



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 on those recommendations made during the first 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.

Norfolk Lodge Montessori Nursery

Dancers Hill Road, Barnet, Herts. EN5 4RP

Date of first re-accreditation visit: 13 February 2013

Date of second re-accreditation visit: 25 April 2013

Date of previous MEAB accreditation: January 2009

This accreditation report relates to the provision for children aged 2½ to 5 year olds, in the 'Jade, 'Silver' and 'Gold' rooms.

Description of the school

Norfolk Lodge Montessori Nursery is privately owned and was established in 1996 in a large, two-storey Victorian house located in a semi-rural area on the outskirts of Barnet and Potters Bar. One of the rooms to be accredited is situated on the ground floor; the other two rooms are on the first floor, these rooms do not have direct outdoor access. Children are accompanied by a member of staff to access the children's toilets, which are located in the adjacent corridors. The outside area covers 2½ acres and includes a covered outdoor classroom and a large grass play area containing four sets of climbing apparatus and a trampoline. The children also use an adjoining clay tennis court with an assortment of wheeled toys, bicycles and scooters.

The school can accommodate 140 children of whom 27 may be under 2 years of age. Currently there are 196 children on roll. There are nine classrooms in total. The 'Nursery programme' consists of the Jade room which has 22 children and the Gold and Silver rooms that each have 24 children aged 2½ to 5 years of age, and it is only these children to whom this accreditation relates. Children in these rooms must attend for a minimum of five morning or afternoon sessions per week. On the day of the second re-accreditation visit there were 68 children present during both the morning and the afternoon sessions, with nine members of staff present and one Montessori trainee.

Norfolk Lodge Montessori is a term-time nursery and is open for 35 weeks a year. Morning session times vary between 8.45 to 12.00 and 9 or 9.15 to 12.15. Afternoon sessions vary



between 12.30 to 15.45 and 12.45 to 15.45 or 16.00. The school offers before and after school sessions and lunchtime sessions, as well as 11 weeks of holiday activities, as optional extras. There is a family working plan for children to attend all 46 weeks. Additional curricular activities are also offered each day. There is a large hall which is used for these additional sessions and for lunch. Children may have a cooked lunch prepared by the school catering team or bring a packed lunch from home.

There are 13 members of staff (not including the head teacher) of whom nine hold a Montessori teaching diploma; of these one has Qualified Teacher Status, one has NVQ3 and a third NVQ2. The head teacher holds a Montessori Diploma and an NVQ3 in childcare and has 21 years management experience. The owner is not present on a regular basis.

Children with special educational needs are supported by a qualified SENCo who liaises with families and outside agencies. Children with English as an additional language are also offered support.

Summary

Norfolk Lodge Montessori Nursery is a friendly, well-organised Montessori setting with a strong commitment to staff development. The school's management team provides good leadership for the staff, who work well in partnership with parents and families – this is a real strength of the school. Since the previous MEAB accreditation the timing of sessions has been reviewed to ensure an uninterrupted work cycle. Following the first re-accreditation visit the setting has reviewed its policies and procedures to include statements describing how they assess the quality of teaching and of children's learning. Provision has also been made for observation of staff by management and for longer observations of children, and plans are in place for the further development of the outside area.

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 with the development of the outdoor environment to include all areas of learning.

Philosophy:

The principles, goals and philosophy of the school are stated in the prospectus, the parents' handbook, the policies and procedures files and on their website. These are reviewed annually by all staff. The staff in the rooms being considered for this accreditation (Jade, Gold and Silver) have a very good understanding of Montessori philosophy and this is evident in their interactions with the children and in their expectations of each child. Children are given freedom to choose and experiment with the Montessori materials and with other activities and the adults are skillful in knowing when to offer guidance. The staff assess each child well enough to know, for instance, when they can be trusted to walk the short distance to another classroom by themselves.



Learning and Development:

All staff have input to long-term and medium-term planning. Topics are discussed and then each room plans separately. Planning for the individual child is updated weekly by the key person. These plans take into account the interests of the child. Planning is organised by the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) areas of learning and with reference to the Montessori curriculum. Planning is shared with parents half-termly so that they can be involved in their child's learning. All staff record observations of children in their room and these are collated and assessed by the child's key person and recorded in the child's 'Learning Journal', which accompanies them throughout the school and is shared with the child's family at termly parents' meetings.

The SENCo works between all the classes, providing support for children with SEN and liaising with the child's key person, parents and outside agencies.

Since the first re-accreditation visit a statement of how the school assesses the quality of teaching and children's learning has been added to the school's policies and procedures and longer observations of children have also been introduced.

Each class is responsible for the layout of its room and resources are organised by Montessori areas of learning, with separate areas for art and craft. Children in the Jade, Gold and Silver classrooms are enthusiastic, independent learners and are free to make choices throughout the morning work cycle, which is a minimum of three hours duration. Although free flow movement to the outdoors is not possible for the upstairs classrooms, children may ask to go outside at any time and use activities in the outdoor classroom or the play areas. Outdoor provision has been highlighted as an area for continued development by the head teacher.

Prepared Environment: resources and materials

The Jade, Silver and Gold classrooms are organised by areas of learning and give children access to a good range of Montessori and non-Montessori materials. The quality of materials is good and they are presented in an appealing way and are appropriate to the developmental needs of the children attending. Additional activities are introduced to support children's learning such as Chinese brush painting at Chinese New Year, with an interest table containing related items. Staff are skilled at anticipating children's needs and changing the environment to support them. Children can ask to be taken outside at any time throughout the work cycle. The extensive outdoor play areas are equipped with climbing frames, bicycles and wheeled toys to aid development of large motor skills. Further development of the outdoor classroom is planned in order to enhance the educational provision for the whole school.

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

The children in the Jade, Silver, and Gold classrooms have many opportunities for independence and self-initiated, spontaneous activity. Materials are easily accessible and children confidently choose their own activities to work alone or with friends. Adult-led activities and groups are also offered but are not compulsory. There are expectations that children will respect the materials and will tidy up after themselves and the children take pride in doing this, using the equipment supplied, such as cloths. Children independently prepare their own snack and are encouraged to serve themselves at lunchtime. The staff model respect for others in their behaviour towards



each other, and also towards the children and their parents. Children are gently re-directed to another activity if they are disturbing others. On arrival, children are encouraged to get themselves ready for the classroom by removing their outdoor clothes and changing their shoes. Parents are welcomed into the classrooms and staff share their knowledge of children's achievements so that parents can support independence at home. Informative displays outside each classroom also provide parents with information about how they can help their child's progress and termly workshops relating to children's learning are offered to parents.

Montessori practice: Classroom management

Children's learning occurs through a mixture of planned activities and opportunities for spontaneous learning. A morning work-cycle with a minimum of three hours contributes towards learning by giving all the children ample time to work with a variety of activities inside and out. Adults in the classrooms work together to ensure that they are available to support children as necessary and clear policies and procedures (which are available in each classroom) lay out the school's expectations of staff. Staff timetables/rotas ensure that staff are available to help children with transitions such as from classrooms to outside, or from classrooms to the lunch room. Football, P.E and dance are offered in the afternoon, with this work cycle varying in length depending on which other activities are offered. Music is offered on Tuesday mornings and drama on Thursday mornings. Children in the Jade, Silver and Gold classrooms are vertically grouped by age from 2½ to 5 years of age and are also grouped by key person. The other sections of the school are grouped within more narrow age ranges and by key person groups.

Montessori Practice: links with parents, including reports and records

Norfolk Lodge Montessori Nursery has well-defined systems in place to help ensure the safety of children attending the school. These systems are explained in staff handbooks and the policies and procedures files in each classroom. Daily checks are carried out both inside and outside the building. Any identified issues are recorded and there is a system to help ensure that these are dealt with promptly. There are named staff responsible for Health and Safety, Fire and Safeguarding Children.

All staff in each room record observations of children and it is the responsibility of the key person to ensure that the information is recorded in the child's "Learning Journal" and assessed in order to track a child's development. Day-to-day updates are given as parents drop-off or pick-up their child and these help keep parents informed; their termly meetings with staff, at which they are shown written reports, provide a more formal opportunity for them to discuss their child's development. The parents' handbook, newsletters and termly workshops add to the wealth of information available. A summative report covering all areas of learning is prepared for each child to take to their next school. The school has a Parents Association that helps with the organisation of charitable and fund-raising events. Because of the high level of interaction encouraged by the school, parents are better able to support their child's learning.

Staffing:

Norfolk Lodge Montessori Nursery has thorough procedures in place with regard to staff employment, induction and continued professional development (CPD). There is a staff structure diagram that shows how each post fits into the staff team and links to job descriptions for every



post. All staff appointments are subject to a three month probationary period and a detailed induction plan covers health and safety, and policies and procedures. Each member of staff is given a Staff Handbook.

The regular staff meetings are recorded and there is an annual appraisal system in place (which links to staff CPD files). In response to a recommendation made at the first re-accreditation visit, a programme of observations of staff by senior management has now been introduced. Another new programme that has recently been established enables one staff member to move up with children going into the Jade, Silver or Gold classrooms from the younger age groups. This means that the children have the security of a known staff member when they start in their new classrooms and it also gives staff the chance to work with different age groups.

The head teacher sees it as a priority to encourage other staff to have Montessori training. Recent staff training has included local authority courses relating to the revised EYFS and to Inclusion/SEN. External Montessori training is sought and in-house workshops are provided by the assistant deputy manager. The nursery has recently applied to embark on Hertfordshire's Quality Standard Accreditation.

Norfolk Lodge Montessori Nursery is a well-run Montessori setting that is highly regarded by the families who use it. The head teacher and the enthusiastic staff team are dedicated to using reflective practice to constantly improve their Montessori environment.

Name of Assessor: Susie Norman

Date of reports: First visit – 21st February 2013

Second visit – 30th April 2013