

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.

Cator Park Montessori Pre-School

Cator Park Pavilion, Aldersmead Road, Beckenham, Kent BR3 1NA

Visited on 3 March 2009

Description of the school:

Cator Park Montessori Pre-School is privately owned. It is housed in a rented pavilion located in a large recreation ground in the London Borough of Bromley. The pavilion has been equipped as a Montessori pre-school within the past 3 years. There are two classrooms, an office and staffroom. The secure outside area comprises areas of decking and astro-turf. The pre-school also makes use of the recreation ground for outings such as use of the swing park, nature walks, sports day and Easter egg hunts.

Cator Park Montessori Pre-school is registered for 44 children from 2 to 5 years, and currently has 95 on roll. It is open Monday to Friday during term time, for morning (9:00 – 11:45) and afternoon (12:20 – 3:05) sessions with an additional lunch club for those wishing to attend all day. A summer holiday club is held for 3 weeks each year.

The owner/manager and an additional seven full-time members of staff all hold relevant Montessori qualifications. A part-time unqualified member of staff provides lunch cover. The co-owner provides full-time administrative and finance support.

Summary and conclusion.

Cator Park Montessori Pre-school provides a good learning environment for the children in its care. The owners and staff are committed to providing experiences which meet the needs of every child and to supporting all children in developing at their own pace. The well-structured environment supports these aims, together with good planning and record-keeping. Parents comment favourably on the communication systems in place.

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, but further development is needed in the following areas:

- Continue to work towards increasing the length of the work cycle to the full session

- Increase the quantity and range of Sensorial and Cultural materials on offer to the children
- Ensure that all materials available to the children are complete.

Philosophy:

Cator Park Pre-school is a well organised setting, which offers children many opportunities for learning and development. The staff share a clearly defined philosophy, which is communicated effectively to parents in a variety of forms, and which ensures that the setting focuses on its goals consistently.

The location provides a rich Montessori environment, which allows freedom inside and outside, giving children a wide range of learning opportunities.

Thorough planning and good record-keeping they ensure that the needs of the children are met on a daily basis. More attention needs to be given to the preparation and range of Montessori materials.

Learning and Development:

Planning for the children, long term and short term, is thorough and in line with the Early Years Foundation Stage. The needs of individual children are catered for through the use of focus activities and flexible planning supports for the needs and interests of the group as a whole.

Observations are recorded clearly and are used to inform planning. Next steps are identified and the needs of each child are recognised.

The environment is well-planned and free flow between inside and outside throughout the session ensures that all children have the opportunity to follow their interests. Montessori activities and the expectation that the cycle of activity will be followed is evident both inside and outside. Extension of the work cycle to the full session will enhance children's spontaneous learning further.

Staff encourage children to develop independence by offering a wide range of learning opportunities. They ensure that suitable activities are available for the children in each session and that all children are engaged.

Prepared Environment: resources and materials :

Inside, the organisation of both rooms is good, materials are well grouped and ordered and the areas of learning are clearly defined and labeled.

Overall the range of Montessori materials is satisfactory, although the quantity and range of materials in the Sensorial and Cultural area need to be examined in order to ensure that children can benefit fully from these areas. Other materials complement the Montessori

materials well. Materials are appropriate to the ages of the children.

Most materials are well kept, although incomplete materials should be removed from the shelves. Staff maintain the materials throughout the day.

The outside areas and the materials provided are very good, bringing the benefits of the indoor organisation to the outdoors and encouraging the children to continue the cycles of activity throughout the work cycle.

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

Montessori practice is good at Cator Park Pre-school and staff are consistent in their expectations of the children. They are confident in allowing the work cycle to progress and the children to provide direction. They are good role models for the children and ensure that the needs of all children are met. They interact well with the children, providing support and encouragement, whilst ensuring that children develop independence. They encourage the children to take responsibility for their own actions, and trust them to make their own decisions about the activities they undertake.

The children are confident in their environment and know the classroom rules. They are secure in completing the cycles of activity and enjoy the freedom that the two and half hour work cycle gives them. They enjoy working in small groups and develop good social skills. Their interest in their own record cards shows that they have a good sense of their own achievement.

The environment allows for good independence. Activities are well grouped and ordered, and both table and floor workspaces allow freedom to choose where to work. The outside area is well equipped and allows access to additional materials throughout the year.

Throughout the work cycle children are encouraged to initiate and complete activities, dress and toilet themselves and to help themselves to snack.

Children respond well to the trust placed in them, completing cycles of activity and caring for themselves, others and the environment spontaneously.

The Montessori philosophy and the pre-school's expectations of the children are clearly communicated to parents, many of whom are keen to continue their children's experiences into home life.

Montessori practice: *classroom management*

The two and a half hour work cycle provides a concentrated period of work. Children work well and are engaged throughout. Staff are confident in allowing the children freedom to find their own activities, but provide support and encouragement when needed. Circle time works well within the work cycle, as both children and adults respect the choice of individuals to work alone or join in.

Staff are currently looking at ways to extend the work cycle to the full two and three-quarter hours of the session. They are already experimenting with different ways to facilitate this.

Staff responsibilities are well defined for each session, but the good teamwork allows flexibility as the session develops.

Yoga and rugby are currently offered as extra-curricular activities on a weekly basis. Children can opt in or out of the activities as they wish.

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

The role of each member of staff is well-defined, as are their responsibilities. The staff structure of the pre-school is clear, and there is good teamwork in both classrooms.

Key workers are clear about their responsibilities, but all members of staff take responsibility for ensuring that children are motivated and engaged and that observations and assessments are updated.

Parents comment favourably on the quantity and quality of communication. They feel that the pre-school keeps them well informed about their children's development and about the Montessori philosophy. Staff are willing to take time to discuss any issues or concerns they may have.

Staffing:

The staff structure is well-defined and staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities. Good teamwork is evident and this is reflected in the flow and the flexibility of the routines of the pre-school.

Staff are well inducted into the pre-school and their training and development needs are well catered for. Inset days are used to ensure that relevant training is available to all members of staff. All full-time members of staff hold relevant Montessori qualifications and are experienced Montessori practitioners, they are well aware of the need for continuing professional development.

Communication between staff is regular, and well documented.

Staff are enthusiastic, and are articulate in their commitment to Cator Park Pre-school and the children in their care, and to the Montessori ethos of the setting.

Carolyn Crowe
Name of Assessor

7/2/09
Date of report