

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.

Nightingale 1 Montessori Nursery School

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

Date of previous MEAB accreditation: June 2014

Date of first re-accreditation visit: 26 January 2017

Date of second re-accreditation visit: 2 May 2017

This accreditation is valid until 31 July 2021

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

Description of the nursery:

Nightingale 1 Montessori Nursery School is located on the first floor of church premises in a residential area of Clapham. The setting consists of two classrooms: Daisies, a smaller classroom, which caters for 2 to 3 year olds; and Bluebells, a larger classroom which caters mainly for 3 to 5 year olds during the morning and 2 to 5 year olds during the afternoon session. Both classrooms share the children’s toilet facilities and there is also a kitchenette. The nursery has daily scheduled access to a large, secure garden with lawn, trees, a planting area and a paved courtyard. There is a small shared shed in which the outdoor equipment is stored. The setting packs all its resources away daily but has sole use of its indoor areas during the opening hours.

The nursery is open Monday to Thursday 09:00 to 15:30 and on Friday 09:00 to 12:15 during term times, and runs a two week Summer Club at the start of the summer holidays. It currently has 46 children on roll between the ages of 2 and 5 years old. Children may attend morning, afternoon or extended day sessions. A healthy snack is provided and packed lunches are brought in from home. On the day of the second re-accreditation visit 35 children attended in the morning and 16 during the afternoon, with seven attending only for the afternoon session. The setting caters for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and for those with English as an additional language (EAL).

Nightingale 1 Montessori Nursery School is owned by a limited company, the only shareholder is the previous proprietor (owner). The nursery was originally opened in 1978 by the proprietor and moved back to the current premises in 2003. It has a sister setting, Nightingale 2 Montessori Nursery, which was established in 2012. Both nurseries are led by the same Montessori qualified Manager. When the Manager is working at the other setting, Nightingale 1 is run by two experienced Deputy Managers. In total it employs seven well qualified staff, of whom six hold Montessori qualifications. Four work full-time. The teaching team is also supported by an apprentice who is training for a Level 3 early years qualification and by specialist teachers who come in to offer additional activities such as football. Eight adults attended during the morning of the second visit, with seven in the afternoon.

Summary

Nightingale 1 Montessori Nursery offers a stimulating and supportive learning environment, where children are happy, confident and independent learners. Children are highly respected by the dedicated teaching team and their individual interests and developmental stages are valued, carefully planned for and appropriately nurtured. The Montessori ethos is strongly embedded in the nursery's daily practice and the staff team is passionate about guiding children to learn and develop at their own pace.

Both classrooms are welcoming and are beautifully prepared with an excellent range of Montessori materials to engage and motivate children. The carefully planned layout of each room encourages children's independence and provides them with the opportunity to freely access a range of activities that capture their interest.

Parents speak extremely positively about the high-quality teaching, the inspiring learning environment and the support provided by the Manager and teaching team. They feel involved in their children's learning and that their children are making firm progress both personally and in relation to learning new skills and knowledge.

Staff members are knowledgeable and experienced early years practitioners who work very effectively together to create an exciting and enabling environment for children. They are committed to updating their knowledge and skills and regularly engage in ongoing professional development to further enhance outcomes for the children.

Following recommendations from its previous MEAB accreditation, the nursery has successfully enhanced its method of monitoring and evaluating children's progress to ensure their learning is consistently planned for. This is working extremely well and, after further review, the setting has decided to introduce an online system for planning and assessment, which the teachers are at the early stages of implementing. They are continuing to review and reflect on this implementation and are working effectively towards it becoming fully embedded across the setting. In addition, staff members now carry out regular peer observations to help them assess the quality of teaching and further develop aspects of their provision.

Following a recommendation from the first re-accreditation visit the setting has made some positive changes towards lengthening the Montessori work cycle. They have recently introduced individual snack during both daily sessions, whereby children have the opportunity to help prepare it and independently choose when to take it. They have also moved the morning circle time to the end of the session, which ensures children have more opportunity for uninterrupted work and to freely choose which activities to engage with.

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 team should continue to review the organisation of the additional activities (such as French, music, ballet and football) to ensure that children have the opportunity to work independently and without interruption on activities of their choosing for as long as possible during each session.

Philosophy:

The staff team at Nightingale 1 Montessori Nursery School is fully dedicated and committed to promoting and implementing the Montessori philosophy for the benefit of the children and their families. Staff members are attuned to supporting children's independent learning and encourage them to make creative choices based on their individual interests and current stage of development. They foster children's confidence and self-esteem by helping them develop self-discipline, respectful relationships and by encouraging them to enjoy self-initiated learning. Children across all areas of the setting are guided to learn at their own pace, develop a love of learning and work towards their unique potential.

The Montessori principles and ethos are clearly stated in the nursery's prospectus, on the website and in the welcome packs provided for parents when children join the setting. The quality of the Montessori provision is regularly reviewed by the Manager and her supportive team of teachers.

Learning and Development:

Children are well supported in their learning and development. Both classrooms are attractively arranged to incorporate the different areas of the Montessori curriculum and children enjoy a mixture of independent work, group activities and one to one presentations with the teachers. During the second re-accreditation visit children had fun printing with their fingers and ink to create a large colourful snake, which supported their learning about reptiles. A teacher encouraged them to think about what snakes like to eat and which habitats they live in. The children displayed great interest and excellent knowledge about snakes.

For the morning session three adults are assigned to Daisies and four to Bluebells. The work cycle begins at 09.00, during which the children are free to work with materials across the Montessori curriculum in their classrooms, as well as to explore books, the nature table or creative materials. The teachers are highly attuned to the children's needs across the age range and work effectively together to encourage them to explore the environment, have confidence to try new things and engage in purposeful learning. This attentive and nurturing approach creates a busy and industrious atmosphere, with lots of active learning taking place. The work cycle can continue indoors until either 10.30 or 11.15 depending on the day and whether there are planned additional activities. Both classes can access the garden from 11.00 until 12.00 where they play together and continue to enjoy free choice of activity. At 12.00 children return to their room for a short circle time; these groups provide the opportunity to learn about their class's current project. The recent rescheduling of circle time from the middle of the session to the end has been a positive step towards lengthening the work cycle and the teaching team reports that this is working extremely well and that the children are responding positively to this subtle change to the routine.

Some children go home at 12.15 and those remaining all sit together to enjoy lunch in Bluebells. This part of the day is very well organised to support children's independence and each child unpacks their own lunch. In the afternoon the children all use the Bluebell classroom only. This session starts at 13.00, and during both visits some additional children arrived then, just for the afternoon. As in the morning, the children are again encouraged to explore the Montessori materials, and all the children's learning is appropriately supported as the younger ones have plenty of activities for everyday living, early sensorial as well as creative and other resources within this classroom suited to their needs. Again, they also all play outside for part of the session and have individual snack.

The children have the opportunity to participate in music, French, ballet and football group activities to further enhance their development. On the morning of the second visit they had fun participating in an interactive French group and in the afternoon they enjoyed ballet. Although the children gain great enjoyment from these activities it is recommended that the organisation and scheduling of these group sessions continues to be reviewed, in conjunction with extending the length of the work cycle, in order to ensure that the children have the opportunity to work independently and without interruption on activities of their choosing for as long as possible each session.

The entire team shares ideas and plans termly projects together collaboratively. Each teacher has an allocated week to deliver art projects, group activities and other learning opportunities indoors and out that support the theme. All planning shows links between the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and Montessori areas of learning. There is an effective key person system in place and although every teacher can observe any child's interests and progress, their key person is responsible for updating their Child Profile. This record consists of observations, photographs and details of carefully planned next steps. It is shared with parents at meetings with them or more regularly on request, and each Profile is regularly checked by the Manager. The nursery has recently adopted a secure online system for recording and monitoring children's development and is already using it for all newcomers. It intends to phase out the Child Profile and use this new system exclusively at the start of the new academic year. This system dovetails the Montessori curriculum with the EYFS areas and can therefore be used to provide a comprehensive overview of children's development and possible next steps. As the teachers are at the preliminary stage of introducing this system they are diligently reviewing and evaluating their use of it, to ensure that children's progress continues to be monitored effectively.

Nightingale 1 is a highly inclusive setting. Children with SEND and those with EAL are fully supported. The team works closely with parents and other professionals to ensure that relevant and realistic next steps are precisely planned and provided for to enable these children to flourish.

Prepared Environment: resources and materials

Both classrooms are spacious and attractively arranged to incorporate all areas of the Montessori curriculum. Each room is organised with low, open and easily accessible shelves with a wide range of high quality Montessori materials. This helps children to make independent choices, supports their sense of order and encourages them to help maintain the order of the environment by returning their resources once finished with. Each room also has a cosy book corner where children can rest if required, an inviting art area with easel and art trolley for children's individual art folders, ICT equipment and an area for promoting children's self-care skills, with tissues, a water dispenser and a hanging rack for coats and bags. Both classrooms have attractive wall displays, with children's work and displays that reinforce their learning, for example about the weather, seasons, or planets. Following a recommendation from the first re-accreditation visit, both classrooms now have a snack area, where the children enjoy helping to prepare snack and are free to access it based on their individual needs.

In the Daisies classroom on the day of the first visit, the teachers sensitively supported the younger children to enjoy exploring Montessori activities for everyday living and children delighted in practising pouring, transferring and threading. They also guided children in their exploration of sensorial materials, early mark-making and tracing activities. The adults in the Bluebells classroom are also very effectively deployed to facilitate the children's learning. One child enthusiastically explored a letter puzzle and was well supported by a teacher to identify phonetic sounds and make connections

based on their existing knowledge.

The nursery shares the garden with other hall users but has sole use of it during its allotted times, during which all the children can go outside and they enjoy developing their imagination, physical and social skills in the garden. Some children delight in riding on scooters, tricycles and transporting pushchairs, building their strength and spatial awareness, whilst others enjoy developing their balance and co-ordination on a rocking horse, stepping stone logs and whilst using a climbing frame. On the day of the first visit, a group of children had fun digging in a large mud pit. They enthusiastically took turns to fill up their trucks and diggers and enjoyed transporting the mud to make mounds and banks. As they played, they effectively negotiated how much mud they needed, incorporating lots of mathematical language into their play. On the day of the second visit children showed enthusiasm as they watered their fruit and vegetable patch. They explained that the plants need water and sunshine to help them grow. Their efforts were warmly encouraged by their teacher who acknowledged how this interactive activity had ignited the children's interest in nature and growth. During both visits children across the age range enjoyed mixing freely outdoors. There is a busy hum of activity and noticeable engagement in learning across the whole of this beautifully prepared environment.

Montessori practice: independence

The children display good levels of independence throughout the day. On arrival, they happily enter the classrooms and are encouraged to change their shoes and hang up their coats and bags. During the work cycles they respond extremely positively to the freedom that staff and the prepared environment offer them. They enjoy moving between activities and freely choosing to work with different materials for as long as they wish, either individually or with others. Children show respect for their environment and enjoy independently rolling up their floor mats and returning their activities to the shelves. They are accompanied to the toilet by staff and are encouraged to develop good personal care and independence skills. The adults make time to explain and reinforce ground rules and positive behaviour to ensure that every child can gain full benefit from the provision.

Following a recommendation made at the first re-accreditation visit, the nursery has introduced the opportunity for children to take individual snack during the indoor work cycle, when they are ready to do so. On the day of the second visit, a couple of children enjoyed the responsibility of preparing the snack area for their friends. With a little support and guidance from a teacher the children cut up some fruit. Once the area was ready, the other children showed confidence and enjoyment in independently washing their hands and selecting their name label to indicate that they were having snack. They enjoyed peeling their banana, transferring strawberries into a bowl using tongs and choosing either milk or water to enjoy with their fruit. This recent development fully supports the children's independence, confidence and social skills and has been a very positive means of lengthening the Montessori work cycle.

Parents are offered ongoing advice on how to promote independence at home. Staff and

parents regularly share ideas with each other to help children to develop new skills and parents speak positively about observing the change in their children's independence and personal development.

Montessori Practice: links with parents

Partnerships with parents are highly successful at Nightingale 1 Montessori Nursery School. There is an in-depth induction process in place for children when they start at the setting, which includes families sharing information about their children's interests and current development when completing an All About Me booklet. Communication with parents is extremely effective. They receive daily feedback, weekly newsletters, and regular written reports and they have an opportunity to attend parent meetings twice a year. Targets set for their children are discussed at these meetings and the mandatory two year old progress check is also shared. Their input is also recorded in their child's Profile. When their child leaves the setting they are presented with a digital record of photographs and videos taken of their child at the nursery and a transition report is also prepared to assist with settling children in to their next learning environment.

There is an active Parent and Teacher Association, which meets regularly to share ideas for further improvements to the nursery. During both re-accreditation visits parents expressed high levels of satisfaction and fully appreciate how staff members nurture their children, the progress that their children make and how involved they feel in their learning. Many parents also expressed how much they enjoy coming into the nursery, for example to celebrate cultural festivals, and describe that there is a real community feel at the setting. Information is available to them about the Montessori approach and about the wider Montessori community.

Staff: qualifications, deployment, and performance management

The nursery is very effectively led by the highly qualified and experienced Manager. As she also works at the setting's sister nursery, in her absence Nightingale 1 is efficiently managed by the two experienced and committed Deputy Managers. Each member of staff has a full induction when they join the nursery. During this time they are provided with a written job description which highlights their roles and responsibilities, and are informed of the setting's Montessori ethos, policies and procedures.

The performance of staff members is reviewed each term and any training needs are identified and fully supported. In addition, they have yearly appraisals to discuss their practice and continuing professional development needs. They attend Montessori conferences. The nursery has a clear and focused development plan in place and staff members regularly carry out peer observations to further develop the quality of the teaching. Weekly meetings are also used to reflect on children's learning and the quality of the provision. These are documented so that absent staff members are kept fully informed.

All seven employees have relevant early years qualifications. Two have degrees

