

# **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.

### **Sitara Toto Montessori**

Scout's Activity Centre, Well End Road, Well End, Herts WD6 5PR  
Visited on 20 November 2008

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

Sitara Toto Montessori opened in 2004. The nursery operates from two rooms situated on the site of Well End Activity Centre, in a secluded wooded area. The nursery children mainly have access to one large hall, which has a small area partitioned off by a low wooden barrier. This allows children from the toddler's room to flow through to the larger area and on days when the toddlers are not in session, the older children can use this area for quiet reading. The building is set within a large wooded area which is used for walks and rambles. The group also has access to an enclosed outdoor play area adjacent to the building. There are currently 20 children from 18 months to five years on roll. The group opens Monday to Friday from 09:00 to 15:00 during term time and children can attend for a variety of sessions or all day. The group also offers a breakfast club from 08:30 to 09:00. There are two full time and three part time staff working with the children. Three of the staff have early years qualifications, the other two are training. The deputy holds a Montessori diploma and NVQ level 3 and is currently working towards an early years degree. All members of staff are either Montessori qualified or working towards a Montessori qualification. The group applies the Montessori approach and the leader holds a PGCE, has a Diploma in Montessori teaching and has gained Early Years Professional Status.

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

Sitara Toto closely follows the Montessori philosophy and practice within the school. A strength of the school is that the staff are either already well trained or keen to continue training and work as a very supportive team. This is reflected in the behaviour of the children which is exemplary. The open plan nature of the setting allows the children to move freely between activities and gives them choice as to how and with whom to work. Children show strong independence and confidence, working with each other, helping each other or asking to be left undisturbed. Another strength of the school is the close observation by the staff of the needs of the children and adapting the environment to cater for these needs.

***The school provides an education in accordance with the principles of the Montessori approach and environment and merits accreditation by the Montessori Evaluation and Accreditation Board***

**Philosophy:**

Sitara Montessori has a strong understanding of Montessori Philosophy and this is evident throughout all documentation and planning, for the individual child and for the curriculum in general.

Within the room there is a wide range of materials, organized on shelves in the specific areas of the Montessori Curriculum and sequenced according to ability. For example early language material is separated from advanced language material. This encourages independence as the children know which materials they can work with alone and which they need adult or peer assistance. Staff monitor and record children's progress throughout the day and use this to plan guided activities and presentations. Staff observe carefully throughout the work cycle and note times when children need redirecting and when small group work is appropriate. Access to the outside area is included in the work cycle, where a member of staff will facilitate this area of learning as and when required. The work cycle begins as soon as the children arrive and continues uninterrupted until midday, during this time children are free to choose activities off the shelves, work alone, in groups, inside or out. During this time staff move unobtrusively, guiding, directing and presenting materials to the children.

The nursery uses both Montessori and EYFS documentation. The EYFS is being introduced gradually as staff are undergoing training.

**Learning and Development:**

The planning is very good, with long-, medium-, short-term and daily planning evident. The plans follow the Montessori philosophy and allow freedom to follow the needs of the individual child.

Children are free to work within a carefully prepared environment with opportunities for outside, creative and imaginative play, within the school day but external to the Montessori work cycle.

During the morning work cycle children move freely around the room choosing materials off the shelves to work with. The layout of the room allows the child to work in clearly defined curriculum areas. It also promotes independence by the arrangement of the tables, which allow children to choose if they want to work alone or in a group. Staff observe the children and help to direct them to areas of the curriculum they have highlighted in their planning by inviting the child to work with them. Montessori materials and learning activities are available for the child to use in the outside area as and when they choose during the work cycle. At the end of the work cycle the children go outside to play before lunch. In the afternoon sessions there is opportunity for more creative and imaginative exploration both inside and out.

**Prepared Environment: resources and materials**

The environment at Sitara Toto is very well prepared. The large room is well laid out to give children space to move, and to work independently or in small groups. There is plenty of floor space for group presentations, walking the line and singing activities. There is a carpeted area for reading and looking at books. All children have access to the toddler area which is divided from the rest of the room by a low wooden barrier and gate, where they can read quietly, work with a teacher or listen to music/stories. Both rooms are very well equipped with a vast range of beautifully maintained and cared-for material.

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

The children are very independent with many opportunities during the day to practice life skills, not only with practical life exercises but by going to the toilet, washing their hands, going outside and clearing up after creative activities. Staff observe the children and if they notice that they are having difficulty with something like putting on gloves they will design an exercise to go on the shelf to help them practise. The children have freedom within the environment as to where to work and whom to work with. The skills they learn at school are followed through at home. If a child is displaying inappropriate manners or behaviour the parents are consulted to check what the expectations are at home and then an agreement is made as to how to deal with the behaviour.

**Montessori practice: *classroom management***

The classroom is managed very efficiently and unobtrusively. The staff observe the children and follow the child with presentations, materials, exercises and activities. The vertical grouping works well. Staff monitor each child's pattern of work throughout the three hour work cycle and identify times when children tire, which leads to discussions on strategies to work through the dips in concentration and activity.

The afternoon sessions are planned for termly with weekly session on Music and Movement, Cooking, Gardening, Art and Craft, Woodland Walk and Creative/Imaginative play. Staff are responsible for the various activities and so organise accordingly.

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

All staff are aware of their individual responsibilities, both on a day to day basis and strategically. These are clearly defined and documented. Record keeping is appropriately documented throughout the day and written up at the end of the week. The staff meet each morning before the children arrive to ensure they are all up to date with any changes to a child's circumstances that may have a bearing on their behaviour or learning.

The school operates a key worker scheme. Parents are aware of who their key worker is. One member of staff is responsible for welcoming children each morning. The deputy is a qualified Montessori Teacher, with NVQ Level 3, SENco and is studying for an Early Years Degree. The Leader is SENco trained and other members staff are completing ongoing SENco training. The overall responsibility of the SENco role lies with the Nursery Leader.

**Staffing:**

Staff are well qualified and their training is up to date. Recent training includes EYFS Observation and Assessment, Music Workshop, Communication Matters, MSA Observation Conference and EYFS Implementation Training is planned for November 08. Staff have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities within the leadership structure and their role and responsibility to the child and parent as a keyworker.. The team spirit is very strong, with all staff feeling their contributions are valued and that their individual efforts help to make the school run in an effective, smooth and efficient manner.

**Denys Lyne**

**20<sup>th</sup> November 2008**

Name of Assessor

Date of report