



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.

Rushmore House Montessori Preschool

Pratts Bottom Free Church, Rushmore Hill, Pratts Bottom, Kent BR6 7NQ

Date of first accreditation visit: 21 May 2015

Date of second accreditation visit: 2 October 2015

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

Description of the school

Rushmore House Montessori Preschool is located in the rural village of Pratts Bottom near Orpington in Kent. It operates from a former church hall which was refurbished as a nursery in 2013. The building is single storey and the grounds consist of two grassed, fenced areas surrounding it. There is a main room which can be divided into two sections, a small kitchen, office and a separate storage area. The setting has sole use of the premises and it is one of two Montessori nurseries in the area led by the proprietor. The provision is for children aged 2 to 5 years during term time only and was originally registered in 2007 and re-registered at the current site in 2013. The setting offers full days from 08.00 to 18.00, morning sessions from 09.00 to 12.25 and afternoons from 12.30 to 15.30. Children may attend either full or half day sessions. Breakfast is available for those who require it and children bring a packed lunch if staying all day. The number of children on roll is 34. On the morning of the second visit 13 children were in attendance, seven of whom stayed for lunch and nine children were present for the afternoon session. The nursery makes provision for children with English as an additional language (EAL) and special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

There are six members of staff, five of whom hold relevant Montessori early years qualifications, including one member of staff who has Early Years Professional Status



(EYPS). The manager is one of four staff members (two being full-time) who work with the children. The proprietor is the group manager and monitors the setting. The office manager does not work with the children but three Montessori students on long term professional placement attend on a part-time basis.

Summary

This setting demonstrates a genuine commitment to the Montessori approach to early years care and education. Staff are highly qualified and provide a well-resourced, stimulating learning environment in which children have the freedom to explore, experiment, discover and challenge themselves. The philosophy of the setting ensures that staff take all children's interests into account and that appealing activities are planned according to individual needs. Staff consistently encourage children to use the wide range of outdoor activities, which they thoroughly enjoy.

The assessment and recording of children's learning is outstanding and provides parents with a record of their child's development and achievements to inform their approach at home. Improvements have been made in communicating children's progress to parents, with whom they have an outstanding relationship.

Team work is excellent. Since the first visit the recommendations have been fully implemented. Some of the policies have been made accessible to prospective parents on the website and staff record responsibility for actions in the minutes of their meetings. The quality of teaching has improved further through the formalization of the peer observation process.

The school provides an education in accordance with the principles of the Montessori approach and environment and merits accreditation by the Montessori Evaluation and Accreditation Board.

- It is recommended that the school continues to reflect on its practice in order to ensure that high standards are maintained.

Philosophy:

The setting provides well trained staff, excellent facilities, Montessori resources and a wide range of supporting materials to extend all aspects of the children's learning. Nurturing of the children is encouraged to help them develop into confident, self-assured, independent learners. Staff provide a choice of activities from within the prepared environment and allow the children freedom of movement and uninterrupted work time to complete their cycles of activity.

Staff carefully record each child's progress electronically and plan thoroughly to ensure



that the children are reaching their full potential. The adults are mindful of their role to observe and introduce new materials when the child is ready to progress in their learning. Staff trust the children and recognize their needs sufficiently to distinguish between occasions when a child requires support and guidance and those when they may be left to problem solve without interruption; they do not intervene unless needed. Staff consistently enforce the 'ground rules' and act as role models by observing the rules themselves. Children have excellent opportunities for the development of self-initiated learning and self-discipline at all times but particularly when they are outdoors. The philosophy is defined in writing on the website and all the principles, goals and philosophy are reviewed annually at a meeting by all the staff. Relevant policies have been made accessible to prospective parents on the website.

Learning and Development:

The children have an excellent range of resources for all areas of learning and all materials are regularly in use. The outside is extremely popular as the equipment and resources provide physical challenges which help children to develop their co-ordination, patience and co-operation. Thoughtful planning has contributed significantly to the outdoor learning and, for example, has motivated the children to learn the names of plants in their environment. Children enjoy digging the garden and are growing beans and potatoes. The work cycle in both the morning and afternoon sessions is two and a half hours long and offers ample opportunities for spontaneous learning and adult-led activities. The needs of all children and especially those with SEND and EAL are exceptionally well met. On Wednesdays children benefit from access to nearby woods for Forest school activities.

The year's planning is done by all the staff, according to the development of the children, and links the Montessori curriculum with the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Framework. Each term has a focus theme on which weekly planning is based. Staff evaluate the on-going theme on a daily basis and amend it according to children's needs and interests: they plan new activities appropriately for an individual child or a group.

Staff use iPads to access a secure, web-based electronic information system to manage record keeping and planning. Children register themselves daily by selecting their photograph on the iPad as they enter the setting. Staff use the iPad exceptionally well to enter observations of the children, both with photographs and written descriptions of what the children are achieving, and these are used to plan the next steps.

Managers use this electronic system very effectively to get an overview of progress in the preschool and to focus on groups of children at the same level of development. They check that plans for each child in every area of development are achieved.



Prepared Environment: resources and materials

The quality of the resources is excellent, with all the materials set out in an orderly manner on low shelving accessible to the children. The main hall can be subdivided into two areas by using built-in folding doors, and the nine windows provide plenty of natural light. The spacious environment allows children freedom of movement inside and outside. The classroom layout has separate areas for each part of the Montessori curriculum, all of which are appealing and ready to use as they are well maintained by the staff.

The outdoor area is particularly well resourced with equipment for physical activities and opportunities for exploration. Children have access to tables and chairs outdoors to enjoy exploring the properties of rocks, soil, plants or to draw and paint. Children benefit from spontaneously learning using the wide variety of outdoor resources and the support of the staff who promote more challenging tasks such as walking across a beam or learning to catch a ball.

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

The two and a half hour work cycle enables children to choose their activities, repeat them and return them to the shelves, showing great respect for the materials, themselves and others. Staff are always nearby to offer support if it is needed. Children prepare their own snack, which may include removing seeds from melons and cores from apples and they wash the dishes afterwards. Two low level sinks help promote the independence of the child in washing hands before handling food and in cleaning up afterwards. The taps are controlled by a soft push button enabling all the children to use them independently. A low-level butler sink is accessible to the children outdoors to enable them to explore and water plants in the garden. Children are free and trusted to go into the garden whenever they want via an overlapping plastic strip curtain in the doorway which is in place to keep the classroom warm.

Where appropriate, staff learn words in children's home languages and value and encourage the acceptance of cultural differences through the use of materials from different cultures. Parents are invited to observe in the classroom so that they may provide a consistency of approach at home.

Montessori practice: Classroom management

This is an exceptionally well run and managed setting. Policies and procedures are in place for all aspects of the work with the children and these are regularly monitored by the managers. The daily routine and planning document is displayed each week on the notice board outside for parents, as well as on the website and on the display board inside the classroom.



Ground rules for the children, including for circle time, are displayed as is the planning for the outside area. The morning routine works well as children choose Montessori materials before the outdoor area is accessible and, thereafter, they have a wider range of activities. The children arriving for the afternoon session, have the same choices as those attending the morning sessions. The children and adults know the routines very well and behaviour is excellent.

Children staying all day bring a packed lunch, wash their hands independently and are supervised by staff while they eat and pack away their lunch boxes. If a child needs to sleep, the room can easily be divided in two with the folding doors to make one side a sleeping area. Adult-led activities, differentiated by age group, are on offer at the beginning and end of each session but for the remainder of the sessions children may choose between individual or group activities. Careful planning for the Forest School each Wednesday, which is linked to the current theme, enables children to benefit fully from this additional learning experience.

Montessori Practice: links with parents, including reports and records

The partnership with parents is strong as the quantity and quality of information shared is exceptionally good. A rota system is in place for all staff to take turns to meet and greet parents, creating a friendly atmosphere for discussion with key persons, and parents can book appointments for longer discussions. There is a parent rota to enable parents to spend a session observing children interacting with their peer group and staff. Managers offer information sessions to parents and demonstrate how materials are introduced to children and how their learning is supported. At least one event is held each term for parents to talk to their child's key person, who is responsible for monitoring their progress. In addition, a termly coffee morning is held for parents to speak to the manager and group manager, and newsletters are sent out at least once per term.

Parents track their child's progress via the website, they read observations of their child's activities and look at a summary chart that highlights the three main areas of the curriculum in which their child is active. Parents have passwords to log in to this secure website and may access home learning suggestions, read notices, send messages to the setting or read a copy of their child's transition report, which is also sent to their receiving primary school.

Staffing:

The setting is led by the manager and overseen by the group manager. The roles and responsibilities are clear and each member of staff has a job description. Effective induction procedures are in place and excellent opportunities for training courses and continuous professional development are on offer. A clear development plan sets out future improvements. All the teaching staff have early years Montessori qualifications,



one has an M.A, two have B.A.s, three have B.Sc.s and one has an M.Sc. and EYPS. Regular staff meetings are held and recorded showing who is responsible for the actions and the date on which they have been completed. The manager carries out observations on all the staff on a regular basis. Staff team work is excellent and all of them are enthusiastic and committed to continually improving their Montessori practice in this outstanding setting.

Name of Assessor: Anne McConway

Date reports submitted: First visit – 22nd May 2015
Second visit – 5th October 2015