

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.

Market Harborough Montessori Nursery

Coventry Road, Market Harborough, Leicestershire LE16 9AX

Date of previous MEAB accreditation: December 2013

Date of first reaccreditation visit: 8 May 2017

Date of second reaccreditation visit: 19 September 2017

This accreditation is valid until December 2021

This accreditation report relates to the provision for children aged 9 months to
5 years

Description of the nursery:

Market Harborough Montessori Nursery is situated in a purpose-built building, located in the grounds of a primary school and surrounded by a residential area. It consists of a lobby area, one main room, a kitchen, storeroom and an office. The main room is divided into three separate areas: one for babies/toddlers under 2 years old; one for the younger 2 year olds and those children who need more support, such as those new to the nursery; and an area for the older children which has most of the setting’s Montessori materials. The nursery has sole use of this building. The well-equipped outside area is shared with the Reception class of the school and is accessed through the main school playground. The nursery has sole use of this area for one hour each

session and can occasionally use the main school playground when it is not in use by the school.

The nursery was established in 2000 by the owner/manager and moved to its current location in 2006. The manager works full-time and is assisted by her deputy, who works part-time. Two full-time and four part-time members complete the current team. The manager holds a Montessori International Diploma as well as Early Years Professional Status, a BA in Early Years, a Foundation Degree in Management, and has completed a Montessori Primary course. Most of the team have early years' qualifications and two are working towards Early Years Educator status.

The setting is open weekdays from 09.00 to 16.00 during term times. Children attend a variety of sessions across the week. There are currently 28 children enrolled. On the day of the second reaccreditation visit ten attended in the morning and seven in the afternoon, six of whom stayed all day. Two children were under 2 years of age, being between 18 and 22 months; both stayed all day. There were four staff members present for each session. Some children bring a packed lunch, whilst others have a cooked meal brought over from the adjoining school.

The nursery caters for children with additional needs, including those who speak English as an additional language. It is an 'I CAN' children's communication charity accredited setting and the manager has an ELKLAN speech, communication and language support Level 2 qualification.

Summary

Market Harborough Montessori Nursery is well-established. Its team of highly qualified and dedicated practitioners is committed to providing a nurturing Montessori setting for the children. Staff members are excellent role models and create a calm environment where children can learn to be independent and enjoy being part of a group. Following recommendations from the first reaccreditation visit, the team has reorganised the environment to provide a bright, orderly and inviting space for the children.

Key persons know their key children very well and the children benefit from being introduced to activities that support their individual interests and levels of development. Recommendations made during the first visit have been implemented, resulting in the children having more time to carry out their spontaneous and self-initiated exploration during each session. Their freedom of choice is also now supported well during lunchtime.

Recommendations from the previous MEAB accreditation have also been fully implemented. Children are now consulted about the activities that are introduced to the setting and are also given many opportunities to care for their environment.

Market Harborough Montessori Nursery has a strong partnership with parents and together they make this nursery a caring and inspiring environment for children to learn in.

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 team continues to regularly evaluate the learning environment in order to retain its high standard of Montessori provision.

Philosophy:

The manager and staff have a sound understanding of Montessori practice, which they implement throughout the nursery. Excellent role-modeling by adults helps children become kind and respectful and creates a culture for learning in this well-resourced environment. The mixed age group of children allows for peer to peer learning, for example, those under 2 years old are given opportunities to socialise with the older children during short periods of each session, including the circle time, and at lunch.

Key persons respond to each child's inner needs through their skilled and careful observations, and through planning next steps appropriately. The setting understands the Montessori principle of "following the child" and of giving children the freedom to explore their own interests throughout the day. Recommendations suggested during the first reaccreditation visit have been followed by giving the children the option to join adult-led activities or not, and by allowing children to choose their own places at the lunch table.

The aims and philosophy of the setting are defined in writing in the prospectus and within policy documents, as well as on the comprehensive new website which details the Montessori curriculum. The setting's values are evaluated formally during monthly staff meetings.

Learning and Development:

The nursery's support for the learning and development of all its children is very well documented and thorough. Short term planning is drawn up weekly by key persons for their individual children. It combines both the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and Montessori areas of learning and development, and is displayed on a board in the main room for all staff to see. Children's achievements are recorded comprehensively under EYFS areas of learning and development, and this record is kept in each child's observation file. A record of their progress with Montessori activities is kept separately but is also used to inform planning for next steps in all areas of learning and development. The nursery is currently trialing an online record-keeping system, which is

being used in addition to the paper-based records. Progress summaries are written every term.

The outdoor play area is shared with the Reception year of the adjoining school, so children at the nursery can only access it during the first hour of each morning and afternoon session. They all go to the area together, with children having the option to come back to the classroom after half an hour. This option was introduced following recommendations made at the first reaccreditation visit, and it offers children more freedom of choice. The staff and children understand the daily routines well and the adults manage a smooth transition between the indoor and the outdoor areas; key persons stay with, support and observe their group at all times. Very well planned outdoor activities are available for all the children, including the babies, and they enjoy the freedom to choose who and what they want to play with. Weekly planning for outdoors is drawn up by the whole team and links strongly with the EYFS Framework's areas. Long and short-term planning for topics is also drawn up by the team and is also thorough and interesting.

Following the initial hour outdoors, the babies are guided to their indoor play area for a snack and are well supported throughout the session. The rest of the children begin their self-chosen indoor activities, including helping to prepare snack. They have opportunities to learn spontaneously and through adult-led activities, continuing to explore freely until 11.45, when they help tidy away in readiness for circle time. A similar routine is followed in the afternoon. The team has worked hard since the first visit to extend the children's work cycle, achieving an excellent balance between adult-led and child-initiated activities.

Prepared Environment: resources and materials

Before the children arrive, the adults check that all resources indoors and outside are complete and ready to use. The outdoor play area is partly covered with artificial grass, the rest being tarmac. There is a very good climbing frame, bicycles, scooters, balls, small toys and a Wendy house for role-play. On the day of the first reaccreditation visit a child spent a long time independently counting out corks into numbered containers.

The nursery's main room is divided through the use of appropriate shelving into the baby area, the nurture/transition area and the main Montessori part of the room. There is also an art corner and a book corner with cosy seating arrangements. In the centre of the room is a newly erected play loft, which houses the role-play equipment on the ground level, with a cosy area above where children can sit quietly to rest or nap. The manager and her team have worked hard since the first visit to reorganise the layout of the room. It is now bright, welcoming, uncluttered and has a serene atmosphere.

The materials are arranged on low-level shelving to ensure children have easy access to them. All areas are very well stocked, with the baby and nurture areas having a combination of Montessori materials and a good selection of other age-appropriate toys. There is an excellent range and quality of Montessori materials for the older children. They are complete, clean and appropriate for their age. Furniture is the right height for

each of the age ranges. The babies' section also has two 'coracle' cots and a climbing frame. This well thought-out and excellent learning environment enables children to work well independently, in groups, on the floor or at tables. The manager's passion to provide high quality resources for the children across the nursery is evident.

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

A great deal of encouragement is given to children to develop their independent skills. They can change shoes upon arrival and when going out, register themselves, and clean up after doing an art activity. The nursery has a 'jobs board', where children can volunteer to do daily chores by 'writing' their names down next to a picture of the activity, for instance feeding the fish, cleaning tables or sweeping.

Children help prepare snack, which is available for when they choose to take it from 10.00 to 11.45 and again from 14.00 to 16.00. They wash up their plates and cups after use. The babies learn to feed themselves and are encouraged to be independent, for instance helping in their self-care. Respect for self and others is promoted very well. The adults are excellent role models and encourage the children's social development through group work, discussions and story-telling. The nursery also fundraises for charities.

Parents are encouraged to promote independence at home. Termly meetings are used as ideal moments for key persons to provide parents with ideas for home learning activities. Parents are also invited to complete an assessment sheet, which is kept in their child's Learning Journey and informs staff of activities children carry out independently at home, thus providing consistency between the home and nursery environments. Parents spoken to during both reaccreditation visits were very pleased by the level of independent skills their children were developing and with the advice offered by key persons on how to further support these skills at home.

Montessori Practice: links with parents, including reports and records

Partnership with parents is strong. Daily communication is very effective and is especially thorough for children under 2 years old. Each child's Learning Journey, which contains art work and a diary detailing their achievements, is shared with parents weekly. The Learning Journey also includes information for parents on how the Montessori curriculum links with the EYFS Framework, as well as 'all about me' information about the child and their key person. Parents are invited to contribute to this record.

The mandatory two year old progress check is completed by the key person in collaboration with the child's parents. Key persons use the termly meetings with parents to discuss their child's progress and prepare a written summative report for them in the summer term.

The parents notice board displays information on the nursery's news and upcoming events, details of half-termly themes and suggestions for activities at home. Parents also receive information updates through regular newsletters and the nursery's Facebook page. The website has a page where parents can log in to view a wealth of information about the setting's philosophy, curriculum, Montessori materials and news, and it has links to interesting videos and articles.

Social events such as coffee mornings for parents and sports days, Christmas performances and Easter parades are well attended. Regular parental feedback forms and surveys allow the team to evaluate its practice collaboratively.

The Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities Co-ordinator oversees provision for children with additional needs and works with outside agencies to arrange appropriate support for them and their families. The whole team is very committed to improving children's speech and language, working closely with parents to achieve this, for example through the use of 'Chatterboxes'. These are boxes containing toys, objects and books based on a theme, to stimulate language and communication development and to help strengthen links with home. The theme on the week of the first reaccreditation visit was "our local environment." One child had brought in photographs of local buildings in the neighbourhood and confidently described them all to the group. On the second visit the theme was autumn and children had brought in autumnal artefacts to show their peers.

The nursery has strong partnerships with surrounding schools and supports children's transitions as they move on to school by inviting the child's next teacher to visit them at nursery and by passing on the child's records.

Staff: qualifications, deployment, and performance management

All but one member of the team hold relevant early years' qualifications. The manager is supported well by her deputy. All team members have defined roles and understand their responsibilities, including for daily checks and maintenance of the working environment. All policies and procedures are reviewed annually by the manager. There is a thorough induction process in place.

Procedures for self-evaluation of practice and performance management are robust. Peer observations, termly supervisions and annual appraisals with the manager enable all staff to have a clear means to reflect on performance. Excellent continuous professional development (CPD) plans are in place. The manager is committed to staff members' CPD and regularly organises in-house workshops to update the team's knowledge and understanding of Montessori principles and practice – the latest one focused on the Montessori work cycle. Staff meetings take place regularly and actions are recorded clearly by the manager. Setting development meetings take place termly, where an overview of the whole term, including projects and themes, is discussed by the team.

Strong team work and staff members' dedication to providing a caring and stimulating

learning environment for children are very evident, as is shown by the team's careful consideration of the recommendations made at the first reaccreditation visit. The team has used these recommendations skillfully to further enhance the setting's practice, which is now excellent.

Name of Assessor: Raju Surelia

Date report submitted: First visit – 11th May 2017

Second visit – 20th September 2017