

Grantham Farm Montessori School

Inhurst Lane, Baughurst, Tadley, Hampshire RG26 5JS

Inspection dates

24–26 May 2016

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders' self-evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses is not accurate because procedures are not in place to gather evidence.
- Teachers are not clear about how they can improve their work.
- Some documents, such as risk assessments, lack detail and have not been updated regularly.
- Leaders have not ensured that checks to keep children safe are consistently in place. This has resulted in the non-compliance of Independent School Standard 3 (12) as the school has not ensured that all electrical equipment is safe for use.
- Performance management is not effective. As a result, teachers and leaders are not held to account for their work or for progress.
- Procedures to measure children's progress in mathematics and literacy over time are not secure. Information gathered about pupils' progress is not yet used effectively by leaders to drive forward improvements in the curriculum, teaching and learning and in pupils' progress.
- Lesson time is not always used effectively to ensure that children make the best possible progress.

The school has the following strengths

- Grantham Farm is a caring school where children's personal development is paramount. Children feel safe and parents state that they are well cared for. This has led to strong relationships between all members of the school community.
- The headteacher has managed change with tact and diplomacy. In the short time that she has been in post, she has ensured everyone has confidence in the school. Parents are extremely supportive and rate the school highly.
- Children behave well. They are polite and have good manners, along with a high degree of confidence. They show respect for each other and for adults.
- Teaching is good. Staff have secure subject knowledge and use questioning effectively to support children's learning.
- The focus on one-to-one teaching supports all children to make good progress. Provision for the most able children ensures that they are suitably challenged.
- The school benefits from extensive grounds which are well used to secure children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development as well as their physical development.
- The curriculum is broad and allows children to develop and follow their interests.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school must take action to meet the schedule to The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and associated requirements. The details are listed in the full report.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - putting structures and procedures in place so that all staff are fully held to account for their work
 - ensuring formal procedures are in place so that the headteacher, who is also the proprietor, is challenged effectively
 - ensuring teachers are aware of how to improve teaching and learning
 - gathering and analysing all evidence to ensure the school's self-evaluation is accurate
 - ensuring all policies and paperwork are up to date and appropriately detailed
 - putting procedures in place to ensure that all electrical and fire safety checks are carried out within the required timeframe, in order to comply with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, Part 3(12).

- Raise outcomes for children by:
 - revising staff appraisal processes so that individuals are set targets and held to account by school leaders in order that the performance of staff, and the school overall, improves
 - developing systems to enable the progress of children to be measured more accurately
 - using all lesson time to greatest effect to ensure maximum progress is made by children.

- The school must meet the following independent school standards:
 - Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management **requires improvement**

- The school has been through an emotional and somewhat difficult time recently, due to the illness and untimely death of the headteacher. The deputy headteacher took on the role of headteacher in January 2016 and she has worked hard to ensure a smooth transition for everyone. As a result, numbers on roll are now beginning to rise and confidence in the school among parents and staff is high. Teachers feel well supported and respected by leaders and, consequently, staff morale is high.
- Leadership has not yet achieved a good grasp of the independent school standards and some minor areas were not met at the time of the inspection. The majority of these were easily rectified during the inspection, for example labelling drinking water, reorganising toilet facilities so that they are for the sole use of the children and ensuring that hot water is of a suitable temperature. Nevertheless, no certificate was available to show that portable appliance testing had been undertaken within the last year and therefore the safety of the electrical equipment used by the school is not assured. The headteacher has taken steps to ensure this test is completed as a matter of urgency. However, this resulted in the school failing to meet the required independent school standard relating to the welfare, health and safety of children Part 3 (12).
- Self-evaluation lacks rigour and depth and lacks accuracy. Leaders recognise this and are determined to ensure that improvements take place. However, leaders do not systematically evaluate the quality of teaching and this has led to the lack of an accurate understanding of the overall quality of teaching and learning.
- Policies and procedures lack detail and substance. Leaders have not ensured that procedures are in place to measure the progress children make over time. Therefore, the school is unable to give an overview of children's progress.
- Performance management has not been undertaken this year. Documentation from last year shows that there has been a lack of focus on teaching and the school's priorities. There are no formal systems in place to challenge the headteacher who is also the proprietor.
- The curriculum is broad and well balanced and provides children with a wide range of opportunities to learn. Children state that they particularly enjoy learning French and music. Provision for physical education has improved due to requests from parents. British values are promoted through the curriculum and evidence of this can be seen in displays, such as the commemoration of Remembrance Day and voting at a polling station in the classroom along with the counting of votes.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is embedded well throughout the curriculum, and there are many opportunities available for children to work together and learn about other cultures, festivals and religions. Children have enjoyed learning about life in Thailand, the festival of Diwali and Judaism. The school has strong links with a school in Botswana and children regularly raise money for them.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. All staff have regular training and safeguarding is a standing item on staff meeting agendas. Children's personal development is given high priority in the school and they are well cared for. Parents are confident that their children are safe at the school. The school has appropriate systems in place to ensure safeguarding concerns are systematically logged and dealt with.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment **is good**

- Teachers have high expectations of children, especially the most able.
- Parents state that teachers 'foster a good learning spirit' and develop 'excitement and enjoyment for learning'. This is due to the enthusiasm and secure subject knowledge of teachers.
- Children are taught either individually or in very small groups and benefit from teachers' good questioning skills.
- The most able children are regularly challenged in mathematics and literacy through small group work. For example, a group of five children aged four and five enjoyed a mathematics lesson involving a shopkeeper and a banker. Subsequently, children were able to add up the cost of two items in the shop, add and count out money correctly and work out how much change they should be given.
- A wide range of activities are available for children to choose from based on their own interests. There is a reasonable balance of child-initiated and teacher-led activities, with children instigating the majority of

activities. Teachers are very responsive to the interests of individual children. However, lesson time is not always used effectively and sometimes children lack guidance and focus. For example, when teachers are working with individual children, some other children are unsure of what to do. This results in reduced learning time and challenge for these children.

- All teachers have a good understanding and awareness of children's abilities and aptitudes. They keep comprehensive records of children's learning each day. This helps them to plan effectively for individual children's learning.
- Assessment procedures are in place to ensure that parents know how well their children are doing and to ensure parents are involved in their child's education. These procedures include the use of a personalised website which enables parents to see evidence of teachers' observations of children. This is appreciated by parents who are able to add information to the site about their child. However, the school does not have procedures in place to measure children's progress accurately over time.
- There is a structured approach to the teaching of reading using a range of strategies, including phonics (letters and the sounds they make). As a result, children read enthusiastically and enjoy learning new words.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare are good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote children's personal development and welfare is good, and is at the heart of all the school does. Teachers are extremely sensitive to the personal development and welfare of the children. As one parent commented, 'The staff are dedicated and caring to the children, I feel they go above and beyond your expectation for all the children.' Another parent noted that the school is 'highly nurturing'.
- The school has a comprehensive child protection policy that ensures staff have a high awareness of how to keep children safe. Parents reinforce this by saying that their children are safe at school which has a 'quiet, peaceful environment'.
- Children understand the concept of healthy eating due to the Eco-school focus in the curriculum. They grow fruit and vegetables in the garden, which they pick and either eat at school or take home. Children enjoy looking after chickens and sell eggs to their parents.
- There are many opportunities for children to develop their physical skills and enjoy exercise. A specialist teacher leads physical education one afternoon a week, supporting other physical activities led by teachers.
- The impressive outside environment contains many opportunities for play and discovery. A trim trail encourages children to develop their balance while a pond supports scientific investigation and exploration. The see-saw helps children to develop their turn-taking skills as they are encouraged to be aware of who is waiting for a turn. The garden area helps children to appreciate nature. For example, after a heavy fall of rain, one child was fascinated by the feel of mud and was testing out how it felt to step into the mud.
- There is a detailed health and safety policy which is well implemented by adults. Risk assessments are in place covering the environment and outings. Those relating to outings are adequate although somewhat brief and lacking in detail.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of children is good. This is due to the very good relationships with teachers who know all children exceptionally well.
- Teachers work hard to ensure that children show good manners, saying please and thank you. Staff model 'grace and courtesy' and, as a result, children show good levels of respect for each other. As a parent said, 'Children have a lot of respect for teachers.'
- Children are confident and articulate and enjoy showing visitors their work and their school. They state that they enjoy school and their attitudes are positive. Consequently, attendance is above average.
- Incidents of less-than-good behaviour are well documented and parents are informed as a matter of course. Sometimes, children become a little overexcited and lack self-discipline. Teachers are quick to deal with any problems arising between children and remind them immediately of good manners, such as encouraging children to apologise.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- All children, including the most able, make good progress from their starting points. This is because they are taught mainly on an individual basis and benefit from good teaching and individualised planning. Teachers quickly identify and address learning needs.
- The school works closely with other early years providers to ensure that assessments are accurate and to confirm that children are achieving in line with or above national expectations.
- Children show good knowledge of topics taught and they discuss their learning with enthusiasm. One child was able to talk confidently about the life cycle of a butterfly after showing the inspector some cocoons. Another child described how some tadpoles, which they had collected from the pond and kept in a tank in the classroom, had changed into frogs. A third child spoke informatively about lava erupting from a volcano.
- Children read enthusiastically and are eager to show their skills and talk about what they are reading. Comprehension skills are appropriate for the age of the children. A reading programme is in place, which is followed systematically, allowing teachers to move children forward according to their ability, ensuring they make good progress.
- Children are well prepared for their next school and strong transition procedures are in place. All children learn to count accurately with some children challenged to count in twos and tens. They learn the sounds that letters make and to read and write simple words. Many children are able to write simple sentences, read with some fluency and add two numbers to equal ten by the end of Reception, giving them a good start when they enter Year 1.

School details

Unique reference number	133964
Inspection number	10008560
DfE registration number	850/6079

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	Montessori
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	2½–6
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	21
Number of part-time pupils	21
Proprietor	Ms Emma Wetherley
Chair	N/A
Headteacher	Ms Emma Wetherley
Annual fees (day pupils)	£6–£8 per session, up to £7,950 per year
Telephone number	01189 815821
Website	www.granthamfarm.org
Email address	emmawetherley@msn.com
Date of previous inspection	10 June 2010

Information about this school

- Grantham Farm Montessori School is an independent day school.
- The school follows the Montessori approach where children work individually most of the time, they have free access to a range of Montessori materials appropriate to their age and they are encouraged to be independent learners.
- It admits boys and girls from two and a half to six years.
- The school is registered to accept 40 children on roll, although at the time of inspection there were 21 children on roll in the school. All children were in the early years foundation stage, with 19 in the Nursery and two in the Reception class.
- A new headteacher was appointed internally in January 2016 following a long illness and subsequent death of the previous headteacher.
- The mission statement of the school is 'to enable the full potential of every child to enhance the future of the world'.
- The school is situated in a specially converted barn located near the village of Baughurst in Berkshire close to the Hampshire border. The school opened in 1985.
- There are no children with a statement of special educational needs and the vast majority of children are of White British origin.
- The school was previously inspected in June 2010.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out with one day's notice.
- The inspector observed lessons taught by two teachers.
- The inspector spoke to the children, teachers, parents and the headteacher.
- Documents were scrutinised, including policies, safeguarding, the curriculum, risk assessments, records of children's behaviour and assessment information.
- The inspector checked the school's compliance with the regulations for independent schools.
- The inspector heard children read and looked at their work. The inspector observed children throughout the day.
- The views expressed by three members of staff through survey questionnaires were considered.
The inspector took into account the views of 13 parents in responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View.

Inspection team

Barbara Chevis, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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