

## **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.

### **Sheen Montessori Nursery**

Palewell Common, Palewell Common Drive, East Sheen, London SW14 8RE

Date of previous MEAB accreditation: November 2013

Date of first re-accreditation visit: 1 March 2017

Date of second re-accreditation visit: 11 May 2017

This accreditation is valid until 31 July 2022

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

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

Sheen Montessori Nursery was established by its current owner in 2011. It is based in a residential area of South West London, adjacent to Palewell Common, in a converted residential building which is arranged over two floors. In addition to three classrooms and a communal area, there are cloakroom facilities, a kitchen and office. The first floor classroom is used exclusively by the 2 to 3 year olds and the two ground floor classrooms and communal area offer a spacious free-flow environment for children aged 3 to 5 years. The ground floor classrooms have direct access to a secure outdoor play space; the nursery also regularly makes use of Palewell Common for nature treks and

access to woodland areas.

Sheen Montessori Nursery is a term-time only setting and is open from 09.00 to 12.15 Monday to Friday, with the option of an extended day to 15.00 on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. The setting is registered for 60 children and chooses to limit the number staying for the extended days to 24 children. On the morning of the second re-accreditation visit there were 58 children in attendance along with 11 adults, including a student teacher, with 15 children and five of the staff staying for the afternoon. Children who stay on bring a packed lunch.

The owner/principal, who is supernumerary, holds a Montessori International Diploma and Early Years Teacher Status; the nursery manager, who is also supernumerary, holds a Montessori Certificate and a Postgraduate Certificate in Education. There are eight other staff members, all except one have relevant early years' qualifications and six hold Montessori diplomas. All staff members are present during the morning sessions and a minimum of four (dependent on numbers of children) stay on for the extended days.

The nursery supports children with special educational needs and/or disabilities as well as children with English as an additional language. It works in partnership with the local authority, accessing training and advice as required.

## Summary

Sheen Montessori Nursery offers children a genuine Montessori learning environment where they are encouraged to learn and develop by following their inner needs and interests. Staff members are well qualified and use their knowledge and understanding of Montessori principles to provide a full range of learning experiences that integrate the Montessori curriculum with the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). The adults work together to identify project themes which they use as the basis for termly planning; the room teams and individual key persons then adapt the environment and activities provided to ensure that their planning meets the individual needs of the children. Following the first re-accreditation visit all staff have reviewed their understanding of the theories that support sustained shared thinking and this has resulted in them now offering an exceptional learning environment, where children's critical thinking skills are encouraged across the whole range of experiences available. The adults use the time before and after the children's attendance each day to ensure that the environment is reviewed and appropriately resourced for the needs of the individual and the dynamics of the group. Sheen Montessori Nursery offers the children a very effective Montessori learning experience that supports every area of their learning and development.

Children thrive in this well-planned environment in which they enjoy real freedom of choice and full engagement with the opportunities on offer. The adults understand that children need to explore their environment at their own pace and they direct the children subtly and appropriately when support is required. All the children can freely choose whether to be indoors or outside and both these areas offer a full range of

learning experiences and resources that are very well maintained. Following recommendations from the nursery's previous MEAB accreditation, the outdoor space now reflects the rich learning experiences available in the classrooms and children are now fully engaged in the wide range of outdoor activities available to them. A true sense of community permeates the setting and children benefit hugely from being part of a diverse multi-cultural nursery. The children are happy and confident and enjoy the company of their peers and the adults in the setting. A respectful ambiance is apparent throughout the setting.

The nursery is highly regarded by the children's parents. Families appreciate the daily face to face feedback and the opportunity to follow their child's progress through their secure access to the nursery's digital record-keeping system. Parents are very aware of the Montessori approach and state that it was their overriding consideration when choosing the setting; they recognise and appreciate the levels of independence their children show in the home environment. Following a recommendation made at the first visit, the nursery has developed robust plans to increase parental awareness of the strong links between the Montessori curriculum and the EYFS, including through the nursery's literature and parent induction events.

***The school provides an education in accordance with the principles of the Montessori approach and environment and merits accreditation by the Montessori Evaluation and Accreditation Board.***

- It is recommended that the nursery continues to reflect on its practice in order to ensure that high standards are maintained and to fully implement the plans already in place to raise parents' awareness of the EYFS Framework.

**Philosophy:**

Sheen Montessori Nursery reflects the principles and ethos of the Montessori approach throughout the setting. The children benefit from secure relationships with the adults, who encourage them to explore their environment through self-initiated learning and active engagement in all aspects of the curriculum. Staff members trust the children to follow the ground rules, and children thrive on the freedom of choice that they are offered. The calm and nurturing environment produces a quiet "buzz" of activity; the children display high levels of independence and self-discipline and rarely need reminding of the ground rules.

The adults regularly review their knowledge and understanding of Montessori philosophy to help ensure that every child's needs are recognised and met. Following the first re-accreditation visit all staff members have conducted regular reviews and analysis of the relationship between key learning theories and Montessori philosophy. This development has enabled them to consistently offer exceptional learning experiences for the children attending. They discuss their practice and the individual needs of the children at fortnightly staff meetings, which are documented.

The nursery promotes its passion for, and commitment to, the Montessori approach in all its documentation. The website offers a clear and insightful introduction to the principles and ethos of the Montessori approach and this is clearly defined as the overarching philosophy of the nursery.

### **Learning and Development:**

The areas of learning are well defined throughout the nursery's environment. There is plenty of floor and table space to enable children to work both independently and in pairs or small groups, as they choose. The children enter enthusiastically on arrival and immediately begin to engage with the resources. Even the newest members of the nursery appear to be comfortable and familiar with the flow of the nursery day. Children can easily access the learning materials and enjoy spontaneously selecting activities that interest them. If children need guidance staff members are on hand to gently support them.

The children in the ground floor classrooms have direct access to the outdoor play space. This is very well resourced with all areas of learning addressed; for example, children can choose to sit quietly with a book in the tepee, or cook up "something special" in the mud kitchen, play with sand and water, build with large construction blocks and work with large scale numeracy and literacy activities. The younger children are encouraged to ask to use the outdoor space and understand that they can do so at any point during the work cycle; they are accompanied outdoors by staff members who are specifically allocated to this role. The entire age range mix freely outdoors.

The team is well organised and well deployed, all understand their daily roles within the setting, which leads to a positive learning experience for the children throughout the three-hour morning work cycle. Children who attend the extended day sessions can choose to join a range of additional activities such as French, yoga, woodland walks, creativity, and physical education sessions.

On the day of the first re-accreditation visit an adult-led group activity of making pancakes was made available to all the children, and they could choose whether to join it or not. This activity was well planned and the children achieved a range of learning outcomes, with the adults sometimes following children's spontaneous interests and sustaining their critical thinking skills. On the day of the second visit, the benefit of staff training in this area was very evident as the adults throughout the nursery used language skills to encourage children to extend their interests and thinking when hypothesising about the possible outcomes of a range of science and construction activities.

The adults plan long term nursery projects and these are updated on a monthly, weekly and daily basis according to staff assessment of children's current interests and progress. Individual planning is evaluated by the child's key person daily and is reviewed overall by the whole team during staff meetings. All staff are given non-contact time to ensure that the children's developmental records are kept up to date. Observations and assessments of the children's achievements are carried out regularly throughout the day

and immediately captured on the digital record-keeping system that is used to track their progress very clearly through the Montessori curriculum and the EYFS. The owner and manager regularly review cohort data produced on the digital system and use this to identify gaps in learning opportunities offered and to enhance provision overall.

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

The three classrooms in the setting are each organised to fully reflect the Montessori curriculum and the progression from simple to complex concepts that the children experience. An excellent range of Montessori resources is attractively displayed on fully accessible shelving; this is enhanced by other resources that enable the staff to challenge and extend children's achievements. Furniture is appropriately-sized for the age ranges within the rooms and has the added advantage of being height adjustable. All classroom areas offer plenty of space to enable children to use the resources to the best advantage.

The communal area between the two ground floor classrooms has a large but cosy book corner and space to enable planned adult-led activities to be carried out with ease. It also offers a place where children can take their snack on a rolling basis; the nursery provides a range of fresh fruit for the snack bar and on the day of the first re-accreditation visit the children ate the pancakes they had made. Water is freely available. The 2 to 3 year olds have their own rolling snack area in their first floor classroom. For those who stay for the extended days, the communal space is easily transformed into a dining area. Children help to prepare the lunch area and the adults use this mealtime well to promote language skills. The senior members of the team in particular effortlessly use these opportunities to further children's thinking and social development. Lunch is a relaxed and sociable occasion. Children do not usually sleep during the nursery session but, if they express a need to, provision can be made in the quiet area/book corner of each of the classrooms.

The staff team takes great pride in offering the children a very favourable environment and regularly reviews the layout and resources to ensure that they meet the dynamics of the groups of children they serve. The children seldom need reminding to return activities to the shelves and enjoy being involved in the maintenance of the classrooms, for example by tidying away outdoor shoes and storing artwork on drying racks or in personalised drawers to be taken home.

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

The adults are skilled at supporting children's independence, which is fully facilitated from the moment the children enter the nursery. They access their coat peg, change from outdoor shoes and immediately begin to self-select activities on arrival; they are settled from the outset and even the youngest immerse themselves independently in productive activities. All the children feel comfortable when asking for both support and company from the adults who, in turn, are caring. Staff members employ their thorough

knowledge of the children's interests and learning styles to promote their independent use of the resources. Children benefit from the freedom of choice that the nursery's long work cycle offers them; they can focus on and repeat activities that capture their interest, work with their peers, or just sit quietly and reflect.

Children work alongside and with each other very well, they are respectful of one another, and often willingly help each other, for example to pick up objects that have been dropped and to tidy work away. Children celebrate their own and one another's achievements joyously; on the day of the second re-accreditation visit there were several shouts of, "I did it all myself," and, "Look, he did it!" The adults are excellent role models and the broadly multi-cultural community of the nursery fosters a natural sense of unity and interest in the wider world. Children's home languages are promoted throughout the nursery and the multilingual skills of the staff team are usefully employed in supporting children's learning and development.

The digital record-keeping system gives parents easy and secure on-line access to their child's development record where they can find advice unique to their child, which helps the nursery and home to work together in promoting independence. Parents comment that they appreciate this support and notice their child's independence and resourcefulness at home; they feel that independence is a key feature of preparing their child for school. Montessori literature is also made available to them. The promotion of children's independence is an outstanding aspect of the nursery's provision.

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

The staff team has very effective relationships with parents; key persons greet them as they enter the nursery, giving the opportunity for face to face feedback at both drop-off and collection times. The nursery owner and manager are always available for parents at these times too. Parents speak of the deep trust they have in the nursery to offer their children a nurturing and respectful environment, and one that fully prepares them for the transition to school. They comfortably seek advice regarding behaviour management in the home environment and place high value on the advice they receive from the nursery.

Many parents have placed more than one child in the nursery over the time since it first opened and report that they are very pleased with their children's progress. Most came to know about the nursery through personal recommendation from current or past parents. They are fully aware of the nursery's Montessori principles and ethos and state that this was a key factor in their decision to register with the setting. Following the first re-accreditation visit the nursery has developed effective plans to increase parental awareness of the EYFS Framework.

Parents often volunteer to help with nursery activities and, after they have done so, they are asked for feedback on how they found this experience and on the setting's provision in general. This feedback is used to inform nursery evaluation and development plans.

In addition to the very effective verbal feedback system in place, all parents have a password that gives them access to their child's digital development record. Parents

enjoy being able to read the staff members' observations, learning overview and "what to do at home" at a time that is convenient to them, and they are encouraged to upload their own observations of their child at home. Parents can also read nursery notices and send messages directly to their child's key person via this portal.

The nursery completes the mandatory two year old progress check and shares it with parents and health visitors. It holds a "Meet the Teacher" event in the first term of each academic year and offers one to one parent consultations and a written end of year report. Staff members share the child's Photographic Learning Journal with the parents on a termly basis. The key persons also prepare transition records for those children leaving to go on to school, and arrange transition meetings with the child's receiving school.

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

Adult to child ratios are excellent at Sheen Montessori Nursery and the team is well qualified. As the owner and manager are supernumerary they can offer support whenever it might be needed across the setting.

Staff deployment is excellent: the adults carry out regular checks of the environment and resources throughout the day and communicate well with one another, which means that children's wellbeing is managed very effectively. Staff members take on scheduled and alternating roles within their classroom, which gives all the team the opportunity to participate in observations of both day to day practice and of peer performance, and to evaluate and develop them. This excellent practice is embedded in the daily routine of the nursery. Since the first re-accreditation visit practice has been further enhanced through all staff members reviewing their understanding of key learning theories and in particular of sustained shared thinking. This has resulted in them now providing a richer language environment that appropriately challenges children's thinking and fully supports their individual interests. The team has enthusiastically embraced this opportunity to improve practice to ensure that every child in their care works towards their full potential.

When staff members first join the nursery they are guided through a rigorous induction process, which introduces them to the wide range of policies and procedures the nursery has in place. The policies are reviewed by staff members annually or as necessary. All members of the staff team have annual appraisals and termly supervision meetings which are used to discuss and record staff's concerns, interests and potential professional development opportunities. All staff members are offered at least three training opportunities each year; these may be provided by local authority, private training providers, the Montessori Centre International or the Association Montessori Internationale. All training forms part of the nursery's improvement plan which is regularly updated as management, the whole staff team and external agencies work jointly to identify areas for development.

The management and staff at Sheen Montessori Nursery have established a setting that truly reflects the principles of Montessori education and the drive and passion to create

an effective, nurturing and very special place for children.

Name of Assessor: Deborah Penny

Date report submitted: First visit – 7<sup>th</sup> March 2017

Second visit – 11<sup>th</sup> May 2017