



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.

Saxbys Montessori Nursery

East Wing, Saxbys, Cowden, Kent TN8 7DU

Date of first re-accreditation visit: 4 July 2012

Date of second re-accreditation visit: 9 November 2012

This setting was first accredited in December 2008

This accreditation report relates to the provision for children aged 18 months to under 5 years.

Description of the school

Saxbys Montessori Nursery is located in two rooms of a residential property. The interconnecting rooms have direct access to a private, well established garden that leads on to a extensive play area. This area incorporates a large horse chestnut tree, a bark surface play area, swings, ropes, climbing frames, digging, construction area and a space for growing.

The school offers a variety of flexible sessions for children aged 18 months to under 5 years. Choice of sessions includes a morning (9.00 to 12.30), an afternoon (12.30 to 15.00) or a full day (9.00 to 15.00). The nursery makes provision for and supports children with special educational needs. Saxbys Montessori currently has 20 children on roll and on the day for the second visit 12 children, aged 18 months to 4 years, were present.

Saxbys Montessori Nursery is led by the owner and head-teacher who holds a Montessori Diploma and an appropriate BA (Hons) Early Years (Montessori) degree. She is supported by a team of three staff, one of whom holds a Montessori Diploma and is studying for a foundation degree and the other members of staff hold appropriate childcare qualifications.

Summary and conclusion

Saxbys Montessori Nursery offers a cosy, home-like atmosphere providing the children with opportunities to socialise that support development of their self-esteem, confidence and respect for themselves, others and the wider environment. The small adult to child ratio enables all children quality time with adults who focus on their individual and unique needs,



ensuring inclusion and equality. An effective work cycle enables all children to have access to all areas of learning throughout their time at the nursery. The outside play areas are highly effective in providing the children with extended opportunities to make connections, develop their own creative ideas and become independently involved and engaged. Following the first visit the team have reflected on the provision and layout of activities available inside and outside in the large play area. The outdoor play area is now organized by area of learning and activities include gardening skills, a construction corner, sensorial garden and a place for mark making. Children actively engage and concentrate on a variety of activities and the majority of them chose to stay outside during the second visit, remaining motivated for the majority of the morning session. This is a busy, happy, sociable setting in which children and adults enjoy their time together, engaging in conversations and sharing a wide range of experiences.

The school provides an education which follows the principles of the Montessori approach and environment. The school has successfully addressed 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:

- Reflect on and review the planning and preparation to ensure that the environment continues to meet the needs of the children who attend, both inside and outside.

Philosophy:

Saxbys Montessori Nursery aims to provide an environment which builds the child's self-confidence, self-esteem, independence and socialisation. This cosy, home-like environment with high adult to child ratio enables effective support of the child's unique needs. Adults promote confidence and trust in the child through their proactive role-modelling and positive communication. Children's individual rhythms are respected, which was demonstrated during both visits when children feeling hungry before midday were given the opportunity to prepare lunch for themselves and when children were able to finish their activity, not being rushed to join others for lunch. This process enables the children's morning session to flow without any interruptions or hindrance in line with their individual needs.

The short-term planning, daily preparation and continuous maintenance of the classroom by the adults encourages opportunities for the development of self-initiated learning. Children confidently access the activities they want to use, moving freely through the classroom and into the outside area.

Adults effectively offer continuity, guidance and support to the children when they are accessing, exploring and playing with activities. Since the first visit the team have made some small changes to the layout of the tables and chairs and this has encouraged more children to become individually and independently motivated and engaged. Adults are encouraged to show continued faith and trust in their environment by ensuring that their preparation and planning meets the needs of all children, especially the very youngest.

Learning and Development:

Saxbys Montessori Nursery provides effective opportunities for learning across all age groups



and areas of learning. The layout of the classroom promotes a child-led environment where activities are at the child's level and accessible at all times. The design of the classroom is effective in promoting opportunities for social interactions and communication and language skills. Since the first visit the team have made changes to the position of several of the tables and chairs. This enhances opportunities for children who wish to work alone, without interruption, as well as enabling them to become involved in their chosen activity.

Children have access to different environments including the outside area. The immediate small, enclosed and well established garden provides a wealth of opportunities for children to make connections with the wider environment as they garden, caring for and watering the plants. These activities are self-directed and accessible for all the children. During the first visit children enjoyed experimenting with pouring and collecting water from the water tank.

Following recommendations, children now have immediate access, if they wish, to the large play area at the back of the garden. This area offers children outstanding opportunities to make connection with activities that promote skills for everyday living as well as the promotion of their development of balance and co-ordination. During the first visit this was observed with the child who cleaned the slide with a brush, becoming engaged and repeating the activity for more than ten minutes. Also, the child who used the tyre-swing, carefully considered how to climb in, how to make it swing, and then how to get off safely. Whilst during the second visit children became deeply involved with raking the garden and collecting leaves, and enjoying the sensorial area with the wind chimes. A small group teacher-led activity about fireworks further encouraged the children to discuss aspects of safety and science.

Adults model and guide children with the use of Montessori materials and provide effective conversation to encourage socialisation, recall, and opportunities for the children to make connections. Individual activities linked to the current project or festival further motivate and engage individual older children.

Saxbys Montessori Nursery uses a computerised software system for tracking the children's progress. Observations are added daily and assessments are linked and made in relation to the EYFS development matters. This programme effectively provides an immediate and up to date progress report of the child enabling the team to respond spontaneously to individual needs and adapt short term planning in line with the child's own path and learning.

Prepared Environment: resources and materials

The classroom is a warm and welcoming environment. Children feel comfortable and at ease – choosing their activities as soon as they arrive in the nursery, enabling all parents to leave promptly. This was also evident during the second visit, when many children became engaged with activities as soon as they parted from their parents. This created a calm, yet industrious hum in the setting.

The classroom is organised in areas of learning that are clearly laid out. There is an adequate and suitable range of equipment across all areas, including the outside. The environment is complete, clean, appealing and ready for use. There is sufficient space for older children to work together in pairs, with an adult, in a small group or alone. The team are encouraged to reflect and consider the wide age range of children's individual developmental needs to ensure that opportunities are not missed for the youngest of children to access exactly what activities they need without disturbing other children.



Activities provided – both inside and out – effectively meet the developmental needs of the age group of children who attend. The outside area including the large play area provides a wealth of opportunities to engage with the environment and play alone or with friends. During both visits, children were able to access a wide range of materials to support their play. This was seen through the choices made when watering plants, sweeping and cleaning slides, setting up an assault course, making a smelling activity from the flowers and plants and placing cones in an orderly line. Since the first visit the team have reviewed the planning and preparation of the large outside area. They have created a provision that offers continuity of practice to the outside area with an emphasis on the three prime areas of the EYFS, which are communication and language, physical development and personal, social and emotional development.

Children with special educational needs (SEN) are seen as part of this inclusive learning community. Their needs are met and the team are highly effective in responding spontaneously to support their individual development.

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

Independence at Saxbys Montessori Nursery is fostered through the layout of the classroom. Activities are accessible and at the child's level enabling them to make their own choices. During the second visit the grouping of children included very young ones. To ensure that the different areas of the classroom continue to promote independence for the diverse developmental needs, the team must continue to observe, reflect and plan regularly and be prepared to reorganise the environment should the need arise.

Free access to the outside area, when to have a drink or snack and what to choose to play with are effectively supported by the adults. Adults offer careful guidance and encouragement to when children are making choices of activities and remind them of what they have enjoyed before. During the second visit children benefitted from a longer period of time outside and were free to choose where to play. When a worm was discovered in the digging area teachers engaged effectively with the children encouraging their communication and language, and especially their listening skills.

Adults consistently model respect and the ground rules of the Montessori classroom and activities. Since the first visit changes to the layout, planning and preparation of the outside area contributed to creating continuity and opportunities for making connections between the inside and out. The team should continue to reflect and evaluate the freedom for learning opportunities both inside and outside to ensure that this significant change in the organisation of the classroom becomes fully established in the daily routine of the setting.

The nursery effectively facilitates and promotes independence effectively both at school and at home, by encouraging children to have the confidence to go to the toilet, change their shoes, help themselves to snack or lunch, wash their hands and help tidy away. Children are able to put on their coats and the older children always want to help the younger ones.

The school provides the parents with good range of information about independence at home and this is accessible through the newsletter as well as a full information pack on how to help their child at home on their website. Since the first visit the school has further enhanced the information for parents by updating the website which now includes a useful section on the



revised EYFS (2012). Parents indicated that they enjoyed the photos in the learning journeys as this showed them the types of activities that their children engage with and enjoy at nursery.

Montessori practice: classroom management

Short term planning at Saxbys Montessori Nursery focuses on the Montessori materials and areas of learning, which are prepared and maintained on a daily basis in line with the child's individual needs. Medium and long term planning takes into consideration developmentally appropriate learning for children and is reflected in the topics and activities, some of which have become Saxbys Montessori Nursery traditions. This includes, for the summer term, the study of the life cycle of the butterfly, which was observed during the first visit, whilst during the second visit the children were exploring and discovering Halloween and fireworks.

Team work is obvious in practice through communication and the teachers' awareness of the children and of themselves at all times. The team's roles and responsibilities are on display and although the team respond to these in a structured, routine manner it is their careful approach and spontaneous communication that facilitates the child's freedom and choice. The team is aware of individual needs and embraces the child's personal developmental progress. In practice this was seen through a variety of individual lessons, particularly with the Montessori materials, which included careful communication that encouraged the child to gently extend their ability. During the second visit children were given more opportunities to engage with activities on their own.

Opportunities however, can be missed at this time, as the adult often stays next to the child whilst repetition and exploration evolve, thus sometimes limiting the child's opportunities to become deeply involved.

The children are vertically grouped. Additional activities such as French and music are planned for the afternoon sessions when the majority of the children stay all day. These sessions are led by specialist teachers. During the first visit the music session was embraced by all the children with great delight; they were motivated, involved and engaged through out the lesson. The teacher worked effectively with all the children, including those with SEN, through her careful and precise communication, questioning and gentle encouragement of the children's recall of previous lessons. The session included the use of a wide variety of musical instruments and opportunities that enabled the children to make connections between the definition of words and musical sounds.

Montessori Practice: links with parents, including reports and records

The school website provides excellent links for parents. The prospectus is informative, clearly describing the school's aims and vision and how this 'looks and feels' for each child. The website provides further information such as key persons, newsletters, class routine and how parents/carers can help children at home. It is updated regularly and for the second visit included information on the revised EYFS as well as changes to the new school year and the school's current policies and procedures.

Parents/carers acknowledge their understanding of the EYFS and the steps the children make in achieving the goals. They spoke highly of the six-weekly report that provides them with



information about their child's progress in relation to the EYFS through the activities and Montessori materials that their child has been using during that time. Photographs reinforce this. Parent/carers commented that they would appreciate further guidance on how to extend the child's learning and development at home. Since the first visit and following the publication of the revised EYFS 2012, the nursery plans to add two summative assessments per year to the current reporting systems. This will further enhance its effective partnership with the parent, the child and requirements of the EYFS.

A key person system is in place that includes a 'buddy system' for staff who work part-time and share responsibility for observation and assessment of some children. Staff work together as a team in implementing the vision and are consistent in their approach in the setting. The computerised recording software system enables clear continuity of reporting for all team members.

Staffing:

The staff of this small setting work well together as a highly effective team. The leadership is strong, ensuring that there is effective communication and continuity of practice. A 'buddy system' in place for part-time key persons effectively supports individual practice and provides a seamless provision of care for each child on each day.

Successful systems are in place and led by the head teacher. Newly employed staff receive an induction which includes time to observe and to read policies and procedures, reflect, and ask questions. All team members are supported in their continued professional development. Three members are currently working towards higher childcare/early years qualifications.

The head teacher leads the majority of the training in-house and the school's development plan makes reference to this and includes the head teacher's and the team's reflective process. Strong links are made with outside agencies and in particular with the Early Years Improvement team promoted by the local authority. As part of their continued development, the nursery participates in the local authority's quality assurance scheme. Clear links are made with all aspects of the team's reflective practice and on-going continued professional development for the setting. Since the first visit the new school year's development plan has been put in place which includes updating training on safeguarding and the role of the SENCo together with training linked to extending the children's learning and development outside through professional forest school training.

All staff are appropriately qualified. The owner/headteacher holds a Montessori diploma and BA Hons Early Years (Montessori); one other staff member holds a Montessori diploma and is working towards the Foundation Degree in Early Years (Montessori). Two other members of staff hold appropriate childcare qualification and since the first visit one of the team has completed and graduated with the NVQ level 3 in childcare.

The team is dedicated to the children and their practice is seen through their commitment to continued professional development that links their training and qualifications directly to Montessori education.

Name of Assessor: Dawn Nasser



Date of reports:
First visit – 4 July 2012
Second visit – 9 November 2012