

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.

Wivenhoe Montessori Children's House

The Pavilion, King George V Playing Field, Wivenhoe, Colchester, Essex CO7 9AF
Visited on 22 June 2009

Description of the school:

Wivenhoe Montessori Children's House is located in former changing rooms on playing fields in the centre of Wivenhoe. There are two main classrooms, a kitchen, a store room and lavatories. There is a small corridor from one class which leads to the garden. This is divided into several areas including a bark covered area with large apparatus, a grassed area with picnic tables and ride-on toys and a gated vegetable area.

There are nine staff including the owner/manager. Two staff are fully qualified (Montessori Diploma) and five have completed a Montessori Foundation Certificate. One staff member has a Pre-school Diploma and another is a qualified musician.

The nursery is open five mornings and three afternoons from 9.00am to 3.30pm.

The nursery is registered for 26 children in each session. At present there are 42 children on roll attending flexible sessions.

Summary and conclusion.

This is a very good Montessori nursery where freedom and independence are evident from the moment you walk in. There is strong leadership and the nursery is really well managed and everyone is aware of their roles and responsibilities. Although the majority of staff do not have full Montessori qualifications they follow Montessori principles and practice and have a deep understanding of child development.

An area for development is to ensure there is continued formal Montessori training and that budgeting allows for some new furniture.

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:

- Place more emphasis on the Montessori ethos of the nursery in all its documentation.
- Consider a plan to review some of the storage units to enable better access to learning materials by the children.

Philosophy:

There is a strong Montessori philosophy evident throughout the nursery. Staff are very respectful, trusting and use appropriate language to encourage and inspire. Children have genuine freedom to choose exercises and move between classes and are calm and familiar with the routines. A well-established work cycle of at least two and a half hours is evident in both classes. Staff have a very clear understanding of child development with independence and freedom given priority. The environment is very well prepared with shelving and furniture neatly arranged and accessible to the children. The nursery's policy and procedures are clearly stated with consideration of EYFS, Montessori aims and staff roles and responsibilities clearly state. However the nursery's educational aims do not refer to Montessori philosophy. There is a two year rolling programme of topic work covering all the EYFS areas and the Montessori curriculum.

Learning and Development:

An excellent work cycle is evident, it is about two and a half to three hours in the morning and three hours in the afternoon and children are very comfortable choosing exercises, returning them and carefully tucking in chairs.

The curriculum in both classes is developmentally appropriate, carefully planned and respects the needs of the individual child. The areas of Montessori learning are clearly defined with many home made exercises and photographs of exercises to guide children. Children are free to move between the classes and free to use the garden in the afternoon session. Creativity and exploration is encouraged through a new allotment area outside and a wide range of unusual topic related activities both inside and out.

Staff show a positive Montessori practice using appropriate language to encourage and inspire and the updating of records throughout the day is thorough yet unobtrusive.

Prepared Environment: resources and materials

There is a very good and inspiring range of Montessori and related activities and materials in all areas of learning and outdoors. They are developmentally appropriate and updated or changed each half term. Excellent use is made of the outdoor area. Some exercises have been made by staff and students and demonstrate creativity and extensions to Montessori activities. They are mainly laid out systematically. There is appropriate floor space for individual and

groups of children and furniture is child sized. However, some of the shelving in Class1 needs replacing to offer better access to activities.

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

There is a strong work cycle where children have genuine freedom to choose exercises and move between classes. In the afternoon this is extended and children are free to work outside or inside or join in circle time should they decide.

In both classes independence is strongly reflected in practice, staff values and children's opinions. There is a calm atmosphere and children are very aware of the level of expected behaviour. Staff trust children to select exercises or work in a small group. Children are familiar with the ground rules and move about with purpose and respect for others and the environment.

There is a strong link with parents; they are very supportive and have a good knowledge of Montessori philosophy through an introductory meeting explaining the philosophy, a nursery prospectus and informative newsletter.

Montessori practice: classroom management

The nursery is well managed and the Principal is thorough in sharing her strong commitment to Montessori practice by offering training. Classes have clearly stated daily plans and a two year rolling plan of topics. Staff are very clear in their Montessori practice especially regarding how to speak to children. A calm and purposeful atmosphere indicates children know exactly what is expected of them. They are very respectful to staff and visitors, interrupting politely. Staff have very clear roles and are able to work as part of a team to adjust ratios in each class or outside as required and to organize routines. Staff are adept at knowing the level of intervention during small group games and activities.

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

Communication between staff, parents and the Principal is very strong and parents are very supportive of the school. Parents comment that liaison with the nursery is good yet some expressed a desire to have Montessori aims reinforced.

Staff are very clear in their roles and responsibilities and are skilled in accurate and relevant record and report keeping. They are very supportive of the nursery and feel involved by attending parents' evenings, organizing circle times and contributing to planning the indoor and outdoor curriculum.

Reports and records have been well thought through and are clear and easy to use. The leavers report is arranged in the areas of the EYFS curriculum under four categories (emerging, working on, consolidating and achieved). This system could be used for the Montessori report and include a category for 'full understanding/creativity'.

Staffing:

Staff are very committed to the nursery and the Principal and they work really well as part of a team. They are very positive and knowledgeable about Montessori practice and principles. Although only two members of staff have formal Montessori diplomas, the Foundation Certificate in Montessori training, ensures that newer staff members understand and appreciate the Montessori method. The Principal is aware of the importance of continued professional development and several staff access local county training as required. There are five non pupil days each year to accommodate in service training such as 'observations', 'working as a team and planning' and 'introduction to the new staff induction process'.

Name of Assessor: Carolyn McNeill

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