



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.

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.

Newpark Montessori Nursery School

22 Seward Street, London EC1V 3PA

Date of first accreditation visit: 6 July 2016

Date of second accreditation visit: 22 November 2016

This accreditation is valid until 31 December 2020

This accreditation report relates to the provision for children aged 4 months to 5 years.

Description of the nursery:

Newpark Montessori Nursery School (Clerkenwell) opened in 2012 and is one of a small group of nurseries privately owned by Newpark Childcare. It is situated in the London Borough of Islington and operates from new purpose-built premises in a residential development. The setting has two main classrooms, one is known as the Montessori schoolroom and is for children over 2½ years of age, and the other is for the infant community with children aged up to 2½. The infant community has a separate sensory 'garden room' and the schoolroom also has a small 'garden room'. Both parts of the



nursery have direct access to the large garden, which they share. There is a hallway, kitchen, office, laundry, and cloakroom facilities.

There are currently 79 children aged between 7 months and rising 5 years on the roll. On the day of the second accreditation visit 24 children attended all day in the infant community, 18 of whom were under 2 years, and 28 in the schoolroom. After an initial settling-in period all children attend a minimum of two full days a week. The setting is open for 50 weeks a year from 07.30 to 19.00, Monday to Friday, and the children all arrive by 09.00. They are provided with hot meals and snacks.

One of the three Directors of the group is in regular attendance but is not included on the rota. She holds a Montessori diploma together with a degree and Early Years Professional Status. The setting employs 20 members of staff including the manager and a chef. The manager is responsible for the day-to-day running of the setting and works five days a week, with the deputy being in charge in her absence. All staff members except the manager and chef work a ten-hour shift four days per week. On the day of the second accreditation visit 20 members of staff were present, 11 of whom worked in the infant community. There are additional staff members employed by the group who cover for staff absence.

The manager has a master's degree in Early Childhood Studies and is a qualified Montessori teaching assistant. The deputy manager has a level 4 qualification in Early Education and Childcare and a Montessori teaching assistant qualification from birth to three. Two members of staff have Montessori diplomas, six have degrees in Early Childhood Education and four of these have Qualified Teacher Status. The other staff members all have suitable childcare qualifications at level 3 or above, and one is currently taking a foundation degree.

The nursery supports children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and children who are learning English as an additional language (EAL).

Summary

Newpark Montessori is a spacious, well-designed Montessori setting, with a carefully prepared and outstanding indoor learning environment and large garden. The range and use of the outdoor resources has been reconsidered following the first accreditation visit and more activities to promote gross motor skills are now available for the children to enjoy. The setting offers its children an excellent Montessori experience from the moment they arrive and throughout their time in the nursery.

Adherence to the Montessori philosophy is very evident and is illustrated by the independence of even the very young children and by the high levels of trust and respect shown by all the children and the staff to each other. Every child is encouraged to work towards their full potential before they move on to primary school.



The setting is led by a highly organised management team who share their expertise and experience successfully. Staff members have very positive links with parents, who really appreciate the work the nursery undertakes with their children and who speak highly of the open communication and approachability of the team. They comment positively in particular on the contact the nursery maintains with them.

The staff work very well together and evidently enjoy their work. This is a vibrant learning community and the way that the team have embraced and implemented the changes suggested at the first accreditation visit illustrates their commitment to continuously assessing their provision and building on their achievements for all the children in their care.

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:

Newpark Montessori provides a warm, friendly and stimulating learning environment and a happy atmosphere in which children are encouraged to reach their full potential. The setting aims to provide an environment that encourages concentration, independence and self-motivation in a non-competitive manner. Each child is treated as an individual and the holistic approach and broad provision cater for all areas of a child's learning and development, with a strong emphasis on respect and the Montessori ethos of 'grace and courtesy'.

The setting's aims and objectives are stated on the very informative website, where there is an explanation of the Montessori philosophy and of how the school adheres to this in practice. The comprehensive handbook includes its development plan. Information about Montessori education and a reference to the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is also available to parents in the prospectus. Through monthly formal staff meetings and excellent verbal communication across the team, there are regular opportunities to review daily procedures, planning and goals in both classes. The management provides the team with many opportunities for training and continuing professional development (CPD).

The team ensures that the principle of 'following the child' is achieved in the daily life of the nursery and through the contact they have with the parents.



Learning and Development:

Newpark Montessori divides the children into two separate groups but these different sets of children have regular opportunities to mix together. The broad curriculum contributes very favourably to the children's learning and development. Long term planning is based on the Montessori curriculum and themes. Short term planning is based on staff members' observations of their key children and this comprehensive system is tailored to reflect the individual needs of the children and their families. These plans are reviewed monthly in the schoolroom and weekly plans are drawn from them. Each child has a 'Complete Guide' record, which is overseen by the key person. These records reflect the progressive nature of the children's development and combine Montessori areas of learning with those of the EYFS. The infant community staff plan for the children on a weekly basis by completing a 'Key Child Focused Planning' document which takes into consideration the information the parents contribute in the child's 'Complete Guide'. The children are closely monitored every day and members of staff track their activity in the environment so that they can see what the children are doing and what their current interests are. Observational practices at this setting are excellent and ensure that staff can provide well for each child. Records are very thorough and well-maintained.

The setting provides rich learning opportunities for all the children attending. All teaching staff in the setting meet every month to plan some activities together, ensuring that the needs of their age groups are catered for. The staff team in each room separately plans their topics. The planned topic is then integrated into some of the daily activities. On the day of the first accreditation visit the infant community children were involved in a project on transport. The role-play area had been turned into an 'airport' and artwork illustrated flying objects. The children participated in an interesting drama role-play, they were given 'boarding passes' and then boarded 'the plane' to sing songs.

On the day of the second visit the project in this room was 'underwater'. The children had many activities to support their growing understanding, including a large tray with water and plastic fish and a box they used as a boat in the role-play area. The setting's impressive fish tank also supported this theme.

Following the recommendation from the first visit topic work is now also well supported in the schoolroom. These children were doing a project on winter and many of the activities in their class reflected this theme. As well as ice and glitter snow there were fir cones and other objects to explore, and a book with winter pictures was very popular and helped extend their knowledge of the project. Other opportunities – such as science activities – are offered regularly that incorporate real hands-on experiences from which the children can build their understanding. Early literacy materials are now complete and available for the children to access independently, and the early reading scheme is appropriate for the age and stage of the children currently attending.

Both the indoor and outside areas used by the schoolroom are set up as Montessori classrooms and the children can work in or out as they choose throughout the day, whatever the weather. The three-hour morning work cycle allows the children plenty of opportunity to refine their skills. They enjoy self-initiated individual activities for the



majority of the work cycle, which gives them opportunities to investigate, explore and be creative. The infant community children are invited to join a group at the beginning of the morning and small group activities take place during the morning in both rooms. The children are taken to local parks regularly to complement their activities in the setting. Twice a year they also attend a concert performed by the London Symphony Orchestra for children under five.

The staff team establishes firm partnerships with parents and with external agencies to secure appropriate interventions for children with additional needs. They work closely with specialists, and staff members speak a wide variety of languages themselves, which helps them support children with EAL on a daily basis. This is an outstanding feature of the nursery as children come from a variety of cultural backgrounds and not all have English as their main language.

Prepared Environment: resources and materials

This outstanding purpose-built setting is very welcoming. The two classes are separately set up to accommodate children in the different age ranges. The Montessori areas of learning are clearly defined in each room and in the outside environment, and are prepared in accordance with the Montessori philosophy.

Following the first accreditation visit the layout of the area used for washing up and snack in the schoolroom has been reviewed and now washing up facilities, sinks and snack tables are closer together. This new layout works well, with the children easily fetching water to wash up. A corner in this classroom is also now dedicated to their project work. There is an area used for group activities and a book corner. The resources are accessible and of a very high standard, covering all the Montessori curriculum areas. The schoolroom children use the outside area for painting and drawing and the garden room off the schoolroom is used as an early literacy room.

The infant room is particularly well laid out and attractive. It has been furnished to cater especially for the young children's needs. It has sufficient space for the children to move around safely and there are soft cushions for them to lie on. This area is used for the children to sleep in and there is a partitioned area for changing nappies as well as a separate area used for messy play and meals. The large fish tank in this room is an outstanding feature of the setting; the fish have a very calming effect on these very young children. The garden room adjacent to the infant room is used as a sensory room and, while this room is set up to meet the needs of the very youngest, any child across the setting can access this area should they wish to. Treasure baskets and activities to support exploratory play with objects are very much in evidence in this garden room.

Both classrooms have direct access to the garden, which is divided into two separate areas by a fence during the morning. The larger part is used by all the children during this time. The younger children do not use the small area as it is an extension of the



older children's classroom. The fence is removed in the afternoon. A large awning covers the garden so that it can be used in all weathers. It is set up as an outside classroom with painting, role-play, books and bricks as well as a small sand tray, which can be turned into a mud kitchen. The children help look after the plants in the large planters and, following the first accreditation visit, fewer benches now line the perimeter of the garden, which has made more space for them to use. Following the first visit this area has also been equipped with more resources to promote gross motor skills and these complement the indoor provision well. The children can use trucks and cars and enjoy climbing.

The children benefit from using all the areas available to them, and having free access to the outside and to sensory play for most of the day is a great asset to their learning. The staff team reviews the provision through their thorough observations of the children at play.

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

Children's independence is fostered as an integral part of their day and this aspect of the setting's practice is excellent. On arrival, children are greeted in the hallway by key persons and those that want it have breakfast. Even the very young children help themselves and are given a choice of what to eat. When they have finished breakfast the older children go into their own classroom and start choosing their activities immediately. Some of the younger ones may start with a circle group and they are then taken to different areas such as the garden or sensory room, where they self-select activities.

The schoolroom children have the freedom to choose which area they wish to work in – their main room, the outside area or the literacy room – during the morning work cycle. Snack is available throughout their session and the children prepare it themselves. They now have the opportunity to wash dishes after breakfast and snack, and both the staff and the children value this purposeful activity. One of the outstanding features of this nursery is the independence shown by even the very young children. This was illustrated during the second accreditation visit by infant community children successfully helping to make a cheesecake for their tea. These children have snack together, which is fitting for this age group.

The staff members are excellent role models, interacting with their fellow workers as well as with the children in a respectful and courteous manner. They handle the materials with care and engage children in conversation about what they are doing, assisting if they need help and giving them time to complete their activities. Consequently children interact with each other in a similar and respectful manner and take care when carrying their activities from the shelf to the floor or table. This was again evident at lunchtime, with even the very young children handing round plates full



of food. The staff team uses positive language to support children's understanding of the boundaries of expected behaviour. For example, when a child wanted to join in a group singing activity during the first visit the children already participating were asked how they could make space for the newcomer.

Staff members give high priority to informing the parents about the importance of independence to aid their understanding of the role this plays in the development of their child. The children exhibit high self-esteem and self-confidence in the way they interact with visiting adults, with the staff, each other and with their activities. The members of the staff team respect the children and give them many opportunities to develop their independence.

Montessori practice: Classroom management

The morning work cycle is at least three hours long and the older children are able to visit the younger ones by invitation. Adult deployment is skillfully managed throughout the day with staff based in their own areas. A chart is displayed on a notice board giving information about the weekly staff rota so they know what their roles are for the day. The manager, with the support of the Directors, has overall responsibility for the setting. Each room has a room leader. Either the main or deputy key person supports each child on arrival in the morning and gives time to the parents to exchange information. Daily information charts for the children under one year are given to the parents at the end of the day. Information about the child's day is verbally communicated for the other children. Staff members are responsible for organising the environment in their own room and for planning and resourcing its activities. However, while all staff members have their own group to work with, they are familiar with all the children in the setting and they work extremely well together as a team.

Meals (except breakfast) are taken in the children's own rooms, which works well. All the children have a cooked meal at lunch and at teatime, which is provided by the setting's own kitchen staff. Children's special dietary requirements are fully considered and each child has a coloured wristband indicating what they can or cannot eat. Some staff members eat with the children and model good table manners. One child helps hand round the food to their table and the children wait until all the children on that table have been served before starting to eat, showing respect for each other. This routine is used in both rooms. The very young children follow their own routines and can sleep during the morning, but the majority of the children needing to sleep do so in the afternoon. Individual mattresses and blankets are provided and blinds are drawn. Adults support and monitor the children sleeping and those who do not need to sleep are able to play outside, or use the garden rooms.

Extra activities such as science, yoga, sport and gardening lessons are provided in the afternoon. When the children have finished these activities they are free to re-engage with the activities both indoors and out. The length of the afternoon work cycle depends



on the time the children are collected. The long work cycle in the morning and the different afternoon activities provide the children with a suitably varied curriculum. The combination of the staff's teamwork and their commitment to the principles of free-flow movement between the different environments and to vertical age grouping offers huge benefits to the children, who enjoy their day at Newpark. Classroom management is excellent.

Montessori Practice: links with parents, including reports and records

Parents are delighted with the progress their children make and with the support and communication they receive. They can see the positive impact the learning environment and the daily routines have on their children. They are happy to recommend the nursery to their friends and colleagues.

Information about the Montessori approach is available, and all the parents spoken to on both accreditation visits reported that they use aspects of the philosophy at home. There is a comprehensive file containing all the policies that is accessible for the parents and they receive a copy of them, along with other relevant documentation, when their child starts. The joining children have a settling-in period before they begin to stay all day.

Along with the thorough feedback they receive at the end of the day, the parents also take their child's 'Complete Guide' home every week and are asked to record in this their child's experiences over the weekend. This helps the staff team maintain contact with parents even when face-to face communication is not possible. These Guides comprehensively illustrate the child's developmental progress. Staff members also communicate with parents through the extensive newsletters, emails and a weekly private blog. Parents also enjoy Newpark's unique birthday DVD compiled during a child's birthday at the setting which gives the family a wonderful insight into their child's day at nursery. Parental participation in social gatherings and outings is positively encouraged and observation visits can be arranged with the manager of the setting.

While they are offered formal face to face parent meetings every six months, parents can meet with staff whenever they need too. A comprehensive developmental written report, with reference to the EYFS areas of learning and development, is written to coincide with the formal meetings. This is also used as a transition document for the child's next school, along with any other documentation the new school may require. The mandatory two year old progress check, compiled under the EYFS prime area headings, is prepared with parental contribution. Links with parents are thorough, relevant and respectful.



Staffing:

The Directors work hard to further develop the existing good practice and they demonstrate a profound commitment to the nursery while delegating the day to day running of it to the competent manager and room leaders. All the staff are well qualified and all those in the infant community have a qualification at level 3 or above, with five at level 6.

Photographs of the staff team are displayed in the hallway, along with their qualifications and designated roles. This information also includes the languages they speak and any significant additional training they have undertaken. Specific responsibilities, such as first aid supervision, are delegated to qualified members of staff who undergo extensive training to support their roles. However all members of staff take key training in, for example, first aid, so that they are able to support the children appropriately. The commitment to CPD is a particular strength of this setting: a wide variety of courses and in-house training are provided. One member recently undertook Montessori training and reviewed her approach to the practical life activities and use of treasure baskets for the benefit of the children. Another attended a short Montessori course that highlighted the importance of the adult as a role-model for children. The team has also recently adopted the Sustained Shared Thinking and Emotional Well-being (SSTEW) scale, to help them recognise further ways to encourage play and to develop consistent strategies for helping children think through problems and resolve their own conflicts. Formal staff meetings are held every month and minutes are written and kept on the premises. Weekly room meetings are also held and are occasionally minuted. All the managers from the group's settings meet every fortnight and members of the senior staff from across the group's settings are able to get together regularly.

New staff feel very well supported and are given a probationary period to learn about the setting before they start. Job descriptions are personalised and updated when necessary. Management and peer observations are embedded in practice and are used to support the development of staff members through the supervision and appraisal process. The setting's decision to apply for accreditation reflects the team's dedication to continuing improvement and to their commitment to provide high quality Montessori education. The children are happy and industrious as they are offered a very rewarding Montessori experience.

Name of Assessor: Charlotte White

Date report submitted: First visit – 8 July 2016

Second visit – 22 November 2016