



**New Park Montessori
Nursery School**

**Assessment Report
June 2015**

THE COUNCIL OF MONTESSORI EDUCATION (UK)

This accreditation report is the judgement of the ME(UK) Assessor approved by the Council of Montessori Education (UK) on how meets the key standards laid down by Montessori Education (UK) in line with the philosophy and theory of the Montessori Approach to education originally established by Dr. Maria Montessori. The granting of ME(UK) Accreditation is recognition of authentic Montessori practice.

Name of School: New Park Nursery and Montessori School
Name of Head Teacher: Marta Krsteva
Name of Assessor: Anita Grebot
Date of Visit: 29th June 2015

Key Issues

Issues for Mandatory Action

No issue for mandatory action has been identified.

Recommendations for Consideration

- To further support classroom practice and team work by being aware of each other's roles during the work cycle - to protect the presenter during presentations to further enhance the experience for the child, as well as protecting the children who are concentrating. It was agreed by all that this can be developed through further grace and courtesy activities.

Summary of Discussion with Head Teacher before Observation

The Assessor was greeted by the Manager of the school, Ms Pateman and the owner Ms Clutterbuck and was introduced to the Children's House Head Teacher, Ms Krsteva and her team. The timetable of the day was discussed, and a suitable time to meet each member of staff individually along with a time for feedback was agreed.

We also discussed the random selection of three different families who would receive a letter from ME (UK).

Summary of Discussion with Head Teacher after Observation

Ms Clutterbuck, Ms Pateman, Ms Krsteva, Ms Sanna and Ms Ibanez were thanked for their hospitality and for the privilege of observing the morning session in the Children's House, and for making the assessor feel very welcome.

School documents were checked together with each child's record keeping. These included a personal booklet for each child with daily observations with abbreviations of choices, assessments, monthly individual planning with objectives and end of month evaluations outlining Montessori curriculum areas; combining Montessori with The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). Each child's '*complete guide*' documented clearly the child's life at the school; an excellent example of how each child progressed towards '*normalisation*'.

The observation of the class and the findings were discussed with the whole team who were informed by the assessor that there were no mandatory action and that the school had met the criteria laid down by ME (UK) for accreditation.

The recommendation for consideration to further improve and support teamwork and classroom practice was discussed in more detail.

Each member of staff was thanked for their co-operation and acknowledgement for their obvious dedication and commitment to the life of the school.

Overall Assessment of the School

New Park Montessori School operates from a residential property and the school is housed on the lower ground floor. The school is purpose built with an entrance hall and the children have use of two environments, one for the Infant Community and one for the Children's House.

There is also a cloakroom, a kitchen, adjoining toilets and outside areas. The school has its own entrance with a secure entry system.

The two outside areas consist of a secure front garden where all the children arrive, and the Children's House classroom has direct access to their other outside environment throughout the sessions.

The classrooms are clearly laid out in the different areas of learning by the use of low shelving units which help to order the layout of the environments both inside and outside. The inside classroom also has areas for floor work and one part of the classroom is used as a sleeping area where children can have a rest after lunch.

The outside area is also organised into the different areas of the Montessori curriculum with tables conveniently arranged for the children to work at. This outside classroom shows that the children have had opportunities for regular gardening projects.

Children

The school is registered to take 36 children from the ages of 2 1/2 to 5 years old in the Children' House and from the ages of 4 months in the Infant Community. The school operates 50 weeks per year.

The children were greeted at the door with a warm and friendly approach. The staff knows the children well and respond to them and build on the children's interests. The children conducted themselves enthusiastically and the assessor was made to feel welcome by a child who was keen to explain what was happening in his classroom - *...look, I'm doing flower arranging and these are called Sweet William"...*

Within the vertical groups the children showed high levels of independence and perseverance as well as empathy towards each other. For example, one child was preparing the fruit for the snack tray. Another child was explaining and consoling his friend who was pointing to the door and wanted his mummy *..."everybody's mummy and daddy will come, but my mummy and daddy can't pick me up. They are at work..."*

Once the children had entered the classroom they were confident in choosing which piece of work they wanted to work with and were observed working both individually and in small groups and for as long as they wished to do so during the work cycle.

It was evident that the mixed age group helps the younger children to have good role models for imitation and the older children have opportunities to reinforce their knowledge and understanding by helping the younger ones; for example, an older child was seen to present the Trinomial cube to a friend and good cooperation was evident. Another child gets her friend a chair and offered to help with the lock activities.

The children are clearly encouraged to become independent and being responsible for routines. For example the assessor observed that the children had duties before and after lunch and the social interactions that arose were rewarding to observe. The children keep the environment clean and ordered whenever possible... *'we're sweeping up these...they're called lentils...* The children were seen to be working in a purposeful way.

The children enjoy healthy and well-balanced food cooked on the premises by their own chef.

Areas of Learning

Practical Life

The Practical Life area was appealing and attractive with a wide variety of activities arranged in an orderly way on low shelves, which allowed easy access for the children.

The assessor observed that the children used this area steadily throughout the morning choosing a wide range of activities including open/shut small boxes, a variety of locks, pouring activities, dressing frames, spooning, cleaning the table and helping to prepare snack, polishing glass, wood and leather, washing dishes; showing good concentration and cooperation. One child was showing his friend how to use the pencil sharpener.

The snack was well organised with opportunities for social interaction with a busy hum of activity with sharing fruit and crackers. One child took the responsibility of cutting the fruit, showing purposeful activity.

Many individual presentations and small groups on how to handle materials and how to carry things were observed for example how to carry a tray of objects, how to carry a jug and sweeping.

It was evident that grace and courtesy activities have taken place regularly – the children walked round the floor mats whenever they moved in the classroom, they knew how to roll a table mat as well as a floor mat, how to carry things in a coordinated way and the assessor could hear a child say ‘excuse me’ when walking past. One child was seen to fold several cloths and found it challenging to put everything back in its place but she persevered and tried several different angles for the basket to fit into its place and succeeded in the end – problem solving was clearly developing.

Sensorial

Throughout the morning it was evident that the children freely chose from the sensorial area of the classroom.

The assessor observed how the children worked individually with the Cylinder Blocks, Colour Box 2, Constructive Triangles, Geometry Cabinet trays, Bi-Nomial Cube, Tri-Nomial Cube and Geometric Solids. A presentation of Colour Box 3, isolating one colour was noted and a sensorial game with Colour Box 2 using the environment.

Maths

Children were observed exploring different activities within this area –Numbers and Counters, a presentation of the layout of the Golden Beads and Decimal Cards and The Sand Paper Numerals.

Language

The children had several opportunities to listen and take part in conversations, for example at the snack table, in small groups as well as when exploring the outside garden. They enjoyed a spontaneous group with five children led by one of their friends – looking at a book and singing, all sitting nicely in the book corner.

The Moveable Alphabet was seen to be in use in the language area, The Metal Inset work, and a presentation on how to Sensitise Fingers followed by feeling the Sandpaper Letters and then the child continued to write using the sand tray.

The book corner was a busy place with good cooperation and quiet moments.

Culture

Geography - The World of Science – The World of Plants – The World of Animals – The World of Art – Music – Technology

A full range of Montessori materials including cultural extensions such as puzzles showing parts of plants and parts of animals and how to make own booklets were available to challenge the full age range of children.

Throughout the morning the children worked with a range of different materials within the culture areas such as Puzzle Maps, puzzles showing the parts of the flower and the parts of the tree. Children were seen to engage in more advanced work on their own, appropriate for their developmental needs; for example, one child was making his own booklet of parts of an animal. He persevered and concentrated for over one hour surrounded by a busy classroom where his friends were doing their own activities.

Evidence of a group of multicultural children was clear when two children were helping each other with the Tri-Nomial Cube in the outside classroom... *'do you speak Italian?...No I'm German...my mummy speaks Italian!...* They then continued with their work. Several bi-lingual books and books about different cultures were available.

It was observed that the children were being introduced to simple scientific principles, for example, using a magnifying glass to look at a selection of shells. The outside classroom was being explored with two children using a torch and looking for special places to light up. Another child discussed how the calculator works.

Some artwork was displayed in an uncluttered way and some children were seen to be busy designing their own cards using a variety of natural materials, textures and colours from an extensively equipped art cupboard and area.

Environmental awareness was promoted in The Children's House with different types of recycling bins and several of the children were seen to tidy up and knew which bin to use.

The snack area had a bread-making machine for the children to use and a booklet with pictures to demonstrate each step in making the bread. One child was eager to talk about the process.

Work Cycle

It was observed that the work cycle continued throughout the morning session with a free flow of activities. During this time the children had free access to the Montessori materials across the curriculum with access also to the outside classroom.

Freedom of choice was evident. Whenever a small group spontaneously started, some children continued with their own work. It was evident that the children knew that they could spend as long as they needed without being interrupted; there is no competition where each child's progress is not compared to the achievements of others allowing everybody to have a role to play. For example, on the day of the visit one child conducted his own group with five of his friends looking at a book and then spontaneous singing could be heard, another child was in deep concentration polishing glass, and some children were seen to be chatting to each other.

The work cycle gives children the time to have spontaneous groups according to their interests and an authentic Montessori classroom allows for this to happen as could be seen from the individually chosen activities, small groups led by a child, some children watching a friend and others helping each other – self discipline was developing.

Several presentations were observed. During the work cycle the positions of the adults in the classroom was discreet and unobtrusive. The team had clear roles of responsibilities – presenter, observer and overseer. Detailed observations of each child were seen to take place daily. On the day of the visit, during some of the presentations children gathered to watch an activity - golden bead material - which was being presented to a friend and it was

evident that the experience for the child whose work it was, could have been enhanced by making his friends aware of choosing their own activity. Further grace and courtesy activities were going to be planned and the team agreed on how to further protect presentations and children who are concentrating.

Environment

The inside environment consists of several spaces; all connected so that the children can freely move around independently and explore and experience the different curriculum areas which are available.

The Children's House is set up in clear well defined areas with a good range of activities to choose from within the Montessori Curriculum. The environment also has space for floor work and the children were observed working confidently using floor mats. There are a variety of different tables; some smaller single tables which the children can move around the inside environment, and also take them out to the adjoining outside classroom.

The outside classroom is inviting with choice of activities from the different curriculum areas. The assessor observed that one child was concentrating on the hand washing activity, other children were seen to be busy with: planting activity, watering the strawberries, painting at the easel, pre reading with classified cards of fruit, Tri-Nomial Cube and other art activities such as printing on coloured paper.

The different garden areas have been developed with some areas of special focus. The children have an area for planting a kitchen garden using big planters and window boxes. The children clearly enjoy all the garden projects, which are supported by a local gardener.

The environment also demonstrates how the school celebrates diversity and different cultures with a multicultural board in the language area. The board shows pictures of children having been introduced to life of many continents and shared experiences of traditional cooking, music, housing and clothing. One child was proud to present a book with words and pictures of his life in his French family.

Staff

There are 11 members of staff in the school, including a chef. Four staff members hold Montessori Diplomas and two members of the school hold Montessori Assistant's Certificates. On the day of the visit there were 3 members of staff involved with the Children's House. They all hold Montessori Diplomas (Level 4) and all staff have several other national qualifications according to early years legislation. The owner is also a Montessori qualified teacher.

Each member of the staff team expressed their enjoyment of working at New Park Montessori School and felt very supported in both the work in the school and in their on going studies for their own professional development. It was evident that the communication and team work is excellent and that they support the work of the school in every possible way and show respect for each other.

Management Effectiveness

The management structure of the school is excellent and all staff members are dedicated and enthusiastic and believe in Dr Montessori's philosophy and its place in the children's lives. There is a sound staff appraisal system in place and a four-week induction programme for new members of staff.

Ms Krsteva maintains the efficient running of the Children's House where the staff team feels valued and supported in their work. Ms Krsteva is aware of maintaining consistency by continual self-reflection and the importance of knowing each child's developmental needs. The Manager, Ms Pateman is constantly vigilant to see if any child, parent or staff member needs help or advice, which she gives freely.

The team meet regularly to discuss relevant issues regarding the children, planning and the school. The school demonstrates clearly how authentic Montessori principles and practices

can be integrated with the more general requirements laid on early years providers with the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Evidence can be seen that the management is supportive and encourages their staff to regularly contribute their time on behalf of the Montessori movement by attending refresher courses, conferences and workshops – continuous professional development is on going.

Partnership with Parents

There is a very good partnership in the school with parents/carers. Families are invited to be involved in their child's life at the school in many different ways, for example, through Montessori information events, twice yearly parent meetings as well as receiving daily feedback on observations of their child's activities.

The assessor observed how the parents are greeted in the morning and have the opportunity to talk to a member of staff at the door. An efficient way of sharing information between the school and the community is via the school's website. The website contains excellent information for families about Montessori principles and practices.

The '*complete guide*' booklet for each child is an excellent tool, which shows each family their child's learning journey, partnership with the school and development towards '*normalisation*' with the help of an authentic Montessori environment.

Does *New Park Montessori* meet the Montessori Education (UK) criteria for accreditation?

Criterion	Met	Not Met	Comments
The school is led by a Montessori qualified teacher; there is evidence that non-Montessori qualified staff are undertaking Montessori professional development.	✓		
Classes have a mixture of ages.	✓		
The working time lasts for an uninterrupted period of at least two and a half hours, preferably three. During this time, the children mostly work individually but come together when they wish to, in small or larger groups.	✓		
Children have continual and free access to a full range of the Montessori materials appropriate for their ages and stages of learning.	✓		
Classes are run in such a way that they promote the children's freedom to make spontaneous choices; to be independent; to complete cycles of work; to develop a sense of responsibility within the group; to use the materials properly and to work on their own or with others, as they like.	✓		
Children actively engage with materials that are designed from a developmental point of view and which lead them to successive levels of discovery about their world.	✓		
Materials are displayed in an orderly way, well maintained and complete.	✓		
Schools undertake written observations of the children which inform their assessment, review and planning of the provision.	✓		
Management structures allow for the implementation of Montessori principles and support staff in their professional development.	✓		
Children must be safe, secure and safe guarded at all times	✓		

Recommendation

The assessor would like to recommend to the Awarding Panel of ME (UK) that New Park Montessori Nursery School receive accreditation.

Name of Assessor: Anita Grebot

Date: 30th June 2015