

## **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.

### **Rushmore House Montessori Preschool**

Pratts Bottom Free Church (former URC), Rushmore Hill,  
Pratts Bottom, Orpington, Kent BR6 7NQ

Date of previous MEAB accreditation: November 2015

This accreditation is valid until June 2023.

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

#### **Description of the nursery:**

Rushmore House Montessori Preschool is located in a rural village. It is set in a former church hall, which was refurbished as a preschool in 2013. The building is single-storey and the grounds consist of two grassed fenced areas surrounding it. There is a main classroom which can be divided into two sections, a small kitchen, office and a separate storage area. The setting has sole use of the premises and it is one of two Montessori preschools in the area led by the proprietor. It was originally registered in 2007 and then re-registered at the current site in 2013.

The provision is open weekdays during term times, 08.00 to 16.00. The morning session runs from 09.00 until 12.25 and the afternoon session from 12.30 until 15.30. There are currently 44 children on roll and children may attend either full- or half-day sessions and

bring a packed lunch if they stay all day. The preschool makes provision for children with English as an additional language and for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. On the day of the second reaccreditation visit, 25 children attended in the morning and 15 in the afternoon, with six staff attending in the morning and five in the afternoon.

There are nine members of staff in total, six of whom hold Montessori early years qualifications. This includes the manager who is the proprietor and the group manager, and who also has Early Years Professional Status. The deputy manager is also Montessori qualified. Two of the staff work full-time and the deputy manager covers in the absence of the manager. The manager monitors the overall quality of the preschool and is supported by an administration assistant who does not work directly with the children. The setting has a holiday club that is open from 08.00 until 18.00 during the preschool's holidays – except for Christmas. Three of the existing staff, including the manager, cover these extended hours.

## Summary

Rushmore House Preschool is an excellent Montessori setting. The Montessori philosophy is implemented effectively, enabling children to make very good progress in their learning. The preschool provides a calm, happy environment where children enjoy their varied learning experiences. Relationships with parents are strong. Parents are very happy with the high quality of communication about their children's progress and with the helpfulness and friendliness of the staff. The behaviour of the children is excellent. They actively engage in a wide range of activities and develop useful skills for the future. The experienced and knowledgeable staff work individually with children, they follow their interests and record their progress. They share this knowledge with the child's parents. The children develop independence from an early age, including how to put on their coats for going outdoors and how to prepare their own snack.

Following the previous MEAB accreditation, the morning work cycle has been extended to three hours – which gives children more time to follow their interests and engage in self-initiated learning. Part of the garden has had artificial grass added, which provides opportunities for children to learn outdoors in all weather conditions. This supports their physical skills and overall well-being. Other useful resources that have been added include a new mud kitchen, stainless-steel crockery, a sink and a noticeboard. This board informs parents of the daily activities that children participate in and which foods are available for snack. The management team has also continued to reflect on practice through regular staff meetings, parent questionnaires and taking children's views into account.

Following the first reaccreditation visit, peer observations have been reintroduced in a positive manner to help maintain the current high standard of teaching. In addition, a review of the purpose of staff meeting minutes has helped ensure a more consistent approach to recording what has been discussed. Also following the first reaccreditation visit, the appearance of parts of the classroom has been improved by

high quality renovation of some of the Montessori materials and other resources, for example the Land and Water Globe, Sandpaper Letters and Red Rods. It is now recommended that the setting continues to reflect on its high standards.

***The setting 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 setting continues to reflect on its successful implementation of Montessori practice in order to ensure that its high standards are maintained.

**An Action Plan has been drawn up with, and retained by, the setting to address this recommendation.**

#### **Philosophy:**

Rushmore House Montessori Preschool successfully implements the Montessori philosophy. Children thrive on the order and structure provided, which helps them to make sense of their world. Children flourish with the freedom they have to follow their natural impulses and they are inquisitive learners. The educational principles of the setting fully take into account Montessori's description of the nature of the child, and each child is fully nurtured and guided to learn at their own pace.

#### **Learning and Development:**

The quality of the teaching and learning is outstanding. Children are highly motivated and eager, and even the youngest children quickly learn how to respect the environment by choosing and returning materials to the shelves. Staff provide high quality individual presentations to the children. During the first reaccreditation visit presentations were given of the Cylinder Blocks, Sandpaper Letters and Sandpaper Numbers, and on how to find pictures of anteaters and other rainforest animals. Staff also supported children to experiment with magnets using a range of different materials, to match models of animals to picture cards and to write numbers and letters for themselves. Since the previous MEAB accreditation, the morning work cycle has been extended to three hours by the removal of an adult-led group gathering at the beginning of the session.

All staff are involved in the planning process and introduce new activities based on their key children's interests, stage of development and choices. Each staff member ensures there is specified time to work with their key children, for example, to implement planned literacy and numeracy activities, as well as time for group activities. This balance ensures strong progress in children's learning. Staff effectively evaluate the ongoing theme being offered and children's achievements. They do this daily and use this information to tailor their planning. Special celebrations such as Diwali, Christmas and Mother's Day are celebrated to help the children learn about each other's similarities

and differences. Forest School planning is also linked to the theme of the week, to help the children to fully consolidate new knowledge. The Forest School sessions take place in nearby woodland, they build on the children's existing skills and enable them to learn activities such as den-making, swing/pulley use and building bonfires. On the day of the first visit, the children had great fun making a snowman in the garden and were extremely excited by the snow falling later in the morning. On the day of the second visit the children enjoyed digging, ball games and climbing in the garden.

### **Prepared Environment: resources and materials**

The classroom is a carefully prepared environment which effectively supports children's developing sense of order. It is well designed with separate areas for each part of the Montessori curriculum. Within each area, low-level shelves are equipped with materials that are complete and ready to use. These are arranged and sequenced with increasing difficulty to offer progression to the children. There are also low-level tables and chairs that are conveniently positioned to enable even the youngest children to carry trays with materials on to work with. The snack table is sufficiently large for a group of children to prepare and enjoy eating snack together.

The garden has different areas and a good variety of activities and, since the previous MEAB accreditation visit, a large section of the grass has been replaced with all-weather artificial turf. The four main sections in the garden are used for digging, climbing, riding on bikes and imaginative play.

Following the first reaccreditation visit, additional cupboards have been placed in the classroom for the extensive range of art materials. In addition, many of the Montessori resources have been renovated to a high standard or have been replaced, making them appealing to children. The books on the bookrack are regularly replaced and are in good condition. The cultural resources have also been beautifully re-organised, making them easily accessible for the children.

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

In both the indoor and outdoor areas, children have the freedom to select their own activities and whether they wish to work individually or in small groups. The children are happy, well behaved and the atmosphere is quiet and calm. Excellent support from staff members helps the children to build their confidence and independence. This is illustrated, for example, when they encourage children to share their experiences during group time and to show others any objects brought in from home. Children have different classroom responsibilities, such as 'book monitor' and 'tidy-up supervisor', to boost their self-esteem. They also enjoy helping to prepare the snack in the morning, using newly-learnt skills such as how to wash, chop and peel fruits as well as how to spread butter on crackers. On the day of the first reaccreditation visit children learnt how to scoop seeds from papaya and enjoyed discussing the different taste and appearance of a ripe and unripe papaya. Children also independently select their own plates and

cups and serve themselves, pour their own milk and wash up their plates after snack. At lunchtime, children open their own drinks and food packets and choose to eat directly from their lunch containers or take a plate and cutlery to use. Children display good levels of self-sufficiency and are encouraged to learn to manage their feelings and conflicts in an appropriate way; they receive positive praise from staff.

### **Montessori Practice: links with parents, including reports and records**

The quality of information sharing and reporting to the parents is excellent. All progress reports contain extensive and helpful detail across all areas of learning. For those with children under three years of age they receive a report at the end of each term and for those over three, at the end of the academic year. Home learning suggestions for parents are on offer on the secure online record system and staff work closely with parents to promote children's independence at home through, for example, encouraging them to dress themselves. Staff hold regular events at the preschool for the extended family, such as Diwali, a Christmas performance, Family Funday and Chinese New Year, in addition to regular coffee mornings and successful fundraising events.

### **Staff: qualifications, deployment, and performance management**

There is a clear management structure in place – led by the manager, with the deputy manager and second deputy offering additional support at leadership level. Staff are well qualified, experienced and their teamwork is excellent. Staff are fully dedicated to the Montessori approach and this shines through in their respectful interactions with the children. Supervision meetings take place twice a year and appraisals annually. There are two staff meetings per week and managers attend local meetings to share information with other early years professionals and setting owners, to ensure their knowledge and skills are kept up to date.

Following the first reaccreditation visit, the recording of staff meeting notes has been further developed to ensure consistency in recording discussions and actions agreed. Additionally, peer observations have been successfully reintroduced as they are beneficial for staff to continue to learn from each other and to maintain the high standards of provision for the children.

Name of Assessor: Anne McConway

Date of first visit: 1 February 2019

Date of second visit: 25 April 2019

Date report submitted: First visit – 4 February 2019

Second visit – 26 April 2019