

## **Montessori Evaluation and Accreditation Board** **School Accreditation**

**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 Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport in Herzegovina-Neretva Canton, 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.

### **Planet Montessori Mostar**

Vukovarska 48, 88000 Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina

This accreditation is valid until June 2023.

This accreditation report relates to the provision for children aged 2½ years to 6 years old.

#### **Description of the nursery:**

Planet Montessori Mostar is located very close to the centre of the town in a quiet street. It is situated in the basement of a large private house and has been converted into a custom-made space to accommodate the requirements of the nursery. There are three open plan classroom sections, which are light and airy, and the children move seamlessly from area to area of the Montessori curriculum within them. The children are in a mixed age range. There is a garden, which is equipped with a sandpit, climbing wooden structures, slides, wooden log stairs, seat bench and mud kitchen. There is another outdoor area where the children garden – using the land to grow their own organic vegetables, fruits and herbs. These are grown using the permaculture principles. All areas of the nursery’s premises are for its sole use.

The nursery is open 45 weeks of the year from 07.30 to 16.30. At present, there are 14 children on roll, ranging from 2 years 11 months to 5 years 11 months. Most attend full-time but the youngest tend to go home after lunch at 13.00. All 14 attend every day. On the second day of the accreditation visit, there were 12 children in the morning, of whom three went home after lunch. All the food served is organic and is prepared on the premises by the owner and an assistant cook. The children are provided with breakfast,

morning and afternoon snack and a very nutritious lunch. The nursery provides for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and cooperates with the Centre for Early Developmental Support and with external experts to provide fully for all these needs. It also caters for children who do not speak Bosnian, Croatian and/or English as a first language.

The nursery is privately owned and was first registered in January 2018. The proprietor has an appointed directress/pedagogue to manage the nursery, who has a Montessori head teacher and two Montessori preschool teachers responsible to her. All these four staff have full Montessori qualifications from the Montessori Centre International. They all work full-time and were present during the visit.

## Summary

Planet Montessori Mostar has really made its mark in the short time that it has been in existence. It offers a genuine Montessori experience for all its children as it follows the philosophy laid down by Maria Montessori very closely. The children are extremely independent in their actions. They are delightful, outgoing individuals who positively thrive on all the opportunities that each of them are given. They work diligently throughout the daily work cycle and enjoy being able to move to and from the outdoor environment as they wish. They make full use of the prepared environment and take great pleasure in exercising their freedom to work either on their own, with a friend or in a small group. They truly respect the beautiful materials that are neatly arranged according to the areas of the Montessori curriculum. The nursery is now going to work hard to thoroughly immerse the English language into all aspects of nursery life. It should also ensure that the older children can work towards their full potential in literacy and mathematics.

The independence shown by the children in so many aspects of their daily life at nursery overflows into their own homes where the parents are happy to reinforce the nursery's ethos. Parents really enjoy being part of Planet Montessori's life and are very happy to support the nursery in all it does. The leadership of the nursery is excellent and the staff work as a skilled, cohesive team, all eager to ensure that every child has a unique experience each day.

***The setting provides an education in accordance with 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:***

- staff should work to fulfil the ambition to establish the use of English in the day to day life of the nursery, and
- staff should continue to ensure that every child, particularly the older children, work towards their unique potential in the areas of literacy and mathematics.

### **Philosophy:**

At Planet Montessori Mostar, it is very evident that the nursery provides a true Montessori experience for every child in its care. They are very independent and show a deep sense of pleasure from participating in the many Montessori experiences that are offered to them. The nursery certainly “follows the child”, making sure that each has their individual needs satisfied, with their carefully planned progress through the curriculum. A good level of trust is displayed between the staff and children, with the child’s inner needs being recognised. There are many opportunities for the development of self-initiated learning and self-discipline, particularly through the children’s use of the cultural materials, which are impressive in their quality, quantity and range.

The children enjoy the benefits of being in a vertical age group of between 2½ to rising 7 years. The adults have a good understanding of the use and implementation of the Montessori principles. Despite being recently Montessori qualified, they are learning to implement their knowledge and skills well, through which they are building their self-esteem and confidence in their work. They are all very capable. The philosophy is defined in writing on the website, in the house rules and in the annual curriculum which is part of the nursery’s legal requirements. The management team regularly reviews the quality of Montessori practice.

### **Learning and Development:**

All areas of the Montessori curriculum are very well provided for and learning takes place both indoors and outside (particularly in the permaculture environment). There is a very wide range of materials to support each area of learning. The three teaching staff work as a cohesive team with equal responsibilities for supporting all the learning. The large teaching area indoors is open plan and they move seamlessly between its different sections to support the children’s learning and development. The children mainly arrive between 08.00 and 09.00; those arriving early have breakfast and all then start their three-hour work cycle. The daily routine is displayed in writing in the classroom and all the staff follow a rota for duties. As the number of children attending is quite small, all the staff do presentations to all the children and they exchange information effectively for recording each child’s progress and for future progress planning.

There is a good balance between adult-led and child-initiated activities. The children are free to work on their own, with a partner and in a small group. There is plenty of opportunity for both spontaneous learning and planned activities to take place across the day. Provision of art and physical activities is enriched by external expertise: a puppeteer, musician, artist, theatrical pedagogue and actor come in to introduce children to all aspects of art and to help them prepare a performance for the end of the school year. These adults do not just work with these art forms, they also follow the nursery’s principles on love for nature and a sustainable environment. For instance, they use recycled materials with the children to create the stage and puppets.

The nursery now needs to ensure that all, particularly the older children, can work towards their unique potential in the areas of mathematics and literacy. Staff should also

integrate the English language into every aspect of the nursery's life.

The nursery works hard to ensure every child's developmental needs are met and it is able to refer to outside agencies for any specific help required. Planning is well organised into long, medium and short-term plans, with the key persons drawing up individual plans for their children. Observations are carried out regularly and are recorded in the child's record file. The nursery is considering implementing a digital system for recording and planning. The pedagogue has overall responsibility for the observations and assessments of the children and the team meets regularly to review the effectiveness of the learning and development provision and to plan enhancements to its already very good provision.

### **Prepared Environment: resources and materials**

The prepared environment at Planet Montessori is quite exceptional, the materials have been in use since January 2018 but still look very new and the children handle each piece as if it were something very special which has to be looked after carefully. There is a wide choice of materials and they are all grouped into the areas of the Montessori curriculum. The Montessori materials are supplemented by extra resources in all the areas of learning. There is a large section for recycled materials and standard art and craft resources, which are always available for the children to experiment with. There are materials applicable to the outdoor environment which are taken outside each day, and in the garden there are large pieces of wooden equipment that enable the children to work on their physical development.

The children eat together in the open plan area and there are sleeping facilities in a quiet part of the nursery for those that need a rest during the day. The adults carefully check the shelves before and after each day's session and the children participate in keeping the shelves in good order and regularly cleaned.

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

Planet Montessori has established a high level of independence in all its pupils. They are eager to help at all times and are given so many opportunities to be self-reliant. They serve their own breakfast, their morning and afternoon snacks and their lunch, for which they also lay the tables. Washing up their plates and utensils is much enjoyed. The staff always allow enough time before going outside for the children to dress themselves appropriately and change into their boots and shoes. The children are trusted to learn spontaneously and there were many examples of children extending their knowledge through open-ended questioning during the visit. There is mutual respect shown between all adults and children and they are very careful in looking after their environment. The nursery shows great respect to the different cultures that the children bring to Planet Montessori.

Every child is free to move around the setting at will and they can repeat any exercises

as many times as they wish. Nursery and home work very closely on developing independence in both places. The nursery keeps in communication with the children's parents, inviting them to facilitate their child's independence, such as by providing child level hooks to enable the children to hang up their own coats when they get home.

### **Montessori Practice: links with parents, including reports and records**

Each child has a key person who is responsible for observations, planning and record-keeping. The staff liaise with each parent at the end of the day when they pick up their child, giving them verbal feedback. At present, the parents are not given a written report, but it is intended that this will be considered as a development when the number of children enrolled increases. The parents are extremely happy with the care, children's progress, and the attention that the nursery gives their children. They appreciate the opportunities to join in outings, social occasions and to receive regular newsletters. The nursery recently held a parents evening, offering a taster session of the many exciting lunch menus that the children had enjoyed. This was appreciated and the parents were surprised by the range of food their children eat at nursery. When a child transitions to school at aged 6 or 7, Planet Montessori provides a comprehensive report.

### **Staff: qualifications, deployment, and performance management**

The nursery has an organisational structure in place for its staff. Each adult knows their responsibilities and there are rota charts for each week of the year, which are followed conscientiously. They work very well as a team. The nursery has policies which are extremely comprehensive and cover every aspect needed to run a successful educational establishment. These are all available in the office for parents to look at if they so wish. They are regularly reviewed and discussed with the whole team. A nursery development plan is also in place and is regularly updated.

All four teaching staff have recognised Montessori qualifications. The nursery has a very good induction procedure in place and all staff have job descriptions. The regular staff meetings are minuted, as are staff's supervisory meetings. There are records of the staff and peer-to-peer observations and of the regular appraisals, all monitored by the directress/pedagogue.

The proprietor works passionately to provide a beautiful Montessori environment where children can develop as active participants in their own learning and development. She places a high priority on continuing professional development, with a recent training opportunity for the staff being in music education. The proprietor has also planned to undertake an English course to improve her own understanding and speaking of the English language and is hoping to do a Montessori access course within the next year. The nursery is led by the extremely dedicated directress/pedagogue who works tirelessly to ensure that the establishment becomes one of Mostar's leading facilities for young children. The rest of the staff work as a cohesive team under the guidance of the also very dedicated Montessori head teacher.

Name of Assessor(s): Wendy E. S. Compson

Dates of visit: May 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> 2019

Date report submitted: May 8<sup>th</sup> 2019