



# **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" (2012/14). 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.

### **Rose House Montessori School**

The Chapel on the Hill, South Road, Forest Hill, London SE23 2UJ

Date of previous MEAB accreditation: November 2012

Date of first re-accreditation visit: 29 June 2015

Date of second re-accreditation visit: 21 October 2015

This accreditation report relates to the provision for children aged 3 to 9 years old

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

Rose House Montessori School was founded in September 2011 for 3 to 11 year olds. Children from 3 up to 9 years of age currently attend. The owner manages two other Montessori settings in the vicinity. The school uses part of The Chapel on the Hill, which is situated in a quiet residential area of Forest Hill. The school has the use of a large, light and airy classroom on the first floor, as well as the entire ground floor, which consists of two smaller classrooms, a wide corridor, kitchen, office, storage facilities, and open access to a large outdoor area. The children are vertically grouped by age; 3 to 6 year olds are accommodated on the ground floor (the Children's House), and 6 to 9 year olds (the Elementary class) on the first floor of this converted Victorian church building. This premise is shared with the church, which necessitates that the furniture and contents are packed away and stored each night. The school enjoys sole use of the facility from 08.00 to 17.00 weekdays and is open to the children from 09.00 to 16.00 during school term times. There are 27 children on roll, all 13 in Elementary attend full time and were present on the day of the second visit. Those in the Children's House attend part or full time; nine children were in attendance on the day of the second visit and stayed all day. Each child brings their own packed lunch. Rose House offers facilities



for children with English as an additional language and special educational needs and/or disabilities.

There are five full time members of staff, of whom four have a recognized Montessori qualification and the other is working towards completing her Montessori diploma, and four have a degree. The school is supported by a leadership team that it shares with the other two settings. The Principal/Owner is part of this team and holds a recognized Montessori qualification and a relevant degree. All five staff were present on the day of the second visit.

## Summary

Rose House Montessori School offers each of its pupils a true Montessori experience. The Montessori philosophy and ethos permeate every activity in the beautifully prepared environments both indoors and outside. The children are supported by a team of dedicated teachers who allow their pupils to develop their independence, self-esteem and inner discipline. As the children move through the various stages of their education at Rose House they become independent thinkers, who are happy to share their views in a manner that shows a maturity in advance of their actual years. The setting has satisfactorily met the recommendations made at their last MEAB accreditation regarding record-keeping on children's progress and staff supervision. They are continuing to review and work on the expansion of the activities of everyday living within the space they have available.

***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:***

- continue to monitor and evaluate the activities of everyday living in the Children's House to ensure that these are always sufficient to extend and satisfy the varied interests of the children; and
- to provide and review materials which will enable children to check their work .

## Philosophy:

The quality of the Montessori provision in the class for primary aged children is exemplary, and these children are following the principles of Montessori in everything



that they undertake throughout the day. In the younger class, the Children's House, the children are not always being given the opportunity to benefit from all that the Montessori curriculum has to offer. During the second re-accreditation visit these children were being given more of the Montessori curriculum but there are still gaps that could be successfully filled. Most children are supported in fulfilling their unique potential with the staff "following the child". During the first visit, there were many examples throughout the school where the children had opportunities to develop self-initiated learning and exercise their own self-discipline. The adults in the school are all well aware of the principles of Montessori and encourage the children to take advantage of their many chances to increase their knowledge and understanding of the world around them.

The Montessori philosophy is documented in the school's written mission statement and is also mentioned in much of the literature for parents. The whole team review these statements on a regular basis.

### **Learning and Development:**

Both age ranges have access to all the areas of learning in the Montessori curriculum, with the Children's House also covering the areas of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Framework. Learning takes place both inside and outside, and the setting offers the children opportunities to learn independently, in small groups and larger ones. During the first re-accreditation visit, two 5 year old boys were working with a teacher who presented the 'noun game'. The boys enjoyed finding the various objects, and then decided there were not enough name labels, they therefore cut up paper, 'sounded out' the names of the objects they wanted to label and wrote out the words, which was a good example of self-initiated activity. It is recommended that staff ensure that control charts are provided for all activities that require them in order to support the children in their independent learning. Since the first visit, the Elementary children have benefitted from the addition of comprehensive materials on the appreciation of art and music. During the visit the children enjoyed using these information cards and pictures, which enabled them to study a wide range of aspects of art and music that they are particularly keen to investigate.

The morning work cycle lasts for three hours, and is a mixture of spontaneous learning with some adult-led activities. Lunch time and times for co-operative play are offered as free flow, leading into a three hour afternoon work cycle, which is mainly based on project work and group activity offers. German is taught by a specialist on a weekly basis within the afternoon work cycle. On Tuesday afternoons the children benefit from sports lessons in two groups, and on Friday mornings eight children from the two age ranges spend the morning on their allotment, a short walk from the school. The developmental needs, including any additional needs, are being met with a variety of carefully planned activities that incorporate the learning styles of each individual child.

The planning has been extremely well designed and is based around the 'Great



Lessons', which are simplified for the Children's House. It is shared across all members of the team and covers long, medium and short term plans. The school uses a web-based digital recording system, which enables the staff to carry out regular evaluations and assessments of children's learning. These in turn often influence changes in short term plans. The Children's House curriculum links the Montessori curriculum with the EYFS Framework, and this link is included in the planning documents. The school has a policy and procedure to secure the confidentiality of the digital system, and the iPads remain on the premise. Through the use of this system, regular assessments are made on the effectiveness of the provision of learning and development. The adults recognize that it is their role to support the children's engagement in the learning environment; they monitor the use of activities, and provide additional materials to extend each child's opportunities.

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

The resources and materials in the Elementary room are beautifully laid out in all the areas of learning. On entering the classroom, the activities on the shelves invite exploration and it is obvious that the pupils really care for, and feel very proud of, their environment. During the first re-accreditation visit they were happy to share their thoughts about their school and classroom. Due to the smaller size of the downstairs classrooms it is not as easy to spread out the materials, nevertheless they are all well displayed and appropriately arranged by areas of the Montessori curriculum and EYFS, and are in good condition. There are enough activities for the number of children and since the first visit the school has undertaken a complete review of the activities of everyday living in the Children's House. This has resulted in the addition of new exercises which are starting to extend the children's learning. It is recommended that staff continue to review this provision.

Since the first visit the Elementary class has introduced an area which focuses on pebble meditation and yoga. There is a large carpet with yoga cushions and a basket of yoga cards so the children can go there whenever they like and follow the instructions on the yoga cards. They can also choose a pebble and take a card and a timer so that they can follow the instructions on relaxation and breathing. The staff feel that the children are already benefitting from this area.

The outdoor area has a wealth of activities to excite and stimulate the children. The materials cover several areas of the curriculum, and they have been carefully planned and instigated to give the children opportunities to develop their gross motor skills and their natural curiosity outdoors. This area is prepared each morning and is packed away each evening, with the children helping to put the many items away. As the school shares the premise, all classrooms have to be packed away at night. Due to the careful attention of the staff the environment looks fresh and inviting when set up each morning. The provision of more diverse activities of everyday living will enhance the school's prepared environment further.



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

Independence is fostered in Rose House Montessori School from the moment the children arrive at the school in the morning. They all hang their jackets up, change their shoes and stow their lunch boxes in the correct places. A good example of well-considered provision for the child's independence is the 'rolling lunch' initiative. From 11.30 the lunch table is open and any child can set up their own lunch place, plate up their packed lunch and enjoy eating with a friend. This interval in the day can extend until 13.30. This example is a true reflection of the children exercising their freedom, with the independence to eat whenever they feel hungry within a two hour window. During the second re-accreditation visit, there were more examples of the independence and freedom that the children benefit from. One 5 year old decided to make his own newspaper and was careful in selecting and cutting out pictures from the free daily newspaper. He used the theme of the state visit of the Chinese President. He was free to arrange the sheet of paper exactly as he wanted and the result was of high quality. The paper was taken round the school by the happy and excited child so that the other children could share in his project. Another child insisted on threading her own needle and sewed with silk thread independently from adult assistance.

All members of staff show immense trust in the children in accessing their learning spontaneously. The teachers act as role models to ensure the children respect each other, the adults in their school, and their own carefully prepared environment. There is a designated "peace area" in each classroom. Here the children talk about their feelings and have opportunities to show respect for the specific cultures of the staff and children in their school. During both visits many examples of kindness and consideration between the children were witnessed. There were wonderful examples of co-operation when the children were working outside both in physical tasks, such as sweeping the earth off the hard areas, and helping each other to make an obstacle course. The school works hard with each child's family to ensure that the high levels of independence attained at school are recreated at home.

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

There is a good mix of learning in both age ranges, with a combination of planned and spontaneous learning both inside and outside. In the morning the children work within a three hour work cycle, with a shorter one in the afternoon. Both classes are vertically grouped; the Children's House caters for the 3 to 5 year olds who have many opportunities to refine their senses, to explore and immerse themselves in language and enjoy freedom of movement throughout the day. The Elementary class currently caters for 5 to 9 year olds, who require encouragement to develop intellectually and to think for themselves.

All the adults are confident of their roles both within the school and their own class, and



the routines run extremely efficiently throughout the day. There is a good balance between adult-led and child-initiated activities. The paperwork for Rose House Montessori School is most efficient, with comprehensive policies, procedures, handbooks and written guidance. Many of these documents are available for all the parents to view at any time.

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

The school's use of the digital programme for all their record-keeping is firmly established. This system matches the children's activities against the Montessori curriculum and the Children's House pupils' work also against the learning requirements of the EYFS. From the information gained, the staff are able to plan, assess and evaluate the children's progress. This information is then used to inform the parents in their twice yearly written progress reports. These serve as transition reports when the children from the 3 to 5 year old group move on to the Elementary class. Parents are also invited to sit in and observe for a morning each term, at the end of which they have a consultation with their child's key person. Each child has their own key person who is responsible for ensuring the child fulfills their unique potential. They carry out regular observations of their child and ensure through the record keeping system that an even coverage of all the activities on offer has taken place.

The school has an excellent relationship with parents, who are very appreciative of the exceptional open door policy which Rose House offers to all its families. There are termly coffee mornings offering Montessori information sessions in addition to the parents' annual social evening. Each class lays on a special end of term event for their parents; these events are prepared by the children. The school has an active community group that organizes events for parents and children to socialize outside of school. During the second re-accreditation visit, two parents came in to spend some time observing their children in their classrooms. They were extremely appreciative of this opportunity and felt it was definitely beneficial for both their child/children and for themselves.

### **Staffing:**

The school has a leadership team that supports the three Rose House settings, and also its own teaching team, exclusively for the Rose House Montessori School. The Principal/Owner and Head Teacher are skilled and extremely competent Montessorians. They offer excellent leadership for the rest of this committed team of teachers, four of whom have a recognized Montessori qualification, one is completing her Montessori training, and four have degrees, two of which are in early years; the proprietor holds a PG Diploma and in Early Childhood Studies.

The school's excellent induction procedure follows a flow chart system, and new staff are assigned a mentor, appraised after six weeks and supported throughout the



probationary period by the whole staff team. Job descriptions, records of all staff meetings, staff observations, continued professional development documentation and all other records that the school keeps are very professional. Rose House gives high priority to staff development, investing in each staff member and offering not only group training sessions but individually tailored training too. The school has a method of peer observations whereby any team member can comment on other staff's performance and record this in their own peer observation book. Since the first re-accreditation visit, the school has introduced a system of effective practice observations where senior managers sit in on a class and record their observations in relation to the environment, the child, and the adult. These are then evaluated and fed back to the staff in their weekly meetings. These initiatives inspire true team spirit which is very apparent across the whole team, who are all enthusiastic, caring and committed Montessori staff.

Name of Assessor: Wendy E S Compson

Date report submitted: First visit – 1 July 2015

Second visit – 22 October 2015