

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 relevant 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 and considered 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.

Receiving accreditation carries the expectation that settings will continue to work on the issues highlighted in this report and will remain committed to the ongoing development of their practice. Furthermore, that they 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.

Kew Montessori

St Luke’s House, 270 Sandycombe Road, Kew, Surrey TW9 3NP

Date of first accreditation visit: 1 November 2017

Date of second accreditation visit: 23 February 2018

This accreditation is valid until June 2022

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

Description of the nursery:

Kew Montessori is located in a residential area of the London Borough of Richmond. It is situated in a large Victorian converted school hall, which is the main classroom, with cloakroom facilities, an office and kitchen also on the premises. The nursery has sole use of the premises during its opening times, including its adjoining grassed garden. It packs its resources away each day.

The setting is open five days a week during term times. Morning sessions run between the hours of 09.10 and 12.15, and afternoon sessions run until 15.00. Most children attend either morning or both sessions, some attend just for the afternoon. One fifth of the children stay for both sessions. Those attending the afternoon bring in a nutritious packed lunch.

The children are in a mixed age range, all using the one classroom. The setting can accommodate a maximum of 50 children between the ages of 2 and 5 years old each session. There are currently 53 children enrolled. On the day of the second accreditation visit 38 children were in attendance during the morning, eight stayed for the afternoon and were joined by one child who attended just for the afternoon. The nursery school supports children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those for whom English is an additional language; it receives assistance for SEND from the local authority.

This privately owned nursery school opened in 1982 and re-registered under the current ownership in 2006. It is part of a group of three settings owned by Broomfield House School Ltd. It employs 12 members of staff; nine have Montessori qualifications at level 4 or above, and five attend full-time. On the morning of the second visit ten were present, with four remaining for the afternoon and all of whom worked directly with the children. The proprietor oversees some aspects of the setting's management, but the Head Teacher and Deputy Head have responsibility for the day to day management of the setting. A full-time administrator is shared with the other Montessori nurseries in the group.

Summary

Kew Montessori provides an outstanding Montessori learning experience for its children. The Montessori philosophy is well embedded in the practice. All the nursery staff members "follow the child" and support children in fulfilling their unique potential. There is reciprocal trust between staff and children which enables them to learn naturally, and excellent opportunities are provided for the development of initiative and self-discipline throughout the day. Children have freedom of movement and access to age-appropriate learning materials. This is a very well-resourced setting.

Staff members are welcoming and informative to parents and children, interactions between children and staff are warm and respectful. Children enjoy their time in this nursery and have the support of a key person to provide direction to their learning. The quality of provision for children with additional needs is outstanding as the team has an excellent understanding of the needs of each child and extra specialist support is provided as necessary. Staff members promote children's language development exceptionally well.

A secure web-based system is used to record observations of each child; this record is regularly updated by staff and is accessible to the child's parents. Parents are very happy with all aspects of the provision; they receive good quality end of year reports on their child's progress as well as weekly updates on learning plans.

Staff members are suitably qualified and experienced and are excellent role models. Team work is exceptionally good, providing a harmonious environment. The management team is very enthusiastic about implementing all aspects of the

Montessori philosophy at the nursery and dedicates time and skill to review and improve practice. The nursery has fully implemented most of the recommendations from the first accreditation visit and has considered changing its record-keeping system to one with more of a Montessori focus.

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:

- implement a method of recording, planning and assessment of children's learning and development that gives a clear Montessori focus; and
- continue to ensure that all the Montessori materials including the activities of everyday living are appealing to the children.

Philosophy

Kew Montessori is an outstanding Montessori setting in which children have the opportunity to follow their own needs and interests with support from well trained staff. The adults expertly create a carefully prepared environment. They support each child, meeting their individual needs by closely monitoring their development and learning so that each of them can work towards their unique potential. Children enjoy the freedom to choose their activities, master their movements and explore creatively. Simple boundaries and ground rules underpin this freedom and the development of the children's self-discipline. Staff members are excellent role models and nurture the positive self-esteem of each child. They manage the transition from home to nursery very sensitively to help ensure that each child new to the setting feels safe and develops trust that leads them on to work independently in this calm, quiet and non-competitive learning environment.

An introductory pack for parents provides thorough information about the philosophy and practice of the setting. The principles of the Montessori approach are clearly embedded in everyday practice. The quality of the Montessori practice is reviewed regularly by the senior Montessori practitioners.

Learning and Development

The learning and development provision at Kew Montessori is excellent. Both indoor and outside areas are equally favoured by the children. They have easy access to the grassed area during the sessions and a fixed awning is available to ensure that this garden is always accessible - good use is made of it in all weather conditions.

All adults know their allocated daily roles and are effective in supporting the children's use of the learning environment. There is a clear written statement of classroom procedures and daily routines. The organisation of the routines is excellent.

Presentations of materials are made to children either individually or in groups, and the balance between adult-led and child-initiated activities is appropriate. The children feel emotionally secure, they enjoy contact with their key person and also engage with the other adults and their peers in activities suited to their stage of development. The children's developmental needs are very well met, including any additional needs. Two speech and language therapists provide support to individual children for three hours per week and occupational therapist visits are arranged as needed.

The morning work cycle lasts for about two and a half hours, commencing when children arrive and continuing until 11.50 when short whole group activities are offered. The morning work cycle offers opportunities for spontaneous learning and planned activities. Those attending afternoon sessions have access to a similar range of choices until 14.30. Afternoon sessions begin with a story or outdoor play and are run on similar lines to the morning programme, with additional enriching activities to choose from including art and craft, music and movement, cooking and gym. Further activities on offer for the children to choose include sports tuition delivered by an external coach on Wednesday mornings from 11.00 to 12.00 outdoors (in order to not interrupt the work cycle), and French on Fridays, 09.45 to 10.30, in an area of the room separated by dividers. Regular Forest School attendance is also offered to the children.

Planning for all the children is organised seasonally into projects; plans are set out according to the learning and development areas of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Framework to which are added specific Montessori curriculum areas. Presentations of Montessori materials are planned separately for individual children. Observation and assessment of individual children's progress is recorded by their key person using the web-based system. The Montessori curriculum is linked with EYFS areas in this record, although it has an EYFS emphasis rather than a Montessori focus. The management team also uses this digital system to make regular assessments on the effectiveness of the learning and development provision. It is recommended that the nursery implements a method of recording, planning for and assessing children's learning and development that gives a clearer Montessori focus. The local authority's guidelines for assessment and recording progress are used when a child moves on to school.

Prepared Environment: resources and materials

Staff members regularly review and improve the environment for the benefit of the children. They provide for different types of activity by separating parts of the classroom into distinct learning areas with shelves and screens. Different-sized chairs enable all children to have appropriate-height seating. The setting is very well resourced with Montessori materials and, following a recommendation made at the first accreditation visit, the layout of these has been re-organised and is now orderly and sequential. All the materials are developmentally appropriate, ready for use, complete, clean and accessible. Following the first visit some of the materials have been carefully refurbished and it is recommended that this should continue in order that all the resources remain appealing to the children. Since the first visit the nursery has also replaced its plastic cups with china and glass.

There is an excellent range of activities on offer for the children to choose. During both accreditation visits children indoors enjoyed painting, gluing, junk modelling, singing and dancing. The quantity of resources is very good both indoors and outside, and there is ample space in which to use them. Children benefit from the classroom opening onto the grassed area where they have opportunities for developing physical skills. They are also taken regularly to the nearby public playground.

The adults' responsibilities are well managed to provide for the children's wellbeing; the staff rota clearly delineates these responsibilities. The room is adapted easily to accommodate lunchtime and children can sleep in a corner of the room which can be separated and screened from the active children by large dividers. All staff share responsibility for the maintenance and assessment of the learning environment and its resources, and each member of staff has a specific area to maintain and review. The children are encouraged to help look after their carefully prepared environment.

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

Children's independence is fostered throughout the setting as the adults carefully and sensitively support each child in the environment and help them to socialise. Staff members trust the children to access learning spontaneously and interventions are very well timed, promoting each child's freedom and independence within the classroom and outdoors. Children are introduced to a range of Montessori materials either individually, in pairs or in larger groups. During the work cycle the children demonstrate high levels of independence in making choices, carrying out activities and returning materials to the shelves. They can choose when to have their snack and learn how to wash up their crockery afterwards. At lunchtime children help set the tables and distribute lunch boxes, which they unpack by themselves, and competently clear away afterwards. Lunchtime also encourages the development of social skills.

During circle time at the end of the morning session a child may choose an alternative activity if they do not wish to join in. Staff members promote the children's respect for others by offering them simple ground rules to follow and instruction in courtesy; as a result they share and behave extremely well. Children learn to respect each other's cultures and many festivals are explained and celebrated. The Montessori prepared environment encourages children's growing understanding of turn-taking and staff model positive language and actions to help them resolve any disagreements. Children learn how to be independent in self-care, dressing and washing hands.

The nursery provides very useful information on its website and in encounters with parents to help ensure that the home offers the child a consistency of approach to learning and that the routines for them are predictable. Staff members promote the children's independence at home by giving parents examples of good practice and they ask them to share information from home on the web-based system. The promotion of children's independence is excellent at Kew Montessori.

Montessori Practice: links with parents, including reports and records

Kew Montessori has outstanding partnerships with parents, which has a very positive impact on children's wellbeing. Staff members are approachable, communicate effectively and provide a friendly, welcoming environment. Parents receive copies of policies and procedures and these are also available on the website and at the nursery. Parents meet the key person when their child first starts attending in order to understand this supportive role, and they are informed of the routines, activities and the operational arrangements that enable children to settle in, to feel confident and supported in a sensitive way.

Consultations with parents take place regularly and members of staff respect their requests for the care of their child to reflect their values and practices, preferences and attitudes. The key person frequently provides them with information on their child's progress, care and needs using the web-based system, emails, telephone and meetings. The planning for each child is shared with their parents electronically and records of individual requirements are reviewed and up-dated regularly with parents. They value being given the opportunity to participate in the assessment and recording of their child's learning and progress. They also receive the topic planning, sent to them weekly with a newsletter. A parents notice board is also used to convey information. High quality written reports are given to parents when their child leaves and a transition record is passed on to the next setting. Children's transitions are aided by the close links that the nursery develops with their subsequent schools. The mandatory two year old progress check is also completed and discussed with parents. Parents speak very positively about the high level of care on offer from all the staff in the nursery.

Staff: qualifications, deployment, and performance management

Kew Montessori is managed very effectively. It has a clear staffing structure which includes cover arrangements for the Head Teacher's absence. The Deputy Head covers the leadership role when the Head Teacher is at the group's other Montessori nursery close by. All the adults know their responsibilities well as this is a very highly organised nursery, with plans and rotas that facilitate exceptional levels of care for the children. Daily checks are done indoors and outside. The overview of policies and procedures is carried out jointly by the group's senior staff members. A development plan for the setting is drawn up and implemented effectively. Staff members at Kew Montessori are very well qualified and experienced, which contributes to the high quality and consistency of the children's care and education. In addition to Montessori qualifications, two members of staff have a BA, one has a BSc and two have an MSc. The team works highly effectively together to provide a harmonious learning environment for the children.

The management team maintains excellent records of the continuing professional development of the staff and ensures that training is kept up-to-date. Most training is accessed online or through the local authority and some staff attend Montessori Schools Association regional training sessions. Staff induction is well planned and recorded, and all staff members have job descriptions for their role. They all attend weekly meetings

which are recorded. The Head Teacher conducts supervisory meetings every two weeks to help maintain the high quality of care. Appraisals are done termly and peer observations are carried out regularly. Staff members are dedicated and passionate about implementing fully all aspects of the Montessori approach in this excellent nursery.

Name of Assessor: Anne McConway

Date report submitted: First visit – 4 November 2017

Second visit – 24 February 2018