

Grantham Farm Montessori School

Inhurst Lane, Baughurst, Tadley, Hampshire RG26 5JS

Inspection dates

1–3 May 2018

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Senior leaders have instigated strong improvement in a whole host of aspects since the last inspection. As a result, all of the independent school standards are now met.
- This is an outward-looking school, utilising to good effect the expertise of a variety of external partners. As a result, standards have risen and staff expertise has strengthened since the previous inspection.
- Senior staff know the school's strengths and weaknesses well. Nevertheless, school improvement planning does not encompass sufficient detail about aspects staff are seeking to improve.
- Pupils and children achieve well because of typically good teaching, bolstered extremely well by adults' strong subject expertise. Many achieve standards above those expected for their age, particularly in reading and mathematics.
- Standards in writing are a little lower, as some pupils, particularly in key stage 1, have yet to fully develop sustained writing stamina.
- The school's curriculum fosters pupils' enjoyment of learning and facilitates success. Children and pupils benefit from wide-ranging activities and the expertise of staff. However, pupils' experience of modern technology is not fully adapted in order to ensure that pupils have a practical grasp of how to keep safe online.
- Safeguarding is effective. Leaders ensure that the latest guidance is fully implemented in all aspects of their work. Nevertheless, not all adults are fully in touch with the full range of risks that can face children in modern society.
- Children quickly develop a deep-seated sense of security when they join the school. Warm and supportive relationships, including between children and their key workers, are established promptly. A calm and positive atmosphere prevails.
- Pupils and children in the early years thoroughly enjoy their experiences. Friendships are strong and leaders have successfully established a culture where respect and good manners towards one another are the norm.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards'), the national minimum standards for residential special schools and associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further develop and strengthen lines of accountability by:
 - developing a rigorous system of improvement planning that clearly captures key priorities and links them to outcomes for pupils
 - ensuring that the planned review of the school’s safeguarding policy serves as an opportunity to deepen the knowledge and understanding of all staff when identifying all potential risks to pupils
 - developing pupils’ application of the skills needed to keep themselves safe online.
- Raise pupils’ achievement by boosting their progress in writing so that more pupils, including children in the early years, exceed the standard expected for their age.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The work of school leaders has been effective in ensuring that the school fully meets all the requirements of the independent school standards. Weaknesses at the previous inspection have been fully addressed.
- The headteacher is highly committed to continually improving the school. Staff hold senior leaders in high regard and all feel that the school is well led and managed. One member of staff epitomised the views of colleagues, saying: 'We couldn't ask for a better leader. She [the headteacher] motivates, encourages and supports us at every opportunity.'
- Since the previous inspection, the headteacher has actively sought guidance from external partners to further enhance the work of the school. At the same time, the school's leadership capacity was extended, following the internal appointment of two deputy headteachers. As a consequence of concerted support and challenge, including from the local authority, the quality of leadership has strengthened. Leaders' passion and enthusiasm for improving the education of children and pupils are clear to see, and set the tone and expectation that all stakeholders, including parents and carers, share.
- Leaders have an accurate view of the strengths of the school and understand what needs to be done to improve. The headteacher and staff make excellent use of recently introduced systems for monitoring and evaluating school performance. Nevertheless, the school's action plan does not fully reflect the targets that all are working towards and the difference adults' actions are making to improving outcomes both for pupils and for children in the early years.
- The headteacher has overhauled systems relating to the appraisal of staff since the previous inspection. Staff now receive regular reviews, and their own professional development is valued tremendously. Furthermore, training with a variety of external partners contributes well to developing the expertise of staff both in their teaching and leadership roles. For example, the school's health and safety officer has introduced new and helpful measures that have a positive influence on keeping pupils safe.
- Leaders make good use of a well-judged system for monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and learning. As a result, the quality of teaching is continually improving. Staff are highly committed to the children and families who attend this school. They work exceptionally well together, seeing themselves as learners, eager to enhance their skills further.
- Furthermore, staff often stay in post for considerable time, which is testament to their high level of commitment to Grantham Farm Montessori School. Staff embrace their duties and there is a palpable sense of pride and teamwork in all that they undertake. This collaborative approach works impeccably and benefits the needs of children and their families. One member of staff epitomised the views of others, commenting: 'I feel such pride walking into our school.'
- Partnership work is a strong feature that comes to the forefront in the design and implementation of the school's curriculum. Leaders are receptive to parents' ideas, making sure that the curriculum retains relevance and appeal to pupils. Activities, including extra-curricular yoga and multi-sport clubs, make certain that pupils are offered

a wide range of experiences.

- The opportunities for pupils to develop spiritually, morally, socially and culturally are extensive. Leaders have successfully developed a culture of mutual respect and tolerance. Pupils and children engage well with their local community, for example through regular visits to a local care home. Pupils, including children in the early years, understand modern British values in action, recently voting for their favourite charity when fundraising through a cake sale.
- Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the good start their children receive at the school. One parent noted: 'Grantham Farm is a wonderful nurturing school which really excels at bringing the best out of its pupils in such a calm and caring way.'

Governance

- The school does not have a governing body. Since the last inspection, the proprietor of the school, who is also the headteacher, has wisely ensured that the school's work is subjected to a greater degree of scrutiny. Consequently, the school has forged strong ties with local authority advisers, a headteacher from a local outstanding independent school and a number of professional bodies. As a result, work across the locality that makes good use of the expertise of others is greatly enhancing the work of staff.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school's policy, imminently due for review, is compliant with requirements and is displayed on the school's website. All the proper checks are carried out on staff and visitors.
- Together with the wise counsel of the school's knowledgeable health and safety officer, the headteacher has fully addressed matters arising from the previous inspection, including those relating to fire safety. There is a comprehensive programme of health and safety checks, including fire drills, securely in place now. The school implements all policies effectively, including those relating to behaviour management, first aid procedures, risk assessment and safer recruitment, to ensure that pupils are well cared for. Parents agree that their children are kept safe.
- Staff receive regular training on safeguarding matters, including the 'Prevent' duty. However, some staff are less secure in their knowledge of what to look out for as potential signs of radicalisation. Nevertheless, staff understand their duty of care and, when there has been a need to respond to a concern, all the correct procedures have been followed. Furthermore, leaders work comprehensively with external agencies as appropriate, including the local authority designated officer to ensure that appropriate support is provided to potentially vulnerable pupils.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching meets the needs of pupils and children in the early years well. Adults strike just the right balance between intervening to support when necessary and also stepping back to encourage independence as appropriate. There is a real sense of camaraderie among

adults, with pupils' well-being seated firmly at its heart. For example, when moving on to lead a different activity, teachers make sure that other adults know how to carry on offering helpful and relevant encouragement to children.

- Teachers are adept at making use of assessment information to plan learning activities that support pupils and children well in achieving their next steps. Pupils' learning needs are understood well, and all are benefiting from a much sharper focus on adults' use of assessment information, linking this well to teachers' planning.
- Teachers structure pupils' learning well. They are confident to challenge pupils and extend their thinking. For example, pupils are encouraged to make good use of their numerical skills to solve complex word problems. In a mathematics lesson, pupils were able to use their times tables knowledge efficiently to calculate how many 3p sweets could be purchased for 10p.
- Pupils, including those who speak English as an additional language, have ample opportunity to solidify their understanding of different mathematical concepts by using a variety of concrete and pictorial aids. For example, pupils in the early years and key stage 1 were able to use coins to represent different money amounts successfully.
- The teaching of reading is excellent. Children and pupils are supported extremely well to develop early reading skills. As a result, the youngest pupils can confidently self-select reading material. A variety of tactile learning experiences further support pupils in developing a secure grasp of letter sounds and blends. Some of the youngest children are able to recognise quite complex words and letter patterns as a result.
- The teaching of writing is effective. The youngest children get off to a good start, quickly becoming confident in mark-making, ascribing meaning and developing a suitable pencil grip. As children move through the school, opportunities to write creatively are extended and pupils gain enjoyment when writing from their own experiences. Nevertheless, some pupils struggle to retain focus and are yet to develop sufficient writing stamina for extended pieces. This slows their progress.
- Since the previous inspection, the headteacher, with the support of the local authority, has overhauled the school's tracking systems. There is now a comprehensive system in place allowing staff to track each pupil's progress in fine detail. The system is understood well by staff. With the availability of comprehensive information, staff are becoming adept at analysing patterns and trends. For example, teachers are focusing more strongly on the teaching of shape, space and measure this year as information shows this was a slightly weaker aspect last year in children's mathematical development. Staff are using assessment information extremely well to further strengthen the provision.
- Adults work to their strengths particularly well. Children and pupils benefit from individual subject specialisms, including in modern foreign languages, science and physical education. This means that children and pupils in key stage 1 have regular and high-quality learning experiences in a variety of subjects.
- Parents receive detailed information about their children's learning on an ongoing basis. As teachers' use and understanding of assessment information has grown, the quality of the school's annual reports has strengthened considerably.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Transition arrangements at every stage are first rate. Parents are kept extremely well informed about their children's well-being, forging a strong partnership with staff from the word go. They contribute well to their children's learning journey through the completion of 'getting to know your child' information sheets when joining the school. Testament to parental satisfaction is the considerable distances some parents travel in order for their children to attend school.
- Lunchtime is a very positive experience. Staff go the extra mile to transform the teaching space into a first-rate dining hall, complete with brightly coloured tablecloths and napkins. The attention to detail epitomises the lengths that all adults go to ensure that children and pupils have a positive experience in all aspects of their schooling.
- Children and pupils develop positive attitudes to school and their learning as a result of the respect and support they receive from staff. Pupils' confidence and self-esteem is very well nurtured by adults in school. One parent commented: 'Children are respected as individuals and are well guided and taught in all aspects, not purely academic, but also socially and emotionally.'
- Pupils and children in the early years learn in a variety of ways about being responsible citizens. They take great care in looking after the school's resources, carefully putting equipment away and tucking chairs under tables. They are kind and thoughtful towards each other and staff, such as when recently writing letters of kindness to one another.
- The school's 'grace and courtesy time' is used well to help pupils develop a strong moral strength, based on mutual respect. Pupils and young children are quick to implement the school's core values in their day-to-day relations and, as a result, there are very few disagreements. Adults are also brilliant at reading situations and therefore intervening before any squabbles get started.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- All pupils settle well into the school day and positively beam on arrival when reunited with known adults. Staff are adept at creating a calm, safe and secure positive learning environment. In the words of one parent: 'My son runs into Grantham Farm every day. To say he is happy there is an understatement. Emma [the headteacher] and her team run a superb school.'
- Tranquillity prevails. The very youngest children are able to explore new skills under the watchful and caring eye of adults and exercise initiative frequently. Children gain tremendously from feeling so at home, confidently selecting resources and activities, retaining focus and making the most of lessons and the teaching that they receive.
- Pupils attend regularly, including children in the early years. Leaders monitor attendance closely and respond promptly if on rare occasions pupils do not attend.
- The youngest pupils know how to take turns, are cooperative, manage their feelings well and are able to express their ideas clearly. Pupils are articulate and confident when exploring new ideas and concepts.

- Pupils behave well, listen attentively and follow routines well. Adults model high standards, and pupils do their best to meet these expectations. Very occasionally older pupils' concentration wanes and they lose interest in the task in hand.
- The school's pastoral records are comprehensive and show that inappropriate behaviour is dealt with appropriately. There are very few examples of repeated inappropriate behaviour by individual pupils.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils and children in the early years make good progress. They are highly motivated and respond well to the good teaching provided. Parents are highly satisfied with the progress their children make. One commented: 'Due to their [the staff] focus, my child at age three can read and write letters, draw people and objects – which we find incredible – setting her up for life and making learning enjoyable.'
- Many children start school with skills and understanding typical of those expected for their age. A small proportion of children speak English as an additional language, and often start school with lower communication, language and literacy skills than are typical of their age. The majority of children, including those at an early stage of speaking English, end their Nursery and Reception Years with skills typical of their age in all areas of learning.
- In 2017, the proportion of children who achieved a good level of development in the early years was above that seen nationally. Furthermore, school information shows that many children exceed the early learning goals, particularly in reading and mathematics.
- Children in the early years achieve well in reading. All children met the standard required in the reading early learning goal in 2017. Pupils benefit from reading widely, and children quickly develop a solid grasp of letters and sounds. Older pupils in key stage 1 delight in the opportunity to read to an adult and are able to discuss their favourite books, authors and poets knowledgeably.
- Pupils in key stage 1 quickly get to grips with a fluent and cursive handwriting script. They use sounds well to spell out words. However, pupils' writing skills are not as well honed as their skills in mathematics, and some lose impetus to write for extended periods.
- Pupils are well prepared for the next stage. They receive a well-rounded education at this school and acquire skills and attitudes that will help them, both now and at the next stage of their education.
- Transition into the school is managed well, including for particularly young children. Parents quickly develop confidence in staff, as leaders do not rush this important step. Staff continue to liaise particularly strongly with parents, sharing detailed assessment information and reporting comprehensively at the end of the academic year.

School details

Unique reference number	133964
DfE registration number	850/6079
Inspection number	10047027

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 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	31
Number of part-time pupils	23
Proprietor	Emma Wetherley
Headteacher	Emma Wetherley
Annual fees (day pupils)	£6–£8 per session, up to £7,950 per year
Telephone number	01189 815 821
Website	www.granthanfarm.org
Email address	emmawetherley@msn.com
Date of previous inspection	24–26 May 2016

Information about this school

- Grantham Farm Montessori School is an independent day school for boys and girls aged from two to seven years. The school opened in 1985.
- The majority of staff were at the school, including the headteacher, at the time of the previous inspection in May 2016.
- The school follows the ethos and teaching methods of Maria Montessori and aims to provide each child with an individual learning experience. Pupils learn at their own pace through a self-discovery approach. The school's curriculum is designed to nurture independence and self-confidence.
- The school is situated in a specially converted barn located near the village of Baughurst in Berkshire, close to the Hampshire border. The building houses three classrooms: one

for Nursery-aged children called The Children's House, one for Reception and key stage 1 pupils called Grantham Farm and another for group activities that also doubles up as the headteacher's office and medical room.

- The headteacher is the sole proprietor. The school does not have a governing body.
- The school is registered to accept 40 children on roll. At the time of inspection, there were 31 children on roll in the school. The majority of children are in the early years, with 22 in the Nursery and five in the Reception class. There are four pupils in key stage 1.
- The headteacher was appointed internally in January 2016. Following the last inspection in 2016, two members of staff were internally appointed to the post of deputy headteacher, forming a school leadership team with the headteacher.
- The mission statement of the school is 'To enable the full potential of every child to enhance the future of the world'.
- There are no children with a statement of special educational needs, and the vast majority of children are of White British origin. A small proportion of children speak English as an additional language.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector carried out a number of classroom visits during the inspection, all accompanied by the headteacher. During classroom visits, the inspector looked at pupils' work and talked to some pupils about the progress they were making.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, who is also the proprietor, both deputy headteachers, a teacher who is the school's health and safety officer and a student on placement.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour in classrooms, at playtime and lunchtime, and as they moved around the school.
- The inspector looked at a range of pupils' work and records of achievement.
- The inspector considered nine responses to Parent View and eight narrative comments.
- The inspector analysed five responses to the staff questionnaire.
- The inspector scrutinised a range of school documents and policies, including those regarding safeguarding and other aspects of the independent school standards, and reviewed the checks made on staff about their suitability to work with children.

Inspection team

Elizabeth Farr, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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Manchester
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