



# **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.

### **Frogmore Montessori Nursery School**

Frogmore House, Frogmore Avenue, Eggbuckland, Plymouth, Devon PL6 5RT

Date of previous MEAB accreditation: November 2012

Date of first re-accreditation visit: 21 May 2015

Date of second re-accreditation visit: 01 October 2015

This accreditation report relates to the provision for children from birth to 5 years.

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

Frogmore Montessori Nursery School opened in 1991, and operates from a large, detached house in a residential area of Plymouth. The children are accommodated on both floors of the property: the babies and young 2 year olds within four rooms on the first floor, and the older 2 and over 3 year olds within two rooms on the ground floor, and with access to the first floor when needed. The remaining rooms include a staff room, office, kitchen and toilet facilities. The large enclosed outdoor space at the back of the property comprises grassed and paved areas, with a wide range of appropriate equipment.

The nursery is registered for 38 children under 8 years. There are currently 55 children on roll, all up to 5 years of age. On the day of the second re-accreditation visit there were five children under 2 years of age present both morning and afternoon, and 19 children aged 2 years and older in the morning and 17 in the afternoon. Holiday care is available for school-aged children up to 8 years of age; this additional provision is not being considered for the purpose of this accreditation. The nursery supports children with special educational needs, disabilities and children who speak English as an



additional language.

The setting opens five days a week all year round, except Bank Holidays and a week at Christmas. Children attend for a variety of sessions, core hours are 08.00 to 17.45, with additional care between 07.30 and 08.00 and from 17.45 to 18.15. There is also the option of a shorter day between 08.45 and 16.15 for term time only attendance. Children who stay all day have the option of bringing their own packed lunch, or having a cooked meal; children who arrive before 09.00 are offered breakfast if they wish, which is provided by parents, and the nursery offers snacks in both the mornings and afternoons. During the summer term, visiting instructors attend for creative and sports activities on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons, which the children can join if they wish.

The nursery is one of two Montessori settings in the area privately owned by the same proprietor, who manages the setting and is supported by nine members of staff, all of whom hold relevant childcare qualifications; six work full time. The owner/manager and two other members of staff have Early Years Professional Status (EYPS) and a Montessori Diploma. Six others also hold Montessori qualifications. The manager is supported by two deputies and she and one of the deputies are also qualified teachers.

## Summary

Frogmore Montessori provides a very homely and welcoming environment for the children and follows the Montessori approach closely. The rooms for the babies and younger children on the first floor are very sensitively prepared and provide a variety of Montessori and other age appropriate experiences. Similarly, the ground floor rooms offer materials in all areas of the Montessori curriculum and, with free flow to the outside, enable the children to access a very broad range of activities.

The children are encouraged to be independent during the core work cycles of at least three hours in length both mornings and afternoons, and enjoy the freedom to choose where and with whom they would like to be. They are happy and confident, and are familiar with the routines. The nursery has effective links with parents, who are very positive about their children's learning. Moreover, the staff team is extremely well qualified, with continuous professional development given a high priority by the Manager, who is also a Montessori teacher trainer and offers teaching practice placement to Montessori trainees.

Since their last MEAB accreditation, the nursery school has effectively evaluated its child observation system, and this now provides a clearer way of recording children's progress through the identification of next steps, which are shared with parents. Montessori training has been strongly promoted through the delivery of part-time courses on site, and the Montessori curriculum has been successfully combined with the revised Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) in the Individual Learning Journals, enabling progress in relation to the EYFS to be tracked more effectively. Since the first re-accreditation visit, the appraisal documents have been updated, and peer



observations and appraisals are carried out effectively. Staff and management consider these useful tools for planning future development. The team has also begun to create more handmade materials for the curriculum areas, and these have proved engaging and relevant for the children attending.

***The school provides an education which follows the principles of the Montessori approach and environment. The school has successfully addressed the 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:***

- continue to prepare resources across the Montessori curriculum areas; and
- continue to build on recent Montessori training to consistently support children's language development.

#### **Philosophy:**

Frogmore Montessori's aims, vision statement and commitment to the Montessori ethos are clearly stated in the nursery's prospectus and the parent Welcome Pack, both of which are available on the website. There are also notices explaining Montessori practice displayed on the parent information boards, and copies of Montessori magazines are available for parents to borrow.

Montessori philosophy is firmly embedded in practice at the setting; for example children have an extended work cycle throughout their session or day, with opportunities for self-initiated learning, working independently or in small groups.

The first floor rooms cater well for the needs of the younger children and allow for vertical grouping as the younger 2 year olds can play in the same room as the babies. The children on the ground floor, who are between 2 and 5 years of age, can choose when to go outside or have snack; staff are respectful of the children's needs and interests. For example, during the first re-accreditation visit, whilst a group of children were looking for mini-beasts and recording their findings outside, others were engaged in role play, while others were making bark rubbings on tree stumps.

#### **Learning and Development:**

The three rooms on the first floor offer a wide range of activities for the younger children and babies. One is specifically the Baby Room, with treasure baskets and other activities for exploration; for example, on the day of the first re-accreditation visit an adult used a bubble-blowing kit, which greatly amused a baby and two young 2 year



olds in the room at the time. There are also resting and nappy changing facilities. A separate room with three cots for sleeping is regularly monitored by staff. Another room (Tadpoles 1) has objects for heuristic play, which children enjoy exploring, a low mirror and magnetic whiteboard, and some early Sensorial materials such as five alternate cubes of the Pink Tower. This room is also used for toddlers and older children who may need rest or sleep after lunch. The third room (Craft Room) has tables and some early Activities of Everyday Living, an area for water play and materials for art work, and is where the young children have snack and lunch. Children develop independence as they learn the cycle of activity as they return their work to the shelf and engage in activities such as sorting objects by colour.

On the ground floor, the smaller room (Tadpoles 2) offers materials of Activities of Everyday Living, art and craft work, and is also the room for snack and meals for the older children. The other room (the Big Room) has materials organised by the Montessori curriculum areas, with an inviting large space at one end dedicated to books, role play and dressing up. Children on the ground floor have free flow access to the outside; they put their names on a board to indicate their choice to be outdoors, and during the first visit children of all ages accessed the great variety of learning experiences across the whole curriculum available there, with the younger age group on the paved area while the older children used the large lawn and Wild Walk area.

The children enjoy work cycles of at least three hours in both the morning and afternoon sessions, during which time they have plentiful opportunities for spontaneous learning. On the morning of the second visit some children chose to join a small group activity playing I-spy, before deciding to do puzzles, trace geometric shapes, or do mark-making, while others built creatively with blocks.

Children's language development is encouraged through story reading, for example *The Hungry Caterpillar* with props for the under 2 year olds, introducing new vocabulary such as colours and the names of vegetables, and encouraging conversation about the children's activities. Children with English as an additional language are also supported effectively with the use of words and expressions in their first language, and the 'hello' song used daily incorporates greetings in several languages. However, the children's language could be further encouraged through, for example, staff giving them more detailed feedback in conversation and expanding on children's comments.

Planning is very comprehensive and involves the whole team, with weekly planning sheets prepared that relate to the term's theme and to children's interests and levels of development. At the time of the first visit the topic across the setting was Africa, following on from finding out about and deciding to sponsor the Send a Cow project. On the first floor the babies and young children listened to *The Lion King* music, while in the Big Room on the ground floor the shop role play featured tropical fruit and vegetables related to the book *Handa's Surprise*.

Detailed records of children's progress are maintained and are shared with parents twice a year through the individual Learning Journals, showing progress achieved in the Montessori curriculum areas and the EYFS, together with samples of the child's work.



Each child also has a regular photo observation, and all children, including the babies, have next steps clearly identified and agreed with parents, which supports clear tracking of progress. The mandatory two year old assessment is carried out as well as twice yearly summative assessments, and parents comment very positively on the information they receive on their child's development.

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

The environment on the first floor is prepared very favourably for the babies and younger children, with the availability of treasure baskets and heuristic play together with puzzles, early construction, dressing up, books, musical instruments, water play and early Activities of Everyday Living and Sensorial materials. On the day of the first re-accreditation visit a child used magnetic shapes on a white board placed at her level, she discussed with the adult the various shapes she was making, such as a triangle, circle and diamond.

In the Big Room on the ground floor, the Montessori materials for each curriculum area are well organised and accessible, together with a range of musical instruments, small world play, dressing up clothes and resources for role play. There are more materials for activities of everyday living, with art and construction activities, in the smaller ground floor room, Tadpoles 2, which also has a child-sized sink and equipment for washing up and cleaning. Here, during the second visit, a boy pointed out the circle he had drawn in rice with his finger, while another did a colour-matching activity, and later a small group made play-dough which they then used creatively.

The quantity of materials in all the environments is sufficient for the numbers of children accessing the different areas, and adults maintain the rooms and outside area well. Since the first visit the staff team have begun to make activities (particularly in the Literacy and Understanding the World areas), which provide children with more resources appropriate for their development. For example, during the second visit an older child was seen matching models of landmarks of the world to pictures, colour-coded to the relevant continent, thereby extending his awareness of the world. The creation of more activities of this type would increase the range of activities on offer, and following on from their recent training, it is recommended that staff continue to develop their expertise in this area.

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

Independence is fostered well throughout the day; for example, on arrival, children on the ground floor hang up their coats and bags, change into their slippers and self-register by putting their names onto a board. They are familiar with the routines and are offered a free choice of activities, inside and outside, during both morning and afternoon sessions. During the work cycles the ground rules are encouraged, such as



tucking in chairs, and children help to prepare snack – on the day of the second re-accreditation visit two children sliced cucumber, with adult supervision, and all poured their own milk into glasses. Lunchtime is held between 11.45 and 13.15 on both floors, and children's independence is promoted by them collecting their cutlery, tidying away their food and containers, and collecting their wash bags for teeth brushing afterwards.

The children on the first floor are also encouraged in their independence, such as by returning their trays of work to the shelf after use, collecting their plates for snack, and serving themselves vegetables with tongs. The young 2 year olds also have freedom to choose their activities, such as water play, construction, heuristic play or using the book area, and are very contented and calm in this appealing environment that meets their needs at this age. The adults on this floor offer the children opportunities to move to a different room, and to go outside, usually as a small group. The babies are also taken outside daily, and have snack and meals in the Craft Room upstairs, as do the toddlers.

There is effective on-going communication with parents about encouraging children's independence at home, and staff model respectful language and behaviour at all times, which is reflected in the polite expressions and courtesy that the children show to each other and the adults.

### **Montessori practice: Classroom management**

The two Deputy Managers have responsibility for the day to day running of the nursery, one for the over 3s, and the other for the under 3s; in addition, the Baby Room Leader is responsible, with the team on the first floor, for planning and maintaining the rooms used by the babies and young 2 year olds. This is carried out very effectively, with activity plans for the week displayed and evaluated on a daily basis. The two Deputies are responsible for the maintenance and resourcing of the two ground floor rooms where the older children work, with the support of the staff there. Staff deployment procedures are clearly specified and the daily routines well organised. Teamwork is a notable strength of this setting; staff go outside as required depending on the numbers of children who choose to be outdoors, they cover for each other at breaks and lunch and, during the first re-accreditation visit, were flexible in allowing the Baby Room Leader and key person to attend a session with a nurse and parent with her baby, so as to learn how to support the medical needs of the child.

Children benefit from the vertical grouping within their age groups on both floors, and from the flexibility to be able to move between floors if necessary, such as to help settle in a sibling. There is a designated room with three cots, and the young children's natural rhythms are respected and recorded for the parents' information.

The long work cycles that the children benefit from allow them to access both spontaneous, child-initiated activities and adult-led ones should they so wish, such as a small group activity related to the topic of healthy food in the morning of the second re-accreditation visit. Staff support children if they choose alternative activities during





these times.

An effective key person system is in place and staff are aware of their responsibilities regarding this, such as writing observations and maintaining the Learning Journals, although they work with all children within a particular age group.

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

Every child at Frogmore Montessori has been allocated a key person who is responsible for the planning and record keeping for their children. An in-depth meeting, held with parents when the child first starts at the setting, helps to initiate the process of sharing information that then continues on a daily basis, and through more formal meetings twice a year when summative assessments are shared. Parents have a very good relationship with staff and express their great appreciation of the contribution they make towards their children's learning and development, commenting on the very high quality of 'faultless' care and education offered, and how their child has been so well prepared for the next stage of their schooling.

The mandatory two year old progress check is carried out and used to inform further planning, and detailed observations of the children's communication and listening skills feed into an 'Every Child a Talker' assessment sheet, to identify children who may be at risk of speech delay.

Parents are also invited to an information/social evening in the autumn term, and to other social events planned during the year. Regular newsletters update parents on nursery events, and there are also notices on the front door and Parent Information Boards to ensure information is shared. Transition reports detailing the child's level of attainment in the EYFS are sent to schools.

### **Staffing:**

Frogmore Montessori has a well-defined staffing structure; all staff members are aware of this and have clear job descriptions and roles. There are nine staff employed, eight of whom hold appropriate Montessori qualifications. Five have a Montessori Foundation Certificate besides other level 3 qualifications, three have a Montessori diploma and one is NNEB and Norland Diploma trained. The Manager and one Deputy also have Qualified Teacher Status, the Manager has an MA, EYPS and is a Montessori teacher trainer, and both Deputy Managers also have EYPS. Staff meet informally on a daily and weekly basis to share planning and children's progress, and minuted staff meetings are held once or twice a term.

All staff members complete a thorough induction process and have had access to Montessori training delivered on site, which has been provided over the last few years by the Manager. Regular staff appraisals identify professional development (CPD) needs,



which are met through in-house training as well as regional and national events. This enhances practice as staff are able to put their knowledge and skills into daily life of the nursery.

A nursery development plan is in place and actions include seeking further training such as Montessori CPD, and embedding good practice in the setting. Since the first re-accreditation visit staff observations have been carried out effectively, together with regular appraisals and supervisions, all of which encourage self-reflection and provide pointers for future development. There is a close relationship between the nursery and its sister setting, as they share training and most of the documentation.

The enthusiastic and strong leadership of the Manager, together with the great commitment of the team ensure that children receive high quality care and Montessori education at Frogmore.

Name of Assessor: Mary Lazo

Date report submitted: First visit – 26 May 2015

Second visit – 05 October 2015