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". 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.

Andrea's Montessori

10 Copthorne Avenue, London SW12 0JZ
Date of first accreditation visit: Thursday 3 February 2011
Date of second accreditation visit: Monday 28 February 2011

This accreditation report relates to the provision for children aged 1 to 5 years

Description of the school

Andrea's Montessori is open each week day from 8:00 to 18:00 for 48 weeks of the year.
Andrea's Montessori childminding which opened in 2003, is on the borders of Balham, Clapham Park and Streatham Hill in South West London and close to both Balham and Clapham South underground stations.
The owner, a childminder, lives in the setting which is a three bedroom semi-detached house. Children have access to two reception rooms, a kitchen, a ground floor bathroom and large garden which has an enclosed area housing three chickens. One bedroom is available on the first floor for children to sleep in.
Andrea's Montessori is registered to care for eight children aged under 5 years. The childminder's assistant is also a registered childminder on the same premises. They currently care for seven children aged between 1 and 5 years of age, of whom four speak English as an additional language and none have special needs.
On the day of the assessment there were six children under 5 years. The owner holds a Montessori Diploma. She is a member of the Montessori Schools Association and is in the process of completing her degree in Early Childhood Studies. Both members of the staff team receive support and training from the local authority and have been members of the childminding network since 2006.

Summary and conclusion.
Andrea's Montessori provides a rich home-based education. The setting is small and parents choose it for this reason. The children are provided with exceptionally good opportunities for language development through high quality social interaction. The children are given every available opportunity to be independent in their learning and development. The children demonstrate good levels of respect for one another and staff provide positive role-modelling for the children to support this.

- ***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 development:***
    - To continue the implementation of the integration of the recording of the EYFS and Montessori practice in every child's assessment.
    - To inplement the planned professional development programme for unqualified staff.

Philosophy

The aim at Andrea's Montessori is to offer flexible, high quality care and education for children based on the Montessori philosophy and Early Years Foundation Stage Framework (EYFS). Staff also aim to support families and their child's individual needs within the five areas of the 'Every Child Matters Framework' in a happy, relaxed, loving and caring home from home environment. Their aims are clearly defined in writing in the Operational Plan and Daily Tasks documents. The daily routine starts at 8.00 when breakfast is provided to children who arrive between 8.00 and 9.00. Some children start the morning session at 9.00. The work cycle is from 9.00 until 12.30 with snack and free-flow indoor / outdoor play. Sometimes they start the morning or afternoon session with singing nursery rhymes and action songs. As the children's ages are between 12 months and 4 years in a vertical group there is a choice of individual or group snack time. Most of the older children volunteer to cut the fruit for the younger children and lay the table for them. The children finish the morning session with cooked (home-made) lunch at 12.30 and story time at 13.15. Resting / sleeping time is between 13.30 and 15.15. The afternoon session lasts until 17.00 when cooked dinner is provided and children depart at 18.00.
Due to a small vertical group the children receive much one-to-one attention, as well as developing their social and emotional skills through group activities. Outings occur to the local park, playground, library, playgroup and museums which are also a very important part of the daily routine. They organise outings two days a week, which also helps the children to become more confident on public transport, as well as learning traffic awareness. They visit the children's theatre every three months.
The daily routine and activities are carefully planned around the children's individual needs, as well as their ages and stages of development. The materials are displayed on low shelves to encourage independent use.

From the moment that you enter this setting you observe l the Montessori philosophy in practice. The staff act as excellent role models for the children and the children in turn know exactly what to do in the prepared environment.

Learning and Development

The children are provided with a very sound learning environment where Montessori philosophy is implemented in practice. The staff talk with the children and interact with them using rich language, in the activities such as surrounding Noah's ark animals. This reflects in children being able to communicate at a very advanced level for their age. One young child could recognize an ostrich and a gazelle while another young child spoke of how the snake slithered. The small vertical group allows younger children to learn from the older ones. The activities are carefully planned around the children's ages and stages of development. There is evidence of both long term, intermediate and short term planning, along with individual planning of next steps for every child. The indoor space is prepared around sensorial, practical life, mathematics, language, cultural and creative activities, as well as a book corner and dressing-up and role-play area. The children have active imaginations and use the resources well to demonstrate their creativity as shown in dressing up and serving tea to one another.

Children engage in their learning through an uninterrupted work cycle allowing children the freedom to learn at their own pace. One was seen working with a child's small hammer tapping pins into small holes on geometric shapes which he engaged in for 15 minutes without interruption. Most group activities such as listening to stories, I spy games, grace and courtesy, art and craft, cooking are carried out in small groups of three or four children.

Prepared Environment: resources and materials

Andrea's Montessori provides both high quality and age appropriate Montessori materials arranged on low level shelves which are easily accessible to the children. The setting has just been given a grant by the local authority to purchase more Montessori equipment to extend the materials even further. There are designated areas for practical life exercises, sensorial, language, numeracy, cultural and creative materials. These are regularly rotated by the staff and are kept in good order. Both rooms are bright, airy and well maintained with highly effective use made of the accommodation. Children have easy access to the outdoor area allowing a free-flow system between indoor and outdoor learning. The materials are displayed on low shelves to encourage independent use, as well as free choice of activity.

The outdoor area is well presented with an enclosed chicken house with three chickens for children to observe; collect eggs every day, for use in cooking. A bird table enables the children to feed the birds. The sandpit, trampoline, climbing frame, slide and a range of cars and push along toys, allow children opportunities for both physical and creative activities. The children have use of a compost heap, a water butt and a raised bed in the front of the property for planting vegetables which are used in cooking and providing nutritious meals.

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

From the moment the children enter the environment they are provided with every opportunity to be independent. They take off their own coats and shoes and put their indoor shoes on. They serve one another at meal times and cut their own fruit at snack time. They are

encouraged to wash their hands and to pour drinks, along with scraping their plates after meals and placing them on a tray. The children have free-flow access to indoor and outdoor activities. The children choose activities independently. Most group activities such as listening to stories, I spy games, grace and courtesy, art and craft, cooking are carried out in small groups. Depending on the children's ages and stages of development Montessori materials are introduced to the child in the form of individual presentations.

During the work cycle children choose activities freely. The children use table or floor mats when carrying out an activity, so it gives them a sense of space and the means to respect each other's space. Due to the young age group sharing issues are part of their social and emotional development. When there is a disagreement between children staff encourage them to solve the problem amongst themselves verbally. They encourage these problem-solving skills through group activities in story time when the children are read a story on 'sharing'. Children are also given the freedom to opt out of activities and this choice is respected by the staff

They encourage grace and courtesy throughout the daily routine including meal times when staff sit with the children. These are social times and music is used in the background to enhance this. They support the children's emotional and social well-being (as individuals and as a group) by listening to them and their views, as well as showing love and care towards each other. The small vertical age group offers a fantastic opportunity to the children to support and help each other. The older children enjoy showing new activities to the younger children, which gives them a sense of responsibility and confidence.

Montessori practice: classroom management

The work cycle is from 09.00 to 12.30. As they work with a young age group there are times when the child or children need a lot of guidance or re-direction to a new activity. The adult only carries out presentations on a new activity if the child is free and is willing to join. This was seen when a child was working with a grating activity the staff showed him how to work with it safely, as he had not worked with it previously. They never interrupt the child if s/he is concentrating on a chosen activity for a long period of time. If the children choose to have snack together as a group the older children help with cutting the fruit and laying the table. The activities are child-initiated throughout the work cycle.

Andrea's Montessori offers a home from home environment for families and their children. The person who works with a specific group of children on the day is responsible for updating observation records, following the progress and development of the individual child. The adult is a guide in the environment, supporting the child's exploration and discovery. Staff observe the children and guide them towards the next steps. They record observations by using different observational methods: code system, video, photo and narrative observations, which are defined in the observation and assessment document. The owner is currently working on a tool which will allow the EYFS and Montessori method to be integrated in assessment.

The environment is maintained by the children taking and replacing their activities on the shelves as they finish their cycle of activity either independently, or supported by other children or the adults. With some support, children clean the tables after snack and lunch wiping them and sweeping the floor. The adults place new activities and remove any damaged

ones for repair. The environment is cleaned in the evening when the children have left and it is prepared for the next day. Some materials such as puzzles, building blocks, books, board games, dressing-up are rotated every three months according to the children's ages and stages of development.

There are risk assessment policies and fire evacuation plans in place. Parents are aware of the safeguarding policies and the settling in policy. There is a key person policy in place. Both team members have clear job descriptions.

Staff provide healthy, home cooked meals with seasonal fresh vegetables from the garden for lunch and dinner, as well as healthy snacks and breakfast. Personal hygiene and care of self are important at Andrea's Montessori during their daily routine as demonstrated by handwashing before meals and brushing of teeth after meals. They also cater for special dietary needs, and allergies are recorded on the child's record form.

Montessori Practice: links with parents, including reports and records

The setting observes and notes the children's developing skills at all ages, tracking their development in their learning files – they use a 'Learning Journey' sheet for narrative observations, as well as using a code system in each child's note book. They also keep the child's weekly diary updated.

They are trying to keep the paperwork and recording minimal during the sessions, as contact time with the children is a priority at Andrea's Montessori. They finalise the observations at the end of the day or at lunch breaks.

The staff exchange verbal information with parents on a daily basis. They also advise parents on toilet training and work closely together to be able to encourage the child towards independence. The 'Weekly Diary' provides parents with written information on their child's favourite activity both individual and group at Andrea's Montessori , as well as parents providing information about their child's achievements at home in the 'My Family' section. Parents feel very well informed by both verbal and written information through newsletters, newsboard in the hall, parents evenings and annual reports on their child, along with opportunities to give feedback in questionnaires. Parents speak very highly of the setting and staff. Although there is mention of the key worker role in the children's diaries, all parents have now also been informed as to who their key worker is, both individually by e-mail and through the newsletter.

Staffing

Staff are always CRB checked and Ofsted is notified of any changes to the staff structure. New staff receive a welcome pack with policies, procedures, operational plan and daily tasks. They have a three month probation period during which they are observed with regard to their strengths and weaknesses in their work with young children, as well as introducing the philosophy and principles of Andrea's Montessori. After three months a staff meeting is held to

discuss contract and continuous professional development (CPD)

The owner always works closely with staff and makes sure that they develop an understanding of home-based care and how the Montessori approach and EYFS is implemented in the daily routine with the children.

In keeping with current requirements the owner holds both early years and Montessori qualifications. Her assistant has 20 years experience of working with children and has a programme of professional development in place. She is also interested in gaining a Montessori qualification in the near future.

The CPD plan is now in full progress and the other member of staff is a fully accredited childminder with Ofsted.

Name of Assessor: Ann Guindi

Date of report: 01/03/11