

Inspection of Clervaux Garden School

Clow Beck Eco Centre, Croft On Tees, North Yorkshire DL2 2TF

Inspection dates: 14 to 16 July 2021

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Sixth-form provision **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Not previously inspected

Does the school meet the independent school standards? **Yes**

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a small school where pupils get a lot of individual support. The mission of the school is to help pupils to learn through their 'hand, head and heart'. Many lessons take place outdoors and in specialist workshops. Pupils learn how to make things, grow plants and look after animals. Pupils are proud to show what they have made and share what they have learned.

Pupils feel safe and say that bullying is very rare. They pay attention to each other and are respectful. Pupils say if anyone says something thoughtless or unkind the staff sort it out quickly. Staff teach pupils how to understand their thoughts and emotions. For example, there is a gathering every week called the Clervaux knot when pupils and staff sit in a circle and share their ideas and feelings.

Pupils have a range of special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They have often struggled to cope in their previous school. Staff understand the needs of pupils well. Teachers adapt lessons to match each pupil's individual needs. Parents speak highly of the school. One parent said, 'We are over the moon that we found Clervaux. It is exactly what our child needed.'

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

School leaders have designed an ambitious curriculum. Pupils learn about their world and how to understand themselves. The school has a specialist curriculum called practical skills therapeutic education. In these lessons, pupils learn how to craft products from wood, clay and textiles. Pupils also learn how to use a forge, work the land and care for animals. The plans for this practical curriculum are well sequenced. Teachers have broken down the crucial knowledge that pupils must learn into small steps. Pupils understand the importance of mastering each part of the craft process. Pupils feel trusted to use tools safely. They show a real sense of achievement in what they have made.

Pupils have lessons in academic subjects, including English, mathematics, science and humanities. Pupils also revisit aspects of these subjects in their practical lessons. The plans for some of the academic subjects do not explain in sufficient detail the essential knowledge that pupils need. Leaders have already taken steps to address this. Subject leaders are in the process of developing more effective curriculum plans. There is time set aside for all staff to receive training in these new plans. The COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic interrupted this school improvement work. The new plans will be in place from September.

Leaders have developed an approach to assessment which tracks what pupils know and can do. Teachers are not using this approach consistently. For example, leaders expect literacy to be tracked in all subjects but sometimes this is not being done. Leaders are aware of this and have taken steps to improve assessment. They have built clearer assessments into the revised schemes of work that will be in place from September.

Leaders keep pupils' progress under close review and make sure pupils get extra help when needed. Leaders gather a lot of information about pupils when they first join the school. Staff check what pupils know and what learning they have missed. Teachers use this information to write subject plans for each pupil. Leaders design programmes to support pupils' social and emotional development. Pupils have the support of therapists for specific needs. For example, a speech and language therapist works with pupils who struggle with their spoken communication.

Leaders prioritise the teaching of reading. Staff know how to check pupils' phonics knowledge and how to address any gaps in missed learning. The words in the books that pupils read contain the sounds that they have been taught and know. Leaders ensure that each pupil has an individual reading plan. This helps pupils to develop as readers.

Pupils have access to a wide range of formal qualifications. For example, pupils can take GCSE English, as well as an Open College Network award in animal care. The proprietor employs a pathways coordinator. The pathways coordinator teaches all pupils in the school about different careers and what skills you need for them. The school's independent careers adviser helps pupils make decisions about their next steps into education, training or employment. Students who stay into the sixth form add to their qualifications. They also get work experience and prepare for independent living. For example, some students work at a local shop and café.

Staff support pupils well to ensure their needs are met. Staff help pupils to stay calm. This enables pupils to stay focused on their learning. Many pupils have missed long periods of school before joining Clervaux Garden School. Leaders help pupils to improve their attendance. One parent said, 'My child is thriving here, it is the first school he has been to where he will go every day.'

The school's personal, social and health education programme is delivered through all aspects of school life, including the topics covered at the weekly Clervaux knot. Pupils learn about themselves and about the rights of others. They also learn about relationships and sex education (RSE). Parents have contributed to the development of the RSE policy. Leaders recognise the importance of the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils at the school. Pupils learn about the world around them. For example, there is a programme of celebrations linked to different religions and ancient festivals. Pupils' talents and interests are fostered through the practical curriculum.

Leadership of the school is strong. The proprietor has ensured that the independent school standards are met. The school is part of the Ruskin Mill Trust. Trust directors support the headteacher well.

Trustees govern the school well. The trustees meet regularly and receive detailed reports from school leaders. Trustees visit the school frequently. They carry out audits to ensure the independent school standards are met. The trustees ensure there is investment in the school. The premises and grounds are delightful and well looked after. The trustees are aware of their duty under the Equality Act 2010.

Trustees are rightly proud of the way that equality and diversity are woven into the life of the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding. The headteacher is an experienced designated safeguarding lead (DSL). He has a thorough understanding of the vulnerabilities of the pupils in his care. The headteacher is quick to refer to external agencies when needed. He keeps accurate records of any referrals and actions taken.

The proprietor ensures that staff receive training in child protection. The DSL and his deputies complete enhanced training. The headteacher gives daily safeguarding briefings to staff. Leaders ensure that risk assessments for the site and for individual pupils are comprehensive and implemented well.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- The long-term plans in some subjects are not coherently planned and do not clearly identify the steps that pupils need to take in order to know more and remember more. It is clear from the actions that leaders have already taken to plan next year's curriculum that they are in the process of resolving this issue. Leaders should complete their curriculum improvement work and ensure plans in all subjects are coherently planned and well sequenced.
- Leaders have an assessment tracking system which has descriptors to explain what pupils know and can do in each subject. The tracking system is designed to be used to record cross-curricular learning opportunities. However, some staff are not doing this consistently and opportunities for checking pupils' progress are being missed in some lessons. Leaders have identified this issue and have put clearer assessment steps into the revised schemes of work that will be in place for September. Leaders should complete their assessment improvement work to ensure there is comprehensive information about pupils to inform teaching.

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 are the provider and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

School details

Unique reference number	147298
DfE registration number	815/6048
Local authority	North Yorkshire
Inspection number	10192269
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	10 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	13
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	4
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Clervaux Garden School
Chair	Helen Kippax
Headteacher	Robert Grice
Annual fees (day pupils)	£46,470 to £93,023
Telephone number	01325 729860
Website	www.rmt.org/clervaux/
Email address	gardenschool@clervaux.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Ruskin Mill Trust. This is a national charitable trust that runs other special schools and colleges for adults with complex needs. The Ruskin Mill Trust is inspired by the work of Rudolf Steiner, John Ruskin and William Morris.
- The school has a specialist, craft and land-based curriculum called practical skills therapeutic education.
- The school is set in extensive grounds on a bio-dynamic farm.
- Pupils are referred from local authorities and require an education, health and care plan for admission to the school.
- The school caters for a wide range of SEND, including autism spectrum disorder, moderate learning difficulties and social, emotional and mental health needs.
- The school does not use alternative provision.

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 meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

- This was the school's first standard inspection since the school opened in December 2019.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders, including the DSL. Inspectors also met with a range of other staff. Inspectors met with the proprietor and trustees.
- Inspectors undertook a tour of the school's site and visited the classrooms and social areas. Inspectors checked the school buildings and grounds against the independent school standards.
- Inspectors did deep dives into English, mathematics, science and the school's specialist curriculum. The specialist curriculum includes craft and land-based subjects. The deep dive for each subject included a meeting with curriculum leaders and a review of subject documents and plans. The deep dive also involved lesson visits, meetings with pupils and scrutiny of pupils' work.
- Inspectors visited lessons in other subjects taught at the school and looked at pupils' work from these subjects.

- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons, in the Clervaux knot assembly, at lunchtime and around the school. Inspectors spoke with pupils and observed them reading to their teacher.
- Inspectors scrutinised school documents and the arrangements to safeguard pupils. This included checking the school's safeguarding systems and the single central register, which lists the recruitment checks the school makes on staff. Inspectors met with the DSL and the lead for health and safety. Inspectors spoke with staff and pupils about safeguarding.
- Inspectors had contact with parents through telephone calls and written comments sent in during the inspection. Inspectors looked at responses to the online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View. Inspectors considered questionnaires completed by 19 staff. Inspectors circulated questionnaires to pupils but did not have any responses.

Inspection team

Patricia Head, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Sarah Hubbard

Her Majesty's Inspector

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