



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.

Sinclair House School

159 and 196 Munster Road, Fulham, London SW6 6DA and SW6 6AU.

Date of accreditation visit: 18 November 2009

This accreditation report assesses all the children in the nursery and reception classes

Description of the school

Sinclair House is an independent, co-educational Montessori day school for pupils aged 2 to 8 years old. It is located in Fulham and consists of two properties on the opposite sides of Munster Road. The school has five classrooms. The main nursery room which accommodates the 3 to 5 year olds is situated at 196 Munster Road along with a library/role play room and the school office. The room for 2 to 3 year olds is situated on the ground floor along with the year 2 classroom at 159 Munster Road. Upstairs in this building are the classrooms for Reception and Year 1 along with a library/computer room. Each property has an outside play area with appropriate play equipment and garden area. The school is registered for 80 children from 2 to 8 years old. At present there are 18 two to three year olds, 31 three to five year olds, 11 in Reception, 8 in Year 1 and 12 in Year 2. Only the Nursery and Reception classes are being accredited. The nursery offers sessional care covering mornings and afternoons. The school offers homework and after school clubs and a breakfast club. There are some holiday courses. The school is open Monday to Thursday from 08.45 to 15.15 and Friday from 08.45 to 12.15 during term time only. The head of the school is also its owner. There are 14 staff, of whom seven have Bachelor degrees and two have Master degrees. The head and her deputy both have qualified teacher status. The Reception teacher has a PGCE. The head and six members of staff have appropriate Montessori qualifications. One staff member has started Montessori training in September and two more are starting in January.

Summary and conclusion

Sinclair House School provides a warm and welcoming environment where the children are encouraged to develop into confident and independent individuals. They are taught by an enthusiastic and dedicated team of staff who respect their needs and work as a bonded team. The children show strong levels of concentration from the youngest class up to reception; they are very polite, kind and well-mannered. Every child is observed and assessed on a regular basis in line with the Montessori and EYFS guidance. Parents are very supportive of all that the school is doing and see their children's education at Sinclair House as a partnership. An open door policy operates throughout the school.



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 consideration should be given to the following points for further development:

- The school needs to extend the work cycle to two and a half/three hours and consider opportunities for free-flow between the indoor and outdoor classrooms.
- Consideration should be given to the layout and quantity of materials in the large nursery room. Special attention should be paid to providing a designated cultural area and reviewing the purpose and role of the nature table in the favourable environment.
- IT resources in reception class need to be reviewed in line with the developmental needs of the children.

Philosophy

The setting's handbook and mission statement encompass the Montessori ideals of offering a nurturing environment that encourages confidence and independence. However, there is little mention of Montessori in the information given to parents, even though in practice these ideals are met. Staff are enthusiastic and encourage parents to continue the use of Montessori principles in the home. The weekly plans are displayed by the door and there is a good system of planning, recording and assessment in place. The staff make good use of their observations to inform future planning. The children are confident and in the nursery classes are allowed to follow their inner need. There are plenty of opportunities for child-initiated learning throughout the morning with teachers sensitively 'following the child'. The children hold a great respect for each other and their environment.

Learning and Development

Each classroom plans separately; there are termly, weekly and daily plans with each member of staff taking responsibility for a particular activity. These are in line with the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). Individual Montessori records are kept on all the children that include details of Montessori activities and observations. There are many examples of spontaneous learning in all the classes. All areas of learning are well supported but it was disappointing not to see the outside area attached to the 3 - 5 year olds' nursery class being used to promote "free flow" learning. The adults always support the children encouraging them to be independent and redirecting when necessary. Children with special needs are well catered for with external support being available where needed.

Prepared Environment

All the classrooms are light and airy and inviting to the child. Care has been taken in preparing the environment for the appropriate ages with suitable materials for each age and stage of development. The materials for the 2 to 3 year olds and reception are arranged sequentially on low, easily accessible shelves, but the 3 to 5 nursery room does not offer the same sense of order as in the other rooms. The combination of the cultural area with the nature table was confusing and there were too many activities on the shelves giving an overall disorganised appearance. Staff need to rethink the organisation of the shelves. The sandpaper numerals



and letters in the nursery for 2 to 3 year olds need to be removed as they are inappropriate for this age group.

The learning resources in all classrooms are sufficient for the numbers of children and are in good condition. There is plenty of space, particularly floor space for the children to use the materials. Children are able to access the materials easily. The outside area is well equipped and funding has been obtained to add to the facilities which will include a purpose built sandpit and shaded area. The adults are not conspicuous but are ready to help any child when necessary.

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

Children's independence is fostered with each child having the freedom to select their materials and complete the cycle of activity. There is evidence that all the children not only respect each other, but also their teachers and their environment. They wait patiently for a piece of material that is being used by another child. Group work is very successful, with tolerance and understanding shown to each other. The independence encouraged in the nursery is followed through at home with positive input from the parents. Children are able to repeat activities for as long as they wished. The work cycle at present is only 1½ hours but this could easily be extended to 2½ hours by moving circle time to the end of the morning and instigating an individual snack. Extracurricular activities that cannot be incorporated into the work cycle could also be moved to the end of the session rather than breaking up the morning. Staff are very enthusiastic about making these changes.

Montessori practice: *classroom management*

Activities are planned but most of the learning appears to be spontaneous. Due to the layout and security of the building the reception and 2 to 3 year olds' classes cannot have free flow to the outside but the 3 to 5 year olds' nursery could. Most of the activities are child initiated with adults intervening as necessary and there is a great deal of co-operative group work in evidence. A key person system is in place in the nursery; there are only 11 children in reception and the class teacher takes on the responsibility for all of them. Extracurricular subjects, gym, cookery, dance and movement and music and singing are timetabled after snack time which shortens the work cycle; these need to be reviewed and if possible integrated into the work cycle.

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

Most staff members take great care of their environment and all are aware of their specific responsibilities and their duties towards the child's well-being and safety, with policies being reviewed regularly. Observations were witnessed in all classes and recorded at the end of the session. Record-keeping is a combination of EYFS and Montessori and the records are updated regularly. Liaising with parents using the notice boards, message books, newsletters, handbook and diary is a great strength of the school. There are regular social events enabling the parents to get together outside the school. Parent/teacher evenings take place twice a year with termly written reports being sent home. Parents are able to talk to staff daily on an informal basis.

**Staffing:**

There are 14 staff on roll and visiting specialists for music, drama and karate. The head is in charge of all the staff and has a deputy. Teachers have specific responsibilities in addition to their class duties. All staff are valued for their contributions towards the running of the school. Detailed job descriptions are in place and appraisals take place on an annual basis. All staff undergo an induction procedure under the guidance of a senior member of the team. The majority of the staff are well qualified with degrees and Montessori diplomas, with other staff undertaking Montessori training. Ongoing training takes place with the local authority and other agencies including in-house training. The staff work as an impressive team in each class, with the Montessori-qualified staff giving enthusiastic encouragement to the others. Weekly staff meetings are minuted and action taken where necessary. Any new materials requested by staff are funded appropriately.

The staff show their commitment to Montessori principles by valuing the uniqueness of the individual and allowing children the freedom to explore their environment.

Names of Assessors:
Margot Best and Wendy Compson

Date of report
November 18th 2009