



**British School
Overseas**
Inspected by Penta International

Inspection Report

Montessori British School Murcia

Spain

Date 17th June 2021
Inspection number 20210617

17th June 2021

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1. Purpose and scope of the inspection

The Department for Education has put in place a voluntary scheme for the inspection of British schools overseas, whereby schools are inspected against a common set of standards that British schools overseas can choose to adopt.

The inspection and this report follow the Department for Education (DFE) schedule for the inspection of British Schools Overseas.

The purpose of the inspection is to provide information to parents, teachers, senior managers and the school's management on the overall effectiveness of the school, the standard of education it provides and its compatibility with independent schools in the United Kingdom.

The inspection and report will cover the key areas of quality of the curriculum; quality of teaching and learning; the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students; their welfare, health and safety; the suitability of the proprietor and staff; the school's premises and accommodation (including boarding); and the school's complaints procedures. An essential part of the inspection is considering the extent to which the British character of the school is evident in its ethos, curriculum, teaching, care for and students' achievements.

This inspection was completed by Penta International. Penta International is approved by the British Government for the purpose of inspecting schools overseas. As one of the leading inspection providers, Penta International reports to the English Department for Education (DFE) on the extent to which schools meet the standards for British Schools Overseas.

During the inspection visit, all teachers were observed by inspectors. School documentation and policies were analysed, and data reviewed. Students' workbooks were scrutinised. Discussions were held with the senior staff, the management teams, a range of teachers, parents and groups of students.

The lead inspector, present at the school, was Dr Mark Evans.

2. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The Montessori British School Murcia, Spain (MBSM) meets the standards for British Schools Overseas.

3. Overall effectiveness of the school

3.1 What the school does well

MBSM has many strengths, including:

- An inspirational team of senior staff;
- Caring and supportive family ethos;
- Stimulating learning environment;
- Individualised teaching and learning and support;
- Progression in English language acquisition and usage throughout the school;
- Resourceful use of online learning.

3.2 Points for improvement

While not required by regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development.

- i. Continue to innovate teaching and learning programme, to ensure that the best quality British education is delivered to students.
- ii. Ensure that students are consistently well challenged in all lessons.
- iii. Check carefully the impact of actions taken to promote further improvement of the boarding school.

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3.3 Recommendation(s)

1. Authorisation be granted for one year, for children for pre-school (0 years) to Year 11 (16 years);
2. Next inspection to take place before June 2022

4. The context of the school

Full name of School	Montessori British School Murcia		
Address	c/ Ermita Vieja, 26B 30006 Murcia		
Telephone number/s	+34629421588		
Fax number	-		
Website address	www.montessorischoolmurcia.com		
Key email address/s	info@montessorischoolmurcia.com		
Headteacher/Principal	Abraham Buitrago Arenas/Mercedes Gil Hernández		
Chair of Board of Governors/Proprietor	Ricardo Frutos Gómez		
Age range	1-18 years		
Number of students	<i>Total</i> 70	<i>Boys</i> 37	<i>Girls</i> 33
Student Numbers by Age	<i>0-2 years</i> 0	<i>3-5 years</i> 4	<i>6-11 years</i> 49
	<i>12-16 years</i> 21	<i>17-18 years</i> 0	<i>18+ years</i> 0
Total Number of Part-Time Students	0		

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The purpose of this inspection is to assess the provision for 1-16 for authorisation as offering a British education, opening a 30 students boarding school.

MBSM was founded in 2014. It moved into its current premises in Puente Tocinos in Murcia, in September 2016.

Due at least in part to Covid-19 government decree lockdown and massive deregistration in 2020 last term, the school started in September 2020 with just 15 students. However, the good results of their innovative programme, the school reached 70 students for the last term. The school has followed the WHO recommendations of not having face to face groups before the incidence rate for Covid-19 got lower than 50, offering a virtual programme until then.

At this moment there are no students under the age of 5. However, there is a small group of families with children in Early Years and Foundation Stage (EYFS) wishing enrol for next year, as well as some students with special educational needs on the autistic spectrum, in which the headteacher is an expert.

The students are taught as two Key Stage 1 (Electron and Quasar) classes, two Key Stage 2 (Neutrino and Proton) classes, and a Key Stages 3 and 4 (Neutron) class. 80% of current students are Spanish, enrolled in the boarding school/ flex programme. There are 14 students of other nationalities or that live abroad (in Italy, UK, Germany and Poland).

Requirement 1: Child protection, health and welfare

Child protection, health and welfare are good.

The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) is the headteacher. He is effective in this role. It is made clear to staff and parents how to voice concerns and how different agencies would work together if there was ever an issue.

Special arrangements have been made this year because of Covid-19. Specifications from the *Consejería de Sanidad* have been put into place including disinfection measures, use of masks and vinyl shields for teachers, reducing groups to a maximum of 8 children in a room with a teacher, outdoor lessons whenever possible, and strict materials and book quarantines. In addition, the senior leadership team (SLT) decided last May to continue with a certain amount of online learning, until the incidence rate (cases per 100,000 inhabitants) was below 25-50 locally, as recommended by the World Health Organisation (WHO) regarding the MISD “multisystem inflammatory syndrome” in children, a serious complication associated with Covid-19).

The clear definition of child protection with appropriate policies and procedures, is understood by staff. The DSL has held professional development sessions for the staff: this underlines again the high value placed by the school on the safeguarding and child protection policies. It is clear what students, staff and volunteers should do if they feel uncomfortable or have concerns about mistreatment or abuse.

The culture and values of MBSM support and encourage good practice. This leads to enhanced child protection. The school uses a single central register, further enhancing security. All members of staff have appropriate Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks, ACRO or equivalent. Staff have completed on-line training in child safeguarding.

Students are encouraged to follow health and safety directions and learn the risks and how to avoid them. Several members of staff are first-aid trained. Current certificates are on display. The principal has provided online training to all staff on data protection. Training has also been provided to all staff on risk assessment and prevention, and on food hygiene.

The building is secure, providing a safe environment for students. The points of access are controlled appropriately. The outdoor space is well maintained. Risk assessments are in place. Fire extinguishers are spread throughout the school and fire exits are marked clearly. Instructions and evacuation procedures are displayed in every room and in

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corridors. Fire drills are carried out regularly and training on fire safety procedures has been provided by the proprietor.

School procedural safety is good. There is an appropriate policy on health and safety, and supervision of break time and sports, risk assessments, after-school club registers, appropriate clothing for students and staff, chemical storage, visitor IDs, and teacher absence are all managed well.

There is good access to water. Staff give due consideration to supporting students' personal hygiene, with all the Covid-19 recommendations in place. Emergency contacts details are maintained and there is information available to staff on children of concern, as needed. The arrangements for pastoral care are very good.

Communications controls are in place to avoid misuse and potential hazards, but if needed students can contact families easily.

Requirement 2: Accommodation and facilities

The school is housed in an unusual spacious building, in an attractive generously planted garden, which allows a lot of outdoors educational activities. The beautiful trees and collection of animals give the school a special feeling. All of the classrooms are on the ground floor and are of a suitable size. Both the size and layout of the building and grounds are suitable for the numbers and age range proposed. There is no evidence that the school does not meet the local authority requirements. The headteacher and the principal regularly review their regional community and municipality responsibilities.

The classrooms are well furnished and have good natural light. They form an attractive and appropriate learning environment. The outdoor learning areas are well planned and there is a range of natural resources, such as areas for planting and growing vegetables. Excellent use is made of the outdoor areas to provide pupils with a rich variety of experiences. This encourages them to question, explore, touch and feel, developing their scientific, physical and language skills.

The school is adequately resourced for the core subjects, with a good range of Montessori and other manipulatives for mathematics, science and English. There is an appropriate scheme to support the teaching of reading throughout the school. The school library is adequately stocked and although the amount of computing equipment is limited, there are convincing plans to develop both sets of resources further over the next few years. The Montessori equipment for every level is displayed appropriately and used in a manner which supports learning in the English national curriculum.

In the classrooms and corridors, some pupils' work is displayed. There are some good displays of their activities and efforts, and in the virtual platforms pupils' achievements are well celebrated. The outdoor areas are safe, exciting and provide stimulating spaces for learning and for recreation. There is ample space available for further recreation and sports facilities as pupil numbers increase.

Suitable sleeping accommodation is provided for boarders, separate for boys and girls. There are four big rooms (just two were working at the time of the visit) with a total capacity of 30 boarders, and two additional rooms for house parents (separated male and female). Furniture is tailored and compact and the boarder can have all her personal objects in or under his bed, which is a special Covid-19 measure. There is a 2+ m. distance between beds. Individual wall space is provided for personal displays as well.

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Risk assessment is up to date and under constant revision. There is a living (social club) and library for study purposes. The boarding school is appropriately furnished, lit, heated and ventilated, daily cleaned and maintained, and has accommodation for restricted mobility students. Access for unauthorised persons is blocked. Privacy is protected and no surveillance equipment intrudes rooms and private spaces.

There are two living rooms, one just for students on the first floor. The library on the ground floor is suitable, and this where students can perform social activities with guests under staff supervision.

Adequate protocols and policies are in place and include a 24/7 available on request nurse and psychologist who can assist students if needed. A private medical insurance is in place, that allows to take children to a hospital 5 minutes driving in case of accident or emergency: the school is close to a medical centre as well for smaller interventions. All staff receives first aid training and access to first aid kits in every room and one portable for external use.

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Requirement 3: Curriculum

The curriculum is broad and balanced, giving students the possibility to take an active role in their learning experience. Favourite learning styles are taken into account, and students are encouraged to find their own one by giving them many different options.

There is a special consideration to the ages of students, aptitudes and needs. This year, students from different places and with different backgrounds, some of them with a low English language level, have been supported due to the Covid-19.

There is an effective blend between the English National Curriculum and the ideas and activities of the Montessori method. Metacognition, challenge, purposeful activity and following personal interests are key. The MBSM curriculum ensures there is full-time supervised education which gives students experience in linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human, and social, physical and aesthetic and creative education

The 20% of the curriculum is dedicated to Spanish standards (Language and Literature, History and Geography) and this is provided face to face, as *per* requirements of the Spanish authorities. The principal is the coordinator of the Spanish department as a qualified teacher.

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is good: it threads through all the learning opportunities provided. There is clear evidence of focussed individualised and social learning, with a good balance of adult interaction and intervention.

There are small numbers in each class, so every student's needs are catered for and ample individual support is available, as required. Some teachers are SEN specialists and the SENCO is providing individualised attention to some autistic, ADHD and dyslexic students.

The balance of teaching time is sound: the range of subjects covered now includes computing, PE, music and art, as well as the core subjects of English, mathematics, science and Spanish. There are plans for collaboration with an online Music School and the local swimming pool. Art and cooking are given a paramount importance with dedicated professionally trained staff.

There is a general British atmosphere around policies, plans and schemes of work, which have been written according to the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. Teachers promote these values during their lessons, for example by asking the students to vote decisions that could potentially affect the whole class. In lessons, for example, the British educational system is explained, including Universities and Awarding Bodies. Important days and weeks such as Shakespeare week are celebrated.

Requirement 4: Staffing

All members of staff have teaching qualifications, and most have significant experience of UK education. The headteacher is UK trained and experienced, and the principal has qualified teacher status and experience in British schools. There is now a continuing professional policy through which all staff have a responsibility to participate in school focussed CPD and personal career development, to support and improve teaching and learning. The CPD leader is the headteacher, who is a qualified teacher trainer. The senior staff offer in-house training, plus the school uses a range of providers/types of provision including online and blended courses.

Staff are positive, collaborate in the mission of the school with enthusiasm, and report that they enjoy their work. Support teachers and teaching assistants have a positive impact on students' learning and help to manage routines. The standard of spoken English amongst the team continues to improve, being spoken most of the time as the language of instruction.

The boarding school spirit is much more in the British mindset than the Spanish, and therefore English native staff with experience in UK Boarding schools is planned to be contracted in September. Alliances are being put in place with different British schools in England and in Spain.

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Requirement 5: Quality of learning

The quality of learning is good. Relationships between staff and students, and among students, are strong: the students enjoy being in school and love learning. There were many examples of excited students seeking knowledge within a calm and supportive environment.

Students are confident and independent. They have excellent personal care routines, develop a great understanding of values, and show outstanding social skills. Staff are strong role models. Student absences are very low, thoroughly checked and tracked every day by staff.

Students are inquisitive, motivated learners who persevere and become independent from an early age. For example, every week early primary students choose a profession they like, and at the end of the week, they show the rest of the class what that profession looks like. Older students are keen and enthusiastic learners too. They work well together and listen to each other's ideas and thoughts. For example, they were obviously delighted in planning and carrying out some research or activities related to the business and enterprise programme (an entrepreneurship weekly workshop).

Technology is present and is often of the highest standard: computers, tablets, electronics, platforms, personal assistants and drones, for example. The abundance of self-correcting materials, small classes and good staff ratios promote individualised learning and personalisation of the curriculum. Artificial intelligence engines (like *Snappet* and *Epic!*) that adapt the level of the exercises to the capacity of the student, are well used. They allow integration of classroom work with remote learning. Videoconferencing allows students to share activities from home if they wish, as well as in the classroom.

Evidence of ongoing assessment with regard to expected levels of the English National Curriculum is filed in students' individual digital portfolios, along with students' personal targets, planning and completed work. Daily targets identified by both teachers and students were listed on the whiteboard in the primary class-room.

A range of outdoors and around the school activities are in place to enrich learning. *Skype a Scientist*, visits to the science museum, different local companies, industries and start-ups which motivate students to find their vocation.

The school is under the process to be recognised as a Pearson Edexcel examination centre to offer a range of GCSEs and A-Levels options. There is already one student who is going to go through GCSEs process this year, and a few more who will sit the exams next academic year.

Evidence

The inspection took place over one full day, with time before and after for preparation and writing. The inspector was Dr Mark Evans. A range of formal and informal discussions with staff, parents and students took place, as well as a series of lesson observations and learning walks. School documentation was read and analysed. During the time of the inspection, the school was subject to national and regional Covid-19 restrictions; all health and safety regulations were fully and appropriately adhered to.