



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) and subsequent 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.

Weyhill Montessori

Scout HQ, Youth Campus, Weyhill, Haslemere, Surrey GU27 1BX

Date of the first re-accreditation visit: 10 March 2014

Date of the second re-accreditation visit: 1 July 2014

Date of previous MEAB accreditation: November 2010

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

Description of the school

Weyhill Montessori School was registered under the current ownership in 1995; it is privately owned and managed by the proprietor. The nursery school operates in the Scout Headquarters in the town of Haslemere. They have sole use of the premises during the time they are open, and pack the equipment away on most days.

The building comprises a large classroom with doors leading to the kitchen and garden. They have an entrance hall which also gives access to a second hall and toilet facilities. The fenced garden consists of a large L-shaped paved and grassed area which includes an activity centre with climbing wall and slide, sand-pit, picnic tables, stepping stones, plant beds, plants and a digging area. There is a large shed and an awning provides good shade and weather cover.

The children also make regular visits to a nearby wooded area.

The school is open during the morning from 9.30 to 12.30 Monday to Friday. Lunch sessions are offered from 12.30 to 13.30 on Monday, Wednesday and Thursday. Afternoon sessions run from 12.30 to 15.00 on Monday and Thursday and 12.30 to 14.30 on Wednesday during term time only. Children can attend a variety of sessions.



Those staying for lunch bring their own.

There are currently 52 children aged between 2½ and 5 years on the roll. On the day of the first re-accreditation visit 28 attended in the morning with 21 staying for the afternoon; another three joined this session, totaling 24 children. The second re-accreditation visit was only for a morning session and 21 children attended. The school makes provision for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), as well as for children with English as an additional language (EAL). It liaises with external agencies such as the local authority and private therapists. Peripatetic teachers come in to offer French and 'Little Footy Stars'. Visits to the local wooded area take place once a week.

The experienced proprietor is responsible for the day to day running of the school. She leads a team of eight well qualified practitioners, two of whom share the responsibilities of deputy manager.

Summary

The nursery provides a really welcoming and inclusive environment for all the children and their families. The staff work together very effectively and the key person system enables all children to feel secure in their environment. The children's freedom of choice and independence are paramount and the key principles of a 2¾ hour work cycle and mixed ages are effectively implemented. The predominantly Montessori trained staff have excellent strategies in place to meet the needs of all children, recognizing their uniqueness and supporting them so that no group or individual is disadvantaged. Effective planning and assessment systems are in place to support and enhance children's learning and development. Children benefit from the outstanding partnerships between staff, parents and other professionals involved in their care. Exceptional reflective practice clearly identifies areas for continued progression, which results in well-targeted and sustained improvement to the nursery. By changing the lunch routine and including evaluative statements in the children's 'Learning Journals' the team have worked successfully on the recommendations from the first re-accreditation visit. The school's educational aims are clearly set out in the information provided for the parents. Weyhill Montessori is very well managed and professionally led, and parents feel well informed and included in their children's developmental progress.

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.

- The school should continue to reflect on its practice in order to ensure that high standards are maintained.



Philosophy:

Weyhill Montessori school has a very strong Montessori ethos, which is reflected in the way the staff encourage independence in the warm, friendly, stimulating and exceptionally well-prepared learning environment. Each child is treated as an individual and the holistic approach and broad provision caters for all areas of learning and development. There is a strong emphasis on respect and consideration for others as well as on developing the children's self-confidence and motivation. The mixed aged group and 2¾ hour work cycle maximize opportunities for individuals to make decisions and choices. This approach assists the children's learning at their own pace, following their inner needs both indoors and outdoors; the staff trust them, encouraging freedom within well-defined boundaries.

Information provided for the parents is excellent, giving clear guidance and understanding of the Montessori approach. The termly newsletters are very informative and relevant articles on many aspects of child development are included in them. The aims and mission statement are set out clearly in the nursery prospectus, in the Operational File and on the web site. Regular reviews of the philosophy, principles and goals are one of the strengths of this well managed Montessori school. By using their observations effectively as a tool for assessment of learning as well as to reflect on their practice, they are able to follow the children successfully. The parents are valued as their child's prime educators and appreciate the information that is shared with them.

Learning and Development:

The staff integrate the Montessori and Early Years Foundations Stage (EYFS) curricula very successfully and have a clear understanding of how to combine them, which is evidenced in their documentation of children's learning. Children are free to explore the environment at their own pace and are involved in purposeful activities throughout the 2¾ hour work cycle in the morning and 2½ hour work cycle in the afternoon. Planning is on-going and involves all those who work with the children.

Comprehensive long and medium term planning ensures the staff maintain a fresh and stimulating environment for the children in their care. The short term planning is based on the children's interests and is highly responsive to the children's changing needs. Care has been taken to include the outside area in the planning to secure continuity of the learning environment between indoors and outdoors. Recording and assessment is predominantly the responsibility of each child's key person, but all staff are involved in observing the children. Following the first re-accreditation visit the staff are now using a tracking observation of the whole work cycle in addition to the already established narrative observations and are including evaluative comments in the "Learning Journals". The process of assessment and recording is holistic and thorough. The staff provide activities and personal targets for each child, which are updated daily and are reviewed half-termly. The children who attend afternoon sessions have their own key person. All staff members ensure the materials available are suitable and interesting as



they follow the children's interests, dinosaurs being a favorite at the moment. Effective and well considered staff deployment enables free access to the outside as needed and contributes significantly to the effective learning within this setting.

The mandatory two year progress check is completed by the younger children's key person during the first term of the child joining the nursery. It is then sent to parents for their comments in preparation for the bi-annual parents conferences. The staff complete a further child assessment form which is a summary of progress and add any relevant information.

The school makes excellent provision for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), as well as for children with English as an additional language (EAL). It liaises with external agencies such as the local authority and private therapists using ECAT initiatives to focus on communication and language. The manager has many years' experience working as a SENCo and attends regular SEND training workshops. A member of the team with special responsibility for one to one speech and language support ensures that both inclusion and additional help are given when appropriate.

Weyhill Montessori provides the children with an excellent balance of adult-initiated and child-led activities with many opportunities for children to explore and investigate and be creative both indoors and outdoors. The appropriate range of child-focused Montessori and other material covers all areas of learning comprehensively.

Prepared Environment: resources and materials

The large hall is diligently maintained and prepared according to the principles of Montessori philosophy, and has well defined areas of learning. The layout ensures children have ample space to work on the floor or at a table as they choose. Each member of staff is allocated an area to maintain and prepare, reflecting the children's needs, and ensuring that the materials are kept clean and complete. They are systematically arranged and ready for use as well as being age appropriate. Both the indoor and outdoor areas and equipment support all aspects of a child's development and are easily accessible for the children. Indoor resources, the washing activities, role-play and the parachute for example – as well as Montessori materials – are also taken outside. Since the last accreditation care has been taken to re-plan and equip the outside area as an outdoor classroom with the addition of a sensory area and a 'secret passage'.

The coloured sand is a wonderful resource. In addition to the well-stocked nature table, fresh flowers decorate the classroom and locusts are kept for the children to observe. On the day of the second re-accreditation visit the outside area was set up using Montessori activities as well as sand, painting, and gardening materials. A light box is also used as wonderful learning tool.

Project work influences the use of the resources, which are changed to keep the environment fresh and interesting and support the children's learning. Projects are also



used to promote and encourage the children's interests (for example, the children will be able to bring in their pets for a visit). On the day of the second re-accreditation visit the butterflies that had emerged from their pupas were released.

The children love learning and working in the nearby wooded area which they visit regularly. They relish the range of enjoyable activities such as building a campfire, hunting for mini-beasts and looking for hibernating hedgehogs in this stimulating natural environment that is situated at the end of the nursery garden. The adults ably promote the children's interests and help consolidate and extend their skills and understanding. The adult involvement enriches the children's play in this unique outdoor classroom. The 'Little Footy Stars' activity is also very popular.

Children are encouraged to respect and keep their environment clean and play constructively together, and are well supported in their learning by the very well prepared environment both inside and out.

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

There are many well considered opportunities for the children to develop independence and follow established routines during their time at Weyhill Montessori. Well established work cycle supports children's growing independence really well. The children are free to choose whether they work indoors or outdoors throughout the 2¾ hour work cycle in the morning and 2½ hour work cycle in the afternoon. The children show a very high level of respect for the environment and readily respond to the suggestions of those who work with them. They are encouraged to keep both environments clean and tidy, working effectively in groups or independently, making friends and learning to help each other. The mixed aged range offers all the children many opportunities to learn effectively from each other.

Throughout the session the children have access to a snack table with fruit, rice cakes, milk and water for those that want them. The children bring in their own cups and are now provided with china plates; they can wash and dry their plates. Following the first re-accreditation visit the children are now able to prepare their snacks on a rotational basis enhancing their independence and giving them real life experience in food preparation. This has led to new activities relating to snack preparation being introduced.

Parents receive written and verbal information on how to promote independence and how this can be extended at home. They are kept informed with a well-resourced parent library and newsletters with informative articles attached in addition to comprehensive information on the notice boards. The most recent newsletter included information about the re-accreditation visit and how the staff have implemented the recommendations.



Montessori practice: Classroom management

The key person responsibilities are divided between staff working with the older and younger children, and the children are only organized into groups for the purpose of planning and record keeping. The use of space and the way the environment is arranged facilitates freedom of movement very effectively throughout the whole indoor and outdoor areas. The adults are evenly distributed throughout the setting with well-organized written routines to ensure good supervision. The mixed aged group brings many benefits to all the children. They have free access to a snack table during the 2¾ hour work cycle.

Glasses and china plates have now been provided for the children who stay for lunch. They bring their own food and now put the lunch boxes away when they have transferred their food onto a plate. They all wait until everyone is ready at their table before starting to eat. The staff say that the slightly increased formality of the meal has improved the children's learning experience. The children develop an excellent understanding of healthy eating and discuss with each other what they have been given for lunch. Children who need to sleep are given a cushion to lie on and are provided with a blanket.

French is the only scheduled morning activity organized once a week and the children are at liberty to choose whether they join in or not. 'Little Footy Stars' is offered during the shorter Wednesday afternoon session, and trips to the woodland area are offered either as an afternoon or morning activity.

The excellent teamwork makes for a smooth, calm and happy learning environment and the staff have worked hard together to implement the recommendations from the first re-accreditation visit.

Montessori Practice: links with parents, including reports and records

Comprehensive policies and procedures are in place and fully understood by all the staff to ensure the children's wellbeing and safety. These are shared with the parents. The manager has overall responsibility for all the administration and observations of the whole setting. She ensures the staff carry out their responsibilities appropriately and effectively. Staff appraisals are embedded in their practice and regular supervision for new staff has been implemented. Peer observations are also made. A culture of regular observations is well established within the setting and makes an effective and positive contribution to teamwork. High staff ratios are maintained at all times with flexible staff deployment allowing children to move freely between the indoor and outdoor environments. Named staff photographs are now displayed outside the classroom for the parents to see.

The manager works very effectively at parent education, offering an annual evening talk, a comprehensive parents' library and information in the setting. This includes,



amongst other things, ideas of-how to support learning at home and articles of interest, local events and children's services on offer in the area as well as parent/teacher events. The parents are very appreciative of the effort taken on their behalf and consider the school to be well managed. There is an active parent association.

All the staff observe all the children. The record keeping is comprehensive and successfully combines the EYFS with Montessori method. Long narrative observations are used to follow the child and a child assessment form is prepared for the parents twice a year as well as a final report which is given to the parents for their comments to pass on to the next school. Compiling observations and writing reports as well as talking to parents are the responsibility of the child's key person.

There is a comprehensive settling-in programme and a 'notebook' which goes home for parents who are not able to collect their child regularly. Good written and verbal contacts with other settings are maintained. The broad 'Tracking Document', which shows progress and any gaps relating to the children's outcomes as identified by the EYFS is regularly updated. Parents receive a 'Learning journal' booklet which has an abundance of informative photographs and work the children have done during their time in the nursery. Evaluative statements are now included on the photographs and children's work. These give the parents a better understanding of their children's progress and the staff a more in-depth record of what the children are achieving.

Staffing:

The robust induction process and the support and training given to new staff ensure they are well informed and prepared for working in the school. Peer observations, staff appraisals and the statutory supervision are regularly carried out and well documented. Teamwork is outstanding and all are involved in the day to day running of the school. A comprehensive list of staff roles and rotas is displayed in the kitchen as well as a list of the children with allergies. Informal pre-session staff meetings are held each morning as well as minuted monthly meetings for all the staff. Students are carefully monitored, mentored, appraised and not included in the staffing ratios.

There are many well considered opportunities for continuous professional development training that has, amongst other topics, recently included sessions on the EYFS revised statutory guidance and observation techniques. The outcomes of all training are shared between the team effectively and, when appropriate, changes are put into practice. Every member of staff holds a current first aid certificate and has attended child protection training.

The owner/manager demonstrates a profound commitment to the school. She has many years' experience of working in a Montessori environment and has a Montessori teaching diploma as well as a degree. Seven out of the eight teaching staff hold a Level 4 Montessori Diploma and one has Qualified Teacher Status. The classroom supervisor also holds an elementary Montessori Diploma.



The whole team is deeply committed to providing outstanding and genuine Montessori practice and their commitment to the implementation of the recommendations from the first re-accreditation visit is a further sign of their dedication to continuous improvement and to the provision of a high quality Montessori environment. The focus on the individual child's developing potential is the strength of this Montessori setting and is much valued by the parents.

Name of Assessor: Charlotte White

Date of reports: First visit – 11 March 2014

Second visit – 1 July 2014