



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). 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.

The Meadows Montessori School

320 Tuddenham Road, Ipswich, Suffolk IP4 3QJ

Dates of the accreditation visits:

Visit 1: November 10th 2011

Visit 2: May 29th 2012

This accreditation report relates to the provision for children from rising 4 to 11 years

Description of the school:

The Meadows is an independent day school catering for up to 50 pupils from rising 4 to 11 years. The school is situated on the outskirts of Ipswich, in the grounds of a large sports centre. It follows the Montessori educational philosophy and methodology which is used as a context for delivery of the primary curriculum.

The school opened in September 2008 and offers progression for children attending Willow Park Montessori pre-school also located on this site and owned by the same proprietor. There are currently 49 pupils on the roll at The Meadows, seven of whom are in the Reception age group of the Early Years Foundation Stage. These children share a classroom with nine rising 4 pupils and nine in year 1 and form the Dragonflies class. The 24 pupils in Year 2 and above have a separate classroom and they are Grasshoppers. Eight teachers and assistants are employed of whom four are qualified Montessorians.

The school operates from 08:45 to 15:30 and has an after school facility that is open until 18:00. The school has plans for a new building in 2012-2013 to house their 9 to 11 year old pupils

Summary and conclusion

The Meadows Montessori School is an inspirational establishment providing a first class Montessori education for 49 children. The school is expertly led by the owner who also teaches the older children. She provides an excellent role model for all her staff who work together as a cohesive team. The school is set adjacent to the nursery in the grounds of a



sports centre, which is conveniently located on the outskirts of Ipswich. The education provided in the school is of high standard and the curriculum is enjoyed by all the pupils who are ambassadors for the Montessori method of learning. The content of learning more than covers the national curriculum and has the breadth of an education to prepare the children for their future roles in society. The youngsters in the school are very independent, caring and confident. Each child is treated as an individual and their needs are always placed first. The parent body is extremely supportive and fully committed to the school aims.

The school benefits from a high level of technology, with their record keeping and provision of a blog system enabling all the older children to record their week and to share their achievements and thoughts with their parents. This is a much appreciated bonus for parents.

The school provides an education which follows the principles of the Montessori approach and environment. The school has successfully achieved 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 ensure the peer observation already started become an embedded part of staff development

Philosophy:

In every element of Meadows Montessori School's operations there is evidence of the Montessori philosophy, goals and their mission statement being put into practice. The school follows the child in every aspect of the primary curriculum. The pupils are independent learners who are all working towards achieving their full potential. They are kind, caring and respectful individuals, not only to each other, but their teachers and their own environment. A great deal of the learning that takes place is self-initiated and the adults are unobtrusive but always there to offer help and guidance after the child has been encouraged to try themselves. Group lessons are presented as and when necessary and are beautifully executed. Self discipline is evident across the whole school.

Learning and Development:

The areas of learning are clearly defined in both classrooms. Children have access to the outside at all times as the school operates a 'free flow' system. All areas of the classrooms are in constant use and all pupils have access to every part of the curriculum. The school has a three hour work cycle in the morning and a two and a half work cycle in the afternoons. During each session the children have numerous opportunities for spontaneous learning and adult-led presentations are made as and when appropriate. There is a very wide range of needs in the Grasshopper classroom but these are well catered for by the staff. A comprehensive computer-based recording and assessment system has been put in place by the owner. All school staff can contribute into this e-keeping tracking system and photos can be inserted into children's records. Each child has their own blog which is only accessible to the child, their parents and the classroom staff. The blogs provide a wonderful record of the child's activities during their school days and it is much appreciated by the parents. All the teachers are well aware of their specific responsibilities and their individual roles within the school. Transition between Dragonflies and



Grasshoppers is seamless as the two classrooms have an open door policy and the children move effortlessly between the rooms as the need arises, so that when the younger children move to the older group they are totally familiar with the environment, the teachers and the other pupils. During the second visit there was a very good example of spontaneous learning moving from the classroom to the outside, where a bridge experiment which two children had discussed and planned inside, was then created from tyres and planks in the outside environment. Their findings were shared with the other children who contributed their own ideas to solve the problem. There was no teacher intervention and this provided a wonderful illustration of the school's democratic approach to the children's learning.

Prepared Environment: resources and materials

The classrooms are light and airy, spacious and inviting. There is adequate space for the children to work both on the floor or at tables, and to work independently or in a small groups. The organisation of the classroom is very good in both age groups. The resources are in excellent condition and appropriately grouped into the specific areas of learning. All the materials are organized in an appealing manner and it is obvious that the pupils really appreciate being able to choose from a wide range of resources. The adults within the environment ensure the equipment is in good order and all the children are encouraged to replace every item they use in the correct place. The range of materials suits the abilities and needs of all the pupils.

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

As a proportion of the nursery children move through to the school there is already a nucleus of very independent children entering the school. Independence is encouraged in every aspect of their school day. They have a rolling snack, they are free to go outside when the door is open and they are free within the prepared environment to do whatever exercises they desire. They have the freedom to move about the classrooms. They understand the rules of good behaviour and the need to respect each other, their teachers and their environment. Examples of kindness and helpfulness between the pupils, particularly during the demonstration and participation in the 1000 bead chain exercise, were observed during the first visit. Parents are keen to continue to foster the children's independence and knowledge gained at school when they are at home. This has increased since the introduction of the children's own blogs, an initiative that has contributed positively to communications within the school and also with parents. It was very rewarding to see how the blogs have developed since the first visit and to hear from the children how much they and their families enjoyed this aspect of their learning.

Montessori practice: classroom management

All the children in the school use individual learning journals, through which the children manage their own learning in consultation with their teachers. There is a mix of spontaneous and planned learning in both classrooms. Long term planning is based on the Montessori materials which are effectively mapped in conjunction with the Early Years Foundation Stage and the National Curriculum. Termly plans are in place and the weekly plans are continually monitored taking into account each child's progress and individual needs. In Dragonflies EYFS reflective planning is done by the team, which is beneficial to all the pupils. Each adult within



the environment knows their specific responsibilities and duties and carries them out most efficiently. The classrooms are very well managed and are full of busy, enthusiastic pupils, each fulfilling their own potential. Both classes are vertically grouped, Dragonflies rising 4 to 6 year olds and Grasshoppers 7 to 11 year olds. There are various clubs at the end of the school day such as cooking, choir and science and these are run by parents and staff and further enhance the children's learning and participation in school life.

Montessori Practice: links with parents, including reports and records

The adult routines are all appropriate for the age range of the pupils. Dragonflies do have a key person system but in Grasshoppers all the staff are responsible for all the children in their class, but each teacher is accountable for different areas of the curriculum, drawing on individual strengths. The liaison with parents is excellent and much appreciated by the very loyal and committed parent body. The school operates an open door policy. Written reports are issued once a year and parent/teacher consultations take place in the Autumn and Spring terms. There are Montessori information evenings during the year with demonstrations of materials as and when requested. Half termly newsletters are sent out in addition to regular e-mail communications.

Staffing:

The school is appropriately staffed throughout. The owner is effective in her management and she also takes responsibility for leading the learning of the older children. There is a lead teacher for each class who is responsible to the owner and there are two primary classroom assistants and three Early Years/KS1 assistants, of whom two do a job share. Four teachers are Montessori qualified. Effective induction takes place within the first week of any new staff member's employment. Regular staff meetings are held, both within the class and the whole school staff. The school would benefit from regular staff observations carried out by the owner. The school's good practice would be further enhanced by introduction and training of staff in peer observation.

Continued Professional Development takes place at regular intervals supplemented by the MSA regular meetings and the Montessori annual conference. Specific training days are arranged when a particular need arises within the school. The staff at the school work as a cohesive team and are all totally committed to the Montessori ethos; they take every opportunity to keep themselves abreast of new initiatives.

Since the first visit the owner and staff have worked very hard to introduce and train the staff in peer observation. A peer observation questionnaire was sent to all the staff asking for their views and as a result training has taken place for all the staff. During the second half of the summer term the lead practitioners and owner are observing each other and reporting back to the whole staff and in the autumn the other staff are starting to observe each other. The owner has already carried out her own observations on the staff in preparation for their annual appraisals. The management team are hoping to strengthen the number of Montessori qualified staff in Dragonflies.



Name of Assessor: Wendy E S Compson

Date of reports:

First visit – November 19th 2011

Second visit – June 2nd 2012