

# **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.

### **Tara House Montessori Nursery**

Wilson Walk Scout Hut, Stamford Brook, London W4 1TP

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

Tara House nursery opened in 1975. It has been operating from a scout hall since 1980. Areas include a large open plan room, with separate kitchen, toilet and nappy changing facilities. There is also one small room that is used for individual language and mathematical lessons.

There is adequate space for the number of children on roll. The furniture is efficiently arranged to make for a flow of working areas. Space within the environment could be adjusted to ensure there is enough working space for work mats.

All children share access to a secure garden for outdoor play and gardening. The outdoor space is well equipped with toys, sand pit and climbing frame.

The nursery operates term time from 9.30 - 12.30 and 13.00 - 15.30 Monday to Wednesday, 9.30 - 12.30 Thursday – Friday; the nursery is registered for 36 children.

Throughout the week children of two to five years attend both morning and afternoon sessions and on two days a week the nursery offers morning sessions for the under threes as well. However, all parents are allowed a free choice of sessions and there is always a mix of age groups.

On Thursdays and Fridays the large and small rooms are completely cleared for the scouts to use.

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

The strengths of Tara House are the physical environment with its open plan room and secure garden, the enthusiastic Nursery Manager, and a caring, experienced staff team that works well together. There is a sound ethos and all children are given equal access to the curriculum, which is firmly based on Montessori principals with due regard to the foundation stage framework.

**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 further development is needed in the following areas:**

- *Develop staff awareness of the Montessorian approach, in particular promoting child-led activities during the work cycle*
- *Ensure that the Montessorian philosophy of following the child is reflected in the preparation of the environment*
- *Ensure resources and materials are available throughout the day both indoors and out*

**Philosophy:**

The children develop positive attitudes to learning based on very high levels of self-confidence and a keen desire to learn. They manage their own learning with competence. Children receive appropriate opportunities to learn the difference between right and wrong and to learn about cultures.

**Curriculum:**

The curriculum is firmly based on Montessori principles and practice with due regard to the Foundation Stage Framework. However, the natural learning cycle's 'Sensitive Period' is cut short by circle time and by morning snack time, both being long.

**Resources and materials:**

General resources are in good supply. Staff are able to access these for children's activities. Some materials are displayed with lids on. Most material is worn with some in need of repair. Resources outside could be more challenging to promote dexterity.

**Staffing:**

Leadership of the nursery is good and effective procedures for staff induction and annual appraisal are in place.

The staff are a caring, friendly, team who work well together. They have a wealth of knowledge and experience between them. Members know their roles. However, staff might benefit from stepping back and reviewing their roles in the wider context of the Montessori philosophy. This would help enhance their abilities as skilled observers, and allow for child-led activities to develop more effectively within the environment. Students give effective support to individuals and groups of children.

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

The practices of independence, freedom and respect are evident and the environment harmonious during the first two hours. However the environment becomes more restricted rather than expansive, and the harmony, which was created during the first

two hours, is disturbed by group activities. Staff may benefit from reviewing their teaching styles and practice with a view to creating an environment which enables the child to find activities and to work at his/her own rhythm.

**Montessori practice: *classroom management***

The children are encouraged to achieve their full potential in all areas of learning. Throughout the week children of two to five years attend both morning and afternoon sessions and on two days a week the nursery offers morning sessions for the under threes as well. This allows for a broader age range of children to work together in the environment. This works well. However, the circle times are age-related. The nursery manager may like to reflect on how to manage the work cycle and social times to promote and develop listening skills, communication and self-help skills. More enriched activities to broaden the child's mind, such as gardening and using the outdoor environment during the sessions, could actively promote their needs.

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

There are very good, strong working links with teachers, students and visiting teachers working as a team. Staff are familiar with their roles and the daily routine. The partnership with parents is strong. Parents are provided with information, which explains the care and education that is provided. Children benefit from the effective and sensitive manner in which they are treated.