

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:



Les Petites Etoiles – West Hampstead

107 Fordwych Road, London, NW2 3TL

Validity period: 3 years

From: May 2025 – May 2028

Name of Montessori Assessor: Neena Dhawan

Date of initial assessment: 16th April 2025

Date of visit: 8th May 2025

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.



Les Petites Etoiles – West Hampstead

107 Fordwych Road, London, NW2 3TL

Description

'Les Petites Etoiles' is situated in West Hampstead, in the London Borough of Camden and is operated by North Star Nurseries Ltd. The setting is part of a group of five nurseries and this branch was established in July 2021. The nursery is located on the ground floor of a large period house, with the Babies and Toddler classes in the main building and the Pre school classroom in a garden room at the end of the good sized garden. In addition, there is a Manager's office, staff room, toilet/laundry area and a kitchen. There is a secure garden at the front of the building, which is for the Babies exclusive use.

The nursery hours are from 8am to 6pm with one child attending a half-day due to Parental choice. The afternoon session mirrors the morning session and includes tea at approximately 3:30pm. The setting is in receipt of funding for nine month olds to 4 year olds for 15 and 30 hours per week. The nursery is open for 47 weeks and closes for bank holidays and inset days.

The children are offered a variety of fruit at morning and afternoon snack time, and the onsite Cook prepares organic meals for the children, which are devised by a Nutritionist. They are offered a four course lunch including cheese and dessert and tea which is served in the afternoon.

The setting offers places for children from the age of 6 months – 5 years and has 50 children currently on roll. The setting is registered for 43 children to attend each session, though the setting opts to keep to a maximum of 42 and on the day of the visit, there were 42 children and 19 staff, including the Manager on site. All staff are well qualified and experienced, including seven trained Montessori Teachers with one Teacher currently completing a Montessori training course.

The majority of the team have been working together for an average of three years and staff turnover is low. All staff complete robust safeguarding training, are first aid trained, and are supported by a two SEND Teachers (special educational needs and disabilities). There are currently four children who require SEND support and the team work closely with the children's families and other professionals. The staff are well supported by Management in terms of continued professional development and monthly staff meetings are held where the team discuss the needs of their key groups, make plans for individual children and engage in in-house training, which includes Montessori topics and presentations. Supervision sessions are held on a regular basis with a strong emphasis on staff well being and peer observation which

has resulted in a supportive team atmosphere. Staff comment on the recognition of each other's strengths and how they all prioritise the individual child's needs.

In addition, termly inset training days are held and new staff members are well supported with mentor support, which encourages the individual to research information about the setting's ethos. The Manager comments that they recruit staff that are empathetic with the Montessori approach. Teachers have excellent systems in place to record the children's learning and use the online 'Tapestry' app.

Summary

Les Petites Etoiles (West Hampstead) is a warm, welcoming environment presenting a strong Montessori ethic, which blends well with the EYFS (Early Years Foundation Stage) curriculum, which is also available for the children. The children are taken to their classroom by their Parent/Carer and are greeted by a Teacher with care and enthusiasm. They happily enter the classroom between 8-9am, and can select activities from a wide range of Montessori materials or EYFS tasks, choosing to either work independently or with their peers. The Montessori work cycle is completed at approximately 11:30am. The pleasant atmosphere in the classroom is one of purposeful activity where the children are well supported by their Teachers who converse in either English, French or Mandarin with the children choosing to respond in a language that they are most comfortable with. The children exhibit excellent behaviour, they wait patiently for their turn and remind each other of their expectations as seen at the sand tray when one child said, "we need to share". The high quality preparation of the classrooms with gentle and appropriate guidance from the Teachers enables the children to independently choose tasks that satisfy their interests.

Recommendations

-To review plans that have already been discussed for the Preschool and Toddler outdoor area, where the garden area will mirror the indoor Montessori environment and thus offer children continued access to Montessori tasks in the garden area throughout each session.

- For the Preschool children to have improved opportunities to 'self serve' at lunchtime, by providing small serving bowls which can be independently managed by the children. Thus encouraging greater independence and responsibility at lunchtime and further opportunities in Practical Life.

1. Montessori Philosophy

The Montessori philosophy is evident in all classrooms, with the needs of the individual child as the primary focus. 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. The Teachers observations are of a high quality, and guide the team to plan for the individual's whole development, they share information as seen when the Mandarin Teacher spoke of sharing observations with her colleagues.

2. Montessori Curriculum

The Montessori curriculum is presented to the children via a wide range of Montessori resources appropriate to the age groups in the setting for example the Babies have access to transferring small items such as lentils using different large utensils whilst the older children transfer water using a funnel. In addition the setting offers a good range of Teacher made resources as seen in the Cultural area with resources such as 'land, air and water' where the children carefully handle glass jars containing land, air and water and name and match animals to the correct element or tuff trays, such as the 'under the sea' theme where children explore different sea creatures in a multi sensory way. The children are able to self-select tasks from well-maintained and inviting resources that are available on low accessible shelving. Due to space constraints, some activities are placed on high shelving so the children ask their Teachers for assistance. All classrooms are well organised with all materials displayed in appropriate sections with good access to cleaning materials and a low sink where the Toddlers and Pre-schoolers can wash their snack bowls. The children concentrate well and move from one activity to the next, choosing to work independently or with their peers, for example, two children chose to explore the 'beach scene', they investigate the items on the table using magnifying glasses and carefully picked up shells so that they could listen to the sea.

3. Montessori Prepared Environment

The nursery is divided into three rooms, with free flow between the Babies and Toddler classes and a separate garden area for the Babies. This space is enclosed and well planned with a cosy book area, and a range of activities to support large motor skills. The Pre school class is in a garden room at the end of the shared garden for the Toddlers and Pre-schoolers, which gives both classes an opportunity to socialise and play together. All classrooms are inviting, well organised and orderly in layout, with access to low sinks and an enclosed toilet area for the Toddlers and Pre-schoolers. The classrooms have exceptional resources and in addition to the Montessori resources have EYFS based resources, which are reviewed on a regular basis in response to the children's interests. Both curriculums blend well together and Montessori practice was evident in the café role-play area, where a child and Teacher shared a cup of tea and toast. There has been discussion to review the Toddlers and Preschool outdoor space so that the children can further access Montessori activities

in the garden, thereby developing the area to mirror the indoor classroom. It is recommended that these plans be revisited, thus offering the children enhanced access to the Montessori curriculum, both indoors and outdoors.

4. Montessori Practice

On the day of the visit, a number of Montessori presentations were observed in each class ranging from the babies exploring sensory bottles filled with herbs, the Toddlers cutting apples with an apple cutter at snack time to the older children working with literacy and numeracy tasks. Each presentation was initiated with an invitation, supportive language and appropriate to the individual's needs. The Teachers experience and knowledge was evident as it was observed how a Teacher guided a child with word building using the large movable alphabet, and as the child made the word the Teacher presented another child to a grading task with colour box three and then checked in on the first child. Throughout the morning, 'grace and courtesy' was noticeable as children greeted each other in their home language and asked 'please can you pass the water' at lunchtime. The Teachers demonstrated caring and positive language, such as "thank you for your good listening" and celebrated the children's achievements with joy as seen when a young child completed the maze with the long rods. In addition, children with special educational needs are well supported as noted when a child required support with the transition from circle time to lunchtime.

The children take care of their classroom and on the day of the visit, a Teacher guided a child as she used a dustpan and brush to sweep up after the cous cous fell from her practical life tray, the children showed their familiarity with the snack time routine as they washed hands, washed and cut their fruit and then completed the task by washing their snack bowl. They are also shown how to compost the fruit peelings and have been introduced to recycling through use of a paper-recycling bin. Also the Toddlers show much excitement as they watch and look after their new gold fish that they have named 'Le Petit Bob'.

During the work cycle the children independently explore the classroom, some choose the Pink Tower and Broad stair and then decide which design to create with the assistance of the Teacher. Whilst others sit with a Teacher, around the world map puzzle and decide which continent the animal models live in, they listen to the information that the Teacher gives and show excellent turn taking skills. Another group, set up three trays to represent land, water and air and decide where a group of animals reside, they discuss if an animal lives in the water and the Teacher extends their knowledge by asking if the animal lives in the sea or in a lake.

This term the children have chosen to focus on the theme of the sea and beach; and Teachers make notes of the children's interests and plan accordingly, during a Circle time activity before lunch the children were fully engaged as their Teacher explained the life cycle of a turtle through use of an oral story and models of turtles. The

children were then shown pictures of the turtles at different stages and were subtly introduced to environmental issues that affect the lives of the turtles. This prompted much discussion from the children as they shared their own experiences.

The three classrooms offer the children many choices and they can opt to work with the Montessori resources as seen when a child matches the large number cards for 10, 20 and 30 to the golden beads, or when a child practises with the large button frame. They also have good access to a cosy book area where a range of books are available in English, French and Mandarin and in the Toddler room it was noted that an adult was always available to read to the children.

The children are able to follow the principle of 'free flow' to the garden areas with an adult supporting them in the various areas. There are a wide range of activities outside such as climbing and constructive equipment, water play, a book area and a planting area where the children have planted a number of herbs. As discussed with the Management team, plans have been considered to develop greater access to Montessori activities in this area.

After a productive morning, the children settle into a group activity whilst a friend helps to set the tables for lunch. The children are familiar with their routine of hand washing and ask about the lunch menu as they pour water into their glasses. They engage with social chatter with their peers as they start their four-course lunch and handle their cutlery well. The Teachers pass the different courses, which are served, in one bowl, and the children serve themselves. It is recommended that the food be served in small serving bowls, which the children can independently have access to. Following lunch, the children can be encouraged to be more involved in tidying up and preparing the classroom for the afternoon session.

5. Montessori Parent Partnership

Parent partnership is a solid feature of the setting; with Parents choosing the setting for both the Montessori curriculum and the bilingual aspect. Parents speak highly of the setting especially the warm and friendly atmosphere created by the Management and staff. Parents are involved in settling in their child over a period of time which helps them to get to know their child's key person, they value the caring bond that is nurtured between the key person and their child and the 'open door' style of communication. This is especially important for Parents in the Babies (Bunnies) class, where strong bonds between the adult and baby were apparent.

Parents are kept well informed of their child's daily activities and progress via the 'Tapestry' app and the weekly newsletter, which covers the weekly theme. They are invited to attend parent teacher meetings twice a year and also receive written reports. Parents are invited to attend events such as 'Family day' and the annual Christmas concert and are welcomed in to talk to the children. Recently a Parent

came in to talk to the children about the Persian culture and how the recent New Year was celebrated. During the Accreditation visit Parents spoken to were very happy and supportive of the setting and valued the special relationship between home and school.

6. Montessori Management

Excellent Montessori management is embedded in this setting as leadership, a combination of an onsite Manager and a higher management team based off site have a clear vision to provide high quality early years provision. The Manager places an emphasis on child led learning where all children are well supported, they personally engage with the children who are eager to chat and share their news and this caring 'hands on' approach reflects the basis of the Montessori philosophy. Equally, all members of staff are valued and are offered opportunities for further training in order to sustain and extend this nurturing environment where children have access to outstanding care and provision.

Overall, the high standards observed at the setting, the happy, caring and stimulating atmosphere, the excellent quality of resources and the dedicated team reflect strong management and leadership.