

Montessori Evaluation and Accreditation Board

School Accreditation

This report is a supplement to the setting's previous MEAB Accreditation Final Report, which is published in conjunction with this report.

This report was prepared following, and is based on, two accreditation visits made on behalf of the Montessori Evaluation and Accreditation Board. It considers how far the setting follows relevant criteria in "The Guide to the EYFS in Montessori Settings" (2012/14). During the second visit the progress made with the recommendations set out in the report from the first visit was assessed and any further findings made during the second visit were considered.

The report does not address the standards and quality issues that are assessed by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), which reports separately. Also the report does not provide any assessment of financial aspects of the setting.

Receiving accreditation carries the expectation that the setting will continue to work on the issues highlighted in this report and will remain committed to the ongoing development of its practice. Furthermore, that it 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.

The Rainbow Montessori Nursery School

The Lynch Chapel, The Lynch, Winscombe, North Somerset BS25 1AR

Dates of previous MEAB accreditations: November 2010 and June 2014

This accreditation is valid until June 2023

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

Description of the nursery school:

The Rainbow Montessori Nursery School is located in Winscombe, a small village in North Somerset. It occupies spacious premises adjacent to the Lynch Chapel, comprising three rooms for children's use, an office, storage room, a kitchen and toilet facilities. The older children aged 3 to 5 years use the largest room, and the 2 year olds are based in one of the smaller rooms. The other room for the children is used for quiet activities and has a book area and sleeping provision. The children have daily access to the premises' paved garden area, which has a playhouse, sandpit, mud kitchen and a variety of resources displayed on shelves and organised by curriculum area. They also go to a nearby disused railway line (The Strawberry Line) for weekly Forest Rangers

sessions. The nursery school has sole use of the premises during its opening hours and occasional use of the Chapel for special events and nativity plays. It packs away its resources every Friday afternoon.

The nursery school is open term time only, from 09.00 to 17.00 Monday to Thursday, and 09.00 to 13.00 on Friday. Children can attend morning, afternoon or full day sessions; 66 children are enrolled, of whom 11 are 2 years old. Food for lunch is locally sourced and freshly cooked on site, Mondays to Thursdays. The setting provides for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and for those with English as an additional language. On the day of the second visit 21 children attended. They were supported by six members of staff.

The setting is privately owned and was established in 1996. It was re-registered under the present owner in April 2016. The owner employs nine teaching staff, an administrator and two part-time cooks, and manages the setting as its principal. She is a qualified Montessori teacher with Early Years Professional Status and works full-time at the setting in a supernumerary role. All other staff members work part-time. Each of the two age range classes has a lead teacher, one of whom is also the deputy manager. Nine members of the staff team have relevant childcare qualifications and three have degrees (including the principal), one has Qualified Teacher Status and four hold a Montessori diploma. The nursery school currently supports two student teachers and an apprentice working towards an early years qualification. One of the students is carrying out her Montessori professional placement, and a member of staff is working towards Early Years Teacher Status.

Summary

The Rainbow Montessori Nursery School provides very high quality Montessori care and education for its children. Their needs and interests are identified clearly and they are encouraged to grow in independence and self-confidence. Links with their parents are excellent. The resources provided for the children are suited to their current stages of learning and development, as shown by their high levels of engagement. Following the first reaccreditation visit new Montessori materials have been sourced for the younger children, which both meet their needs and help to prepare them for transition to the largest room.

Since the previous MEAB accreditation the nursery school has changed ownership; the new owner/principal works with energy and professionalism to ensure that each child is valued, respected and included. She leads the staff team with enthusiasm, putting the Montessori ethos at the centre of the setting's work with children and engaging with local educational research projects to continue to reflect on and improve the nursery school's practice.

Following a recommendation made at the first visit, peer observations are now being recorded. In order that this tool can be used to support staff members' reflective practice more precisely, it is further recommended that these observations have a

specific focus. The supervision and appraisal documentation and procedures have also been reviewed, with the appraisal process focusing on performance management and training needs. This is proving useful in providing the principal and all team members with opportunities to discuss development both for the staff member and for the setting.

The setting provides an education which follows the principles of the Montessori approach and environment. The setting has successfully addressed 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 reflect on the provision for, and the children's use of, the new role play area; and
- the team should continue to develop focused peer observations in order that these become an effective tool for continuing reflective practice.

An Action Plan has been drawn up with, and retained by, the setting to address these recommendations.

Philosophy:

Montessori philosophy is strongly embedded in the nursery school's procedures and practice. The staff team demonstrates this ethos in the respect and trust shown towards the children, allowing them freedom within boundaries. The children enjoy daily work cycles of three hours in which to self-select their activities, and seamlessly move between independent and small group work. The adults sensitively engage with the children, supporting and extending their learning, and follow their interests closely. In the afternoon of the first reaccreditation visit, an adult based a modelling activity around a farm story and tractor, knowing that this would interest a particular child.

The Montessori philosophy is explained in the nursery school's written documentation for parents, such as the prospectus and parent pack. A new website has been created since the first visit, with further links to information about Montessori for prospective parents.

Learning and Development:

In both classes and the garden all curriculum areas are available. Children show a high level of interest in their self-initiated activities as well as in those which are adult-led. On the day of the first reaccreditation visit small groups arose spontaneously, often inspired by the adults; for example, one demonstrated an activity that reproduced a volcanic eruption.

Differentiation of planning and activities is noticeable, as staff members in both classes work to ensure that the learning and development opportunities meet the needs and interests of its children. On the day of the first visit there were activities for exploring ice in both classes, linked to the topic of winter and North America, but whilst the younger children explored ice with their hands, the older ones experimented with the effect of salt on ice. The large group activities are also age-appropriate. Children with additional needs are extremely well supported.

There is a specific focus to the afternoon sessions, during which art, Forest Rangers, dance and cooking activities are offered, and children take part in these enthusiastically.

The principal is actively involved in local research projects, such as on storytelling, which is having a positive impact on staff members' confidence in this area and on children's language and creative development. A new focus on creativity and imaginative play has led to the creation of a role play area in the largest room. It is recommended that all staff continue to assess this provision as they observe and reflect on children's current interests.

A secure web-based record-keeping system is used to record staff observations of children's activity and progress. The children's, as well as the whole nursery school's development, is very effectively monitored by the principal.

Prepared Environment: resources and materials

Children choose from the extremely wide range of resources that are available on accessible shelving, both indoors and outside. The largest classroom contains plentiful materials in all the Montessori curriculum areas, including many teacher-made activities. The 2 year olds enjoy a homely environment with suitable materials for their stage of development, such as posting buttons into a tin, threading large beads and mark-making with chalk or paint at an easel. These resources cover each area of learning and development in the Early Years Foundation Stage, and the children in this room are introduced to the Montessori ethos, for example through choosing and returning resources independently. Following the first reaccreditation visit, early Montessori sensorial and cultural materials have been made available to these younger children. They show their readiness for these by, for example, grading cylinder blocks by size, or sorting models of animals into family groups. These new resources and activities are enjoyed by the children and will aid their transition to the older children's room.

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

Children demonstrate high levels of independence throughout the day, choosing their activities and returning them to the shelf, and changing into boots and coats to go outside. They help themselves to snack, lay tables for lunch and self-serve their food. The older children have individual snack and, although the younger ones eat this as a

group, they help themselves to crackers and fruit, spread butter and pour their own water or milk. Parents are highly complimentary of their children's developing independence, and take pleasure in fostering this at home.

Montessori Practice: links with parents, including reports and records

Links with parents are exemplary, and they praise the staff team's dedication, care and knowledge. Parents can speak with their child's key person daily, and receive weekly information and progress updates from the setting's staff through the web-based record-keeping system. The prospectus is comprehensive and the detailed parent pack is given to them during their child's first settling-in session. Parent evenings, where information on the child's progress is shared, receive very positive feedback, and social events are also held, with very good attendance.

Staff: qualifications, deployment, and performance management

The staff team is well qualified, very motivated and passionate about supporting each child to achieve his or her potential. The team works very effectively together, under the enthusiastic leadership of the principal. Monthly staff and planning meetings help to ensure that all staff members remain well-informed and regularly reflect on their practice. Following the first reaccreditation visit, a format for peer observations has been implemented in order to achieve consistency in making and assessing these across the team. It is now recommended that these observations have a particular focus each time, so that they can more effectively support the continuing professional development needs of the staff.

The format for termly supervisions has also been reviewed following the first visit, and appraisals conducted by the principal have been introduced. This has allowed performance management and training needs to be identified and addressed more fully, and is proving to be beneficial for all staff. The nursery school is dedicated to providing high quality care and Montessori education to the children, who thrive in this nurturing environment.

Name of Assessor: Mary Lazo

Date of first visit: 15 January 2018

Date of second visit: 27 April 2018

Date reports submitted: First visit – 16 January 2018

Second visit – 30 April 2018

Appendix to the report dated June 2018

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.

The Rainbow Montessori Nursery School

The Lynch Chapel, The Lynch, Winscombe, North Somerset BS25 1AR

Date of the first re-accreditation visit: 24 October 2013

Date of the second re-accreditation visit: 27 March 2014

Date of previous MEAB accreditation: November 2010

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

Description of the school:

The nursery school is located in Winscombe, a small village in North Somerset. It is accommodated in a church hall which is used as the main classroom. The room is organized into the Montessori areas of learning, while a smaller room is used for quiet activities such as reading and for small group work. The setting has use of a kitchen where lunches are prepared and cooked for all children attending. There is also an office, a storage room and three toilets. The setting has occasional access to the vestry and the chapel for special events such as nativity plays and end of term performances. On Friday afternoons the entire contents of the nursery have to be packed away and stored for the weekend. The children have access to a small outside paved area and the nursery rents a private allotment. The nursery is very close to the disused railway line (The Strawberry Line), and they use this location for weekly forest school activities.

The nursery operates school term time only, and is open from 9.00 to 17.00 Monday to Thursday when morning, afternoon, or all day sessions are offered for 2 to 5 year olds, and it closes at 13.00 on Fridays. Forty-seven children are on roll and 26 children attend in the

mornings and up to 22 in the afternoons, and all were present during the second re-accreditation visit. There is provision for children with Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND), with staff available to support children individually. Currently there are no children with English as an Additional Language (EAL), but there are resources available if the need arises.

The nursery is privately owned; it has been established since 1996 and under the present ownership since 1998. There are ten staff including the owner, of whom nine have relevant early years qualifications and one has started a Montessori distance learning course since the last visit.

Summary

The Rainbow Nursery School was last accredited in November 2010 and the two recommendations have been successfully addressed. The school offers a complete Montessori experience for the 2 to 5 year olds, giving children opportunities to develop independence and self-confidence, preparing them most effectively for their transition into full-time school. The Montessori philosophy is at the core of every aspect of the nursery's planning and resourcing. The environment in which the children work encourages respect for themselves, other children and their adult role models. The older children help the younger one and effectively model appropriate behaviour. The classroom resources are of a very high standard offering the children full access to all areas of learning. The outdoor environment is thoughtfully planned and well resourced to ensure that each child can follow their interests. The work cycle is followed most effectively both during the morning and afternoon sessions. Since the first re-accreditation visit the nursery has introduced peer observation.

The competent staff team respond well to children's questioning and encourage open ended investigations, especially in the outdoor environment. The parents fully appreciate the quality of the teaching and the commitment of the staff and they are true partners in their child's education and development. To further enhance the partnership with parents, the nursery has introduced, since the first re-accreditation visit, a computerized system for recording registration, observations and feedback between home and school.

The school provides an education which follows the principles of the Montessori approach. The school has successfully achieved the points for action recommended on the first re-accreditation visit, and this merits accreditation by the Montessori Evaluation and Accreditation Board. Consideration should be given to the following point for further development:

- Continue to implement peer observations across the whole team.

Philosophy:

As you enter the nursery, the Montessori ethos is evident from the beautifully prepared environment, where children cannot wait to start their activities as they arrive in the morning. This is effectively reflected in the settings documentation.

The atmosphere is calm, but busy, with staff interacting appropriately with every child and parent. The nursery 'follows the child', with each one working towards their potential. There are many examples of spontaneous learning, children exercising self-discipline and taking the opportunities to extend their own knowledge by developing extensions to their learning with imaginative use of the materials.

The adults have a sound understanding of Montessori principles, and observe and support each child who needs help. This has been reinforced considerably since the first re-accreditation visit by the introduction of the new recording system. The philosophy is clearly stated in much of the nursery's literature, both for parents, and the staff, who review their practice regularly through staff meetings.

Learning and Development:

The classroom is clearly divided into the Montessori areas of learning and the children move easily between the classrooms, using the shelves, tables and the floor space appropriately and effectively. They have free access and move confidently between the indoor and outdoor spaces, remembering to put on boots and coats if they are going outside. The outside has an excellent range of equipment and activities to support the children's learning.

The work cycle lasts for 2¾ hours in the morning and an hour and a half in the afternoon. Each staff member has specific responsibilities for an area of the curriculum, which ensures that the children have access to appropriate materials and activities to enrich their knowledge of each area. The whole year is planned in advance by all the staff using a rotation of curriculum enrichment topics based on seasons and festivals. Montessori activities are effectively linked with the revised EYFS framework. The children's age, ability and specific interests are all taken into account as each key person plans for their children. Resources and effective planning ensure that the needs of all the children are met.

During the second visit when the children were studying the rainforest, there was clear differentiation across the topic. For example, there were specific materials for matching and small world play for the under 3 year olds, while for the older pupils, there was extensive high quality teacher-made material, to support their understanding of the make-up of the forest and to develop appropriate vocabulary.

The observations and individual learning plans are consistently used to evaluate and assess children's needs and progress, assisted by the new computerized system. Since the first re-accreditation visit, each child's learning journal has been enhanced by the computerized record keeping system, which is shared weekly with parents. This system is organized in accordance with the EYFS linked with the Montessori curriculum. Children with specific needs are supported effectively by a team which includes access to an individual support worker, a key person and the SENCO member of staff.

Prepared Environment: resources and materials

There are excellent resources to cover every area of the Montessori curriculum alongside the seven areas of learning as defined in the EYFS. The range and variety of materials, both inside and outside, cater well for the individual needs of each child attending the nursery. There is a

good mix of table and floor activities as well as materials for group or solo work. Everything is very well maintained and carefully laid out. The activities are systematically organized, building on children's growing competence in their use. The staff work hard to ensure that all the materials are complete and in good condition. There are certainly enough exercises for every child to be able to choose their own activity.

The nursery offers a wide range of teacher-made materials, including those prepared by a student on placement.

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

The children's independence is fostered throughout the day. A very good example of this independence is the children's management of the snack time, as each child takes the food and drink, sits down, spreads their own butter and eats their crackers, having poured their drink, and then clears the plates. Other examples of independence include children registering themselves on arrival (after the official registration at the door) by finding their name on a lolly stick and placing it on the rainbow; dressing themselves in readiness for the outdoors; and the older ones making independent visits to the toilet.

On the day of the first re-accreditation visit they cooked apple sponge in the afternoon, where they practiced their cutting skills, chopping the apple sections into small pieces and adding them to the sponge mixture. On the second re-accreditation visit the cookery activity was linked to the theme of the rainforest.

The children show a healthy respect for themselves, each other and the adults in the environment. They handle the materials with care and return them to the shelves. The children have much freedom, which allows them to move from area to area, both inside and outside. The big blocks proved to be extremely popular during the visit and some children spent up to 45 minutes carrying out purposeful play with them, as the other children waited patiently for their turn. This effective play was much in evidence also during the second visit.

Teachers engage in presentations to a single child or to a small group. An individual lesson observed focused on the life cycle of the pumpkin, and gradually attracted a group audience. This led to child-initiated discussions as to the characteristics of the pumpkin, which resulted in some particularly good exploration of terminology and vocabulary. This high level of learning was evident on the day of the second visit, demonstrating important aspects of physical and language development, particularly as children cleared up after themselves using cloths, small brooms, and a dustpan and brush.

The parents support the school in the encouragement of independence from a very young age, and they appreciate the flow of information between school and home, informing them of the various aspects of child development from a Montessori perspective.

Montessori practice: Classroom management

The children are well motivated, and they need very little direction when choosing activities. The staff are vigilant and carefully monitor what each child is doing, only interrupting if the materials are being inappropriately used. They also ensure that the children access a wide range of activities during the work cycles. There was a period during the first re-accreditation visit when the children became restless, but by 11 o'clock every child was working with refreshed energy both inside and outside. At the end of the 2¾ hour work cycle some of the children would have happily continued with more exercises. During the morning the children were invited to participate in small groups for musical activities that were taking place away from the main classroom. This system worked very well and did not cause any interruption to the work cycle. At the end of the morning the children divided into two groups, where age-appropriate circle activities took place while the rest of the staff and a few children prepared the tables for the hot lunch. During the second visit, preparations for lunch were made while the children moved to the chapel to rehearse their Easter concert. Those who need to sleep use the floor mattresses in the separate quiet room after lunch.

The school has all the necessary policies in place, and these are known by both the parents and staff. The essential policies are included in the new parents' welcome pack. Each afternoon there are different specific activities which are incorporated in the 1½ hour work cycle. The afternoon activities include arts and crafts, dance and cookery. The access to Forest School activities is supervised and organized to ensure access by each child once a week. On Thursdays the nursery run a mother and toddler Montessori afternoon which the parents appreciate as an introduction to the nursery.

The adults in the environment demonstrate good organizational skills; they know their specific responsibilities for each day and make observations on their key children (as well as other nursery children on occasion) using the new recording system.

To ensure continuity, each child is allocated two key persons, as the nursery employees are all part-time. This means that each child benefits from a key person present at the session they attend and parents have continuity of information.

Montessori Practice: links with parents, including reports and records

The manager or deputy manager are always on early morning door duty and relay any messages back to the appropriate member of staff. The staff all work together to sensitively handle the transitions from home to nursery; this procedure was in evidence on both visits. Daily safety checks were carried out and recorded by the staff member responsible before the session started.

Dedicated staff undertake regular observations of their key children. Appropriate and effective evaluations and assessments as well as preparations of each child's individual learning plan are also in place. The nursery has exceptionally good links with the parent body. The prospectus, new parent's information pack, monthly newsletters and the comprehensive diaries of the nursery activities are all very much appreciated by the parents who speak very highly of the nursery. There are two parent evenings during the year and one written progress report at the end of the summer term as well as a comprehensive transition report when the child moves into primary school.

Parent feedback with regard to the introduction of the computerized system has been extremely positive. The manager has emphasized how valuable this system has proved to be as a regular monitoring tool, not only for her, but the rest of the staff.

Staffing:

The school is owned and expertly led by a proprietor who has a Cert Ed., B.Ed (Hons), the Montessori diploma, and has also achieved the Early Years Professional Status.

When staff join, the manager gives each one a fully comprehensive induction course; there are also job descriptions for all positions. Since the first visit the manager and her deputy have embarked on staff observations, which has been a very positive experience for all involved. The manager intends to develop this good practice to staff observing each other, and this remains an action for future development. In addition to this, the manager has the support of another Montessori setting manager, sharing good practice and observations. Regular staff meetings take place and all the staff work as a very cohesive team always putting the needs of the child first. They have an infectious enthusiasm for the many aspects of the Montessori curriculum and share their love of learning with all the children.

The manager is supported by nine part-time staff, three of whom have full Montessori qualifications, four others have attended a series of Montessori workshops in addition to their NVQ level 3 qualifications. One member has embarked recently on an MCI distance learning course. The qualified Montessori staff give her support with her Montessori studies. One member of staff has a NVQ level 3 and one other is a qualified teacher. All the staff have attended the North Somerset local authority training sessions on a variety of applicable topics, as well as attending Montessori conferences and workshops in London. They all try to support the Montessori regional meetings. The setting is committed to delivering high quality Montessori practice

Name of Assessors: Wendy E S Compson and Maureen Taylor

Date of reports: First visit – 24 October 24 2013

Second visit – 27 March 2014