

**A report on**

**Cardiff Montessori School**

**Golden Gate  
73 Ty Glas Ave  
Llanishen  
CF14 5DX**

**Date of inspection: May 2026**

**by**

**Estyn, His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education  
and Training in Wales**

## About Cardiff Montessori School

|   |                           |
|---|---------------------------|
| Name of provider                                  | Cardiff Montessori School |
| Proprietor status                                 | Private limited company   |
| Language of the provider                          | English                   |
| Type of school                                    | Independent Primary       |
| Residential provision?                            | No                        |
| Number of pupils on roll                          | 109                       |
| Pupils of statutory school age                    | 84                        |
| Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable) | {PreviousInspectionDate}  |
| Start date of inspection                          | 06/05/2026                |

### School context

Cardiff Montessori School is a co-educational, independent school for pupils from 3 to 16 years of age, located in Llanishen, Cardiff.

The school is organised into four sections: the Toddler Community, for children aged 2 to 3 years, the Children's House (ages 3 to 6), Elementary (ages 6 to 12), and Secondary (ages 12 to 16). There are currently 109 pupils on roll, with 23 below compulsory school age, 50 in primary year groups, and 36 in secondary.

The current headteacher is the proprietor and founded the school in 2016. The school was last inspected in 2023. The school aims to foster its stated values of kindness, honesty, respect and responsibility through implementation of the Montessori approach to education.

## Previous recommendations

- R1 Formalise and sharpen quality assurance arrangements to focus on key areas for improvement
- R2 Ensure that teacher feedback is more immediate and helps pupils sustain improvements in learning successfully
- R3 Improve the quality of writing across the school

## Summary

Cardiff Montessori School is a highly inclusive, supportive, and nurturing environment where pupils feel safe, happy, and respected. Working relationships between staff and pupils are highly positive, contributing to exemplary behaviour and strong communication skills across the school. Pupils develop independence, resilience, and responsibility rapidly from an early age. They plan and manage their own learning effectively while contributing to routines that promote collaboration and care for the environment.

Across the school, nearly all teaching is reflective of Montessori principles, with clear explanations, authentic resources, and strong use of open questioning to encourage independent thinking. In the secondary school, enquiry-based learning is balanced effectively with preparation for GCSE requirements. Classrooms are purposeful places, and nearly all pupils make strong progress in their knowledge, skills, and well-being.

The school has strengthened its feedback practices since the last inspection. Teachers continuously monitor pupils' work, provide verbal and written feedback, and hold weekly progress meetings to review learning and set targets. Secondary pupils also receive detailed written feedback linked to GCSE examination criteria. As a result, nearly all pupils are better able to understand and improve their performance over time.

Leaders have prioritised raising standards in pupils' writing through professional development, targeted interventions, and a whole-school writing policy. As a result, the quality, accuracy and clarity of pupils' writing is beginning to improve throughout the school. Quality assurance processes have also been formalised and enhanced. Evidence from lesson observations, learning walks, work scrutiny, and pupil voice, now gives leaders a clear understanding of teaching effectiveness and informs school improvement priorities well. The recently established advisory board provides valuable expertise, guidance, and challenge, helping leaders sharpen improvement planning and monitor progress towards targets.

In a very small number of cases, checks to establish the continuing suitability of staff have not kept pace with legislation. As a result, the school does not currently meet all requirements of the Independent Schools Standards (Wales) Regulations 2024.

## **Main evaluation**

Leaders and staff at Cardiff Montessori School have successfully established an inclusive, supportive learning environment in which staff share a clear common purpose. As a result, nearly all pupils feel happy, safe and supported at school. They build open, communicative relationships with their teachers, which helps to foster high levels of motivation and independence. Across the school, nearly all pupils' behaviour is exemplary. Pupils are courteous, respectful and encouraging to their peers, and are highly welcoming to visitors.

### **Developing independence and skills**

From the moment pupils join Cardiff Montessori School they begin to rapidly develop independence and resilience. As a result, nearly all pupils self-direct their learning and manage their learning spaces and resources highly effectively for their age. Across the school, in consultation with their teachers, pupils take responsibility for planning their daily activities. As a result, they demonstrate high levels of agency, curiosity and ownership of their learning.

Nearly all pupils develop their social and collaborative skills well. For example, through contributing to well-established routines for caring for the school environment. During their time at the school, nearly all pupils develop their oracy and communication skills rapidly and securely. Pupils of all ages listen carefully when others are speaking, and respond with confidence and clarity, when appropriate, to develop conversations well.

Across the school, staff have established a calm and nurturing environment in which most pupils are highly eager to learn. Working relationships between pupils and staff are highly respectful and positive, and this supports pupils to be aspirational.

Teaching in the primary school follows Montessori principles and is delivered to small groups of pupils or individually. Explanations are clear, interactive, and usually supported by authentic resources. In the secondary school, teachers build upon Montessori principles to blend together a range of enquiry-based tasks with more tightly focused questions reflecting the demands of GCSE examinations. Across the school, nearly all teachers use open questioning skilfully to develop pupils' understanding well. As a result, most pupils

are able to identify steps to improve their learning accurately. Overall, classrooms across the school are purposeful learning environments, which support pupils to make progress in their development, knowledge, and skills effectively.

### **A purposeful focus on feedback and on developing pupils' writing**

The school has built upon its existing approaches to pupil feedback successfully since the last inspection whilst not detracting from the deliberate emphasis placed upon pupils to self-assess. During each 'work cycle' or session, staff observe pupils' work closely and act as effective facilitators to drive progress. At the end of each session, pupils' work is reviewed by teachers, and feedback is provided either through discussion or through written comments in pupil's planners. In addition, pupils benefit from weekly, individual progress meetings with their teachers. As a result, nearly all pupils know their key areas for development and can identify their next steps accurately. In the secondary section of the school, teachers build upon these approaches further and provide detailed, specific written feedback regularly. Teacher's comments are developmental and are often linked to GCSE marking criteria which enables pupils to evaluate their progress in relation to their peers in other settings. As a result, most pupils can recognise and sustain improvements in their learning over time. Many older pupils feel the feedback they receive supports them to make progress in their studies, and that their teachers are approachable and helpful.

Since the last inspection, leaders have had a clear focus upon improving the quality of pupils' writing. Staff have had access to a wide range of meaningful professional development related to writing strategies. In addition, experienced staff have been recruited to deliver specific language and communication interventions. Leaders have developed a whole-school policy related to writing and undertaken a comprehensive audit which clarifies the existing strengths and priorities for improvement. As a result of this work, pupils of all ages are beginning to improve the accuracy and clarity of their writing.

### **Leadership and quality assurance**

Since the time of the core inspection, leaders have implemented a formal programme of quality assurance activities to monitor the quality and impact of teaching across the school. They collect a suitable range of first-hand evidence including lesson observations, learning walks, work scrutiny, planning scrutiny and pupil voice. Leaders' evaluation of this evidence informs the school's development priorities, which focus particularly on effective delivery of Montessori education. As a result, leaders now have an accurate overview of the effectiveness of teaching and learning across the school. In addition, leaders closely monitor the effectiveness of off-site provision, such as farm experiences and trips, which enables them to evaluate this provision against the school's educational

aims and ethos. Leaders act promptly in response to findings to improve and refine provision.

Leaders use their findings from quality assurance activity to identify priorities for professional learning, and to monitor its impact effectively. For example, in response to evidence from learning walks, recent staff training focused on further developing learning environments.

The school's advisory board (established since the last core inspection) consists of suitably experienced professionals, familiar with the implementation of Montessori principles across the full statutory school age range. This body provides leaders with valuable advice, guidance, and challenge. The board's work includes well-established contributions to quality assurance activity, with a focus on pupil progress and outcomes. As a result of the board's work, leaders have begun to sharpen and further develop school improvement priorities and can identify associated actions more effectively.

In a very few instances, the school's processes for establishing the continuing suitability of staff have not kept pace with changes to legislation. As a result, the school does not meet all of the requirements of the Independent Schools Standards (Wales) Regulations 2024.

## **Compliance with the regulations for registration**

Independent school inspections are governed by the Education Act 2002 and related regulations: the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2024. These regulations require an independent school to meet an appropriate standard in the following areas:

### **The quality of education provided by the school**

On the basis of this inspection, there is no evidence that the school does not comply with this standard.

### **The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils**

On the basis of this inspection, there is no evidence that the school does not comply with this standard.

### **Welfare, health and safety of pupils**

On the basis of this inspection, there is no evidence that the school does not comply with this standard.

### **The suitability of proprietors and staff**

The school does not meet the regulatory requirements for this standard.

Although the school meets almost all of the regulatory requirements for this standard, in order to comply fully with the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2024 the school should, in relation to members of staff at the school:

- where an individual is registered with the DBS up-date service, check the individual's certificate status at least every three years **[23(a)(i)]**
- where an individual is not registered with the DBS up-date service, apply for a DBS certificate in respect of that individual at least every three years **[23(a)(ii)]**

### **Premises of and boarding accommodation at schools**

On the basis of this inspection, there is no evidence that the school does not comply with this standard.

### **The provision of information**

On the basis of this inspection, there is no evidence that the school does not comply with this standard.

### **The manner in which complaints are to be handled**

On the basis of this inspection, there is no evidence that the school does not comply with this standard.

## **New recommendations**

We have made two recommendations to help the school continue to improve:

- R1 Comply fully with the Independent Schools Standards (Wales) Regulations 2024.
- R2 Continue to implement and embed the school's current improvement priorities.

## **Safeguarding**

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils do not give any cause for concern.

## **What happens next**

Since the school does not meet the standards required for registration, the Welsh Government will require the proprietor to submit an action plan within a specified period of time. This plan will set out the steps that the school will take to meet the standards, and the timescale within which it will complete each step. Welsh Government may then request Estyn to support the school through an improvement process.

## Evidence base of the report

Before an inspection, inspectors:

- analyse the outcomes from parent/carer and pupil questionnaires and consider the views of teachers and support staff through their questionnaire responses

During an inspection, inspectors normally:

- hold a meeting with parents/carers to hear their views on the school and its effectiveness
- meet the headteacher, governors/proprietor(s), leaders and individual teachers to evaluate the impact of the school's work
- meet pupils to discuss their work and to gain their views about various aspects of their school
- meet groups of pupils in leadership roles, such as representatives from the school council and eco-committee
- visit lessons and undertake a variety of learning walks to observe pupils learning
- look closely at the school's self-evaluation processes
- consider the school's improvement plan and look at evidence to show how well the school had taken forward planned improvements
- scrutinise a range of school documents, including information on pupil assessment and progress, records of meetings of staff and the governing body (where appropriate), information on pupils' well-being, including the safeguarding of pupils, and records of staff training and professional development

After the on-site inspection and before the publication of the report, Estyn:

- review the findings of the inspection alongside the supporting evidence from the inspection team in order to validate, moderate and ensure the quality of the inspection

## Appendix 1: Numbers – quantities and proportions

The report makes references to different quantities and proportions e.g. ‘*most pupils...*’ or ‘*very few pupils...*’. We use these terms to describe quantities and proportions as outlined in the table below:

|               |                          |
|---------------|--------------------------|
| nearly all =  | with very few exceptions |
| most =        | 90% or more              |
| many =        | 70% or more              |
| a majority =  | over 60%                 |
| half =        | 50%                      |
| around half = | close to 50%             |
| a minority =  | below 40%                |
| few =         | below 20%                |
| very few =    | less than 10%            |

## Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Estyn website (<http://www.estyn.gov.wales/>)

The report was produced in accordance with section 163 of the Education Act 2002. The main purpose of inspection under this section is to report on compliance with the Independent Schools Standards (Wales) Regulations 2024. In schools that provide non-maintained nursery education, this report also satisfies the requirements of Schedule 26 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

Every possible care has been taken to ensure that the information in this document is accurate at the time of publication. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

Publications Section

Estyn

Anchor Court, Keen Road

Cardiff

CF24 5JW or by email to [publications@estyn.gov.wales](mailto:publications@estyn.gov.wales)

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