



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” (2008) 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.

Barnes Montessori Nursery

Barnes Sports Club, 261 Lonsdale Road, Barnes, London SW13 9QL

Date of the first re-accreditation visit: 12 November 2014

Date of the second re-accreditation visit: 11 February 2015

Date of previous MEAB accreditation: June 2011

This accreditation report relates to the provision for children aged 2 to 5 years

Description of the school

Barnes Montessori Nursery is situated in the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames. The nursery opened in 1969 and has been under its present, sole ownership since 1987. This pack-away setting is located in a sports pavilion and has sole use of the premises during its opening times.

The setting consists of four rooms, three of which are used as classrooms (Cricket, Ladybird and Butterfly) with the fourth being a multi-purpose room. The setting also has use of the sports clubhouse (a separate building) for some activities. There is a small kitchen and toilet facilities for staff and for the children. Outside, a veranda is used as an outdoor classroom and a securely fenced large field. An outdoor shed contains resources such as balls and hoops, and an area near the pavilion has a mud kitchen, water play and other outside resources. The children are regularly taken on outings to a nearby reservoir, which provides opportunities for observations of nature.

The setting is open term time only, Monday to Friday. The morning sessions run from 09.00 to 12.00. The afternoon sessions run from 12.00 to 15.00, Monday to Thursday only. The nursery has a lunch club on Mondays through to Thursdays from 12.00 to 13.00 and some children then stay for the afternoon sessions; the number staying for lunch club and the afternoon sessions varies from day to day. Children bring a packed



lunch from home and snack is freely available during the morning. The nursery can take a maximum of 50 children at any time and presently there are six 2 to 3 year olds in the Butterfly class, and 44 3 to 5 year olds on the roll. On the morning of the second re-accreditation visit, there were 11 children in the Butterfly class with three members of staff, 18 in Ladybird class with three members of staff and a student, and 18 in Cricket class, again with three members of staff. Seventeen children stayed for lunch club, of whom thirteen stayed all day. The lunch club is supervised by at least two members of staff, as are the afternoon sessions; this depends on the number of children staying and the correct number of staff are deployed to ensure adult:child ratios are met.

In addition, two optional afternoon sessions are run separately from the rest of the nursery for children over 2 (2.3) to rising 3 years old in the run up to their entry in September of each year. This additional provision is not being considered for this accreditation.

Including the owner/manager, there are 12 members of staff; two work full time and the appointed deputy is in charge if the manager is absent. Six of the team are Montessori qualified, three are studying for their Montessori diploma and the remaining members of staff have other childcare qualifications.

Summary

The well qualified team at Barnes Montessori Nursery fully understands the needs of the children in the setting and allows them the freedom to move between both the indoor and outside environments. The website is full of information and links for parents to access, which helps them to reinforce the Montessori ethos at home.

Parents contribute to children's learning and development, working in partnership with their child's key persons. Planning, recording and assessment is an area of strength in the setting, as is the partnership with parents.

As recommended in the nursery's previous accreditation, the environment is maintained to a high standard and additional activities, such as French, have been moved to the afternoon or are included as part of the work cycle, which gives the children full freedom to choose their own activities. The children exhibit a high level of independence and show respect for their environment, their peers and for the adults, who are very good role models.

The setting is well resourced, with each room displaying developmentally appropriate activities within easy reach for the children. The materials are in good order; there is free flow between both indoor and outdoor environments and the work cycles are of appropriate length.



Continued professional development is encouraged for all staff, which keeps their practice up to date for the benefit of not just the children but also the adults. Staff have developed a good system of activity evaluation that continues to inform and improve their practice.

Barnes Montessori has an excellent reputation in the local community and offers children a firm foundation for their future learning.

The school provides an education in accordance with the principles of the Montessori approach and environment and merits accreditation by the Montessori Evaluation and Accreditation Board.

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

Philosophy:

The setting's aims and mission statement are clearly reflected in all of the nursery's documentation and on the newly redesigned website. It aims to offer a safe and welcoming environment to 'lay the foundation for the child's future learning' and to celebrate children's achievements.

Staff and parents work closely together and parents are well informed of the Montessori ethos through the parents' handbook, website and other readily available documentation. Parents spoken to during both the re-accreditation visits said that they appreciate all the information they receive and the progress the children make in their learning at the nursery. The principle of allowing the children to follow their inner needs was evident from the way adults and children interacted with each other during the course of the visits and staff are very good at engaging children in a variety of activities. This enables the child to fulfil his or her unique potential while being supported by caring and knowledgeable adults.

The principles and goals of the setting are discussed both formally and informally as an on-going process and are influenced by the varied courses, conferences and written articles that the staff access. Staff support self-initiated learning and are able to 'follow the child', guided by their comprehensive knowledge of the Montessori method.

Learning and Development:

Each of the three classrooms plan separate topics. There is an overarching topic that is broken down into weekly themes; for example, during the second re-accreditation visit Ladybird class had a half-termly theme of 'People who help us' and were looking at the role of a postman/woman. The children were also making cards and heart-shaped



biscuits in advance of Valentine's Day. Other themes to engage children's interest include 'Continents' and 'The five senses'.

Children are able to access activities for learning both inside and outdoors. The Montessori areas of learning are clearly defined in each room and in the outside environment, and the uninterrupted work cycle allows the children plenty of opportunity to refine their skills.

Staff carry out one long narrative observation and one tracking observation that covers the whole session, for each child, once a term. This complements the daily short observations that staff make on children. This frequent observation informs planning and it is the key person who sets individual weekly goals on an 'Intended Learning' planning sheet. All these plans are flexible, tailored to the needs of the child and fully evaluated. Children's use of the Montessori activities is recorded in their Individual Learning Plans (ILP's) in which these activities are linked to the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) areas of learning and development. The setting is considering adopting a web-based recording system.

Partnership with parents is an integral part of the children's assessment process and in order to promote this partnership, each term parents are given a Child Progress form which has headings from the seven EYFS areas of learning and development, with an explanation of what is required; they are asked to complete this form at the end of each term and return it to the key persons who then add to it. Parents can also comment in their child's Home News Link books, which go home at the end of each week, along with the key persons' comments. In this way, children's individual needs and achievements are identified by the setting and the family, and the parents know they are contributing to their child's learning. Similarly, when mandatory two year assessments are carried out, parents complete a blank form; the setting acknowledges that the parents are the child's first educators. The nursery has found this system of parental involvement in assessment of learning to be a very positive move and it is appreciated by the parents.

Staff are able to make appropriate provision for children with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND) and for those with English as an additional language. There are appointed SENCOs who liaise with relevant outside agencies and attend regular training.

Barnes Montessori has an excellent planning, recording and assessment procedure in place, with a very positive contribution to this process from parents.

Prepared Environment: resources and materials

There are three classrooms – Butterfly, Cricket and Ladybird. The Butterfly classroom caters for children in the two to three year old age group and all these children started in September. Developmentally appropriate resources are provided for this age group, with a wide range of activities for everyday living, sensorial and creative activities, plenty of puzzles which are rotated weekly, a book corner and some basic literacy and



numeracy material. All the materials are clean and in good order, arranged on shelves accessible for the children. There is ample space for floor work.

The children in the Cricket and Ladybird classrooms are in the 3 to rising 5 year age group; some are new to the nursery this academic year and some have moved up from Butterfly class. All the resources in these rooms reflect the Montessori areas of learning and cover the whole curriculum but also include plenty of puzzles, a painting area, wooden construction bricks and book corner. The materials are clean, in good order and well maintained; for example, a set of Montessori cylinders in Cricket class has been replaced since the first re-accreditation visit. Children are encouraged to bring items in for the nature tables and some materials can be shared between classes as the need arises.

There is access to the outdoor space from each room and staff have developed an effective method for monitoring the number of children outside. When children are invited to go outdoors, a picture of a child in outdoor clothes is placed on the door and those children wishing to go outside put on a coloured sash and make a mark against their name on a washable board. This coloured sash system is used by all the classes. There was a constant flow of activity between the in and outdoor environments during the visits.

The setting also benefits from being able to use the large open field in front of the building, with access to trees for climbing under supervision, and plenty of space that promotes the children's gross motor skills. The field is secure and checks on all the gates are carried out routinely. There is a mud garden and water play area, and various activities on the veranda such as a small tent for children to sit in with a friend to look at books, and a painting easel. On the day of the second re-accreditation visit, additional activities included bubble blowing with soapy water and paint spraying on a sheet that covered an A-frame. There are more resources that promote motor skills which are stored in a shed when not in use, and all staff contribute to planning for the outdoors as well as indoor provision.

Although there are some disadvantages of having to pack away daily, the advantage is that the environment can be changed easily to suit the needs of the children. Setting up the classrooms every day makes it easy to keep a check on the materials. The nursery makes creative use of the space and ensures that high standards of maintenance are kept.

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

All the children at Barnes Montessori are encouraged to be as independent as possible. They hang up their coats on named pegs in the morning, change their shoes and/or boots and are able to see to their personal needs. Younger children are well supported



by the adults in the setting to achieve this level of independence.

During the course of the day, children are able to complete a cycle of activity, help to prepare and then enjoy a snack of fresh fruit and wash up their own plates and glasses after snack and/or lunch. Water is accessible at all times which children help themselves to. Milk and biscuits are also available at the snack table. The school is a nut-free setting and an allergy list is kept in each classroom. Parents are encouraged through optional home visits, presentation evenings and conversations with their child's key persons, to continue to provide these excellent opportunities for independence at home.

The children have complete freedom to choose their own activities and repeat them as often as they wish. Children in all the classes work in small groups or pairs, as well as with an adult. It was evident during the course of the second re-accreditation visit that all the children are well aware of the ground rules, waiting patiently for their turn to use an activity and carefully walking around children's floor work. They show great respect for their peers and are kind and helpful to each other.

All the staff act as good role models, they reinforce ground rules when necessary and support the children in their spontaneous learning.

Montessori practice: Classroom management

The 2¾ hour work cycle begins as soon as the children arrive in the morning; they are greeted by a member of staff and choose their activity after self-registering. During the morning of both re-accreditation visits, there was a free flow of movement between the indoor and outside environments with members of staff sharing the responsibilities of being outside or supervising the children who were preparing snack. Staff are very good at supporting and supervising children in both environments and a rota helps them to remain aware of their roles and responsibilities.

The children mostly stay in their own classes, though they can move between classrooms by invitation; if a child wants to go from Cricket to Ladybird for example, they take a picture of a cricket to the classroom they want to visit so that staff in each classroom can immediately see if they have a child from another class visiting. Children across the classes also mix freely outdoors. There are core members of staff who stay in each room but some of the staff, including the owner, move around the different rooms. One member of staff carries out cooking activities with each class over the course of the week. There are appropriate staff:pupil ratios in each room and these numbers remain constant over the week.

At around 11.45, the morning children get ready to go home while Ladybird class is prepared for lunch and the other rooms are packed away. Following the first re-accreditation visit, staff have reflected on the lunchtime transition, reviewing the deployment of staff, and a calmer and smoother transition procedure is now in place.



Children staying for lunch wash their hands, collect their lunch boxes and sit together with the members of staff who supervise the lunch club. Other members of staff who stay for the afternoon session eat separately. The nursery only uses the Ladybird class at present for the small number of children who stay on for the afternoons and children are free to continue using the Montessori materials and outdoor activities during these sessions. The setting has recently introduced Forest School, which takes place at the reservoir on Monday afternoons and is led by a qualified Forest School leader from an outside organization. French is also an optional extra in the afternoons but music and dancing take place during the morning work cycle, with children choosing whether or not to join in the activity. If any child needs to have a nap after lunch, they are directed to the multi-purpose room and the setting has quilts and pillows if needed.

There are appropriate policies and procedures in place that support the smooth running of the setting; all parents, staff and students have a list of the policies in their respective handbooks. They also receive electronic copies of core policies (e.g. Safeguarding and Child Protection). The school keeps a hard copy of all the policies, and any policy is available on request.

Montessori Practice: links with parents, including reports and records

Partnership with parents is very strong. Parents have the option of a home visit before their child starts at Barnes Montessori. There is an effective key person system in place and it is each key person's responsibility to keep records up to date, although children are free to work with any member of staff. Each key group has two members of staff to act as key person in order to cover staff who are part time or other absences. This good practice ensures that children and their families are well supported at all times; it also means shared documentation by staff providing a richer and well-rounded view of the key children.

There are two parent/teacher meetings a year and the parents receive a comprehensive summative report at the end of the summer term. Parents are sent regular newsletters and much of the communication is done via email and/or the website. Each classroom has an outside notice board that displays information such as important dates and termly themes. In addition there are several parent notice boards with relevant information. There is an annual presentation session that covers a variety of topics such as the EYFS and Montessori, and independence. The deputy manager also runs parenting classes. All the parents spoken to during the visits praised the standard of learning and the approachability of the staff. They particularly like the yellow Home News Link books, where staff write about significant activities that their child has taken part in during the week. Parents are welcome to come into the nursery and observe a session at any time.

Children are able to record their own achievements in their blue Diary, kept in their



individual folders. This may include some writing practice, drawing or a photograph of them carrying out an activity. Parents are free to come and have a look at their own child's records at any time, not just at the parent/teacher meetings. Each child also has their own ILP in which the Montessori achievements are recorded, and the setting completes the local authority's pro-forma transition document for each child when they leave.

Parents at Barnes Montessori are kept very well informed of their child's progress; they are encouraged to play a positive role in their child's learning and feel that the setting gives the children a solid foundation.

Staffing:

There is a well-organized staffing structure in place. The owner/manager is at the nursery every day and although she is usually included on the staff rota, at times she is supernumerary, giving her the opportunity to offer help where needed or act as cover for staff absence. As well as her Montessori qualification, she has Early Years Professional Status and a BA (Hons) in Early Childhood Studies. The deputy also holds a Montessori qualification, as do four other members of staff. One has an MCI Foundation Degree and another is working towards her BA (Hons) in Early Childhood Studies. The other members of staff are either in the process of carrying out their Montessori professional placement through Montessori Centre International (MCI) or have undertaken the MCI Montessori Approach and Practice courses. Six of the team hold degree qualifications.

All staff are encouraged to attend in-house training days and continued professional development courses run by the local authority or MCI. Once they have attended a course, they complete a feedback report and this is cascaded to other members of staff. Staff meetings are held fortnightly and these are minuted. New staff and students undergo a thorough induction procedure. Staff have at least two supervision sessions a year and these feed into annual appraisals. The setting has recently introduced a new format of peer observations. Rather than focus on a particular individual, a member of staff from one room plans activities for a whole work cycle in a different room with two members of that room's team. Each of these adults then spends an hour observing the whole room during the course of this work cycle, with a focus on the interaction between adults and children; these observations are then evaluated jointly, with staff looking at what aspects of the morning worked well and what did not. Staff have found this method of observation extremely useful and it has sparked off some lively discussions. This is an excellent example of the setting's commitment to self-evaluation and continued quality improvement.

All the documentation in the setting, including job descriptions, parent, student and staff handbooks are regularly reviewed and there is an on-going school development plan.

