



# **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” (2008) and subsequent 2012 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.

### **Hartley House Montessori The Lido**

The Lido, Worthy Lane, Winchester, Hampshire SO23 7DZ

Date of first accreditation visit: 4 February 2014

Date of second accreditation visit: 3 June 2014

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

#### **Description of the school**

The Lido is one of two nurseries in Winchester privately owned by Hartley House Montessori Ltd. It opened in 1996 and has sole use of a self-contained building, owned by Winchester Lido Sports Association; this consists of one main classroom and a cloakroom where children can hang their coats and where there is a sink for washing up and a small fridge. There is a small bathroom with child-sized toilets and basins and an upstairs area that is used as an office. Outside, the small, concrete paved garden has a Wendy house and a large shed where a variety of materials and activities for the children are stored.

The Lido is open from 08.00 to 16.00 term time only; it can have up to 26 children attending at any one time and presently has 41 children attending a variety of sessions over the course of a week. On the day of the second accreditation visit, there were 19 children in the morning and 14 in the afternoon, with four staff at both sessions. Children either stay for just the morning session which finishes at 13.00, for the afternoon session from 13.00 to 16.00, or they stay all day. The nursery also runs an After School Club from 16.00 to 18.00 and Holiday Club, but this provision is not being assessed for accreditation. Children staying for lunch bring a packed meal from home. There is provision for children with special educational needs and English as an additional language.

The manager has a Level 4 Montessori qualification and has regular contact with the proprietor, who is also Montessori qualified. There are five other members of staff, four with appropriate childcare qualifications and one unqualified member of the team who works when required for staff cover. The majority of the team work full days.



## Summary

The strength of The Lido is its commitment to the Montessori ethos. This is evident from the way both children and adults behave in the classroom. The atmosphere is calm and respectful, children are confident in talking to visitors and enjoy the opportunity for independent learning.

Partnership with parents is good. Some had previously requested more information on Montessori philosophy and how they could extend their child's learning at home; since the first accreditation visit, the manager has organized a parents evening to explain Montessori philosophy.

The setting has also recently introduced a digital record-keeping system to document children's learning; this has already made a significant difference to the quality and frequency of the recording, evaluation and assessment of children's achievements.

Resources inside are good on the whole and, following a recommendation made at the first visit, some of the Montessori materials have been renewed and additional resources have been made available. Adding to the activities in the outdoor space is part of the nursery's development plan so that it better reflects the spectrum of the indoor provision. A positive start has been made and this continues to be an area for development.

There is a two and a half hour work cycle in both the morning and afternoon sessions, giving the children the opportunity for self-initiated activity. Some minor changes to the lunchtime and end of morning routine have been made, making for a smoother transition between the morning and afternoon sessions.

Staff are encouraged to go on relevant training courses, given either by the local authority or Montessori Centre International and the manager has introduced a system of peer observations that will feed into staff appraisals.

The manager is enthusiastic in her approach and is well supported by her team and the Hartley House management. All are committed to offering high quality childcare.

***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 develop the outside area with appropriate resources that will engage all the children.
- Ensure that all staff are able to fully implement the new digital record-keeping system.

### **Philosophy:**

The Montessori provision at The Lido is excellent. Staff understand the needs of the children, they allow them to explore their environment and offer support and guidance where necessary. Children appear confident in choosing their own activities.



The setting has a clear mission statement that can be seen on the school's website and in the information sent to parents: it is to 'provide a focused, thoughtful and high standard of nursery care for the children'. The website gives parents plenty of information on Montessori education. The principles and goals are reviewed regularly by the managers and owner of the company's settings, as well as during in-house training of staff.

There is a notice board with information for parents, which includes upcoming events and ideas for home activities, along with a staff notice board detailing planning, staff rotas and the daily routine. Staff have recently completed a pictorial guide of the daily routine for the benefit of the younger children, to help them understand this more easily.

Staff at The Lido strive to fully implement the Montessori principle of enabling self-initiated learning and exploration.

### **Learning and Development:**

As there is just one classroom, staff plan activities together for all the children; these reflect the seasons and different festivals as well as following the interests of the children. Parents receive a copy of a calendar of events for the year. This is broken down by staff to produce weekly planned activities, but what is actually offered is always flexible in order to fit in with the children's interests; the planning indicates that these activities cover all areas of learning and are developmentally appropriate for the age range.

It is the key persons' responsibility to plan appropriate individual activities for their key children, which are introduced during both the morning and afternoon two and half hour work cycles alongside the child's spontaneous activity. Key persons are also expected to keep records up-to-date. Since the first MEAB visit, both The Lido and the sister setting have introduced the 'My Montessori Child' digital record-keeping system. This has enabled the team to keep records up to date and plan appropriate activities more easily. Staff are still becoming familiar with the system but report that it has greatly improved their record-keeping and they feel that their ability to easily access the children's data has improved their practice. The system is encrypted to allow parents access to their own child's records, to see what activities their child is doing, add their own notes to the records and include photos. Children's Personal Learning Journals (PLJ's) link the Montessori activities to the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), and reflect the content of this revised framework; these Journals have been added to the digital records.

When children join the nursery, parents are asked to complete an 'All about me' booklet, giving staff some basic information about the child. Mandatory two year assessments are carried out by the setting and parents have the opportunity to contribute to their child's learning plan.

Children interact with all members of the team and move between the inside and outside, although the design of the building does not lend itself easily to the complete free flow of movement between both environments.

Children with additional needs are well supported in the setting and, when necessary, with support from relevant outside agencies.

The setting produces a development plan that is regularly updated. This ensures that the staff



and management continue to reflect on and monitor the provision for the benefit of the children.

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

The classroom is bright, with a double height ceiling that gives a lightness and sense of space to the room. This is enhanced by a mirror (made of safety glass) along one side of the room that comes halfway up the wall. Activities are laid out on low, open shelving that make them easily accessible for all the children and they are arranged in defined areas of the Montessori curriculum. There is a good range of Activities for Everyday Living (rotated on a regular basis) and age appropriate puzzles. There are suitable activities on the Numeracy and Literacy shelves and more advanced activities are brought out as children progress. Following a recommendation made at the first visit, some Sensorial materials have been renewed and extra resources have been added to the Understanding the World section, including a World jigsaw together with life cycle puzzles, animal families and pairing cards. As with other materials, these are rotated regularly.

The art and craft area has a variety of materials for the children to create their 'masterpieces', some of which are displayed on the walls. There is also a designated book area and snack table. Children enjoy working on the floor and there is plenty of space for this, as well as sufficient tables and chairs.

There is a short corridor leading off the classroom that gives access to the garden; next to this is the children's cloakroom where they hang up coats and leave their outdoor shoes, and this leads into the toilet area. There are stairs leading to a gallery and large office; a stair gate prevents the children from accessing this area.

The outside space consists of a small paved area and a shed containing a variety of activities for physical play. Since the first accreditation visit, new resources have been added which the children can access themselves and these are rotated on a regular basis. A new sand tray has been purchased, which opens up to allow children to sit on the side, and new guttering fixed to the wall encourages pouring and water play. There is also a Wendy house in one corner of the garden. On dry days, tables and chairs are brought out and the manager encourages children to bring out activities from the classroom. As the outdoor space is not directly off the classroom, the staff have walkie talkies to keep in contact. Improving this space is part of the nursery's development plan. A member of staff has a particular interest in the outside environment and, together with the manager, is developing plans to introduce sensory areas, grow plants in pots and add some willow fencing to create a more natural environment.

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

When children arrive at the nursery they independently hang up their coats and change from outdoor shoes into slippers. Younger or less able children are gently encouraged and supported in these tasks.

During the morning and afternoon sessions on the occasion of both visits, children were



observed completing cycles of activity: taking resources from the shelves, working with them for as long as they wished and returning them once finished. They are encouraged to chop up fruit for themselves and their friends during snack time and are able to pour their own drinks. After both snack and lunch, the children wash up their plates and cups. The manager is investigating the possibility of obtaining Eco School status next year.

On the notice board in the corridor leading to the cloakroom, there are ideas for parents to continue Montessori practice at home, but as some parents drop their children off without coming into this area, the manager has now included these ideas in the termly newsletter too. Staff have also introduced a 'Nature Explorer' bag containing binoculars, magnifying glass, pens, paper and an information sheet with ideas on how to use these resources; there are also suggestions for further activities offered in the child's 'My Montessori Child', which are relevant to their interests and which encourage independent learning.

Children are free to move around the classroom and work either independently or with friends. Although the layout of the building makes free flow to the outside difficult, the staff make sure that all children who want to go outside have the opportunity to do so during the course of the day. As the children are vertically grouped, the older children often assist their younger friends.

Staff are good role models, reinforcing the ground rules of grace and courtesy. They swiftly intervene during the occasional episodes of unacceptable behaviour, coming down to the level of the children and talking calmly and quietly to help them resolve their difficulties and disputes.

Children respect their environment by returning work to the shelves, helping their peers and waiting their turn.

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

The nursery is open from 08.00 but the majority of children arrive at 09.00. They are greeted at the door with a handshake and after hanging up their coats and changing shoes, they spend the rest of the session working independently or with their peers or an adult, inside or out. There is a good key person system in place but the children can work with any adult. Snack is available from around 10.00 and the children have access to fresh fruit and either milk or water to drink; water is available throughout the session.

Following a recommendation from the first visit, the setting has reviewed both its lunchtime and end of morning procedures. Between 11.30 and 11.45 the children have a circle time with songs and stories, after which they help clean the tables and prepare for lunch. Children take their chairs to the lunch tables, wash their hands, then sit to eat. Once children finish lunch, they are free to work with the activities. The morning children then get ready to go home and sit with a member of staff in the book corner until they are collected, while the all day children continue with their activities. If any child wishes to have a nap after lunch, they are directed to the book corner. The setting has a supply of blankets and cushions to keep a sleeping child warm and cosy.

The afternoon children come in just before 13.00 and at that point the morning only children go home. Staff ensure that this transition time runs smoothly. The afternoon session is similar to the morning, with children free to work with different activities; snack is also available.



Activities such as mini-yoga, cooking, gardening and storytelling/drama are also offered on different days by the staff. On Tuesday afternoons the children enjoy a session of 'Rugby Tots', led by a peripatetic teacher; this takes place in the sports hall next to the setting. As with all planned, adult-led activities, if a child does not want to participate, they are able to continue working in the main classroom. The rugby sessions last for about 40 minutes, after which the children resume their activities until approximately 15.30, when there is a final circle time, with the children sitting on the floor in the book corner. The children put on their coats and outdoor shoes and go home at 16.00.

There are policies and procedures that support classroom management and these are displayed on the staff notice board. The daily routines that support the children's learning are well thought out and all staff members are aware of their responsibilities.

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

The working environment is well maintained by the staff. There is a staff rota on the notice board that includes nappy changing and garden duties.

Parents are given verbal feedback on their child's progress almost daily and are invited to a termly parents evening at which they are also given summative reports. They are encouraged to contribute to their child's PLJs, to inform next steps for learning and add comments, all of which can now be done on the new recording system. Some parents had previously indicated that they would like more information on Montessori philosophy and how they can extend the learning at home; in response to this, the manager arranged a Montessori Parents Evening to explain philosophy and give some ideas for home activities, as well as including these ideas in the termly newsletters. Parents who attended were able to use the nursery's resources and thereby gain a better insight into the activities their children can access. A further session has been planned as a follow up for parents.

Short observations are made frequently and are now entered directly onto the individual child's page in the new recording system, as well as occasional long observations and photographs of the children working.

The setting has good links with the local primary schools, regularly inviting them into the nursery. A transition document, indicating the child's progress in all areas of the EYFS, is produced for children who are leaving. If children also attend another setting, links are made by means of a communication booklet.

### **Staffing:**

The owner visits the nursery twice a week to oversee administrative matters. Since the first visit, the setting has employed two experienced Montessori qualified staff, one of whom has been appointed as joint deputy manager. The manager holds an International Montessori Diploma as do the new members of staff. One also holds a diploma in Play Therapy. The other deputy manager has a Level 2 Montessori qualification and a B.Ed. in Early Years Education. Another member of staff has a CACHE Level 2 Diploma in Child Care and is currently working towards Level 3. There is an unqualified member of staff who works at the setting when the



need arises.

The manager, one of the deputies and another member of staff work all day for four days a week; the other deputy and Montessori qualified member of the team both work two full days a week.

There is a very good induction system in place that includes relevant policies, procedures and duties. The manager has recently produced a pack containing all this documentation along with a comprehensive job description for each member of staff. There is a staff appraisal system and the manager has recently introduced regular peer observations which, it is intended, will feed into the annual appraisals.

The manager, who is fairly new to the role, has been enrolled on a Leadership Training course. Further areas identified for staff development include greater awareness of Montessori practice and the links between Montessori and the EYFS framework. The manager is planning to offer continued professional development opportunities to further extend knowledge and understanding of Montessori practice across the team. Staff are encouraged to attend courses run by Montessori Centre International and the local authority and to feed back to the team what they have learnt. They also attend local support and cluster groups, as well as workshops run by the Montessori Schools Association regional group.

The manager has regular meetings with the owner and the Hartley House management team, where there is some sharing of policies and procedures with the sister nursery; these meetings are minuted. Staff at The Lido meet monthly and these meetings are also minuted.

Although this is a relatively new team, they maintain a calm atmosphere in the classroom, work well together and are led by an enthusiastic new manager who is committed to providing a high standard of Montessori care and education.

Name of Assessor: Margot Best

Date of reports: First visit – 4 February 2014

Second visit – 3 June 2014