

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.

Paint Pots Montessori School Bayswater

St. Stephen’s Church, Westbourne Park Road, London W2 5QT

Date of previous MEAB accreditation: May 2013

Date of first re-accreditation visit: 13 October 2016

Date of second re-accreditation visit: 18 January 2017

This accreditation is valid until 31 July 2021

This accreditation report relates to the provision for children aged 2½ to 5 years.

Description of the nursery:

Paint Pots Montessori Bayswater is located in a residential area of central London. It was established by the present owner in 1988 and moved to its current location in 2014. The nursery is on the first floor of a church building and has two classrooms, known as the North and the South Rooms, a Gallery space and a connecting corridor. There are children’s toilet facilities on the same floor and the setting has sole use of these areas of the premises during its opening hours. The nursery is set up each Monday and packed away on a Friday so other groups may use this floor. As there is no outdoor area available at the church, children are escorted daily to one of several local parks for physical activities and play.

The nursery caters for children from 2½ to 5 years of age and there are 23 enrolled. All children attend morning sessions from 09.15 to 12.30 and some stay for a packed lunch and for the afternoon until 15.45. On the day of the second re-accreditation visit there were 20 children present and five members of staff, with four children and three staff staying on from the morning. The nursery closes on Friday at 12.30 and runs during term times. It supports children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those with English as an additional language.

Paint Pots Montessori Bayswater is one of a group of three Montessori settings under the same ownership and was the first of these to be established by the proprietor. The owner only attends the nursery for meetings and is not regularly present. The head teacher and deputy work full-time and hold Montessori International Diplomas. They are supported by two full-time Montessori trained staff and two Montessori professional placement students who attend part-time.

Summary

Paint Pots Montessori Bayswater is a calm and welcoming nursery where the focus on encouraging children's independence and confidence is very evident. Staff members work consistently to engage children and extend their learning by using positive language and by giving children time to express their interests. The team is adept at adapting the environment and activities accordingly.

A strength of the setting is its emphasis on developing creativity, for which there is a wonderful and diverse range of resources available in the Gallery. There is a very well presented range of information technology activities and the way in which these are embraced by the setting is to be credited. As there is no outdoor space attached to the premises that the nursery can use, the staff team provide rich opportunities indoors for learning about nature through the provision of a wide range of plants, natural products, posters, and goldfish. They ensure children visit local parks and Forest School activities are offered once a week.

Since the previous MEAB accreditation the team has reviewed the layout of the classrooms to enhance learning opportunities. Activities for everyday living and cultural resources have been moved to the Gallery, and additional creative opportunities offered. The team has also reflected on the support given by adults to the children through their introduction of a positive language policy, which has resulted in the consistency of approach and enhanced children's self-initiated learning.

The team continues to monitor the effectiveness of the layout of the learning environment. Staff have changed some resources between rooms and provided additional activities which serve to enhance children's exploration of all Montessori areas of learning. The management team has also started to explore ways in which parents may become more fully informed about their child's focus of learning.

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 management team should continue to review and explore methods of enabling parents to become fully informed about their child's plans and progress; and
- make more effective use of their electronic recording system.

Philosophy:

Paint Pots Montessori Bayswater provides excellent opportunities for learning and strongly fosters the Montessori approach. Children are free to follow their interests throughout the work cycle and staff members provide excellent opportunities for self-initiated and teacher-led activities. They are adept at following the child through careful observation, planning activities based on the child's interests, and by frequently reviewing their development. Staff clearly trust children and know them very well, resulting in a respectful and kind atmosphere with an element of fun throughout the nursery.

The aims and objectives of the setting are clearly presented on the website, in the prospectus and in the policy documentation. These focus on the Montessori approach and are updated by the management team of the three settings as required. Job descriptions, specific training and weekly meetings ensure teachers understand their roles. They have excellent knowledge of Montessori principles and work with parents and, if necessary, outside agencies to develop the unique potential of each child.

Learning and Development:

The nursery offers excellent opportunities for learning and development across all areas of the Montessori curriculum and Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). The South Room is carefully laid out in the Montessori areas of learning, with a comfortable space for reading or quiet reflection. Children enjoy selecting activities and adults support as they are required. In the North Room there is an emphasis on physical development and, following the first re-accreditation visit, all areas of learning are now provided for here through resources such as a dressing-up basket, role play, blocks, small world play, puzzles, and a soft seating area with puppets. This room is also used for group activities such as music sessions.

Between these rooms is the Gallery, which offers rich opportunities for creativity, cultural understanding and for independent skills such as snack preparation, washing up and

the use of information technology. Children may move freely between the three rooms for at least three hours in the morning and the work cycle is only interrupted when children are given the choice to walk to a park or to stay and continue working with activities at the nursery. Staff members are deployed appropriately to support this choice.

As there is no space to play in the church garden, staff members plan very effectively for children's outdoor experiences. Resources selected by the children are taken along to the local parks and weekly Forest School sessions, held at one of the group's other nurseries, also offer good opportunities to learn about and play in an outdoor environment. There are also many items and resources inside the nursery to deepen children's knowledge of the natural world.

There is an effective key person system in place and staff members prepare children's individual plans with reference to the EYFS areas of learning. They observe children closely and record observations on a secure online system. As a small team, all the staff work with all the children and take turns to prepare long term plans for them, with reference to the Montessori syllabus and order of learning. These ensure staff know children's areas of interest really well and are competent in planning future learning. Small group planned activities frequently include food preparation or art activities. During both re-accreditation visits, rich opportunities for learning were provided by staff; they encouraged questioning and sustained shared thinking whilst, for example, children made a collage in the style of the artist Piet Mondrian. Children are given the choice to join in with planned group activities such as music and yoga. These are popular and most children are fully engaged.

The head teacher and deputy regularly review practices and the effectiveness of the learning provision during staff supervisions, appraisals and peer to peer observations, highlighting targets. They have also started to use the information held on the online system for this review, if the team's expertise in this area increases this will help further enhance practice.

Prepared Environment: resources and materials

Paint Pots Montessori Bayswater is a very well organised nursery. Staff members ensure that the child's needs and interests are considered foremost in their planning of the layout of the rooms and of the resources available. In the South Room there is a very good selection of high quality and well-chosen Montessori activities, with additional resources to enhance learning about the natural world. The activities are easily accessible, clean and complete and arranged in an attractive, systematic and well thought out manner. There is sufficient space for children to work independently at single tables, on work mats on the floor, or alongside friends at larger tables. The book area is attractive, with a good selection of seasonally appropriate books. Children are free to read or rest here, or be read to.

During the second re-accreditation visit, additional activities such as early Montessori

activities and a role play kitchen had been included in the North Room. These offer enhanced opportunities for children to be exposed to learning about numeracy and literacy while engaged in play.

The staff team takes pride in preparing and maintaining the excellent and diverse opportunities for learning in the Gallery. These include activities for everyday living and many opportunities for knowledge and understanding of other cultures and for creativity. Small planned activities are very well provided for in this area and many resources have been especially made for individual children to extend their knowledge and vocabulary, such as a matching dinosaur game. Children are busy and purposeful in this area and show they are very familiar with routines. They demonstrate genuine independence and freedom of choice. During the first visit one child tapped in the iPad's password, accessed a program, set the timer and happily packed it away after a wonderful exploratory session on it, during which the child was supported by a teacher. This example demonstrated clearly the setting's commitment to providing an excellent prepared learning environment and to supporting the children's full use of it.

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

Independence is very strongly fostered at Paint Pots Bayswater. Staff members ensure children are given plenty of time and freedom to select activities both in the classrooms and outside at the park, and that they are able to work with resources for as long as they choose. The staff team prepares the indoor environment carefully, ensuring everything is at child level and set out to encourage children to complete their cycles of activity, including tidying up after themselves and, for example, hanging up their paintings to dry. Children show genuine care for their environment and enjoy looking after the cut flowers, seeds, other plants and their goldfish.

Adults gently remind children about how to be kind and respectful to one another, about the importance of listening to others and about the classroom rules at 'rest your mind' sessions towards the end of the morning. This, along with a focus on positive language and talking about what the child can do, results in very respectful and trusting relationships between the children and adults.

Snack and lunch times enable staff to support children in carrying out tasks for themselves as they set the table, scrape their plates and wash up. Children select fruit and vegetables for snack and prepare and clear away independently. Adults act as excellent role models at lunch time as they sit with the children to encourage respect for others and good manners; they also make excellent use of these opportunities to develop language skills. Children are positively encouraged to respect the cultures of others through their use of the diverse range of cultural objects, excellent continent boxes and many posters and books about other parts of the world.

Adults plan the routines carefully, ensuring that there is a good balance of small and whole group activities across the week and that children are given the option to

participate in these groups should they wish. During the first re-accreditation visit a child chose to join both consecutive music sessions; this choice was respected by the adults. Regular meetings, daily discussion and thorough information on the online system ensure parents feel informed about how to encourage independent skills at home.

Montessori Practice: links with parents, including reports and records

Paint Pots Bayswater has strong links with parents; they speak highly of the care and knowledge the staff team offer and the open communication that they have with the nursery. All staff may make observations on all children, and the key person arrangements work well. The online system and the local borough's checklist are used appropriately to record assessments and plan next steps in learning, linking the Montessori and EYFS areas. These are supplemented by written documentation showing the current areas of focus for individual children. The management team have started to take steps to consider different ways, not at present shared with parents, in which they can enhance communication and keep parents fully informed about their children's individual progress and the planning drawn up for them. This will help ensure that families continue to feel positive about being able to track their children's learning and to contribute to the planning process if desired.

There are many other ways in which families may learn about the nursery, such as through the detailed newsletters, regular parents evenings and through the individual appointments that can be arranged. Parents feel welcomed and are invited in to share ideas and news, demonstrate activities or to attend end of term events. The reception area contains good information about the wider Montessori community and opportunities for training.

Detailed mandatory two year old progress checks are prepared when relevant, and excellent reports that cover the seven EYFS areas of learning are prepared for children as they move to primary school.

Staff: qualifications, deployment, and performance management.

Staff members work as a strong team under the inspirational leadership of the head teacher; they are continually moving forward, receptive to new ideas, and have developed a strong focus on creativity. Many of the excellent policies and procedures are shared across the Paint Pots group. Rigorous and thorough induction policies and procedures have been developed and are frequently reviewed to ensure the Montessori approach is always prioritised. Regular supervisions, appraisals and occasional peer to peer observations enable the team to remain aware of their roles and responsibilities. All staff members attend in-house and whole nursery group meetings. The team is particularly strong in evaluating their practice and procedures informally in order to ensure they are always maximizing the learning opportunities for the children.

Staff members take turns to set up the rooms each morning and share very effectively the preparation of art, role play and creative resources. This collaboration demonstrates their commitment to the nursery. They plan for their key children but are adept at ensuring long term and weekly plans remain highly flexible to reflect children's needs and current interests. Their positive language practice, careful listening to, and open questioning with the children, ensure a consistent approach across the team. This supports the development of trust between staff and children.

The head teacher and deputy are experienced Montessori practitioners and have worked together for many years; they provide excellent role models for junior staff. They are supported well by the two full-time Montessori trained staff and two students. The student teachers are given the opportunity to make a positive and individual contribution to the nursery. Staff training and continual professional development opportunities are arranged as the need arises. These are frequently co-ordinated with the group's other two settings.

The staff team shows a genuine commitment to the Montessori approach and takes pride in their work. The head teacher's vision, creativity and her continual drive to improve learning opportunities for the children ensure that the whole team at Paint Pots Bayswater remains dedicated to the Montessori ethos.

Name of Assessor: Carolyn O J McNeill

Date report submitted: First visit – 15th October 2016

Second visit – 19th January 2017