



# **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.

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 2 Montessori Nursery**

St. Stephen’s Church Hall, 35 Weir Road, Balham, London SW12 0NU

Date of the first accreditation visit: 12 March 2013

Date of the second accreditation visit: 18 June 2013

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

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

Nightingale 2 Montessori Nursery opened in September 2012 and is a sister nursery to Nightingale 1 Montessori Nursery, which was established in 1978. Both have shared ownership, with the part owner of this setting also managing it. It is located in a community church hall in a residential area of Balham, south west London. The nursery is set back from the main road and access is through a small, paved courtyard. The setting has sole use of a large, spacious hall during its hours of operation and shared use of a small kitchen. There are separate toilet facilities for children and adults, including facilities for those with disabilities and for nappy changing. At the right hand side of the courtyard there is a good-sized planting bed and a small play area covered with artificial lawn. The nursery also benefits from a natural, grass covered L-shaped garden surrounded with plants and mature shrubs.

The nursery is open from Monday to Friday from 9.15 to 12.30 in term time. Children may bring a packed lunch and stay until 13.00. An afternoon session to 15.15 is available on Wednesdays and in September 2013 the nursery intends to open for four afternoons per week. There are 27 children enrolled, all attending a minimum of two mornings each week. There were 14 children in attendance on the day of the second visit.

The nursery caters for children with special educational needs and for those with English as an additional language.

There are six staff members in the team, including the owner/manager and a deputy manager. They all have appropriate early years’ qualifications and all work directly with the children. Of these, four hold Montessori qualifications and two have degrees. The manager also has Early



Years Professional Status (EYPS) and Qualified Teacher Status (QTS). Half of the team work part time, including the manager who currently works three days a week.

## Summary

Nightingale 2 Montessori was established 2012. The manager and some of the staff have worked together at the sister setting, and have quickly developed a strong team spirit and created a calm Montessori environment wherein they support children's independence, freedom and trust very effectively. Children are aware of the expected level of behaviour and are happy and familiar with routines.

The setting provides a wide range of developmentally appropriate activities for children, many of which are handmade, creating a unique and well laid out environment. Many new and enticing early mathematics and language activities have been provided following a recommendation made at the first visit. Several activities have also been added to enhance the opportunities available for two year olds to explore problem solving and early literacy. French, music and dance are available as part of the session.

Opportunities for outdoor play and exploration are very good and are provided for in the newly resourced garden. The further enhancement of this area remains a part of the nursery's development plan and since the initial visit staff now support creativity and imaginative play more broadly by providing a wider range of activities as well as resources for growing and caring for plants, including vegetables and herbs. The opportunities offered outside are a strength of the nursery. Staff have good strategies in place to observe, record and evaluate children's progress and maintain comprehensive Learning Journey folders.

The manager ensures staff are familiar with their roles and responsibilities and undertakes appropriate induction training and performance reviews. Following a recommendation from the first visit, staff now have individual record folders which are kept in a secure storage cabinet. These contain personal documentation such as job descriptions, responsibilities and a section in which to record reflective practice. Outcomes are discussed at weekly team meetings and this ensures that practice is continually evaluated and improved and the commitment to Montessori principles is adhered to.

The manager and the staff team demonstrate an emphasis on flexibility and are open to change and adapting procedures and routines as the nursery becomes more established and increases in size. Links with parents are very good and parents feel well informed about their children's progress. Staff have a thorough knowledge and understanding of child development and Montessori practices, resulting in a supportive, calm and purposeful nursery for the children.

***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.***

- It is recommended that the school continues to embed the recent developments in creative outdoor learning and to continue to reflect on its practice in order to ensure that high standards are maintained.



### **Philosophy:**

Nightingale 2 Montessori follows the Montessori ethos and practices very closely under the strong leadership of the manager and a very committed staff team. They are adept at following the children's interests, encouraging independence and supporting children in fulfilling their potential. The aims and objectives of the nursery and a commitment to the Montessori ethos are clearly outlined in the staff induction and parents' handbooks and in all policies. These ensure staff offer good opportunities for children's self-initiated learning and that staff demonstrate genuine trust in the children.

The nursery motto "Help me to do it by myself" is stated in the nursery prospectus, the website and in the settling-in information pack. Children are given freedom to move throughout the room and to select the activities without disturbance. Staff are attentive, sensitive and calm towards children, creating a trusting and purposeful atmosphere in the nursery. Children are accompanied should they choose to work outside and are involved in any changes made to the classroom, outdoor environment or to routines. This ensures they are happy and have a positive and meaningful attitude to learning. Staff are very good at supporting children by using positive language to develop initiative and self-discipline.

Staff have clear roles and responsibilities and the whole team work hard to continually review practice in this new setting. They are flexible in their approach as they try out different routines or activities in order to improve practice and support children's learning.

### **Learning and Development:**

Nightingale 2 Montessori provides very good learning opportunities for children. The spacious hall is carefully organized and clearly labeled in the Montessori areas of learning with the addition of a book corner and areas for art, role play, small world play, sand and water play and a nature table. There is a well resourced ICT area, a table for adult-directed activities and a small writing table. Activities are arranged to encourage exploration and provide good opportunities for spontaneous, small and large group work and adult-led learning for about two and a half hours each morning, including snack.

Children are able to explore the outdoor environment in small groups, with support from staff. The garden is a new development for the nursery and offers a variety of appropriate activities. Following a recommendation from the first visit, a wide range of activities and resources are now provided, including those that foster creativity and imagination and the care of plants, including vegetables and herbs. Opportunities for quiet reading and role play are also appropriately catered for. The staff team work hard to ensure opportunities for discovery and learning in the outside environment are very good and this is a strength of the nursery.

Long term planning is clearly documented and short term plans include lists of possible activities and experiences (inside and outside) for each day. Staff take turns to organize adult focused activities and weekly plans and this works well within the team. Children's individual plans are recorded very clearly and effectively in their individual Learning Journey files using appropriate targets, next steps and a Montessori checklist. Excellent documentation is available for parents, explaining the purpose of record keeping and assessment and linking the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) to Montessori activities. There is an effective key person system in



place and parents comment that they find this provides useful information about their child's progress.

The manager ensures that the staff make informative observations of children's progress by providing specific training and overseeing staff member's initial work. This results in very clear, consistent and concise individual Learning Journey files, which also include samples of children's work, photographs, settling-in assessments, statutory two year old checks and EYFS progress checks. These provide a clear and current view of the child's interest and stage of development and assist in planning for the individual.

Staff are good at offering flexibility by following each child's interest and the nursery provides appropriate opportunities for children with special educational needs and English as an additional language by offering extra adult support and adapting activities as required.

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

Nightingale 2 Montessori is well organized nursery environment for children. Each day staff carefully set up a range of Montessori (and other) activities in a very well thought out arrangement of equipment, shelving and furniture in the spacious hall. There are many very good examples of homemade activities, demonstrating the commitment of the staff and ensuring the nursery retains its unique character. The warm atmosphere of the hall is enriched by the provision of plants, low lighting and rugs. Children have freedom to access all activities inside and outside (with adult support in accessing the garden) throughout the morning. Activities are within easy reach for the children, systematically arranged in labeled areas of learning and take into consideration the developmental needs of the children present. Space is used very effectively to encourage children to work independently, in a small group or coming together as a whole group, should the child choose to.

Many new and enticing early mathematics and language activities have been provided following the recommendation from the first visit. Several activities have been made by the staff, which enhances opportunities available for 2 year olds to also explore problem-solving and early literacy. All activities and resources, inside and outside, are developmentally appropriate for the children present.

The small garden area is a new development for the nursery and now offers many opportunities for play, with an appropriate range of new resources, covering physical and social development. Reviewing the garden design and layout is part of the nursery's development plan. Following a recommendation from the first visit the range of activities and resources provided outside has been extended significantly. The staff team work hard to ensure that opportunities for discovery and learning in the outside environment are very good and this is now a strength of the nursery.

Children are happy and work purposefully in the nursery and appropriate resources are provided for them to assist with tidying, cleaning and preparing for the group's snack. As the nursery is set up each day, staff have very good systems in place to prepare the environment specifically for the present children, both inside and outside. These procedures ensure that the nursery looks welcoming and neat and that staff are able to maintain activities and resources to the highest standards.



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

Staff demonstrate high levels of trust in the children by supporting them and ensuring they have the freedom to select activities, work with them for as long as they wish and without disruption both inside and in the garden, for around two and a half hours each morning. They act as excellent role models, sensitively demonstrating how activities and routines are carried out and using appropriate and consistent language across the team to support this. They are adept at allowing children freedom to explore activities, enticing them to new activities and allowing them to choose to work individually or in small or large groups.

Staff support children to be independent by giving them time to complete self skills such as putting on coats and shoes to go outside, listening patiently and showing strong respect for the child's stage of development. Children help prepare snack for the group and have snack independently, selecting fruit and drinks. There is a busy and purposeful atmosphere, both inside and outside, and children carry out tasks such as tidying up, sweeping, washing up and helping each other. Children are supported in respecting the wider environment by ensuring they are aware of issues such as recycling and endangered species. As the nursery age range is growing, staff are promoting opportunities for older children to assist younger ones, and younger children to learn skills from the older children.

As the nursery has only recently been established, the staff team are working hard to build trust with new families. They offer good support to parents in assisting them to appreciate the need to foster independence by providing information face to face, at meetings, on the notice board and in newsletters. This has enabled parents and staff to begin to work together positively to promote children's learning and the development of independent skills.

### **Montessori practice: Classroom management**

In this nursery, the management team has a flexible and open approach to the development of practice and routines. Good classroom management is facilitated by clear and well documented policies and procedures, of which all staff are well informed. The management is supported by a very committed staff team, some of whom have worked together at the sister setting and who are therefore aware of each others' practice and the importance of consistency in their approach. They work closely with each other to ensure each child is appropriately guided across the areas of learning and readily take turns in weekly planning, organizing routines, preparing snack and working outside. They show skill in balancing the number of adult-led presentations with child-led activities, and in their use of appropriate and consistent language and non-verbal skills.

The manager provides very good staff induction training, such as supporting the use of consistent positive language and the recording of meaningful and consistent observations. The dedicated staff know what is expected from them and act as excellent role models. The children are aware of the expected levels of behaviour in the nursery. As the nursery has grown the management team have fulfilled a recommendation from the first visit, to develop more structured methods of staff assessment and target setting. Outcomes are discussed at weekly team meetings to ensure that practice is continually evaluated and improved and that staff's commitment to Montessori principles can be assessed formally.



Children from 2 to 5 years will be vertically grouped and adults and children mix freely. There is a successful key person system in place that delegates overall responsibility for record keeping for key children to particular staff.

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

The nursery is well organized and staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities, which are clearly documented and state a commitment to Montessori practice. They work very well as a team and are committed to providing for children's well being through maintaining a calm and relaxed atmosphere and adhering to a good rota system that ensures the inside and outside environments are ordered, stimulating and safe. This is supported by appropriate policy documentation (which resembles that of the sister setting) and staff appraisals.

There is a very effective key person system in place, in which learning and development is supported across the Montessori and EYFS areas by detailed observations of children. These are recorded in individual Learning Journey files that provide excellent information on a child's progress for parents, including targets, settling-in assessments, a Montessori checklist, EYFS record and monitoring sheets, as well as samples of the child's work and photographs. Specific training by the manager ensures that the files give accurate and meaningful information on a child's progress and are consistent across the staff team. The nursery provides good reports in the EYFS's seven areas of learning for children going on to primary school. The sharing of a DVD of the individual child in action and of their creative work undertaken while at nursery supports excellent communication with local schools.

The nursery offers many means of communication with parents, who value the experience of the manager in providing informal discussions and advice. There are regular newsletters, a very informative website (shared with the sister nursery), a parents' notice board and a PTA has recently been established. As a new nursery, staff are aware of the many strategies needed to continue to ensure parents are fully informed about the nursery and Montessori in the wider context. The manager is open and flexible in her approach to welcoming parents and they show support by attending parents' meetings, special events and giving offers of help. There is a very good induction procedure for new families, including an explanation of the Montessori curriculum, the EYFS and a sample timetable. There is a good handbook in place for staff and parents which includes the aims and mission statement and a firm commitment to Montessori practices.

### **Staffing:**

Staff at Nightingale 2 Montessori work very well as a committed and close team under the strong and sensitive leadership of the manager who promotes the calm and relaxed atmosphere. The team ensure the nursery is well organized, are happy to maintain routines and place the child at the centre of their practice. They are supported by clearly defined roles, responsibilities and job descriptions and show very good knowledge and understanding of child development and Montessori philosophy.

Staff and students are supported by appropriate induction documentation, frequent appraisals



and reviews, and senior management have developed formal methods to record individual reflective practice and evaluation. This assists the assessment of the learning provision and enhances staff's continued professional development.

The manager is supported by five other members of staff, two of whom work part time. Four staff are Montessori qualified, two have degree qualifications and the manager has EYPS and QTS. Staff are supported by specific in-service training, which ensures a consistency of practice across the team, and local authority training is available in response to the needs of individual staff and children. Staff meet regularly and feel valued and very well informed about the development plan of the nursery, which enhances their enthusiasm and commitment to Montessori practices.

Name of Assessor: Carolyn McNeill

Date of reports: First visit – 12<sup>th</sup> March 2013

Second visit – 18<sup>th</sup> June 2013