



Form B2: Final Report Form

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.

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.

Chagford Montessori Nursery School

Moor Park, Lower Street, Chagford
Devon, TQ13 6BX

Date of the 1st re-accreditation visit: 12th March 2013

Date of the 2nd re-accreditation visit: 18th June 2013

Date of previous MEAB accreditation: April 2010

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

Description of the school

Chagford Montessori Nursery School first opened in 1997 and was registered under the current manager in July 2007. The setting is co-owned by the manager and the administrator. Both partners take an active part in the running of the nursery. The school is located in Chagford town on the edge Dartmoor and has sole use of the bungalow it occupies. The property is set back from the road and has two secure enclosed outdoor areas, which are accessible to the children and are very well resourced with a wide range of appropriate outdoor equipment and separate gardening areas. Inside there is one large classroom, two smaller rooms and an office. There is a small cloakroom area and separate toilets and wash basins for the children.

On the day of the second re-accreditation visit there were 31 children on roll, attending a variety of days across the week. The maximum number of children attending any session can be 20 and is currently 15. On the day of the visit 11 children attended in both the morning and the afternoon. The school offers flexible session times between the hours of 9.00 and 16.00, Monday to Thursday during term time. Children who stay for lunch bring packed lunches from home and eat in the classrooms. The setting also provides a parent led singing group on Friday mornings.

The nursery school supports children who have English as an additional language and children with additional needs.



There are at present four members of staff working with the children, two of whom hold the Montessori International Diploma, one holds the Montessori Early Childhood Certificate and the other is currently studying on the Early Childhood Course. The manager also has Early Years Professional Status.

Summary

Chagford Montessori Nursery School operates in line with the principles of Maria Montessori, and is continually reflecting on and improving practice. The small staff team work diligently to meet the needs of every learner in the setting, adapting the activities and environment wherever necessary. The children who attend are supported to become independent learners who are engaged and excited about their time there.

The environment is arranged to encourage the children's development by providing clear and easy access to materials both inside and outside the setting. Children take on purposeful activities and are trusted to do so by the adults who work with them. Planning is based on the skills children possess and the interests they have, therefore the children are able to be challenged and engaged simultaneously.

The environment and materials are kept in beautiful condition by both adults and children. There are enough resources to give all children choices, and they are afforded as much time as they need to explore them. The children are confident of their own abilities, and demonstrate high levels of independence and self-care.

Parents are appreciative of the respect shown to their children, and how they are able to both enter and leave the setting in a calm and happy way. Staff are able to keep parents up to date with their child's development because they observe effectively and keep detailed records.

Following the previous accreditation in 2010 the setting has successfully set up a process to incorporate written evaluations of child observations into their records. Since the first re-accreditation visit the setting has acted on recommendations to streamline the record keeping system, and this has also enabled the sharing of information with parents to be improved.

- ***The school provides an education which follows the principles of the Montessori approach and environment. The school has successfully addressed the 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:***
- ***To continue to develop the 'Shared Staff Learning' program in order to identify and enhance effective practice.***

Philosophy:

The philosophy and principles of Maria Montessori are closely adhered to by all staff as they help



children become independent learners. The staff follow the children through first knowing them and then identifying their interests. Planning is done individually to meet children's needs, and theme or topic work is based on ideas the children have had or talked about. If a single child wishes to go outside then this is made possible for them, and this attitude of staff being there for the full benefit of each child is apparent through their actions during the day.

After being individually greeted, children are able to select activities of their own choosing. Staff trust the children to find materials that will engage them, and move to support and scaffold learning when required, for example when modelling how to hang paintings up to dry. The consistent and well-ordered environment, coupled with the few easily understood rules, empower the children to exercise self-discipline within the setting. This was clearly seen during the second re-accreditation visit as children were able to self-manage the size of their snack portions free from adult guidance.

Adults follow the Montessori principles in theory and practice, leaving children to explore and discover for themselves without undue interference. Staff show deep respect for children through this action, and the way they speak with them in a calm and nurturing tone.

The philosophy is defined in writing in the prospectus, within policy documents and on the nursery's website. It is discussed and reviewed during staff meetings.

Learning and Development:

The large classroom is clearly organised into areas of learning. There is a mixture of Montessori materials alongside other activities that support development as detailed in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) framework. The wide range of materials on offer ensures that all Montessori areas of learning are covered, and children are able to make good progress in all of them.

The work cycle operates in both the morning and the afternoon, and lasts for 2 hours and 40 minutes. During the first hour children have access to the main room and one of the small rooms that contains a computer and open ended role play materials. After one hour this small room is closed and the children then have free-flow access to the outside spaces. At the end of the work cycle the children gather in the other small room for a short group activity.

Children learn primarily through independent and spontaneous activity although they are able to work in collaborative groups if they wish, for example during the second re-accreditation visit a small, child-initiated group engaged in sustained book sharing with an adult for half an hour before developing into social role play based on what had been read. Adults re-direct children in a sensitive fashion, suggesting an activity but then leaving the child to make their own choice. When an adult offers to work with a child the adult will select an activity from the child's planning or follow their current interest.

Children demonstrate very high levels of engagement within this calm environment, which is a reflection of the children's developmental needs being met. They are able to interact with their peers whilst both teaching and learning simultaneously, for example during the second visit a child with a magnifying glass said to another child "Everything is bigger, shall I show you how I do it?".

Planning is well organised, based on individual progress made and identifies possible next steps



in the child's development. Recording of observations and activities has been streamlined; it is done using dedicated software that links both the Montessori curriculum and the EYFS framework and provides records that identify achievements within both. Each child also has an individual photo book containing photographs, written notes and creative paper-based work.

Plans are also drawn up for whole school 'focus activities', which staff endeavour to link with children's current interests.

The adults within the setting prepare the environment diligently before the arrival of children, and support them in keeping the classroom in good order throughout the day.

Prepared Environment: resources and materials

The environment is prepared with a focus on ensuring accessibility for children and ease of use by them. The low, open shelving provides easy access to materials, arranged by areas of learning which are clear to see. A large low sink in the main room is used even by the youngest children, as is the comprehensive range of cleaning equipment suitable for their use.

Within the main room there is an open book shelf and soft seating area, a snack table which is always available, mats and floor space to use them in, a range of plants and fresh flowers and trays for the children to put book bags and paper based work in. Tables and chairs are suitably arranged around the room.

Outside there are two secure areas that are joined by a path. One area comprises a climbing frame on safety flooring, a play house, a shed with activities to choose from, two tables with seating, wheelbarrows and spades. There are established trees on a bark chip base. The other area has a lawn with planted borders on two sides, a small pond, a wooden stage area, a covered 'patio' with sand and water trays, a sink and a range of real gardening tools. There are two rabbits that have both a hutch and a run on the grass.

There is a wide range of resources indoors and outdoors, both Montessori and non-Montessori. The outdoor tools are all 'real' and are used by children to explore and carry out genuine gardening tasks. The quality of all the resources is very good, both purchased and home-made materials are kept in excellent condition by staff and children.

The materials effectively meet the developmental needs of the children, and are changed as and when needed. For example, there is an extended collection of threading activities on the Activities for Everyday Living shelves, with challenging binca and sewing resources available, and during the second re-accreditation visit the shelves had been changed from the first visit to include activities such as flower arranging and hammering.

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

Promoting children's independence is a significant aspect of this setting. Children are supported to be independent learners, and to operate for themselves within the setting. The work cycle is adhered to; ensuring the freedom to repeat is given fully to all pupils in both the morning and the afternoon sessions. The snack table is used spontaneously and children follow a complete cycle of activity that begins with snack selection, and finishes with the washing of their plates



and cups.

The freedoms of choice and activity that children receive indoors are replicated in the outdoor environment. Once the free-flow begins, if one child wishes to go out then staff are able to accommodate this. The levels of trust demonstrated by staff are high – trust in the children to meet their own needs and to act independently in the setting.

The level of respect shown by the children towards their environment and to each other is also very high and reflects the excellent modelling of behaviour that staff provide. On more than one occasion during both the re-accreditation visits children were seen to pick up dropped resources for themselves, or to politely hand them back to the user in a natural and caring way. Children engage in conversation with each other, and respect the work and spaces that are being used. When conflict resolution is required the adults model this interaction, but also allow children time and space to interact and problem-solve independently.

Outside, it is apparent that children are observed well as they are left to explore the space and materials as individuals, or in small groups. A considered approach to interventions enables children to engage in sustained activity, and for children to follow their natural path of development.

Parents state that the calm and consistent nature of the setting is a strength, and that staff had supported them in making changes in their approach at home to replicate the independent experience in the nursery – for example, during the first visit, a parent described how they now keep milk in a small jug so that their child is able to make their own breakfast in the morning.

Montessori practice: Classroom management

The classrooms are well managed at the setting, the small staff team working effectively to provide as much opportunity for fulfilling individual potential as possible. As the planning is based on the materials available and following the child's interests, it is the children who lead the learning. Staff scaffold the child's learning that occurs from spontaneously chosen activities when required, observing and recording as appropriate.

The work cycle provides ample time and opportunity for children to engage fully with their environment, both inside and outside. Due to the small staff numbers there is only normally a maximum of two adults in each room or area. This requires the staff to operate efficiently, engaging in presentations and managing the use of the rooms. They do this very well, working with individuals whilst having good peripheral vision around their area. Children engage in the active management of their classroom, respecting each other and workspaces that are in use, for example, children were observed picking up a tub of glitter that was spilt whilst being shared.

All children between the ages of 2 and 5 years operate as a single, vertically grouped class. Lunch is well supervised. Children are involved in the setting of tables and clearing away litter to recycle, and plates to be washed.

Activities additional to those provided in class are related to the planned topics or to cultural events. They often take the form of a trip out, for example to the fire station, library or the school's community allotment. Visitors to the setting are also arranged, for example the children have been visited by, and had conversations with, a police officer and a bee keeper.



Montessori Practice: links with parents, including reports and records

A Key Teacher system is in operation, with that person taking full responsibility for all the record keeping for children in their 'group'. All recorded incidental observations, records of presentations and notes are overseen by this teacher, and they are the first point of liaison with parents. They prepare summative reports twice yearly and transition reports are given to parents when their child leaves.

Following a recommendation made at the first re-accreditation visit, the recording and information sharing systems have been streamlined for efficiency. The process now employs just three documents. Parents are able to share information regarding the health and welfare of their children in 'Just To Let You Know' memo books which are filled in only when required. All staff now record their observations and presentation notes daily using a piece of commercial record-keeping software. This enables the setting to produce monthly written feedback to parents detailing the activities their child has engaged with, and progress made. Planning is also shared with parents on a termly basis. Photographs of the children, which are dated and annotated, are kept in individual Photo Diaries along with paper based examples of creative and mark-making work.

The setting does benefit from excellent relationships with parents. They are given a Parent's Handbook when their child starts at the setting, receive regular detailed newsletters, are invited to an annual open day and are offered the use of a library of Montessori texts and associated books.

Parents have commented on the calm nature of the setting and how it is empowering their child and encouraging their independence. They are appreciative of the respect that is shown and the level of knowledge the staff have of their child, which is shared with them.

Staffing:

The small staff group is led by an energetic and reflective manager. They work flexibly to accommodate the changing needs of the children in the setting, and understand that their roles require both focus on activities and a wider classroom management view. They work well as a team to achieve this, understanding what needs to be done at any moment for the benefit of the children.

They are a well-qualified staff group, two members holding a Montessori diploma, and two more who are currently working towards this qualification. The level of continued professional development is good, and all staff are involved in learning and improving practice through external courses.

The manager carries out annual appraisals for the staff and although the number of staff is small, the setting has recently begun a programme of 'Shared Staff Learning'. This entails an element of self-evaluation from each member of the team, and the sharing of strengths to develop each individual. This is an ongoing project that is under development.



There is a complete induction arrangement in place for new staff, with job descriptions available for all posts. Staff meetings are used to review practice and plan future actions, and are attended by all in the team.

All the staff are clearly committed to following the Montessori approach, and this commitment is seen through the joy and independence of the children in their care. With an open approach to reflecting on their own work, they will be able to continue to adapt and improve their own practice and the experiences they provide.

Name of Assessor: Jeremy Clarke

Date of reports: First visit – 13th March 2013

Second visit – 18th June 2013