

Montessori Accreditation Report

The Montessori Accreditation Report was reviewed by the MAA Accreditation Board. The Board has verified our Montessori Assessor's recommendation to accredit the setting, as highlighted below:



MAA Montessori Accreditation has been awarded to:



The Little Learners Montessori Nursery, Northwood

10 Oaklands Gate, Northwood, Middlesex, HA6 3AA

Validity period: 3 years

From: April 2024 – April 2027

Name of Montessori Assessor: Neena Dhawan

Date of initial assessment: 11th March 2024 via Zoom call

Date of visit: 17th April 2024

Note on Confidentiality:

This final document is private and confidential, and may not be made public until ratified by the MAA Board. The Final Report will be submitted to the MAA Board for approval. Upon the Board's validation, an official email notification will be sent from the MAA office.

This notification not only confirms the accreditation but also contains the final version of the Report, the MAA accreditation logo, and a press release. At this point, the report can be shared with parents and the broader community, and the MAA logo can be featured on the setting's website and in documentation. Settings will also be awarded a certificate.

It's important to note that the report does not address the standards and quality concerns evaluated by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted). It is solely an inspection to judge whether the nursery is adhering to the Montessori Educational Standards set by the MAA.

This Montessori Accreditation Report was prepared following an initial online video call, interview and in-person accreditation visit, conducted by an experienced Montessori assessor within the Montessori Apprentice Academy (MAA) team.

Activities carried out by MAA Montessori Assessor

The manager led the Montessori Assessor on a learning walk and discussed their Montessori ethos, curriculum planning and educational knowledge on Montessori.

The manager carried out a joint observation with the Assessor on the settings Montessori practice. The Montessori assessor carried out direct observations of the Montessori classroom, the interaction of Montessori Teachers with children and the Montessori practices with the Montessori Apparatus.

The Little Learners Montessori Nursery, Northwood

10 Oaklands Gate, Northwood, Middlesex, HA6 3AA

Description

The Little Learners Montessori Nursery is based in the suburb of Northwood, part of the London Borough of Hillingdon. The nursery was established in 2014 and is part of a group of four privately owned Montessori nurseries. The nursery is located in a two storey building, which is bright and spacious. The older children (Children's House) are based on the ground floor whilst the younger ones (Infant Community) are on the first floor; both classes have an attached toilet with a changing area in Infant Community. The first floor classroom has a small kitchen area with the main kitchen on the ground floor where a Kitchen Assistant organises the hot meals. All children have access to a well-planned garden area, which is on two levels. In addition, there is a small office and an area for staff breaks.

The nursery hours are from 7:30 –6 pm with some children attending a half-day till 1 pm, which includes lunch and an option for some to attend from 1 – 6 pm. During the morning and afternoon sessions the children have access to fruit for a snack and tea is served at approximately 3:30 pm. The setting is open for 50 weeks a year and is in receipt of funding for 2, 3 and 4 year olds. The majority of the children attend full time.

The setting offers places for children from the age of 6 months to 5 years and has 29 children currently on roll. A maximum of 40 children can attend each session and on the day of the visit there were 13 children in the Infant Community room with six staff and 13 children in Children's House with three staff plus the Manager and the Kitchen Assistant. At present there are five Montessori qualified Teachers, with one Teacher currently completing a Montessori training course.

Continuous professional development is a priority for the setting and all staff complete safeguarding training and are first aid trained. The Manager is the SENCO and supports the team with regard to SEND support (special educational needs and

disabilities). Staff meetings take place on a monthly basis where the needs of the children and the team are discussed. Staff comment that they are well supported by the robust induction training and the regular mentor support.

Summary

The Little Learners Montessori Nursery, Northwood is an inviting setting with a warm and friendly atmosphere. The children arrive at nursery with big smiles and greet their peers and Teachers with joy and confidence. They eagerly engage with a wide range of Montessori tasks and choose to work independently or with their peers. They are supported well by their Teachers who enable them to focus on self selected tasks independently giving guidance as required. The Montessori work cycle is completed around 11:30 am, and is one of calm where children show familiarity with their routine. The children exhibit excellent behaviour and care for their peers, as seen when the younger children walk through Children's House and greet the older ones and members of the team as they go to the outside area. In the garden, as the older children explore a 'mini beast' tuff tray the younger ones are invited to join in and find the worms in the wormery.

The children are confident to explore their environments, which have been well prepared by their Teachers who base activities on the children's interests. For example, in the Infant Community class the Teachers have made a music board in response to a child's love of musical instruments. Likewise, in the garden the children can explore a dinosaur area, which was set up to support two children with an intense interest in learning about dinosaurs. Activities like this are recognised by the Parents who appreciate the time the Teachers take to get to know their child and to plan for the individual. Parents also speak highly of the team and value the outstanding care provided by all staff.

Overall, the Manager and Deputy Manager have a clear vision of providing an excellent Montessori foundation for all children in their care and this dedication is supported by the caring team of staff.

Recommendations

- In the Infant Community class, at mealtimes, staff can offer children greater choices such as pouring water into a cup (rather than drinking from a beaker), and help with tidying up, for example placing their bibs into a basket. Thus offering children further independent Practical Life experiences.

- For staff in the Infant Community to record the children's early experiences of the Montessori Curriculum to ensure continuity when the children move to Children's House.

1. Montessori Philosophy

The Montessori philosophy is evident in both classrooms, with the needs of the individual child being highly regarded. The classrooms are set up to promote independence, respect and self-motivated learning as seen when the children enter the classroom and decide which activities to work with. The opportunities to experience free choice and social interaction are supported by staff who enable the children to self-select tasks and make choices whether to work independently, with a friend or with an adult. If the children require guidance, the knowledgeable team gently supports them.

2. Montessori Curriculum

The children have access to a complete and varied Montessori curriculum suitable for this age group with advanced activities in storage to be presented as needed. In Children's House the children can self select from a wide range of Montessori resources, which are varied on a regular basis to meet the changing needs of the group. For example to support the current theme of 'Spring' the children can observe caterpillars, they look at them through magnifying glasses and with the Teacher's support they carefully handle them and comment 'this caterpillar is tickling my hand'. They show curiosity and excitement at the prospect of seeing them become butterflies in due course. All activities in both classrooms are on low-level shelving and children can make their own choices. The children focus well and help each other, by moving a floor mat to make space for another friend to work or asking, "please can I join in?"

The Infant Community encourages children to be independent and to tidy up as they work with early practical life and sensory tasks. They engage with books with puppets singing 'five little ducks' and experiment with finding frogs in water filled tray with flowers and lily pads. Whilst some children exercise their motor skills as they climb up the steps, crawl through the tunnel and use the slide after a prompting of 'ready, steady, go'!

Overall a productive and harmonious atmosphere is noticeable as the children work with purpose and confidence.

3. Montessori Prepared Environment

Both classrooms are well organised, orderly and inviting; the carpeted area in the Infant community room is particularly homely and suited for young children. Displays are at low level, subtle and interactive, for example in the garden there is a display of different textures for the children to touch and comment on. Enticing and cosy book areas engage the children and they were seen looking at books from a range of fiction and non-fiction books.

The classrooms are well maintained and it can be seen that staff take pride in their environment as they make activities to support the children, often using recycled goods. For example the young children explore hand made sensory boards with different colours and textures and the older children name and place three dimensional planets onto a black felt square followed by Teacher made felt planets which can be attached with velcro, the name cards are then added and act as a form of self correction.

The garden area is well planned and reflects the indoor area, as children are encouraged to return tasks to the right place, there are opportunities for gross motor skills task, literacy, numeracy and cultural activity plus a quiet reflective space where a child chose to sit and observe his peers. The range of activities provides opportunities for discovery, experimentation and problem solving. Care of the environment is a strong feature, as children sweep leaves and carefully handle a ladybird and observe the wood louse found under a plant pot.

4. Montessori Practice

Excellent practice was observed during the visit; the Teachers have a warm and friendly rapport with the children and are able to guide the children well. They use positive and appropriate language, for example when the younger ones prepare fruit for snack time, they are gently reminded to wash their hands and are then shown how to peel and cut fruit with small wooden knives. In the garden as the older children explore the mini beasts area, they look at the differences between a snail and a slug and discuss their “slithery” movements and the “slimy, sticky residue” that they leave behind.

In the classroom, the children are able to self-select and focus on tasks, they can choose when to take a break and can access the snack table where they can prepare their fruit and pour a drink. The older children observed, carefully cut the fruit and disposed of the peelings in a compost bin, helping each other and politely saying ‘thank you’ as the fruit basket was passed around. The children in Children’s House show excellent care of the environment skills as they set up for lunch, wash the dishes and prepare the room for the afternoon session. A lovely community atmosphere was observed at lunchtime as firstly the children sing a ‘thank you’ song, then; self serve and help each other to pour water. The children chose to place out

spoons for the meal of rice and curry and can be encouraged to use forks and knives at this stage.

At lunchtime in the Infant Community room the children are enabled to self serve at the table, and use plastic bowls and spoons to eat and their beakers for drinking. Here it is recommended that some children can be offered plates and forks and can be encouraged to pour water into glasses, as they are able to do this with practical life tasks from the shelf. Similarly the children can self serve their dessert rather than having pre served bowls handed to them, an extension from the preparation of fruit at snack time. Plus it was observed that the children like to tidy up before lunch and this could be extended to after lunch, they could be supported to scrape their plates, place tableware in a washing up bowl and place bibs in a basket for washing. Thus giving the younger children more independence.

The children were active in a range of learning areas, for example a child was presented to the 'spindle box', as he counted, he stopped midway to announce "do you know I am 3 and a half ". Another child working with the large movable alphabet, a word-building task, was supported by the Teacher to sound out the words, as he worked another child asked to join in and the Teacher commented on their kind sharing. Another child read a task from the pink reading series, and was supported by the Teacher to focus on the vowel sounds as they read.

The well-prepared garden is accessible to children at all times, and provides an outstanding range of activities to support their appreciation of the natural environment. They have opportunities to plant flowers and have observed that though the daffodils are no longer in flower the flowerpots provide homes for wood lice and ants. They have planted strawberries and a range of herbs that provide sensory experiences for all ages. In the afternoon session the children were offered the opportunity to plant pansies, and feed the worms in the wormery with apples from the compost. They exercise good motor skills as they dig, plant and sweep.

The garden area also offers the children activities to exercise their large motor skills such as balancing along steps of different heights, climb the climbing frame or to manipulate sensory items on a wall. Activities further enable children to combine skills such as using fishing nets in a water tray to collect number discs, one child comments on the different colours of the nets whilst another says, "I'm fishing for number five".

The nursery operates a key person system, with staff observing and recording the progress of the children which then informs the daily and long term planning for the setting. Staff maintain written records in two formats, one for the Montessori curriculum and one for the Early Years Foundation Stage, it is suggested that the Infant Community team also record the children's progress with the Montessori curriculum to aid a smooth transition to Children's House.

Overall, Montessori practice is strong as staff are knowledgeable and confident to share information about the ethos with new staff through demonstrations of materials and discussion at team meetings. Management ensure that the key principles are adhered to and staff value the support offered.

5. Montessori Parent Partnership

Parent partnership is a solid feature of the nursery; parents praise the open and approachable communication between home and school. Plus the support they receive in key stages of their child's development, from settling in, to toilet training and to reflecting their child's home language and culture in the setting. Parents comment that they are happy as their child loves to attend the nursery and that the daily feedback is much appreciated. In addition to verbal feedback Infant Community Parents receive a daily photograph of their child with a description of the favoured activity via the 'Family' app. Parents of the older children receive a weekly update via 'Family' and all Parents receive a report twice a year with an invitation to attend a parent teacher meeting. Parents are kept well informed about seasonal activities and themes sent on a weekly basis with a newsletter issued on a termly basis.

Parents are able to attend termly events at the nursery such as the recent 'Mother's day' morning and are invited in to talk to the children. For example, the children responded well to two Dentist parents, dressed in their uniform who spoke to the children about brushing teeth and healthy eating. The Manager has extended upon this by preparing folders for Parents to view at home with their child covering themes like 'brushing teeth, 'toilet training' and 'fussy eaters' which are appreciated by the families.

6. Montessori Management

Excellent Montessori management is evident in this nursery, as the Manager and Deputy Manager are committed and passionate about the Montessori method. Their aim of respecting the individual's needs and providing a nurturing environment filters through to the team and together they have created a welcoming setting for young children and their families.

In addition Management supported by the Senior Management Team (based off site) are committed to supporting and training the team so that quality practice and care can be offered to all children. This vision is embedded throughout the setting.