

School inspection report

17 to 19 September 2024

The Meadows Montessori School

32 Larchcroft Road

Ipswich

IP1 6AR

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. Leaders work as a cohesive team with the proprietor so that the aims and ethos of the school are fully understood by the school community and that pupils' wellbeing is promoted effectively. Leaders have the knowledge and skills to ensure that the Standards are consistently met.
2. Teaching is effectively planned and monitored by the school leaders. Teachers respond to the individual needs and interest of pupils effectively so that they make good progress from their starting points.
3. The carefully designed curriculum is structured to ensure that the required areas of learning are covered as well as elements specific to the Montessori approach. It meets the needs of the pupils.
4. Leaders monitor teaching carefully and check that it is well planned for all age groups and develops pupils' skills and knowledge effectively. Teaching makes effective use of resources, including those related to the Montessori approach, to promote learning, including in younger years, of number and pattern and the relationship between letters and sounds.
5. Behaviour management is effective. Leaders and staff encourage positive behaviour, including through a code of conduct and clear expectations and rules.
6. Pupils experience a suitable range of sports overall. However, high school opportunities for pupils to pursue particular sports of their own interest are more limited. This reduces the engagement of pupils with sport as a whole.
7. The curriculum enables senior pupils to reflect on potential careers. However, it does not inform them about the range of careers and post 16 pathways as strongly as it could.
8. Safeguarding is effective and safeguarding procedures reflect current statutory guidance. Staff understand how to respond to any safeguarding concerns that might arise. However, at the start of the inspection, the safeguarding policy had not been updated to reflect changes to this guidance. The school rectified this during the inspection.
9. The school's attendance procedures are appropriate. However, at the start of the inspection, the attendance policy was not available on the school website, as required by current statutory guidance. This was rectified during the inspection.

The extent to which the school meets the Standards

- Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance are 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 met.

Recommended next steps

The proprietor should:

- strengthen senior pupils' ability to make informed choices available about careers and post-16 pathways
- strengthen high school pupils' participation in sport
- ensure that the safeguarding policy remains up to date and reflects current statutory guidance
- ensure that the attendance policy is maintained on the school website.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

10. Leaders fulfil their responsibilities effectively. They successfully create a culture which promotes pupils' wellbeing effectively and ensures that staff clearly understand and support the Montessori approach to teaching and learning of the school. Leaders apply good knowledge and skills to ensure that the school meets the Standards.
11. Through careful recruitment and continuous monitoring of teachers, leaders ensure that teaching meets the needs of individual pupils and is consistent and effective in developing their learning.
12. Leaders work effectively with external agencies. For example, they liaise with local safeguarding partners appropriately and refer safeguarding concerns to them when required.
13. The leadership team work effectively together. They evaluate the school's effectiveness carefully against school development plans which are continuously reviewed and amended. Leaders' decisions about what actions to take to develop the school are informed by consultation with staff, parents and pupils.
14. Leaders have identified curriculum areas such as careers and music for focus, and actions implemented so far are having a positive impact on provision for the pupils. For example, involvement in a local careers fair has developed the careers advice for pupils, while changes to musical instrument lessons have strengthened pupils' development of musical skills.
15. Leaders provide effective guidance to staff in the early years. This guidance supports the development and use of effective teaching skills appropriate for this age and so contributes to children's good progress.
16. The proprietor, supported by an advisory board, offers appropriate support and challenge to the leadership team. The advisory board members visit the school and talk to staff and pupils. The proprietor meets regularly with leaders responsible for premises and accommodation and health and safety to monitor these.
17. Leaders implement an effective risk assessment policy through detailed risk assessments, which give suitable guidance to staff. Leaders review risk assessments and adapt them as required. There are assessments in place for areas such as trips including residential visits, the early years environment, and any hazardous materials. The proprietor reviews all risk assessments to ensure that appropriate steps are taken to ensure that appropriate measures are taken to mitigate potential risks that have been identified.
18. Leaders typically ensure that required policies and information are provided or made available to parents, either on the school website or from the school office. However, the attendance policy was not available on the website at the start of the inspection. Similarly, the safeguarding policy available at the beginning of the inspection did not reflect current statutory guidance. Leaders rectified these issues during the inspection.
19. Parents receive detailed reports about their children's progress which outline what the individual has achieved, any areas of weakness and strength, and how they can continue to make progress. Leaders provide the local authority with the required information in relation to any funded pupils, including those with an education, health and care (EHC) plan.

20. Leaders implement an appropriate complaints procedure. They maintain a log to record any complaints which go beyond the informal stage, but there have been none in the previous four years.
21. The school meets the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. Leaders maintain a detailed accessibility plan which identifies how the school adapts its curriculum and accommodation to promote accessibility for any pupils with a disability.

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

- 22. All the relevant Standards are met.**

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

23. The curriculum is well planned and carefully organised to enable pupils to deepen their learning well. Core subjects are planned effectively and delivered as discrete lessons in the curriculum by staff who have good subject knowledge. This ensures pupils learning is sequential, with lesson plans developing key skills and knowledge methodically in these areas, including through what the school term 'concept ladders'. Staff also carefully plan a series of what are referred to as 'Great Lessons', which link themes covering a variety of subjects under one topic. This enables pupils successfully relate different areas of study to each other and so deepen their understanding.
24. Staff's effective use of either one-to-one verbal feedback or the school's own tracking application ensures that the pupils are given individual guidance on how to independently explore the themes from 'Great lessons' in ways which reflect their interests and ability. This supports pupils to become adept and managing their own time to study. Clear and detailed feedback enables pupils to know how to improve their work and make progress. Individual support and guidance focusing on the interests of the pupil enables those who have previously experienced anxiety about learning to fully engage. Choice on when and how to respond to work fosters self-motivation.
25. Carefully directed questions in feedback enthuses the pupils to inquire more deeply into topics, apply themselves intellectually and creatively, and to develop their own perspectives on the subject matter being explored. High school pupils develop the ability to carry out research, evaluate material and present their work. Teaching plans include time for pupils to present their work in both a written and verbal form, followed by questioning from their peers and staff. Pupils develop effective speaking and listening skills as they justify and explain their ideas.
26. Teachers use observations and assessments effectively to evaluate pupils' understanding and use their evaluation to plan further follow up work in the week. Teaching is tailored effectively to the needs and abilities of individual pupils and develops their learning well so that they make good progress.
27. Teachers provide individual pupils with clear feedback that enables them to evaluate their own progress and understand how to improve their work further. From the early years onwards, teachers use their observations of children's and pupils' learning to adapt teaching and plan subsequent learning activities matched to the pupils' needs. In this way, teaching is tailored effectively to the needs and abilities of individual pupils and develops their learning well so that they make good progress. The feedback provided enables pupils to recognise their strengths and areas for development and plan out when and how to carry out work following on from more guided learning. As a result, pupils become highly self-reflective. Teachers carefully monitor pupils' self-directed work so that by the end of high school pupils are confident, independent learners. Older pupils are prepared well for GCSE examinations.
28. The early years curriculum covers all seven areas of learning effectively. Teachers effectively model the use of language and encourage specific vocabulary in play so that children become confident in speaking and listening and being part of conversations. Structured guided use of resources, including Montessori materials, builds children's understanding of the sounds that letters make, so they begin to decode and read words accurately and develop an enjoyment of reading. Teachers use mathematical resources effectively to encourage children to identify patterns. Through

conversation, teachers encourage children to notice number patterns so that they gain a good foundation for more formal mathematical operations.

29. The leader of provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) meets regularly with staff to review pupils' progress against their objectives. Any need to provide more support is quickly identified and implemented in a timely fashion. In this way pupils receive the support they need to make good progress from starting points.
30. Staff provide effective support for pupils who have English as an additional language (EAL) when this is needed. They co-operate closely with parents to build on pupils' existing language skills and make effective use of a range of teaching techniques and appropriate resources to develop pupils' English language skills.
31. The school provides an appropriate extra-curricular programme, which include sports, music and drama clubs and activities such as knitting, dancing and choir. This programme is designed to correspond to learning in these areas that is integrated into the curriculum and helps enable pupils to develop their skills in these areas.

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

- 32. All the relevant Standards are met.**

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

33. Leaders communicate their high expectations of behaviour effectively. This is reflected in the clear school rules and code of conduct displayed around the school. Leaders and staff implement the behaviour management policy and anti-bullying strategy consistently and efficiently. Any minor altercations or bullying incident, should they occur, are swiftly dealt with. The curriculum is used to develop pupils' skills in finding resolutions to conflict in appropriate way. As a result, pupils are polite and respectful of one another and behave well.
34. Personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education lessons on strategies to challenge discrimination and prejudiced based bullying help pupils deepen their understanding of issues of equality and the needs to respect people's protected characteristics, such as race, sexual orientation and religion. Staff utilise the PSHE programme to teach pupils strategies they can use to reduce anxiety, such as taking 'brain breaks'. Pupils in the high school can access external professional mental health support out of school. They also have several staff in school, who act as a support network for the pupils. These networks provide pupils with support and guidance when required.
35. The school supports pupils' development of self-confidence effectively. This begins in the in early years, when staff support children's development of emotional resilience. They enable children to recognise and regulate their own emotions through gentle coaching when children are upset or cross. The curriculum is planned to allow pupils to make choices about when and how to complete their work and use their time. Pupils develop self-confidence as they learn to make sensible choices that help them achieve success. Teachers gently encourage and validate pupils' choices when planning next steps in lessons. This recognition of and respect for pupils effectively builds their feelings of self-worth and self-esteem.
36. 'Faith and belief' topics develop pupils' knowledge about different religions and beliefs effectively. Visitors from faith communities enable pupils to question and learn about the meaning of their faith to them.
37. Relationships and sex education (RSE) is taught within the 'Great lesson themes' and contains appropriate content. For example, pupils learn about different types of healthy relationship, setting boundaries, and the importance of consent.
38. Physical health is promoted through the curriculum and activity programme which enables pupils to experience a variety of sporting activities, such as dance, tai chi and roller skating, some of which is taught externally by specialist staff. Children in the early years' physical health and development of skills such as balance and co-ordination are supported through appropriate physical activities. Older pupils develop a variety of sports skills, including through competitive sports with other schools. However, in the high school, pupils have limited opportunities to pursue particular sports of their own interest, with the effect that their engagement with sport as a whole is not as strong as possible.
39. The premises and accommodation are suitably maintained through regular health and safety checks and servicing of equipment. The school implements an effective fire safety policy. For example, staff are trained appropriately in fire safety and fire evacuation drills are practiced regularly.

40. First aid arrangements are effective. First aid boxes are adequately maintained and available and medicines are appropriately stored and administered. Leaders monitor accurate records of medicines or first aid given and any accidents or incidents. There are sufficient numbers of suitably trained staff on both sites including those trained in paediatric first aid.
41. Admissions and attendance registers are appropriately maintained, with any absence suitably followed up. The local authority is informed if pupils join or leave the school at non-standard times including to be homeschooled. The school implements an appropriate attendance policy which reflects current statutory guidance.
42. Leaders ensure that supervision arrangements are effective, including by maintaining high teacher to pupil ratios. This ensures that although the pupils across the school have high degrees of autonomy and choices about their own locations for learning, there are always adults adequately supervising the spaces. Children in the early years are always in sight and hearing of their staff and appropriate staff-to-child ratios are maintained.

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

- 43. All the relevant Standards are met.**

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

44. Leaders and staff utilise 'Great lesson' themes and Friday school topics to enable the pupils to develop moral sensibilities and understand the importance of treating people fairly and respecting others' rights. The curriculum enables pupils to develop their understanding about different world cultures and range of the cultures represented in British society. For example, pupils study important historical and contemporary figures who represent different cultural backgrounds and well-chosen literature that draws out themes such as the impact of prejudice. Pupils study the Holocaust and other themes that draw out issues of equality and ethical treatment. As a result, pupils can reflect on such themes articulately and understand that people with different culture heritages have positively affected life in British society.
45. The Montessori curriculum is specifically developed to allow time for community work. Pupils are encouraged to contribute to their community and develop their sense of responsibility to those around them. Teachers encourage and enable pupils to take initiative in identifying and planning community action such as that taken by younger pupils who, with staff support, organised a litter pick in the local park. Pupils across the school participate in national and local events to raise money for a variety of causes, including those chosen by the pupils themselves. The Eco committee works to promote pupils' environmental awareness. In the high school pupils carry out jobs in their school community such as to work on their allotments. Older high school pupils support younger ones by helping them with their learning and activities such as dance classes. Engagement in such activities helps to promote pupils' sense of social responsibility.
46. The school teaches pupils about democracy and engages them with themes such as how laws are made, crime and punishment, the role of the police and how Government operates. Pupils enhance their understanding of democracy through electing pupils to particular roles of responsibility. Leaders ensure that any political themes that are met in the pupils' studies and discussions are explored fairly and impartially.
47. The school promotes pupils' social development effectively. Children in the Early years learn the first steps in developing positive relationships with their peers through careful encouragement by their teachers to share and take turns when playing group games. Staff use techniques such as 'peace tables' and articulation of rights and responsibilities to enable pupils to find solutions to any issues which arise. Pupils are encouraged to give and receive compliments and learn to develop relationships with their peers built on mutual respect. They develop skills on how to form positive interpersonal relationships.
48. The careers programme for senior pupils is effective overall. Staff enable pupils to identify their interests and skills and match these to potential careers. One-to-one mentor meetings provides pupils with individual careers advice. The school is quick to respond to pupils who voice interest in a career, supporting this by arranging visits from relevant people to discuss their roles. However, the school does not develop senior pupils' ability to make informed choices available about careers and post-16 pathways as effectively as possible.
49. The curriculum develops pupils' understanding of economics effectively from an early age. Children in the early years begin to develop knowledge and understanding of how money is used through activities such as roleplay cafés. In the primary school, teachers enable pupils to put their developing

understanding of economic concepts into practice. For example, weekly school meetings exploration of costings and affordability and the economic impact of any class decisions. In the high school, pupils plan and cost a range of events such as the summer ball and take on roles such as treasurer. Enterprise activities in the senior school in preparation for their Christmas fair allow pupils to put their economic knowledge in practice in planning, making and marketing artifacts to sell.

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

50. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

51. Leaders maintain an effective culture of safeguarding throughout the school. The safeguarding team follow up any safeguarding concerns that arise and apply appropriate procedures to do so. They liaise with external safeguarding partners effectively, including by making referrals when these are needed. The school has suitable procedures to respond to any allegations or low-level concerns against staff, including the head of school, that may arise.
52. The proprietor typically ensures that the safeguarding policy and procedures are regularly reviewed. However, at the start of the inspection the safeguarding policy had not yet been updated to reflect current statutory guidance (September 2024). This was put right during the inspection. Advisory board members support the proprietor's oversight of safeguarding, including by visiting the school and speaking to pupils and staff.
53. Appropriate and regular training is in place for all staff. The safeguarding team enable staff to apply the training received to the school. Staff knowledge is regularly checked. Staff understand their responsibilities towards safeguarding the children in their care. They know how to follow the school's safeguarding procedures should any safeguarding concern arise, including any concerns about staff. Staff know they can act independently to contact the local authority designated officer (LADO) or make a referral to children's services if necessary.
54. The school implements effective filtering and monitoring of internet usage to protect pupils accessing school computers and the internet. The filtering and monitoring system is regularly checked and tested.
55. Leaders provide pupils with a range of different ways in which they raise any worries that they might have, such as boxes in each classroom for anonymous use. Staff respond effectively whenever pupils communicate any concerns.
56. 'Great lesson' themes and specific PSHE lessons, as well as class and community meeting discussions, teach pupils of all ages how to keep themselves safe when online.
57. Leaders ensure that all required safer recruitment checks are carried out before staff commence working at the school. These checks are recorded accurately in the single central record of appointments.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

- 58. All the relevant Standards are met.**

School details

School	The Meadows Montessori School
Department for Education number	935/6226
Address	The Meadows Montessori School 32 Larchcroft Road Ipswich IP1 6AR
Phone number	01473 233782
Email address	info@themeadowsmontessori.com
Website	www.themeadowsmontessori.com
Proprietor	Mrs Samantha Sims
Head of school	Mrs Samantha Sims
Age range	3 to 16
Number of pupils	66
Date of previous inspection	15 to 16 January 2020

Information about the school

59. The Meadows Montessori School is an independent co-educational day school. The school is overseen by a single proprietor who is also the head of school and supported by an advisory board. It operates across two school sites with the primary school at the registered school address and the high school for pupils in aged 11 to 16 years at 316 Tuddenham Road, Ipswich. The primary school consists of three classes; Dragonflies, for pupils aged 3 to 6 years, Grasshoppers, for pupils aged 7 to 9 years, and Fireflies, for pupils aged 10 to 11 years.
60. The early years setting of seven children is integrated into the Dragonflies class.
61. The school has identified 19 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Three pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
62. English is an additional language for three pupils.
63. The school states its aims are to provide a school community in which every child can thrive and be prepared for life. It seeks for all children to have a life-long love of learning, be truly independent, intrinsically motivated, secure, responsible and confident.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

17 to 19 September 2024

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

65. Inspection activities included:

- observation of lessons, some in conjunction with school leaders
- observation of class meetings
- observation of a sample of activities that occurred during the inspection
- discussions with the proprietor and an advisory governor
- discussions with the heads, school leaders, managers and other members of staff
- discussions with pupils
- visits to the learning support area and facilities for physical education
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

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

How are association independent schools in England inspected?

- 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**.

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