



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.

The Little House Montessori Nursery School

The John Flamsted Hall, Church Road, Burstow, Horley, Surrey RH6 9RG

Date of first accreditation visit: 4 October 2013

Date of second accreditation visit: 11 December 2013

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

Description of the school

The Little House Montessori Nursery School is situated in a church hall in the village of Burstow, Surrey, which is easily accessible from neighbouring residential areas. It was first established in 1996 and changed to the current ownership in 2010. The spacious church hall has a large room, separate kitchen and toilet facilities. The nursery has sole use of the premises during the week. The outdoor space has play facilities in an artificially grassed area, this is accessible from the rear of the premises.

The nursery is open term times only and offers sessional care for children aged from 2 to 5 years. Sessions are offered from Monday to Friday from 9:15 to 12:30, with extended afternoon sessions from Tuesday to Thursday until 14:30. Children who attend afternoon sessions are provided with packed lunches by their parents.

There are currently 16 children on roll, with the maximum number of 12 children attending for morning sessions and nine children attending afternoon sessions each day. During the second accreditation visit there were 11 children attending in the morning and six children attending the afternoon session. The nursery is able to support children with special educational needs (SEN), special dietary requirements and children who speak English as an additional language.

There are five members of teaching staff including the two proprietors. Both proprietors hold a Montessori diploma. One of the proprietors also holds a BA Hons. degree in Early Years and has Early Years Professional Status, and she is the appointed SENCo. Another member of staff is also Montessori qualified, and one is currently completing the Montessori diploma. The team



share their work schedule on a part-time basis, with two members of staff working with the children each day including one of the proprietors.

Summary:

The Little House Montessori Nursery School offers a warm, stimulating and calm Montessori environment for young children aged from 2 to 5 years. The staff place strong emphasis on following the individual child's interests and needs. The children are encouraged to develop confidence and independence in the carefully prepared indoor and outdoor environments with a wide range of learning materials that are suitable for their ages and stages of development.

Effective team work is evident through a well-established daily routine and key person system. All members of staff show knowledge and understanding of the importance of strong partnership work with parents and other childcare professionals. This enables staff to exchange information, assess individual progress and to plan effectively for each child's next steps within the Montessori and Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) areas of learning. The effective staff supervision system enables the team to continuously monitor and develop provision for the benefit of all at the Little House Montessori.

In response to the recommendations made at the first accreditation visit, the nursery has obtained written consent from parents for information sharing on the child's progress if the child attends more than one setting and it has reviewed its monitoring of hygiene procedures.

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

Philosophy:

The Little House offers a stimulating Montessori environment. During the morning work cycle, which lasts for three hours, children are given the freedom to choose for themselves and become engrossed in self-initiated activities, both in and outdoors. The adults are skilful in guiding the children within this environment in order to help them to develop into confident learners and creative thinkers through their use of the Montessori activities. The children are happy to communicate their needs to the adults. During the shorter afternoon sessions there are more structured group activities on offer to the children. However, these activities are not compulsory and children are able to continue to select activities of their own choice.

The nursery's aims, philosophy and principles are reviewed regularly and are defined in writing in the "Long term plan" and "Prospectus", which are available to parents through the website.

All members of staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities, which are defined in writing in the "Notes for practitioners" document.



Learning and Development:

The children are free to choose their activities within the Montessori areas of learning, both indoors and outdoors, during the three hour morning work cycle. During the afternoon sessions, which are shorter in length, extra activities such as cooking, craft, singing or gardening are offered.

The individual child's learning and development are well supported through the implementation of the setting's key person system. The key person observes the child's interests, needs and separation from his/her parents during the settling-in period, which is documented on the child's observation form. This "Induction Observation sheet" makes up part of the child's "Learning Journal", which also contains the child's "Montessori record cards" and "Observation and Planning" documents that link the Montessori activities and EYFS areas of learning. The Journal is regularly updated by the child's key person, and is used to inform assessment and planning of the child's next steps. It is also available for each child if they wish to include pictures from home in it, which encourages dialogue about their lives beyond nursery.

The mandatory two year old assessment is carried out, which enables staff to recognise if a child needs additional support. A "Child Profile" is completed at the end of the child's first term and throughout their time at The Little House Montessori. This will then accompany a Foundation Stage "Transition Report" for transition to school, which is a detailed assessment of the child's achievements covering the Montessori and EYFS areas of learning.

Children confidently communicate with their key person or another teacher if they want to engage with an adult in their chosen activity indoors or outdoors. The teachers communicate with each other effectively during sessions and are able to follow and accommodate the children's needs as a group and individually.

All members of staff plan topic activities, based on the children's interests and, together with individual materials, these provide comprehensive coverage of the EYFS and Montessori areas of learning, as documented in the "Medium Term Plan". The activities are evaluated and reviewed on a regular basis. Topic based discussions are offered during the circle time at the end of the three hour work cycle. This adult-led group activity lasts for ten to fifteen minutes during which the children sing songs and discuss the current chosen topic.

One of the proprietors is the appointed SENCo, who keeps up to date with monitoring a child if any concerns arise. These concerns are documented and an Individual Educational Plan (IEP) is also implemented for children with special educational needs to enable staff to support the child's additional needs.

In response to a recommendation made at the first accreditation visit the provision has obtained written consent from parents to enable teaching staff to exchange information on their child's progress with another childcare provider if the child attends more than one setting. Partnership work with parents and other childcare professionals is well established, and documented on the "Record of children who attend more than one setting" form.



Prepared Environment: resources and materials

The Little House Montessori provides a well prepared Montessori environment with sensory, cultural, creative, language, mathematics and practical life materials available for the children. The classroom also has areas for stories, art and craft and constructive play. The apparatus is easily accessible for all age groups, and arranged on shelves at the child's level. The children use the materials individually or in groups.

The children are given the opportunity to select and prepare their snack in the snack area, where plates, glasses and washing-up facilities are provided. Picture cards indicate the menu available for the day; this promotes their developing independence very well.

The outdoor area provides an extension of the indoor Montessori areas of learning; it is situated in the church garden and has artificial grass and is fenced. It is easily accessible to the children to allow free choice between indoor and outdoor activities. There is additional outdoor equipment such as a climbing frame, sand and water play to encourage children's gross motor skills and planting/gardening facilities for the children. The nursery also has access to the rest of the church's garden, which gives further opportunities to explore nature on a regular basis through supervised 'nature walks'.

Both indoor and outdoor areas of learning are well maintained and regularly checked by staff in order to help ensure that the materials are safe, suitable and appropriate to support learning, according to the children's ages and stages of development.

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

A well-established daily routine supports the children in becoming confident and independent; they access learning freely and spontaneously, both indoors and outdoors. The children are encouraged to return the materials to the shelves after finishing an activity. They hang their coats on their pegs independently and change into their indoor shoes / slippers before entering the classroom.

The children select and prepare their own snack, with picture cards indicating the menu available for the day. During the snack routine washing-up facilities are provided for the children to clean their plates and cups after use.

All members of staff work very effectively with parents to promote the child's growing independence at home. They observe and accommodate the individual child's needs, including toilet training. In response to the recommendation from the first accreditation visit the staff supervise the children more closely when following hygiene routines.

The carefully prepared environment encourages the children to respect each others' space by sharing and turn taking. The adults are good role models who encourage positive behaviour throughout the daily routine. Staff treat and welcome all children equally and show regard for their culture, background and ability by celebrating their achievements and differences. They also encourage the children to develop respect for others through cultural activities.



Montessori practice: Classroom management

The team plans together well and staff are fully aware of their roles and responsibilities. The strong team work facilitates a caring and harmonious working environment for both the adults and the children. Policies and procedures are reviewed once a year by the team. Classroom practice is reviewed regularly in order to promote continued effective practice for this mixed age group of 2 to 5 year olds through the provision of a well-established daily routine of a work cycle in the morning and extra activities such as cooking, gardening, and craft during the two hour afternoon sessions.

Due to all members of staff working on a part-time basis, a well-managed key person system is implemented. This is documented on a 'weekly rota', which is displayed in the classroom. As the setting's opening hours are short there are no sleeping facilities in the classroom, but if a child is unwell or tired he/she is comforted by an adult in the 'story' area, where soft cushions are provided.

During both accreditation visits parents commented on how much they appreciate the calm atmosphere and the quality of the individual care that The Little House Montessori offers. This was evident in how the children played, as a group or individually during sessions.

Montessori Practice: links with parents, including reports and records

Parents have access to information about the setting's ethos and Montessori philosophy through the "Prospectus", website and "Welcome Pack". Parents are provided with an "Enrolment form" to be able to exchange information with the child's key person and they contribute photos and notes during the three initial settling-in visits; this enables the key person to gain useful insight of a child's routines and preferences.

The Little House Montessori keeps parents updated about events and future plans through regular newsletters. Parents have the opportunity to verbally exchange information on a daily basis and are provided with a daily 'Communication book' so that they can inform staff in writing of any significant changes in their child's learning and development at home. Home visits are offered to parents if further consultation is required with the key person, in order to support the child's development both at home and at nursery.

Parents' meetings are held once a term at which they can discuss their child's progress and help plan their next steps together with the key person. Parents are also invited to participate during the lunchtime routine so that they gain more insight into how independence and table manners are promoted at the setting. Open days also offer the opportunity for families to become more familiar with the Montessori philosophy and daily activities at The Little House Montessori. A "Transition Report" is prepared when a child leaves for a new school.

During both accreditation visits parents commented on how welcoming and accommodating the teaching staff are at The Little House Montessori, as well as the useful information they have received in order to be able to implement some aspects of the Montessori philosophy with their children at home, such as practical life and creative activities. During the second accreditation visit one parent commented on the significant support their child has received to be able to settle at nursery, including a home visit by the key person.

**Staffing:**

Staff at this setting demonstrate outstanding team work. The "Job description", "Mission statement" and the "Notes for practitioners" documents clearly define the key person's roles and responsibilities at The Little House Montessori. Induction, supervision and appraisal procedures are effective. The staff supervision system gives the team the opportunity to monitor and develop provision for the benefit of all, and staff appraisals are held once a year with both proprietors. Staff meetings are held once every half term and are minuted. These discussions link with the nursery's development plans. All staff can contribute to planning, self-evaluation and development in the setting, which reinforces the effective team work.

The proprietors promote continuous professional development amongst the team, which helps to ensure that all members of staff have a shared understanding and commitment to the Montessori ethos of the setting. The five members of staff are well qualified: three hold Montessori qualifications including the two proprietors. One of the other members of staff is currently working towards the Montessori diploma. Staff qualifications and further training are reviewed every half term, which is documented in the "Professional Development and Staff Training" portfolio.

All members of staff are passionate about and dedicated to enhancing their Montessori practice through on-going training and active involvement in the Montessori community in their region.

Name of Assessor: Andrea Dalling

Date of reports:

First visit: 11th October 2013.

Second visit: 12th December 2013.