

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 relevant criteria set out in “The Guide to the EYFS in Montessori Settings” (2012/14). The second visit sought to assess the progress made on the recommendations set out in the report from the first visit and considered 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.

Receiving accreditation carries the expectation that settings will continue to work on the issues highlighted in this report and will remain committed to the ongoing development of their practice. Furthermore, that they will report to the MEAB office any relevant changes such as to premises address, ownership, hours of operation or to the age range of children attending.

Malton Montessori School and Nursery

Uplands House, Castle Howard Road, Malton, North Yorkshire YO17 6NJ

Date of previous MEAB accreditation: December 2011

Date of first re-accreditation visit: 15 September 2016

Date of second re-accreditation visit: 28 March 2017

This accreditation is valid until 31 July 2022

This accreditation report relates to the provision for children aged birth to 6 years old.

Description of the nursery:

Malton Montessori opened in 1995 and is located on the outskirts of a rural market town. It occupies the ground floor of a large Victorian house and also a purpose-built annex, both of which it has sole use of. The annex houses the infant community unit, in which the children range in age from birth to rising 3. The children’s house unit, for the 3 to 6 year olds, uses the ground floor; it has two ateliers, for science and for art, and three good-sized classrooms. One of the classrooms is used for practical life activities and for dining; it has a small sink and work surfaces at the children’s level, so that they are able to help with food preparation. The second classroom has the sensorial, language and literacy, mathematics and cultural curriculum areas. The third classroom,

which was not in use during the visits, is being prepared as a class for primary school-aged children. This provision is not yet in place and therefore is not included as part of this assessment. The entrance hall is also used as a library, and there is an office and store rooms, kitchen and cloakroom facilities. The annex consists of two connected open-plan play rooms, with verandahs for outdoor play, a sleep room, milk kitchen, store and cloakroom facilities. The extensive grounds include areas for messy play, gardening, Forest School, physical and sensory play.

Full day provision is available from 07.30 to 18.00, Monday to Friday, for 46 weeks of the year. There are 55 children registered and on the day of the second visit there were 15 children up to the age of 5 years attending the children's house in the morning and 14 in the afternoon. In the infant unit there were 14 children present for the morning and eight in the afternoon. Children can attend morning, afternoon or whole days. The children benefit from freshly prepared lunches and teas daily. The setting makes provision for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), and for those for whom English is an additional language (EAL).

The nursery is privately owned and is run by the proprietor who is Montessori qualified and has a degree. She has a team of ten staff. Three are graduates, two have full Montessori international diplomas and many, including the proprietor, are undertaking further Montessori training. Most of the staff members work a four day week; the proprietor's deputy covers in her absence. Ten members of staff were present all day for the second visit, five of whom worked in the infant community unit.

Summary

Malton Montessori offers a rich Montessori experience for every child who joins this learning community. The children benefit greatly from the wealth of opportunities that the setting offers. They are happy, enthusiastic and respectful children who take pleasure in their learning and are receiving excellent preparation for their future education. The Montessori philosophy is very much in evidence throughout their nursery day. The staff expertly 'follow the children', encouraging them at all times to exercise their freedom and independence, and giving them opportunities to contribute fully within this vibrant nursery.

The learning and development of the children in both units appears to occur naturally as they have open access to such a stimulating and diverse curriculum. The environment is prepared so that it meets the children's needs and they grow to become aware of the care required both by them and the staff to ensure it remains well-kept and inviting. The relationship between the parents and the nursery is a very positive one, which benefits the whole community. Staff members are well trained and their length of service is a good acknowledgement of the emphasis the proprietor places on the development of her team; they are a real credit to the setting.

Since the previous MEAB accreditation the outside area has been adapted to provide the children with more numeracy and literacy experiences, and the team has fully implemented and evaluated the recently updated processes for recording children's development. Following a recommendation made at the first re-accreditation visit, the setting has undertaken an impressive transformation of the outdoor learning environment. Custom-made cabins and work stations have been added to offer the children excellent opportunities. This area is very popular with the children as they demonstrate their independence, woodwork skills, safe handling of tools and enjoyment in learning outdoors. The nursery now also has a peer review system firmly embedded in its routines and the record keeping is kept completely up to date.

The school provides an education in accordance with the principles of the Montessori approach and environment and merits accreditation by the Montessori Evaluation and Accreditation Board.

- It is recommended that the setting continues to reflect on its practice in order to ensure that the high standards that have been established are maintained and that recording of the children's progress is kept up to date.

Philosophy:

The setting offers a true Montessori community, placing at the heart of its philosophy the Montessori values of peace, equality, simplicity, integrity and respect. All these values are listed in the mission statement and are promoted through every activity in which the children participate. Staff members consistently provide for each child's needs and interests to ensure that they can reach their full potential and learn independence. The staff give each child the opportunity to develop their inner discipline and self-initiated learning as they make full use of the carefully prepared environment, both indoors and out. The essence of excellent Montessori practice was clearly apparent during the second re-accreditation visit, and was fully reflected in the behaviour and activity of the children.

All staff members have an excellent understanding of their own roles as well as how these fit within the team; they have sound knowledge of the Montessori principles and philosophy. The quality of Montessori practice is frequently reviewed both by the proprietor and her team. The aims and objectives, along with detailed information about the nursery, are clearly laid out both on the website and in the literature given to parents.

Learning and Development:

The nursery offers a very broad curriculum both indoors and out. The children move freely throughout all the indoor areas of their unit and they have direct access to the inspirational outdoor learning environment. There is a very good mix of self-initiated work, individual presentations and group activities throughout the day.

During the first re-accreditation visit, children went outside in small groups to gather windfall apples so that they could be crushed in a newly-acquired machine. This activity required real determination and concentration to turn the wheel in order to strain the juice through muslin. One group was observed working out for themselves that it would be better to have two children turning the wheel, and they engaged in very productive dialogue about the 'really hard work' and about needing healthy food to give them strong muscles. During this activity one child pointed out a blackbird who was feeding from an apple, and this became the shared focus of the group. They expressed their joy and wonder whilst watching it and their teacher stood by unobtrusively, listening but not interrupting. When they returned to the classroom they looked for a book with a picture of a blackbird, to find out more.

During the second visit four children went outside to do a whittling activity. Each child selected an elder stick and a peeler from the Forest School shed and settled down to strip the bark off the sticks. This was not an easy task but all four children tackled it with great enthusiasm, one child took half an hour to complete it, including offering assistance to a much younger child who was struggling with the task.

The daily work cycle in the children's house is three hours in the morning and two and a half in the afternoon. As children arrive they all prepare their own breakfast, eat it and clear away, washing their utensils and storing them correctly. They then start working at activities of their own choosing in either of their main rooms. The staff organise themselves with one member in each room and another overseeing both rooms in order to be available for presentations or to help any child that asks for assistance.

During the second visit the work cycle included using the art atelier. It is staffed by an inspirational member of the team. The activities on offer appeal to all the children and are very inviting. During the visit the children were making Easter cards, using self-chosen art materials and producing individual designs. There was also an overhead projector for the children to place items on to create their own patterns.

The infant community's open-plan rooms have a wealth of materials to stimulate the children's developing minds. The four staff members here have additional help from another team member when needed. They cater extremely well for the needs of all the children in their unit. They show care and compassion, which is reflected in the children's behaviour towards them. Most of the children have a sleep after lunch, with the younger ones usually having two rests during the day, all in the dedicated sleep area. During the first visit the toddlers had a group presentation looking at pictures of fruit, handling real fruit and then tasting each one, the children found this a very

enjoyable experience, sitting round the table for 30 minutes and concentrating fully on the staff member making the presentation. During the second visit the babies had a wonderful time creating their own picture with foam and paint, which they mixed with their hands, and the toddlers worked independently with practical life materials. The work cycles in this unit are between two and two and a half hours during the morning sessions.

The staff teams for each unit spend time together daily to observe, record and assess the children's progress and to adjust any planning as necessary. They produce a yearly plan which they draw from on a monthly and weekly basis, and which includes opportunities for whole setting social activities and events such as Easter egg hunting. The whole team regularly reviews the effectiveness of the learning and development provision.

Staff members ensure that each child's individual developmental needs are catered for and the provision made for those with additional needs is excellent. All the teachers can contribute to any child's records but the key person has overall responsibility for ensuring that their group of children is making the expected progress. The adults use a web-based recording system to record observations, which they discuss together, and planning for each child is drawn up according to their progress and interests. This process is overseen by the proprietor and her deputy on a weekly basis. The Montessori curriculum is linked with the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Framework in planning, recording and assessment through the staff team's use of the digital recording system. The records and the iPads are securely stored and used. Following a recommendation made at the first visit, the records have been brought fully up to date and the team now has a system in place to ensure that these remain current.

Prepared Environment: resources and materials

The prepared environment is conscientiously cared for by the dedicated staff team. In both units there is a very large choice of appropriate materials for their age range. The resources are attractively displayed and easily accessible to all the children. The range of materials in the infant unit is impressive. The science and art areas attached to the children's house are not in full use at all times due to the staffing requirements needed here, but the children have the freedom to make regular visits to these two ateliers, which offer stimulating areas for creativity and experimentation. There is an excellent range of Montessori materials in the children's house unit, supplemented with extension materials, and this combination offers the child opportunities across all areas of both the Montessori curriculum and the EYFS. The resources are in very good condition and inviting to the child. They are sufficient in quantity for the whole group and there is plenty of table and floor space for the children to work with them. The developmental needs of the children are fully provided for in both units.

The children are encouraged from a very young age to take care of all the materials and to contribute to the upkeep of their learning environment. The adults are meticulous in

their maintenance of these prepared environments and carefully monitor the children's use of the resources.

The children make excellent use of their outdoor environments and gain much enjoyment from their use of them. The outdoor environment for the older children has a wealth of learning opportunities which, since the first re-accreditation visit, have been made much more accessible through the provision of work benches with cupboards underneath to store the materials for different activities. This re-organisation has enabled the children to use the resources independently and they now also have access to custom-made cabins which offer role play, Forest School, literacy and mathematics resources. These improvements have made a significant difference to the children's use and enjoyment of the outdoor learning environment.

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

Children enjoy the opportunity to exercise their own independence. During the second re-accreditation visit children displayed excellent independence in their learning, such as in using a resource that introduces coding to nursery-aged children. The outdoor environment offers the children the same level of independence as they enjoy indoors. The children in both units have freedom to select their own activity during the work cycles and to repeat it as many times as they wish. In the children's house unit they help with the preparation of the tables for lunch, with two children laying the places for the whole class. Lunch is prepared for them on site and the toddlers demonstrate independence with their eating. A 1½ year old insisted on pouring out the water for each child, saying "I can do it myself".

During the visits there were many examples of the children showing a high level of respect for each other in both units, such as when older children helped younger ones with food preparation. The adults encourage the children to be as independent and to try and resolve problems by themselves before the adults intervene. Adults are excellent role models and there is a very positive working relationship between them and the children, with mutual respect being shown throughout the daily routines. The children show an interest in and respect for different cultures. Parents are kept well informed of their child's progress in the nursery and they are encouraged to promote the same level of independence at home.

Montessori Practice: links with parents, including reports and records

The parents of the children in both units very much appreciate the high level of pastoral care that their child receives. They value the daily verbal feedback given by staff and the liaison that takes place regularly. Parents in the infant community receive detailed daily reports. Every child has a key person but, due to the small size of the classes, the staff work as a very close-knit team, with the key person taking overall responsibility for

their key children's record keeping, assessment and monitoring of progress. Every parent receives two observations a week through the secure web-based system, which is also used to send out regular bulletins updating parents with nursery activities and ideas for home-based learning.

Parents are invited to attend monthly information evenings explaining various areas and materials of the Montessori curriculum. Following the first re-accreditation visit, the parent evenings that have taken place have included introducing the forthcoming primary Montessori class. Parents can also be involved during celebrations, specific occasions and festivals, and they are working collaboratively with the setting on its links with the wider community through its provision of additional Forest School sessions in a nearby park. This provides a local parent and child activity which has been enthusiastically received by the parent body.

The mandatory two year old progress checks take place when these are due and a very comprehensive report is sent to the parents at each year end as well as when the child leaves to join another setting. A separate report is provided for the next school and Reception teachers are invited in during the summer term to observe the children before they join their school. The setting has a complete set of policies, some are included on the website and all are available in the office for parents to read through on request. Links with parents are outstanding.

Staff: Qualifications, deployment and performance management

The nursery's proprietor is a dedicated leader who sets an excellent example for all her staff. She is based in the children's house and is supported in this unit by two Montessori qualified staff, one of whom is the deputy and SENCo, and two others who are currently studying for Montessori qualifications. The infant community team members all have relevant childcare qualifications.

The adults' responsibilities are equally shared and are arranged to help ensure that the wellbeing of the children is afforded paramount importance. The daily checks are displayed on each unit's notice board. There is a detailed school development plan which is regularly updated by the proprietor and her deputy. The proprietor strongly believes that all her staff should have access to opportunities for their continued professional development (CPD), and she and three others are currently undertaking a Montessori primary CPD course. One of the staff has recently completed Forest School training.

The induction package is excellent and comprehensive: new staff members are assigned a mentor, and there are full job descriptions. Following the first re-accreditation visit all members of the team have undertaken peer observations and there is now an efficient system in place to ensure these observations are carried out at regular intervals. The staff meetings are minuted and, since the first visit, regular meetings have taken place and are now scheduled throughout the academic year.

The whole team works as a very cohesive group of professionals: they are experienced, caring and extremely conscientious. They demonstrate to the children and parents their obvious love of their work and their extensive knowledge of the principles which underpin excellent Montessori practice.

Name of Assessor: Wendy E S Compson

Date report submitted: First visit – 20th September 2016

Second visit – 28th March 2017