



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.

Rooftops Montessori Nursery School

8-10 Queens Road, Richmond, North Yorkshire DL10 4AE

Dates of the first re-accreditation visit: 23 October 2012

Dates of the second re-accreditation visit: 4 December 2012

Date of previous MEAB accreditation: September 2008

This accreditation report relates to the provision for children aged 2 years 9 months to 5 years old.

Description of the school

Rooftops Montessori is located on the ground level of a two storey building in the centre of the town of Richmond in North Yorkshire. The Pre-school is directly accessible from the Rooftops Baby and Nursery Unit which is located on the first floor of the building but this accreditation only relates to the Pre-school; which is for children aged between 2 years 9 months and 5 years old. It has been under the current ownership since 2006.

The Pre-school is made up of two classrooms, connected by a wide open doorway. There is a partitioned cloakroom at the front of the building, and children have access to their own bathroom facilities.

At the rear of the property is a covered yard, with a lower level grassed and graveled area to which access is gained through a gate and down some shallow steps.

Rooftops Montessori is open between 8:30 and 17:00, offering a mixture of full day or sessional places and it is open for 48 weeks a year. Children who stay for lunch bring packed lunches from home. There are 21 children currently enrolled in this section of the nursery, with a maximum of 20 attending at any one time.

There are four members of staff working with this age range, one has NVQ level 4 in childcare, one has level 3 and two have level 2, and three of the team also have a



Montessori qualification.

The setting is able to support children with additional needs.

Summary and conclusion

Rooftops Montessori clearly follows the philosophy of Maria Montessori. The principles that underpin daily routines within the setting are drawn from this philosophy and are managed in a way that supports all children.

The recommendations of the previous accreditation have been met. The work cycle has been extended to just under three hours, the use of space and access to materials has been improved and is now excellent, and the whole staff team is included in regularly revisiting the Montessori philosophy during staff meeting time.

Children are shown a great deal of respect by the adults working with them. This can be seen in their well-mannered interactions, the opportunities afforded to them, and how their individual needs are met. All children are treated as unique individuals within the setting.

Learning takes place within beautifully and creatively organized indoor and outdoor spaces. The materials are of good quality, and are obviously well cared for by both adults and children. There is a wide-ranging selection of resources available to the children, and indoors the space available to work in is ample.

The children's independence is supported by the whole staff team alongside the enabling routines and environment. The consistent approach from staff gives children stable experiences to use as a base for development.

Record keeping is efficient and detailed for each child. All staff work with all children, but the key person system enables staff to focus on individuals and build a strong relationship with parents and carers.

The owner/manager has an energetic leadership style that, when combined with the dedicated and professional staff working with her, has created a successful and joyful environment. Through hard work, and a willingness to reflect on their own practice, there is continued development within the setting, benefiting not only the staff, but all the children who attend.

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 assess the quality of learning that occurs outdoors and use this review to inform further development of this area.
- To plan a review of the Child Profile involving the whole staff team, giving consideration to how well it links with the EYFS.

**Philosophy:**

The staff team fully adheres to the principle of 'following the child' by consistently using the child's interests as a starting point for their learning. Children are treated as individuals by all the adults in the setting, and know that they are welcome to bring and share their own ideas in class. It is clear that children lead the learning.

Children are trusted to operate independently within the setting, and the way adults speak to children encourages this, through suggestion as opposed to command. The environment supports their independence, with easy free-flow between indoors and outdoors for two hours every session. Self-care is supported for all ages and abilities by the caring staff.

Since the first re-accreditation visit there has been an improvement in the freedom afforded to the children and this has resulted in more exploration and risk taking. Adults consider when best to approach children to prevent disrupting their concentration. Respect is given to the decisions that the children make, both indoors and outdoors. Staff work well to extend the children's thinking based on how they are accessing materials, and all of the children's questions are listened to and answered courteously. The children are evidently settled in a routine of self-choice, and operate within the social rules of the setting well, treating each other and the materials respectfully.

The adult's role is to facilitate and support, to gently re-direct and engage with the children, but to follow the child's agenda. They do this in a compassionate and assured way. Adults do not just focus on individuals; they also enable children to work in pairs or small groups, for example through modeling how to sit next to each other when sharing a book.

The philosophy of the setting is made clear to families through face-to-face daily interactions and through the prospectus of the setting. The principles and goals are reviewed by the owner/manager.

Learning and Development:

The indoor environment is beautifully prepared. There are clear spaces to enable movement and work, and access to the materials is good. All areas of learning are covered and all are used well. Children move easily between areas during the day.

The work cycle lasts for just under three hours, and children are afforded ample opportunity to spontaneously self-select materials. During the work cycle the children's activities are supported by adults, and they can become adult-led with a small group if the children show a desire for this to happen. Children work both independently and in self-managed small groups during the session, often extending their own learning through the introduction of supplementary materials to their activity. The carefully selected range of materials on offer meets the range of developmental needs of the whole class.

Outside there is a wide range of resources on offer, with materials relating to all areas of learning. There is one table, and floor space available for children to work with materials that are kept outside. The split level area encourages children to take interesting journeys within the outdoor area, and gives an enhanced sense of space which supports exploration and development of children's spatial awareness.

Planning for individuals is detailed, and follows logical steps in development. Half-termly topic



planning ensures a rich curriculum coverage, and both the Montessori curriculum and the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) framework are combined effectively for the children, with the adults recording both the activities and the skills developed by them.

The key person system that is in operation allows adults to record information and observations in detail for their 'own' children, but does not exclude them from recording information for other children. The coverage of what is recorded is good. Following a recommendation made at the first re-accreditation visit, longer narrative observations are now planned for each child once a month and are being used to further inform planning for individuals.

The small team of adults know their roles well, and operate flexibly to support children in their learning where they see the need is greatest. Children with additional needs are well supported and home-school links for these children are effective.

Prepared Environment: resources and materials

Rooftops Montessori Pre-school has light and spacious rooms, with shelving around the perimeters that are arranged in areas of learning. The shelves themselves are beautifully presented, with order and cleanliness. The materials are complete and appealing; there is an ample amount for children to choose from.

Inside there is a good range of practical life, creative, literacy, sensorial and early maths materials. All the materials are well cared for by both children and adults, and are accessible and inviting for the children. The provision for practical life and cultural materials is especially strong, whilst the book area is comfortable and uncluttered. The mixture of purchased and carefully created 'home-made' materials gives the children good choice of Montessori and non-Montessori activities.

The outside area again boasts a broad range of materials and activities, giving children opportunities across all areas of learning. Rigorous recording of the activities that children engage with and the materials they use in this area, coupled with an assessment of the quality of learning taking place, will enable staff to regularly review and improve the outdoor provision.

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

Children are supported in their growing independence from the moment they enter the setting, using the cloakroom and then beginning their work cycle. Levels of self-care are very high, seen for example in children getting themselves dressed to go outside. The snack area offers an opportunity for complete independence: it is extremely well organised, so that all staff are required to do is top-up the snack if it is running low. This is available all session, and although children are encouraged to only have one snack, they may return for more. This area promotes social interactions, co-operation, and gives children the opportunity to use grace and courtesy in a genuine context.

Freedom of movement is a real strength within the setting. The free-flow between rooms and the outside is truly free – there are no constraints on numbers and if just one child wishes to be in a certain area, then they are permitted and supervised accordingly. Children are closely monitored by the adults, but are left to freely choose what, where and who they work with.



Repetition is a natural aspect of work in the classroom; during both re-accreditation visits children were comfortable with the time that they had to complete their activities.

Adults role-model respectful behaviour and this can be seen to have an effect on how the children act with their peers, with support and good manners occurring between them without prompting. The independence that the children enjoy helps boost their self-esteem and confidence.

Routines are shared with parents and are adhered to daily, and they are given information about how to support growing independence at home.

Montessori practice: classroom management

Learning is managed by following the child. During the work cycle the planning used is individual, but is also quickly adapted to the changing needs of the child. For example, one to one activities can become small group activities if the child is happy for others to become involved. Staff move flexibly between areas to ensure all children have adequate supervision and, whilst operating a key person system, they record incidental observations and presentations for all children. Children are grouped vertically and all activities are open to all ages of children in the rooms, as appropriate. If a child is independently engaged then staff will not disturb their concentration.

During both re-accreditation visits the majority of the outdoor learning was spontaneous during the work cycle and, in response to a recommendation made at the first visit, staff are now recording in detail the activities that children take part in outside and are using these records to plan for future provision in this area. This planning is both for individuals and to evaluate which materials are used or not used in this area.

In the afternoon there are more structured and adult-led activities taking place both indoors and outdoors, although children are still free to choose materials to work with during this shorter work cycle.

Staff know both their roles and the roles of others – this enables them to move seamlessly to any area where they are needed. The morning cloakroom routine is handled well, with each child being greeted personally. The snack table only needs supervision and reminders of its use and children assist with many aspects of organization within the class, such as helping to keep others safe by storing personal possessions out of the way. They are given the feeling of responsibility and ownership over their nursery.

Children are able to assist in the preparation for lunchtime, moving tables and chairs into position. They sit in small groups, and the eating experience is both calm and sociable. Staff encourage independence by reminding children to dispose of litter and food waste in the appropriate bins.

Information about children is recorded efficiently, and if information needs sharing there are well-established routines in place to ensure this happens.

During both re-accreditation visits the rooms had an energetic and purposeful atmosphere, but never lost a sense of inner calm shown by the majority of the children.



Montessori Practice: links with parents, including reports and records

The key person system enables staff to build a good relationship with parents and report daily about the progress of the children, and any issues individuals may be having. They engage in a positive manner, and parents respond well. Staff are aware of their responsibilities and are diligent in carrying them out in order to help maintain safe working practices.

Records of the children's development are thorough. The 'Child Profile' documents have been revised to take into account the requirements of the new EYFS, and to ensure all photographs are linked to an area of learning. Following the recommendations made during the first re-accreditation visit, these records have been enhanced by incorporating longer observations of children and through the inclusion of monthly input from parents about their child's progress or observed behaviours and language at home. It is now recommended that a review of the Child Profile is undertaken with the whole staff team, with consideration given to how well it links with the EYFS. When a child leaves the setting to move on to school the Child Profile is given to the family, along with a summary of progress.

Regular newsletters keep parents up-to-date with events at the nursery, and also begin to introduce some Montessori principles in explanations and ideas. Parents also benefit from a large digital display in the cloakroom area showing images of their children at work in the Pre-school, and the offer of a free Montessori parenting book when their child begins attending.

Parents have a very positive view of the Pre-school, and are knowledgeable about some of the Montessori principles used within the setting. Comments from parents include an appreciation of the calm atmosphere in the setting, the information about their child's development that is exchanged on a daily basis, and the welcoming 'open door' policy that enables parents to share the learning experiences of the children. There are two parents' evenings each year, which are designed to give parents as much time as possible to look through the Profile, photographs, and work their child has done, as well as talk to the staff.

Staffing:

The setting benefits from energetic leadership and a clear organizational structure that is understood by the staff. The small staff team operates very well together. They are deployed efficiently, and across the setting they demonstrate excellent practice.

The induction process is thorough, staff benefit from continued professional development and undergo skill-based appraisals throughout the year. They are well qualified and the manager supports their growing knowledge of Montessori pedagogy.

Staff meetings are attended by the whole team and are used to share information in an open and supportive way. The team work for the benefit of all the children.

Staff are comfortable and familiar with their roles and duties, and operate in a professional and purposeful manner. They are supported by an excellent manager, whose enthusiasm and commitment to Montessori principles is the driving force behind the child-centered nature of the setting.



Name of Assessor: Jeremy Clarke

Date of reports:

First visit – 29th October 2012

Second visit – 9th December 2012