Inspection of Wharfedale Montessori School

Bolton Abbey, Skipton, North Yorkshire BD23 6AN

Inspection dates: 4 to 6 March 2025

Overall effectiveness	**Requires improvement**
The quality of education	**Good**
Behaviour and attitudes	**Good**
Personal development	**Good**
Leadership and management	**Requires improvement**
Early years provision	**Good**
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good
Does the school meet the independent school standards?	**No**

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are well supported to become responsible and independent learners at this small, rural school. Pupils behave well and are highly respectful of each other. Staff keep pupils safe and well cared for. The Montessori philosophy and approach is well-embedded here.

The school has high expectations of pupils' achievement. The school's curriculum enables pupils to achieve well. Pupils are knowledgeable about their learning. They talk enthusiastically about the wide range of topics they study. As a result, pupils leave the school ready for their next steps in education.

The school exploits its unique location to provide wider opportunities to pupils. Local walking routes, the on-site forest school and natural surroundings are part of the weekly offer for pupils. Pupils talk enthusiastically about why their school is special. There is a strong focus on pupils taking responsibility for the school and each other. They take pride in their daily roles. These include looking after resources, setting the table for snack and lunch, and getting wood for the fires. This sense of pride and citizenship starts as soon as the youngest children join the school.

Over time, the proprietor has not ensured that the independent school standards (the standards) have been met. Policies and procedures are not always reviewed regularly.

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

The school's curriculum gives pupils the key skills and knowledge to succeed. Learning starts with Montessori 'great' lessons where skilled teachers support pupils with key learning across the curriculum. This helps pupils develop deep and well-connected knowledge linked to a wide range of curriculum areas. Pupils progress through the curriculum well.

Pupils master the key knowledge and skills they need before moving on to new learning. Pupils work collaboratively to improve their understanding in number. Children in early years have sound understanding of place value in readiness to learn more complex content.

Individual project work helps pupils focus on areas of interest. Pupils' knowledge of where places are in the world is precise. Using mapping resources, older pupils confidently locate the Bay of Biscay and the Strait of Gibraltar. Using other skills linked to literacy and art they create detailed presentations in different formats. They share their expertise with each other. This helps pupils understand a range of topics from the earth's atmosphere to bike maintenance.

Younger children and pupils use outdoor space effectively. They search for their own material working physically to support their learning. A more formal approach to

physical education for older pupils keeps pupils active alongside the use of the local area. Opportunities to participate more widely in sports beyond the physical development curriculum are limited.

Children learn of a love of reading from when they start school. Books are part of daily life. Pupils study texts that they find interesting. This helps them develop their understanding of what they read. Pupils are committed to reading and talk with enthusiasm about book genres they enjoy. Using Montessori approaches children in early years learn to build their phonics knowledge through a structured approach. Children apply and master their phonic sounds well. Pupils practise the words they can read with books well matched to the sounds they know.

The school's curriculum is inclusive for all pupils. The school carefully considers any barriers to learning pupils may have. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well supported through the individualised approach to their individual learning journeys. They achieve well. Where needed, they have access to appropriate adaptations. Pupils who may need help to catch up with their peers are supported through focused short interventions.

Pupils act as role models to each other. They work diligently through independent tasks. From early years, children know the school's expectations well. For example, they make use of the forest school's resources with care and attention. Staff foster warm and caring relationship with and between pupils. Older children and pupils support their peers with confidence. If the working noise becomes too loud, pupils of all ages will calmly and sensibly ask their peers to be quieter. Pupils respond to any requests without hesitation.

The school's vision to develop responsible and caring pupils is ever present. The school enables pupils well to be active citizens. There is a palpable sense of shared responsibility for all aspects of school life. Pupils are highly respectful of others. They listen to each other's views with consideration. It is fine to have a different opinion, interest or passion. Some passions ignite interest in other pupils such as the roller-skating pupils practice during social times. Pupils live out fundamental British values across the school day. Visits to London and parliament brings these to life for pupils. Pupils also learn how to keep healthy and make the right choices. Children in early years visit the local fire station to understand how people help them stay safe.

New leadership is reflective and focuses on the right areas for improvement for the school. A number of the standards were not met at the start of the inspection. The school worked to meet some of these whilst the inspection was in process. Some remain unmet. Some policies and procedures are not well aligned with each other. For example, admissions and attendance registers and linked policies do not consistently follow statutory guidance. Additionally, oversight and monitoring of the standards by the proprietor is not well structured. The proprietor acknowledges the work needed to strengthen this aspect of the school's work.

The proprietor considers the well-being of staff carefully. Staff feel well supported by approachable leaders. Many parents are positive about the school. Parents value the independent learning skills pupils gain here.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders, staff and the proprietor work together to keep pupils safe. The school takes considered action and works with other agencies when needed. However, it can be difficult to see what actions the school takes and in what order. The school recognises the need to improve their record keeping processes and safeguarding procedures further. This work has already begun.

What does the school need to do to improve? (Information for the school and proprietor)

- Record keeping for some incidents linked to safeguarding are not held in a systematic and orderly way. This means it is not clear and easy to understand what happened and in what order. The school must ensure actions and communications with other agencies linked to safeguarding are recorded effectively so it is clear what actions have been taken to keep pupils safe.
- Systems to review policies and procedures are not well developed. This means that there is a lack of clarity about what needs to be completed and when for some aspects of the school. The proprietor should ensure that policies and procedures are written, reviewed and updated regularly to best meet the needs of the school.
- There is insufficient oversight of how the school meets the standards. The school does not meet the standards consistently over time. The proprietor should ensure that they maintain effective oversight of the standards to ensure they are met.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	121763
DfE registration number	815/6032
Local authority	North Yorkshire
Inspection number	10342013
Type of school	Other Independent School
School category	Independent day school
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	31
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Wharfedale Montessori Limited
Chair	Graham Lord
Headteacher	Jeremy Clarke
Annual fees (day pupils)	£3,918 per term
Telephone number	01756 710452
Website	www.wharfedalemontessori.co.uk
Email address	secretary@wharfedalemontessori.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	9 to 11 November 2021

Information about this school

- Wharfedale Montessori School offers education for pupils aged two to 11 years old. The school opened in June 1992. This is the school's sixth standard inspection since it opened.
- The school follows the values and principles of the Montessori curriculum.
- The school's principal took up post in September 2024. They are supported by a school business manager and bursar.
- The school is registered to admit 48 pupils. There are 31 pupils on roll.
- There has been a change in proprietor since the previous inspection. The proprietary body is Wharfedale Montessori Limited. There is a named chair of the proprietary body. The chair is also the bursar for the school.
- Pupils aged two- to six-years-old are taught in the Children's House. Pupils aged six- to eleven-years-old are taught in The Cabin. Both provisions are on the same site.
- The school does not use any 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.

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.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors met with representatives from the proprietor body, the principal, and lead teachers. Inspectors spoke with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, and the creative and the cultural curriculum. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, looked at curriculum plans, visited lessons, spoke to staff, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and

considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.

- Inspectors reviewed the school's policies and documentation relating to pupils' welfare and to their education. They talked with staff and pupils about pupils' personal development and pupils' behaviour and attitudes. They observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school.
- Inspectors checked the school's compliance with the standards. As part of these checks, an inspector toured the school's premises accompanied by school leaders.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents through responses to the online survey for parents, Ofsted Parent View, and in person. Inspectors considered the views of staff through meetings. Inspectors considered the views of pupils through pupil discussions.

Inspection team

Emily Stevens, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Zoe Lightfoot	Senior His Majesty's Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school failed to meet the following independent school standards

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 10 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that bullying at the school is prevented in so far as reasonably practicable, by the drawing up and implementation of an effective anti-bullying strategy.
- 13 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that first aid is administered in a timely and competent manner by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written first aid policy.
- 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].
- 16 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that-
  - 16(a) the welfare of pupils at the school is safeguarded and promoted by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written risk assessment policy; and
  - 16(b) appropriate action is taken to reduce risks that are identified.

Part 6. Provision of information

- 32(1) The standard about the provision of information by the school is met if the proprietor ensures that-
  - 32(1)(a) the information specified in sub-paragraph (2) is provided to parents of pupils and parents of prospective pupils and, on request, to the Chief Inspector[14], the Secretary of State or an independent inspectorate[15];
  - 32(1)(b) the information specified in sub-paragraph (3) is made available to parents of pupils and parents of prospective pupils and, on request, to the Chief Inspector, the Secretary of State or an independent inspectorate;
- 32(3) The information specified in this sub-paragraph is-
  - 32(3)(d) particulars of arrangements for meeting the standards contained in paragraphs 9, 10, 11 and 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;

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: http://eepurl.com/iTrDn.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2025