

# Inspection of Mill Cottage Montessori School

Wakefield Road, Brighouse, West Yorkshire HD6 4HA

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Inspection dates:

3–5 December 2019

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## Overall effectiveness

## Requires improvement

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The quality of education

**Requires improvement**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Good**

Personal development

**Good**

Leadership and management

**Requires improvement**

Early years provision

**Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Outstanding

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

**No**

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

The happy smiles on children's faces reflect the enjoyment children gain from attending school. Pupils behave well in class and enjoy learning in a variety of different ways, for example learning how to tie up a hammock, build a fire in forest school, or learning new yoga positions in class.

The school follows the Montessori curriculum. Often learning starts with an idea or a question from a pupil which leads the class on a journey of discovery. For example, pupils asked questions about the stars which led them to look at planets, the solar system and our galaxy.

Staff have high expectations of all pupils. Most of the time, teachers make sure the curriculum is right for every child. They also check how much pupils have remembered from the curriculum they have already covered. However, sometimes this does not happen and pupils do not learn and remember as much they could. Older pupils understand what bullying means. They told us that it does not happen in school because everyone cares about each other. School records show bullying is very rare.

## **What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?**

While the school follows a Montessori curriculum, leaders have ensured that links with the national curriculum and the early years foundation stage remain. This is evident in leaders' intentions for the school. Children thrive in the early years, gaining skills and understanding because teachers plan learning well. Extending children's vocabulary is a key focus in the curriculum. Children are encouraged to talk about how they feel. For example, in cultural studies children were asked how the sound of a Tibetan singing bowl made them feel. Comments included: 'It makes me feel quiet on the inside.'

The curriculum in the early years is built logically and is carefully crafted around children's needs. Physical education (PE) is taught through a range of different experiences including forest school as well as using the outdoor stage to exercise with music.

Phonics teaching is through the Montessori approach. This approach supports children and pupils to make the required progress to become confident and fluent readers.

The school has a small number of older pupils, many of whom are home educated but attend the school part time. The curriculum for these pupils is not always well planned to meet their needs. For example, some books show that these pupils are not accessing the curriculum they need to learn more and remember more. This will not give them a secure basis to build on when they transfer to their next school.

The school ethos is welcoming to everyone. The curriculum meets the needs of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities effectively, particularly those in the early years. Parents feel school leaders make their children very welcome. They particularly value the headteacher's support in helping them to deal with other agencies.

Pupils and children told us that they enjoy coming to school. Their behaviour inside the classroom reflected this, as most listened and joined in lessons. Outside the classroom, pupils played together well, particularly when enjoying the imaginatively designed play area complete with real boat and roadway.

Relationships between pupils and staff are strong. This is reflected in high attendance levels and pupils' confidence that bullying is very rare and quickly dealt with.

Pupils learn to be resilient, brave and fearless in forest school. All are keen to make dens and put up hammocks. Many enjoy finding out about the natural world within the school grounds. Yoga sessions help children to become reflective and calm in mind and body as well as offering an opportunity to improve their core muscles. These activities improve pupils' personal development as well as their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding.

Leaders and proprietors have not ensured that all of the independent standards have been met. The complaints policy does not make sure that copies of the findings are made available to the complainant and where necessary the person complained about.

The quality of the curriculum is not well planned for the small number of part-time older pupils. Work in books shows that this has been a problem since the beginning of term and pupils are now lagging behind in English and mathematics. Leaders have been slow to recognise and bring about improvement in this regard. Leaders have also been slow to check on teachers' assessments, which do not always appear to be accurate.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The school's safeguarding policy makes reference to the 2019 version of Keeping Children Safe in Education. Leaders ensure that the system in place to store confidential files is secure. Staff have received regular safeguarding updates and training. As a result, staff are clear about the procedure for making a referral should they have concerns about a pupil. The school keeps a register of safeguarding checks carried out on staff which is compliant with current requirements. Staff are recruited safely.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and proprietor)**

- The curriculum delivered to the small number of older part-time pupils does not reflect leaders' intent as clearly as that for younger children. Leaders have in the past monitored the curriculum very closely. However, due to a number of recent challenges faced by the leadership team, the level of monitoring has been reduced. Consequently, issues in the curriculum for older pupils have not been picked up in the way they have previously. Leaders are aware that monitoring must now be sharpened up and that a more focused approach is needed to ensure that the implementation and subsequent impact on pupils' learning are regularly checked.
- The complaints policy needs to be amended so that the complainant and, where appropriate, the person complained about receive a copy of the panel findings.

### **How can I feed back my views?**

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you're not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	131158
<b>DfE registration number</b>	381/6012
<b>Local authority</b>	Calderdale
<b>Inspection number</b>	10110720
<b>Type of school</b>	Other independent school
<b>School category</b>	Independent school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	125
<b>Number of part-time pupils</b>	106
<b>Proprietor</b>	Martin Blowers and Ailsa Neville
<b>Headteacher</b>	Ailsa Neville
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£1,775–£12,852
<b>Telephone number</b>	01484 400500
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.millcottageschool.co.uk">www.millcottageschool.co.uk</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:ailsa.neville@millcottageschool.co.uk">ailsa.neville@millcottageschool.co.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	21–23 March 2017

## Information about this school

- The school is registered on the Early Years and Childcare Register and received an inspection under this framework in May 2019.
- The previous standard inspection was carried out in March 2017.
- The school does not have provision for two-year-olds within the registration identified by the Department for Education.
- The school does not use alternative provision.
- The school operates a Montessori curriculum.
- The vast majority of older pupils who attend the school do so on a part-time basis. Nearly all are registered as home educated.
- The school has very recently appointed a new deputy headteacher.

## Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The school has failed to meet the independent school standards. These are the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- We met with the proprietors, the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, teachers and pupils.
- We carried out four deep dives into the four subject areas, mathematics, English, physical education and cultural studies. As part of our deep dives we met with leaders, teachers and pupils. We also scrutinised pupils' work and checked the curriculum plans for each of these areas, as well as observing learning in both classrooms within the school.
- The team looked closely at documents relating to safeguarding presented by the school. We also looked closely at the record-keeping provided by the school, and spoke to staff about their safeguarding knowledge and recent training. We spoke to pupils about how safe they felt in school.
- We held conversations with a number of pupils.

## Inspection team

Marian Thomas, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Andy Taylor

Ofsted Inspector

## **Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements**

### **The school failed to meet the following independent school standards**

#### **Part 1. Quality of education provided**

- 3 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the teaching at the school-
  - 3(a) enables pupils to acquire new knowledge and make good progress according to their ability so that they increase their understanding and develop their skills in the subjects taught;
  - 3(c) involves well planned lessons and effective teaching methods, activities and management of class time.

#### **Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled**

- 33 The standard about the manner in which complaints are handled is met if the proprietor ensures that a complaints procedure is drawn up and effectively implemented which deals with the handling of complaints from parents of pupils and which-
  - 33(j) provides for a written record to be kept of all complaints that are made in accordance with sub-paragraph (e) and-
    - 33(j)(i) whether they are resolved following a formal procedure, or proceed to a panel hearing; and
    - 33(j)(ii) action taken by the school as a result of those complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld); and
  - 33(k) provides that correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are to be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them.

#### **Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools**

- 34(1) The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school-
  - 34(1)(a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently;
  - 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently.

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