

Montessori Accreditation Report

The Montessori Accreditation Report was reviewed by the MAA Accreditation Board. The Board has verified our Montessori Assessor's recommendation to accredit the setting, as highlighted below:



MAA Montessori Accreditation has been awarded to:



Artisans Kindergarten

Crabtree Fields, Scout HQ, Waldegrave Park, Harpenden AL5 5SF

Validity period: 3 years

From: February 2024 – February 2027

Name of Montessori Assessors: Neena Dhawan and Jenna Hamilton-Heward

Date of initial assessment: 06/12/2023 via Zoom call

Date of visit: 31/01/2024

Note on Confidentiality:

This is the final report which has been approved by the MAA Board.

MAA accreditation logo can now be featured on the settings website and in documentation. Settings will also be awarded a certificate.

It's important to note that the report does not address the standards and quality concerns evaluated by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted). It is solely an inspection to judge whether the nursery is adhering to the Montessori Educational Standards set by the MAA.

This Montessori Accreditation Report was prepared following an initial online video call, interview and in-person accreditation visit, conducted by an experienced Montessori assessor within the Montessori Apprentice Academy (MAA) team.

Activities carried out by MAA Montessori Assessor

The manager led the Montessori Assessor on a learning walk and discussed their Montessori ethos, curriculum planning and educational knowledge on Montessori.

The manager carried out a joint observation with the Assessor on the settings Montessori practice. The Montessori assessor carried out direct observations of the Montessori classroom, the interaction of Montessori Teachers with children and the Montessori practices with the Montessori Apparatus.



Artisans Kindergarten

Crabtree Fields, Scout HQ, Waldegrave Park, Harpenden AL5 5SF

Description

Artisans Kindergarten is located in Harpenden, a small residential town in Hertfordshire. Ruth Martin, the Head teacher and owner of the nursery, established the nursery in 2007, and moved to the current location in 2009. The kindergarten is set up in the Scout HQ and staff prepare the classroom and garden area each morning, and pack away at the end of the day. The children are based in a large, bright room, which has free access to a spacious garden. In addition, there is a staff room/office, toilet areas and a kitchen where the Cook prepares snack and a hot lunch on a daily basis.

The nursery hours are from 8:30- 4:00pm with some children attending a half-day till 12pm or 12:30pm if they have lunch. The afternoon session commences at 12:30pm and mirrors the morning session. The setting is in receipt of funding for 3- and 4-year-olds for fifteen hours per week. The nursery is term time and closes every Friday afternoon for staff meetings and training. On average the children attend 4.5 sessions out of an available nine.

The setting offers places for children from the age of 2-5years and has 67 children currently on roll. A maximum of 50 children can attend each session and on the day of the visit, there were 48 children and ten members of staff, including the Head Teacher. All staff are highly qualified and experienced, including seven trained Montessori Teachers, with one Teacher currently undertaking a Montessori training course and two due to start their training in 2024.

The majority of the team have been working together for over ten years and staff turnover is low. All staff complete safeguarding training and are first aid trained, and are supported by an onsite SEND Teacher (special educational needs and disabilities). The staff are well supported by management in terms of continued professional development and each week staff meetings are held with the opportunity for discussion and further training to meet the needs of the children and the team. For example, staff recently completed a language course to support children with language delay.

In addition, termly inset training days are held and new staff members are well supported with mentor support and in-house training. Teachers have good systems in place to record the wellbeing and learning of each individual child and prioritise the

whole child's needs. Supervision and regular peer-to-peer observations are well established.

Summary

Artisans Kindergarten excels in Montessori practice, where the children happily enter the classroom, greet their Teachers and peers and commence their activities. They freely choose from a wide range of Montessori materials and additional tasks and can choose to work independently or within a small group. This Montessori work cycle is completed around 11:30am. The atmosphere in the classroom is one of calm, purposeful engagement and joy. The children exhibit excellent behaviour, they look after each other as seen when the older children help the younger ones with their aprons or with serving toast at snack time. The high-quality preparation of the classroom with gentle and appropriate guidance from the Teachers enables the children to independently choose their tasks that meet their particular interests.

The children are self-confident, as seen by the fact that they are happy to show visitors their tasks and feel comfortable when parents enter the classroom at drop off and collection time. This 'open door' policy enables children to settle well, as they can show their parents their chosen tasks or introduce them to their special friends and is therefore reassuring for parents/carers. Parents speak highly of the setting and value the excellent care provided by all staff.

Overall, the management team is robust and visionary in the support for the teaching team, parents/carers, their dedication to the Montessori philosophy and respect for the unique needs of each child is exemplary.

Recommendations

- Continue to review snack during the work cycle by enabling the children to access independently an area with jugs of water, fruit (or similar) and appropriate kitchenware is available at all times. The children can be encouraged to 'register' their name when they have snack rather than the adults manually checking this.
- For the children to 'self-serve' at lunchtime, by providing small serving bowls and child sized serving spoons. Thus, encouraging greater independence at mealtimes and offering further opportunities in Practical life, such as clearing up and washing up.

1. Montessori Philosophy

The Montessori philosophy is evident in all aspects of the classroom, with the needs of the individual child at the forefront. The classroom is set up to promote independence, respect and self-motivated learning as seen when the children enter the classroom and decide what activities to work with. The opportunities to experience free choice and social interaction are supported by staff who enable the children to self-select tasks and make choices whether to work independently, with a

friend or with an adult. If the children require guidance, they are gently supported by the knowledgeable team.

2. Montessori Curriculum

The Montessori Curriculum is presented to the children via the full range of Montessori resources covering the age groups within the setting and with further Teacher made materials also available and adapted to the themes and needs of the group as a whole. The Children are able to self-select tasks from beautifully prepared resources that are available on low accessible shelving. The large room is organised well with all materials displayed in order with items such as a cleaning station and floor mats easily available. The children concentrate well and move from one activity to the next, choosing to work independently or with their peers. The classroom supports all children from the age of 2 - 5 years, and a community atmosphere is noticeable with the children assisting each other with by helping with coats or helping staff to hang out the laundry or looking at a Teacher made book about 'Asia'.

3. Montessori Prepared Environment

The classroom, though large is well organised, inviting and orderly in layout. The Owner was involved in the design of the building and was able to ensure easy access to the outside area as well as under floor heating which following a consultation with Parents allows the children to walk barefoot around the setting. The classroom has excellent resources and in addition to the Montessori resources has an excellent range of extension activities, such as a world map made from blue felt with the coloured continents. The children observed carefully placed the continents on the felt, placed the continent name labels and then discussed the various animals that live on each continent. Animal models were placed on each continent and a high-quality discussion took place.

4. Montessori Practice

On the day of the visit, a number of Montessori presentations were observed, such as initial presentations with the geometric cabinet to a three-period lesson with the sandpaper letters. Each presentation was conducted with an invitation, supportive language and appropriate to the individual child's needs. Throughout the morning 'grace and courtesy' was evident as children discussed language for sharing and how to greet each other. The staff were observed using reassuring language, such as "do you need help with that, sometimes that happens to me." In addition, children with special educational needs are well supported as seen when a Teacher presented the colour boxes to a child on a one to one basis.

This term the children are focusing on traditional nursery rhymes and engage in tasks linked to the rhymes, they place drainpipes of different sizes (linked to the lengths of the red rods) on a mat and then discover which spiders (on string) will fit in each drainpipe and recall the rhyme 'incy wincey spider'. Similarly, they can explore the concept of 'sink and float' as they place a small boat in water and recite 'row, row your boat'. Multi-sensory tasks such as these extend the children's sensorial experiences and add to their language and creative skills. The book area is inviting and the children choose to sit together and look at books with great care.

The children take care of their classroom and on the day of the visit, a Teacher showed them how to cut and place roses in a glass container and place on the tables around the room. Children experiment within the sensorial area by placing the pink tower and the broad stair together and another child takes the sandpaper letters and is encouraged by his Teacher to find objects around the room that start with the letter 'o'. The child happily responds and is excited to share that his name starts with 'O'. Whilst another child takes out a set of wooden soldiers and after placing them together in various ways, shows that one soldier looks like 'one' and that two can be placed at an angle to make 'seven'. Whilst another group continue a discussion about the importance of 'questions' their curiosity is heightened by the question 'how do fish sleep?' each answer is recorded and valued.

The children are able to follow the principle of 'free flow' to the garden as staff are allocated outside to support the children. There are a wide range of activities outside which are rotated on a regular basis, such as wheeled toys, tuff trays with construction or creative tasks, climbing areas and cleaning equipment such as large brooms. The children can also care for the three guinea pigs by feeding them and maintaining their palatial home.

During the morning session the children are invited to participate in snack time, where they help to set the table and pour drinks for each other. The Cook prepares fruit and toast for the children, and a child will serve to their peers. They confidently spread their toast with butter, jam or honey and help to tidy up. This is a lovely social time for the children of mixed ages and the children use polite language when helping each other. It is suggested that the children have a snack station set up in the classroom, where they can freely access water and prepare their own fruit or vegetables, thus extending their independence skills.

Around midday small group activities take place such as movement, pouring water in practical life and matching the number rods to the numerals; thus, giving the children the skills of turn taking and listening to each other. For the lunch session, items are placed on a table and a child will set the table for their group, a 'thank you' prayer is said and then the Teacher serves the children their meal. The children show good handling of cutlery and are able to pour their own glasses of water. It is recommended that small serving bowls are set out with child sized serving spoons which will enable

the children to self-serve. Following lunch, the children can also be encouraged to help tidy up, by scraping their plates and washing up.

5. Montessori Parent Partnership

Parent partnership is a strong feature of the setting; parents are involved with the settling in process and can liaise with their child's key person on a regular basis. Parents speak highly of the caring staff and appreciate that their child has a special bond with their key person. Parents are kept well informed of activities within the setting via the 'My Montessori child' app, and the Artisans informative website. They are invited to attend annual parent teacher meetings and receive reports twice a year. Parents are genuinely welcomed into the setting, for example on their child's birthday they are invited to attend their child's 'birthday circle' and to have lunch with the children. Parents can also participate in activities such as baking with the children or reading stories. During the visit Parents spoken to were very supportive of the setting and have a good rapport with the team.

6. Montessori Management

Excellent Montessori management is embedded in this setting as leadership; a combination of a senior leadership team led by the Head teacher is highly qualified and dedicated. They have a thorough understanding of the Montessori philosophy and a mutual aim to provide a caring, nurturing environment, which offers the children an outstanding range of experiences.

Overall, the high standards observed at the setting; the happy and engaging atmosphere, the quality of resources and the exceptional commitment from the staff reflect strong management and leadership.