



Montessori Evaluation and Accreditation Board

School Accreditation

This report is prepared following two accreditation visits 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” (2008) and subsequent 2012 revisions. The second visit sought to assess the progress made on the recommendations set out in the report from the first visit as well as any further findings made during the second visit.

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.

Nightingale 1 Montessori Nursery School

St Luke’s Church Hall, 194 Ramsden Road, London SW12 8RQ

Date of the first re-accreditation visit: March 6 2014

Date of the second re-accreditation visit: May 12 2014

Date of previous MEAB accreditation: June 2011

This accreditation report relates to the provision for children aged 2 to 5 years old

Description of the school:

Nightingale 1 Montessori Nursery School is located in part of the modern church premises of St Luke’s Church, in Clapham South. The facilities consist of two classrooms (one large, one small), toilets and a kitchenette for the preparation of the children’s snack. The classes are grouped according to age; the Daisies class caters for 2 to 3 year olds and the Bluebells class caters for 3 to 5 year olds. The nursery has daily access to a large, secure garden with trees and lawn, in addition to a paved courtyard that can be used in inclement weather. The nursery has sole use of their part of the indoor premises between 8.00 and 15.45 daily.

Nightingale 1 has 50 children on the roll. The sessions offered during term times are Monday to Friday from 09.00 to 12.15, Monday to Thursday from 13.00 to 15.30, or whole days Monday to Thursday. On the day of the second re-accreditation visit, 34 children were present in the morning, 17 for lunch and 19 in the afternoon. These children were supported by seven staff in the morning and five in the afternoon. A holiday club is offered for two weeks in the summer for children aged 2 to 5 years.

Children who stay for lunch bring their own packed meal and the nursery provides a healthy snack in the mornings and afternoons. The nursery is able to support children with additional needs.

Nightingale 1 is privately owned, with one proprietor. It is managed by a Montessori qualified



manager who also runs and co-owns Nightingale 2 Montessori Nursery.

The nursery was established in 1978 and moved to the present location in 2003. It employs seven well qualified staff, including the manager, of whom the majority have Montessori qualifications. Two of these staff members work part time.

Summary

This is a true Montessori environment filled with young children busily going about their work in well prepared surroundings, being independent, and using their freedom to fulfill their unique potential. The staff do not intervene unless they are asked, or feel a child needs some guidance. Clever use is made of the outdoor environment, which is only on offer for a set time each day as it has to be shared with two playgroups who are also tenants of the church buildings.

The children work diligently throughout their two hour work cycle both in the morning and afternoon. The nursery is well equipped with Montessori materials and is carefully maintained. The staff have now introduced the use of full observations of the children and these are already proving to be beneficial for individual forward planning. The record keeping system is good, and it is recommended that it is kept up to date on a regular basis. The staff team are highly committed and always put the needs of each individual child at the top of their agenda. It is a very happy nursery where the children and staff have a mutual respect for each other.

Nightingale 1 Montessori Nursery School was last accredited by MEAB in June 2011 and the two recommendations made then have been addressed. The formal staff appraisals that take place annually are now fully embedded in practice and the nursery has started to introduce peer observations in consultation with the whole staff team.

The school provides an education which follows the principles of the Montessori approach and environment. The school has successfully addressed the points for action recommended on the first visit, and this merits accreditation by the Montessori Evaluation and Accreditation Board. Consideration should be given to the following points for further development.

- The nursery should ensure that the record keeping continues to be updated on a regular basis.
- The good work already undertaken to introduce peer observations should continue to be developed with the whole staff team.

Philosophy:

The nursery offers a stimulating Montessori environment, with the children showing very high levels of engagement during the entire period of the work cycles. On the day of the first re-accreditation visit they arrived dressed as their favourite book character. Although they were wearing costume, there were many examples of the children exercising self discipline by completing their individual cycles of activity, even though they were aware that there was a special bookmaking activity taking place, in which they were all anxious to participate. Each



child waited patiently for their turn to go to the activity. In the younger class, it is very evident that the Montessori philosophy plays such a large part in each child's development, there are many examples of freedom and independence as each child selects the exercise of their choice, works on it and returns it to the shelf when they have finished.

The nursery 'follows the child', assessing each individual's specific needs and ensuring appropriate materials and activities are available for them to achieve their potential. The adults are there for the children when needed, but do not intervene unless specifically required. During the visits the children were seen to be fully engaged in their learning, and the background 'hum' was definitely conducive to each child's intellectual and social learning journey.

On the day of the second visit the high standards that had been noted at the first were again evident in every aspect of the day's activities. This is a genuinely enriching Montessori environment.

The Montessori philosophy is outlined in the nursery's prospectus and reinforced in the settling-in information pack. This information is reviewed annually or when it becomes apparent that review is necessary.

Learning and Development:

Both rooms are well laid out according to the areas of the Montessori curriculum and are set up daily with consistency of provision. The use of the outside environment has to be restricted due to the multi-use of the grounds by two playgroups also located in the church premises. Each group has a set time on each day of the week, so it is impossible for Nightingale 1 to have free flow from outdoors to indoors; also, the nursery is located on the first floor and the stairs have to be very carefully supervised. However, the learning opportunities that take place in the allotted outdoor time are numerous and cover many aspects of the areas of learning. Since the first re-accreditation visit, the outdoor area has been improved with the addition of pieces of tree trunk cut into manageable chunks, which provide the children with balancing activities.

The work cycle is two hours because the nursery have managed to gain the use of the grounds at the end of the morning and afternoon sessions on most days. During both the morning and afternoon work cycles, there is a good mix of spontaneous learning and adult-led activities. The staff are also very aware of specific needs of the children. There is excellent provision for children with English as an additional language, as well as very good support for pupils with language and communication difficulties.

The planning is very comprehensive, with detailed long, medium and short term plans that are compiled by the whole staff team. The children's progress is continually assessed and planning adjusted accordingly. The records include all the Montessori materials mapped to the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) learning goals. The mandatory two year old assessment is carried out at the appropriate time for each child. At present, not all the staff are keeping the records fully up to date, and this is an area that the setting intends to address. The staff are aware of each child's progress and ensure that their key children are continually being introduced to the appropriate materials and activities, to ensure that they offer stimulating learning opportunities. The staff have worked hard to bring all the children's records up to date since the first visit, but this is an area which the nursery should continue to monitor closely and consistently.



Prepared Environment: resources and materials

Both classes benefit from a well resourced and organized Montessori environment. Most of the materials are in good condition and the nursery is progressively replacing some of the equipment with that of a higher quality. During the second re-accreditation visit, it was evident that some new material had been purchased, which the children were using with real enjoyment. All of the materials and exercises were complete.

The Montessori areas of learning are all set out in order, ranging from the activities for everyday living through to the cultural areas. There is enough material for every child to work with, and a good mix of table and floor activities. The outside environment has a shed with activities to improve the child's gross and fine motor skills, as well as boxes of smaller equipment such as magnifying glasses and bug hunting materials. These are accompanied by identification charts and books. There is also a play house where the children can be creative and enjoy some role play, and a good assortment of very large and medium sized construction materials, which are very popular. The adults work hard to prepare both the inside and outdoor environments to enable the children to obtain the maximum benefit from them both.

Montessori practice: independence, including independence at home, freedom, respect.

All the children attending the nursery are encouraged to be independent from their first visit, when they are shown their coat pegs. When the time comes for them to go outside, they are all encouraged to put on their own boots and outdoor clothes and change again when they come inside. The work cycle is two hours and the children exercise a high level of independence during this time; they choose their activities and also work well in small groups of their choosing. They are careful when handling the materials and the staff consistently reinforce the importance of taking care of their environment.

The children respect each other and do not interrupt a child who is working on their own. They respect the staff team, who set very good examples for the children to observe. All the children have the freedom to exercise their choice of activities and with whom they would like to work if they do not wish to work on their own. During the first re-accreditation visit a young girl was constructing a marble run and she repeated this exercise for twenty minutes until she was satisfied that she was happy with the result, no one intervened and she was free to repeat as much as she wished.

During the second visit there were many more examples of children repeating exercises, quite independently, and in the younger class there were wonderful moments of collaboration as one child invited another child to share an exercise.

The parents are encouraged to follow through with the independence that is established initially in the nursery, with activities such as changing clothes, peeling fruit and pouring their own drinks at home.



Montessori practice: Classroom management

The nursery would like to lengthen the work cycle, but this is impossible due to the restrictions placed on them with regard to the use of the grounds. The work cycle of two hours is very well used and on arrival the children quickly start their work. They are well motivated and need very little direction when choosing activities. The staff work quietly and efficiently in the background, and ensure the needs of every child are met. They make sure that each child has access to all the activities in the room, and the computer time is limited to ten minutes, which is accepted by all the children.

Planning is detailed: the long term plans are produced for the whole term, the medium term plans are reviewed each week and short term plans are constantly updated according to the needs and progress of the children. Classroom routines are carefully adhered to and overseen by the manager. The children's use of the toilets is supervised by the adults as these facilities are located on a mezzanine floor. The children who stay to lunch are joined by the staff, who encourage a family atmosphere around the tables with good manners and where each child learns to show respect for others.

There is a good mix of adult-led and child-initiated activities throughout the day. The classes are grouped according to ages; the Daisies class caters for 2 to 3 year olds and the Bluebells class caters for 3 to 5 year olds. On some days the children from both classes all go outside together, which works well. Most of the younger children go home before lunch so there is little requirement for providing facilities for sleeping children, although children who need a rest or a sleep can do so. In the afternoons, the children have the opportunity to have ballet, French and music lessons on different days. Those children who wish to continue with their own work are free to do so. During the second visit the nursery's visiting music specialist carried out five separate music sessions in small groups, in which the children's levels of concentration were most impressive. There was a high level of participation throughout each of these sessions.

The nursery has written policies in place, which are known to both the parents and staff. The essential policies are included in the welcome pack given to new parents.

Montessori Practice: links with parents, including reports and records

All the staff help prepare the classrooms each day and pack them away at the end of the afternoon. Each member of the team has specific responsibilities that ensure the smooth running of the nursery, and these are all overseen by the manager.

Every child has a key person who has the responsibility of keeping the records up to date, planning for the child's learning, and carrying out observations on their children. Since the first re-accreditation visit, detailed observation charts have been put in place which all the staff are now using effectively. This greatly assists them with the planning of the child's next steps.

The key person also conducts the parent/teacher consultations. Parents have two set verbal consultations a year, and when their child leaves the nursery they receive a full written report. There is an additional meeting for the parents of 2 year olds when their mandatory assessment is being completed. Due to the small size of the nursery, all parents have plenty of contact with the staff at the beginning and end of the day.



The manager produces a weekly e-mail for all parents along with a full and detailed termly newsletter, which is distributed by hand to all parents. The parents are very appreciative of the good lines of communication that take place between home and school.

Staffing:

Although there is a manager, there are two staff members who take the responsibilities as room leaders, with one of them acting as the deputy manager who covers for the manager when she works at her co-owned Nightingale 2 Montessori Nursery two days a week. The manager and the team have produced a self-evaluation form which is updated annually, with each staff member being fully consulted and able to contribute to the final copy.

Four of the seven staff have a recognized Montessori qualification (including the manager) and a further member is completing Montessori training. The remaining two members of the team have a BTEC National Certificate in Childhood and an NVQ3 in Early Years Care and Education. These staff have attended several Montessori training days at Montessori Centre International and the whole team attend Montessori conferences and regional training days.

When new staff join the nursery they undertake an induction period during which they are given a pack and assigned a mentor. There are well written job descriptions for the different roles. Staff meetings take place twice a week. Annually, each staff member is observed by the manager, who also carries out staff appraisals. The nursery is in the process of introducing peer observations as an additional reflective tool for staff development. Since the first re-accreditation visit, progress has been made in the introduction of these observations, with all the staff contributing their ideas. This is an ongoing development for Nightingale 1 Montessori Nursery School.

Despite the restrictions of the premises all members of staff have a significant engagement with the children, and work as a most enthusiastic and committed team.

Name of Assessor: Wendy E S Compson

Date of reports: First visit – March 10th 2014

Second visit – May 12th 2014