



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" (2008) and subsequent 2012 revisions. The second visit sought to assess the progress made on the recommendations set out in the report from the first 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.

Newpark Montessori School

450 Uxbridge Road, Shepherd's Bush, London W12 0NS

Date of first accreditation visit: 7 June 2012

Date of second accreditation visit: 13 November 2012

The school was last accredited by MEAB in November 2008.

This accreditation report relates to the provision for children aged 2½ to 5 years.

Description of the school

The Newpark Montessori School is part of a small group of three privately owned nurseries, which are family run. It opened in 2007 and operates from a large hall in a church in the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham. There is access to two securely enclosed outdoor areas. A dividing wall within the hall separates the school from the infant community; only the Montessori school is being considered for the purposes of this accreditation.

The Montessori school is registered to care for a maximum of 40 children between the ages of 2½ and 7 years. There are currently 44 children on roll; children's attendance patterns vary but most children attend mornings or full days, with a few children attending afternoon sessions only. The school is able to support children with learning difficulties and children who speak English as an additional language. It is open each weekday from 8:00 to 18:30 for 50 weeks of the year.

Children come from the local and wider community. The school employs six staff, including the Head Teacher and Proprietor who hold appropriate Montessori qualifications. The other four members of staff are currently working towards Montessori qualifications. In addition, the school employs a qualified chef and can use the services of one of the team of four staff members who work across all three of the company's settings. The school's educational ethos is based on the Montessori method.



Summary and conclusion

The school provides a warm and welcoming environment, with a wealth of opportunities for learning, both indoors and outside. The children are confident, independent, caring and concentrate very well on their self-chosen activities. They link up with others for support if they need to and they are well directed by a professional and enthusiastic team. The children's achievements are carefully monitored and recorded.

The parents appreciate the frequent, detailed feedback, rejoice in their children's learning and report high levels of satisfaction with the school. They feel confident that their children are learning valuable knowledge and skills and that this fits in well with the revised Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). They appreciate the many opportunities that exist to contribute to their children's learning and the team's flexibility in working around their commitments to work and their families.

The school already has an extensive outdoor curriculum with practical life and other Montessori activities and continues to look for ways to further enrich children's use of the garden areas and strengthen their connection with the natural world.

Following a recommendation made during the first visit the team has successfully extended the work cycle to a full three hour period in the mornings. As a result the children can start with their chosen activities as soon as they arrive. This has made the start of the day more relaxed and productive, for both children and teachers. The longer work cycle has also given the children more opportunity for strengthening their ability to concentrate and for greater involvement in their learning.

The school provides an education which follows the principles of the Montessori approach and environment. The school has successfully achieved the points for action recommended on the first visit, and this merits accreditation by the Montessori Evaluation and Accreditation Board. Consideration should be given to the following points for further development:

- Organise the outdoor environments so that open-ended creative and physical outdoor activities are available to all the children throughout their morning and afternoon sessions.
- Further enhance the children's learning about the natural world and the world of technology.

Philosophy:

The children behave with great consideration for each other, their teachers and the classroom, demonstrating that the Montessori philosophy of 'freedom with respect' is put into practice. Children and adults are courteous; they help each other and children are confident enough to ask for support when needed.

There is a perceptible atmosphere of calm and trust; children take measured risks, for instance by carefully carrying a tray with crockery and liquid all the way from the classroom to the garden, stepping over the threshold without tripping. They are trusted and keen to prove worthy of the trust placed in them. They complete the activities in their own time and mostly return the materials to the classroom shelves without needing to be reminded. There is careful guidance and support for those who need it and a respectful standing back for those who are



confident or striving towards greater independence.

The school's website explains the philosophy in some detail and its brochure has good information on Montessori, the setting and the principles used. It is made clear to the parents that the children's freedom of choice is important, as well as giving them the opportunity to do things by themselves and for themselves. There is a lot of reflection and self-evaluation and the teachers report on ample opportunities for sharing and discussion.

Learning and Development:

A wide range of activities are provided which are developmentally appropriate and meet the learning needs of the children. Children have good access to the indoor resources which cover all areas of learning and choose their own activities and repeat them as often as they wish. The children's levels of concentration are very good. There is a good balance of child-led and adult-led activities during the day and staff observe the children effectively, which supports the planning process.

Indoor-outdoor freeflow has been developed successfully and the children know they are trusted to take activities outdoors and to return them. Most of the activities carried outdoors are chosen from the practical life area, with the occasional addition of a sensorial or language activity.

Following a recommendation made at the first visit the team has worked together to extend and enrich the outdoor learning opportunities and has developed new daily routines to ensure that this environment is fully set up and assessed for safety before the children access it.

The children's learning is carefully planned and monitored by senior managers and the staff frequently reflect on their practice in an effort to continuously improve their practice. The children's developing needs and interests are observed and carefully recorded in their learning journeys, also known as 'Complete Guides.' The whole team is involved in detailed and thorough topic planning. This is done weekly and takes account of the information provided by home and school in the Complete Guides.

Prepared Environment: resources and materials

The spacious classroom is a very attractive and welcoming place for exploration and discovery. It is richly resourced with a full range of Montessori and additional equipment. It is well laid out, with plenty of space for independent work on floor mats or at small individual tables with chairs of different sizes. Opportunities for using technology are not as ample as those available for other areas of learning. The materials on the shelves, especially in the practical life and creative play areas, are rotated to keep them fresh and appealing, and in accordance with current needs and focus.

The classroom features a beautifully maintained fish tank and the children enjoy feeding the fish and sometimes just observing them. They study life cycles in the natural world, having recently looked at frogs and butterflies and planted spring bulbs. They frequently enjoy planting and caring for plants, especially in the newly re-developed sensorial garden directly off the main



room, but also in the main outdoor play areas to the front of the building. Training plans are in place for helping the staff to further develop and strengthen the children's learning about the natural world.

The children are encouraged to carry classroom activities outdoors, moving through the entrance hallway, which they do with great skill and confidence. The outdoor area has two zones, one for the infant community and one for the school children. Since the first visit all the staff have been involved in plans for extending the range of outdoor resources and many opportunities for mark-making, creative and physical play have been added, particularly in the infants' area. As a result a much greater choice is made available for the children's use on a daily basis. Providing free access to open-ended creative and physical activities outdoors during the whole of the work cycle for the older children is a point for further development.

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

The classroom and outdoor areas are set up to give the children as many opportunities for independent work as possible. Children demonstrate careful and confident use of the resources. They are really proud of their achievements and keen to help one another and to learn more. They have ample opportunities for exploration and discovery and the teachers respect their need to practise and repeat and to learn from initial failure as well as success.

During the work cycle children choose whether to work alone, in pairs or in groups, inside or outdoors, at tables or on a mat. During circle times they are not obliged to take part and they are given space and time to complete their chosen work.

Children are given the opportunity to carry out real tasks with just enough support to keep them challenged and allow them to experience teamwork, communication and success. An example is the lunchtime preparation, where a few of the children prepare the classroom for lunch and the rest period. They make sure there are enough tables and chairs, arrange them carefully, clean the tables and put out named water glasses. They take care to ensure that the children who are new to the classroom are seated next to an older, more experienced child who can support them and ensure that each child who normally sleeps after lunch has their own mat and a space. All this is done by the children with expert minimal support from a Montessori directress, who is careful to give them ample time and opportunity for discussion, trial and error and careful preparations. The children clearly benefit from completing a real-life task that is of service to others, incorporating discussion about other people's needs and abilities.

The children's confidence shows that they feel secure and appreciated. They respond to others with kindness and care, which reflects how staff interact with them and with each other. They greet visitors who are welcomed by the staff and feel free to approach them and chat about their school and their activities.

The parents really appreciate the plentiful feedback they receive in daily, weekly, fortnightly and termly reports. They feel able to implement some of the Montessori principles at home, for instance by giving their children time for trial and error and by involving them in daily activities and household chores. When they bring the children in they allow them space and time to change from coats into smocks and to put their slippers on, showing that they share the same principles of respect for the children's growing skills and abilities.



Montessori practice: classroom management

Since the first accreditation in November 2008 the school has successfully incorporated freeflow access to the outdoor areas. Both the classroom and the outdoor spaces are very well managed, and staff facilitate rolling snack and free choice during the work cycle.

The front garden is zoned into two areas: one primarily for babies and infants and one for the school children. The older children tend to only use the space for the toddlers; it has a wealth of opportunities for open-ended creative and physical play, at the end of their morning work cycle and in the afternoons. The organisation of the space could be changed to afford the older children a greater range of activities during their normal morning work cycle.

There is a good balance of planned and spontaneous, independent and supported play and learning, both inside and outdoors, and the children enjoy the benefits of vertical grouping. Since the first re-accreditation visit the team have agreed to have just the one circle time at the end of the sessions. After arrival the children now settle into their chosen activities much more easily and flexibly. The staff have noted that this longer work cycle of two and a half to three hours has increased the children's opportunity for developing concentration and in-depth learning. There is another work cycle in the afternoon, which is shorter.

The teachers respond to the children's needs with tact and sensitivity, redirecting them respectfully where needed. The children work alone, in pairs, in small groups and sometimes in a larger group, depending on the time and theme, the teachers' planned activities and the children's own interests. For example, a 'walking on the line' activity with soft classical music playing in the background can start as a small group and develop into a large group activity. Children are free to join and leave the group as and when they choose. Such experiences are offered as part of the free work cycle.

Additional activities such as yoga, Spanish, art and cooking are added into the work cycle depending on theme and project work. The children often walk to a nearby market to buy ingredients for their cooking and harvest vegetables from their plot in a nearby park.

The staffing ratios are always good, with effective use of 'floating staff' shared between the company's three settings. There is excellent teamwork; all staff take part in doing presentations, making observations, cleaning and tidying, planning and recording progress and communicating with parents.

Montessori Practice: links with parents, including reports and records

Staff are very clear about their roles and responsibilities due to thorough induction processes and frequent one-to-one and more formal meetings. Children's well-being and safety is very well managed.

Parents are aware of who their child's Key Person is and of the specialist roles that some of the staff have, such as Head Teacher and Child Protection Officer. A chart on the entrance door displays these roles and responsibilities.



The spacious entrance hall provides a useful and attractive space for meeting and greeting and for exchanging information with parents, as well as storing children's personal possessions. The Complete Guide that goes home with the parents each weekend allows for parents and staff to keep each other updated on learning and development as well as important events in the child's life and forms a solid base for individual planning. A child's birthday celebration is usually recorded, saved on a CD and given to the child and their family as a unique keepsake gift. Records sent to a child's next school are well written, useful documents.

Since the first visit the school has effectively used email, the school blog, parents' evenings, wall displays and the children's Complete Guides to update parents on the changed EYFS. The Guides have been revised and give parents clear links between the Montessori curriculum and the EYFS in recording a child's progress. Most of the parents who were asked during the second visit reported that they have been made aware of the EYFS and that they are confident that the requirements of the statutory framework are being met and exceeded. The parents are happy that their children are given an excellent early education at Newpark. Newsletters, the fortnightly blog, the Complete Guides, the CDs with photos and, most of all, the daily verbal feedback are greatly appreciated by them. The partnership between home and school is a particular strength of the school.

Staffing:

Induction arrangements are thorough and the staffing structure is clear. The staff are highly motivated and feel part of a team that works well together. They are supportive of the children and know when to stand back and give them space. Likewise they speak positively of each other and of the senior management. They feel appreciated both personally, with performance incentives, and as a setting, with budgets and time and resources offered as needed by the owners to ensure the smooth running of the nursery. Staff members appreciate the company's commitment to them as individuals and to the setting. Appraisals and observations of staff by the management team effectively support self-reflection and collaboration.

There is a real commitment to learning at Newpark, for the children and through continuous professional development for the adults. Personal and professional development is given a high priority and a number of staff have been sponsored to undertake Montessori training. Senior staff are Montessori qualified and the Head Teacher has been promoted into the role from within the company.

The team's use of training, self-evaluation and reflection demonstrate their commitment to providing a true Montessori prepared environment and a willingness to engage in continuous improvement for the benefit of all the children in their care.

Name of Assessor: Thea Bredie

Date of reports:

First visit – 9th June 2012

Second visit – 15th November 2012