

# **Montessori Evaluation and Accreditation Board**

## **School Accreditation**

This report follows an accreditation visit made on behalf of the Montessori Evaluation and Accreditation Board. It considers how far the school follows Montessori approaches. 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.

### **Cherry Tree Montessori**

3 Lacon Road, East Dulwich, London SE22 9HE

#### **Description of the school:**

Cherry Tree Montessori operates from two rooms on the ground floor of a semi-detached family dwelling. It is situated in a residential area of Dulwich and has a secure outdoor play area. A maximum of sixteen children attend the nursery at any one time, these are made up of full and sessional care. The nursery operates from 08.00 to 18.00.

Currently, six children under 3 years and ten children over 3 years attend the nursery, all children over 3 years get government funding. The nursery integrates the Montessori and the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) curriculum.

#### **Summary and conclusion.**

This nursery is a delightful Montessori environment. It provides opportunities for learning and development to take place through the facilitation of staff. The activities seen are well thought out and children are motivated and interested to learn. The children demonstrate independence, confidence, and have great respect for the environment and one another.

**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:**

- Montessori resources need to be extended and some of the existing pieces replaced. Shelving needs to be adjusted to enable younger children to reach materials independently.

- Montessori students rather than foundation stage students would help in possibly gaining more Montessori staff in the future
- Planning needs to be looked at from a Montessori perspective rather than an Early Years Foundation Stage perspective. The way forward is to integrate both curriculums using the 'Guidance to the EYFS in Montessori Settings' to facilitate this and gaining the backing of Southwark council with paperwork.

**Philosophy:**

As soon as you walk into this setting the Montessori philosophy is evident from the way in which the children behave towards one another and to the teachers. The children are encouraged to be independent from when they enter the building by taking off their own coats and self-registering. The children then join the group quietly and respectfully without disrupting the circle time. The children self-select their work or join other children in a focused group activity. The children show grace and courtesy in taking turns and listening to one another during discussions. During snack time they cut up their own fruit and pour their own drinks. They have the freedom to move from one room to another or go outside if they wish. All the children are engaged in work and work independently.

**Curriculum:** The written curriculum is heavily focused in the EYFS curriculum, although the practice follows the Montessori philosophy. There does seem to be a conflict between the two. The way forward is to find a way to integrate both curriculums. The local council is dictating the way in which the recording and assessment is to be carried out and this seems to be where the conflict arises. The staff have all seen the new 'Guide to the Early Years Foundation Stage in Montessori settings' but may need the council to be more supportive and understanding of the Montessori philosophy in order to move forward with planning.

**Resources and materials:**

The manager indicated that her resources were 15 years old and that storage was limited. She would also like to have some more cultural materials. The equipment is very basic and is in need of replacement. If more resources were available it would give the children more opportunities to learn and develop.

**Staffing:**

The team work very well together under the leadership of the Montessori-qualified head teacher. The fact that this team have been together for a long period of time is reflected in how they managed the classroom activities. The room is very organised with one teacher on each table with a focused group activity going on. There is also a float teacher who is able to help the other children in their Montessori work if needed. The children have a good relationship with the teachers, who are able to

facilitate and enable the children to develop and learn.

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

The nursery does very well at promoting the children's independence by allowing children time to undertake activities and encouraging children to do things for themselves. However, the Montessori work cycle is not in place. Great patience is demonstrated by the staff in allowing children time to explore new materials such as the mackerel and octopus during the focus group activity. One particular child wanted to touch without gloves and explore the texture and the smell the teacher gave him the freedom to explore with his bare hands. She respected his wishes and facilitated his desires and he delighted in it. It was wonderful to see the enthusiasm and awe in this child's body and soul. He even decided to take the octopus home to explore more at home with his parents. This encapsulated the whole Montessori philosophy in the discovery of the child.

**Montessori practice: *classroom management***

The overall classroom management is good. The staff work well together as a team. Each person knows what other people are responsible for. The allocation of staff resources is good, with high child to teacher ratios this ensures that the children get the attention they need. The environment is well prepared for the children to promote independence and freedom of choice in their activities. There is a teacher allocated to both focus group activities and a float teacher to facilitate children's individual learning.

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

The nursery has formed strong links with parents and this is a real strength to the running of the nursery. The parents are kept informed by newsletters and regular meetings with staff. The parents get updated on their child's progress during parents' evening and also have regular updates from their child's key worker.