



# **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.

### **Iverna Gardens Montessori**

Armenian Church Hall, Iverna Gardens, London W8 6TP

Date of previous MEAB accreditation: June 2012

Date of first re-accreditation visit: 20 May 2015

Date of second re-accreditation visit: 9 July 2015

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

#### **Description of the nursery:**

Iverna Gardens Montessori School is located in Kensington and it operates from an Armenian church hall premises. The school is on two floors; the ground floor consists of one large, main classroom which uses the church hall, and the downstairs room is for afternoon use by the older children who stay all day. Outdoor facilities consist of a paved area with a number of flower beds, a climbing frame, well-equipped playhouse, sand tray, water tray, bikes, large building blocks, mud kitchen, gardening equipment, role-play activities and world map.

The provision is for children aged 2 to 5 years during term time, and was first registered in 1992. It has sole use of the premises during its hours of operation and packs away at weekends. The setting offers morning sessions from 9.00 to 12.00, a lunch club for which children bring packed meals, followed by afternoon sessions from 13.25 to 15.55, five days per week. The number of children on roll is 67 and up to 40 children attend each session, with younger children attending only the afternoon sessions, whilst older ones can attend up to full-time. There were 33 children in attendance on the morning of the second re-accreditation visit and 26 in the afternoon. The nursery makes provision for children with English as an additional language (EAL) and special educational needs



and/or disabilities (SEND).

The school is one of two Montessori nurseries in the area led by the owner. There are eight members of staff employed to work with the children and all of them hold level 4 Montessori diplomas for early years; six work full-time. Four Montessori professional placement students also attend part-time. There is a manager and deputy, who take the lead when the owner is working at the sister setting.

## Summary

This is an exceptionally stimulating Montessori setting where the relationships between all who attend are outstanding. The commitment to the Montessori approach is strong and underpins all aspects of the environment. This ensures that children are happy, independent, and purposefully learning wide-ranging skills. Staff plan for the children with exceptional attention to detail to ensure their continuous progression in learning and development. The high quality of the regular assessment and recording enables all staff to communicate effectively with parents to support their children at home. The vast range of high quality, inspiring projects makes the learning exciting for the children. New children settle quickly and learn the routines.

Parents are highly appreciative of the care and individual attention paid to the needs of their children and the availability of staff to provide information on their progress. Wide-ranging, high quality information and support is on offer to parents. Teamwork and organisation are outstanding; staff members have a shared understanding of their roles and responsibilities and all of them have Montessori qualifications. The recommendations from the last MEAB accreditation, to link Montessori areas of learning with the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and to review use of the outside, have been fully implemented. Also, since the first re-accreditation visit, improvements have been made to the recording of the induction process, minutes of staff meetings, and the development plan.

***The school provides an education in accordance with the principles of the Montessori approach and environment and merits accreditation by the Montessori Evaluation and Accreditation Board.***

- The school should continue to reflect on its practice in order to ensure that high standards are maintained.

## Philosophy:

The Montessori approach is exceptionally well understood and put into practice. Staff carry out regular detailed observations which enable them to know the interests of each child and plan opportunities for them to develop their unique potential, allowing them to



embrace spontaneous learning. Staff have high expectations of the children's behaviour and provide good role models for them. Children respect the environment by replacing materials on the shelves and respect each other by avoiding interrupting the activities of other children, thus developing good self-discipline.

The school fulfils its aims as stated on the website and in the prospectus to develop independent, happy and confident children. The website offers parents a wealth of useful information including on lectures, planning, helpful links and parents evenings. The philosophy is reviewed regularly by the head and by staff at meetings. Extensive and comprehensive written policies and procedures ensure that the aims and objectives are clear.

### **Learning and Development:**

The staff team has created a warm, welcoming, vibrant and stimulating learning environment with an extensive range of high quality resources which offer children a profusion of learning experiences. Long term planning, which follows the Montessori curriculum, is of excellent quality. Twice per term the aims for each child are written in detail by their key person to guide the daily planning. Each week staff plan new projects that expand upon an aspect of the theme of the term. These projects greatly enhance the children's knowledge, experience and enjoyment of learning. The weekly planning uses Montessori activities linked with the EYFS areas of learning.

Children are happy learning individually, in pairs and small groups. Staff rotate their roles on a daily basis so that they get to know all the children very well. Learning is spontaneous as children may join any group to observe and participate in the activity and this contributes to their ability to take turns and co-operate.

During the two hour forty minute morning work cycle children may identify their wish to be outside by wearing one of a number of beautiful bead necklaces. Staff know to invite these children to go outdoors when this option is available. The developmental needs of all the children are extremely well met and, in particular, those of children with additional needs, including EAL, for whom additional support is on offer, including through external agencies if appropriate. Additional weekly activities include French, music, yoga and drama.

The daily and weekly minuted staff meetings are reflective and contribute significantly to the planning done by the key person for each child individually and to the effectiveness of the learning and development provision. The Montessori curriculum is linked with the revised EYFS Framework in the observations, recording and assessment. Achievements are recorded in termly progress trackers, biannual reports, half termly aims and outcomes, daily photographs, and the attractive and regularly updated child's Learning Journey profile. The quality of teaching and the staff's understanding of the developmental needs of the children is exceptionally high at Iverna Gardens Montessori.



### **Prepared Environment: resources and materials**

This is an exceptionally well organised setting in which the extensive range of Montessori resources and other high quality learning materials are set out in an orderly manner. All materials are accessible to the children and they have the space to use them and move them to whichever part of the room they desire. The outdoor area is spacious and the materials complement those in the indoor environment so that children develop their physical skills further. Plants and pets make up part of the indoor provision, while a wormery and an incubator in which chicks hatch are part of the outdoor provision. All resources are in good condition and developmentally appropriate to the needs of the children that attend. The staff carefully prepare the environments twice a day, so that they are ready for the children attending each session.

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

The staff have an exceptionally good understanding of how to promote independence, both in- and outdoors. Children work with their chosen activities for as long as they desire and without interruption regardless of how they are managing their exploration and experimentation, such as with bread-making. This is indicative of the high level of trust which staff members have in allowing the children to access their learning spontaneously and creatively.

A morning work cycle of two hours and forty minutes includes a snack which the children prepare themselves at a time of their choosing by, for example, coring apples and squeezing juice from oranges. Children thoroughly enjoy their freedom of movement within the classroom and this enables them to choose whether to work individually or with others in small groups. They are also welcome to join in the presentation of new materials by a teacher during which they show tremendous respect for each other and for the materials. Staff are highly imaginative in creating and acquiring wide-ranging resources for projects to promote a respect for the cultures of others; they also actively engage with parents to encourage consistent routines for the child in the home.

### **Montessori practice: Classroom management**

An exceptionally good balance is achieved between spontaneous learning and adult-led activities. The morning work cycle is effective in giving all children in these mixed age sessions the time to choose a wide range of activities of particular interest to them, which develops their concentration and perseverance.

Staff plan thoroughly for each individual child and commence each session with a warm greeting. Each child may choose activities from the extensive range of high quality



learning materials, both indoors and outdoors. Staff take groups of up to eight children into the garden when they demonstrate their preference to go outside by wearing special necklaces. The children attending the afternoon sessions receive the same exceptionally high standards of care and nurturing as those attending in the morning, although the afternoon work cycle is shorter. Children who stay all day, in preparation for school, have lunch in the downstairs room where they independently access washing facilities.

The daily routine commences with checks on the premises and materials, followed by a staff briefing including the rota duties for the day. Twice daily staff meetings contribute significantly to the organisation of routines, supervision of the children, the quality of teaching, staff training and development, as well as team work.

The management has in place clear policies and procedures to support staff in the classroom and outside. Additional weekly activities on offer to those who wish to participate are yoga, music, drama and French as an optional extra. These activities do not affect the work cycle. Monday sessions start with a circle time to introduce the project work for the week to ensure children develop an understanding of the related vocabulary.

### **Montessori Practice: links with parents, including reports and records**

The quality of the relationship with parents is exceptionally good. Staff show warmth and affection towards the children, which helps them build secure relationships and grow rapidly in confidence to make their own decisions. The staff members are caring, sensitively nurture children's needs, and carefully record their development in Learning Journeys, which are shared with parents. Key persons report to parents and contribute to supporting the child's learning at home.

Parents appreciate how staff challenge and cherish each child individually and provide regular feedback on progress. The quality of communication with parents is excellent and there is a summary of the Montessori approach on the website. Parents receive a handbook, a new child guide, newsletters, child profiles and have parents evenings. They receive written reports twice a year and an individual summative progress report is produced on each child for the next school.

### **Staffing:**

The leadership and management are outstanding: the owner and a manager and deputy manager constantly evaluate the practice and strive for excellence. The development plan is part of the regular monitoring of progress.

The head is Montessori qualified and holds a degree in education and all of the other eight staff have level 4 Montessori diplomas. In addition, one member holds Qualified



Teacher Status, and two hold educational qualifications at level 6 or above. Seven of the team are qualified to bachelor degree level or above.

The management's support for staff is exceptionally good and an appraisal system is in place. Opportunities for staff training are excellent, including a weekly in-service training meeting and courses, some of which are shared with the sister setting. Job descriptions with responsibilities clearly designated are in place and the induction handbook is supported by a comprehensive record of the induction process. New staff members are often recruited having already attended as student teachers. Team work is excellent and peer on peer observations are endorsed by the leaders to develop best practice. The frequent staff meetings further support effective practice and minutes are recorded. All members of the staff team are highly committed to the Montessori approach.

Name of Assessor: Anne McConway

Date report submitted: First visit 24 May 2015

Second visit 9 July 2015