



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 2012 revisions. 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.

Little Orchard Montessori Nursery

The Old School Room, Sparkwell, Devon PL7 5DB

Date of the first accreditation visit: 3 June 2013.

Date of the second accreditation visit: 30 September 2013.

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

Description of the school

Little Orchard Montessori was established in January 2011. It is situated in Sparkwell, Devon in the grounds of Sparkwell Old Primary School. The spacious, main classroom is divided to cater for babies, toddlers and the pre-school age group. The nursery includes a large outdoor space with play facilities on a covered decked area, as well as an orchard and garden. In addition to the main room, the nursery has an office, kitchen and toilet facilities. The nursery is open from 8:00 to 18:00 from Monday to Friday, 51 weeks in calendar year, and offers full-time or sessional care for children from birth to 4 years of age. There are two separate age groups of children, those under 2 years and children between the ages of 2 and 4 years. Sessional care is offered from 8:00 or 9:00 to 12:00 or 13:00, and from 12:00 or 13:00 to 16:00 or 18:00. Little Orchard provides healthy meals for the children including breakfast, cooked lunch and afternoon tea. Meals are optional according to sessions, and children can bring in packed lunches if preferred.

There are currently 43 children on roll with the maximum number of 26 children attending for morning and afternoon sessions each day. The nursery is able to support children with special educational needs (SEN), special dietary requirements and children who speak English as an additional language. On the day of the second visit there were 19 children attending the morning session in total with six teaching staff, including three children under 2 years of age with one staff member working in the baby section of the large room. Thirteen children were attending in total during the afternoon sessions with five teaching staff.



There are ten members of staff in total, including the two proprietors and deputy.

The two proprietors/managers are both Montessori qualified, as well as holding level 4 in Early Years Practice and level 5 in Business Management. One of the proprietors is also SENCO trained. There are two deputies. One holds a level 4 qualification in Childcare and Early Years and the other a level 3 NVQ. The other six staff members are NVQ level 3 qualified. There is also a cook employed on site, who prepares the lunches. The proprietors and the deputies share their weekly work schedule so that at least one of them is present at any given time. The other members of staff share their full day work schedule (from 8:00 to 18:00) on a rota basis.

Summary:

Little Orchard Montessori Nursery offers a homely, nurturing and stimulating environment for very young children. There is a wide range of indoor and outdoor activities that enable children to explore and investigate at their own pace whilst becoming confident and independent within their environment.

All members of staff are enthusiastic, passionate about and committed to providing the Montessori areas of learning within the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) framework. Little Orchard Montessori places strong emphasis on offering healthy meals to the children, as well as on the care of the environment throughout their daily routine.

The effective teamwork amongst staff creates a warm and calm atmosphere for children along with a strong focus on supporting the child's individual needs and interests. The daily routine is carefully planned according to the children's ages and stages of development, and a key person system is in place. Links with other childcare providers are established for the benefit of children who may be attending more than one setting. There is strong partnership with parents, which enables staff to fully support the child's learning and development, and plan effectively for their next steps.

All members of staff continuously reflect on their practice for the benefit of the families and their children, and this enables staff to maintain effective teamwork at Little Orchard Montessori. In response to the recommendation made at the first accreditation visit, all members of staff have re-evaluated the key person's role in keeping observations in the children's individual files current, this was evident during the second accreditation visit as these records were up to date.

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 team continue to reflect on its practice to ensure that high standards continue to be maintained.

Philosophy:

Little Orchard Montessori provides a stimulating indoor and outdoor environment for babies, toddlers and pre-school aged children to help them to develop into happy and confident learners while fulfilling their individual potential. The adults' role is to guide the child within the environment, nurturing their needs and interests. As Little Orchard offers full day care, the daily work cycle is extended to between three and a half and four hours in the morning, and three



hours in the afternoon, during which the children are free to choose activities, both indoors and outdoors. The children are encouraged to become imaginative and creative thinkers within this mixed age group and they confidently communicate with adults when they need help. The babies and toddlers are located in an enclosed area of the classroom and are well guided and encouraged by the adult to explore and discover, both indoors and outdoors.

The older age group engages in many self-initiated cycles of activities and play together harmoniously. All members of staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities.

The nursery's aims, philosophy and principles are reviewed regularly and are defined in writing in the "Mission Statement", which is accessible to parents through the website.

Learning and Development:

Little Orchard's staff observe each child's individual interests, spontaneous and self-initiated activities. As a team, they carefully plan adult-led themed activities that, together with individual materials, provide comprehensive coverage of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and Montessori areas of learning. The themed activities cover the prime and specific areas of learning within the EYFS. The activities are evaluated and reviewed on a regular basis

A key person system is in place, which is documented. In the baby and toddler area the key person follows the child's routine, as well as observing the individual child's interests and needs in order to be able to support social, emotional, communication, language and physical development. The teachers communicate effectively during sessions to be able to follow and accommodate the children's needs as a group and individually in both age groups.

Each child is observed by their key person who also maintains the child's "Scrapbook". This record contains artwork, narrative and photo observations that are very capably linked to the revised EYFS and Montessori areas of learning through a computerized record keeping system that is used to inform assessment and planning of the child's next steps.

Each child's individual educational plan is produced and is well documented through this tracking system. Since the first accreditation visit all members of teaching staff have reviewed the key person's role so that they are now able to keep up to date records of their key children's progress, which was evident in the children's individual "Scrapbook" during the second accreditation visit.

The "Scrapbook" is also available for each child to stick in pictures from home, which encourages dialogue about their lives beyond nursery. The mandatory two year old assessment is carried out, which enables staff to recognise if a child needs additional support. One of the proprietors is SENCo trained, and keeps up to date with monitoring a child if any concerns arise. Partnership work with parents and other agencies such as portage, speech therapists, physiotherapist, and local authority support services is well established, and information is shared with parents through the record keeping and planning of the child's individual next steps.

Prepared Environment: resources and materials

Little Orchard Montessori offers a structured, stimulating and clean classroom with good quality learning materials available both indoors and outdoors. The baby and toddler area is well



equipped with sensory, practical life and heuristic materials, as well as small wooden climbing apparatus. There are also areas allocated for snack, story, music sessions and changing, resting facilities.

Sensory, cultural, creative, language, mathematics and practical life materials are available for the pre-school aged children, and the classroom also has areas for role-play, snack, stories and constructive play. In the areas for babies, toddlers and pre-school age the apparatus is easily accessible for the children, and arranged on shelves at the child's level. The older children are given the opportunity to select activities individually or as a group. During the snack routine washing-up facilities are provided for the children to clean their plates and cups after use. The older age group is also encouraged to help take care of the environment through separating recyclable waste as part of their daily routine.

The areas of learning are well maintained and regularly checked by all members of staff in order to ensure that they are challenging and appropriate to support learning.

There is a wide range of outdoor apparatus provided in the decked area and the nursery garden, which, in particular, encourages gross motor activities and sensory skills through exploration and discovery. Children have opportunities to explore nature by planting vegetable seeds in the garden, as well as investigating mini-beasts and life-cycles in the nursery's pond.

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

Little Orchard Montessori places strong emphasis on developing independence and respect for oneself and others. A well-established daily routine enables the children to become confident and independent within the environment, and to access learning freely and spontaneously. All members of staff work very capably with parents to promote the child's growing independence at home. The children are encouraged to hang their coats on their pegs, as well as changing into their indoor shoes / slippers before entering the classroom. Children are free to choose activities both indoors and outdoors, and encouraged to communicate with the adult if help is needed. The older children are given the opportunity to select and prepare their fruit for snack. The teachers are positive role models, listening to the children, going down to their eye level and using gentle voices when communicating with them. The children confidently interact with the adults and enjoy many opportunities for independent action and decision-making. The younger and older age groups have opportunities to engage with each other throughout the sessions.

The children and adults are encouraged to celebrate diversity by respecting others' cultures, religious beliefs and backgrounds. The older children are encouraged to return the materials to the shelves after finishing an activity. They are also involved in the meal time routines by preparing snack and tidying up dishes, as well as being reminded of hygiene routines. The babies and toddlers have established feeding and sleeping routines to help them settle into a home-from-home environment. All members of staff observe and accommodate the individual child's needs, including toilet training.



Montessori practice: Classroom management

Classroom management is excellent, with staff being fully aware of their roles and responsibilities. The strong team work facilitates a caring, child-focused and stimulating indoor and outdoor learning environment. This is a harmonious working environment for both the adults and the children. Little Orchard's policies, procedures and "Operational Plan" are reviewed regularly by the team. The classroom routine is reviewed monthly in order to promote continued effective practice with all age groups within the setting.

The team plans together, and communicates effectively. Three allocated staff, including the deputy work in the baby and toddler area with the maximum number of nine under 2s, and together establish the daily routine according to the individual child's needs. All age groups have the opportunity to also engage in preparation of food through cooking / baking activities as part of the routine at Little Orchard.

During both accreditation visits parents commented on how much they appreciate the calm atmosphere and the quality of the individual care that Little Orchard Montessori offers. This was evident in how the children played, as a group or individually during sessions.

Montessori Practice: links with parents, including reports and records

The adults' routines are clearly defined and implemented through the "Staff" and "Student / Volunteer" Handbooks.

Parents are able to access information about the setting's aims and policies and about literature on Montessori philosophy through the "Operational Plan", website, prospectus and the "Nursery Handbook". Little Orchard provides an "Under 2s care plan" for parents to complete so that staff are able to support their babies' and toddlers' needs, as well as helping them to settle into the new environment. Daily contact with parents also offers the opportunity to exchange information on a regular basis, and parents can attend meetings once a term at which they can discuss their child's progress and help the planning of the child's next steps with the key person. Regular newsletters also keep parents updated about upcoming events and future plans at Little Orchard Montessori.

When a child leaves Little Orchard a "Transition Report" form is given to parents and to the next school, this includes a detailed assessment of the child's achievements covering the prime and specific areas of learning within the EYFS. If a child attends more than one setting the "Information sharing with other setting" form is exchanged between Little Orchard Montessori and the other providers.

During the first accreditation visit parents stated that they were pleased with the range and depth of information they receive and with the quality of the provision and the progress achieved by their children. One of the parents whose child attends another setting highlighted the effective information sharing between Little Orchard Montessori and the other provider.

Staffing:

Little Orchard Montessori has a well implemented staffing structure, including detailed job descriptions and full induction in the "Staff's Profile". Induction reviews take place regularly whilst staff settle in. Supervision and appraisal procedures are effective and staff appraisals are



held once a year and reviewed after six months.

The proprietors and deputy encourage all members of staff to evaluate their practice when working with the children, and the "Action Plan for my CPD" form encourages this.

Teamwork is outstanding, and the effective staff supervision system enables the team to monitor and develop provision for the benefit of all.

Staff meetings are held once a month, and records of meetings show what has been discussed and the outcome of these discussions, these matters are also linked to the nursery's development plan when relevant. There are opportunities for all staff to contribute to planning, self-evaluation and development in the setting, which enables staff to help maintain effective team work at Little Orchard.

The proprietors ensure that all members of staff have a shared understanding and commitment to the Montessori pedagogy and practice through in-house training. During both accreditation visits the non-Montessori qualified staff stated that they would like to continue with their professional development, including gaining Montessori qualifications.

Name of Assessor: Andrea Dalling

Date of reports:

First visit: 5th June 2013.

Second visit: 2nd October 2013.