



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). 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.

The Beehive on Queen’s Park Montessori School

147 Chevening Road, London NW6 6DZ

Dates of the accreditation visits:

Visit 1: 19 January 2012

Visit 2: 17 May 2012

This accreditation report relates to the provision for children aged two to five years.

Description of the school

Beehive Montessori nursery opened in 1984 and relocated to the current premises in 1990. The school operates on the ground floor of a converted house in a residential area in the London Borough of Brent. The school serves the local and wider community.

The children have access to a small room at the front of the house and a large ‘L’ shaped classroom at the back, which has open access to the safe and secure garden areas. The nursery is privately owned and a maximum of 24 children may attend at any one time. There are currently 46 on the roll. The school is open from Monday to Friday, from 8.40 to 16.00, during term time.

The school supports children with learning difficulties as well as children who speak English as an additional language. It currently employs eight members of staff, all working with the children. The owner manager holds a Montessori diploma; the majority of the other staff also have Montessori diplomas, with one member of staff currently working towards this qualification and another studying for a degree in Early Years.

Summary and conclusion

Beehive offers high quality Montessori education for children aged two to five years in a spacious, converted ground floor of a house. The excellent team work, well qualified staff and the strong commitment to the Montessori approach all contribute to the provision of high quality nursery education. The children are respected and guided by all members of the staff and are given opportunities to learn freely throughout the two work cycles per day. The children are confident, articulate, and eager learners who show respect for each other



and their environment. The staff are willing to make changes if it is for the benefit of the children.

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:

- To continue to promote greater independence in the children during the morning drop off routine.
- To carry on improving the provision for the younger children.
- To provide a more comfortable book corner.

Philosophy:

The bright, stimulating, well laid-out and child friendly environment provides the children with a safe and vibrant nursery to learn and work in. Adherence to the Montessori approach to education ensures that the children learn and develop to their full potential. The materials, which are mainly Montessori, are attractively placed on child-accessible shelving. The staff are unobtrusive and sensitive to the children's needs and their holistic approach supports the children's development. The staff work well together as a team and have a good understanding of their responsibilities. Comprehensive planning and observations involving all the staff ensure that each child progresses and the principles and goals of the setting are periodically reviewed.

The two hour fifty minute work cycle during the morning ensures that the children have ample time to explore their working environment either individually, in pairs, or in larger groups. Teacher-led activities are available to the children on a voluntary basis. The effective use of signs gives the children the opportunity to choose whether they join a group session or not. The children are free to use the smaller outside area throughout the work cycle, whatever the weather.

The parents are informed through the website, parents' evenings and newsletters about the Montessori philosophy and how it can be extended into the home.

Learning and Development:

Beehive nursery school follows the Montessori curriculum, with close links to the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). It incorporates a key person system, making one individual responsible for a child's well being, record keeping, assessing observations and maintaining close contact with the parents.

The observations and recording done by the staff ensure that the assessment and forward planning for each child is thorough and enables the adults to effectively follow the children, helping them reach their full potential. Consequently the children are skillfully challenged. All members of staff are involved in the planning and observations of the children and the short daily staff meetings and regular longer meetings keep all the adults well informed.

The two rooms have a wide range of predominantly Montessori materials and activities. The L-shaped room covers mathematics, language, sensorial, painting, cultural materials, and snack



area, with a small area set aside for reading. The smaller room is predominately used for practical life, craft and group activities. The six areas of learning are comprehensively covered for the older children and the staff are beginning to understand the needs of the younger children: they have introduced heuristic play, a posting box and more appropriate practical life exercises. This area should still be improved.

The large garden area is well designed and wonderfully resourced. It is available for all the children to use at the end of the work cycle and a routine has now been established for small numbers of children to also use it, in rotation, during the work cycle. The staff have also worked on the small outside area to create a more stimulating environment, including materials for cleaning and building. All the children have access to this small area throughout the work cycle.

The freedom to choose where to work gives the children many opportunities to develop independently and explore and learn. The system for using the outside space is well established and the children have time to enjoy the outdoor environment within the work cycle, whatever the weather. Group activities are enjoyed on a voluntary basis, using signs to inform the children that they are taking place.

The SENCO works with the teaching staff and outside agencies when necessary in order to provide support for those children with additional needs, as well as maintaining close relationships with the child's parents. Relevant equipment and resources are employed as appropriate. Care is taken to display posters in relevant languages for those for whom English is not a first language.

Prepared Environment: resources and materials

The first impression of the atmosphere is one of a friendly, child-centered nursery, where the staff have created an environment in line with the Montessori philosophy. The excellent use of the environment has been achieved by the way the classrooms have been prepared and it is evident that a great amount of time is given to its preparation.

The indoor area offers a well presented, wide range of predominantly Montessori materials, which are in excellent condition and attractively displayed. There is enough equipment for all the children to be engaged in self-selected activities. The materials are regularly checked and are updated by the staff when necessary. Plants are a nice addition to the classroom and the well-tended and improved nature table further enhances the indoor learning environment.

The environment would also benefit from having a more enticing and comfortable book corner.

The larger garden area is a safe, stimulating, and very well-resourced space, covering the six areas of learning, with a wonderful natural area at the far end. The smaller outside area now provides a wider range of learning opportunities.

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

The layout of the setting, the prepared environment and the attitude of the staff all contribute to the generally high level of independence shown by the children. The children confidently put



on and take off their shoes and their coats when going outside, self-select activities, and they can also choose whether they join in a group activity or not. The snack area offers a wonderful opportunity for the children to develop their independence. The whole philosophy of the school is based on the child's freedom to choose where they work and what activity they do, completing their cycle of activity, cleaning up after themselves and caring for their environment.

The children are trusted and given plenty of time to work things out for themselves. Free flow between inside and outside is well established, allowing the children to choose independently where they work.

Some of the parents still help with their children's coats and shoes in the morning, but the staff are now using this opportunity to encourage the parents to let the children show them how independent they can be. The children's pegs are clearly labeled.

The children now put their own lunch out on a tray and are encouraged to wash up and clear away when they have finished, which they enjoy.

The parents are well informed about the principles of the Montessori method of education through the very comprehensive website, parents workshops and literature. The new children attend an induction summer school and the parents are able to visit the school for as many times as they wish before their child starts, so they have many opportunities to see how the Montessori method of encouraging independence at home could work. There is a friendly and respectful atmosphere between the staff and the children, who come across as polite and confident.

Montessori practice: classroom management

A comprehensive rota system ensures that all staff work in all areas of the nursery. There is no specific grouping of the children, but each key person is responsible for their own children's record keeping and liaising with the parents.

The uninterrupted work cycle of nearly three hours in the morning and two and a half hours in the afternoon works well, giving the children plenty of time to explore the activities that interest them. All the staff offer support to the children if it is needed whilst also encouraging them to be independent. The children help prepare their snack and choose if they want to sit together. The children who bring a packed lunch prepare their own tray and take responsibility for cleaning up.

The children are able to move freely around the whole setting, with effective vertical grouping and free flow inside and out throughout the work cycle. Extracurricular activities are optional and are offered discreetly so that they do not fragment the work cycle. Presentations are given as required and the children have ample opportunity to work independently, following their natural rhythm of activity without unnecessary interruption.

Montessori Practice: links with parents, including reports and records

The adult routines are effective in ensuring both children's safety and well-being and good maintenance of the working environment.



The key person system operating in the school offers a strong partnership with the parents, who know that they have direct contact with a specific member of staff. Discussions with them demonstrate their high levels of satisfaction with the communication they receive. Once a term the parents are given the child's Learning Journal to read and add to. This is very much appreciated by them, as the information is comprehensive and they have an opportunity to contribute themselves. The website, parents' evenings, and verbal and written reports all help parents to feel involved with their children's progress. Close links are also established with the schools that the children move on to. A comprehensive report is written for each child under the six areas of learning and a copy is given to the parents and sent to child's next school if requested.

Staffing:

Having nearly all the staff Montessori trained shows the school's deep commitment to the philosophy. Members of staff work very well as a team, under the excellent leadership of the owner manager who has undertaken level 4 management training. The exceptionally effective communication between members of staff contributes to the harmonious workplace, from which the children benefit hugely.

Individual staff training needs are discussed regularly and provided for as funding becomes available. Training covers all relevant areas. Staffing structures and roles are clearly defined and the educational principles of the Beehive nursery school are introduced to the new staff during their extensive and comprehensive induction process.

The high standard of care and education provided is in line with Montessori practice and adherence to the EYFS, and is made possible by the commitment of all the staff.

Name of Assessor: Charlotte White

Date of reports:

First visit – 20th January 2012

Second visit – 17th May 2012