



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.

Victoria Road Montessori

The Vestry, Christ Church, Victoria Road, London W8 5RQ

Date of previous MEAB accreditation: June 2012

Date of first re-accreditation visit: 14 May 2015

Date of second re-accreditation visit: 8 July 2015

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

Description of the nursery:

Victoria Road Montessori is located in a residential street in Kensington. It uses a small hall in the ground floor vestry of a church and an enclosed outdoor area. It has sole use of the hall and outside area during its opening hours and packs its equipment away daily. The provision is for children aged 2 to 5 years, during term time only, and was first registered in 2007. The setting offers morning sessions from 9.00 to 12.00 five mornings per week for a maximum of 16 children. There are 16 children on roll, who can attend up to five mornings per week. On the morning of the second visit thirteen children were present.

The nursery makes provision for children with English as an additional language (EAL) and special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Victoria Road is one of two Montessori nurseries in the area led by the owner.

There are four members of staff, three of whom hold a Montessori early years qualification and one student attending for long term professional placement. Two staff



members are full-time and two are part-time. One of the team manages the setting and the head of both nurseries – who has over 36 years' experience of early years practice – works part-time with the children.

Summary

The commitment to the Montessori approach is strong. Planning for the learning and development of the children is thorough. Assessment and recording of the children's learning is exceptionally good and enables parents to effectively support their children at home. Children thrive in this dynamic and exciting learning environment in which they can experiment with natural materials and develop the skills that they have learnt. Wide-ranging, high quality information and support is on offer to parents. Staff are well qualified and team work is very good.

One of the recommendations from the last MEAB accreditation, which was to reschedule circle time, was very carefully considered and tried but was found to be impractical. The other one, to link Montessori areas of learning with the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) in record-keeping, has been implemented. The areas recommended for improvement during the first re-accreditation visit were all completed by the time of the second visit.

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:

This setting offers an exceptionally high quality Montessori provision. Staff members consider carefully the needs of each child individually and adapt the environment to provide them with activities which suit their stage of development. The staff are adept at following the interests of the child and in supporting them to fulfil their unique potential. Mutual trust enables all those in the provision to meet the children's needs and the opportunities for development of independent learning are excellent. Group activities encourage good listening skills, turn-taking and the development of an extensive vocabulary to communicate ideas and express interests.

Adults in the setting have an excellent knowledge of their roles and a thorough understanding of Montessori principles, which they implement effectively. The philosophy is defined in writing in the prospectus and is available on the website, where



a wealth of useful information is on offer to parents including details of lectures, planning, helpful links and parents' evenings. The philosophy is reviewed regularly by the owner.

Learning and Development:

Staff have created an exciting and stimulating learning environment with an excellent range of high quality resources that offer children an abundance of choice in all areas of learning. The long term planning follows the Montessori curriculum, with written aims being set twice a term for each child to support the daily planning. These aims are adapted to reflect the changing needs of the child. In addition, staff members plan weekly projects that follow a theme for the term, with a new project each week. The planning is done following the EYFS areas of learning. The topic planning is shared by all staff, who change the materials in the prepared environment to enhance the project work. French, drama and music are on offer weekly in addition to the Montessori curriculum. Some of the range of activities children were actively engaged in and enjoying on the day of the first visit of the re-accreditation were bread making, a volcano experiment, learning about the history of our planet, walking in a straight line to refine balance, and joining a circle to celebrate a birthday.

The inside environment is meticulously organised by Montessori areas of learning and all staff monitor the children. The setting has exclusive use of a secluded outside area, weather permitting, which is available as an extension of the classroom with materials and equipment accessible there for the first two hours of the session. Towards the end of the session children may choose outdoor activities from the following; an equipped playhouse, an 'office', blackboard, sand tray, flower boxes for planting, water tray, gardening equipment, bikes and large building blocks.

The work cycle is two hours and forty minutes long to give children opportunities for spontaneous learning and to respond to adult-led activities. The developmental needs of all the children are well met, including those with additional needs. Children with EAL rapidly develop their language skills through listening, conversation with peers and responding to staff's skillfully constructed questions. Staff practice inclusion by warmly welcoming all families and offering additional support where it is needed. Children with SEND are identified through the observation and recording process and where appropriate, external agencies are approached for support.

Planning is done individually for each child by the key person through observation, daily and weekly meetings where all teachers contribute, and through taking into account achievements and feedback from home.

Children's progress is continually recorded in several ways; for example, on Montessori curriculum records, termly progress trackers, daily observations, twice-yearly reports, half termly aims and outcomes, daily photographs, and the beautiful and regularly



updated child's Learning Journey. The Montessori curriculum is linked with the revised EYFS Framework in the observations, recording and assessment of the children in their Learning Journeys.

The leadership and management are reflective and continually assess the effectiveness of learning and development provision and make any necessary changes. The staff team understands the significance of their role in preparing the environment daily and keeping the children's records up to date, identifying targets for their key children and timely information sharing with each other and parents.

Prepared Environment: resources and materials

The room is neatly organised by the Montessori areas of learning, with all materials easily accessible on low shelving. An excellent range of developmentally appropriate Montessori resources and other materials are on offer both inside and outside. The setting has the benefit of being able to share additional resources with its local sister school.

All resources and materials are appealing to the children, ready for use, complete and clean. The quality of all resources is exceptionally good and their layout is attractive. Space-saving portable, child-sized tables enable children to choose where they wish to work before commencing an activity, hence learning practical spatial awareness. Staff set out both the indoor and outdoor resources and materials daily to ensure children have access to the excellent resources that interest them. An adjacent paved area around the church with trees, flowerbeds, a planting area and grass is accessible daily, all year round, for the setting's exclusive use.

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

The children's independence is exceptionally well fostered. They have freedom of movement inside and outside, choice from a wide range of activities over a period of two hours and forty minutes and have a snack at a time of their choosing. Children self-register, develop self-help skills and work at their own pace very effectively.

Staff are sensitive to children's needs and trust them to access learning spontaneously, to respect each other, and to respect the materials by treating them with care and returning them to the low-level shelves after use. Wide-ranging resources and activities promote a respect for the cultures of others. Children are given choices and may repeat actions to attain mastery if they so wish; they participate in individual, small or large group activities.



Staff actively promote the school and home working together to facilitate children's independence through a consistency of routines for the child. Parents have access to a wealth of helpful information about the Montessori approach and are supported individually with ideas to implement it in the home.

Montessori practice: Classroom management

The management of the classroom is carefully planned to ensure all children have access to interesting group activities in addition to individual work. The staff team plans a stimulating environment using accurate records of each child's stage of development and they encourage spontaneous learning both inside and outside. The two hour forty minute work cycle encourages children to concentrate and persevere with activities without feeling time-bound. Staff organise supervision of children and presentations of Montessori resources effectively, and clear policies and procedures support staff in the management of the classroom.

Vertical age grouping of the children enables the younger ones to learn from the older ones. The additional activities on offer – French and drama/music – are at the beginning of the morning twice a week; these enable children to develop further skills and do not interfere with the work cycle's operation.

Monday starts with a circle time to introduce the project work for the week, which enables the children to learn the associated vocabulary and express ideas. The management considered the recommendation made at the previous MEAB accreditation to move the circle time to the end of the morning, but this was found to be impractical. This professional judgement demonstrates their willingness to consider new ideas and to evaluate them according to the setting's style of work.

The staff provide good role models for the children's behaviour and are alert to the need to intervene in a timely manner with positive language to redirect children, for example when too many want to have snack at the same time.

Montessori Practice: links with parents, including reports and records

This is a well organised setting where staff know when each child was last observed. Children's well-being is paramount and is supported by all staff observing all the children and recording significant achievements or concerns for sharing with parents. The relationship between the setting and parents is strong and the latter are delighted with the progress of their children and the support they receive.

Staff carry out daily checks of the premises very effectively. A key person is allocated to each child, who reports to parents. The quality of communication with parents is outstanding and includes a website that contains information on termly projects, with comprehensive details of some of the more important themes (e.g. festivals, a pre-



historic timeline and the animal kingdom); there are also support links and articles with information about nutrition, speech and language and home routines. In addition, the setting provides a parents handbook, a new child guide, regular memos, parents evenings, termly reports, child profiles, and an annual occasion for parents to meet each other and learn about Montessori with specialist talks arranged by the school covering subjects such as child behaviour.

Parents may also assist with a project, as an open door policy for daily contact is in place. When a child leaves an individual progress report is produced for the next school.

Staffing:

The setting is led by the head teacher who also works with the children one day a week (she is Montessori qualified and has a degree in education). It is managed by one of the two other Montessori qualified full-time staff working directly with the children.

Outstanding leadership skills are demonstrated by the sensitive manner in which staff are managed. All staff have a clear understanding of their roles and are effective in implementing them. The staff team members are supportive of each other and there is a well-established system for appraisals. Training courses are available and regular in-service training is organised in conjunction with the sister school. All staff have distinct job descriptions with responsibilities clearly designated; they are usually recruited from the sister school or from the Montessori students who come to this setting to complete their training. A comprehensive induction handbook is provided and is now supported by a record of the process. Peer on peer observations have recently been introduced.

Staff meetings occur regularly and the minutes now indicate responsibility for actions and date of implementation. The leadership and management are reflective of the practice and have produced a written development plan. All the staff are very enthusiastic about their work and have excellent knowledge and commitment to the Montessori practices.

Name of Assessor: Anne McConway

Date report submitted: First visit – 16 May 2015

Second visit – 8 July 2015