

Montessori Evaluation and Accreditation Board

School Accreditation

This report is a supplement to the setting's previous MEAB Accreditation Final Report, which is published in conjunction with this report.

This report was prepared following, and is based on, two accreditation visits made on behalf of the Montessori Evaluation and Accreditation Board. It considers how far the setting follows relevant criteria in "The Guide to the EYFS in Montessori Settings" (2012/14). During the second visit the progress made with the recommendations set out in the report from the first visit was assessed and any further findings made during the second visit were considered.

The report does not address the standards and quality issues that are assessed by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) which reports separately. Also the report does not provide any assessment of financial aspects of the setting.

Receiving accreditation carries the expectation that the setting will continue to work on the issues highlighted in this report and will remain committed to the ongoing development of its practice. Furthermore, that it 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.

Rectory Garden Montessori School

Old Church Road, Melton, Woodbridge, Suffolk IP13 6DH

Dates of previous MEAB accreditations: August 2011 and November 2014

This accreditation is valid until December 2022

This accreditation report relates to the provision for children aged 1 to 4 years old

Description of the nursery:

Rectory Garden Montessori School is located just outside a small village in East Suffolk. The nursery is situated in a building that was formerly a potting shed and has been redesigned for its current purpose. At the time of the previous MEAB accreditation it had one large classroom (now called the Oak Room) along with its entrance hall, office and kitchen. In 2016 a new classroom (Acorn Room) was added for children from 1 year to 3 years of age, replacing the toddler group which was housed in the office. There is a book corner in the Oak Room, where children can also rest, and the Acorn Room has a small 'quiet' room adjacent to the main area, where the younger children can rest as needed in cots or on low beds. The setting has a large outdoor area, with cultivated and wild spaces augmented with appropriate play equipment. In addition, the Acorn Room

has direct access to two small garden areas, and the Oak Room has direct access to its small garden too.

The nursery is open every week day term-time only, from 08.00 to 16.00. Children can attend either morning or afternoon sessions, which have been extended since the previous accreditation to four hours each. Children can also stay for the full day. Those children who stay for lunch bring a lunch box from home. There is also now a one hour after-school session available daily for the children who attend in the afternoons. This session is not being assessed as part of this reaccreditation.

There are 20 places in Oak Room for 3 to rising 5 year olds. At the second reaccreditation visit there were four qualified staff members attending and one student in the morning with 13 children, and four staff members in the afternoon with eight children. The number of spaces has changed from 26 at the last accreditation because the proprietor felt that this room works better with fewer children. In the Acorn Room there are nine spaces for children from 1 to 3 years of age – on the second reaccreditation visit there were nine children attending in the morning with four staff, and five children in the afternoon with three staff.

The nursery first opened in January 2010 and is privately owned. Staff members are well qualified. The proprietor, the manager and one other staff member hold early years' degrees and Montessori diplomas. Most of the team have, or are working towards Montessori diplomas. The proprietor works full-time and the eleven other staff, including the manager, work part-time. One of the part-time staff members is a student. There is provision for children with additional needs such as special educational needs, disabilities and English as an additional language.

Summary

Rectory Garden Montessori School is a high-quality Montessori nursery. The proprietor and her manager work exceptionally well together to ensure that every aspect of the setting runs smoothly. The adults understand Montessori philosophy and this supports children's learning because the teachers are skilled at treating each child as an individual. The staff members are also excellent role models for the children in that they are respectful of each other, and they give their full attention when a child is speaking to them. The atmosphere in both classrooms is that of an extended family environment. The Acorn Room matches the high standards of practice of the Oak Room and both give children easy access to learning activities and opportunities for self-care.

Since the previous MEAB accreditation the setting has changed from paper Learning Journey Profiles to a secure web-based recording and planning system. There is also an app for parents to use which informs them about their child's sleeping and eating patterns during their day at nursery, and which also gives them information about the nursery's activities. Links with parents are excellent.

The setting is well resourced and both rooms are arranged according to the Montessori areas of learning. Furnishings and learning materials are of good quality and any wear, missing items or breakages are reported to the manager as part of the nursery's daily assessment of the provision. This addresses one of the recommendations made during the previous MEAB accreditation. In following the second recommendation – that written plans be provided at the start of term – staff members in each classroom now plan a termly topic together and take it in turns to deliver activities which include the Montessori areas of learning and that are also linked to the developmental stages identified by the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). These plans are displayed on each classroom's noticeboard.

The level of children's independence in both rooms is high and, following a recommendation made during the first visit, the lunchtime routines are continuing to be revised. It is suggested that further consideration is given to this part of the day in order for children's autonomy to be fully maximised. In addition, the garden doors from the Oak Room are now kept open during the work cycle giving children more choice of where to work. The garden adjacent to the Oak Room was already well equipped with practical life activities and the recent addition of further resources to support the other areas of learning has enhanced children's learning experiences. Planning now includes both indoor and outdoor activities.

The setting provides an education which follows the principles of the Montessori approach and environment. The setting has successfully addressed 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 review the lunchtime arrangements to offer children in both rooms maximum opportunity to develop their skills of independence; and
- continue to review the outdoor activities and opportunities to ensure that all areas of learning are represented.

An Action Plan has been drawn up with, and retained by, the setting to address these recommendations.

Philosophy:

The development of the child is at the heart of this setting. The teachers' knowledge of Montessori principles is evident during discussions with them and also in their actions as they care for the environment throughout the day, making adjustments as necessary for each child.

Learning and Development:

Children at Rectory Garden Montessori School are highly motivated to learn. The morning work cycle runs from 08.00. On the day of the first reaccreditation visit, most children in the Oak Room were working individually or in small groups by 08.30. On Monday and Thursday mornings one of the nursery staff offers Forest School and gardening sessions to Oak and Acorn children. Visiting teachers offer football skills, dance classes and ballet classes to Oak Room children on Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday mornings respectively. These activities commence at 10.30, by which time the Oak Room children have already accessed a 2½-hour work cycle. Children have the choice of whether or not to attend the group activity, and on the morning of the first visit several children continued to work with self-chosen activities rather than join the group. After lunch there is also a continuous period of 2½ hours when the Oak Room children may choose what they would like to do in their classroom, or they may choose to go into the garden, or to rest. The timetable in the Acorn Room is very flexible due to the needs of these younger children. They are supported by the adults to choose activities inside or outside and they may rest in the adjoining quiet room. There are two morning snack times in the Acorn Room. Currently there are no children attending the setting for afternoons only.

Each early years qualified staff member has a group of key children for whom they record evidence of their learning and development, along with their planned next steps, using the web-based recording system. The planning refers to Montessori activities, which are linked to the developmental stages identified by the EYFS. Planning has recently been extended to include activities for outdoor learning and the staff team intends to continue to develop this further. Every adult can contribute to all children's learning records and the adults know every child extremely well. An example of this during the first visit was when one teacher adjusted the presentation of a Montessori activity to a small group to challenge one of the children who already understood the concept. The proprietor and manager use data from the web-based system to assess the nursery's provision as a whole, including how it fulfills the learning and development requirements of the EYFS.

Prepared Environment: resources and materials

The resources in this bright, spacious Montessori nursery are of good quality and are relevant to the needs of the children using them. Learning materials are attractively arranged on low-level shelving so that even the youngest children can choose their resources easily. There is a good selection of Montessori materials as well as other equipment to support topics, such as the topic of 'Eggs' at the first reaccreditation visit.

On the morning of the second reaccreditation visit the doors to the Oak Room garden were opened at 09.00 and one of the children invited the assessor to see the new outdoor activities. These activities cover several areas of learning and also link to the current 'Harvest' theme. Continuing to review and provide a wider variety of learning materials in the garden areas, for children to freely access during the work cycle, will help to broaden their learning and development opportunities even further.

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

The proprietor, manager and staff team have created an environment that offers children many opportunities for independence. Children's autonomy is well supported. They are confident to explore the environment and, because children feel responsible for their environment, they feel free to make suggestions, such as one child's idea given during the first reaccreditation visit: "I could be in charge of opening the gate", which the staff supervised. Self-service snack provision and low sinks mean that children can help themselves to snack when they choose and wash up afterwards. Children confidently change into outside clothing and shoes when ready to go out, and help each other if needed.

Children who stay for the full day bring a packed lunch. Following a recommendation made during the first visit, the lunchtime routine has been amended so that children in the Oak Room now collect their own lunch box. However, adults continue to lay out children's name cards and set the tables ready for the children to place their lunch items on plates. Re-organising lunchtime so that children can do this themselves would give them greater opportunities for independence. In the Acorn Room, the adults take the children's lunch items out of their lunch bags and place them on a plate before the children come to the table. Continuing to review this aspect of lunchtime is recommended as these children, with the support from adults, could collect their own plates and lunch bags and put their lunch items onto a plate, further enhancing their autonomy.

Montessori Practice: links with parents, including reports and records

Parents are very positive about their relationship with the staff team. They speak highly of the key person system and are confident that they know who to go to if they have any concerns. They like the fact that they can contribute to their child's online development record, as well as to the termly topic plans. On joining the nursery, families are invited to provide photographs so that nursery staff members can make personalised albums for their key children. On the day of the second reaccreditation visit children in the Acorn Room showed excitement and enjoyed looking at a photograph album of one of the Acorn staff. Families are also advised of activities such as sports day and parent meetings through the nursery's termly newsletters. Key people now meet formally with parents of their key children annually and they now prepare annual digital reports for parents and paper transition reports for when children move to another setting.

Staff: qualifications, deployment, and performance management

With eight of the 12 staff either holding a Montessori qualification or working towards one, this is a very well qualified and knowledgeable team. The manager plans the staff rota to ensure that there is always a Montessori qualified teacher in each of the rooms and that either the manager or the proprietor are present in the nursery at all times. The

manager works mainly full-time in the Oak Room and the proprietor works mainly full-time in the Acorn Room.

The induction process helps to ensure that new staff members are fully prepared for their responsibilities and they are not given key children until they have settled in. Appraisals are held six-monthly and as part of this process staff members are invited to identify training, beyond their statutory training needs, which they feel would enhance their professional performance. The proprietor and manager of Rectory Garden Montessori School work hard to ensure that staff members are well organised and that they receive the support and training that they need to provide a high standard of care and education for children attending. It is obvious that the team is proud of its provision and of the children's achievements.

Name of Assessor: Susie Norman

Date of first visit: 22 May 2018

Date of second visit: 27 September 2018

Date report submitted: First visit – 23rd May 2018

Second visit – 1st October 2018