

## **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.

### **Eden Montessori Nursery**

Kensington United Reformed Church, Allen Street, Kensington, London W8 6BL

Date of previous MEAB accreditation: June 2014

This accreditation is valid until December 2022

This accreditation report relates to the provision for children aged 12 months to 5 years.

#### **Description of the nursery:**

Eden Montessori Nursery is situated in the London Borough of Kensington and Chelsea. The nursery was established in 2010 and is privately owned by the principal. It is located in a church hall and has sole use of the premises during opening hours. There are two large rooms which form the two Montessori classrooms. The Yellow classroom is divided into Yellow stage one, catering for the 1 to 2 year olds, and Yellow stage two for 2 to 3 year olds. The other classroom is the pre-school room, which caters for 3 to 5 year olds. There is also a large kitchen, an office, and a staff/meeting room which is also used for children to sleep in when necessary. The nursery has a small, paved outdoor

space at the front of the church which is used as a play area. The children are taken on regular visits to the local park, library and Forest School (based in Holland Park) during the afternoons. The nursery packs away the Yellow classroom each day and both classrooms every Friday afternoon, after the session has finished.

The nursery is open weekdays in term time only and its day runs continuously from 08.30 to 15.30. Part-time and full-time attendance options are offered. Morning sessions run from 09.00 to 12.00 and afternoons from 12.30 to 15.30. Breakfast club runs from 08.30 to 09.00. The children must attend a minimum of three sessions a week; many attend on a full-time basis.

The nursery currently has 41 children on roll, 12 children under 2 years, thirteen 2 to 3 year olds and 16 aged 3 to rising 5. On the morning of the second reaccreditation visit there were 31 children attending altogether, of whom eight were under 2 years old; 16 stayed for the afternoon session and no children attended just for the afternoon. There were ten members of staff attending during the morning and eight in the afternoon. There are eight permanent members of staff altogether, including the administrator and the principal. Most work full-time. This team is supported when necessary by three regular temporary staff. One student on teaching practice is also currently attending.

Three of the staff hold a Montessori qualification including the principal, who is involved with the daily running of the setting. The manager holds Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) and an MA in education, and is working towards a Montessori qualification. One member holds a level 6 qualification, one is qualified to level 3 and two to level 2. Three teachers work with the under 2 year olds, all being qualified early years practitioners.

Eden Montessori Nursery offers healthy snacks for the children and cooked lunches are prepared on site by a member of staff. The nursery is able to support children with additional needs such as disabilities, special dietary requirements or English as an additional language.

## Summary

As recommended at the previous MEAB accreditation, the principal and her team have continued to reflect on their practice to ensure that its high standards are maintained. The management team is motivational and all the adults are committed to providing the children with an holistic education which matches their interests. They have high standards and high expectations of themselves and of the children, for whom they set challenging and realistic goals. They have an excellent knowledge of each child's individual needs. The strategies that they offer the children to help them manage their emotions and resolve their own disputes are outstanding. Partnership with the children's families is very strong.

The Montessori prepared environments indoors are highly conducive to learning. The low-level shelving and the Montessori and other resources are suitable for the children's ages and stages of learning, they foster independence and meet the children's interests. However, it is recommended that the staff team reviews the

provision for promoting gross motor skills and have to hand their information on children's current fascinations. An invitation system between rooms can be incorporated so that children have independent choice to visit the other room.

There is now no direct access to the outdoor area from the classrooms, but best use of the outside space available is achieved through a comprehensive system of communication between the staff indoors and out. The children are able to use this area when they want to during the morning's three hour work cycle. Lunch is taken in the classrooms for each age group. The children who stay all day are often taken on local outings during the afternoons. On the day of the second reaccreditation visit the children were taken to the local library in the afternoon.

Since the previous MEAB accreditation staff members have become experienced in using the secure online record-keeping system, which has been comprehensively tailored to meet the setting's needs. Having undergone training, the staff now use effectively the area on the system that is designated for 'critical insights'.

Eden Montessori Nursery is an exceptionally nurturing learning environment; the children display high self-esteem and thrive as they and their parents enjoy their full inclusion in the nursery.

***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:***

- further enhance provision for the development of gross motor skills, particularly outdoors; and
- make information on children's current interests and schemes more easily available, especially in the toddler area, to remind staff of which learning opportunities to provide.

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

#### **Philosophy:**

Adherence to the Montessori philosophy is the foundation for the children's learning at Eden Montessori Nursery. The aim of the staff team is to give each child a firm base in education and to support them in working towards their full potential. The adults have high standards and expectations of themselves and of the children; they set them realistic goals, they are sensitive to the children's needs and encourage their independence.

It was recommended at the first reaccreditation visit that staff introduce an invitation system so that children can visit the other class, to further support their freedom of choice and natural curiosity. This was implemented effectively after the visit and it is planned that this will be reinstated shortly, once the new children have fully settled in. The calm atmosphere, the industrious children and their respect for the environment and each other, ensure that they have a very positive experience at nursery.

### **Learning and Development:**

Learning is primarily child-led and the adults have firm knowledge of, and respect for, the children's interests. They are skilled early years teachers. For example, during the first reaccreditation visit, one child was given a book about an orange dinosaur as staff thought this would be of particular interest and the child's parents confirmed that this matched their child's favourite colour and animal.

To complement the Montessori curriculum, children who choose to learn through role-play are given a range of interesting and realistic props such as a doctor's set with a real stethoscope and mask. This inspires and encourages them to become active and playful learners. The adults are adept at supporting, without interrupting, the children's exploration and learning, which was in evidence during the second visit in the way an adult skillfully directed a child who was 'preparing lunch'.

The very young children (1 to 2 year olds) tend to stay at home for their sleep and usually therefore only attend a half-day session; they can either attend mornings or afternoons to fit in with their own routines. The older age groups enjoy a three hour work cycle in the morning and the other activities organised for the afternoon. Any child who needs to sleep at the setting can do so. The children have many opportunities to learn beyond the nursery during the afternoons; they visit the park and library regularly, they visit an Ecology Centre occasionally, and attend Forest School weekly. Additional activities such as yoga that take place in the morning are generally voluntary, so as not to interrupt the children's morning work cycle.

As observations that staff members make of the children are comprehensive, planning is relevant and is linked effectively to the Montessori curriculum and the Early Years Foundation Stage areas of learning and development. Long term planning is drawn up by the team as a whole, and includes topics and trips out. Each class also plans for additional activities weekly.

The setting's proactive approach towards evaluating and developing opportunities for children's learning is greatly enhanced by the adults' ability to adapt their practice and the provision for the benefit of the children, such as for those with additional needs.

### **Prepared Environment: resources and materials**

The layout of the classrooms facilitates easy access to all the materials, and the extensive range of resources promotes the children's learning and development very effectively, especially in the area of fine motor skills. Good use is made of the small paved outside area. The children self-select the resources they want to play with and on the day of the first reaccreditation visit the children chose to use construction and art materials outside.

The importance of providing activities and resources for children's developing gross motor skills and for children's schemes is very well recognised by the management team. It is recommended that information on children's current interests and schemes is displayed as a prompt for staff to provide specific activities for them (particularly in the toddler area). It is also recommended that staff members further enhance provision for the development of gross motor skills, especially outdoors. The clean, fresh presentation of the classrooms is a tribute to the dedication the principal displays for her nursery.

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

There are many opportunities for the children to develop their independence. Partnership with parents is particularly strong in this aspect of provision, with excellent information being made available to parents about how to encourage their child's autonomy.

Freedom of choice is evident in the setting, children work indoors or out, alone or with others, with self-selected activities. Snack is freely available for the older children and they are encouraged to squeeze their own orange juice. The very young children have a snack all together, which is appropriate for them.

The staff members will initiate an activity, such as a presentation of a resource, and the children freely join if they wish. The adults use very positive and effective techniques for behaviour management and the children have a good understanding of what is expected of them. This helps engender a natural and calm atmosphere in both rooms and supports the Montessori ethos of grace and courtesy. Giving children the opportunity to become more independent is a strength of the nursery.

### **Montessori Practice: links with parents, including reports and records**

Links with parents are outstanding. Regular parenting classes are offered and parental support is fully embedded in practice. Home visits are made available. The mandatory two year old progress check is carried out by the child's key person with parental contributions, and both complete a settling-in form together when the child first starts. The parents describe the nursery as 'like a family'.

While paper records are used when appropriate, the digital record-keeping system is now fully in use for monitoring and assessing children's learning and development. Tailored improvements have been made to this use since the previous MEAB accreditation, for example, staff members now use it daily to communicate with the parents of children under 2 years old. The area for 'critical insights' on the digital system is also now used more effectively and provides the staff with significant information about the child, the environment and the teacher's role in supporting the child.

### **Staff: qualifications, deployment, and performance management**

The highly committed principal is passionate about the Montessori approach. This commitment is evidenced in the training and support she provides for the staff. She works collaboratively with her team to ensure the best outcomes for the children and their families. Staff supervision meetings take place termly with the manager, and appraisals are annual. Regular peer observations are useful for continuing professional development and job descriptions include a section on Montessori practice. The principal and manager work well together and all staff members report that they feel very well supported by them. The whole staff team comes together at the beginning of the day to discuss plans for the children; the meeting ends with a few minutes 'devoted to mindfulness', giving the team the opportunity for calm reflection before the day starts.

This is an infectious, enthusiastic, respectful and caring team that works hard to promote the Montessori ethos beyond the setting. The children's best interests are at the heart of its practice.

Name of Assessor: Charlotte White

Date of first visit: 12 June 2018

Date of second visit: 11 October 2018

Date report submitted: First visit – 14 June 2018

Second visit – 12 October 2018