in England.
- ISI is approved by the Secretary of State for Education to inspect independent schools in England, which are members of associations in membership of the Independent Schools Council.
- ISI inspections report to the Department for Education on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards, the EYFS statutory framework requirements, the National Minimum Standards for boarding schools and any other relevant standards are met.
- For more information, please visit **www.isi.net**.

Independent Schools Inspectorate

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