

Wharfedale Montessori School

Bolton Abbey, Skipton, North Yorkshire BD23 6AN

Inspection dates

6–8 June 2017

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- An inspirational principal leads a team of staff who are as passionate as she is to ensure that pupils not only enjoy their education but fulfil their potential.
- Pupils make excellent progress in a range of subjects as they work through well-planned, hands-on activities.
- Pupils' interests and wishes lead their learning. This core principle and stimulating resources mean that pupils have excellent learning behaviours and they want to learn.
- The head of pre-school plans learning meticulously so that children make outstanding progress in a stimulating environment where their needs are very well met.
- Parents receive a wealth of information about how well their child is doing. The annual written report that parents of pupils in the primary department receive does not clarify progress and attainment as clearly as it could do.
- Parents are highly complimentary about all aspects of school life.
- Pupils behave well at all times. Expectations are high and adults act as excellent role models.
- Pupils' personal development is a strength of the school. Leaders take every opportunity to encourage independence and confidence.
- Leaders ensure that opportunities for pupils to learn about the world around them and people in that world are embraced.
- Teachers know their pupils extremely well. They work closely with pupils and know when they need to consolidate learning and when they can move on.
- All teachers are involved in observing teaching to support improvement. Sometimes issues raised at a previous observation are not followed up at subsequent appraisals of teachers' work.
- The proprietors have ensured that all the independent school standards and statutory requirements of the early years have been 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.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of performance management by ensuring that judgements made about strengths and areas for improvement in teaching and learning are always considered at subsequent appraisals and performance management meetings.
- Improve the annual written report that parents in the primary department receive, so that it gives a clearer picture of progress and attainment.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- The principal is highly enthusiastic about her school and aspires to high standards for all staff and pupils. Staff and pupils, particularly the head of primary and head of pre-school, take great pride in aiming for and reaching these high standards.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong. Leaders take advantage of the diversity of cultures and religions of the pupils and their parents to learn about, and celebrate, different beliefs and faiths.
- Staff ensure that British values are fundamental to everyday life in school. Every opportunity is taken to reinforce these values so that respect and tolerance is central to the behaviour of everybody. Even the youngest children know that a name card on equipment means you must leave it and respect and tolerate that someone else is learning with that equipment.
- Pupils are encouraged to learn about how they may contribute positively to the lives of others. They frequently and enthusiastically take part in fundraising, such as making and selling cakes for a charity, litter-picking and taking part in tree-planting with the Woodland Trust.
- Senior leaders make sure that pupils learn through a curriculum that is highly diverse and enhanced by numerous trips such as to stately homes and to the local priory.
- Parents are highly complimentary about all aspects of school life. They have the opportunity to make appointments to see teaching staff on a daily basis should they wish to do so. Through these appointments, newsletters, the school website, an online programme and the activities of the friends of Wharfedale Montessori group, parents play a very active part in their child's education. Parents are knowledgeable about the school and highly involved in promoting pupils' welfare.
- Senior leaders are aware that at the moment the annual written report that parents of pupils in the primary department receive does not give information on progress and attainment as clearly as it could do. The head of the primary school has already addressed this issue and intends to pilot the new report format at the end of this academic year.
- All leaders and managers know their school extremely well. They are acutely aware that a few administration tasks are not as good as they could be due to recent personal illnesses and absences of key staff. However, despite these absences, they have ensured that the education and welfare of pupils has continued to improve.
- Leaders and managers use continuous professional development to support their staff and promote improvement. All staff are involved in peer observations, with senior leaders having overall responsibility to ensure the quality of evaluations.
- Staff receive regular appraisals and supervisions. Occasionally, previously identified strengths and areas for improvement are not referred to, so that at times improvement is not as fast as it could be.

Governance

- The governance of the school takes place through the roles that the two proprietors take as principal and head of primary school. These roles allow the proprietors to be highly involved, informed, challenging and supportive of all aspects of school life.
- The proprietors have ensured that all the independent school standards are well met and that areas for improvement identified at the last inspection have been addressed.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Pupils' safety is of paramount importance to all adults.
- The proprietors have ensured that a suitable and effective safeguarding policy, along with numerous other policies and information, is available on the school website.
- Adults ensure that all appropriate steps are taken to keep pupils safe. Staff are well trained and checks are made to ensure that all adults working with pupils are suitable.
- The designated safeguarding lead is proactive and is in regular contact with the local authority. She attends meetings and conferences to ensure that the school is up to date with current practices and information, and new information is immediately cascaded to other staff.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- Teachers build excellent relationships with pupils. This mutual respect gives pupils the confidence to try to tackle challenging tasks and to learn from their mistakes.
- Teachers know their pupils extremely well. They move around the classroom knowing when to leave pupils to persevere and when to give a moment's intervention to help them move on.
- Teachers are continually assessing pupils' needs. They probe and question to get pupils to explain their learning and comprehension of the task set. Teaching and activities are then immediately adapted to take account of that assessment.
- Teachers keep detailed notes of what pupils have achieved so that all adults have a good understanding of what pupils' next steps are.
- Pupils' interests are always taken into account, which means pupils that are very interested in learning. For example, a more able pupil who wanted to learn more about Penrose tiling, was encouraged to do so and this led to some highly complex mathematical work, with the teacher learning alongside the pupil.
- Teachers have limitless expectations of what pupils can achieve. Pupils are set individual learning tasks to meet their particular needs, which means that they make rapid progress as work is so well matched.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. Pupils are confident, mature and highly motivated individuals by the time they leave the school.
- Pupils' enthusiasm to learn is excellent. Pupils work diligently and enthusiastically at the activities they are given.
- Pupils' independent skills are highly developed. All pupils are responsible for the care of resources and the environment they are in and the organisation of that environment. For example, pupils know that because they use the tablecloths and napkins they will at some point be responsible for the cleaning of those resources.
- Pupils take on roles of responsibility with enthusiasm and dedication. Team leaders direct others with respect and confidence.
- Secondary schools that the pupils move to comment on how well pupils from Wharfedale Montessori school settle in, even when the environment and learning styles are very different to those they have been used to. Other providers remark on pupils' excellent learning behaviours and their quiet confidence in dealing with all situations.
- Pupils say that they feel safe and know how to keep themselves safe in a range of situations. Their access to the internet and social media is limited but they have an awareness of how to keep themselves safe when using electronic equipment.
- Pupils know what bullying is but say that it does not happen in their school. They know that they can talk to adults if they are worried.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding as pupils behave exceptionally well throughout the day.
- The atmosphere within the school is of a calm, respectful learning environment where adults act as excellent role models.
- Pupils of different ages mix well together. A tolerance and respect for those who are older or younger is evident as they help each other complete tasks such as setting the dining table.
- Although pupils are very well supervised, the need for adult direction or intervention is rare. All pupils know what the expectations are and why rules have been made, and as a general rule pupils keep to the parameters of those expectations.
- Pupils who are new to the school say that they settle in quickly as other pupils make them feel welcome.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school and although some pupils attend on a part-time basis as they are home-educated, attendance is good.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- Pupils make outstanding progress from a range of starting points in a range of subjects, even though many pupils join the school at times other than normal.
- Leaders do not follow any nationally recognised assessment system. However, evidence, for example from the school's assessment system, initial baseline assessments made by feeder secondary schools, results from entrance examinations and from pupils' work, confirms that pupils achieve well. Pupils reach standards higher than those of pupils of the same age nationally by the time they leave the school.
- Pupil's comprehension and language skills are excellent. They are able to clearly articulate problems using mature and accurate terminology. Adults act as good role models in ensuring the use of the correct vocabulary, which helps pupils to adapt their own terminology.
- Pupils make excellent progress in literacy skills and the youngest pupils also have a good understanding and are able to use pronouns, verbs and suffixes correctly.
- Adults allow pupils to follow an aspect of learning they are interested in and consequently pupils' progress in humanities is excellent, such as when they are able to talk about the different continents and weather systems within those continents.
- Pupils follow a systematic, well planned and individualised approach to learning which allows pupils to make progress at a fast rate. This particularly benefits the most able pupils as there are no limits to what or how quickly they can learn.
- Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education as they have reached high levels of attainment in a number of subjects. They have a sound general knowledge, confidence and good learning behaviours.
- Pupils develop the ability to read a range of texts, initially at a slower rate than other pupils of the same age nationally. This is due to the particular approach to learning how sounds are represented by different letter combinations. However, once they start to read, pupils make exceptional progress and quickly become fluent readers.
- Pupils use information technology in a range of ways and older pupils develop skills in circuits and programming.

Early years provision

Outstanding

- Children enter the Children's House with a range of different experiences, which sometimes involves having no pre-school experience, and with skills and levels of understanding which vary tremendously. Children make outstanding progress so that by the time they leave the setting they are reaching levels that are higher than typical for children of their age.
- The leader of the Children's House has an excellent knowledge of how children of this age learn and develop. She plans learning meticulously to meet these needs, enabling children to make outstanding progress.
- Children's personal development is superb, they are taught respect and tolerance and to be responsible for themselves and their environment. Consequently children confidently

dress themselves, prepare their own snack and place all the equipment back in exactly the way they found it so that it is ready for the next child.

- These young children behave very well. Although they are well supervised, adults rarely have to intervene to guide behaviour.
- Children's learning is enhanced by an exceptional outside environment. The head of the Children's House organises and plans this space to maximise learning and to stimulate children's interests.
- Children go into the forest to take part in Woodland Explorers activities such as cooking on the camp fire. Other activities include completing 'random acts of wildness', for example, feeling the forest with their toes or identifying and learning all about wild flowers.
- Children who are new to the school settle quickly. Those who cry when parents leave are quickly engrossed in one of the many challenging and interesting activities.
- Adults' interaction with children is exceptional. They know when to intervene and when to probe and direct learning further.
- Adults' assessment of children's learning is rigorous. A highly effective online system enables adults to record children's achievement. This information is immediately taken into account to plan what children should learn next.
- Parents are very involved in their children's education and welfare in school. They have access to an online programme and are encouraged to contribute to show what their children are learning at home. The system also guides them in ways in which they can help their children learn and develop.
- Children are extremely well prepared for the next stage of their education. They have quickly become confident, independent little people who enjoy learning and have reached high levels of attainment in a range of aspects.
- The proprietor and the leader of Children's House have ensured that all of the relevant independent school standards and the statutory requirements of the early years have been met.

School details

Unique reference number	121763
DfE registration number	815/6032
Inspection number	10033914

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 category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	36
Number of part-time pupils	11
Proprietors	Jane and Graham Lord
Principal	Jane Lord
Annual fees (day pupils)	£4,230–7,035
Telephone number	01756 710452
Website	www.wharfedalemontessori.co.uk
Email address	enquiries@wharfedalemontessori.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	3–5 June 2014

Information about this school

- Wharfedale Montessori School was last inspected in June 2014, when it was judged to be good. Behaviour and safety were judged to be outstanding.
- The school has two proprietors, one who is the principal and one who is the head of primary education. The school has no other governance structure.
- The school is registered to accept up to 48 pupils and currently has 32 pupils on roll. No pupils have a disability, a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan. Some, particularly the younger pupils, attend on a part-time basis.
- The school follows the Montessori methodology, where children learn at individual rates and through hands-on learning. The school aims to enable children to achieve their full potential, to be happy, to grow in knowledge and confidence, to have a good self-image

and eventually to be able to go out into a fast-changing, problem-laden society confidently with well-developed skills, initiative and enthusiasm; able to find their place, enjoy it and do well.

- The school premises comprise of two buildings. Children aged between three and six years learn in the Children's House and older pupils learn in a Swiss-style lodge within the same grounds. Both buildings are set in large grounds and in an area designated as a site of special scientific interest.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was carried out over two and half days by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors.
- The inspector held meetings with both proprietors, who are also the principal and the head of primary education respectively, and with the head of pre-school education.
- Pupils' learning and behaviour was observed throughout the day, both in classrooms and in the outside environment.
- The inspector listened to several pupils read and spoke to a large number of pupils about their work and their well-being.
- Twenty-three responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, were received and there were 16 written responses. The inspector also spoke to two parents. All these opinions were taken into account.
- Eight responses to the staff questionnaire were received and the inspector spoke to several staff. The views expressed were taken into account.
- The inspector toured the buildings both inside and outside to ensure that the relevant independent school standards were met and that pupils' welfare is taken into account.
- The inspectors examined school documentation, including a range of policies required as part of the independent school standards. Documents relating to safeguarding, behaviour and welfare, as well as health and safety documents, were also studied.

Inspection team

Jo Sharpe, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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