

# Montessori Evaluation and Accreditation Board

## School Accreditation

This report is prepared following an accreditation visit 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”.

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.

### **Beehive on Queen’s Park Montessori School**

147 Chevening Road, London NW6 6DZ

Visited on 12 November 2008

#### **Description of the school:**

Beehive on Queen’s Park Montessori School is situated on the ground floor of a converted house in a residential area of North London. The school has two classrooms, a large room at the back of the property (which is used primarily for sensorial, mathematics, literacy and cultural activities) and a smaller front room accommodating practical life and art activities. The school has two outside areas, the smaller area is available at all times, while the larger garden is available for the last half hour of each session. The school is registered for a maximum of 24 children at any one time. It is open Monday to Friday during term times only, opening hours are from 0840 to 1600. The school has chosen not to accept the nursery education grant scheme.

#### **Summary and conclusion.**

Beehive Montessori Nursery provides each of its pupils with a good Montessori experience. The prepared environment is inviting and the staff are very welcoming and extremely competent. They work together as a strong team observing and recording each child regularly. Planning is based around the Montessori curriculum and the Early Learning Goals; however, at the time of the accreditation visit the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) had not been fully implemented. At present there are no children with identified special needs but this is an area where the setting's policies should be reviewed in the light of recently introduced requirements. The children's independence is fostered throughout the setting with particular reference to the practical life exercises. The children's independence is fostered at home as the parents are well informed on the Montessori principles. Excellent classroom practices were continually observed throughout the visit and the work cycle worked extremely well.

The head teacher provides strong leadership, and with her staff present excellent role models which were evident in the high level of respect the children showed for each other, their teachers and their beautiful environment.

**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 may wish to consider the following points for development:

- Provide more advanced practical life exercises for older children;
- The work cycle to include outdoor activities; and
- Review the nursery's policies for children with special educational needs.

**Philosophy:**

In Beehive Montessori Nursery the Montessori philosophy is clearly reflected in the environment, as well as by the children, staff and parents. The school's educational principles, goals and philosophy are clearly set out in the school prospectus and further enhanced by an informative DVD which is sent out with each prospectus. The parents are encouraged to carry the principles of the Montessori philosophy through to their own homes. The staff are in the process of reviewing the principles, goals and philosophy in preparation for the production of a new prospectus in 2009. There is written evidence of classroom procedures including daily routine, planning, recording and assessment which enables both staff and parents to have an up to date progress report at any time. The system is working efficiently. The management regularly checks the recording and assessment, using the information gained to inform future planning, which is done in conjunction with the staff.

**Learning and Development:**

The staff at Beehive Montessori Nursery work closely together to plan for learning and development. The planning is well documented and takes into account the Montessori curriculum and the Early Learning Goals. Project-based short- and long-term plans are used for group activities, together with Montessori planning sheets for individual children. Their planning does not yet reflect the changes required by the EYFS but this is being incorporated in the next few weeks. Effective use is made of the two classrooms; however, the outside area would benefit from a wider range of activities. The staff move between the rooms as effectively as the children. Informal observations are made throughout the work cycle by all staff and these contribute effectively to the children's record cards and future planning. There is an element of duplication within the record system and this could be refined in the future. At present the setting has no children with special needs. This is an area where the setting's policy should be reviewed in the light of the new requirements.

**Prepared Environment, resources and materials:**

The prepared environment at Beehive Montessori is particularly well organised. The materials are in excellent condition, they are orderly, accessible and regularly checked and updated by staff as and when necessary. There is a wide range of appropriate materials reflecting the age range of the children. Sensorial, mathematics, language and cultural areas are very well provided for, but a few more challenging practical life activities could be provided for the older

child. There is sufficient material for the requirements of this setting, with certain materials being limited to encourage patience and turn taking.

**Montessori practice, with comments on *independence, independence at home, freedom, respect:***

The children's independence is more than adequately fostered by the provision of appropriate practical life exercises for the younger children, the overall layout of the setting, and the positive attitude of all the staff towards children's abilities. A wider range of more advanced practical life activities would ensure that the children continue to grow in independence throughout their time in the setting.

As the parents are well informed on Montessori principles through the prospectus, DVD, and parent's workshops, independence is encouraged at home as well as in the school. The whole ethos of the school is based on the child's freedom to choose and this includes not only the exercises, but also where, and with whom, they work. Their total free flow between classrooms and the smaller outdoor area adds to their independence. If re-directing of a child is necessary it is carried out in a very caring and sympathetic manner. Examples of respect for others, themselves, and the environment are constantly in evidence, and encouraged through good role modeling from the staff.

**Montessori practice, with comments on *classroom management:***

The work cycle works extremely well and is never less than two and a half hours. This could be extended to three hours to include outdoor activities. There is no specific grouping of the children but, as required by the EYFS, each member of staff has responsibility for certain children in regard to record keeping and feedback to parents. Excellent classroom management practices are evident throughout the day with every child busy and involved in whatever they are doing. The children refer to staff very infrequently, as and when the need presents itself.

**Montessori Practice, with comments on *adults' routines and links with parents, including reports and records:***

All staff take great care of the prepared environment both before and during the session. Regular observations are carried out on all children and discussed regularly. The record keeping is practical, comprehensive and works well, but it may be possible to avoid some duplication. A list of allergies is kept but the school only provides limited food, organic where possible. Food policies are in place and each family has their own copy. The parents really appreciate the lines of communication between the nursery and themselves and are full of praise for every aspect of this setting. They receive regular informative newsletters, verbal reports each term and a written report in the summer. The child's next school receives a very informative report.

**Staffing:**

There are four staff, two teachers and two assistants. They work extremely well as a united team, and are aware of their roles within the school. The head teacher provides strong

leadership and the other staff respect and refer to her when necessary. As new staff join, the head works with them for one week; they are provided with all policy and procedure documents and a parent's pack. The head has received level 4 training in management and this is evident from many of the practices in place. All staff have received training in first aid and child protection as well as a five week course on using music and art creatively. EYFS training has taken place with Brent council. The staff all have clear written job descriptions and responsibilities. These are reviewed regularly in the light of staff discussions and appraisals and management observations. Comprehensive records (including details of discussions and decisions) are kept of the regular staff meetings. Observations of the staff take place regularly and are fed back to them verbally, with serious concerns being put in writing.

Funds are available for any new materials that are requested by the staff. Regular checks ensure that damaged or incomplete materials are repaired or replaced. This system works very effectively in this setting.

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Name of Assessor: C. Manville/W. Compson

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