

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:



The Little Learners Montessori Nursery, Cricklewood

St Vitus Hall, St Agnes Centre, Gillingham Road, Cricklewood, NW2 1HR

Validity period: 3 years

From: April 2024 – April 2027

Name of Montessori Assessor: Neena Dhawan

Date of initial assessment: 5th March 2024 via Zoom call

Date of visit: 30th April 2024

Note on Confidentiality:

This final document is private and confidential, and may not be made public until ratified by the MAA Board. The Final Report will be submitted to the MAA Board for approval. Upon the Board's validation, an official email notification will be sent from the MAA office.

This notification not only confirms the accreditation but also contains the final version of the Report, the MAA accreditation logo, and a press release. At this point, the report can be shared with parents and the broader community, and the MAA logo can be featured on the setting's 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.



The Little Learners Montessori Nursery, Cricklewood

St Vitus Hall, St Agnes Centre, Gillingham Road, Cricklewood, NW2 1HR

Description

The Little Learners Montessori Nursery is located in Cricklewood, London, in the Borough of Barnet. The nursery was established in 2012 and is part of a group of four privately owned Montessori nurseries. The nursery is based on church premises in St Vitus Hall, which is a self contained unit comprising of two bright, spacious rooms; each containing a toilet/changing area. The Toddler Room has a small kitchen area where the outsourced hot lunches and tea are prepared. There is a lobby area used as a cloakroom for the children and an Office, which staff also use for their breaks. Attached to the nursery is a secure large garden with a decking area and two sheds for housing resources.

The nursery hours are from 7:30 – 6:00pm with some children attending a half day and finishing after lunch at 1:00pm. Some children attend the afternoon session from 1:00 – 6:00pm, which mirrors the morning session. The setting is in receipt of funding for 2, 3 and 4 year olds and currently receives further funding for two children with special educational needs. The nursery operates all year round and is open for 48 weeks.

The setting offers places for children from the age of 2-5 years and has 54 children currently on roll. A maximum of 44 children can attend each session and on the day of the visit, there were a total of 41, with 24 in the Preschool class, and 17 in the Toddler Room. There were fourteen members of staff on site including the Manager plus a Kitchen Assistant. All staff are well qualified and experienced, and overall include eight trained Montessori Teachers, plus two Teachers currently completing a Montessori training course, and two who have attended a Montessori practical Workshop.

The majority of the team have been working together for over five years and staff retention is high; dedicated and creative teamwork is a key feature of this nursery. All staff complete safeguarding and first aid training, and are supported by two SENCO Teachers (special educational needs). The Senior Management team (based off site) are currently supporting a number of staff with their level 5 Early Years Lead Practitioner Apprenticeship course.

Summary

The Little Learners Montessori Nursery provides children with an excellent Montessori foundation and blends this well with its outstanding practice with the Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum. The children happily start their day, by greeting their Teachers and friends and make choices whether to have breakfast or

engage in self selected tasks. In the Preschool class the children choose to work with a range of Montessori resources and some choose to work in a small group with an extension of the colour boxes, where they mix primary colours together to make secondary colours. They comment on each other's discoveries and are encouraged by their Teacher to make predications about their work. In the Toddler Room, some focus on Practical Life tasks such as brushing a model of teeth whilst others are drawn to a multi sensory tuff tray where they can handle models of farm animal families and chat with the adult to name the animals, talk about what they might eat and to sing 'Old Macdonald had a farm'. The atmosphere in both classrooms is one of purposeful engagement and happy chatter. The children exhibit excellent behaviour, they help each other by helping to clear up after breakfast and listen well when a Teacher reminds them to tuck in their chair.

The children are independent and can choose when to go out to the garden and though the door is kept ajar between the two rooms the children can access both rooms. They are given the opportunity to mix together at meal times and in the garden area, where an older child suggests that a younger child wear a Doctor's uniform as she was using the stethoscope to hear a doll's heartbeat. The children are confident and as the staff child ratio is high, there are plenty of opportunities for one to one teaching and new settlers can be given extra time and comfort. Likewise special bonds were evident between staff and those children who require extra support.

Partnership with Parents is robust and they speak highly of the setting and value the care that is given to the children. Exceptional staff teamwork is a key feature of the nursery and open communication with Management is much valued. Overall the Management team has a clear vision of the Montessori ethos, which is shared by the team who show much enthusiasm towards the unique needs of each child.

Recommendations

-To continue to evaluate and strengthen Montessori practice and to share good practice with new staff, thus maintaining the high quality of the current provision.

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 which 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. The children are able to experience the work cycle for

three hours in both the morning and afternoon sessions, which is a key component of outstanding practice.

2. Montessori Curriculum

The Montessori Curriculum is presented to the children via a full range of well maintained 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. In addition there is a wide selection of EYFS activities set up in the classroom and in the garden, the children experiment with different utensils in a sand tray and with the water tray they fill up watering cans and pour water into drainpipes along the wall and watch with wonder as the water cascades from pipe to pipe.

The children can choose tasks from thoughtfully prepared resources that are available on low accessible shelving, and can relax in 'calm areas' where they can look at books and emotion puppets. The rooms are organised well and staff make the most of the space to ensure that in addition to the Montessori resources each room has a snack area, an art area, a book corner and in the Toddler room a home corner is also available. Children have good opportunities for caring for their environment as seen when they mop the floor, care for their pet fish and look after plants in the garden.

When working with the resources the children show good focus, independence and care for each other, they help to set up for mealtimes and to tidy up afterwards. In addition to the Montessori curriculum the children can access payable extra curricular activities like Music and Drama, Football, Ballet and Gym, most take place after the Montessori work cycle has been completed.

3. Montessori Prepared Environment

The setting has two classrooms, the Toddler room for the 2 -3 year olds and the Pre school room for the 3-5 year olds with free access to the garden area. Both rooms are well maintained and house the complete range of Montessori resources and a wide range of EYFS activities, all easily accessible and on low shelving. There are floor mats for the children to work on though in Toddler room more floor space could be created for the children to work with the larger activities.

The Teachers have developed an exceptional range of resources particularly in the Cultural area where children can learn about different occupations, look at Continent boxes and engage with their Teachers as seen when they looked at a book about 'Festivals' and recalled their experiences at Christmas time, where one child said "I made a Christmas cake with my Daddy". Whilst others engage in a volcano experiment, and carefully add vinegar to the volcano model using pipettes and watch and wait for the 'volcano' to erupt. As they watch, they share information with their Teacher about the parts of a volcano.

The garden area is set up each day with a range of activities reflecting all areas of learning, the garden has a covered decked area where children can engage in art/craft activities, practical life and sensory tasks and where staff set up tasks to reflect the children's interests and needs. For example as a number of children have new siblings, an area has been created where children can bathe the baby dolls, change their nappies and put them to sleep. There are also many opportunities for the children to extend their gross motor skills through use of bikes, scooters, balls and gardening equipment. A lovely planting station has been set up where for 'Earth day' all the children planted a seed in individual pots and take pride in watering them.

In addition, the cultural area is prepared to engage all children from the local community and Teachers work with Parents and have recently developed new activities such as celebrating Orthodox Easter day by painting eggs together. Provision for children with special educational needs is exceptional, as seen with the range of Teacher made resources such as the 'now, next, later' board and the 'feelings' board.

Overall the environment is inviting, stimulating and very colourful; a Montessori environment is traditionally more neutral in colour and imagery, and it is suggested that the team evaluate the classrooms and consider adjusting the high level notice boards to the children's level and condense the amount of information on the walls and windows. Thus creating a more calm, sustainable and soothing atmosphere.

4. Montessori Practice

Excellent Montessori Practice was observed on the day of the visit, the children are able to make choices and happily engage with a range of activities. They are able to focus well and share information with their peers and Teachers, as seen when one child whilst using the insets for design, shared that she could also write her name which she proceeded to do so. Another child was supported by a Teacher as he explored the magnets box and discovered which items were magnetic and non magnetic, the Teacher then extended the task by showing the child how a piece of paper could be placed on the magnet and attract metal items. Whilst another child was introduced to capacity, as she poured water into jugs at different levels and observed "this is a little bit full and this is empty".

As the staff child ratio is exceptionally high, it was observed that this enabled staff to present activities to the children on an individual basis, thus adapting the activities to the needs of the children and others could observe and record the individual child's learning and track information in their learning journals. Records are then referred to when planning for the individual. The opportunities for small group work especially support those children with English as an additional language as seen when a Teacher presented an art activity based on a popular story 'Elmer' the elephant, the children placed coloured squares onto recycled milk containers and added 'eyes' to

make an elephant, they chatted about the colours, and whether their elephant was a boy or girl as it had long eyelashes.

Presentations were inviting and children participated in tasks such as wordbuilding with the large movable alphabet where a child was encouraged to sound out the phonetic letters and make a word. Others worked on their own, as seen when a child handled the number cards and chose to trace the numbers as he placed them in sequence. Teachers use supportive language and gentle prompts, for example a child works with the Thermic tablets and is asked, “does this feel cold or warm?”

In the Toddler room, a number of children engage with the practical life activities such as transferring and preparing snack by cutting fruit and pouring a drink into a glass, when finished they place their photo on the ‘I have had snack’ board. With regard to the water based tasks like transferring water or brushing the model teeth, children collect water from the bathroom before commencing the task and then need to empty the water after completing the task. It is suggested that the tasks are complete and ready to use before the session begins thus giving children more independence as sometimes the bathroom is in use and children cannot access the facilities.

Throughout the visit the children were courteous, well behaved and excited about the activities available to them, one spoke about making cookies at school “they were yummy”! Each week the children can extend their practical life experiences by participating in cooking tasks and are introduced to the French language by a Teacher whose first language is French. She introduces new vocabulary to the children using the Montessori materials like the colour boxes or the number cards through games and songs.

The children complete a three hour work cycle in both sessions, and during this time have plenty of opportunities to experience high quality activity. The children’s interests are recognised in the Teacher’s planning and recently after much discussion the children chose to have duck eggs in the classroom, once hatched they were able to handle the young ducklings and watch them splash about in the garden. For the older children they were able to make comparisons as in the previous year they had seen several chicks hatch.

Lunch is served in two sessions at 11:30 and 12:00pm; children help to set up the Toddler room for lunch where the children sit in two sittings enabling both age groups to be together. They set up water jugs on the table and find their named place mats and pick up a plate and cutlery before sitting at the table. Each area has a staff member to support with a float Teacher refreshing the bowls of food. The children then self serve their meals with confidence and chat to their peers, and one child comments, “we can’t finish the pasta, we need to leave some for the next group”. The Teacher seated at the table, reassures her that there is plenty for all the children. Most children chose to use a spoon to eat the pasta and the older children

could be prompted to use a fork and knife. After lunch the children help to tidy up and are supported by the staff at the 'scraping food' and cleaning stations. Some go to sleep in the next room and others go to the garden for a play. A small group excitedly shared that they were going to the 'Millennium Green' park as they collected bug boxes, magnifying glasses and their high vis jackets. On their return, they shared their investigations with the group in the garden, and carefully placed ladybirds, green flies and a wood louse in the mud tuff tray and ensured that the mini beasts had plenty of leaves to eat. The children made the most of the sunny weather as they played in the construction area, making 'London Bridge' or dressed up in the mini theatre or listened to stories with a Teacher.

5. Montessori Parent Partnership

Parent Partnership is a strong and much valued feature of the setting, Parents feel informed and involved from the settling in process, daily feedback and weekly updates via the 'Family' app. Parents speak highly of the caring and approachable staff and appreciate the regular feedback and the opportunities to be involved in events like the recent 'Mother's day' morning where Mums were treated to a spa experience. Reports are prepared each term and Parents are invited in to attend meetings with their child's key person. Following a Parent questionnaire, Parents were invited to a 'wine and cheese' evening and were able to view the educational resources and speak to staff about the Montessori and EYFS curriculum. They also have access to Workshops run by Barnet council, which are held on site for Parents and Staff to attend, such as how to support language development. Parents comment that provision for children with English as an additional language is remarkable and that they know their child is well prepared for the transition to Reception Class.

Parents appreciate the friendly rapport they have with the team and staff enthuse about seeing leavers returning to the setting with their younger siblings.

6. Montessori Management

Montessori management is highly effective in this setting as leadership with the support of a Senior Management team (based off site); seek to offer a quality Montessori experience for all children. The team are passionate about their teaching and share ideas and evaluate their experiences with the children ensuring that exceptional quality education is accessible to all. They maintain effective systems for recording each child's progress and operate a key person system. The Manager ensures that staff are well supported with regular staff meetings, supervision and access to online continuous professional development. New staff are linked to an experienced 'buddy' and can shadow a Teacher so that they can learn about the Montessori method. Thus ensuring that all staff are aware of the Montessori ethos and work together to nurture all children in their care.



The management team support further training for staff and plan to support staff who are completing their Montessori training this year and to enable staff to access SENCO training with the Barnet Inclusion team.

Overall, the Management and team of staff have prepared a welcoming, happy and vibrant environment for all children and their families.