

Mill Cottage Montessori School

Wakefield Road, Brighouse, West Yorkshire HD6 4HA

Inspection date

12 May 2021

Overall outcome

The school meets all of the independent standards that were checked during this inspection

Main inspection findings

Part 1. Quality of education provided

Paragraph 3, 3(a), 3(c)

- At the school's standard inspection in December 2019, inspectors found that the curriculum was not well planned for the small number of part-time older pupils attending the school. Pupils were falling behind in acquiring new knowledge in English and mathematics. As a consequence, they were not making good progress.
- During the last inspection, it was found that teachers' assessments of pupils' work were not always accurate. Leaders had been slow to monitor and check the implementation of the curriculum and its impact on pupils' learning.
- The action plan that school leaders produced to address these issues was evaluated by the Department for Education (DfE) as acceptable with modifications.
- The action plan did not address how leaders would monitor the impact of the actions taken to ensure that pupils are learning more and remembering more from a well-planned curriculum.
- The action plan states that pupils will create their own weekly timetables. Pupils will use an assessment grid to check their progress against a number of objectives. A daily record of what each child achieves will be kept. Staff will check these records to ensure that pupils are gaining knowledge.
- The action plan also sets out how leaders will invest time and money in developing teachers' skills and knowledge. Leaders feel that this will lead to teachers becoming more skilled to deliver an effective curriculum. It is proposed that a science expert will be employed to work with pupils. An extra, qualified teacher will be employed for three days a week. Staff will undertake professional development by completing Montessori workshops.
- Since the previous inspection, leaders have reviewed their curriculum planning. Half-termly planning now takes place. Plans are specific to the individual needs and interests of each pupil. The pupils contribute to their learning plans by choosing activities that

interest them. Objectives for pupils to achieve are set in all subjects. Teachers work closely with parents and carers, so that the work that is planned to begin at school can be carried on at home.

- A new assessment system has been created, with clear expectations of what pupils will achieve by the end of the year. Ongoing assessment of pupils' progress takes place through the achievement of learning outcomes, observations and through discussions at 'circle time'. Pupils check their own progress against their half-termly curriculum plans. Teachers check each other's assessments to confirm their accuracy.
- Since the previous inspection, pupils have been recording more of their work in workbooks. Daily records are kept of pupils' work and of their reading activities.
- Leaders are now checking pupils' books to ensure that pupils are acquiring appropriate knowledge across the curriculum. The headteacher is monitoring the impact of the actions that have been taken, to make sure that pupils are learning more and remembering more. Pupils' progress towards milestones in the curriculum is now checked by looking at their work. The headteacher checks on the content of teachers' planning, so that any weaknesses can be quickly identified and acted upon.
- Owing to the constraints of the national pandemic, plans for a science specialist to visit the school were not realised. Training workshops for teachers were also put on hold during the pandemic. However, online training has taken place in autism spectrum disorder, special educational needs and the early years curriculum. An extra teacher is adding capacity and contributing to the skills of the team.
- This standard is now met.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraph 7, 7(a), 7(b)

- At the previous inspection in December 2019, this standard was met.
- The school's safeguarding procedures remain effective.
- A regularly reviewed safeguarding policy is on the school's website. Parents can request a copy from the school. The policy reflects the latest government guidance.
- The headteacher has links with external agencies, so that concerns, training and advice can be discussed with the appropriate agencies.
- Staff know what action to take if they are concerned about a pupil's well-being. Staff have received appropriate training to do all they can to safeguard the pupils in their care.
- Appropriate checks are made on new staff to ensure that they are suitable to work with children.
- This standard continues to be met.

Part 4. Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

Paragraph 17, 18(1), 18(2), 18(2)(a), 18(2)(b), 18(2)(c), 18(2)(c)(i), 18(2)(c)(ii), 18(2)(c)(iii), 18(2)(c)(iv), 18(2)(d), 18(2)(e), 18(3), 20(6), 20(6)(a), 20(6)(a)(i), 20(6)(a)(ii), 20(6)(b)(ii), 20(6)(b)(iii), 20(6)(c), 21(1), 21(2), 21(3), 21(3)(a), 21(3)(a)(i), 21(3)(a)(ii), 21(3)(a)(iii), 21(3)(a)(iv), 21(3)(a)(vi), 21(3)(a)(vii), 21(3)(a)(viii), 21(3)(b), 21(6)

- This standard was met at the previous inspection.
- The proprietor has put in place systems to ensure that appropriate checks are carried out on staff who are employed at the school.
- The school does not employ supply staff.
- The single central register is in place and contains the required information on staff who have been appointed to the school.
- This standard continues to be met.

Part 6. Provision of information

Paragraph 32(1)(c)

- This standard was met at the previous inspection.
- The safeguarding policy is available for parents to access on the school's website.
- It is also available to parents on request from the school.
- This standard continues to be met.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

Paragraph 33, 33(j), 33(j)(i), 33(j)(ii), 33(k)

- This standard was not met at the previous inspection. This was because the complaints policy did not include arrangements for the complainant and, where appropriate, the person complained about, to receive a written copy of the panel's findings.
- The policy has been reviewed and amended. It requires a written record to be kept of all complaints. The complaints record will set out whether complaint(s) have been resolved and what action leaders have taken in response to complaint(s). The complainant and the person complained about will receive a copy of the panel's findings. Records will be stored securely.
- The proprietor has ensured that there is a complaints policy in place. It is available to parents on request.
- This standard is now met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraph 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b)

- At the inspection in December 2019, inspectors found that this standard was not met. The quality of the curriculum was not well planned for some pupils, and teachers' assessments did not always appear to be accurate. Additionally, there were other unmet

standards, including the complaints policy not making clear how findings are made available to those involved.

- The proprietor has taken effective action in meeting the unmet standards. The delivery of the curriculum is now well planned to incorporate pupils' needs and interests. A new assessment system tracks the progress that pupils are making more closely. Leaders have a better understanding of what aspects of the curriculum are working well and where improvements are needed.
- The headteacher has tightened measures to check on the effectiveness of the curriculum. The headteacher has introduced a more focused approach to monitoring how well pupils are learning and remembering subject knowledge.
- Leaders have continued to develop their understanding of the independent school standards (the standards). They have used the standards to review and amend their policies.
- The complaints policy has been reviewed and amended. It now reflects the requirements contained in part 7 of the standards.
- The proprietor has ensured that the independent school standards have been met.
- This standard is now met.

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- Leaders understand their responsibility to put an accessibility plan in place. This plan sets out how access to the physical environment will be improved for individual pupils. Personalised access plans will be created for pupils with specific needs. Access to the curriculum will be developed through the continuing professional development of staff. Access to information for parents and pupils will be improved by developing information on the school's website.

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 that were checked during this inspection. This included the standards and requirements that the school was judged to not comply with at the previous inspection. Not all of the standards and associated requirements were checked during this inspection.

The school now meets 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.

School details

Unique reference number	131158
DfE registration number	381/6012
Inspection number	10152394

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 status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	62
Number of part-time pupils	59
Proprietor	Ailsa Neville and Martin Blowers
Headteacher	Mrs Ailsa Neville
Annual fees (day pupils)	£1,775 to £12,852
Telephone number	01484 400500
Website	www.millcottageschool.co.uk
Email address	ailsa.neville@millcottageschool.co.uk
Date of previous standard inspection	3–5 December 2019

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 proprietor is also the headteacher. The school does not have a governing body.
- The previous standard inspection was carried out in December 2019. Overall effectiveness was judged to require improvement.
- The school does not use alternative provision.
- The school operates a Montessori curriculum.
- The vast majority of pupils who attend the school do so on a part-time basis. Nearly all are registered as home educated.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out at the request of the registration authority for independent schools. The purpose of the inspection was to monitor the progress the school has made in meeting the independent school standards and other requirements that it was judged to not comply with at its previous inspection.
- This is the school's first progress monitoring inspection.
- The inspector met with the proprietor/headteacher, teachers and pupils.
- The inspector met with the proprietor and teachers to discuss the curriculum and curriculum planning and the standards that had not been met in the previous inspection.
- The inspector looked at a range of documents, including the safeguarding policy, the single central register, the curriculum policy, the accessibility plan, curriculum plans, assessment information and pupils' books.
- Discussions were held with pupils and with staff. Staff talked about their safeguarding training and how they reported any concerns. Pupils talked about what they enjoyed about school and how safe they felt.

Suzette Garland-Grimes, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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