

# **Montessori Evaluation and Accreditation Board**

## **School Accreditation**

This report is prepared following an accreditation visit 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".

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.

### **Shamley Green Montessori Pre-School**

Christ Church Hall, Church Hill, Shamley Green, Guildford, Surrey, GU5 0RS

Date of accreditation visit: 23 March 2010

The accreditation report assesses the Montessori practice offered to 2 to 5 year olds in this setting

#### **Description of the school:**

Shamley Green Montessori Pre-school is a small setting, situated in a village close to Guildford. It was opened in September 2007 and is registered for twenty children between the ages of two and five years; there are currently 32 children on the roll.

The pre-school opens from 9:15 until 1:15 every weekday and operates during term times only. It has thirty-one children on roll who attend a variety of the morning sessions and those over three years of age are able to stay on for the final hour to have lunch.

The setting currently supports a child for whom English is an additional language and also supports a child with learning difficulties.

There are four members of staff including the proprietor, all of whom hold (or are working towards) relevant childcare qualifications, including two with international Montessori diplomas. The proprietor manages the setting.

The building is a church hall and the pre-school has sole use of one large room, with a kitchen, toilet and storage facilities leading from a central entrance hall. The outdoor area is easily accessible from the main room; it is fenced and has both grassed and tarmac areas along with further storage.

#### **Summary and conclusion:**

Shamley Green Montessori Pre-school offers a genuine Montessori environment. The activities and daily schedule are organised to support the children's exploration and discovery of the world around them. Staff encourage them to make decisions for themselves and to treat the activities and each other with respect. The setting has a calm and nurturing atmosphere.

Staff members have a good understanding of Montessori approach and demonstrate a commitment to continued professional development.

High priority is given to building and maintaining effective partnership with parents, with regular written and verbal exchanges taking place.

The pre-school emphasises the importance of making its provision child-centred, with the interests, needs and capabilities of each child being taken into consideration. This is in keeping with the Montessori principle of supporting the unique nature of the individual and enables each child to get the most out of attending the pre-school.

***The school provides an education which broadly follows the principles of the Montessori approach and environment. This merits accreditation by the Montessori Evaluation and Accreditation Board.***

***Consideration should be given to the following points for further development :***

- The setting could further extend the opportunities which encourage the children to be independent
- The provision of Montessori activities could be broadened to include sensorial, language and mathematical equipment for more capable children. These areas of learning could also be better provided for in the outdoor area.
- The range of parent information displayed at the premises could be enhanced.

**Philosophy:**

The pre-school offers an educational environment which is profoundly influenced by Montessori philosophy. Its aims and objectives are clearly written and make direct links with Montessori principles.

The staff team work together to enhance their daily practice in line with their commitment to providing a quality early years provision using the Montessori approach. The pre-school acknowledges the importance of supporting each child in fulfilling their unique potential through opportunities for self-initiated learning and daily routines support this.

The website is well-organised, informative and provides parents with an overview of how the setting works to achieve its aims, along with direct links to further sources of information regarding Montessori pedagogy.

**Learning and Development:**

The provision is well-planned and adults' roles are clear, giving priority to supporting the children in all aspects of their learning and development. There is ample opportunity for the children to access all areas of the setting, which enables them to pursue self-directed activity and gives them the opportunity to mix freely with others throughout the session.

Experimentation and discovery are positively encouraged throughout the range of activities available.

The provision of Montessori activities could be broadened to include sensorial, language and mathematical equipment for more capable children. These areas of learning could also be

better provided for in the outdoor area.

The planning is simple and practical, offering scope for reflective practice. Staff collaborate in drawing up plans for the whole setting and for the individual. They are well-practiced at reviewing learning outcomes and at using this knowledge to further enhance provision for the individual child, as well as for the setting as a whole. Clear links are made in the long-term planning between Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) aspects of learning and the Montessori provision made available on a daily basis. The planning is not prescriptive and allows for spontaneous expression of needs and interests by the children. Individual progress is recorded through observations and photographs and a comprehensive record of Montessori material use is made for each child. The pre-school is considering using a detailed record which links individual learning and development to EYFS goals.

Parents have access to their child's records, they are kept informed of current learning and development through the Bring Everything Everyday (BEE) books, and can communicate their own observations of their child effectively using this book. They are less well informed of whole setting planning, although newsletters and BEE books are used for this purpose.

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

Shamley Green offers a Montessori environment that is sufficiently resourced and maintained. Staff understand the importance of careful preparation (as detailed in the pre-school's mission statement) and of responding to individual children's needs by providing further, more challenging materials. The children are encouraged to help maintain their learning resources and enjoy easy access to the activities both in and outdoors.

The materials are set out around the main room according to areas of the Montessori curriculum. They are systematically arranged from simple to complex and from concrete to abstract. Some labelling of resources and photographic guides would further enhance the educational opportunities available. The range and quality of materials provision is excellent in the practical life, cultural and creative areas, but a wider range of sensorial, language and maths activities could be provided, especially for the more capable child.

The classroom displays are interesting and relevant to current areas of focus and include examples of children's work.

Despite certain limitations due to the play surfaces and shared use of the premises, the setting makes good use of its outdoor area. The opportunities for creative and physical play are particularly well-catered for outside and in warmer weather the breadth of provision is extended to include other areas of learning.

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

The setting fosters the development of independence in the children attending through its daily routine, through the physical layout of the learning activities and the type of activity on offer. The routine maximises the opportunity for children to self-select what they do and when (including having snack). There is no timetable and the adults offer further individual challenges and group presentations when it suits the children. This encourages children to

make real choices, to follow their ideas and interests in full and to become deeply involved in what they do. The activities offer intrinsic opportunities for the children to develop their self-care skills and the physical layout of the setting ensures easy access to the equipment. The setting could further extend the opportunities which encourage the children to be independent as they arrive in the morning and prepare to go outside.

The outdoor environment is made available daily, the children often have the choice of playing in or outdoors and enjoy full freedom of movement within the indoor classroom. The children can also choose which adults they would like to work with, although they have the security of knowing who their key person is. The vertical age grouping works well and children mix together in a relaxed manner.

Strong relationships between children and adults are apparent and the pre-school has a warm, nurturing atmosphere. The children are confident and independent in their individual and group activities and staff work hard to foster feelings of self-worth and respect for others; they reinforce ground rules and demonstrate skilled and sensitive techniques to ensure the session runs smoothly.

The setting has a good policy on equality and diversity and this is reflected in its practice, for example in offering the children a global perspective on respect for others through projects on other cultures, using pictures, puppets and artefacts.

Staff work hard to establish and maintain dialogue with parents in order to convey the importance of promoting the development of independence in their children. The manager is considering broadening the range of written information in order to further inform parents on matters of child development.

#### **Montessori practice: classroom management:**

A full Montessori work cycle is in place at Shamley Green Montessori Pre-School. The setting is well-organised and managed, for the optimum benefit of the children attending.

There is no fixed timetable across the week. Planned individual and group activities are introduced when staff feel they will be of greatest interest and benefit to the target children. The children are encouraged, but are not obliged, to join the groups. Outdoor provision is offered as part of the work cycle, as is the snack table, so that each child can choose when to access these areas.

Staff members are deployed in response to children's needs and will work in any area of the classroom. During their time at the setting the children are presented with materials and cared for by their key person as well as other adults, thereby enabling each child to get to know a variety of adults well. The children are confident and settled in the routine of the setting and show high levels of curiosity and involvement.

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

Staff roles and responsibilities are clearly documented and all the adults are well-trained in providing a safe and stimulating learning environment. All members of the team can contribute ideas for group and individual activities and they can make requests for additional provision to support the children's interests.

Policies and procedures are straightforward and facilitate safe working practices. Risk assessments are carried out and reviewed as necessary. Senior staff ensure that administrative records are kept up to date and that individual needs are documented.

The maintenance of the working environment is a shared role, all team members are expected to take on this responsibility and the children enjoy playing their part with end of session tidying and end of term spring cleaning.

The staff team work closely together, sharing tasks and child observations. These observations are mostly of an incidental nature (and are brief written notes or photographs). Assessment of learning is shared with parents through the BEE book. This book is an excellent communication tool between home and the pre-school; it is also used to transport children's work and parent correspondence. Parents are encouraged to use these books to communicate with their child's key person.

The setting works hard to maintain effective partnership with parents and there are a number of other communication channels accessible to parents, most notably daily verbal contact.

More in-depth observations and assessments are carried out termly and stored in the child's profile, this information is shared with parents at annual consultation meetings and when a child leaves. A transition record is also prepared and passed to the child's next setting when they leave.

The manager is considering enhancing the information with regard to the Montessori curriculum and daily activities offered to parents on the display boards in the hall.

**Staffing:**

Shamley Green Montessori Pre-School is a small setting in which all members of the staff team take an active role in classroom management and liaison with parents. Leadership and support roles are defined verbally and are workable. Staff are familiar with the structure of the setting and they rely on their daily contact to facilitate the smooth running of the setting. They work co-operatively for the benefit of the children and their families.

Staff job descriptions, rotas and the induction process all offer clear written guidance for daily practice. Verbal exchange is the primary means of communication between staff members. Continued professional development is encouraged and the adults take advantage of local authority and Montessori training opportunities in order to continue to enhance their knowledge and skills.

The senior staff members hold Montessori diplomas and the junior members of staff are committed to undertake Montessori training. The whole team meets regularly to plan and to



discuss daily procedures, current issues and areas for development. Staff appraisals are carried out.

This commitment to working towards high quality Montessori provision is evident in daily practice. The setting's administrative arrangements serve to support this good practice.

Michele Dow-Miller

Name of Assessor:

24 March, 2010

Date of report: