

# **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.

### **New World Montessori Nursery School**

St Barnabas Church, Pitshanger Lane, Ealing, London, W5 1QG

Date of accreditation visit: 17 June 2010

This accreditation report relates to the provision for children aged six months to five years

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

New World Montessori Nursery Schools are two privately owned nurseries for children aged 2 to 5 years. They are both situated in Ealing, West London but only the St Barnabas provision is being assessed for accreditation. The nursery has the use of a small hall, a kitchen (for staff only), cupboards for storage, and toilet facilities. Outside there is a large garden plus a small nature garden and a shed for storage. The school is open term time only for morning and afternoon sessions; the morning sessions run from 09.15 to 12.30 and the afternoon from 12.30 to 15.30. It runs a Christmas holiday club. The school is registered for 18 children and at present six 2 to 3 year olds and twelve 3 to 5 year olds attend the morning session; the afternoon session is attended by fewer children and the number varies from day to day. There are three staff in total; one has an appropriate Montessori qualification with the other two working towards full Montessori qualification. At present there is also one student. The head is also the owner and splits her time between the two settings. She is fully Montessori qualified and also has a Bachelor of Arts degree.

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

New World Montessori Nursery School offers a warm, nurturing environment where children are supported and motivated by committed and enthusiastic adults. The premises are small but well prepared by staff who have created a welcoming environment. Children are polite and helpful to each other and adults and show good levels of concentration and independence. Each child is observed on a daily basis that informs further planning in line with both Montessori and the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), with clear individual records kept. Parents are supportive and see themselves as partners in their child's education. The school operates an open door policy for parents.

***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 :***

- Develop opportunities for free-flow between the inside/outside environment.
- The sensorial area needs to allow for easier access to materials.
- Further training in working with two year olds is recommended

### **Philosophy**

The school website and prospectus explain the setting's aims with clear links to Montessori ideals and philosophy. Their aim is to provide a positive environment that motivates children and encourages independence by treating them as individuals, able to progress at their own pace. This is reflected in the way adults interact with children during the session. Children are confident in choosing their own activities with adults in the background, there to support and re-direct the children when necessary. Staff follow through by encouraging parents to continue the use of Montessori practice at home. These ideals and philosophy are periodically discussed at staff meetings.

A timetable is displayed on the notice board and a newsletter informs parents of termly topics. The weekly plan is displayed in the classroom together with daily focused activity plans. Information about the school's policies and procedures, Montessori and Ofsted are on display at the front entrance.

### **Learning and Development**

The two settings meet to discuss long term plans such as themes to be covered over the year; otherwise each setting organizes their own separate weekly and daily plans. Staff plan focused activities around a specific theme and share the responsibility for organizing these.

A combination of Montessori and the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is used to plan whole group activities while each Key Person plans individual Montessori activities by following the child's interest and using information gained from their observations.

Adults use a variety of observation techniques including tracking the level of use of different areas of the classroom. This ensures that each area of the environment fulfills the developmental needs of the child. The layout of the building means that it is difficult to access the outside area which restricts free-flow between indoors and outside. Children are well supported in all areas of learning with adults redirecting where necessary and ready to offer support if needed. Children with special educational needs are also well supported.

### **Prepared Environment: resources and materials**

Although the classroom is small, the high ceilings give a sense of space and there is adequate light and ventilation. Shelves are checked daily by staff to ensure materials are complete, safe

and clean. The staff have made the best use of a small space by dividing the room into various areas – creative, role play, construction and a quiet book corner. They have also managed to ensure there is a good sized floor space. There is a small theme table at the front of the room. Low shelves display materials that can be accessed easily and are systematically arranged in the various Montessori curriculum areas.

There are sufficient materials for all the children to use and there are appropriate for the ages and stages of development with specific teacher-made resources for the two year olds. Staff monitor the use of activities which are rotated periodically. However some of the materials on the Sensorial shelf were placed on the top of the unit, making it difficult for the smaller children to reach them. Some of the materials such as Red Rods and Number Rods could be moved into containers on the floor, freeing up space on the shelves for these activities. The Head is in the process of buying additional Sensorial materials and replacing those that are too well worn.

The school has recently been granted funding by the local authority to develop part of the outside area.

### **Montessori practice: independence.**

Children are able to select their own work and complete their cycle of activity without interference from adults. They work individually, in groups or with an adult and are allowed to repeat activities for as long as they wish. A snack table is set aside offering fresh cucumber and carrots plus bread and jam so they can make sandwiches and select their own snack when they choose to have it. This helps to promote independence and self esteem. Parents are able to support them at home by encouraging children to dress and undress themselves and some report that their children independently tidy their toys away at home.

Children show respect for each other by sharing activities and helping each other particularly at the snack table. Although the room is small, the children move carefully around each other's work. They keep the environment tidy by tucking in chairs and putting work away. Younger and new children are gently reminded of the ground rules by the adults.

The work cycle is approximately 2½ hours long giving children the opportunity for an undisturbed period of concentration. The playground is shared with another pre-school so there is little opportunity for free-flow to the outside environment as it is not big enough to accommodate all the children. In practice this means the children only have access to the outside area for the last 40 minutes of the morning session. There is another small garden at the back of the hall and the school has funding to develop this area. Once this is done, there will be more opportunities for free-flow and the work cycle could be extended to almost three hours. However consideration should be given as to how this area can be used at the moment for free-flow between the inside and outside environment. There is no direct access to this garden and management will need to plan carefully to ensure the staff:pupil ratio remains constant.

### **Montessori practice: classroom management**

Nearly all of the learning observed was child-initiated and spontaneous. There is a Key Person system in place; however the children work with the adult of their choice, not necessarily their Key Person. Good planning ensures that each child's interest is taken into account. Adult led activities were well presented and the morning session flowed smoothly.

The setting offers French, yoga and music as additional activities with the children given the choice if they do not wish to take part. These activities take place during the morning and may shorten the work cycle. There were none planned for the day of the visit.

### **Montessori Practice: links with parents, including reports and records**

Staff ensure that the adult:child ratio is correct at all times. Part of their job description includes maintaining the safety of the environment as well as planning activities for their own Key Person group. The safety of the children is paramount and the setting has a strict regime of obtaining a signature from parents when they bring their child to nursery and collect them at the end of the day.

Observations are made throughout the morning and placed in the relevant Key Person folders, which are updated weekly. There is a good Montessori system of record keeping for children as well as individual portfolios containing photographs and samples of children's work. Written observations in the portfolio link EYFS and Montessori. Reports are sent to the child's next school and these are written in line with the EYFS curriculum.

Parents are kept informed of their child's progress through termly meetings with teachers. They are given a written record of their child's strengths and weaknesses which also include next steps for development. The school has an open door policy and is happy for parents to come and observe the children at work. Parents are also encouraged to come in at various times throughout the year to share their cookery and creative skills with the children. The Manager hopes to introduce workshops for parents to demonstrate and explain Montessori materials.

### **Staffing**

Although the Head has overall responsibility for both settings, the Manager is responsible for the day-to-day running of the nursery and is well-supported by the other members of staff. The Head is fully Montessori qualified with a degree in Business Administration. The Manager has had previous management experience and another member of staff holds both the Montessori Infant and Toddler and Early Childhood Diplomas.

There are detailed job descriptions in place with staff undergoing annual appraisals. The Head and Manager are introducing a formal system of peer observation in the autumn. New staff and students go through an induction procedure with emphasis on health and safety and receive a handbook detailing the school's policies and procedures. There are weekly staff meetings where planning and the progress of children are discussed and these are minuted.

The Head's suggestion that a member of staff attend a portage course has benefitted the setting as she is now able to support children with speech and language problems. Staff are encouraged to attend a variety of local authority courses and there has been some in- house training. As the school anticipates a larger number of younger children joining them in the next academic year, the Head and Manager feel that further training in working with two year olds may be of benefit to them. The Head has a budget set aside for the setting.

The adults work well together as a team, are aware of their responsibilities and support each other. All members of the team are enthusiastic in their commitment to Montessori principles with the children very much at the heart of their practice.

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Name of Assessor: Margot Best

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