



Wharfedale Montessori School

CONTENTS

[Introduction and summary](#)

[Purpose and scope of the inspection](#)

[Information about the school](#)

[Summary of main findings](#)

[What the school does well](#)

[What the school must do in order to comply with the regulations](#)

[Compliance with the regulations for registration](#)

[1. The quality of education provided by the school](#)

[The quality of the curriculum](#)

[The quality of the teaching and assessment](#)

[Does the school meet the requirements for registration?](#)

[2. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils](#)

[Does the school meet the requirements for registration?](#)

[3. The welfare, health and safety of the pupils](#)

[Does the school meet the requirements for registration?](#)

[4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff](#)

[Does the school meet the requirements for registration?](#)

[5. The suitability of the premises and accommodation](#)

[Does the school meet the requirements for registration?](#)

[6. The quality of information for parents and other partners](#)

[Does the school meet the requirements for registration?](#)

[What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?](#)

[7. The effectiveness of the school's procedures for handling complaints](#)

[Does the school meet the requirements for registration?](#)

[School details](#)

Introduction and summary

 CONTENTS

Purpose and scope of the inspection

 CONTENTS

This inspection was carried out by the Office for Standards in Education under Section 163 of the Education Act 2002 in order to advise the Secretary of State for Education and Skills about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Information about the school

 CONTENTS

Wharfedale Montessori School is an independent school which opened fifteen years ago. It is located in a rural area of great natural beauty. The school caters for pupils between the ages of two and a half years to twelve years drawn from the surrounding area of North Yorkshire.

The school follows the ideas and methods established by Dr Maria Montessori in all aspects of practice. However the school incorporates other forms of teaching and good practice that lend themselves to the Montessori approach. The aim of the school is:

`to produce happy children with a love of learning and a good attitude towards school and grown ups, and to give them the opportunity to learn well and thoroughly; so that in later life they can go closer than any of us to reaching their maximum potential'.

The younger pupils, up to six years of age, are educated in the open-plan ground floor of a large residential house with extensive grounds. The primary class, up to twelve years of age, is located one mile to the north in a building that was once Barden village school.

All the teachers are trained and experienced in the Montessori method of teaching.

Summary of main findings

Wharfedale Montessori School has a significant number of good features. The principal and staff are committed to the Montessori approach and work hard to provide a learning environment that helps pupils to achieve their full potential. The quality of the curriculum is good and is supported by effective planning. The quality of teaching is good. Pupils' behaviour is excellent. They display good attitudes towards their work. The provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good and is a strength of the school.

What the school does well

- the quality of teaching is good overall and is often very good in the pre- primary class;
- the principal gives clear direction to the work of the school and is ably supported by a team that shares her vision;
- the school provides a happy, secure environment where pupils are encouraged to fulfil their potential;
- pupils' behaviour is excellent and reflects the high expectations of staff;
- the school encourages pupils to accept responsibility, show initiative and understand how they can contribute to community life;
- it has the overwhelming support and confidence of the parents; and
- it supports the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils.

What the school must do in order to comply with the regulations

- provide parents with an annual written report of the progress and attainment of their children in the main subject areas taught;
- make available to parents particulars of academic performance during the preceding school year, including the results of any public examinations; and
- ensure that a written complaints procedure is made available to parents on request.

What the school must to comply with the Disability Discrimination Act 2002 (DDA):

- prepare a plan to show how over the next three years it can make itself more accessible to pupils with disabilities.

Compliance with the regulations for registration

1. The quality of education provided by the school

The quality of the curriculum



The quality of the curriculum is good and reflects practice to be found in Montessori schools. The curriculum policy is set out in the school prospectus. It is implemented effectively and is supported by adequate schemes of work and teaching plans. The early years curriculum closely follows the national guidelines and staff provide appropriate activities which involve pupils learning by 'doing'.

The curriculum is broad and balanced. It enables pupils to acquire sensory, linguistic, mathematical, scientific and technological skills, whilst also nurturing the development of skills associated with history, geography, physical education, music and drama. In addition French is taught. Emphasis is placed on pupils' acquisition of skills, knowledge and understanding. Their learning is seen as: 'a series of discoveries made in collaboration with their teachers'.

A central theme of the curriculum is the experiences offered to pupils which are designed to develop the whole personality of the child. They learn to accept responsibility for their behaviour, to contribute positively to the school 'family', make choices and demonstrate initiative and self-confidence. As pupils move into the primary class they are introduced to zoology, ecology, physics, chemistry, algebra and geometry. Teachers plan topics that incorporate a number of subjects in order to manage the curriculum effectively. This enables pupils to apply recently acquired literacy and numeracy skills whilst increasing their knowledge and understanding of the world.

Good use is made of the local environment, such as the Strid nature trail and educational visits, in order to support pupils' learning. Typical experiences include trips to the seaside, the zoo and Leeds-Bradford airport. One afternoon a week is set aside for physical education and the school uses the facilities at a neighbouring school in order to take the pupils swimming.

The quality of the teaching and assessment



The quality of teaching is good overall. The teaching in the pre-primary department is a strength of the school. Staff know their pupils very well and establish strong relationships as they join the school 'family'. Pupils are motivated and demonstrate enthusiasm, usually maintaining their concentration for a considerable length of time. They work hard and respond with interest to the carefully structured questions posed by teachers. They are given good opportunities to practise skills and gain new knowledge as they work through the varied programme for each day.

The skilled staff work very effectively as a team to provide the pupils with consistent support for their learning. Pupils make good progress. The pre-primary teachers have a very good understanding of the Foundation Stage curriculum and integrate this very effectively with the principles of Montessori. The classrooms are organised appropriately and use the range of Montessori apparatus and resources to help pupils learn in all subjects. Teachers plan effectively for the group and project sessions, and keep careful records of observations and assessments made. They know what pupils need to learn next and what they need to practise further. Teachers help pupils to become independent and think for themselves. For example, when two boys were discussing photographs of children from other countries, the teacher skilfully encouraged them to express their own feelings and to empathise with the children in the pictures.

The very clear structure of the day enables the pupils to work at their own pace and to experience a number of activities which they have chosen, as well as those led by the teachers. Routines are embedded in the daily programmes and they provide order and security for the pupils. An example

is the welcome and registration process at the start of the day. The school has high expectations of pupils and as a consequence they behave responsibly and focus on the task in hand. Pupils begin to develop a wide range of skills as soon as they start school which help them to cope with situations as they arise. They are able to make choices independently, such as when they need to wait for particular apparatus or to take a seat at the snack table.

The school has very clear aims and individual achievement is shared with parents on a regular basis. Progress for the younger children is measured very effectively using the Foundation Stage Profile and this is complemented by the Montessori records of achievement. In the primary class, pupils are involved in the assessment process through discussion. This was evident when a pupil finished a mathematical activity and, following discussion with the teacher, knew that the next step would involve work relating to decimals. The school is effective in providing for all pupils and makes a special effort to support those with special educational needs.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

2. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils



Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good and is a strength of the school. The school operates on the principle that everyone is part of its 'family' and this is shown very clearly through the mutual respect and consideration evident for others. Pupils work effectively in classes of more than one age group. They take responsibility for their activities, for example collecting and putting away their apparatus and other resources. At lunchtime, pupils have very clear roles and responsibilities when preparing for lunch. Pupils take great pride in making sure the room is clean and ready for the afternoon session.

Pupils are polite and their behaviour is excellent. There is a clear shared understanding of how pupils are expected to behave both in class and outside. If any problems arise, class discussions are used effectively to sort them out. The pupils work calmly and show a sincere interest in the work and welfare of their classmates.

The school provides pupils with the chance to experience a sense of amazement in the world around them through exploration of its idyllic rural setting and through visits to many places of interest. Pupils have regular opportunities to be part of stimulating and exciting whole-school performances which often form the culmination of a project.

The pupils are encouraged to help others through their own endeavours. They make biscuits which are sold and the proceeds go to a charity which helps people with leprosy. Pupils have close links with the local and wider community through the work of the National Park and input from representatives of public services, including the police and ambulance service.

Through regular projects about other countries and cultures, pupils develop a clear understanding of and respect for difference. Following a term's work on Africa, the school has developed an interesting link with a Kaptebeswet school in Kenya. A range of customs and festivals from a number of faiths and cultures is recognised and celebrated through specific work and everyday activities. Pupils explore music, language and clothing from around the world and prepare food from other countries.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

3. The welfare, health and safety of the pupils

▲ CONTENTS

Wharfedale School is very effective in providing for the welfare, health and safety of its pupils. The staff have created a community which is caring and understanding. There are detailed written policies to promote the health and safety of pupils both in school and when on visits. The behaviour, bullying and discipline policies clearly demonstrate the Montessori commitment to developing self-control and awareness of the needs of others. The school makes effective use of the North Yorkshire Child Protection Committee documentation. The principal is the trained child protection officer and ensures that all staff are fully aware of these issues by sharing information and enabling them to attend appropriate training.

The school keeps full accident, incident and First Aid records as well as maintaining information on particular health needs of the pupils. The majority of the staff hold a First Aid qualification. There is a comprehensive fire safety procedure in place and the fire authority monitors the school's risk assessments every four years. Regular fire drills are held and documented accurately. All fire appliances and alarms are checked regularly. Pupils are supervised effectively in the classrooms and when using each of the outdoor play areas, including the woodland.

Attendance is very good. The admission register complies fully with the regulations.

At present, the school does not have a plan to show how over the next three years it can make itself more accessible to pupils with disabilities.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

What the school must to comply with the Disability Discrimination Act 2002 (DDA):

- prepare a plan to show how over the next three years it can make itself more accessible to pupils with disabilities.

4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff

▲ CONTENTS

The school takes seriously its responsibility to ensure that staff are suitable to work with children, and has carried out checks with the Criminal Records Bureau on all existing employees. Good systems are in place to verify the identity, medical fitness and suitability of all staff prior to commencing their appointment. All teachers are qualified to teach the Montessori method. Teaching assistants form positive relationships with pupils. This provides an environment in which pupils feel secure. They are able to discuss their work, ask questions and develop lively, enquiring minds.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

5. The suitability of the premises and accommodation

▲ CONTENTS

The school provides appropriate accommodation on two sites approximately one mile apart. The pre-primary and primary buildings are leased from the trustees of the Chatsworth Settlement and are set in the National Park. The pre-primary building consists of two suitable classrooms and a small adjoining space for pupils to work in small groups or individually. The school office is on the first floor. Both buildings are in a satisfactory decorative order and are clean and tidy. There are clearly organised spaces for pupils to store their belongings and to house resources.

The pre-primary site has an interesting range of outdoor areas including a sheltered woodland area, a section with climbing apparatus, a grassed garden with a play house and raised beds for pupils to grow their own plants. There is an adequate hard-surfaced area where they use tricycles and other large wheeled toys. Within the grounds there are suitable outbuildings for keeping toys as well as for the safe storage of animal feeds. There are goats and a pony kept on this site in suitably fenced paddocks. Other pets are appropriately cared for on site.

The primary department is housed in a Victorian school building. It consists of one main teaching room and is suitable for the age and number of pupils attending. There is an adequate, walled hard-play surface outside which provides space for a range of ball games. A garden area at the front includes a small greenhouse for growing produce.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

6. The quality of information for parents and other partners

▲ CONTENTS

The quality of the information provided for parents is good. The school prospectus sets out a range of useful information which includes a description of the Montessori approach. Emphasis is given to its unique qualities, with specific reference to the development of intellectual skills whilst fostering initiative and independent choice within a carefully structured environment. It also provides sufficient information for parents regarding the school's policy for admissions, health and safety, discipline and the provision for pupils with special educational needs. Details relating to the number of staff employed at the school together with a summary of their qualifications are also contained within the prospectus.

The school does not make available information concerning academic performance during the preceding year, including the results of any school entrance examinations.

Relationships between parents and teachers are good. Staff are always willing to discuss any concerns parents may have. Parents feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions, suggestions or a problem. Newsletters are sent home periodically throughout the term. They keep parents well informed about changes to school policies and forthcoming events.

The school places great importance on creating a partnership with parents. However, the school does not provide parents with an annual written report reflecting the progress and attainment of their children in the main subjects taught.

The quality of the information on pupils with statements of special educational needs that is sent to

the local education authority is good. Details relating to individual pupils' strengths and weaknesses are noted. As a result pupils' learning needs are catered for appropriately.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

The school meets most, but not all, of the requirements.

What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?

In order to comply with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:

- provide particulars of academic performance during the preceding school year, including the results of any public examinations (paragraph 6(2)(i));
- provide to parents an annual written report of the progress and attainment of each registered pupil in the main subject areas (paragraph 6(5)); and
- make it clear that parents of pupils and prospective pupils may request details of the complaints procedure adopted by the school, together with the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year (paragraph 6(2)(j)).

7. The effectiveness of the school's procedures for handling complaints

 **CONTENTS**

The school has recently written and implemented a new procedure for handling complaints which meets all of the regulations.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

School details

 **CONTENTS**

Name of school:	Wharfedale Montessori School		
DfES ref number:	815/6032		
Type of school:	Pre-School and Primary		
Status:	Independent		
Age range of pupils:	2 - 12 years		
Gender of pupils:	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils):	Boys 12,	Girls 15,	Total 27
Number on roll (part-time pupils):	Boys 7,	Girls 10,	Total 17
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need:	Boys 0,	Girls 1,	Total 1
Annual fees (day pupils):	£3,765		
Address of school:	Wharfedale Montessori School		
	Bolton Abbey		
	Skipton		
	North Yorkshire		
	BD23 6AN		

E-mail address:	enquiries@wharfedale.montessori-school.info
Telephone number:	01756 710452
Principal:	Mrs J Lord
Proprietor:	Mrs J Lord
Lead Inspector:	Mr Christopher Keeler HMI
Dates of inspection:	11 - 14 October 2004

© CROWN COPYRIGHT 2004. This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.
Inspection reports are available on the Ofsted web site (www.ofsted.gov.uk).

