



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" (2008) and subsequent 2012 revisions. 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.

Sheen Montessori Nursery

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

Date of the first accreditation visit: 7 May 2013

Date of the second accreditation visit: 16 October 2013

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

Description of the school

Sheen Montessori is a privately owned nursery in East Sheen, south west London. This is the school's first accreditation.

The nursery opened in September 2011 and operates from two converted cottages on the edge of Palewell Common. The setting is arranged over two floors with the top floor classroom used by the 2 year olds and the two ground floor classrooms at either end of the building by the 3 to 5 year old age group. The downstairs classrooms both lead onto a central communal area that has space for coats and is used for various activities by the older children. There is also a kitchen, office and toilet facilities for staff and for children. Patio doors lead from both downstairs classrooms onto an enclosed outdoor area, partially covered with a safety surface.

Sheen Montessori is open from 9.00 to 12.15 on Monday and Friday and from 9.00 to 15.00 on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, term time only. The setting is up to full capacity in the morning, with 60 children normally attending, and a maximum of 24 attend in the afternoon. On the day of the second accreditation visit, there were a total of 55 children attending in the morning and 16 in the afternoon. Children attend five mornings, with the option of staying for the extended days. Those that stay bring a packed lunch from home.

There is provision for children with special educational needs (SEN) and English as an additional language (EAL).

The owner/principal has a Montessori International Diploma and during the morning session she is supernumerary. Altogether, there are twelve other members of staff; two of them have an



Montessori International Diploma and four are working towards this qualification, one has a Montessori certificate and two have postgraduate certificates in education (PGCE). The majority of the remaining staff are working towards level 3 early years' qualifications. On the day of the second visit, there were thirteen staff present in the morning and four in the afternoon, including the owner.

Summary

This recently opened nursery is staffed by a team of enthusiastic teachers who recognize the importance of encouraging children to work independently throughout the day, with support when necessary. Children are happy, confident and eager to learn, and also very respectful towards their peers and adults in the setting. The older children have freedom of movement between the indoor and outdoor environments and, following a recommendation from the first visit, arrangements have been made to allow the younger children a similar opportunity.

There is a good partnership between the school and parents and they receive verbal feedback on their child's progress from the key person on most days. The regular newsletters keep them up to date with forthcoming events. There is also a Parents Forum that gives staff and parents a further opportunity to discuss a variety of topics related to the nursery.

Daily observations help ensure that individual children's needs are met and whole group planning is done, taking account of the varying ages and needs of the children. Since the first accreditation visit, the setting has introduced a computer-based recording system that links Montessori activities to the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) framework.

Resources indoors and outside are good and well maintained. Following the first accreditation visit, staff have added a variety of different activities to the outdoor provision that more fully reflect the indoor environment and curriculum. This is an area that staff are continuing to review.

The staff undergo regular appraisals and attend relevant training courses offered by the local authority and Montessori Centre International. A high standard of Montessori practice was observed throughout the visits, even though not all staff are Montessori qualified.

Sheen Montessori offers children in their care the opportunity to learn in a relaxed environment that supports the inner needs of each child.

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:

- Continue to develop the outside space with resources and activities that engage children and reflect the indoor environment.

**Philosophy:**

The Montessori ethos is evident throughout Sheen Montessori, where children are encouraged to explore new activities at their own pace with support and guidance from the caring staff. As stated on the school's website, staff follow the principle that 'Children who are treated with respect and who are encouraged to try new things learn more readily to do things for themselves.'

Parents are given a wealth of information both on the website and verbally by staff. There is a strong partnership with parents and they understand the relevant recording and assessment procedures of the school.

During both visits, children were settled and confident in choosing activities, with staff supporting them as necessary. The setting's philosophy and aim are discussed by staff on a regular basis.

The team at Sheen Montessori fully understand the principle of 'following the child' and the importance of self-initiated learning.

Learning and Development:

The whole team agrees a termly theme but each class develops this in their own medium and short term planning, according to the age and differing needs of the children. Alongside this, each key person plans for the individual children in their key group. On the day of the second accreditation visit, the nursery was exploring the theme of 'Autumn'. Half termly plans are displayed on the doors for parents. Children's work, which is displayed on the walls, shows links to all areas of learning and the planning indicates that these areas are developmentally appropriate for the various age groups.

When registering their children, parents are asked to complete a background profile. This is helpful to the key person when planning suitable activities, and it is the key person's responsibility to keep records up to date. The EYFS is delivered using the Montessori areas of learning and the key person also records the Montessori activities that the children have been presented with. It was recommended during the first visit that the setting could make better documented links between Montessori activities and the EYFS framework and, since this visit, the nursery has introduced a computer-based recording system, 'My Montessori Child'. This is an encrypted system to secure confidential details. The system has enabled both Montessori and non-Montessori trained staff to make the links between the Montessori curriculum and EYFS, giving each key person various possible lines of development to follow or the option to use their own expertise to plan for their key children. Observations and photos are added directly onto the system and the observations are regularly checked by the deputy manager. Staff are very enthusiastic about and confident in using this system and report that planning has been made easier, not only for each child but they can see at a glance areas of the EYFS framework that they can focus on for all the children attending. For example, with a large intake of 2 year old children in the autumn term the planning emphasis has initially been on their physical abilities, but has now moved on to also encourage communication and social skills. This system also helps staff to complete the mandatory progress checks for the 2 year olds.

With supervision, children are free to work with any member of staff and can move freely between the inside and outside environments, including the younger children who use the upstairs room. Almost all of the activities observed during the visits were child-initiated, with



adults supporting the children when needed.

Children with SEN and EAL are fully supported in the setting and, when required, staff liaise with relevant outside agencies.

Prepared Environment: resources and materials

The premises are on two floors and are painted in neutral colours throughout, to draw children's attention to the activities on offer. The upstairs is used by the 2 to 3 year old children. There is a large role play/construction area that is related to the current theme on one side of the room, while the other side is set out with low shelving displaying appropriate activities for this age group. These are mainly activities for everyday living, sensorial, knowledge and understanding of the world and suitable puzzles. There is some very basic numeracy and literacy material, for example Number Rods, a couple of Metal Insets and a few Sandpaper Letters. There is an art and craft area, book area and snack table as well as a toilet. It is evident that thought has been given to the kind of activities and resources that will encourage self-initiated learning for the younger age group and support their learning in the three prime areas as identified by the EYFS. As children progress, they are introduced to more challenging activities.

Downstairs is a large open-plan space with a classroom at either end; the central communal area is used for individual snacks and for large creative projects. It also contains an area for construction activities as well as coat hooks and space underneath these for children to place their outdoor shoes. Both classrooms are furnished with low shelving that children can access easily. The shelves are arranged in the Montessori areas of learning and resources are rotated regularly to keep the children's interest and offer new challenges. Each classroom also contains a small art and craft area and book corner. There are plenty of chairs and tables for children to sit comfortably, with adequate space for floor work and sufficient resources to enable several children to work in each area simultaneously. All the material is well maintained and, as the setting is only two years old, is in excellent condition.

Patio doors at either end of the building lead to a good sized outdoor space, partially covered with a safety surface, with some raised flower beds and an area the children are using to make a 'mud' garden. There is a large storage cupboard that contains a variety of resources that help to develop the children's physical skills, such as stilts, balls, and hoops, as well as a sand tray, hollow blocks, trikes, chalks and pencil and paper with clipboards. Continuing to develop the outdoor space is a whole school project and, following the first visit, the setting has added activities such as large dominoes, conker counting with metal numerals, two writing tables and books. They intend to continue to add resources and activities.

During both visits, children were engaged in a variety of tasks as the prepared environment offers the children many opportunities for independent learning. The team at Sheen Montessori have worked hard to make full use of the space and provide thoughtful and developmentally appropriate activities.

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

The children at Sheen Montessori exhibit a very high degree of independence. Even the youngest children are encouraged to try and do things for themselves with support from adults



when necessary. It was particularly noted during the second accreditation visit that, within a relatively short space of time since the beginning of term, the 21 under 3 year olds have all settled into the daily routine extremely well. They are able to change their shoes and hang up their own coats and bags. They are able to help themselves independently to snack and wash up after themselves and see to their personal care, with younger children assisted in their toilet training. Each key person gives parents information on how they can continue to encourage independence at home. Many parents indicated that they have noticed how independent their children have become since starting at Sheen Montessori.

Children have complete freedom to work with whom they want to, either in small groups, pairs or individually, indoors or outside. Since the first accreditation visit, the staff have made efforts to ensure that all the younger children in the upstairs room have the opportunity to go outside during the course of the morning whenever they wish, rather than having a specific timetabled 'outside' time. Most children downstairs tend to stay in their classroom area, but the central area is used as a communal meeting place. Staff are available to guide and re-direct children when necessary and this is carried out sensitively.

Good role modelling by the adults in the setting creates a respectful environment. From time to time, younger children need to be reminded of the ground rules of returning work to the shelves but on the whole, children are able to complete their own cycles of activity independently.

Montessori practice: Classroom management

The morning work cycle is three hours long. Children arrive at 9.00 and after changing into indoor shoes and hanging up their belongings, settle straight into their chosen activities. The children in the ground floor classes are of mixed age while the younger children use the upstairs room. Snack upstairs and downstairs is available throughout the morning and both areas are constantly monitored by the staff. Doors to the outside are normally opened after about half an hour and on the day of the second visit, in spite of the rain, children from both groups were in and out during the morning from about 9.45 onwards. Although the principal is supernumerary in the morning, allowing her time to attend to paperwork or show prospective parents around the nursery, she often assists in the classrooms if extra help is required.

On Wednesday mornings a music teacher comes. She moves from room to room, offering the children an opportunity to play musical instruments. The children have the choice as to whether or not they join in these sessions.

Towards the end of the morning the children who are going home change their shoes, put on coats and all the children go to their classrooms for a short circle time that includes a story and some songs. Once the morning children go home, those staying all day prepare for lunch. When finished, the children wash and dry their plates and put away their lunch boxes. Children who require a nap are directed to one of the quiet book corners.

On the three extended days, a variety of activities are offered to the children alongside the Montessori activities, which are freely available throughout the afternoon for about two hours. The afternoon children often work in the upstairs room as this gives them the opportunity to use the role play area but they are also free to use the outside space as well as continuing to explore the Montessori materials. On Tuesday a PE teacher takes children in small groups outside for planned sports activities; on Wednesday a French teacher teaches those children who wish to participate in small groups, and on Thursday afternoons a variety of activities such



as yoga or nature trails are organised by the staff. There is also further opportunity for small group presentations such as the Sun Game or extensions with Colour Box 3. On the day of the second accreditation visit the afternoon children were split into two groups; one group had a French lesson in one of the downstairs classrooms while the other group continued using the Montessori materials in the other classroom, swapping over after half an hour. On this occasion, all the children were happy to participate in the French lessons but any child not wishing to do so is given the option to continue to use the other activities. All the children who stay on a Wednesday afternoon do so because French is offered.

The classrooms and the children learning is managed well under the effective leadership of the owner/head.

The setting has a comprehensive set of policies and procedures that support effective classroom management and the daily routines have been well thought out.

Montessori Practice: links with parents, including reports and records

All staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities and there is a daily rota regarding monitoring of the central communal area. Staff ensure that all materials are checked and in good order before the start of the session and throughout the day.

Children's progress records are always available to parents and verbal feedback is given almost daily. Parents also have the opportunity to talk to staff at two formal parent consultation meetings during the year, as well as receiving termly detailed reports. Staff also carry out mandatory two year old progress checks. There is a Parents Forum with representatives from each key group who meet with staff every half term to discuss a variety of matters affecting the school. These meetings are parent-driven and it was in response to a recent meeting that the setting introduced extended days.

Observations are made during the day and are used by the key person to inform planning for their key group. Parents have the opportunity to add their comments to their child's records at the formal parent consultation meetings and they are to be given an encrypted password so that they can access their children's records online. They are also regularly asked to complete a questionnaire in order to help maintain high standards in the nursery.

The setting has made good links with local primary schools and has recently had a visit from one of the class teachers. Feedback from the schools has been very encouraging, particularly with regard to the children's independence and how easily they settle into the school routine. The nursery produces a transition document in line with local authority guidelines, which is sent to the child's next setting.

There is a strong partnership with parents at the nursery and they are appreciative of the feedback they receive on their children's progress.

Staffing:

The owner/principal is in the nursery each day. The majority of the adults are appropriately qualified, some with Montessori qualifications whilst others are undergoing this training. The setting is very well managed and there is an appointed deputy manager.



The induction procedure is very good, with a staff handbook containing relevant policies and procedures. There is a supportive system of staff appraisals and, from time to time, the principal observes senior members of staff and gives appropriate feedback. Students are also mentored on a regular basis. Staff meet weekly to discuss planning, concerns about children or staffing issues and these meetings are minuted. There is a rolling programme of continued professional development courses and staff are encouraged to attend not only those offered by the local authority but also seminars offered by Montessori Centre International. One non-Montessori trained member of staff recently attended 'An introduction to Montessori practice', which she found extremely helpful.

The owner is happy to purchase new resources and equipment when requested. The setting has a self-evaluation document which is updated annually; the focus this year is on adding resources to the outdoor area.

Although this is a fairly new Montessori setting, the enthusiastic team has a caring and respectful attitude towards the children and a deep understanding of Montessori philosophy.

Name of Assessor: Margot Best

Date of reports: First visit – 7 May 2013
 Second visit – 16 October 2013