

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, a two-day accreditation visit 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).

The report does not address the standards and quality issues that are assessed by the Quality Assurance Authority for Education (QAAT), which reports separately. It has received licence to operate from the Ministry of Education. 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.

Madeleine's Pre School

House 582, Road 3212, Block 332, Manama, Kingdom of Bahrain

Date of previous MEAB accreditation: June 2015

This accreditation is valid until June 2023.

This accreditation report relates to the provision for children aged 3 to 6 years old.

Description of the pre-school:

Madeleine's Pre School is located in a converted villa in a residential district of Manama, the capital of the Kingdom of Bahrain and it serves the local community. The pre-school opened in 1982 and has been under its present, sole ownership since then. The owner also has a separate nursery and shares her time between these two settings.

The pre-school consists of seven classrooms, six of which are across two floors of the villa whilst the seventh is housed in a separate building in the garden. The pre-school also has a large indoor activity room, spacious entrance hall, kitchen and reception/office area. There are children's lavatory facilities on each floor. The pre-school is accessed through a small garden.

The pre-school day starts at 08.00 and finishes at 12.30, and there are facilities for early

drop off from 07.00 and late collection at 13.00. The pre-school follows the Bahraini school calendar and is open five days per week. A snack is provided for the children. There are currently 124 children on roll with approximately 17 in each classroom. On the days of the reaccreditation visit 122 children were present and 15 teaching staff. Children are organised by age with the younger children, 3 to 4 year olds, in three classrooms, a further three classrooms of 4 to 5 year olds and one class of 4 to 6 year olds whose classroom is in the separate building in the garden. This accreditation report covers the entire age range of the children attending.

English and Arabic provision is offered so the children have the opportunity to be with either English or Arabic speaking teachers on a rotational basis. This approach facilitates immersion in each language as the adults in each class only speak to the children in their first language. The pre-school also offers cooking and gym classes and there is provision for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Madeleine's Pre School is led by the principal/owner who is Montessori qualified and actively participates in the daily management of the setting. She is supported by an administrator, a team of eight Montessori trained teachers and six early learning trained teachers, one teaching assistant, three domestic staff, and a maintenance and security staff member. Two teachers work part-time and the rest work full-time.

Summary

Madeleine's Pre School is a popular and well thought of Montessori setting. The principal leads the well-qualified team and works hard to achieve high standards. She is dedicated to promoting and improving Montessori practice throughout the pre-school. Staff members' involvement in the MEAB reaccreditation process highlights their commitment to the Montessori philosophy. All staff members, whether they are Montessori trained or not, are enthusiastic about Montessori practice and each child is valued and supported.

The pre-school's excellent reputation is justified as it provides a calm and industrious environment with high academic standards and expectations of the children. The children are set challenging goals with a strong emphasis on literacy and mathematics. Arabic and English are given equal value and are both taught throughout the pre-school.

The children enter the premises by walking through the tranquil garden which has real grass and trees, and an aviary full of chattering budgerigars. There are large pots that the children have decorated themselves and which they use for growing flowers and vegetables. The welcoming atmosphere fosters appropriate emotional support for all the children who are kind and caring towards one another. There is an aquarium in the entrance hall and most of the classrooms have a nature table. The shady outside play area has an artificial surface and extensive climbing apparatus. There is also a sandpit, a climbing frame and 'sand kitchen' in an additional play

area. The children congregate in this area before school begins in the morning, giving them time to socialise, develop their physical skills naturally and let off steam before the morning work cycle starts.

The indoor environments are conducive to learning. The low-level shelving and Montessori materials and other resources are suitable for the children. The adults are currently in the process of auditing the curriculum provision to minimise repetition and make space for a greater variety of materials, including more core Montessori materials. The rooms all have clearly defined areas of learning and by placing the materials in sequential order they will make the staged differentiation and progression clearer for both the children and staff.

There is no direct access to the outside area from most of the classrooms, and the area currently used is limited in space, therefore the different classes have to take turns using it. The previous MEAB accreditation's recommendation, to undertake more Montessori training, is proving difficult to achieve due to the location of the pre-school. However, the teaching is led by Montessori trained staff and teamwork is exceptional.

The team is working towards extending the work cycle, the time the children have to work without interruption by timetabled activities. During the reaccreditation visit days, the teachers enthusiastically received suggestions to extend the work cycle, such as by rescheduling large group activities to the end of the morning. The rolling snack system was also popular when trialed during the visit. Their willingness to change their routine for the benefit of the children is testament to their desire to improve practice and offer all the children a work cycle with fewer interruptions.

Madeleine's Pre School is an exceptionally nurturing learning environment; the children display high self-esteem and thrive as they and their parents enjoy full inclusion at the setting.

The setting provides an education which follows the principles of the Montessori approach and environment and merits accreditation by the Montessori Evaluation and Accreditation Board. Consideration should be given to the following points for further development:

- maintain a work cycle of two and a half hours for the children to engage in uninterrupted and self-initiated learning. This can be achieved by moving the planned whole group activities to the end of the session; and
- ensure that all core Montessori materials are in all classrooms, and that they are complete and sequentially displayed.

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

Philosophy:

The Montessori philosophy is at the heart of this setting as its homely environment reflects the Montessori ethos well. Staff members trust the children's ability to become motivated and independent learners and work together to support them in their interests. The aim of the staff is to give each child a firm base in education and to support them in working towards their assessments for their primary schools. Parents with children starting at the pre-school for the first time are invited to attend a session which provides an introduction to the Montessori method of education and are advised as to how they can help with the settling-in period.

The pre-school's aims, philosophy and principles are reviewed regularly and are defined in writing in the prospectus. All members of staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities as these are made clear when they start in the setting. By extending the work cycle to at least 2½ hours the children would have fewer changes to cope with and more time to build their concentration and follow their own interests, thereby promoting independent learning. The pre-school is very fortunate to have so many Montessori trained staff.

Learning and Development:

The early years Montessori curriculum is the basis for children's learning in all of the classes. There is a strong emphasis on mathematics and literacy, with the children also having access to the broader curriculum. Teaching is effective as staff members are adept at motivating the children to learn and accomplish new things. At the beginning of the year teachers review the aims and objectives of the pre-school and ensure that the children are offered the whole curriculum in both languages as currently the children change class, teachers and language each week. Both languages, English and Arabic, are taught by teachers fluent in these respective languages. The language taught in each classroom is either Arabic or English. The children learn to read and count in each language. By introducing Makaton signing the children could be further supported in their language acquisition, especially those who are still only beginning to speak. The principal of the pre-school is keen to introduce bi-lingual classes where the languages are taught simultaneously and naturally, so that the children have more continuity in their education and do not need to move class each week.

Whole group planning is prepared monthly and these plans are shared with the parents. Long term planning is drawn up by the team as a whole and includes topic work and cooking. Children are encouraged to provide the cooking ingredients on a rotational basis, which gives them a real experience of shopping and sharing with their friends. Observations and tick charts are used by staff to record and assess children's progress and to compile reports and plans. Parents are invited to come and talk to the staff every term about their child's progress.

The adults are effective at encouraging the children to develop their own ideas and make connections with the outside world. Life cycle activities and topic work reflect the environment in Bahrain and the wider world, and during the reaccreditation visit days

children learnt about our dependence on the sun. Art and crafts are given prominence in the pre-school and children's artwork has pride of place in its displays.

The pre-school is based in a villa and, due to the layout of the building, children's visits to the outside area are timetabled. However, by changing the organisation of the morning, and only having compulsory large group activities at the end of the session, the children, with the exception of their garden time, could have a longer period for their self-initiated learning.

Children with special educational needs are fully integrated and supported within the classrooms. The setting also accommodates children with allergies. Teamwork is evident, which contributes to the children's successful learning and development.

Prepared Environment: resources and materials

The children at Madeleine's Pre School regularly move around the building. For example, they move to the garden area for outside play, to the kitchen to cook and to the soft play area during the morning work cycle. They also currently change classrooms at the beginning of each week to learn either English or Arabic. The children have total immersion in the language of the class they are in, both written and spoken.

The classrooms are all set up using the same formula, comprising low level shelving with the different curriculum areas well defined. Most have a good selection of Montessori materials. During the reaccreditation visit the teachers audited their shelves to ensure that the materials were complete and in sequence. Provision should be made to ensure that all classrooms have the core Montessori equipment and that these are complete and sequentially displayed. One member of staff discussed plans to extend the curriculum by adding some science activities into all the classrooms.

Members of staff have lovingly made some of the materials, for example, there is a model town and farm which are used to teach grammar. During the reaccreditation visit two older children enjoyed placing objects, such as a black car on the road, building an appropriate sentence, which they then wrote out. The children demonstrated their ability to think for themselves and enjoyed their work.

The garden is divided into four areas. As the children enter the building they walk through a delightful lush garden with trees and birds. This natural garden is an oasis amidst its dry surroundings. There is also an area for large flower and vegetable pots, charmingly decorated by the children. The shady play area is separated by a fence and is well equipped with climbing equipment, slides and seesaws. Ride on bicycles and rickshaws are available and during the visit the children had artificial 'snow' to play with. At the end of this area there is another space, covered in sand, with a 'sand kitchen' and climbing frame. Good use is made of these outside areas and, during the visit, the children especially enjoyed spinning around while sitting on the seesaw.

Cultural studies are obviously very important in this setting. Arts and crafts are enjoyed, and music is evident in all the classrooms. Cooking is also given high priority. On one of

the visit days some children made pizza while others made a cake, and preparations were being made for National Day. The nature tables in some of the classrooms were exceptionally well resourced with objects from around the world. The soft play area has role-play resources and various construction play opportunities. All the different environments are very well cared for.

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

All adults constructively support every child's emerging independence. Children are given time and freedom to repeat activities, with support offered when needed by staff. They are provided with easy access to the curriculum materials both indoors and out. An illustration of their capabilities can be seen at snack time as the children help themselves, pour their water and unfold and fold mats. Giving the children the opportunity to chop their own fruit would further enhance their independence and support life skills. The trial in one class of a café style rolling snack system worked very well during the reaccreditation visit and the children benefited from being able to have snack when they wanted it, without interrupting their work.

The staff encourage good self-esteem by giving the children responsibilities, for example taking the snack trolley back to the kitchen and delivering messages to and from other members of staff. The children learn to keep their classroom clean and tidy. The staff are outstanding role models for the children who are calm and polite and show respect for their peers, the prepared environment and all the adults who teach them.

The pre-school actively promotes the importance of independence and encourages the parents to continue this practice at home. During the visit one mother expressed that she was very surprised and impressed with her children's capabilities. The respect the staff show for the environment, each other and the children is a real strength of this pre-school.

Montessori Practice: links with parents, including reports and records

Links with parents are excellent. The principal is available every day and welcomes the children when they come in each morning. The parents have verbal communication with their children's teachers daily and regular written reports are compiled for them using group and individual observations. Individual parent/teacher meetings are offered every term. The teachers rely on tick charts to indicate progress and identify children's next steps in learning. Currently it is just the class teachers who write the records and these records and observations stay in the classroom in which they are written. Only verbal information is shared between the different class teachers. To improve the record-keeping and planning further, it is suggested that all staff could make observations of the children, they could reduce the reliance on the use of the tick charts to plan for next steps, and a child's records should follow them when they change class.

Photographs and regular newsletters are sent home via the 'Parental App' therefore the parents are kept up to date with any relevant information. During the reaccreditation visit

days the children were preparing for National Day, when parents were going to be invited in to see their children perform. Fundraising for local charities plays a large part in the pre-school's community life, and outings to areas of interest are well supported with parental presence.

Parental feedback about the setting is excellent; they praise the standard of the education and appreciate the ideas that they are offered to use at home with their children.

Staff: qualifications, deployment, and performance management

This is a very well qualified team. The majority of the teaching staff hold a Montessori qualification and they are well supported by assistants. The principal is Montessori qualified to diploma level. She shares her time between this pre-school and her separate nursery but is available daily. Many of the staff have worked in the pre-school for a number of years. They feel exceptionally well supported by her and consider her to be like a 'mother' to all of them, as she is very approachable and knowledgeable. She is supported by an administrator, however, appointing a deputy would help share the managerial load.

The principal observes the staff and ensures that there is a consistent approach to classroom management across the setting. Teachers are also encouraged to observe in the classroom, to gain a better perspective of their own abilities. Team spirit is very strong. Staff members work well to ensure that all roles are fulfilled and that the children are supported effectively. Regular staff meetings are held at which operational information is shared alongside new initiatives and changes in practice.

To ensure that staff members are up-to-date with developments in Montessori pedagogy, they should continue to explore professional development opportunities. The whole team's attitude to changing some fundamental elements of practice during the two-day reaccreditation visit was inspiring and a credit to the teachers, who are determined to improve their Montessori practice.

Name of Assessor: Charlotte White

Dates of visit: 26th and 27th November 2018

Date report submitted: 2nd December 2018