

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 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.

Little Oaks Montessori Nursery School
Tomtits Lane, Lewes Road, Forest Row, East Sussex RH18 5AT
First visited on 27 November 2008
Revisited on 25 March 2009

Description of the school:

Little Oaks Montessori Nursery School is a single storey purpose-built building on the outskirts of Forest Row. The school has one large room divided into sections, with kitchen and toilet facilities. There is a secure play area outside which is fenced and mostly laid to lawn overlooking a large paddock with sheep.

The school is registered to provide full day care for 16 children from two to eight year. There are currently 22 children from two to four years on the roll. Eleven children receive the nursery education grant. Children attend a variety of different sessions. Children with English as an additional language and special needs are provided for.

The school is open five days a week during school term times, offering five morning and two afternoon sessions. The school runs a holiday play scheme.

Three fully trained Montessori teachers work with the children full time and the school adheres to the Montessori curriculum

Summary and conclusion.

This small purpose-built nursery provides a happy atmosphere with an abundance of material and resources, albeit in an overcrowded environment. The children are calm, happy and busily engaged in worthwhile activities. The staff are warm, welcoming and provide a nurturing environment and the children are confident, independent and articulate.

The team are currently working positively on ensuring that the children benefit fully from the wealth of materials by ensuring that they do not restrict the time the children are allowed to follow their natural path of development by supporting an interrupted, free-flow, work-cycle.

The school provides an education which broadly follows the principles of the Montessori approach and environment. This merits accreditation by the Montessori Evaluation and Accreditation Board, and the school should consider the following points for further development:

- Continue to look at ways of ensuring an uninterrupted work cycle commencing from when the child arrives at the school.
- Reflect upon the environment and the distribution of resources to improve their presentation
- Review staff and team roles to including the implementation of a key-person system which is supported through staff appraisals and reviews.

Philosophy:

The staff recognize that the aim of Montessori education is to help the natural process of development allowing the children to reach their full potential. They treat the children as individuals and are aware of their goals. For much of the work-cycle the children are given the opportunity to progress at their speed and freedom of choice in the prepared environment following the morning circle time. The children are helped and supported with skills for learning, and they have periods of concentration. The children display self discipline and there is a strong emphasis on grace and courtesy. There is a calm atmosphere in the classroom.

The school prospectus provides the parents and staff with the educational principles, goals and philosophy. The principal discussed plans for reviewing the prospectus and records to help staff and parents in relating to the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).

The parents are provided with newsletters and there is an informative timetable on the door.

Learning and Development:

The principal and staff plan the Montessori-based curriculum. Planning is done on a half term and weekly basis incorporating the children's individual needs.

Planning is organized by the Montessori areas of learning which are in the process of being linked to the EYFS.

The children have access to practical life, sensorial, environmental and cultural language and mathematics material to aid their learning in defined areas. There is space for the children to move around the room. The outdoor area is used well and helps promote the children's learning and development. The staff support the children in their learning. The nursery has good provision for children with additional needs.

Prepared Environment: resources and materials

The room is large and the materials are well organized in defined areas. The school is very well resourced with Montessori and other materials. There are ample core materials present in the room. The Montessori materials are complete and in good condition. The children have

independent access to all relevant materials, which are age-appropriate and on child-level shelving. However, there are too many material resources on display considering the space available, resulting in a cramped and unattractive arrangement of the learning environment. The walls are covered with art work, displays, record keeping and natural objects. The room benefits from large windows which provide lots of natural light.

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

The school provides the foundations for children's independence. They are encouraged to do things for themselves, hang their coats, change their shoes, look after the environment, to have something to eat at snack time and whether they stay in or got out, all of which gives children a strong sense of responsibility.

The children start the day with a circle which restricts their spontaneous need for freedom of choice and individual learning.

Montessori practice: *classroom management*

Following recent review and reflection, the team have implemented subtle changes to the class routine that have enabled the work-cycle and the child's freedom of choice to be extended to a maximum of 2½ hours. During this time, the children choose activities, help prepare snack, have snack, and go out to play at their own pace.

The children are grouped vertically and do not have a key person and all staff track the children's progress and help with the record keeping.

The staff consistently observe the class and respond to this reflective practice by guiding and facilitating the children through the appropriate graded material. Through continued reflective practice the staff demonstrate continued faith and trust in the child by allowing the children more freedom through their own exploration and discovery.

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

The school pays great attention to the children's well-being and safety. The premises are checked every morning. Staff and children are well informed about safety procedures. Notices about children's allergies are displayed in the kitchen. Risk assessments are updated, reviewed and implemented. The premises are maintained to a high standard.

The staff observe and assess the children on a regular basis and are well informed of the children's progress. The children's records are updated regularly and the parents are well informed by regular daily contact, newsletters, reports and parents evenings.

Staffing:

All the staff either have a Montessori diploma or are in the process of working towards one, as well as other appropriate qualifications. There is an effective verbal method of induction for new staff and a new written induction process is being created. Currently there are no staff appraisals but due to the nature of the small setting the staff are aware of each other's needs. All the leadership roles (eg. child protection) are currently undertaken by the head.

The staff have undertaken appropriate training relating to current issues. The job descriptions are informative and staff meetings are recorded in the minutes.

The staff are committed to delivery of high quality Montessori provision for the children attending Little Oaks.

Assessor **Charlotte White**
Moderated by **Dawn Nasser**

30 November 2008
30 March 2009
