



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.

Milkshake Montessori School

131 Warren Road, Whitton, Twickenham TW2 7DJ

Date of first re-accreditation visit: 27 February 2014

Date of second re-accreditation visit: 8 May 2014

Date of previous MEAB accreditation: June 2011

This accreditation report relates to the provision for children aged 9 months to 5 years

Description of the school

Milkshake Montessori School opened in June 2004 and operates from a semi-detached house in Whitton, Twickenham, which is situated in the London Borough of Richmond. It is privately owned.

Both floors of the premises are used, with the Infant and Toddler group (called the Mango room) on the first floor. This space is divided into three areas for eating, sleeping and activities, and there is a kitchen, nappy changing area and staff room. The two Nursery classrooms are on the ground floor lead off the main entrance hall and are named Strawberry and Banana. They contain a variety of Montessori and non-Montessori resources; there are also toilet facilities on this floor. Outside there is a secure, enclosed garden.

The setting is open term time only. There are two sessions a day: 09.15 to 12.30 and 12.30 to 16.15. Children stay either part time or full time and attend a variety of sessions over the course of a week. Milkshake Montessori provides breakfast, a hot lunch and afternoon tea, as well as snacks during the day. The setting can cater for a maximum of 40 children at any one time. On the day of the second re-accreditation visit, there were 26 children in the morning and 22 in the afternoon in the Nursery rooms with five teaching staff at both sessions, and six children in the morning and five in the afternoon in the Infant and Toddler group, with three teaching staff at both sessions. The setting also runs a Breakfast Club from 08.00 to 09.15 and



an extended session until 18.00; however, this provision is not being considered as part of this MEAB accreditation.

The setting caters for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and children with English as an additional language (EAL).

There are 12 members of staff including a chef and teaching assistant. Six of the team work part time. The owner is in daily attendance and has an International Montessori Diploma and Early Years Professional Status. The manager of the setting has a BA Hons in Early Childhood Studies. Three other members of the team hold a level 4 Montessori qualification and all members of teaching staff hold appropriate child care qualifications.

Summary

The strengths of Milkshake Montessori are its very good links with parents and the close working relationship of the team. On entering the setting there is a warm, homely atmosphere that has been created by the well qualified and caring staff.

Staff use their observations of the children to plan a variety of interesting and challenging activities to further their development; these observations are carried out daily. Following recommendations from the previous MEAB accreditation, Montessori activities are linked to the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) framework in each child's Learning Journey and Profile. A medium term plan for the individual child is produced and shared with parents. Since the first re-accreditation visit, the setting has begun to trial a new computer-based recording system, making it easier to keep children's records up-to-date and it is also including longer observations as part of the children's assessment cycle.

The setting is well resourced and, following a recommendation from the first visit, materials in the Sensorial and Numeracy areas have been refurbished. There is a good variety of resources for each area of the Montessori curriculum, both inside and out, and some extra Literacy and Numeracy resources have been added to the outdoor environment.

Children enjoy freedom of choice during the morning and afternoon work cycles, working spontaneously with activities or with an adult in a pre-planned activity. Parents are encouraged to reinforce Montessori practice at home. The partnership with parents is strong, with parents being welcomed into the setting. They are appreciative of the daily feedback that they receive from staff and of the written records and reports.

Staff show a commitment to improving their practice and, following a previous MEAB recommendation, the Infant and Toddler staff have benefitted from further training in working with the under 2s and from assistance given them by Montessori qualified staff at the setting.

This school provides a high standard of Montessori care and is staffed by an enthusiastic 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:

- Monitor the effectiveness of the newly introduced digital record-keeping system to ensure its consistent use by staff in recording children's achievements.

Philosophy:

The Montessori provision at Milkshake Montessori is very good. Staff have a respectful and sensitive attitude towards the children and trust them to use the materials appropriately. This is evident from the confident approach children have to carrying out their activities; they are supported and guided by staff when appropriate.

There is a strong partnership with parents, who are very happy with the progress of their children. The school's website contains a wealth of information including an explanation of the Montessori method, and it stresses the importance of building good links with parents.

Principles and goals are reviewed regularly and are part of the school's development plan. Policies, procedures and daily routines are also included in the development plan, as well as being displayed on the parents' notice board in the classrooms.

Staff at Milkshake Montessori support the children by following the inner needs of the child, in line with the principles of Montessori education.

Learning and Development:

The setting plans monthly themes, such as a topic on the solar system, as well as a Montessori focus such as language and literacy. Weekly plans are made that reflect these themes and incorporate adult-initiated activities. Alongside these, staff plan for individual children in their key groups. Staff in the Infant and Toddler room plan age appropriate activities, also in key groups.

Planning for individual children begins with regular observations by staff that are used to create a medium term plan covering all areas of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) framework, linked to the Montessori activities that are offered to deliver this framework. This individual planning sheet is discussed and agreed with parents and has been introduced following a recommendation from the previous MEAB accreditation. Short observations are made throughout the day and kept in plastic pockets on the classroom wall to be added to individual profiles. A recommendation from the first re-accreditation visit was to keep the children's records up to date; the setting has taken this a step further and is presently trialing the 'My Montessori Child' computer-based recording system. Staff are still recording children's progress in their written profiles, as they get used to the new system, and intend to go over to paper-free recording in September. It is recommended that use of the new system is monitored to ensure consistency amongst staff members' record keeping. The Montessori/EYFS profile is a comprehensive document detailing EYFS Development Matters and the Montessori activities that deliver the framework, together with possible next steps. There is space for short observations to be added.



Children also have a copy of 'My Incredible Journey', which is a book of dated photographs of the children enjoying and taking part in a variety of activities. The key person links these photos to the appropriate areas of the EYFS.

Following a recommendation from the previous accreditation, the staff in the Infant and Toddler room have had further training on working with the under 2s and benefit from a weekly training session with one of the Montessori qualified members of staff. This has given staff in this room a lot more confidence when introducing Montessori materials to this younger age group.

The older children enjoy free flow between the inside and outdoor environments and staff in the Infant and Toddler room ensure that all their children have the opportunity to play outside whatever the weather. Children with additional needs are also supported in the setting using staff deployment and adapted activities as necessary. This multicultural setting acknowledges the differing needs of individual families and makes everyone feel part of its community.

The setting continually reviews procedures, as is evident from the school development plan. It aims to provide an effective learning and development environment for all the children.

Prepared Environment: resources and materials

The Infant and Toddler (Mango) room consists of three separate areas, including a small area that contains a snack table, art and craft table, and small sink; this area is also used for messy play. There is also a dedicated space used mainly as a sleeping area; it also contains high shelving on which is stored additional learning materials and the children's spare clothes and sleep blankets. The largest room on this floor contains a small staircase used to promote children's gross motor skills, comfy cushions, a book corner, dressing up clothes, musical instruments and shelves containing an assortment of age appropriate chunky puzzles and early Montessori sensorial activities. Since the first re-accreditation visit, the Activities for Everyday Living shelf has been moved from the snack area into this largest room, which makes the snack area less cramped, and includes pouring, transferring with a spoon or tweezers, and sorting activities. These materials are monitored and changed regularly. Other heuristic activities have also been brought into this classroom. A small table and chairs have been added to allow children the opportunity to work at a table as well as on the floor and assist children's transition to the Nursery rooms. Children usually make this transition at approximately 2 years old.

The two Nursery classrooms on the ground floor, off a small hallway, are linked at the back of the premises by the children's toilet facilities. The Strawberry room contains the majority of the Montessori resources, which are laid out in designated curriculum areas. Teacher-made resources can be found in the Understanding the World section alongside commercially made materials and these proved to be popular during the first visit. There are suitable materials in the Numeracy area, and the number rods in this section, as well as the red rods in the Sensorial section, have been repainted, as was recommended at the first visit. There is appropriate Literacy material, a computer area which is also popular with the children, and a whiteboard with washable felt tip pens. At the back of the room is the snack table and doors leading to the garden. The Banana room houses the art and craft area, AEL section, construction and role play area. The space under the stairs is used as a sensory area and is furnished with soft cushions in a variety of textures. Doors at the rear of the Banana room also lead out onto the garden.



Outside, the enclosed garden has a variety of equipment and resources to promote physical skills including a slide, climbing platform and large construction materials. There is also a large, walk-in sandpit and at the rear of the garden is a play house. Under a covered area is a painting easel, craft materials, sand and water tray and wellington store. There is also a designated area for the infants and toddlers, with some puzzles and pull/push-along toys. Most areas of the Montessori curriculum are represented in the outdoor environment. Following a recommendation from the first visit, interesting and creative Numeracy and Literacy resources have also been added.

Overall, the environment has been prepared and maintained to allow children to fully access the resources.

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

Children's independence is promoted effectively throughout the setting. Those in the Infant and Toddler group are encouraged to help themselves to snack during the morning; low shelving enables them to access materials independently and although at this young age completing a cycle of activity is not always possible, staff try to encourage the children to tidy up before going outside and have introduced exercises in grace and courtesy. Staff assist the children to put on coats, take them off and change their shoes independently.

Children in the Nursery rooms have their own named coat pegs and are able to hang up their coats independently and change shoes, with help given to those younger or less able children. They independently choose their snack, clear up after themselves and are able to see to their personal care. Throughout the morning, children are free to spontaneously choose their activities, either inside or in the garden. Children work independently, in pairs or small groups, sometimes with an adult supporting them effectively when necessary.

Parents are offered advice as to how they can promote independence at home and a suggested activity is included on the individual planning sheet that parents receive. Information is also given verbally at the end of the day. Since the first re-accreditation visit the owner has introduced some hands-on sessions for parents during the regular coffee mornings, giving them the opportunity to use and learn about the varied resources on offer.

Children have a respectful attitude towards each other and the adults in the setting. They are encouraged to respect their environment by completing a cycle of activity, taking turns and adhering to the setting's ground rules.

Montessori practice: Classroom management

Although the setting runs a Breakfast Club, the majority of children arrive for the start of the morning session at 09.15. In the Nursery classes there is an optional circle time at the beginning of the session, but some children choose to begin working with their own activities immediately. Children continue to work inside or outdoors, independently or with different adults throughout the morning. When children want a snack they self-register and help themselves to a healthy snack such as cucumber and breadsticks. On the wall by the snack



table is a list of the children's dietary requirements and photographs of those children. The children continue to work at their own pace until approximately 11.50. At this time, they gather in their key groups to take part in an activity planned by their key person. This activity could be a story, exploring feelings or looking at life cycles.

The Infant and Toddler children have a short circle time at the end of the morning. Adults support them well, especially in their physical and language development. There is always a planned messy play or art activity available. They can independently choose their snack and staff keep a record of what the children eat. They also keep notes of nappy changes and sleep times. Staff in the Infant and Toddler community recognise that they need to adapt to the younger children's needs and this meant that on the occasion of the second re-accreditation visit, the children spent most of the morning, including having their snack, outside despite the inclement weather, only going inside around 10.45.

At 12.15, the morning-only children prepare to go home and are called one at a time to be collected by their parents. This transition period is managed well. The Nursery class children that stay for lunch or all day sit down for a hot lunch prepared on the premises; again dietary needs are catered for. Staff sit with the children at meal times and there is a great deal of social interaction. Children help to hand out plates and cutlery, helping themselves to food under the supervision of adults, and tidy up when finished. The afternoon session begins at 13.15, and the routine of this work cycle is similar to the morning session.

The Infant and Toddler children who have lunch are assisted in feeding themselves by the adults. After lunch the children have a nap, either in the small room which has been prepared with mats, pillows and blankets, or in the large room, part of which can be sectioned off and used for any Nursery class children requiring a nap.

Additional activities are offered during the week and during both re-accreditation visits some children were participating in a 'Stretch and Grow' music and movement session. All the additional activities offered to the children are optional.

Montessori Practice: links with parents, including reports and records

All staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities in the classroom and there are various rotas on display, such as responsibility for equipment, inside and out, snack rotas and, for the younger children, nappy changing duties.

Each key person is responsible for keeping records for their key group and for planning further activities, although adults work with all children not just those in their key groups. This is good practice. Short observations are carried out daily and, following a recommendation from the previous accreditation, longer observations are now also carried out once or twice a term in order to gain a deeper insight into children's development. Summative reports are given to parents at the parents evenings, which are held twice a year. The setting also carries out the mandatory two year old assessments.

There is a very strong link with parents, some of whom have been connected with the school since it first opened, sending all their children to the nursery. Daily verbal feedback is given to the parents, especially those with children in the Infant and Toddler group. There is a termly newsletter and coffee mornings for parents and carers, which are extremely well attended. An



informative transition document is sent to the child's next setting. The school also asks parents to come in and share their professions with the children, and has recently been visited by two parents who work in dental practices, helping children learn to look after their teeth.

Staffing:

There is a well-organized staff structure in place. The owner, who has an International Montessori Diploma and Early Years Professional Status, is in daily attendance but is supernumerary in the classrooms. The deputy manager has an International Montessori Diploma, as do two other members of the teaching staff. Other members of the teaching staff hold NVQ level 3 childcare qualifications and the manager holds a BA Hons. Those working with the under 2 year age group are appropriately qualified and experienced. A new member of staff who has recently joined the setting intends to commence Montessori training in September.

Staff members complete a thorough induction procedure and receive copies of appropriate policies, procedures and job descriptions. There is a very good staff appraisal system in place with staff completing a self-evaluation form prior to appraisal meetings and this, together with peer observations, feeds into the appraisal system. The team has regular staff meetings and these are minuted. Staff have been provided with a variety of in-house training on Montessori philosophy, working with under 2s and extensions to the Numeracy and Literacy resources. They also attend local authority training courses, seminars at the Montessori Centre International and regional Montessori Schools Association meetings. They have identified areas for development such as recognizing individual children's needs through schema. The setting has produced a school development plan and this is regularly updated, helping to ensure the smooth running of the school and taking into account suggestions made by staff.

The team at Milkshake Montessori shows a deep commitment to improving their practice. They work extremely enthusiastically together under strong leadership from the owner and manager.

Name of Assessor: Margot Best

Date of reports: First visit – 27 February 2014

Second visit – 8 May 2014