



# **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" (2012/14). The second visit sought to assess the progress made on the recommendations set out in the report from the first visit as well as any further findings made during the second 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.

### **Ladbroke Square Montessori School**

42 Ladbroke Square, London W11 3ND

Date of first re-accreditation visit: 20 October 2014

Date of second re-accreditation visit: 21 May 2015

Date of previous MEAB accreditation: June 2011

This accreditation report relates to the provision for children aged 2½ to 5 years

#### **Description of the school**

Ladbroke Square Montessori School, originally established in the 1940s, caters for children between the ages of 2½ and 5 years of age from the local community. The owner employs two head teachers who share the responsibility for the day to day running of the setting. The school is situated in a four storey period house with a small garden at the rear, which provides opportunities for small group outdoor activities. The children also have limited access to the communal gardens in the centre of the square. The school has four large classrooms, one on each floor of the building, each accommodates a maximum of 20 children at any one time; each classroom is supported by a minimum of three early years practitioners. One of the classrooms can be converted into a gym and is regularly used for ballet (an extra-curricular lesson) and assembly.

The school is open from 08.55 to 15.15 with children attending a variety of sessions. There are 77 children on roll for the morning sessions and on the day of the second re-accreditation visit there were 64 children present, of whom 40 stayed for the whole day and had lunch at school. The younger children (14 at the time of the second re-accreditation visit) attend in the afternoons. Children bring fruit for snack and those who



stay all day also bring packed lunch from home. The school has a healthy eating policy.

The school employs the two head teachers who divide their time between teaching and administration, 12 teachers, the majority of whom are Montessori trained, and a registrar. The school is able to support children with special educational needs and English as an additional language. Extra-curricular activities are delivered by visiting professionals.

## Summary

Ladbroke Square Montessori School is a thriving community nursery school; children are happy and curious as they freely access the wide range of Montessori materials and other activities available in the classrooms. The school offers care and education that is in line with Montessori practice and the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) 2014. The staff are extremely well qualified and led by newly appointed co-head teachers who are dedicated to promoting Montessori principles and philosophy throughout the school. The children benefit from vertical grouping throughout the school and are kind and caring towards one another, negotiating use of group activities with little teacher direction.

The layout of the nursery building does not allow for free flow access to the outdoor areas; however, the nursery ensures that each classroom regularly accesses either their small secure garden or the communal gardens opposite the school.

In keeping with the school's key objective to develop their relationships with the children's parents "home link books" are reviewed on a daily basis by the head teachers and staff to promote an on-going dialogue between key persons and parents in recognition of the central role that parents play in their children's learning and development.

The school should be commended on the positive approach it has taken to implementing the recommendations made at the first re-accreditation visit; the head teachers and their staff team have reviewed the classroom/resource organisation and established daily routines that enhance learning opportunities for the children and reflect the Montessori principles and practice very well. Since the first re-accreditation visit the school has reviewed the systems used to record and monitor children's development to ensure that a full and representative record of children's achievements is used to identify areas of strength and areas where further support would be of benefit.

***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:***

- To continue to develop opportunities for more advanced work for the older children in the school.
- To make the role of the key person more visible throughout the school, including to parents.

**Philosophy:**

The school places great value on creating a homelike environment that reflects the Montessori ethos and that encourages children to develop at their own pace. Staff model behaviour appropriately and work together to support children in their interests. Good use of language to engage and challenge children is evident throughout the school; staff are particularly adept at using language to effectively support the children's growing communication skills.

Montessori practice is most visible in the staff's individual work with children; they give individual children their full attention and make it clear that each individual child is respected and valued. Children are confident and inquisitive and since the first re-accreditation visit benefit from strong direction in the cycle of activity and the care of the materials; staff are attuned to giving individual lessons to reinforce patterns of activity. The work cycle now runs throughout the sessions and the children competently organise themselves to access the rolling snack that has been reintroduced. The school should give consideration to introducing nature/interest tables for the children to display items they bring in from home.

The school's literature and website makes clear reference to the Montessori approach and the value that is placed on the principles. The school should be commended on the strategies that have been introduced since the first re-accreditation visit to further embed the Montessori philosophy in the daily life of the setting.

**Learning and Development:**

The children can freely access a wide range of Montessori materials and other activities, and spontaneously select them from the shelves; the areas of learning are now clearly defined and children independently access their chosen tasks. Since the first re-accreditation visit the school has re-organised the classroom furniture and resources to create more defined curriculum areas in order to encourage more effective use of a wide range of activities.

Staff interact well with children on a 1:1 basis, offering a very nurturing level of care to



the individual child. Further consideration should be given to developing this individual attention so that it challenges particularly the older children in their continued exploration and investigation of the learning environment. The school is particularly effective at encouraging creative expression in the children and the classrooms display an impressive range of children's art work appropriately.

Access to outdoor play is limited due to the constraints of the building; however, the school has in place an effective timetable that allows all children to have time outdoors in both the small school garden and the local secure communal gardens opposite the building. Children are keen to explore the outdoor space and enthusiastically describe their activities there, such as that they are "going to collect leaves and then print them".

Termly planning is clear and provides a good introduction to chosen themes which are delivered throughout the school; since the first re-accreditation visit gaps in the record-keeping have been thoroughly addressed and children's records show clear links between the Montessori curriculum and the EYFS.

The school has many multi-lingual children on its roll and staff support children's language development very well; this is reflected in the children's confidence and eagerness to communicate with both their peers and adults. The children can freely access a wide range of Montessori materials and other activities.

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

Since the previous MEAB accreditation visit, the school has opened up each classroom throughout the building creating a large indoor work/play space on each level of the building. The management is in the process of updating the decor and flooring throughout to make the rooms more inviting.

The wide range of materials ensures that children have the opportunity to make choices about the activities that they undertake. Since the first re-accreditation visit the head teachers and staff have reviewed the resources to create a more open feel to the classrooms, with clearly defined access to a full range of activities. The school's updated approach to record keeping clearly evidences children's progress. Consideration should be given to further planning for differentiation of learning within all areas of the curriculum to offer more challenge to children who are attending for their second year. In order to do this, staff should consider tracking individual children through the work cycle to highlight areas for development, specifically focused on individual needs and interests, and plan the introduction of additional materials, such as nature/interest tables.

The development of a small outdoor classroom on the lower level floor of the school has provided children with opportunities to work away from the main group and focus on their individual interests, and has created more flow within the classroom. Observations



of its use may give rise to strategies for extending freer access to the space. Work is underway to provide more natural resources for this area.

Since the first re-accreditation there is less focus on “show and tell” sessions; the children benefit from access to the full range of resources throughout the work cycle. Introduction of interest tables and project tables that can focus on individual children’s interests, thereby creating personalised learning opportunities, would further enhance the work cycle provision.

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

Children access the materials freely and now they all follow the cycle of activity and independently tidy and maintain the classroom space. The extended, uninterrupted work cycle and effective deployment of staff introduced since the first re-accreditation visit allow children the time to develop a keen respect for both their environment and the classroom ground rules.

The children happily interact with one another and with their teachers; parents comment positively on their children’s independence at home and in the wider community. The children now benefit from staff deployment that recognizes strengths within each individual teacher’s practice, thereby meeting the needs of the individual children with a more supportive structure and enabling staff to reflect on the role of the key persons within each classroom. The current level of staffing is generous and, under the direction of the head teachers, staff have taken on clearly defined designated roles to support the management of the classroom as well as of the children’s learning.

### **Montessori practice: Classroom management**

The school is under new management and the co-head teachers are very enthusiastic about their role; they are keen to develop every aspect of the school in line with the value they place on the Montessori approach and the school’s partnership with parents. The head teachers and staff team should be commended on the positive approach they have taken to re-establishing a structured approach to classroom management throughout the school.

Observation of the children’s development is mainly carried out through spontaneous methods; the structure and planning of day to day routines and activities recognize how the children use the classroom space. This could be further enhanced by the school pursuing its intention to employ an electronic record keeping system as this would further enhance the tracking of the children’s learning and progress.



Since the first re-accreditation visit the school has re-established a full work cycle which supports an effective flow of spontaneous learning and ensures that staff deployment facilitates independent learning and more focused teaching opportunities to reinforce the cycle of activity. The management competently supports staff in defining how they work together as a team to develop a planning strategy that gives each member of the team an opportunity to make use of their knowledge and expertise.

The school has a very thorough range of policies which are under regular review.

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

Parents are very complimentary about the school and although some could not name their child's key person all were very impressed with the level of communication the school offered both in regard to their children's development and with news about the school in general. Parents said that they enjoy the daily face to face feedback and appreciate the weekly newsletters and emails. Links with parents could be further strengthened by making the role of the key person more visible through parent board displays and parent information circulars.

Parents spoke enthusiastically about attending sessions that helped them to understand how the Montessori approach could support their children's learning and development, and those spoken to all mentioned that they have chosen the school over other local schools because it was a Montessori nursery.

### **Staffing:**

The co-head teachers had worked at the school as teachers under the previous headship and since the first re-accreditation visit have established a positive working relationship with their staff team; they have created a calm and respectful ethos throughout the school and have put into place systems that support the children's development through effective planning and teacher interaction. The staff team has been very effective in establishing a consistent approach to their day to day practice.

Staff are very well qualified; all members of the teaching staff have appropriate early years qualifications and nine of them also hold Montessori teaching diplomas and several have first degrees in early years and other disciplines. Staff attend local authority continued professional development training as well as national seminars and conferences.

Staff induction documentation, staff contracts and job descriptions are in place. Staff meet on a regular basis after school and this is the ideal forum to develop new strategies and working practices in response to the recommendations in this report.



Since the first re-accreditation visit staff are given regular non-contact time to plan for learning and update children's records.

The children in the school are very warmly and affectionately cared for by an enthusiastic and knowledgeable staff team who have worked very hard since the first re-accreditation visit to effectively revitalise Montessori practice throughout the school.

Name of Assessors: Deborah Penny and Barbara Isaacs

Date report submitted: First visit – 1 November 2014

Second visit – 21 May 2015