

Montessori Evaluation and Accreditation Board

School Accreditation

This report is a supplement to the setting's previous MEAB Accreditation Final Report, which is published in conjunction with this report.

This report was prepared following, and is based on, two accreditation visits made on behalf of the Montessori Evaluation and Accreditation Board. It considers how far the setting follows relevant criteria in "The Guide to the EYFS in Montessori Settings" (2012/14). During the second visit the progress made with the recommendations set out in the report from the first visit was assessed and any further findings made during the second visit were considered.

The report does not address the standards and quality issues that are assessed by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), which reports separately. Also the report does not provide any assessment of financial aspects of the setting.

Receiving accreditation carries the expectation that the setting will continue to work on the issues highlighted in this report and will remain committed to the ongoing development of its practice. Furthermore, that it will report to the MEAB office any relevant changes such as to premises address, ownership, hours of operation, or to the age range of children attending.

Weyhill Montessori School

Scout HQ, Youth Campus, Weyhill, Haslemere, Surrey GU27 1BX

Dates of previous MEAB accreditations: June 2010 and December 2014

This accreditation is valid until June 2022

This accreditation report relates to the provision for children aged 2½ to 5 years

Description of the nursery:

Weyhill Montessori School opened in 1995 and was re-registered under the current ownership in 2014. The nursery school is set in the Scout Headquarters in the town of Haslemere. It has sole use of the premises during its opening hours and packs its resources away on most days. The building comprises a large classroom with doors leading to the kitchen and garden. The entrance hall gives access to a second, smaller room that can be used for parent and staff meetings and for small group work with the children. The fenced garden consists of a large L-shaped paved and grassed area, including an activity centre with climbing wall and slide, sand-pit, picnic tables, stepping stones, plant beds and a digging area. There is a storage shed, and an awning provides good shade and weather cover. The nursery also makes regular visits to a nearby wooded area.

The setting is open term time only, with morning sessions from 09.15 to 12.30 Monday to Friday. Lunch sessions are offered from 12.30 to 13.30 on Monday through to Thursday. Afternoon sessions run from 12.30 to 15.00 on Monday and Thursday, and 12.30 to 14.30 on Tuesday and Wednesday. Children can attend a variety of sessions. Those staying for lunch bring their own packed meal.

There are currently 48 children aged between 2½ and 5 years on the roll. On the day of the second reaccreditation visit 29 attended in the morning with 23 staying for the afternoon. The nursery makes provision for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), as well as for children with English as an additional language (EAL). It liaises with external agencies such as the local authority and private therapists.

Peripatetic teachers come in to offer French, 'Little Footy Stars', yoga and 'Kindermusik'. The proprietor is the manager, responsible for the day to day running of the nursery. She attends daily and leads a team of ten well-qualified practitioners, one of whom is appointed as deputy manager. All but one of the teaching staff hold level 4 Montessori early years diplomas, the deputy also has a Montessori elementary diploma, and seven are educated to degree level. All staff work part-time and one attends solely to offer SEND support. The nursery also currently has a Montessori student teacher on professional placement.

Summary

Weyhill Montessori School implements the Montessori philosophy very effectively and provides an exciting learning environment for the children. Many improvements have been made since the previous MEAB accreditation in keeping with the recommendation from that accreditation, which was to continue to reflect on practice in order to ensure that high standards are maintained. These improvements include the refurbishment of the setting with beautiful new wooden tables, chairs and shelving. Many of the Montessori materials have been renewed and the range of resources extended to expand children's learning (about cultural aspects of the world and technology for example). The garden has also been developed to include an astroturfed area under the new climbing activity tower. Furthermore, an online record-keeping system has been introduced and fully implemented by staff to record their planning, assessment and observations of the children's learning and development. This is securely accessed by parents on the parent portal and is much appreciated by them. Following recommendations made on the first reaccreditation visit, thorough monitoring of staff members' use of this online system has been implemented and parents now also receive clear and accurate guidance on its use.

Promoting each child's learning and development is at the core of the setting's ethos. Children's needs are extremely well met by the caring adults, who provide high quality interactions. The management and staff strive to offer excellent childcare and education through regularly reviewing and evaluating their practice. All the children are happy to freely explore all aspects of the setting, to express their feelings and to enjoy the daily Montessori work cycle, which is offered each morning for nearly three

hours. The adults make a very significant contribution to the calm, harmonious environment created for the children. It is recommended that they continue to assess how they can improve the opportunities for outdoor learning. Parents are very appreciative of the high quality care and attention which their children receive.

The setting provides an education which follows the principles of the Montessori approach and environment. The setting has successfully addressed 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:

- the team should continue to assess and improve the planning for, transitions to, and ground rules for the outdoor learning environment.

An Action Plan has been drawn up with, and retained by, the setting to address these recommendations.

Philosophy:

Staff members have an excellent understanding of the Montessori philosophy and a shared vision of what they can help each child to achieve. Once a term an audit specifically on the setting's Montessori philosophy and principles is undertaken by the team to determine how effectively these are being implemented. This is a highly successful means of self-evaluation and it is made available to all staff and to families through the online parent portal.

Learning and Development:

Children are grouped into Owls or Robins, with Owls being the older, pre-school age range and Robins the 2 and 3 year olds. Staff members are assigned to these groups and have curriculum areas to take responsibility for, but all staff and children interact freely across the setting.

The online record-keeping system, which has a Montessori focus, has been fully implemented and is used well for recording, assessing, planning, drawing reports from and analysing cohort data. It is managed securely and it links the Montessori curriculum effectively with the Early Years Foundation Stage areas of learning and development. Key persons use it ably to draw up a list of activities and personal targets for each of their key children. The system also offers the facility for sharing information across the team. It is appreciated by parents as a record of their child's progress and learning journey, which they can download at the end of the year. Following a recommendation from the first reaccreditation visit, further training for staff has been undertaken on their use of the online system and this use is now effectively monitored by the manager and deputy.

Each child's speech and language development is monitored when they first start at the setting. Children with SEND or EAL benefit from one to one help and initiatives such as targeted language activity groups. Key persons, parents and the well-qualified SENCo work effectively and closely together to support these children.

Further additional activities have been introduced since the previous MEAB accreditation, these include Kindermusik and yoga. Specialist external teachers provide the additional activities in small groups, to avoid disruption to the work cycle, with songs, stories and games for groups of children, indoors or outside. Yoga is on offer for half an hour on Tuesday afternoon and Kindermusik for half an hour on Friday mornings. French is on Monday mornings and Little Footy Stars on Wednesday afternoons. Alternative activities are always available for children who do not wish to join in with these groups. The opportunities offered to the children at Weyhill Montessori School fully support all areas of their learning and development.

Prepared Environment: resources and materials

The spacious indoor environment is beautifully resourced and stimulating for the children. The refurbishment and new resources make it appealing for all the children and the new geography cabinet, land and water forms and world puzzles, for example, fully support their exploration and learning. Outdoors, a vegetable garden and herb planters have been added since the previous MEAB accreditation, and the area behind the shed has been creatively adapted for children to enjoy. New resources include a den-building resource box, a wooden mud kitchen, a water station, alphabet bunting and wooden stepping stone discs. Staff organise weekly small mixed age group visits to the wooded area at the end of the Youth Campus, where a broad range of activities take place, including role-play, pond-dipping and supervised fire-making. The team should continue to assess and improve the provision for outdoor learning in order to maintain a stimulating, orderly and well-cared for outdoor environment. It is suggested that staff members enhance the planning for this, modify the outdoor ground rules and manage the children's transitions to and from the outdoor areas even more effectively. The provision for learning and development across the setting is excellent.

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

The well-prepared environment and skilled staff fully nurture independence in the child, for example enabling them to wash up after their self-service snack. In the Robins group the children are well supported as they learn how to manage their freedom in the environment and how to make appropriate independent choices. New children receive careful guidance, enabling them to be independent within the clear boundaries and ground rules. Staff members work closely as a team and communicate effectively within the classroom. Turn-taking, sharing and collaborative activities are incorporated into the planning to help children to understand the views of others and to learn to respect differences. The manager has identified that the setting could offer further opportunities for the older age group to support the learning of the younger children, possibly through

a 'buddy' system. Good links within the local community enable the setting to offer children visits to the sorting office, library, ice-cream parlour and to the local school's nativity play. Visitors to the setting include firefighters, a dentist and parents who come in to support topic work.

All aspects of the snack routine are independently achieved by the children, including fruit cutting and the washing, drying and returning of their used crockery at the end of their snack. Since the previous MEAB accreditation staff members have encouraged the children to unpack the contents of their lunchboxes onto china plates, they offer crockery and cutlery and encourage its use.

Montessori Practice: links with parents, including reports and records

Staff members very effectively promote the children's learning and independence at home with their parents through daily contact and through the parent portal. A well-resourced parent library includes DVD's on Montessori practice, and a coffee morning, information sheets and an annual talk given by the manager all include advice on fostering independence. A summer picnic enables families to get to know each other prior to their children starting in September, and parents are asked to complete an initial assessment on their child's learning and development before they begin at the setting, which helps staff plan successfully for children on entry. The parents' welcome pack is informative.

Following a recommendation from the first reaccreditation visit, the information and guidance given to parents about their use of the online record-keeping system and its content has been thoroughly reviewed and revised to reflect the current practice of the setting. Links with parents are excellent.

Staff: qualifications, deployment, and performance management

The leadership team structure is clear and the 'Person in Charge' of the session has a full written description of this role and its responsibilities. Staff members share a strong Montessori ethos and vision of how they can provide high quality education and care for the children; they work to ensure that each child's needs are met and that their developing independence and self-initiated learning are respected. Key person teams (Robins and Owls) liaise weekly, and the full team also meets weekly to plan activities and four times per term for Montessori refresher training. There is a strong culture of encouraging staff members' continuing professional development and self-reflective practice. Training includes whole team 'use of materials' reviews led by the manager and deputy manager, and reviews of effective use of the online record-keeping system. Staff members attend the annual Montessori Schools Association conference and regional training events. The manager recently completed a Diploma in Leadership and Management to further her skills in overseeing the quality of the provision at this exceptional Montessori nursery.

Name of Assessor: Anne McConway

Date of first visit: 8 March 2018

Date of second visit: 9 May 2018

Date report submitted: First visit – 9 March 2018

Second visit – 9 May 2018