



Montessori Evaluation and Accreditation Board

School Accreditation

This report is prepared following an accreditation visit made on behalf of the Montessori Evaluation and Accreditation Board. It considers how far the school follows the criteria set out by the Montessori Evaluation and Accreditation Board and the Ministry of Social Affairs, Kuwait. The report does not provide any assessment of financial aspects of the school.

Gulf Montessori Nursery

Salwa, Area 7, Street 1, House 168, Kuwait

Date of the re-accreditation visit: 14 May 2015

Date of previous accreditation visit: December 2011

This accreditation report relates to the provision for children aged 18 months to 6 years of age.

Description of the school/nursery

The Gulf Montessori Nursery in Kuwait has a sister school in Dubai with whom they share the Montessori ethos and the majority of the documentation. It is privately owned, and was established in 1993; it offers trilingual provision with teachers speaking Arabic, English and French. The nursery is located in the Salwa area, in a converted double story villa of which only the ground floor is now being used for the nursery provision. Following recent changes in nursery regulations a new nursery building was included in the grounds of the school to accommodate the upstairs classroom. Each classroom has its own bathroom facilities. There is access to a large paved garden. The nursery also includes a comfortable reception area, a kitchen, and dining and staff rooms with excellent storage facilities.

Currently there are 129 children attending, all of them come to school five days a week; their day starts at 08:00 and finishes after lunch at 13:00. Some of the younger children leave before lunch. The three classrooms are named after flowers: the youngest, and newly registered children attend Blossom, the 2 to 4 year olds' class is called Lilies and the 3 to 6 year olds are in Tulips. There are approximately 43 children in each class. The nursery provides children with snack and lunch prepared on the premises.

The nursery has facilities to support children with special educational needs. The trilingual approach supports children with diversity of languages. Many parents appreciate that their children have access to Arabic.

The nursery employs 19 staff, with a Montessori academic co-ordinator supporting



twelve Montessori trained teachers and two Montessori trainee teachers. Each classroom has a nurse and support staff. The administrator also holds a Montessori diploma.

Summary

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:

- Consider reorganization of the classroom to facilitate art activities in areas with close access to water.
- Review transition procedures to facilitate smooth transfer of children from indoor to outdoor activities in small groups
- Consider deployment of staff to ensure effective teaching in smaller groups

Philosophy:

The nursery's aim is to create a favourable learning environment, where Montessori philosophy is respected, offering children rich opportunities for learning where freedom of choice is facilitated.

The staff observe and look for children's sensitive periods and note their readiness for learning and absorbing information. They respect the children's independence and make sure that they have the freedom to follow their own interests under the gentle guidance of the teachers who create interesting learning opportunities.

The nursery maintains a relaxed relationship with the children's families, who are aware of the nursery's aims. All the publicity materials are regularly revised by the owner and academic co-ordinator, and then published in the school information packs and also on their website.

Learning and Development:

The children benefit from the Montessori early years curriculum, which is organized into the following areas of learning: activities of everyday living, education of the senses, literacy and numeracy, knowledge and understanding of the world, and creativity.

The children in the Blossom class focus mostly on activities of everyday living and early sensorial activities with access to role play and a wide variety of creative activities. They



enjoy the well organized book corner, which was well supported by one of the student teachers on the day of the visit.

The children in Lilies, the new downstairs classroom, have access to a wide range of Montessori activities including early literacy and numeracy, and also benefit from a small outdoor area which is being developed to facilitate role play and creative activities.

The children in the Tulips classroom, many of whom are around 5 years old and older, engage in many literacy and numeracy activities and have access to a garden which they tend carefully and with enthusiasm.

The teachers plan for children's learning based on individual observations and in line with a Montessori checklist which serves as the main recording tool alongside the regular observations. There is also a school annual plan for project work where the theme changes every three to four weeks. During the re-accreditation visit the older children were exploring the concept of interdependence, which was linked with the importance of the Sun. They really enjoyed collecting plants from the garden as the starting point of their discussion about their growth. In the Lilies classroom they were talking about caring for our planet and its plants and animals.

The annual plan is developed at the beginning of the academic year and detailed plans for specific activities are then discussed by the class teams and shared with the academic co-ordinator. The teachers are sensitive to children's responses to the project themes and are happy to change its direction to reflect children's own interests.

Due to the length of the morning the younger children have access to a two to two and half hour work cycle whilst the older children have a work cycle for three hours or a little more. All children are able to spontaneously select activities and engage with them.

The school employs a member of staff to support children with additional needs.

Prepared Environment: resources and materials

Following the opening of the Lilies classroom in September 2014 staff reviewed the school's resources to ensure that they were complete and ready for use by the children in the classrooms. The Montessori activities and materials are organized into the Montessori areas of learning and are generally well laid out and accessible to the children. More care and attention could be given to the outdoor area adjacent to Tulips and Lilies to offer activities prepared for individual children's spontaneous engagement and exploration.

Following a recent visit by some of the nursery team to Reggio Emilia in Italy light boxes were included in all the classrooms, with the children in Blossom making very good use of them exploring shapes and shadows. All classrooms also focus on ensuring that



children have plentiful and well-resourced opportunities for spontaneous creative activities.

The outdoor area is well equipped and includes a large space for riding tricycles and a variety of outdoor games as well as sand, grass and a shaded area with a climbing frame, balancing beam and slide. The children have an opportunity to care for chickens, ducks and a nanny goat which the school keeps in a shaded and fenced-off part of the garden.

There is ample space in the classrooms for children to play on their own with friends and in small groups. With the number of children in each class whole group activities should be brief to maintain children's attention and engagement. Individual snack is available during the morning and children help themselves to lunch, which is served in the dining room for the older children; the youngest children, in the Blossoms class, stay in for their lunch.

The Blossoms and Lilies classrooms would benefit from making the creative activities easily accessible to running water in the cloakroom and so ensuring cleanliness of other materials and activities in the classroom.

Since the staff's visit to Reggio Emilia in Italy, the creative areas in each classroom have been expanded and children are guided toward spontaneous creations as well as focused collaborative work, which has produced some interesting sculptures (such as the one showing the diversity of animals and creatures on Earth).

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

The nursery is committed to encouraging children's independence. This is evident in all three classrooms in the children's ability to select work and also return it to the shelves. Even the youngest children in the nursery are able to do this. They are also encouraged in their personal hygiene and during snack and lunch time.

Polite and respectful behaviour is modeled by all staff and grace and courtesy are encouraged across the whole nursery. Further consideration should be given to the organisation of group activities, working with smaller groups led by individual teachers, rather than as a whole group. This would further benefit the children's decision making and levels of concentration, as well as minimize waiting during transitions from one activity to another.

Parents are made aware of the nursery's aim to help children become more independent and advised how to facilitate such independence at home. This is first introduced to them at the start of their child's nursery days and also during parent teacher meetings.



Children are given time and are trusted to do things for themselves; the vertical grouping in all the classrooms further promotes grace and courtesy. Staff are consistent in modeling and encouraging ground rules. The nursery celebrates many festivals during the academic year.

Montessori practice: Classroom management

The nursery benefits from a team of experienced practitioners who are carefully guided by the co-ordinator to ensure smooth running of all three classrooms. Staff are clear about their roles in respect of maintenance and organisation of the environment, and this is underpinned by effective policies and procedures. The nursery should consider how best to use staff to support small group work with the children to support their growing concentration and engagement with activities.

The planning of themes and projects takes place at the start of the academic year; however, the staff are responsive to children's suggestions and flexible in addressing and incorporating the children's ideas into the plans. Individual children's progress is monitored using their individual learning plan (Montessori checklist) and regular observations also contribute to children's records.

The work cycle is two and half hours long in Blossoms whilst in Lilies and Tulips it is three hours long with children choosing work spontaneously, and having their outside time mostly at the start of the day. The children in Tulips, many of whom are over 5 years old, are very able to create spontaneous small group learning as witnessed during the visit when they were collecting plants in the garden at the start of the 'Sun Game'.

Having relocated the upstairs classroom to the newly built rooms in the ground floor last September, staff are re-evaluating the effectiveness of the classroom organization having almost reached the end of the academic year. This is likely to result in some changes next September, particularly in the use of the small outdoor classroom located between the two rooms.

Montessori Practice: links with parents, including reports and records

Parents are given the freedom to contact nursery administration for any queries they may have. When necessary teachers will contact parents to ask for a meeting to discuss their child. There are two parent/teacher meetings in the academic year during which time teachers discuss each child's progress in detail. In addition parents may ask for an appointment at any time during the year and individual learning plans are made available for discussion during these meetings. Should any accident occur a written explanation is prepared by the nurse, and given to the parents stating all action taken or medication given.



Parents attend an induction meeting when their children start nursery, and regular newsletters are sent home. The nursery organizes a big graduation event at the end of the academic year to celebrate the children's achievements. Parents are delighted at their children's progress and growing independence.

Staffing:

The nursery benefits from an experienced and well trained team of Montessori teachers who are expertly led by the owner, co-ordinator and administrator.

The co-ordinator and administrator are responsible for induction of new teachers and also for day to day academic aspects of the nursery life. The setting has well defined policies and procedures relating to staff and their roles and responsibilities. There is also an annual appraisal scheme and opportunities for further training offered locally and also by the Gulf Montessori Centre.

The nursery places great importance on the training and qualifications of the teaching team. The owner, who holds a Master's in Early Childhood Education, has over 30 years of Montessori teaching experience, has 23 years of management experience, and is a Montessori trainer. The co-ordinator and administrator are also Montessori trainers and they use their knowledge and experience to ensure the staff working with children have a sound understanding of the Montessori approach. Thirteen of the teachers have full Montessori qualifications; they are supported by two trainee teachers and three qualified nursery. There are currently two administrators, and also support, maintenance and security staff who all contribute to the safe day to day life of the school.

There are opportunities for the senior teachers within the nursery to share their learning about children and the Montessori approach with the teachers located in the sister nursery in Dubai. This exchange of professional expertise benefits all the staff and children in both settings owned by the Gulf Montessori Nursery.

Name of Assessors: Penny Johns and Barbara Isaacs

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