

## **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.

### **Ladbroke Square Montessori School**

43 Ladbroke Square, London W11 3ND

Dates of previous MEAB accreditations: June 2011 and June 2015

This accreditation is valid until December 2022

This accreditation report relates to the provision for children aged 2 to 5 years old

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

Ladbroke Square Montessori School, originally established in the 1940s, re-registered under the current ownership in 1992. The owner, who does not attend the setting daily, employs one head teacher who is responsible for the day to day running of the setting and attends full-time. The nursery is situated in a four-storey period house with a small 'quiet garden' at the rear, which provides opportunities for activities such as digging, construction and water play. The children are also accompanied to the communal gardens in the centre of Ladbroke Square and to other local community facilities like the library. The nursery school has large rooms, one on each floor of the building, and each of the three classrooms can accommodate a maximum of 20 children at any one time, except one that has a maximum of 19. Each class 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 dance and assembly.

The setting is open in term time only, Monday to Friday. The morning sessions run from 08.55 to 12.00 and the recently introduced lunch club runs from 12.00 to 13.00. The afternoon sessions run from 12.00 to 15.00 for four days a week and to 15.30 on Thursdays to accommodate computer club. In the afternoon the children all join together for this session. No children attend just for the afternoon. There are 49 children currently aged between 2 and 5 years on the roll, all attend for morning sessions and some stay for the afternoon. On the day of the second reaccreditation visit there were 41 children present, of whom 17 stayed for the whole day. Three children attended lunch club and then went home. All thirteen members of staff were present in the morning. Ten stayed on for the afternoon, including the head teacher and the registrar. Children bring fruit for snack and those who stay all day also bring a packed lunch from home. The setting has a healthy eating policy.

The head teacher's qualifications include a Foundation Degree in Early Years, NNEB and a Norland Diploma. The registrar has a primary teaching qualification and all members of the teaching staff have appropriate early years qualifications. Nine hold Montessori teaching qualifications and several have first degrees in early years or other disciplines. Most of the staff work full time and the deputy is in charge if the head teacher is absent. Some additional activities are delivered by visiting professionals. The setting is able to support children with special educational needs and/or disabilities as well as those for whom English is an additional language.

## Summary

The very well-qualified team at Ladbrooke Square Montessori School is led by the head teacher who works hard to achieve high standards and who is dedicated to promoting and improving Montessori practice throughout the nursery. All staff members are enthusiastic about the Montessori philosophy and each child is valued and supported in developing at their own pace. To highlight this commitment to Montessori philosophy job descriptions are being rewritten to include reference to Montessori practice.

The welcoming atmosphere fosters appropriate emotional support for all the children, they progress in all areas of their learning and development and are kind and caring towards one another. The children benefit greatly from positive interaction with their peers in each of the mixed-age group classes.

Following the first reaccreditation visit the staff team has worked hard to extend the older children's learning by providing them with additional resources. This practice should continue to be developed by offering them more advanced Montessori materials as well as linking challenging activities to the project topics even more creatively.

The nursery offers many extra activities, which generally take place in the afternoons. The head teacher and her team enthusiastically received the suggestion

made at the first visit for them to trial the introduction of an invitation system for children to visit the 'quiet garden' and other classrooms. This system has been adopted now and this development is testament to the team's desire to improve practice and to offer all the children a work cycle with fewer timetabled interruptions. Staff should now look at reducing the length and frequency of assemblies in order to maximise the children's opportunities for independent learning.

In following a recommendation from the previous MEAB accreditation the nursery has made the role of the key person clearer. This has benefitted the children and is explained to their parents. Since the previous accreditation a digital record-keeping system has also been adopted. The staff members are still learning how to use it to its best advantage to effectively plan for and assess the children's progress. By varying the types of observation staff members employ – such as incorporating narrative observations of the children's use of the classrooms over the whole day – they should be able to assess in more depth and thereby ensure that the children have a curriculum which is fully relevant to their individual developmental needs. Since the first visit the staff team has worked to enhance the children's respect for their learning environment and to ensure that it better supports their sense of order. The rooms all have clearly defined areas of learning and, following the first visit, the Montessori materials have been placed in sequential order, which now makes the staged differentiation and progression of the materials clear for the children and staff.

The changes made to the lunch routine have also had a profound and positive effect on the children's behaviour and sense of responsibility; it has improved their skills and now promotes effectively the Montessori ethos of grace and courtesy. Ladbroke Square Montessori School offers a nurturing learning environment. Links with families are very strong, the children flourish and they display high levels of self-esteem.

***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:***

- staff should continue to improve the recording of children's progress by including longer narrative observations;
- the length and frequency of assemblies should be reviewed; and
- the opportunities for more challenging work for the children should be further developed.

**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, and 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 nursery's website and literature make clear reference to the Montessori approach and the value that is placed on these principles. The lunch routine has been extensively reviewed and now promotes the Montessori ethos of grace and courtesy comprehensively.

While the team has made great progress towards providing the children with an uninterrupted work cycle each day by giving them the choice as to when they visit the setting's garden, staff members' attention should now focus on reviewing the arrangements for whole setting assemblies.

### **Learning and Development:**

Teaching is very effective. Staff members are adept at motivating the children to learn and accomplish new skills. The children benefit from the broad curriculum offered to them and, in all the rooms, learn effectively through their use of the extensive range of resources which they self-select. The children are respectful and greatly benefit from the mixed-age range classes. They are confident communicators and the children who speak additional languages progress very well with skilled support from staff.

The recent introduction and use of the digital record-keeping system is enhancing staff members' recording, assessment and planning for children's learning and development. They are still learning how to use it to its best advantage, they can link children's progress with both the Early Years Foundation Stage areas of learning and development and the Montessori curriculum, and can use it to analyse cohort data. This information is also useful to help staff draw up progress reports for each child, including the mandatory two year old progress check and transition documents. All staff contribute to the child's records which are managed by their key person.

The adults are effective at encouraging the children to develop their own ideas and initiative, and to make connections with their previous experiences. During the second reaccreditation visit a child peeled and successfully chopped a carrot. The bowl for the pieces was too small and the child was encouraged to work out how to resolve this challenge. Eventually the child fetched a bigger bowl and walked around the classroom offering the chopped carrot to peers. Following the first visit, the setting better meets the needs of the older children by providing more activities that promote problem-solving and which extend their interests and project work. This has been achieved in particular by reviewing the level of challenge offered by the practical life, mathematics and literacy materials. This progress can now be built on and the staff team should continue to look for ways and materials that provide a fully stimulating curriculum for all the children attending.

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

The four classrooms are welcoming and well-resourced with a variety of Montessori and additional materials which now accommodate the child's needs more comprehensively. The resources are set out in clearly defined areas of learning. The furniture is arranged to enable children to access the materials easily and move around the room freely. The range of resources is extensive both indoors and out. The children's own artwork is valued and imaginatively displayed.

Placing the materials in sequential order on the shelves has helped the staff and children to identify progression in learning and development more effectively. Core materials are now available in all the classrooms and children are encouraged to complete their cycle of activity to promote respect for their environment and each other, and support their sense of order. The 'quiet garden' is also very well resourced. On the day of the second reaccreditation visit children were able to bake 'chocolate' cake in the mud kitchen, experiment with floating and sinking in the water trough and use the ride-on toys. Caterpillars had been nurtured and the butterflies were released, much to the delight of the children.

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

Every child's emerging independence is constructively supported by all the adults. They are afforded time and freedom to repeat activities, with help given when needed by the staff, and they are provided with easy access to the curriculum materials both indoors and out. Giving the children the opportunity to use the garden when they want to has further promoted their independence. An example of their capabilities is seen at meal times, when they help lay the tables, empty their food onto a plate from their lunch boxes and clear up afterwards. They are supported when appropriate by attentive staff members who sit and eat with them. Along with regular parent seminars, the digital record-keeping system is now used to indicate to parents how independent their children are at the setting, which helps promote a consistent approach to fostering autonomy both at nursery and home. The children are now also using the digital system to contact staff members in other rooms when they wish to visit them. This demonstrates the collaboration between the adults and children in aiding independence.

Assembly is still currently half an hour and takes place once a week. Having had time to reflect on the interruption this group has on the children's independent learning, the staff team is considering reducing the frequency and length of the assembly.

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

The setting seeks information from parents about their child, such as before they start attending, and the information given to parents is thorough. One of the outstanding features of this nursery is its strong sense of community, enhanced by the active parents

association and regular parent seminars. Communication with parents is very good. All staff members have the opportunity to give parents daily verbal feedback, and currently the child's key person writes messages for the parents in the home-link books. It is planned that this form of communication will be phased out as the digital record-keeping system becomes more established.

Observations and photographs are shared securely online with the child's parents every week so that they can see for themselves how their child is progressing. By using the digital system staff members now track the children's use of the Montessori environment. It is recommended that they employ longer narrative observations to evaluate progress and identify the children's possible next steps. Furthermore, by encouraging parents to contribute their own observations online of their children's learning and development, the setting will extend their knowledge of the children's progress and individual developmental needs in order to provide for these in full.

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

The head teacher has a positive working relationship with her staff team and a consistent approach to classroom management is evident across the setting. There is a strong culture of continuing professional development. Performance management procedures are clear and peer observations are embedded in practice. New staff members are very well supported by the management and mentored by a member of the team.

The setting provides a happy and nurturing environment. The staff team is highly committed to and enthusiastic about the Montessori approach, and about providing the children with an education in line with its principles. To highlight this job descriptions are now to include a section on Montessori practice. The adults are dedicated to the children's wellbeing. The management team has demonstrated that it is proactive in driving changes for the benefit of the children and is fully committed to further enhancing the setting's practice.

Name of Assessor: Charlotte White

Date of first visit: 6 April 2018

Date of second visit: 2 July 2018

Date report submitted: First visit – 29 April 2018

Second visit – 3 July 2018