



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" (2012/14). 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.

Denning Montessori School

Fawley Village Hall, Fawley, Near Henley on Thames, Oxfordshire RG9 6JA

Date of previous MEAB accreditation: May 2012

Date of first re-accreditation visit: 16 June 2015

Date of second re-accreditation visit: 6 November 2015

This accreditation report relates to the provision for children aged 2 to 4 years.

Description of the school

Denning Montessori School was established in 1991; it is privately owned and runs from a village hall situated in the village of Fawley in Oxfordshire. It consists of one large classroom, one reception room, a kitchen and a small office. The outdoor area comprises two gardens, one of which is accessible to the children throughout the session. A second, larger garden is accessed through a gate from the small garden. A copse nearby is used as a Forest School.

There are four members of staff, three of whom hold a Montessori International Diploma. The manager and deputy also hold Forest School Leader qualifications. The manager, who is also the owner, works in the setting full time, with the deputy manager covering in her absence.

Denning Montessori has sole use of the premises during its opening hours, which are from 09.10 to 12.25 on Mondays and Fridays, extending to 13.00 on Wednesdays and Thursdays, and until 16.00 on Tuesdays, during term times. Most children have lunch at the school and stay all day on Tuesdays. Packed lunches are brought in from home and



the setting provides snack. Denning Montessori offers dance and French classes and one week of holiday club in the summer. The setting is registered for 18 children.

The school is able to support children with additional needs and those for whom English is an additional language.

Summary

Denning Montessori is a well-established nursery that offers a warm and welcoming environment for the children. Staff members' commitment to Montessori philosophy and practice is excellent.

Parent partnership is strong, with regular exchange of information between home and school about children's development and interests.

The well qualified and experienced team work very well together and treat all children as individuals and with respect. Independence in children is promoted by allowing them freedom to choose activities indoors or outdoors and by encouraging self-care.

Materials are accessible and arranged in areas of learning. The activities are stimulating and purposeful. Record keeping for both the Montessori curriculum and the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) areas is robust.

Denning Montessori provides a stimulating, happy and nurturing environment for children to thrive in. It has maintained its high standards since the first MEAB accreditation in May 2012 and continues to allow children to learn in a free flow environment, with access to both indoors and outdoors.

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:

- It is recommended that the school continues to reflect on its practice in order to ensure that high standards are maintained.

Philosophy:

The Montessori ethos runs through every aspect of the day at Denning. The well qualified team members have a very good understanding of Montessori principles, which they put into practice by following individual children's interests and inner needs. They



trust the children to initiate self-chosen activity, judging when to interact with the child, and when to observe from a distance.

The school's Aims and Objectives brochure includes an overview of the care and education offered, stating that the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) framework is delivered using the Montessori areas of learning.

It is recommended that the Montessori philosophy, which is so well implemented in the school, is documented in more detail for current and prospective parents. The manager is in the process of developing a website for the school, which should be an ideal tool for explaining the Montessori curriculum and ethos and the nursery's commitment to it.

Learning and Development:

The school is set out according to areas of learning. Children are able to access all the materials, both inside and outside; they have free flow to the outdoor area and enjoy the opportunities for spontaneous learning offered throughout the setting. They have the freedom to follow their interests in the main classroom, in the small reception area (which has dressing up clothes and musical activities), and in the small garden adjoining the main classroom. French and dance are offered as additional activities each week with children having the option to join in if they wish. Denning Montessori also offers children regular Forest School sessions in a copse nearby, led by the manager and deputy manager.

Each child's developmental needs are planned for by key persons. Planning is very thorough, covering all areas of learning within the Montessori context and within the EYFS. All members of staff contribute to observations of all the children, which are recorded alongside photographs. The key person is responsible for cross referencing these observations against the Montessori areas of learning, which are linked with the EYFS early learning goals in the child's folder. The mandatory two year old progress check is also carried out by the child's key person. This is then shared with parents and next steps for learning and development are planned together with them.

The children have a morning work cycle stretching to over three hours. The lunch session and the additional activity classes are incorporated seamlessly into the work cycle, so children who stay for lunch and those who stay on for the afternoon enjoy a work cycle that extends across the day with little interruption and well managed transitions.

A well-considered balance between spontaneous, child-initiated activities and adult-led activities helps ensure that every child makes very good progress in their development in a relaxed manner.



Prepared Environment: resources and materials

The main room is well planned out, with a range of materials to suit the developmental stages and abilities of all the children. It is divided into Montessori areas of learning, with apparatus placed on low shelves. In addition, there is a comfortable book corner with a small sofa for relaxing, a computer station and an art and craft corner. The appealing, well-loved materials are complete, clean and ready to use.

The small garden, which includes an artificial grass surface, is used for free flow. This outdoor area is well planned, with materials carefully selected to provide ample opportunities for children to initiate activities. These include growing plants in boxes, a digging corner, a role play area and an art and craft area. Exercises for everyday living such as pouring, using a turkey baster, using scissors and measuring are integrated into outdoor play. It was a rainy day on the second re-accreditation visit, and children had a wonderful time exploring the texture and properties of wet mud, splashing in puddles and making mud pies.

Staff move about discreetly, ensuring the environment is well maintained for the children at all times. They make excellent use of the space, both indoors and outdoors, to create an environment that is inviting, attractive and able to serve the needs of every child at Denning Montessori.

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

Children at Denning Montessori have many opportunities to develop independence skills. They self-register by finding their name written on a laminated card and dropping it into a basket. They are encouraged to take off shoes and change into their indoor shoes or wellingtons, for outdoor play, by themselves.

There is a snack area with fresh fruit, milk and water available for children throughout the session. Before having snack or lunch, children wash hands, take a plate and put their food on it. Children prepare their own snack, asking for help in cutting fruit if required. They pour their own drink and tidy up the crockery and cutlery after finishing. Independence in personal hygiene is also fostered very effectively.

Children show respect and care for each other. At lunchtime on the day of the first re-accreditation visit, a 2 year old was having difficulty unwrapping her sandwiches. She asked for help and an older child immediately came round to her, helped her unwrap her food and went back to resume his lunch. Outside, a girl was having trouble pouring water into glass bottles. An older child passing by noticed this and stopped to help her before returning to his play.

Many self-initiated activities were observed on both re-accreditation visits, with children choosing to work in the main classroom, outside, at tables or on floor mats, independently or in groups. Two boys were observed having a well-planned adult-led



lesson on planets. Later, one of the boys was seen to take the basket containing the model solar system and 'teaching' another child the names of the planets and their positions in relation to the Sun.

Children respect the materials, using them with care and returning them to the shelves. Adults gently remind the children to clear up after themselves if required. Staff members' trust and respect for the child allows even the youngest children to be capable of carrying out their tasks independently and with confidence. Independence at home is also encouraged, with staff providing information and advice by newsletters, verbally and during Montessori talks for parents.

Montessori practice: Classroom management

Strong team work is evident; staff provide a stimulating environment where the children can access both spontaneous and planned learning. Staff are deployed wherever there is a need, depending on the free flow of children indoors and outdoors.

Children begin their work cycle on arrival at 09.10. Parents and staff have opportunities to exchange information at the beginning and the end of the session, which is either at 12.25, 13.00 or 16.00. Free flow to outside begins when the last child has arrived, to ensure adequate staff cover in all areas.

On the day of the first re-accreditation visit, a French class was offered in the morning and a dance class in the afternoon. Most children joined in whilst some desired to carry on with their chosen activities. This respect for the children to choose and complete their own activities was also observed at lunch time, when some children started their lunch, whilst others completed activities. After finishing lunch, children discarded their rubbish in bins, which are divided into recyclable, food and general rubbish bins. After putting their plates and cutlery in the washing up basket, they resumed choosing their own activities. Some children wanted to have a story read to them, whilst others painted, played outside or chose activities off the shelves. The whole school day for each child is finely balanced between freely chosen activities and adult-guided lessons, which are of a high standard. Children who might occasionally need a nap have a choice of resting on the sofa in the book corner, or on a sleeping cushion brought out for the child.

Robust policies help ensure that staff and parents work together to make the child's day educational, enjoyable and stimulating. There is an effective key person system in place to help ensure children's welfare needs are met. All the practitioners contribute to the children's learning and to the thorough records of the children's development, and these records are kept up to date by key persons. Individual weekly learning plans covering the breadth of the Montessori curriculum and EYFS are drawn up by key persons.



Montessori Practice: links with parents, including reports and records

Partnership with parents is strong. Prior to a child starting at Denning Montessori, a home visit is made and information is collected in an "All about me" booklet. Information is exchanged informally at drop off and pick up times. The reception area has a parent board, with news of events and contact details of outside agencies, a small library of Montessori books and Montessori International magazines for parents to borrow, and a parent handbook for reference, which contains policies, general information about the setting and a guide about how Montessori provision meets the EYFS. Since the first re-accreditation visit, staff have also put up an information board in the reception area which displays photographs of children carrying out various Montessori activities to demonstrate how the setting provides for the EYFS areas of learning.

Emails and newsletters are sent regularly to parents to keep them updated with information and ways to support their children's learning at home. The manager organizes termly information evenings about an area of the Montessori curriculum, or of the EYFS. Attendance at these meetings is variable from just a few to almost all parents attending. It is recommended that parents and prospective parents are given broader insight into Denning Montessori's ethos, Montessori practice and the EYFS, through the medium of a more comprehensive website.

Parents interviewed spoke highly of the school, praising the commitment of staff and expressing pride in the progress their children had made since starting at Denning Montessori. They appreciate the key persons' knowledge of their children.

Denning Montessori celebrates school leavers day with the presentation of a comprehensive folder containing photographs, observations and a record of the child's time at Denning Montessori. The folder also details their accomplishment in the EYFS and Montessori curriculum and can be shared with the next school.

The effective partnership with parents helps ensure that there is continuity of care and strong nurturing for each child at Denning Montessori School.

Staffing:

There are four members of staff, three of whom hold the Montessori International Diploma. The owner, who is also the manager, works at the setting full time. The fourth member of staff is an experienced, but as yet unqualified, Montessori practitioner.

Staff work well together as a team, all understanding their roles and responsibilities. The team members devise medium term plans together and hold formal weekly meetings. Informal discussions are held regularly through the session.

The manager has a thorough induction procedure in place. She maintains a regular



audit of staff's training needs with regards to the EYFS framework, and has a robust professional developmental plan for each member of staff. The manager and deputy manager attend regular Montessori training days and conferences. All other members of staff are also encouraged to attend Montessori training days in order to keep up to date with professional development.

The enthusiastic team is committed to providing the best education and care for the children attending Denning Montessori School.

Name of Assessor: Raju Surelia

Date report submitted: First visit – 21 June 2015

Second visit – 8 November 2015