



Montessori Evaluation and Accreditation Board

School Accreditation

This report is prepared following two accreditation visits made on behalf of the Montessori Evaluation and Accreditation Board. It considers how far the school follows the criteria set out in "The Guide to the EYFS in Montessori Settings" (2012/14). The second visit sought to assess the progress made on the recommendations set out in the report from the first visit as well as any further findings made during the second visit.

The report does not address the standards and quality issues which are the responsibility of the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) which reports separately. Also the report does not provide any assessment of financial aspects of the school.

The Little Learners Montessori Nursery

The United Reformed Church Hall, East Lane, Wembley, Middlesex HA9 7NN

Date of previous MEAB accreditation: November 2012

Date of first re-accreditation visit: 6 November 2015

Date of second re-accreditation visit: 23 March 2016

This accreditation report relates to the provision for children aged 2 to 5 years

Description of the school:

The Little Learners Montessori is located in Wembley, in the London Borough of Brent. It occupies church premises and has use of two rooms for the children: a large hall is the main classroom, and a small room for creative activities. This is a pack-away setting; it also has a store room, kitchen and a garden adjacent to the main room and has sole use of the premises during its opening hours. The age range of 2 to 5 years is mixed across all areas of the setting. The nursery is open term time on weekdays, with morning sessions from 09.00 to 12.00, afternoon sessions from 12.00 to 15.00 and school day sessions 09.00 to 15.00. There are 100 children on roll and a maximum of 50 children may attend the nursery at any one time. Children attend five sessions per week, mostly for either mornings or afternoons. The number of children present during the morning of the visit was 43 and during the afternoon 34. The children who attend the afternoon sessions bring in packed lunches. Provision is made for children with additional needs, including those for whom English is an additional language (EAL). A high percentage of the children have EAL and the setting serves a culturally diverse community.

The nursery was first registered in 2009 and re-registered in 2012. It is owned by three



highly qualified early years' practitioners who also own three other local Montessori nurseries. There are fourteen members of staff, including the owners, ten of whom work directly with the children. All of them hold relevant childcare qualifications and eight are employed full time, including the manager. Ten of the team were present for both the morning and afternoon sessions on the day of the second visit.

Summary

The Little Learners Montessori, Wembley is exceptionally well-led and managed. Organisation is excellent and the children benefit from the consistency of approach between home and nursery. Information for parents is outstanding and they are encouraged to participate in the setting in a range of different ways. Children have excellent opportunities for developing their skills of independence and respect for others. The setting is outstanding in meeting the needs of children and in helping them to learn language and routines and to develop to their potential. Staff members have positive relationships with all the children and provide exceptionally good support for those with additional needs; they are friendly, helpful and experienced in supporting children's learning, and are knowledgeable about Montessori philosophy.

Weekly planning ensures that the current interests and needs of each child are considered and provided for within the range of activities on offer. Since the first re-accreditation visit assessment has much improved, enabling the rate of progress to be tracked effectively on the Montessori computerised recording system. Also the system for recording staff members' understanding and implementation of new policies has been changed and is now robust. Since the first re-accreditation visit huge improvements have been made to the outdoor grass area, making it attractive and more accessible to the children. The recommendations from the previous MEAB accreditation have also been met: the school has improved its documentation on planning and parent links and fully supports the settling-in of new children.

The school provides an education which follows the principles of the Montessori approach and environment. The school has successfully addressed the points for action recommended on the first visit, and this merits accreditation by the Montessori Evaluation and Accreditation Board. Consideration should be given to the following point for further development:

- Continue to implement the integration of the Montessori and Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) records into one recording system.



Philosophy:

The quality of the Montessori provision is excellent at The Little Learners, Wembley. Staff members consider each child to be unique, with individual needs. They create a stimulating environment in which children have the opportunity to develop to their potential. They offer a Montessori ethos with care and respect for the child, and the Montessori teaching enables children to learn and achieve in their own ways and at their own pace. The range of opportunities that foster self-initiated learning and self-discipline is outstanding.

Staff members speak several languages, which they use to support the children in their communication and learning. Families also receive support through practical parent workshops, coffee mornings/afternoons and translations of information to help them comprehend the nursery's principles and philosophy. The staff team is secure in their understanding of their role in implementing the Montessori philosophy and provides a warm welcome. The principles, goals and philosophy are clearly defined and detailed in the prospectus, policies, procedures, website and newsletters, and are displayed around the setting. They are reviewed by staff during weekly discussions, monthly staff meetings, or at end of term reviews.

Learning and Development:

The learning and development of the children is excellent. Very good provision is made in all areas of learning and children have access to the outside in small groups. Indoors, children have a choice between creative activities in the small room, such as arts, crafts and role play, and the Montessori resources in the main hall, for the full duration of the session. The work cycle is two and a half hours in both the morning and the afternoon sessions and includes a good mix of adult-led and spontaneous learning.

Planning reflects the children's interests and stages of development and is compiled into four separate plans; a Montessori plan, an EYFS indoor plan, an outdoor plan and an Art Room plan. All these plans are linked and follow the theme of the week or the topic of the month. Children's needs and interests are observed exceptionally well by staff. The short term lesson plans include helpful differentiation for individual children. Additionally, the children also contribute their own ideas for short term planning through their selection of picture activity cards. The long term planning has the whole year's themes including calendar festival dates. Weekly music and movement sessions are held on Fridays.

Learning Journey records are comprehensive. They are extensively used and include: a weekly assessment of progress across the spectrum of learning areas as well as children's current interests; next steps in learning; parent conference notes; photographs; evaluations; learning intentions; feedback from children commenting on their own progress, and Montessori tracking sheets. The Montessori tracking sheets are updated after every presentation to record the level of achievement of the child and are



dated, with space for practitioners to write comments or link to the EYFS areas of learning. The Learning Journeys are available to parents to take home and make entries about their child's achievements and interests outside the setting. An electronic system of recording assessment is being piloted, providing parents with easy, secure access to their child's records.

The key person system is effective in supporting individual children. The developmental needs of the children are exceptionally well met – including those with additional needs – through keen observation of the staff and well-timed support. Close links with the local authority's Early Years Inclusion team, speech and language therapists and the SENCo help staff to support children with additional needs. Makaton is used to enhance children's learning, especially those with speech delay or EAL. Staff members are reflective in their practice and discuss the effectiveness of the provision together as a team.

Prepared Environment: resources and materials

The organisation of the setting is exceptionally good, with all resources readily accessible to the children. The materials are well set out according to the Montessori areas of learning, with ample floor space for each child to move about with ease.

The large and securely enclosed garden, which is adjacent to the main hall, is accessed by all children taking turns to go out in small groups. Extensive improvement has been made to provide an outdoor classroom that covers all areas of learning, and artificial grass has been included to enable it to be accessible to the children in all weathers, and they are well equipped to do so.

The range of resources both indoors and out is excellent. It covers the Montessori and EYFS curriculum and resources are maintained so that they are ready for use, complete and clean. All the materials are highly relevant to the developing needs of the children. Staff members make daily checks of the prepared environment and resources are changed every six weeks to link with planned themes and topics. A washing-up area is set up for both morning snack and lunch so that each child independently washes their own cup, crockery and utensils.

Montessori practice: independence, including independence at home, freedom, respect

Independence is fostered exceptionally well throughout the morning and afternoon sessions, including during snack and lunch times. For the duration of the work cycle children have a choice of location to work in and all staff offer clear guidance to enable children to care for themselves, each other and the environment. Children participate in the care of their environment through activities like brushing, cleaning, sweeping and tidying up the classrooms. Sufficient time is allocated to tasks to enable repetition of



new skills.

During the second re-accreditation visit it was very evident that every possible opportunity is taken to develop the independence of the children as staff trust them to access learning spontaneously and encourage them to make choices, explore and problem solve. Children have access to snack from 10.00 and a visual display chart acts as a reminder to the children to wash their hands before they cut their fruit, pour their own drinks and clear away afterwards. They are learning respect for themselves and others through the good role modelling of the adults. They use the Montessori materials by themselves after they have been shown how to use them, with staff overseeing. Staff members give one-to-one support and have small, adult-led group times for focused activities.

Parents are encouraged to include their children in daily activities and decision-making at home. Suggestions are offered on how to extend children's independence at home during coffee mornings/afternoons and through practical parenting sessions at which staff emphasise how the Montessori approach benefits the child. Staff organise a range of events representative of the cultural diversity of the setting.

Montessori practice: Classroom management

The learning provision is exceptionally well matched to the needs of the children, particularly through the support that staff offer for language development and to those with EAL. Both morning and afternoon sessions start with self-registration, to help children identify their names. The morning session has a very short circle time before the commencement of the work cycle, while the afternoon session starts with lunch, during which the children have opportunities to develop independence in managing their meal and to socialise, with adult support.

The children attending in the afternoon have access to the same quality of work cycle as those attending in the morning. Each work cycle lasts for two and a half hours and includes a short group session and the choice of activities indoors or outdoors. The children are closely monitored by staff to ensure that they are all engaged in their learning. The children follow a visual timetable which operates throughout the work cycle. The discreet management, quiet music at lunchtime and encouragement to engage in purposeful activity ensure that this is an active learning environment for the children. Transitions from lunch to group and individual activities are quiet and orderly. If a child needs to sleep, they are accommodated in the book corner. Children across the vertical age range mix freely throughout the setting and are actively encouraged to share knowledge and understanding through showing each other how to carry out activities.

A rota system is in place for staff duties and responsibilities within the environment and the distribution of staff is effectively managed through regular use of a walkie-talkie system. The policies and procedures promote very good classroom management. Police



and fire fighters are invited in to talk to the children about safety. Real china is used to give the children a sense of weight and fragility of resources so they learn that if it falls it may break. In the outdoor area, children explore natural materials, experiment with resources, manoeuvre between spaces to gain better balance and assess risk through their own experiences.

Montessori Practice: links with parents, including reports and records

All staff record observations of, and comments from, the children. Staff carry out long observations when children first start at the nursery and parents have good opportunities to share information with their child's key person when they first join. Parents may stay to settle their child for the first two weeks, during which time they engage with the staff and communicate their child's preferences. A strong parent partnership is enhanced by the open door policy, which ensures continued and excellent communication on children's progression. Parents have daily contact with key persons to discuss children's needs, interests and achievements. The staff team now shares the new Montessori records of assessment with parents.

All literature relating to routines and planning is displayed clearly on parent notice boards in the corridors. Regular newsletters update parents of any changes in the setting. Parent consultations take place at the end of the autumn and summer term at which staff members discuss the child's progress and targets; they also encourage parents to take part in activities or share their talents with the children. Transitions to local schools are well managed and parents are given the comprehensive Learning Journeys when the child leaves the setting. Parents report that they are very happy with the setting, especially with the support that the managers offer them. Parent questionnaires are evaluated and show reflective practice.

Staffing:

Strong leadership and management make this an effectively run setting. The organisational structure includes a manager, a deputy and a senior Montessori teacher, who are supported by the three owners through regular contact and their ability to share practice between all four settings in this group of Montessori nurseries. The staff team is well qualified and includes three with Early Years Teacher Status, two with relevant degrees, five with Montessori teaching qualifications, five with other early years' qualifications at level 3, and two at level 2.

All new staff members have a comprehensive induction and job descriptions. They can access online training through the local authority. Training takes place on a regular basis including attendance at Montessori workshops to help keep knowledge and skills up-to-date; all members of the team are encouraged to attend training sessions most suited to their needs and cascade what they learn to benefit all staff and improve practice. Appraisals and supervision are well established and peer observations are



made monthly. Self-evaluation of practice and performance management is strong. Staff meetings take place regularly and actions are recorded. Staff are given copies of new and reviewed policies and, since the first re-accreditation visit, an improved system has been introduced which confirms that they have read, understood and will fully implement them. The excellent teamwork amongst these experienced staff contributes to their enthusiasm for and commitment to Montessori practices.

Name of Assessor: Anne McConway

Date reports submitted: First visit - 8 November 2015
Second visit - 23 March 2016