



# **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) and subsequent revisions. The second visit sought to assess the progress made on the recommendations set out in the report from the first 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.

### **Moseley Montessori Nursery**

St Columba URC, Chantry Road, Moseley, Birmingham B13 8DJ

Date of first re-accreditation visit: 31 July 2014

Date of second re-accreditation visit 2: 16 October 2014

Date of previous accreditation visit: 7 April 2011

This accreditation report relates to the provision for the whole nursery including babies, toddlers and pre-school children.

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

Moseley Montessori Nursery is situated in a church building near the centre of Moseley, which is 1½ miles from Birmingham city centre. It is open from 08.00 to 18.00 for 50 weeks of the year, and children may attend for the morning session which runs from 08.00 to 13.00 or for the full day. During these times the setting has sole use of the premises. Some areas of the nursery are packed away daily.

There are currently 60 children on roll, and a maximum of 51 children attend at any one time. On the day of the second reaccreditation visit there were 51 children attending, of whom 34 were under 3 years of age. There is a Baby Room on the first floor for children from 6 months to 18 months. On the ground floor there is a large Toddler Room for children from 18 months to 36 months and a Pre-school Room for children from 36 months to 60 months. Also on the ground floor are a large staff room, kitchen, nursery office, four children's toilets and four adult toilets. Children have access to an outside area which surrounds the building and daily access is also available to a large, private park which is adjacent to the church. Snack is provided for all children and they are free to access this when they choose. An outside catering company, specialising in nursery food, provides lunch; tea is prepared on the premises.

The school was established in 2008 by the two managers who work full-time. They both hold Montessori qualifications and Early Years Teacher status. In addition to the managers there are 13 full-time staff members, two of whom hold Montessori Teaching qualifications, and the remaining staff hold appropriate childcare qualifications. Children with special educational needs



(SEN) and children with English as an additional language (EAL) are supported by the managers, one of whom is the school's Special Needs Coordinator (SENCo).

## Summary

Moseley Montessori Nursery is a vibrant early years setting led by a passionate and well-qualified management team who recognize the need for reflective practice. Parents are full of enthusiasm for the setting and praise the staff team highly for their commitment and dedication. The children attending the school enjoy a wide range of learning opportunities and are supported by knowledgeable, well-trained adults. Excellent use is made of the school's indoor facilities, giving children plenty of space to work alone or in groups, to refine their large motor skills as well as fine motor skills and to move between classrooms as they wish. The outdoor learning programme at the nearby private park is a major strength of the school, providing enjoyable activities for the children whilst developing their independence and practical skills. The adults in the school are good role models for the children and are consistent in their expectations of children's behaviour. Since the last accreditation the school has provided further Montessori training for all staff and the managers are keen for more of their staff team to undertake Montessori training courses.

***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 encourage staff members to access Montessori training, giving all adults in the school a shared understanding of Montessori principles
- To continue to develop the newly established method of record keeping that links Montessori to the Early Years Foundation Stage.

## Philosophy:

The aims of Moseley Montessori Nursery are stated on their website and in the setting's policies. These aims include providing children with a high-quality Montessori education in a fun, child-centered and multi-age environment which is safe and welcoming. The school also shares "Montessori Education Principles" with parents in which it is stated that children will be regarded as individuals and will not be compared to each other. These principles also explain the adult's role in a Montessori classroom, how self-discipline, independence and concentration will be fostered and the importance of parents and the school acting in partnership. The principles are apparent in the adults' interaction with the children: they are respectful and supportive, knowing when to intervene and when to let the child make their own discoveries, thus helping them to develop independence and concentration. The adults encourage children to identify risks, for example at the forest school at the nearby park, and they draw children's attention to the ground rules in each classroom, which helps them to develop self-discipline. The aims of the school are reviewed twice a year by all staff.



### **Learning and Development:**

The school's curriculum, which is based on the Early Years Foundation Stage, incorporates Montessori learning activities and activities suggested by children's interests.

A great deal of thought has been given to how to meet children's individual needs. Children in all rooms are motivated to explore the wide range of equipment and activities provided and they are given freedom and time to choose for themselves, supported by adults who are attentive but know when to stand back. The management team place great importance on an uninterrupted work cycle. In the Toddler Room children have a minimum work-cycle of 2½ hours and in the Pre-School Room the work cycle runs for three hours. Babies are encouraged to initiate their own play and are not interrupted whilst concentrating on their chosen activities. Children may choose to work inside or to go outside to the garden area, where activities include sand and water play and a variety of wheeled toys. The garden area is accessed by a door from the pre-school room. On most afternoons children from one or more rooms walk to the adjacent Moseley Private Park for a Forest School session. These sessions are guided by the school's Forest School and Nature Walks policy, and children's interests and choices are taken into consideration. This is apparent by the enthusiasm they show as they dig, make dens, and tend their small allotment. Children's learning in this area is highly effective – they talk to adults about how to keep themselves safe and follow rules when walking to the park and when using items such as woodworking tools.

Long term planning is completed for the whole school at an annual staff meeting, when topics and themes are agreed. This planning is flexible to reflect the children's changing interests. Staff from each room meet weekly to plan for individual children's learning – this involves reviewing what went well previously and incorporating children's individual interests and next steps into the forthcoming short-term weekly plan. These next steps are recorded in a 'next steps book' which is kept in the classroom for all staff members to access.

Feedback from families and from the SENCo are also incorporated into planning for individual children. At the time of the first re-accreditation visit, children's individual weekly plans were primarily organized around the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and these, together with observations made of each child, were stored in large individual files called 'Learning Journeys'. Each child also had a Montessori Individual Learning Plan which was kept separately from their Learning Journeys. The managers recognised that the children's Learning Journeys were unwieldy because they contained all observations and planning documents for the entire time that the child had been at the school. In between the first and second reaccreditation visits the staff team have worked together to design a new method of recording children's achievements which combines Montessori and the EYFS. Assessment of children's learning is thorough, with key people tracking each child's progress from their starting point when they join the nursery until they leave for their next school. The managers use this information, together with information from peer observations, to assess the quality of teaching in the school. Since the first reaccreditation visit a statement has been developed which shows how children's learning and the quality of teaching are assessed.

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

Moseley Montessori Nursery is bright, spacious and well equipped. The Pre-school Room is arranged by Montessori areas of learning, and alongside the Montessori materials there is a good variety of appropriate non-Montessori learning materials. The quality of equipment is



generally high, and some key pieces of Montessori equipment have been replaced since the first reaccreditation visit. A cosy book area provides a space for children to relax. The Toddler Room is in a hall and thoughtful use of space has created exciting learning areas which children access confidently and with great enthusiasm. There are activities for large motor skills, small-world play and a book corner. At one end of the hall a sleep area is available for children to rest whenever they need to. The Baby Room, which is upstairs, is a bright uncluttered space with plenty of room for babies to crawl and explore. Activities are at a low level so that the babies can easily access them, and a wicker arch houses a small area to rest. Travel cots and sleep mats are also provided. All children have access to paint and other creative materials. Throughout the school there is a sufficient quantity of learning materials and furnishings for children to choose to work alone, together, or in small groups, and these are appropriate for the age and ability of children attending the school.

Due to the physical nature of the building it is not possible for all children to have free-flow access to the garden, but they may ask to go outside at any time. Resources such as sand and water play and tricycles are available in the garden. The activities in the garden are changed regularly to suit children's interests and routines. Moseley Montessori Nursery's Forest School offers children many opportunities for open-ended play and discovery. This area is very well equipped with secure accessible storage. All staff members can contribute to identification of replacement or new equipment for purchase to be considered by the management team.

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

Children in all three rooms at Moseley Montessori Nursery display high levels of independence. The older children confidently choose activities, help themselves to snack and pour their own drinks and tidy up after themselves. They serve themselves at lunchtime and are expected to put on their outdoor clothing and shoes by themselves. On the day of the first reaccreditation visit, older children at the Forest School were trusted to behave appropriately and were proud to show their skills. On most days babies are taken to the private park for walks. The toddlers are encouraged to choose their own activities and to put them back when they have finished. They use cutlery and are invited to make choices about snack and meals. To help children independently regulate their own behavior there are notice boards in the Pre-school and Toddler Rooms illustrating ground rules by showing photographs of children in those classes being, for instance, kind and helpful. Children at Moseley Montessori Nursery are encouraged to raise their hand and say "Stop please" if another child is doing something they feel uncomfortable with, such as touching their work.

Children in the Baby Room show emerging independence as they enjoy the social experience of sitting in a group with their friends. They are excited when their name is called and they can recognize themselves in a photograph. They sit on low level feeding chairs as soon as they can support themselves, and are encouraged to feed themselves, taking as long as they need. They help to tidy up by cleaning their own tray and are also shown how to wipe their own face. Tiny Talk sign language is used with the babies so that they can ask for what they need even before they are verbal.

Adults throughout the setting are very good role models and consistent in their expectations of children. Parents are extremely appreciative of the support given by the nursery to help children to be independent at home. This includes coffee mornings with talks about subjects such as "Montessori in the Home" and informative newsletters four times a year.



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

Children are grouped by age and also by key person groups. The Baby Room takes children from 6 months to 18 months, the Toddler Room is for children from 18 months to 36 months, and the Pre-school Room is attended by children from 36 months to 60 months. These age groups are flexible depending on the child's level of development. Each key person has a group of children for whom they are responsible, for instance by updating the child's Learning Journey. However, all adults in the setting may work with and observe any child and contribute to that child's records. Since the first reaccreditation visit children's records have been simplified by combining Montessori with the EYFS, and this has reduced the size of the files, making them more easily accessible to staff – they are now easily available in the classrooms rather than being stored in cupboards. Each room has a notice of classroom procedures on the wall and these also highlight the work cycle relevant to that room, e.g. three hours in the Pre-school Room and 2½ hours in the Toddler Room. Long-term and short-term planning is in place, but every day is flexible depending on the needs and interests of the children. A comprehensive set of policies and procedures ensures that all staff understand what is expected of them and which daily checks are required. Children have meals in their classrooms and staff ensure that routines are followed so that children know what is coming next. Parents are asked about any allergies/dietary preferences that their child may have when they first enroll at the school and information about these is displayed in their child's classroom.

Continued commitment to training of all staff in the Montessori approach will enhance shared understanding of Montessori principles amongst the staff.

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

All parents whose views were sought during the first reaccreditation visit spoke highly of their child's key person and of the staff team. They felt that they were partners in their child's education, that they were consulted and valued and that even if they had not known about Montessori when they chose the school, they have learnt enough about it since then to be able to support their child's learning at home. On joining the school, parents are given a welcome pack which contains information about Montessori, the school and relevant policies. They are also invited to write a letter to their child to be added to the child's Learning Journey.

Parents receive informative newsletters and invitations to workshops, and they are also encouraged to visit the school at least termly to share in their child's learning experience and see their Learning Journey. Notice boards informing parents of changes and new initiatives as well as information about the EYFS ensure that they are always up-to-date with the school's procedures. Parents commented on how much information they were given about their child's day at the end of every session. Annual parent questionnaires give them an opportunity to voice their opinions and the management team feedback information about any changes that have taken place as a result of this.

The management team has also developed an Improvement plan which ensures that they are constantly reflecting on the quality of their provision and finding new ways to improve it. Parents are invited to attend transition meetings when their child moves from one room to another and parents of 2 year olds are also invited to contribute to their child's 'EYFS progress check at 2'. The school invites parents to complete 'You're a Star' notes to record their child's interests and achievements at home and these are added to the child's Learning Journeys and



linked to the EYFS. Social events such as Christmas concerts and coffee mornings also give families opportunities to meet each other. When children move to their next school parents are invited to add their comments to the summative report that is prepared by their child's key person.

### **Staffing:**

The management team has developed thorough staff recruitment and induction policies. These include a supervised induction period during which new staff are assessed in all areas of their performance. Detailed records are kept for all staff, including information about their qualifications, training attended and any further training identified. Annual appraisals are in place for all staff as well as monthly supervisions which are used to give staff opportunities to discuss any problems they may have, to make any suggestions and to refresh their knowledge of the school's policies. Moseley Montessori School participates in their Local Authority's quality improvement scheme which the managers feel contributes to the effectiveness of the staff team.

There is a chart showing the organizational structure of the school. Both managers are recently qualified Early Years Teachers and have held Montessori teaching qualifications for many years. Two additional staff also hold Montessori teaching qualifications, and the remaining 11 staff hold appropriate early years qualifications. Most of the staff team have received first aid training and it is planned that all staff will hold a first aid certificate by 2015. The managers have a strong commitment to developing their staff and to providing professional development opportunities; external and in-house Montessori training is provided to give the staff team an understanding of Montessori principles and the managers are encouraging more staff to undertake Montessori courses.

Name of Assessor: Susie Norman

Date of reports: First visit – 6<sup>th</sup> August 2014

Second visit – 16th October 2014