

Inspection of Mill Cottage Montessori School

Wakefield Road, Brighouse, West Yorkshire HD6 4HA

Inspection dates:

8 to 10 March 2022

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Early years provision

Good

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Requires improvement

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

No

What is it like to attend this school?

This school follows the Montessori curriculum. Teacher demonstrations are supported by the carefully planned resources in the children's house. This structured approach encourages children to make a strong early start. Learning continues in the well-equipped outdoor environment. The outdoor areas offer a wealth of opportunities for children to learn more.

Leaders have created a caring community. The behaviour and attitudes of pupils in this school are exceptional. The children's house and elementary classrooms support pupils to develop their sense of self. Pupils feel able to share their thoughts and opinions with confidence. Pupils say they feel safe and they are safe. Parents speak highly of Mill Cottage. They appreciate the personalised care their children receive. They told inspectors that they would recommend this school to others. The welfare of pupils at the school is of paramount importance to all staff. Pupils are kind, thoughtful and respectful members of this school community.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are very well supported in this setting. However, this is not the experience of all pupils. Younger children learn effectively in the children's house. They achieve high end points. However, in the elementary phase of school, leaders have not ensured that learning in subjects such as mathematics is as well developed. In some subjects, older pupils are not supported well enough to acquire new knowledge and make good progress.

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

In the children's house and the elementary classroom, the standard of work in the cultural curriculum is ambitious. Pupils relish learning about astronomy and space. The youngest children are able to talk comprehensively about the planets. As they move into the elementary classroom, pupils build successfully on this learning. Pupils talk enthusiastically about star constellations and dwarf planets. Pupils enjoyed a teacher's input, discussing the shapes of the different constellations they might see at night fall. They were able to name these star constellations. In a later lesson, they spoke comprehensively about the life cycle of a star.

The same rigour is not evident in all parts of the curriculum. Children begin well in the children's house. They develop a strong understanding of early reading and mathematics. As pupils move through the elementary classroom this progress is not sustained. Pupils follow their interests, choosing areas of learning they enjoy. However, this is not leading pupils to develop a secure enough knowledge in these areas. The environment is not always prepared sufficiently well to support pupils in their independent practice.

Pupils in the elementary setting attend on a part-time basis. Leaders communicate regularly with home to share what pupils are learning in school. However, leaders

are not assured that this learning is continued at home. This is a barrier to pupils being well prepared for the next stage in their education.

In the elementary classroom, resources do not always effectively support pupils' independent learning. Adults do not always model ideas and concepts well. This means that pupils gather incorrect information, which compounds misconceptions. This limits pupils' developing independence and interrupts their self-directed learning.

Pupils are prepared well for life in modern Britain. They have a secure sense of British values. They show respect and tolerance for one another. Pupils can demonstrate a growing understanding of different cultures and different family backgrounds. There is an ethos of good manners and kindness that permeates school life. Pupils demonstrate a real sense of pride both in themselves and their school. They know it is important to take turns and pupils do this naturally. Pupils are thoughtful and reflect on international issues as well as developing an understanding of local concerns. Older students serve as good role models for younger pupils.

Children access their early years education in the children's house setting at Millgate. This provision is highly aspirational. There is a strong focus on early mathematics and early language. This supports children in developing a secure foundation of knowledge. Children in this setting develop a wide vocabulary. They use this well to explain what they know and remember. The classroom learning environment is purposeful. Adults interact well with pupils to support their learning. Children are then able to access further learning independently. They are interested in finding out more. They are excited to share what they are learning with others.

Leadership is varied. There are some key strengths in this school. These include the robust safeguarding culture that the head teacher instils as well as the strength of SEND support available to pupils. The headteacher delivers training in the Montessori approach to staff each week. However the school is still not meeting the independent school standards. Actions taken to improve the curriculum since the last standard inspection in December 2019 have not been sustained. Leaders have shown reticence in addressing the areas of the curriculum that need improving. These areas remain a concern. Leaders are not doing enough to tackle weaknesses in the curriculum for older pupils. These issues continue to be areas for improvement and the unmet standards are an ongoing requirement.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The head teacher is vigilant and has developed a robust culture of safeguarding at Mill Cottage. Leaders work with the local authority safeguarding officer to ensure all training is purposeful in terms of the local area and the bespoke context of this school. The facilities in school are maintained to a high standard, with appropriate

entrance and exits procedures in place to keep pupils safe. Staff receive regular face to face training and have completed further online safeguarding courses.

The school has four deputy designated safeguarding leaders in addition to the designated safeguarding leader, who is also the headteacher. All are appropriately trained and attend regular refresher training. The school carries out appropriate checks on all adults who work at the school. The related documents are up to date and comply with the latest government requirements.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- Pupils in the elementary classroom do not achieve well enough.
 - Not all staff have the subject knowledge to be able to teach core subjects in depth. Leaders should urgently address this lack of knowledge through a comprehensive training programme so all staff are able to deliver an effective curriculum.
 - A sequential approach to curriculum delivery is not evident in core subjects in the elementary classroom. Leaders should work closely with all staff to develop a coherent curriculum that effectively builds on pupils' experiences in the children's house.
 - Classroom resources are not consistently of a wide enough range across all phases of school. This hampers some pupils from learning independently through self-directed study in some subjects. Leaders must ensure that appropriate resources are available to support pupils in their independent learning and self-correction in all classrooms.
- Leaders do not ensure that all the independent school standards relating to the quality of education are met consistently. Strong systems should be promptly set up to check that an ambitious curriculum is being implemented effectively across the school. This should enable leaders to have clear evidence that all pupils receive a good quality of education which enables them to know more, remember more and be able to do more.

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

Unique reference number	131158
DfE registration number	381/6012
Local authority	Calderdale
Inspection number	10209080
Type of school	Other independent school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	47
Number of part-time pupils	45
Proprietors	Ailsa Neville and Martin Blowers
Headteacher	Ailsa Neville
Annual fees (day pupils)	£58.67 (full day) £50.39 (school day)
Telephone number	01484 400500
Website	www.millcottageschool.co.uk
Email address	ailsa.neville@millcottageschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	3–5 December 2019

Information about this school

- Millgate Montessori School last received a standard inspection in December 2019, when it was judged to be requires improvement.
- The school is registered to accept up to 113 pupils and currently has 47 pupils on roll. Four pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- Almost all of pupils who attend the school do so on a part time basis. Many pupils in the elementary classroom attend one or two days per week. All of the statutory school age pupils are registered as home educated.
- A small number of pupils attend alternative provision. This is arranged by their parents during the period of time they are electively home educated.
- The school has a registration as Mill Cottage Montessori School Day Care on the Early Years and Childcare Register. This setting is registered at the same address and received an inspection under this framework in May 2019.
- The school does not have provision for two-year-olds within the registration identified by the Department for Education.

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.

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.

- 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 headteacher and proprietor. 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 with 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, Ofsted Parent View. They also spoke with parents as they brought their children to school and within the setting.
- Alongside the responses to the online surveys for staff, inspectors also considered views by meeting with various groups of staff. Inspectors considered the views of pupils, including their responses to the online surveys and through talking with pupils.

Inspection team

Zoe Lightfoot, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

David Penny

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
 - 3(d) shows a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the pupils, and ensures that these are taken into account in the planning of lessons
 - 3(e) demonstrates good knowledge and understanding of the subject matter being taught.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 15 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that an admission and attendance register is maintained in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006[13].

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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