



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.

Orpington Montessori Preschool

Methodist Church, Sevenoaks Road, Orpington, Kent BR6 9JH

Date of first accreditation visit: 25 June 2015

Date of second accreditation visit: 9 October 2015

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

Description of the nursery

Orpington Montessori Preschool is located near the centre of Orpington in Kent. It operates from the ground floor of a church hall and has use of a grassed and paved fenced area within the grounds. The part of the premises that the preschool uses consists of a main room with storage and a nearby kitchen, and a separate storage area. The setting has sole use of the hall during its opening hours, packs away daily and it is one of two Montessori nurseries in the area led by the proprietor. The provision is for children aged 2 to 5 years during term time only and was originally registered in 2009. The setting offers morning sessions from 09.00 to 12.25, Monday to Friday, and extended days on Tuesday and Wednesday, from 09.00 to 14.30. Children may attend either full or half day sessions and bring a packed lunch if staying all day. The number of children on roll is 46 and 27 were in attendance on the morning of the second visit. The afternoon session had 18 in attendance. The nursery makes provision for children with English as an additional language (EAL) and special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

There are nine members of staff employed, seven of whom hold relevant early years qualifications and three of these are Montessori qualifications. The proprietor has Early Years Professional Status (EYPS). The appointed manager is one of the nine staff who



work with the children, of whom two are full-time, including the manager. Eight staff were present on the day of the second visit. The proprietor is the group manager and monitors the setting.

Summary

This setting very effectively implements the Montessori approach to early years care and education and has a commitment to implementing the philosophy in full. Staff either have Montessori qualifications or are about to qualify, and they provide a well prepared and resourced learning environment. Children have the freedom to choose their own activities and staff support them effectively to extend their learning, as well as observing their interests and planning activities which they enjoy. Children are confident in exploring this stimulating environment, experimenting with the wide ranging resources and making discoveries. Staff have a sound understanding of the Montessori philosophy and the setting is well led and managed.

The regular assessment and high quality recording of children's learning is much appreciated by parents and provides them with a consistent record of their child's development and achievements to inform their approach at home. Staff teamwork is outstanding, as they work hard to provide motivating learning opportunities and to support children with EAL and SEN. Relationships with parents are excellent. In response to the recommendations made at the first visit, the policies are being reviewed and are accessible on the website.

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.

- It is recommended that the school continues to reflect on its practice in order to ensure that high standards are maintained.

Philosophy

The setting offers outstanding quality Montessori practice and resources to support and extend children's learning. It aims to provide a safe, secure environment in which to prepare the child for school and to develop their full potential. Staff members are meeting these aims effectively through careful planning of a stimulating environment that fosters curiosity and helps each child to develop an excellent foundation for creative learning, to have a positive attitude, and to develop self-confidence.

This is an orderly prepared environment that gives children freedom of movement and choice within the classroom. The behaviour of the children is excellent and they participate in self-initiated learning and complete their cycles of activity. High levels of



trust between the staff and the children enable the latter to work without interruption in recognition of their needs. Staff have a thorough understanding of their role in the implementation of the Montessori philosophy and act as good role models. The group manager and staff annually review the written philosophy, principles, and goals. Parents may access helpful information about the Montessori approach, the curriculum and the setting on the website. Prospective parents can access policies on the website.

Learning and Development:

Areas of learning are clearly defined by the consistent layout of the classroom so that children are able to find materials which they enjoy. Most of the Montessori materials are regularly in use while other resources are related to the current theme; for example, for the topic of Australasia/Antarctica children are offered melting ice in many shapes. Outside the children have a good choice of learning activities as materials for all seven areas of learning are accessible to them, including growing plants such as strawberries and potatoes. The outside area is well used as children who have indicated a preference for outdoor activities are taken in groups by staff to the enclosed area to develop their co-ordination with, for example, a range of bikes and trikes which they use in a self-disciplined manner.

The work cycle, which takes place in the morning session, is two and a half hours long and has an excellent mixture of spontaneous learning and adult-led activities. The developmental needs of all children are being met and staff receive additional training to support those with SEND and EAL.

All staff are involved in the year's planning which is done in accordance with the developmental stage of the children. Links are made with the Montessori curriculum and the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Framework. A focus theme for each term is the basis for the weekly planning. Effective daily evaluation by staff of the activities for the on-going theme ensures that they modify plans according to children's needs and interests. Staff regularly observe and they offer new activities suitable for individual children or small groups and diligently record each child's progress, each child being allocated a key person. Planning is thoughtful and meticulous to ensure that all the children are realizing their full potential. All staff are attentive to their role as observers. They use iPads effectively to access the secure, web-based electronic information system in order to administer record keeping with photographs and descriptions of what the children are achieving. This system is also used to plan the children's next steps in learning. The regular evaluation of the learning and development of the children is supported by this electronic system, which is used to provide a summary of children's progress.

Prepared Environment: resources and materials

This is a well prepared, stimulating learning environment with excellent organization at



all levels (both inside and outdoors) that provides children with space to move around to each of the areas of learning. The classroom layout provides distinct areas for each part of the Montessori curriculum. Materials are set out in an orderly way on low shelving accessible to the children, with nearby tables or floor space to pursue their activity. The quality of the learning resources is excellent with sufficient to meet the needs of all the children. Staff work hard to make the environment as attractive and stimulating as possible through, for example, the use of differently coloured water for exploratory activities. All the resources and materials are complete and clean, with many new and refurbished items.

Staff maintain the setting well and pack equipment away daily. The outdoor area is particularly well planned to provide children with opportunities to develop a wide range of skills and learn self-discipline and respect for each other and for nature. They have a good range of equipment for the development of physical skills. Staff take every opportunity to provide natural resources for the children, for example, large sea shells in the outdoor sand tray.

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

Children are developing useful skills from having the freedom to choose their activities. They are also developing good concentration throughout the work cycle. Children demonstrate great perseverance with Montessori materials and repeat them until they have mastery of the skills. They enjoy their learning and return materials when they have finished, showing great respect for the materials, themselves and others. Staff are always nearby to offer support and guidance if it is needed. Children prepare their own snack, which can include peeling satsumas, separating the segments and buttering bread with stainless steel cutlery. Children can access water independently for a range of purposes both indoors and outdoors, for example, to enable them to water the strawberry plants in the garden.

Staff are effective in promoting the needs of children with EAL by learning words in their home languages and through valuing and encouraging the acceptance of cultural differences. Materials from different cultures are collected to support children in their learning. To ensure a consistency of approach at home, parents are invited to observe in the classroom and have discussions with the staff.

Montessori practice: Classroom management

This is a well organized and managed setting. All activities are planned to appeal to the children through the creative use of resources; for example, using a wide range of materials and styles such as ornate glass, silver, brass and wood for activities of everyday living. Managers monitor the impact of policies and procedures to help provide a safe, secure and stimulating environment. Excellent use is made of the hall outside



the classroom to provide parents with information on the preschool. This includes notice boards with the daily routine and planning documents for both inside and outside activities. The work cycle in the morning is two and a half hours long and there are no additional children arriving for the afternoon session. On Tuesday morning those children choosing the dance class go into a separate room at 11.45 for the final forty-five minutes of the session. On Friday a few children have a French session in the book corner between 9.15 and 10.00. On Wednesdays children have an opportunity to attend the Forest School at the sister setting.

The routines are well known to the children and staff have designated roles on a daily basis so that each child is known to them and they work in all areas of the setting on a rota basis. Children are given responsibilities and take pleasure in performing these roles, for example, ringing the bell five minutes before the end of the session. Behaviour of the children is very good and those staying all day bring a packed lunch, wash their hands independently and are supervised by staff while they eat and pack away their lunch boxes. Children who need to sleep may do so undisturbed in the book corner. Each session begins and ends with an adult-led activity, differentiated by age, but for the remainder of the sessions children may choose between individual or small group activities.

Montessori Practice: links with parents, including reports and records

A strong partnership with parents has been established through the availability of staff for discussion and the high quantity and quality of information on offer to them. Parents are encouraged to get involved in supporting their children's development by having regular meetings with the staff and attending information sessions on how materials are introduced to children. At least once each term an event is held whereby parents may have discussions with key persons. A coffee morning is organised for parents with the manager every term to discuss the current theme, activities associated with it or other matters.

Parents regularly access their children's progress records electronically to read observations, look at photographs and receive a copy of their child's report, which is sent to their primary school when a child leaves. Parents are involved in fundraising events and celebrations such as Diwali and Christmas and are invited to read to the children or support with EAL, art and craft activities. A newsletter is sent to parents each term and they are encouraged to share their views through questionnaires which help the managers with self-evaluation.

Staffing:

The setting has a clear staff structure and is efficiently led by a manager and keenly overseen by the group manager. Each member of staff has a written job description in which the roles and responsibilities are clear. These are reviewed annually by the group



manager. The detailed induction procedures are implemented and recorded. Excellent opportunities are available to staff for training courses and continuous professional development. Self-evaluation is good and plans are made for future improvements. Seven of the teaching staff have early years qualifications, of which three are Montessori. A further three staff members are being trained in the Montessori approach and six have degree level qualifications: three with B.A.s, three with B.Sc.s and one also with an M.Sc. and EYPS.

The regular staff meetings are recorded and the minutes are accessible to staff. In response to a recommendation made at the first visit, records are kept of staff receiving, reading, and agreeing updated versions of policies. Peer observations are comprehensive, management observations of staff take place and team work is excellent. Staff are enthusiastic in implementing the Montessori approach and demonstrate commitment to continually improving their practice.

Name of Assessor: Anne McConway

Date report submitted: First visit – 30 June 2015

Second visit – 9 October 2015