

# Inspection of Wharfedale Montessori School

Bolton Abbey, Skipton, North Yorkshire BD23 6AN

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Inspection dates: 9 and 11 November 2021

**Overall effectiveness** **Good**

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The quality of education **Outstanding**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Early years provision **Outstanding**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Outstanding

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

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

Pupils flourish in this small, rural Montessori School. This is a school which places no limits on what pupils can achieve, both academically and personally. Pupils grow in confidence and independence throughout their time here. Parents and carers are very positive about this school. They praise the manner in which staff go out of their way to develop and nurture their children. As a result, pupils thrive here.

Pupils feel extremely safe in this setting. They understand that there are different types of bullying. They say that bullying is very rare but, if it does happen, they know to speak to a trusted adult and this will be resolved. Pupils are exceptionally polite and respectful towards their peers, staff and visitors. They are empowered to be unique individuals who are able to share their thoughts and feelings with self-assurance.

Pupils enjoy their work cycle in this school. Leaders work hard to ensure learning is delivered with fidelity to the Montessori principals. This supports pupils in developing confidence and self-belief alongside their academic learning. Parents and carers really appreciate this. Leaders' communication about what children are learning, and their next steps, is comprehensive. Parents appreciate this information. However, some parents feel that leaders communicate less well about other events or changes that take place.

Staff are ambitious in supporting the achievement of all pupils. They encourage pupils to look beyond their immediate neighbourhood to discover more about the wider world. Through the Montessori great lessons, teachers plan many interesting experiences aimed at introducing pupils to a rich variety of cultural experiences. Leaders know that they need to improve pupils' understanding of the distinctiveness of different faiths in order to further prepare them for life in modern Britain.

Pupils do not always arrive at school in time for the start of the school day at 9am. By arriving late, pupils miss out on the extensive array of learning opportunities that are available to them from the start of the school day. In addition, parents sometimes choose not to send their child into school. This means that some pupils are not receiving the full education they are entitled to from the age of five.

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

Passionate leaders and staff are united in their determination that all pupils achieve their potential. By the time pupils leave this setting, they reach very high standards across the whole curriculum and they are well prepared for the next stage in their education journey.

Pupils achieve exceptionally well in reading, writing and mathematics. Leaders are determined that pupils leave the school with knowledge and skills that will serve them well. Leaders ensure that their written curriculum is supported by appropriate plans which are implemented effectively. The morning academic work cycle supports pupils in being able to understand what they are learning. They are supported by an

adult in their work before undertaking tasks independently to develop their ability to apply their knowledge. They do not move on to new learning until they have a depth of understanding. Teachers then support their pupils with new learning which the pupil continues to work on until once again they can access this independently and remember what they have learned. This approach means that all pupils are able to access the curriculum, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

The breadth of opportunities to develop pupils' personal development is impressive. There is an extensive range of activities on offer throughout the afternoon for all pupils. This includes a weekly forest school session in the school's own woodland. This is set within a nature reserve which is a Site of Special Scientific Interest. This is used by the school to develop pupils' understanding of the world. Pupils really look forward to their work and take responsibility for their wider learning. Pupils from six to 11 years of age who access 'The Cabin' also value the variety of opportunities to develop their leadership skills. They each undertake different job roles in this setting and they take their positions of responsibility very seriously. As a result, children understand the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. Pupils leave this school well prepared for life in modern Britain.

The curriculum in Children's House for pupils from three years old is highly aspirational. A focus on early mathematics and early language helps children get off to a secure start. Children develop a wide ranging vocabulary which they use with familiarity in their activity. There is a focus on developing independence in this setting. Staff take every opportunity to introduce children to a wide range of cultures, and children develop a fascination with the world. Children are deeply engaged in the activities on offer. They are focused on their learning and interact beautifully with their peers. Children are excited to learn.

The principal, who is also the proprietor, is passionate about the Montessori principles and how this approach can provide an aspirational curriculum. Along with the wider leadership team, she is committed to providing a high-quality education for all pupils. Leaders are very supportive of the staff team and ensure that workload is manageable is of much importance to them. Senior leaders have a clear vision for the school. However, this needs to be shared more widely with all stakeholders. Further work is needed in terms of record-keeping and improvement planning. Leaders know their school well but record-keeping is brief. This does not allow areas for improvement to be systematically identified and addressed.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff are vigilant and take their safeguarding responsibilities seriously. They undertake training and meet regularly to discuss pupils. All staff have completed online safeguarding courses, including e-safety, child protection, prevent training and child sexual exploitation awareness training. The designated safeguarding lead

(DSL) and the deputy DSLs have all completed the appropriate training. They understand the contextual safeguarding concerns of their setting.

Appropriate checks are carried out on all adults who work at the school. During the inspection, leaders added a few details to the school's record of checks. These changes brought documents in line with the latest government requirements.

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

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

- Following the pandemic, some pupils arrive late and attendance is not as good as it could be. This means some pupils miss valuable learning time and do not access all aspects of their education. Leaders should continue to work with families to support pupils to arrive at school punctually and to attend well all of the time.
- Leaders know their school well and to date have had a casual approach to improvement planning processes. This means that the strategic school vision is not always well understood by all members of staff. This process needs formalising so that the strategy and vision for school improvement are rigorous and well understood by all members of the school community.
- School leaders' record-keeping is not as precise as it could be. As a result, record keeping is not systematic. This does not enable analysis and evaluation to take place. Leaders need to ensure that record-keeping is more detailed and robust.

## **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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	121763
<b>DfE registration number</b>	815/6032
<b>Local authority</b>	North Yorkshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10202195
<b>Type of school</b>	Other Independent School
<b>School category</b>	Independent school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	2 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	39
<b>Proprietor</b>	Jane Lord
<b>Principal</b>	Jane Lord
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£1,808 per term aged 3 to 4 years £2,750 per term aged 5 to 6 years £2,940 per term aged 7 to 11 years
<b>Telephone number</b>	01756 710452
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.wharfedalemontessori.co.uk">www.wharfedalemontessori.co.uk</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:secretary@wharfedaelmontessori.co.uk">secretary@wharfedaelmontessori.co.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	6 to 8 June 2017

## Information about this school

- Wharfedale Montessori School was last inspected in June 2017, when it was judged to be outstanding.
- The school is run by the proprietor who is also the principal. She is supported by the vice principal and the bursar, who is also responsible for human resources. The school has no other governance structure.
- The school is registered to accept up to 48 pupils and currently has 39 pupils on roll. One pupil has an education, health and care plan.
- This school does not use an alternative provision.

## Information about this inspection

Inspectors 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.

- 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.
- Inspectors held meetings with the principal and the senior leadership team. Inspectors also held meetings with senior teachers and the special educational needs coordinators.
- Inspectors toured the school site to check compliance with the independent school standards.
- Inspectors visited lessons, looked at pupils' work and listened to pupils reading to familiar adults in school. Deep dives were carried out in reading, mathematics, the cultural curriculum and the creative curriculum. Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons, around school and during lunchtime.
- Inspectors examined safeguarding records, including the single central record and recruitment checks on staff.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents by reviewing the responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. They also spoke with parents as they brought their children to school.
- Alongside the responses to the online surveys for staff, inspectors also considered views by meeting with various groups of staff. Inspectors also considered views of pupils, including their responses to the online surveys and meeting with mixed groups of pupils.

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

## Inspection team

Zoe Lightfoot, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Janet Keefe

Ofsted Inspector

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