



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.

Cator Park Montessori Pre-school

Cator Park Pavilion, Aldersmead Road, Beckenham, Kent BR3 1NA

Date of previous MEAB accreditation: July 2013

Date of first re-accreditation visit: 30 April 2016

Date of second re-accreditation visit: 14 July 2016

This accreditation is valid until 31 December 2021

This accreditation report relates to the provision for children aged 2 years 9 months to 5 years old.

Description of the nursery:

Cator Park Montessori Pre-school is located in a residential area of Beckenham, in the London Borough of Bromley. It has the sole use of a converted pavilion in the grounds of Cator Park Recreation Ground and has two large classrooms, two offices, a large storage area situated between the classrooms, a cloakroom and kitchen facilities. Both rooms have a prepared Montessori environment and a mixed age range of children attending; there is an enclosed garden for outdoor play. A maximum of 46 children between the ages of 2 years 9 months and 5 years old attend at any one time. There are currently 65 children on roll. On the day of the second re-accreditation visit 36 children were in attendance during both the morning and afternoon sessions, with six leaving at



the end of the morning and the same number arriving. The setting supports children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those for whom English is an additional language, and receives support from the local authority early years team.

The nursery is open five days a week during term times and a play scheme is available during the summer holidays for two weeks. Normal sessions run between the hours of 09.00 and 16.00, with an afterschool club to 17.00. Children join for morning sessions up to 11.45 or 12.00 (depending on the classroom), afternoon sessions up to 15.15 or 16.00, or they stay all day. On Mondays both classes offer a full day only. Those who attend all day bring in packed lunches. Just over half the children attend for three or more full days per week.

This privately owned pre-school opened in 2006. It employs 14 members of staff, 11 of whom work directly with the children and seven, including the manager, have early years Montessori qualifications. Thirteen of the staff team are full-time. The proprietor leads the setting with the help of the manager and oversees the finance and administration. Both work full-time.

Summary

Cator Park Montessori is a robustly led and managed setting where the well trained staff members provide a calm, quiet learning environment. The children show high levels of concentration on activities, confidence, independence, self-esteem and respect for each other. Children know the routines well and are purposefully engaged in learning wide-ranging skills. The outdoor provision offers children wonderful opportunities to explore and discover the natural environment along with coaching in various sports such as cricket. Planning is outstanding and is drawn from the setting's unique system for recording children's individual progress in all areas of learning. Children are very well prepared for the next stage in their learning. Staff demonstrate excellent teamwork. Their commitment to the Montessori approach is strong throughout the setting, in conjunction with their delivery of care and education in line with the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Framework. They have an excellent understanding of their roles and responsibilities. The partnership with parents is very strong and effective links with external agencies ensure that individual children's needs are met.

The recommendation from the previous MEAB accreditation, to introduce peer observations for staff, has been fully implemented.

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 pre-school continues to reflect on its practice in order to ensure that high standards are maintained.



Philosophy:

Cator Park Montessori Pre-school implements the Montessori philosophy outstandingly well and integrates this with the principles of the EYFS Framework. Its philosophy is defined in the document 'Cator Park Montessori Pre-school's Philosophy, Principles & Education Programmes'. Parents have very good access to information on the setting through the website, leaflets given to them and through direct contact with the management team. The well qualified and dedicated staff team fully understand their roles and responsibilities in implementing the philosophy to support children's learning and development. All aspects of the setting are very closely monitored, including children's progress. Trust is placed in the child to access learning opportunities independently and children relish this freedom within the excellently prepared environments. Self-discipline is actively promoted and the children are encouraged to reflect on their actions and given opportunities to self-correct through the process of open-ended sustained shared questioning. The enabling environments, indoors and out, provide the children with great opportunities to discover, explore and develop useful skills for the future.

Much importance is placed on the individuality of each child and his or her family. The strong partnership with the parents ensures their involvement in their child's education so that each child can fulfil their unique potential. Parents' and children's views are sought, listened to and respected. The policies, procedures and routines are regularly evaluated and amended as necessary, making self reflection a significant feature of their work.

Learning and Development:

Planning for and assessment of children's progress is meticulously detailed in all areas of learning. The leadership and management have high expectations of children's learning and development. The Montessori curriculum is fully implemented and integrated with the EYFS.

Long term planning is carried out by the leadership and discussed with the whole team at staff training days. This planning draws on staff experience and the setting's resources. Staff members work closely together to implement the long term themes. Short term planning meetings are held every morning in each classroom before the children arrive to organise the classrooms for the needs of the children. Planning for individual children is the responsibility of the key persons, who use a computer-based programme devised by the setting, 'Record of Achievement' (ROA). Key persons spend one hour of non-contact time at the end of each day collating information from the team to update the ROAs and plan possible lines of development (PLODs) for their key children. The PLODs are recorded on the whole class daily planning and evaluation form. Staff's evaluation of the previous day informs the next day's plan and includes discussing if PLODs were achieved.

The child's electronic ROA file is organised by the age-appropriate outcomes of the EYFS's areas of learning and development and indicates how the Montessori materials



and activities are used to meet them. This recording tool automatically updates a child's progress through the Montessori education programme every time staff record what children have achieved. The ROA contains a range of photographic evidence, work samples, parents' input, termly summative assessments and observations of individual children's progress, and is made available to parents during meetings each term and on request.

Parents are invited to share observations of the child's experiences at home. A highly experienced Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities Co-ordinator works one day per week to support parents and key persons to develop individual plans for those children with additional needs. The high staff/child ratio enables effective support and encouragement to be given to all the children. The staff team are well trained to provide for all areas of the curriculum and are allocated roles on a revolving daily basis at the direction of the class leader, as agreed at the morning meeting. Key persons disseminate information to other staff and parents, and are assigned responsibilities for group activities and presentations. The manager oversees the staff carrying out their roles across the setting. The learning and development provision at Cator Park is outstanding.

Prepared Environment: resources and materials

The children benefit from an exceptional prepared environment, both indoors and out. The indoor classrooms have wide-ranging Montessori resources set out according to curriculum areas, together with other learning resources such as science and ICT equipment. All materials are easily accessible to the children on the purpose-built low shelves. Staff members have easy access to a wealth of other resources kept in the storage area between the classrooms, in order to change the materials according to the needs of the child. Each room has a well-equipped expressive arts area, role-play and book corner, and the snack area is set up to enable children to be independent with all aspects of the snack cycle of activity, from choosing food to loading the dishwasher. Children have the opportunity to independently label and store their work using printed name labels and accessible work folders. The team work together extremely well to maintain the prepared environment and the children are encouraged to help with this task. Between the first and second re-accreditation visits, new resources were acquired to help children learn about money and to provide 'a grocery shop' for children to play in independently.

The outdoor area is used extremely well for wide-ranging activities, including demonstrating concepts such as the passage of time and 'volcano' experiments. The building is surrounded by a perimeter fence to create a secure garden. A decking area is used effectively as an outdoor Montessori classroom, set up with curriculum shelves. Children enjoy digging in the mud-kitchen and have planks and tyres for large construction play, and sand and water play. A versatile role-play area is used for specific themes such as traffic safety lessons and may-pole dancing. The gardening plot provides space for children to plant flowers, fruit and vegetables which they harvest for the end of year picnic, having seen the entire plant life-cycles during the academic year.

There is also a large Astroturf area, part of which is used for physical play such as with



rockers and trikes and the other part as a sports zone, in which a full-time sports coach delivers a range of activities throughout the sessions and across the year. The resources and facilities for sports coaching at this pre-school are exceptional and extend to the whole of the perimeter area in the summer term to provide for seven different sports, with additional coaching, making this a major feature of the provision as well as supporting individual learning.

Flower beds are located around the drop off and pick up area, and the children and their parents are encouraged to share in the upkeep of these. The premises are set within a public park, thus making nature trails easily accessible.

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

Children display very high levels of independence, self-esteem and engagement with activities. They choose what to do, who to work with and where to play. They work on their own, in pairs or small groups at tables, on the floor or outside. Members of the staff team sensitively encourage the children to treat their environment with respect. The effective key person system helps each child to develop the confidence to independently separate from their prime carer. On arrival, children greet and shake hands with staff, store away their lunch box, change into indoor shoes and self-register. When all children have arrived and a short circle time has taken place, they all make their own choice of activity without interruption. The adults act as positive role models for the children and each other as they treat all those involved with the setting with courtesy and respect. Social skills are reinforced for the children through a programme that introduces these skills in groups, including the ground rules, and these help prepare the children to deal independently with challenging situations and to refine their interaction and respect for others.

Low level coat pegs, bag and shoe spaces enable children to be self-sufficient when preparing to go outdoors. Staff members monitor the numbers of children going out using a bib-system, which is effective in helping to ensure sufficient adult support indoors and out.

A varied and healthy snack is provided by the setting and is available throughout the sessions for children to choose and clear up after themselves. They self-register for this, take a cup and plate each, pour drinks, and wipe their crockery in a washing bowl before placing it in the dishwasher. Skills such as cutting fruit are introduced to enable the children to confidently prepare the snack independently. They are helped to develop independence in opening lunch bags, cartons and containers, and are encouraged to wipe the tables and clean their teeth after lunch.

Prospective parents are given a clear verbal introduction to the Montessori philosophy and leaflets and website information highlight the pre-school's approach. Parents are updated on how they can extend their child's learning at home, which enables parents and teachers to work in partnership to consistently foster the child's independence.



Montessori practice: Classroom management

This is a calm, very well-managed learning environment where staff have meticulously planned activities but in which they respond well to the spontaneous interests of the children. One to one work is given high priority. Children work independently both indoors and outside and the free flow between these two areas is extremely well managed by the team. The work cycle varies in length from 2¾ hours in the morning to between 2½ and 3½ hours in the afternoon depending on the length of session children are booked to attend. Circle times for each key group take place both on arrival and at the end of the sessions, but children are free to join these or to choose other activities. Ball skills, gymnastics and athletics take place outdoors during the work cycle throughout the year and the children are again free to join in or not. The members of the staff team work extremely well together to support the children's choices and provide a very good balance between adult-led and child-led activities. For example, the team are innovative in offering challenging extension activities with Montessori sensorial resources for the benefit of all children and, in particular, to support those with SEND individually. Both classrooms have the same breadth of age range and all the children mix freely whilst outdoors as these areas are shared by both classes.

Children staying all day eat their packed lunch with staff sitting with them to encourage good table manners. Children requiring a rest use the comfortable book corners, and those who stay until 17.00 have tea, which the nursery provides, and a story time after the other afternoon children leave. Clear policies and classroom procedures are accessible to all staff together with details of children's dietary requirements. Music is played in the background to create a calm atmosphere and all transitions during the day are very well managed.

Montessori Practice: links with parents, including reports and records

The leadership and management have a very positive approach to their links with parents, they openly share information and offer support to parents to build a strong partnership. Parents feel involved in the life of the setting and value the open door policy. Their views are respected and suggestions from half-termly questionnaires are acted upon. The setting provides parent information leaflets, settling-in sessions and initial summative assessments for newcomers, information evenings and informal verbal exchanges on arrival and pick-up.

The first summative report is drawn up with parents, and they are invited into the classrooms to share their knowledge of culture, jobs, hobbies or to join in special class activities. There is a parents' association, and communication is further strengthened through informative half-termly newsletters, with questionnaires, and 'highlights of the day' slips. Parents meet with the management and their child's key person for updates on their child's progress at least once per term. During these meetings parents are invited to view the photographic observations and attainment records on their child's ROA, and agreement is reached on the next steps in the child's learning.

When a child leaves, a transition report is discussed with parents and shared with the next setting, and parents receive an electronic copy of their child's record which includes



photographs. The high quality information provided through the website, newsletters, notices and information evenings enable parents to gain a thorough understanding of the ethos and practice of this excellent Montessori environment.

Staffing:

The joint leadership of the proprietor and manager is outstanding. The staffing structure is clear and the high expectations of the management are consistently applied throughout the setting to help ensure excellent standards of care and education. The leadership team embraces a holistic approach to the management of all aspects of the pre-school; they involve the staff, children and their families in discussions about the provision and, as a result, the staff are fully engaged and the children are settled, independent and thriving.

Members of staff are well qualified and, in addition to the seven with Montessori qualifications, one holds a BA in Early Childhood Studies, others have relevant early years' qualifications and one is a qualified sports coach. The leaders are fully committed to the continued professional development (CPD) of the whole team and the development plan includes staff's CPD goals. Attendance at Montessori training events is encouraged and excellent support is provided for less experienced members of the team. Highly effective employment procedures, induction and staff appraisals are in place. Regular staff meetings are recorded and statutory training is kept up-to-date. Observations of staff are regularly carried out by the manager and proprietor in order to assess performance. Peer to peer observations are embedded in practice to further enhance self-evaluation. The management of this setting demonstrates progressive thinking and innovative ideas that encourage the staff to provide a very high quality Montessori education for the children.

Name of Assessor: Anne McConway

Date reports submitted: First visit - 3 May 2016
Second visit - 14 July 2016