

St Helens Montessori

St Helens, East Farleigh, Maidstone, Kent ME15 0JT

Inspection dates

11 September 2019

Overall outcome

The school meets all of the independent school standards that were checked during this inspection

Main inspection findings

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraphs 7, 7(a), 7(b) and including Part 6, paragraph 32(1), 32(1)(c)

- The previous standard inspection found that the proprietor had not made effective arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school. The safeguarding culture was not strong enough. The safeguarding policy had not been updated or published on the school's website as is required. Leaders had not kept up to date with statutory information issued by the Secretary of State about safeguarding. Staff had not received timely or effective training. As a consequence, staff did not have a clear understanding of their duties in keeping pupils safe.
- The action plan that the proprietor submitted to the Department for Education (DfE) indicated that all necessary action had already been taken. A new designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and deputy had been appointed. The DSL, deputy DSL and headteacher had all received the required level of training. Training was said to have improved the knowledge and understanding of staff.
- Following their recent training, leaders now have a sound understanding of safeguarding. They are familiar with statutory guidance. They use this knowledge and understanding to fulfil their duties in relation to safeguarding.
- The school's safeguarding policy meets statutory requirements. It is published on the school's website.
- The recently appointed DSL has put in place new procedures for the proper recording of concerns. This includes noting smaller indicators that might build a worrying picture over time. The forms for record keeping cover the elements recommended in recognised safeguarding guidance. Staff have begun to use these forms appropriately. This demonstrates that they know the procedures and are suitably vigilant. The DSL has responded promptly to any concerns raised and taken prompt action. Where appropriate, she has consulted with other agencies. The school's current safeguarding records are of good quality.
- Leaders know the correct steps to take should any concerns arise about staff, including the headteacher.

- Staff report that an increased focus on safeguarding has been a change for the better. They have now had training and convey a sound knowledge of a wide range of safeguarding matters. Staff have appreciated the opportunity to reflect on and discuss this training together. In terms of safeguarding, leaders and staff are mindful that there can be both benefits and potential risks in a close-knit community. There is a much stronger sense of shared responsibility.

Paragraphs 11, 12, 13, 16, 16(a), 16(b)

- The previous inspection found that arrangements for managing health and safety did not meet the standard required. For example, checks on the hot water temperature in hand basins were not effective. Either the policies or the procedures for fire safety, first aid and risk assessment did not meet requirements.
- The action plan indicated that the health and safety policy would be updated. Staff would be trained to ensure that the policy was implemented effectively in practice. Similarly, the action plan stated that the risk assessment policy and procedures would be updated. An external fire safety check was planned to help ensure the school conformed with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. The action plan stated that the school had updated its first-aid policy in February 2019. The plan also confirmed that staff had the relevant training, including in paediatric first aid.
- The proprietor has ensured that there is now a workable health and safety policy in place. It sets out necessary procedures to promote the safety and welfare of pupils, staff and visitors. It also allocates responsibility for the steps to be taken on the proprietor's behalf. The school's premises and grounds are clean, tidy and well maintained.
- A full fire risk assessment is in place. It was completed with advice from an external specialist. This risk assessment identified a handful of minor steps that would further reduce risk. The proprietor has acted promptly on this advice and taken the necessary action. Leaders and staff record their regular fire safety checks. There are also clear records of regular fire drills. These practice evacuations are fully evaluated to identify relevant learning points.
- A suitable first-aid policy is in place. There is a generous allocation of trained first aiders to care for injured pupils.
- The risk assessment policy sets out clearly the roles and responsibilities of leaders and staff in identifying, minimising and managing risk. Records of a range of different types of risk assessment show that this policy is followed in practice.
- All the standards that were checked in this part are met.

Part 4. Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

Paragraphs 18(2), 18(2)(a), 18(2)(b), 18(2)(c), 18(2)(c)(i), 18(2)(c)(ii), 18(2)(c)(iii), 18(2)(c)(iv), 18(2)(d), 18(2)(e), 18(3), 19(3), 21(1), 21(2), 21(3)(a), 21(3)(a)(i), 21(3)(a)(ii), 21(3)(a)(iii), 21(3)(a)(iv), 21(3)(a)(v), 21(3)(a)(vi), 21(3)(a)(vii), 21(3)(a)(viii), 21(3)(b), 21(4)

- The 2018 inspection found that arrangements for checking the suitability of staff and adults to work with children were ineffective. Leaders had not had up-to-date training about safer recruitment procedures.

- The school's action plan indicates that the secretary attended a safer recruitment course in February 2019. The safeguarding checks that were missing before were reportedly carried out in February 2019. The results of these checks were said to be stored in an updated, single central record.
- The single central record shows all required information. It contains details of the various checks that have been made about the suitability of staff to work with children. Where relevant, this includes prohibition from teaching and the various barred list checks.
- There are risk assessments in place for staff who have worked or lived overseas, to show what, if any, additional checks were needed.
- The school is currently establishing an advisory board. Leaders have started the necessary checks that members are not barred from involvement in the leadership and management of an independent school.
- The requirements that are contained within this part are met.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Paragraphs 21(1), 24(1)(a), 24(1)(b), 24(2), 28(1), 28(1)(d)

- The most recent standard inspection found that the school's medical room did not meet the required standards. Also, the temperature of hot water in the hand basins was found to be too high.
- The action plan stated that a suitable medical room had been created by the time the plan was submitted. The plan also reported that the temperature of the hot water was now suitably regulated.
- The medical room meets requirements. It is compact, but only intended for very short-term care of sick pupils. There is space to set out a foldaway bed which is neatly stored. The room has an integral toilet and hand basin, with a folding door for privacy.
- The hot water does not present a scalding risk.
- All standards that were checked in this part are met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraphs 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b), 34(1)(c)

- The previous inspection found that school leaders did not know the independent school standards and associated guidance well enough. As a result, the requirements of several parts of the standards were unmet.
- The action plan was found to provide a detailed account of the actions to be taken to ensure that all standards were met. The plan said an advisory panel would be created to support the proprietor's work to ensure that all requirements are continually met. The board would be made up of a range of professionals from education and beyond. Links would also be made with the local authority, for safeguarding.
- The proprietor has systematically checked that the school fulfils all requirements of the independent school standards. Leaders responded promptly to the findings of the

previous inspection. All independent school standards that were checked as part of this inspection were met.

- The proprietor has invested well in training for leaders and staff since the previous inspection, particularly around safeguarding. More is planned in the future. The proprietor has invited scrutiny of the school's safeguarding procedures, by the local authority, to check that these are robust.
- The proprietor has taken advice on the purpose and practicalities of operating advisory boards. She has consulted with another independent school and the local authority. The advisory board members have been identified. They bring a wealth of expertise and experience. For reasons beyond the proprietor's control, this process has taken slightly longer than the action plan indicated. The board's first meeting is scheduled to take place soon.
- The standard in this paragraph is met.

Statutory requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Early years safeguarding and welfare requirements 3.6, 3.7, 3.9, 3.11, 3.12, 3.54, 3.64

- The same weaknesses that previously led to unmet independent school standards meant that some of the early years safeguarding and welfare requirements were also unmet.
- Improvements to the school's arrangements for safeguarding, health and safety, and safer recruitment procedures outlined in this report mean that the associated early years safeguarding and welfare requirements are now met.
- The statutory early years safeguarding and welfare requirements that were checked are met.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements that were checked during this inspection. This included the standards and requirements that the school was judged to not comply with at the previous inspection. Not all of the standards and associated requirements were checked during this inspection.

The school now meets the following independent school standards

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 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.
- 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.
- 12 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.
- 13 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that first aid is administered in a timely and competent manner by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written first aid policy.
- 16 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that–
 - 16(a) the welfare of pupils at the school is safeguarded and promoted by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written risk assessment policy; and
 - 16(b) appropriate action is taken to reduce risks that are identified.

Part 4. Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

- 18(1) The standard in this paragraph relates to the suitability of persons appointed as members of staff at the school, other than proprietor and supply staff.
- 18(2) The standard in this paragraph is met if–
 - 18(2)(a) no such person is barred from regulated activity relating to children in accordance with section 3(2) of the 2006 Act where that person is or will be engaging in activity which is regulated activity within the meaning of Part 1 of Schedule 4 to that Act;

- 18(2)(b) no such person carries out the work, or intends to carry out work, at the school in contravention of a prohibition order, an interim prohibition order, or any direction made under section 128 of the 2008 Act or section 142 of the 2002 Act, or any disqualification, prohibition or restriction which takes effect as if contained in either such direction;
- 18(2)(c) the proprietor carries out appropriate checks to confirm in respect of each such person–
 - 18(2)(c)(i) the person’s identity;
 - 18(2)(c)(ii) the person’s medical fitness;
 - 18(2)(c)(iii) the person’s right to work in the United Kingdom; and
 - 18(2)(c)(iv) where appropriate, the person’s qualifications;
- 18(2)(d) the proprietor ensures that, where relevant to any such person, an enhanced criminal record check is made in respect of that person and an enhanced criminal record certificate is obtained before or as soon as practicable after that person’s appointment;
- 18(2)(e) in the case of any person for whom, by reason of that person living or having lived outside the United Kingdom, obtaining such a certificate is not sufficient to establish the person’s suitability to work in a school, such further checks are made as the proprietor considers appropriate, having regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.
- 18(3) The checks referred to in sub-paragraphs (2)(c) and (except where sub-paragraph (4) applies) (2)(e) must be completed before a person’s appointment.
- 19(3) Except in the case of a person to whom sub-paragraph (4) applies, the certificate referred to in sub-paragraph (2)(a)(i)(bb) must have been obtained not more than 3 months before the date on which the person is due to begin work at the school.
 - (21)(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor keeps a register which shows such of the information referred to in sub-paragraphs (3) to (7) as is applicable to the school in question.
 - 21(2) The register referred to in sub-paragraph (1) may be kept in electronic form, provided that the information so recorded is capable of being reproduced in legible form.
 - 21(3) The information referred to in this sub-paragraph is –
 - 21(3)(a) in relation to each member of staff (“S”) appointed on or after 1st May 2007, whether–
 - 21(3)(a)(i) S’s identity was checked;
 - 21(3)(a)(ii) a check was made to establish whether S is barred from regulated activity relating to children in accordance with section 3(2) of the 2006 Act;
 - 21(3)(a)(iii) a check was made to establish whether S is subject to any direction made under section 128 of the 2008 Act or section 142 of the 2002 Act or any disqualification, prohibition or restriction which takes effect as if contained in such a direction;
 - 21(3)(a)(iv) checks were made to ensure, where appropriate, that S had the relevant qualifications;

- 21(3)(a)(v) an enhanced criminal record certificate was obtained in respect of S;
- 21(3)(a)(vi) checks were made pursuant to paragraph 18(2)(d);
- 21(3)(a)(vii) a check of S's right to work in the United Kingdom was made; and
- 21(3)(a)(viii) checks were made pursuant to paragraph 18(2)(e),
- 21(3)(b) in relation to each member of staff ("S"), whether a check was made to establish whether S is subject to a prohibition order or an interim prohibition order, including the date on which such check was completed.

■ 21(4) The information referred to in this sub-paragraph is, in relation to each member of staff in post on 1st August 2007 who was appointed at any time before 1st May 2007, whether each check referred to in sub-paragraph (3) was made and whether an enhanced criminal record certificate was obtained, together with the date on which any check was completed or certificate obtained.

Part 5. Premises and accommodation at schools

■ 24(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that suitable accommodation is provided in order to cater for the medical and therapy needs of pupils, including–

- 24(1)(a) accommodation for the medical examination and treatment of pupils;
- 24(1)(b) accommodation for the short term care of sick and injured pupils, which includes a washing facility and is near to a toilet facility.
- 24(2) The accommodation provided under sub-paragraphs (1)(a) and (b) may be used for other purposes (apart from teaching) provided it is always readily available to be used for the purposes set out in sub-paragraphs (1)(a) and (b).

■ 28(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that–

- 28(1)(d) the temperature of hot water at the point of use does not pose a scalding risk to users.

Part 6. Provision of information

■ 32(1) The standard about the provision of information by the school is met if the proprietor ensures that–

- 32(1)(c) particulars of the arrangements for meeting the standard contained in paragraph 7 are published on the school's internet website or, where no such website exists, are provided to parents on request.

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
 - 34(1)(c) actively promote the well-being of pupils.

The school now meets the following early years safeguarding and welfare requirements

- 3.6. Providers must train all staff to understand their safeguarding policy and procedures, and ensure that all staff have up to date knowledge of safeguarding issues. Training made available by the provider must enable staff to identify signs of possible abuse and neglect at the earliest opportunity, and to respond in a timely and appropriate way.
- 3.7. Providers must have regard to the government's statutory guidance 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' and to the 'Prevent duty guidance for England and Wales'. All schools are required to have regard to the government's 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' statutory guidance, and other childcare providers may also find it helpful to refer to this guidance. If providers have concerns about children's safety or welfare, they must notify agencies with statutory responsibilities without delay. This means the local children's social care services and, in emergencies, the police.
- 3.9. Providers must ensure that people looking after children are suitable to fulfil the requirements of their roles. Providers must have effective systems in place to ensure that practitioners, and any other person who is likely to have regular contact with children (including those living or working on the premises), are suitable.
- 3.11. Providers must tell staff that they are expected to disclose any convictions, cautions, court orders, reprimands and warnings that may affect their suitability to work with children (whether received before or during their employment at the setting). Providers must not allow people, whose suitability has not been checked, including through a criminal records check, to have unsupervised contact with children being cared for.
- 3.12. Providers other than childminders must record information about staff qualifications and the identity checks and vetting processes that have been completed (including the criminal records check reference number, the date a check was obtained and details of who obtained it). For childminders, the relevant information will be kept by Ofsted or the agency with which the childminder is registered.
- 3.54. Providers must ensure that their premises, including overall floor space and outdoor spaces, are fit for purpose and suitable for the age of children cared for and the activities provided on the premises. Providers must comply with requirements of health and safety legislation (including fire safety and hygiene requirements).

- 3.64. Providers must ensure that they take all reasonable steps to ensure staff and children in their care are not exposed to risks and must be able to demonstrate how they are managing risks. Providers must determine where it is helpful to make some written risk assessments in relation to specific issues, to inform staff practice, and to demonstrate how they are managing risks if asked by parents and/or carers or inspectors. Risk assessments should identify aspects of the environment that need to be checked on a regular basis, when and by whom those aspects will be checked, and how the risk will be removed or minimised.

School details

Unique reference number	131567
DfE registration number	886/6113
Inspection number	10114599

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

Type of school	Other independent school
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	2 to 12
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	53
Number of part-time pupils	32
Proprietor	Marie-Elise Jeannelle Dening-Smitherman
Headteacher	Miss J Dening Smitherman
Annual fees (day pupils)	£7,900–£8,130 (full time)
Telephone number	01622 721731
Website	www.sthelensmontessori.co.uk
Email address	office@sthelensmontessori.co.uk
Date of previous standard inspection	6–8 November 2018

Information about this school

- St Helens Montessori School follows the Montessori approach. It is a Christian school, although children of all faiths are accepted.
- The nursery admits children from the age of two. The school is an approved provider of up to 30 hours' free early years education funding.
- There are no pupils with education, health and care plans.
- The proprietor is also the headteacher.
- The school's previous standard inspection was 6–8 November 2018.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out at the request of the registration authority for independent schools. The purpose of the inspection was to monitor the progress the school has made in meeting the independent school standards and other requirements that it was judged to not comply with at its previous standard inspection on 6–8 November 2018.
- This was the first progress monitoring inspection. It was conducted without notice.
- The school was required by the DfE to produce a statutory action plan. Ofsted evaluated the action plan on 20 May 2019 and the DfE accepted the plan without modification.
- The inspector held discussions with the proprietor, who is also the headteacher. He met with other leaders and a small group of teachers and staff. He scrutinised the single central record and other documentation relating to previously unmet standards.
- The inspector toured the school, with the headteacher, while it was operating.

Inspection team

Clive Dunn, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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