

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 relevant 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 and considered 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.

Little Tree Montessori Nursery

143 Ferme Park Road, London N8 9SG

Date of previous MEAB accreditation: June 2014

Date of first reaccreditation visit: 1 June 2017

Date of second reaccreditation visit: 14 November 2017

This accreditation is valid until December 2022

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

Description of the nursery:

Little Tree Montessori Nursery is located in a pleasant leafy road in Crouch End. It is set in premises that are attached to a church and community centre and has sole use of its parts of the building during its sessions. There are two small classrooms on the entrance level floor, which is known as the ‘upstairs’ area, where the Oak Class for 3 to 5 year olds is accommodated. Downstairs on the lower level there is a large room for the Elm Class, the 2 to 3 year olds. A kitchen area is situated adjacent to the Oak Class’s rooms and additional kitchen facilities downstairs are shared with the community centre. There is a hallway on the entrance level and an office downstairs, with a small resources room equipped with a computer that can be used for small group work. The Elm Class’s resources are packed to one side daily and away once a week so that others may access this part of the building.

To the rear of the property there is a large enclosed garden for the sole use of the nursery children, but with some restrictions on its times of use due to neighbouring residents. Both classes can access this garden from their own rooms during the permitted hours of use. This is well-equipped with climbing apparatus, ride-on toys, mark-making and role play resources. It also has a sand pit, quiet area, a music-making area and construction activities. There is an additional outside area running alongside the Elm Class that is used as its outdoor classroom and which is suitably equipped for this younger age group. These children have free access to it during their sessions. The Oak Class children have access to an area of raised decking from their floor, which is used as their outdoor classroom.

The nursery is open from 08.45 to 15.45, Monday to Friday, during term times. Children attend a variety of sessions across the week. Thirty-one children can attend at any given time and 54 in all are enrolled. On the morning of the second reaccreditation visit there were eleven 3 to 4 year olds and eleven 2 to 3 year olds present. Some children went home before, or shortly after, lunch. Five 2 to 3 year olds stayed on for the afternoon, ten 3 to 4 year olds stayed for the afternoon and were joined by another child after lunch. The children who stay for lunch bring in their own packed meal. The setting makes provision for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), including for those with English as an additional language (EAL).

Little Tree Montessori Nursery was registered in 1991 and is privately owned. The owner works full-time as the head. She has an early years degree. She and one of the two deputies, who also works full-time, are Montessori qualified at early years and primary levels and have Early Years Professional Status. There are six other members of staff; all are Montessori trained and most are qualified to degree level. Two members work part-time. Seven of the staff attended for the day of the second visit. The setting has participated in the local authority's quality improvement scheme.

Summary

Little Tree Montessori Nursery offers an outstanding Montessori experience to its children. The commitment of the head and her staff ensures that each child has the opportunity to work towards their full potential. The children are highly motivated, happy and relaxed. They show excellent skills of independence. The adults 'follow the children' and encourage their self-initiative and self-discipline. All staff members have an excellent understanding of Montessori philosophy and practice.

The learning environment, indoors and out, is beautifully prepared and well-resourced with both Montessori and additional materials to extend the children's interests. Following the first reaccreditation visit the setting has worked extremely hard to extend the range and quantity of Activities for Everyday Living for both age groups, including the provision of more materials for their outdoor learning, using many natural items linked to the seasons. All the children demonstrate respect towards each other, the staff and towards their environment. All team members are excellent role models.

Independence is fostered throughout the day and the parents are guided by staff to continue to encourage their children to be independent at home. The links with parents are extremely positive and the parents really appreciate the close contact they have with the setting. They feel well informed and are grateful for the regular feedback, both verbal and written, that they receive. They describe the nursery as a very happy, sociable place. Staff members are highly qualified and are aware of their responsibilities, which contributes to the very smooth running of the nursery. This is an excellent team of practitioners.

Following the previous MEAB accreditation the two recommendations have been addressed. The record-keeping system has been reviewed and improved, with clear links made in it between the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) areas of learning and development and the Montessori curriculum. Each child's progress is now recorded and assessed both clearly and thoroughly. Furthermore, the Oak Class's children now have the opportunity to wash up after their snack.

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 nursery continues to reflect on its practice in order to ensure that its high standards are maintained.

Philosophy:

The parents of children at Little Tree Montessori Nursery are extremely well informed about the aims and philosophy of the nursery. These are clearly laid out in the prospectus and are being included on the nursery's new website. The application of the Montessori ethos is evident throughout the setting and many parents report that they chose the nursery because of its excellent Montessori practice.

The nursery implements the EYFS through the Montessori method of education. During the first reaccreditation visit there were many examples in both classes of the staff 'following the child' and supporting them fully with their progress. The children's needs are recognised and provided for. This is seen, for example, through the use of an 'All About Me' book which each child has put together with the help of their family and their key person. This book is a photographic record of their learning journey, the important people in their lives and the activities they enjoy. These books are kept at the setting for the children to take when they choose, to show to visitors, friends and family. Children that are new to the nursery can find this book very comforting and this provision typifies the caring relationship that exists between the staff and the children.

There are numerous opportunities throughout the day that promote the development of children's self-discipline and their self-initiated learning. Although the children are grouped mainly by age, the Oak Class has a mixed age range and both classes have the opportunity to socialise together during lunch and whilst outside.

All staff members understand the Montessori philosophy and implement its principles with dedication. They meet weekly to review the quality of their practice and undertake a thorough review of it during their two day training session at the beginning of each academic year.

Learning and Development:

The learning that takes place in both classes is impressive; staff members are always on hand to guide the children but they know when to stand back and let the child try to work things out for themselves. The children mainly work individually but they were also observed during the first reaccreditation visit working in pairs, using rich illustrative language with each other. Every child has the choice to work on their own or with others. They are free to move around the environment, to choose any of the resources, to work at a table or on a floor mat, and to repeat activities as they wish. If a child has difficulty deciding which activity to choose, they can have a book into which their key person sticks pictures of different resources that they can choose from. There is a very good balance of teacher-led and child-led activity. Some presentations are made to the individual child, others to small groups. When the children arrive in the morning they quickly settle down for a three hour work cycle and very few need guidance in choosing their first activity of the day. Some of the children just attend afternoon sessions and it is noteworthy how quickly these children settle into the afternoon work cycle, which lasts as long as the morning's.

Children with additional needs are exceptionally well catered for. Staff members attend training and seek professional guidance when necessary. They adapt the learning environment to meet individual needs. For example, resources are provided to support children with EAL and their families, and staff members endeavour to learn phrases in the child's first language(s).

As the setting cannot use its entire outdoor environment throughout the whole day, it makes good use of the small area just outside the Elm Class's room, which the children take turns in visiting. This has a variety of learning resources, such as a large chalkboard for mark-making. The Oak Class children can also use their decking area. During the times that the large garden can be accessed its many learning opportunities include art, crafts and role play, which fully promotes children's language development and creativity. This area is also extremely well-equipped to provide for children's physical development. Drama classes are offered weekly as an additional activity for all the children and the nursery regularly visits nearby woodland.

Daily routines, timetables, weekly and termly planning are displayed for the parents to see on the notice board in the hallway. The whole team plans for the academic year at the beginning of the autumn term and each class then modifies these plans weekly and daily to fit the changing needs and interests of the children. The key persons undertake regular and thorough written observations of their key children and these are used very competently to complete assessments of the children's progress, which are discussed with the head. Close links are made in the planning and records between the areas of

learning and development in the EYFS Framework and the Montessori curriculum. The nursery's record-keeping system is robust and is used very effectively to support children's learning and development. The head and her team make regular assessments of the effectiveness of the provision. Opportunities for learning and development are excellent.

Prepared Environment: resources and materials

The Montessori prepared environment for both Classes is very well resourced; the materials are in very good condition and are laid out according to the areas of the Montessori curriculum. There are plenty of activities for the number of children attending. Particular attention has been paid in the Elm Class to ensuring that the resources are age-appropriate. It has an excellent range of early childhood Montessori materials, and puzzles to encourage the development of fine motor skills. Both classes have additional resources to complement the range of Montessori materials offered, particularly in the mathematics and literacy areas. The Oak Class has access to a kitchen area for cookery and the art and craft provision is very good for both classes.

Following the first reaccreditation visit the team has worked extremely hard together to extend the quantity and range of Activities for Everyday Living in both classes and in their outdoor learning areas. At the second visit there was, for example, a good selection of natural materials particularly linked to autumn, and there are more resources set to be used as the seasons change. The children really enjoy using these new materials. The outdoor areas together provide an excellent choice of resources and activities.

If a child needs to sleep, there are quiet areas in each class where sleeping mats and blankets can be laid out. All the children who stay for lunch eat together in the larger of the Oak Class's rooms. The children help staff prepare the tables and they put their packed lunch containers at their place. When everyone is seated, having washed their hands, they then all unpack their lunches and enjoy this social occasion. A record of dietary requirements is kept in each Class. Before the start of each session the adults check carefully that the environment is ready for the children. They maintain it well throughout the day and the children help them with this task, for example by ensuring that it is left tidy for the next day. The nursery offers an outstanding prepared environment.

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

Independence is very strongly fostered throughout the nursery. Children in both classes are free to choose when they would like to eat their snack. Those in Oak Class cut the fruit up for the whole class on a rota basis and each child does their own washing up. Those in the Elm Class clear their plates after use and put the waste into the compost bin. They all manage their outdoor clothing and find their picture or written name to self-register on arrival. Throughout the work cycles they seamlessly move from one area of learning to another, completing their cycles of activity at their own pace. Even the youngest children are comfortable with the daily routines and capably demonstrate their

ability to make suitable choices by themselves.

During the second reaccreditation visit a child in the Elm Class sat for twenty minutes totally focused on a pouring activity, which had a jug of water and three small pots. On the tray was a sponge to clear up any spills, which the child decided to use in a different way, carefully and patiently transferring the water from the jug to each of the three containers using the sponge. The level of concentration that this young child demonstrated during the activity was exceptional.

The children show great respect towards their teachers and consideration towards their peers. They are encouraged to find their own strategies for resolving conflicts and for supporting each other. The nursery has the advantage of welcoming children from diverse cultures and all have the opportunity to share aspects of their culture with their peers, such as food and special clothing during cultural festivals. The nursery works together closely with families to encourage the children to continue developing their independence skills at home. This aspect of practice is appreciated by the parents.

Montessori Practice: links with parents, including reports and records

The key person system in place promotes each child's well-being and personal, social and emotional development. Each key person maintains the child's records, carries out observations, ensures the child's assessments are kept up to date and writes a full annual report for the parents, which also serves as a transition report when the child leaves.

The parents also receive two verbal reports a year during parent/teacher meetings. The key person completes the child's mandatory two year old progress check with parental input. Parents appreciate the daily contact they have with the head and her staff, who feed back any relevant information or observations. Parents are able to stay as long as they like when settling in their children. They are given the opportunity to spend a session in Oak Class, usually in the spring term, during which the child shows their parent what they like to do at nursery. The families are very appreciative of the excellent relationships they have with the nursery's staff and they help support the setting's charity links with an educational project in Mali. Staff, children and their families participate in fund-raising for this throughout the year, and the children have a very good understanding of why they are raising funds and where the money is going to be used. Links with parents are outstanding.

Staff: qualifications, deployment, and performance management

The head is supported by an exceptional team. Each member of staff has their own job description, with links to Montessori practice, and all have annual appraisals which are conducted by the head. New staff members have an induction procedure. There is a weekly minuted staff meeting which all attend, and two days continuing professional development training is offered at the start of the autumn term. All staff members receive ongoing training provided by the local authority and other organisations. Members of staff attend Montessori conferences, and those who have a particular responsibility,

such as for SEND provision, have the opportunity to receive specific training in that aspect of their role. All the adults understand their responsibilities and daily checks are conscientiously carried out.

The setting has a developmental plan which is regularly reviewed and adjusted as necessary. Policies are all available to the parents and these are reviewed by the head and her team on a regular basis. All staff members at Little Tree Montessori Nursery are committed, motivated and enthusiastic Montessori practitioners who clearly put the children first. This is evident in the extremely happy, peaceful and relaxed atmosphere that they create for those who attend.

Name of Assessor: Wendy E S Compson

Date report submitted: First visit – June 18th 2017

Second visit – November 16th 2017