

# **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.

### **Semley Montessori Nursery School**

Semley Primary School, Shaftesbury, Dorset SP7 9AU

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

Semley Montessori Nursery School has sole use of a building in the grounds of Semley Controlled Church of England Aided Primary School, Semley, Wiltshire. This is a rural location; the well-lit classroom overlooks fields and woodland which are used as part of the setting's outside provision. There is also an enclosed outside area that only the nursery uses. The nursery is open from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Mondays and Fridays, and 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Tuesday to Thursday; it is registered for 17 children per session (32 on roll).

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

In Semley Montessori the philosophy and principles are incorporated into all areas of the provision and priority is given to the needs of each individual child.

The adults are well-trained, well-informed and committed to improving provision for the benefit of the children. Priority is placed on effective communication both within and beyond the setting.

Much effort is put into involving families in their child's learning and development.

The environment is attractive and generally well-resourced, with the exception of providing for more able children.

Children are offered freedom and independence to access the environment at their own pace, but this does not extend to any free-flow between the indoor and outdoor areas. The work cycle is also punctuated by circle time, followed immediately by whole group snack time. The staff team is aware of these limitations to children's independence.

Record-keeping is thorough but no direct links are currently made with the aspects of learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).

The application of good Montessori practice is reflected in the high levels of motivation, concentration and social competence which the children display.

Semley Montessori is a cohesive community of learners, with both adults and children participating in the process of self-development.

**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, and the school is aware that further development is needed in the following areas:**

- To increase the length of the work cycle, as the school intends to do
- To create more free flow between the indoor and outdoor environments
- To amend the children's record keeping system so that direct written links are made with the Early Years Foundation Stage guidelines for learning and development
- To provide challenging Montessori activities for more able children.

#### **Philosophy:**

Montessori philosophy is clearly understood at the setting. The manager has a good understanding of genuine Montessori principles and is able to communicate these to others.

Priority is given to the individual development of each child within the context of their family and within the Montessori environment.

The environment is equipped to support the needs of the children. The adults within it work in a co-ordinated and informed manner and are able to put the philosophy into practice. They set aside time and are adept at reviewing their practice. Part of this review is to identify strengths and areas for development in their Montessori practice. Current areas for development which have been identified are:

- To increase the length of the work cycle from the present one and a half hours
- To create more free flow between the indoor and outdoor environments
- To amend the children's record keeping system so that direct written links are made with the Early Years Foundation Stage guidelines for learning and development.

The setting's commitment to regular self-assessment supports the continuation of good Montessori practice.

#### **Curriculum:**

The setting applies the Montessori method broadly within the context of the EYFS. However, this application needs to be more specifically linked in activity planning and in children's assessment records in order to ensure that provision is fully comprehensive and that records are transparent and therefore useful for all individuals connected with the child.

The activities planned are appropriately challenging, with the exception of providing

for the most able individuals.

Good use of questioning and observation allow staff to evaluate children's learning effectively. The efficient recording procedure ensures that individual needs are broadly identified and provided for; however, more detailed recording of intended and actual learning outcomes would enhance the quality of curriculum provision. The setting is aware of this issue and early steps to improve planning and recording are documented.

A daily review of topic and group planning would serve to keep staff fully informed and prepared and would allow for the refining and differentiation of planning for the benefit of individual children.

#### **Resources and materials:**

Semley Montessori provides a well-resourced and attractive environment for the majority of its children. There are limited materials available for more able children. The setting has a 'wish list' of resources that it would like to purchase and thereby has the means to address this issue.

#### **Staffing:**

There is a strong ethos of co-operative team working in evidence throughout all aspects of the setting's practice.

The staff team is well organised, well informed and committed to on-going professional development. This serves to support the effective practice which is in evidence in the classroom and the good links with parents and other agencies outside the nursery. The process of having annual staff appraisals encourages the identification of areas for personal development and training needs. This process, linked with effective staff management and time given for reflection of practice in staff meetings, ensures continuous self-assessment and improvement within the setting.

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

This is a cohesive community of learners, with both adults and children participating in the maintenance of the environment and offering help and support to each other when required.

Children are offered an acceptable degree of freedom of choice and staff are aware that extending this freedom can be achieved by organising more free flow between inside and outdoors and by the use of a snack table rather than having a whole snack group.

Adult to child support is given through good presentations and dialogue. The children are well motivated and show good levels of independence and concentration. Parents are well-informed about encouraging independence at home.

The photographic 'routine reminders' are a useful aid to independence and a similar

display might be introduced for a classroom helper children's rota, thereby extending the opportunities for taking responsibility and helping others.

The development of social skills is very well supported and the adults show respect towards the children and each other. Children recognise their own achievements as well as those of others. They enjoy each others' company and interact confidently.

**Montessori practice: *classroom management***

The classroom is well managed, the adults have clearly defined roles and the children are confident and settled in the routine of the setting.

Staff have identified the need to extend the work cycle beyond the current 1½ hours and plan to do this by considering periods of free flow between the indoor and outdoor areas and by introducing a snack table.

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

Staff give high priority to safe working practices for the well-being of themselves, the children and others. Policies and procedures are straightforward and support safe working practices and risk assessments are carried out as necessary.

Family links with the nursery are very strong and a lot of time is spent on this vital area of provision. Parents feel welcomed and involved with their children's learning and development. They are very well-informed, with an excellent notice board, parent pack and newsletters to maintain written contact.