

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.

Rose House Montessori School

St George's Church Hall, Vancouver Road, Forest Hill, London SE23 2AG
Visited on 13 November 2008

Description of the school:

Rose House Montessori is set in a large, light and airy newly-built church hall in a residential area. The children's toilet area is directly attached. The classroom has direct access to the outdoor area, which is a fenced garden with lawn and flowerbeds. It also has a flower and vegetable garden and a partially roofed paved area.

The school offers a variety of part-time and full-time sessions ranging from 9am-12pm for 2 year-olds to a four-hour or full-day session for the 3 to 4 year-olds. A holiday club is offered during school holidays.

Between 6 and 18 children currently attend each session. There are seven under 3s and seventeen over 3s registered at the moment. Rose House Montessori School is currently Ofsted registered for 26 children.

The school has use of a kitchen, and there is a privately owned café and shop in the new church building, which gives a real sense of community.

Summary and conclusion.

Rose House Montessori School offers high quality Montessori education for children aged 2 to 5 years in a spacious indoor and outdoor environment, where children are encouraged to learn and develop through a wide variety of activities. The children are respected and guided by all members of staff. They are given many opportunities to explore, investigate and discover freely both indoors and outdoors throughout the whole morning and afternoon work cycle. This gives them great independence, confidence and self-awareness. The materials are of high quality, clean and regularly checked by all members of staff. Reflective practice is very evident and the new Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Learning and Development Journal follows the unique child beautifully, incorporating Montessori practice.

The organisation is excellent; all members of staff have the opportunity for further training and are aware of policies and procedures. They show respect towards each other and they work together as a team in a professional and calm manner. There is a strong sense of community at Rose House Montessori, which demonstrates good relationships between staff, children and parents.

The school provides an education in accordance with the principles of the Montessori approach and environment and merits accreditation by the Montessori Evaluation and Accreditation Board.

Philosophy:

Rose House Montessori has a strong focus on its philosophy, which is very evident in the prepared environment, organization, and the 'Mission Statement'.

The children have the opportunity to explore, investigate and discover. The activities help the child to develop independence, concentration, confidence, opportunities for problem solving and self-awareness.

The environment is carefully designed to meet the needs of the children, allowing them to access all activities, which are presented in an orderly manner.

The staff and owner exchange information through weekly and termly meetings to discuss long-term aims. All staff show a good understanding of the Montessori philosophy and there is a great sense of teamwork amongst them.

Planning is a very important part of the daily routine, which supports the calm and harmonious atmosphere of the environment. All members of staff follow the staff ground rules including "Reinforce ground rules by setting an example", "Don't go where you are not needed", "Be active when you are needed", "Follow, trust and respect the child", "Work as a member of the team". The teachers regularly review certain aspects of the daily and weekly routine through written weekly reflections, termly meetings and a termly improvement plan. Every team member is encouraged to contribute with new ideas to create the best possible environment for the children. The school has long-, medium- and short-term plans in place as well as individual job descriptions.

The teachers show a professional approach by demonstrating clear focus on the task and respecting the child's space by not interrupting the child while completing an activity. For example, one little boy worked out for himself how to put the mat on the table and then completed his activity without being interrupted or asking for help.

Learning and Development:

There is one spacious classroom for the children with outdoor space and each teacher takes turns in planning each week, which covers all areas of the EYFS (Language, Communication and Literacy; Problem solving, Reasoning and Numeracy; Personal, Social and Emotional Development; Knowledge and Understanding of the World; Physical Development and Creative Development). Reflective practice is very evident and the new EYFS learning and development

follows the child beautifully incorporating Montessori practice. Montessori areas are implemented in the new EYFS framework.

All teachers write daily observations on sticky labels which build the foundation of each child's "EYFS Learning and Development Journal" which includes samples of the child's work. For each child the key people document at least one "learning journey" per half term, which is a longer observation supported by a photograph. The child's yearly written report is based on the Journal and observations made.

Special needs children are treated equally with the other children within the setting and some receive additional support once a week from a member of the Lewisham Early Intervention team. Their individual needs are met through the activities in the prepared environment and the school's IEP's plans are now part of the child's individual EYFS Learning and Development Journal.

The environment offers stimulating activities to the children with lots of child focused ideas. For example the 'Autumn project' portfolio shows evidence of careful planning of each areas of learning within the EYFS according to the children's ages and daily routine. The children are making a hedgehog with clay and painting a box for Christmas. This was the children's choice.

One table is laid out with ICT activities such as digital phones and a weighing machine, where children can also do writing and stamping activities.

Children enjoy the blocks with coloured liquid showing great creativity and imagination by turning and building the blocks, one child using it as a telephone.

The snack area is available to the children throughout the day and the children are free to help themselves to fruit. For example, the child peels the satsuma then cuts the apple with the help of the teacher and the child recycles the fruit peel into a recycling box.

The outdoor area is spacious and activities such as cleaning with water, building with blocks, choosing multicoloured textiles, and sandpit. Numbers are displayed on recycled CDs, which hang on the tree. The outdoor tricycles and cars also have numbers on them, which gives the children opportunity to put them in number order. The garden also has a little allotment, which gives the children the opportunity to grow their own plants and vegetables.

The children show confidence, independence, creativity, imagination and long concentration spans through choosing and completing an activity within the environment. Some children stay with one activity for the whole morning. Assessment and recording of the children's development is well documented throughout their EYFS Learning and Development Journal.

Prepared Environment, resources and materials:

The materials are laid out in a systematic order and carefully selected according to the children's ages and stages of development, which give children the opportunity to explore and develop their skills.

Teachers check and clean the apparatus regularly. There is a wide variety of activities for the children to choose from and the materials are of high quality.

Montessori practice, with comments on *independence, independence at home, freedom, respect:*

The children are encouraged to do as much as possible by themselves by learning to look after themselves through putting on and taking off their shoes and coats, as well as the use of the toilet and hygiene (such as washing hands before meal times, and after using the toilet).

The work cycle lasts throughout the morning and afternoon session when the teachers ensure that children have time to choose and finish the activity. The children are free to choose from all areas of learning (language, mathematics, practical life, sensorial, cultural, music, arts and crafts, and book corner) and they stay with the activity as long as they wish. Children are invited quietly to join group activities such as singing or when a group activity begins and they join if they wish such as dance class. They do not have to join in if they choose not to.

The outdoor facility is available for the children throughout the day by using a red and green light system that allows children free flow between indoor and outdoor activities.

The children are encouraged to learn respect for others through teachers being role models and treating the children with respect. They also talk about feelings and introduce different cultures during projects.

The children are introduced to ground rules, which also gives them independence and confidence. The cycle of activity also gives the child confidence within the environment by choosing and completing the activity freely. The teacher does not interrupt the child during the activity unless help is needed.

The children learn about the environment through watering the plants in the garden, feeding the fish, using recycling bins, tidying up after using materials, washing up and cleaning activities.

Children who are unsettled are guided towards an activity. For example, a little boy who took a long time to settle in: after teachers found out his interest in building with Lego he was offered the activity and he engaged himself with it throughout the whole morning session by building a tall tower and fitting different shapes together.

Parents are well informed through the school's 'Parents welcome pack', which gives detailed information about the school and Montessori philosophy as well as Newsletters keeping parents updated all times. The parents also receive a written report on their child's progress and development once a year. This is discussed with parents individually during parents meeting.

Montessori practice, with comments on *classroom management:*

All children aged 2 to 5 share one large room and the outside space. Every child has a key person who ensures that observations are kept in the child's EYFS learning journey. The work cycle lasts for the whole morning (9am-12pm) and afternoon session (1pm-4pm) with a break of circle time and lunch with singing and story time (12pm-1pm).

Staff do not interfere when they do not need to, unless a child asks for help. Each staff

member is in charge of different areas of activity and they are all aware of sickness procedures; this was shown when a child was sick during a session and teachers comforted him and contacted parents.

Montessori Practice, with comments on *adults' routines and links with parents, including reports and records.*

The head teacher is responsible for keeping all children's records up to date and for keeping them secure, ensuring confidentiality. Allergies, dietary needs and medications for each child are recorded.

The professionalism of all staff is shown throughout the daily routine by following the 'Ground rules', respecting the children's space, regularly checking that materials are clean and removing broken or incomplete activities. Each team member works with key children and writes observations on all children, which are then placed into the child's individual (EYFS) Learning and Development Journal. It also helps the key person to define next steps for each child.

Parents receive a 'Welcome pack' with detailed information about the school and the Montessori philosophy. Parents have the opportunity to exchange information with teachers daily and at key person meetings once a year, including a written report on their child's progress and development covering all areas of learning in the EYFS. Half-termly newsletters keep parents updated. The school follows a two year project plan, which is displayed on the school's notice board. There is a photo album accessible for parents to be able to see their children's activities.

The head teacher has developed a new plan for 'improving parental involvement', which will be put forward next year. The document gives a detailed plan on involving parents through regular parent's evenings, and with 'Comment forms' implemented within the child's EYFS Learning and Development Journal.

Staffing:

Rose House Montessori has a team of highly qualified staff. The Proprietor holds a Montessori Diploma, a BA (Hons) Early Years Management and is currently studying for a MA in Early Childhood Development. The Head Teacher holds degree qualifications and a Montessori Diploma and is studying for a BA (Hons) in Early Years Management. There are three other qualified Montessori teachers, one member of staff is working towards a Montessori Diploma and another has a Foundation Degree in Art. The cover staff are also Montessori trained. All members of staff are CRB checked and new members of staff receive a 'Staff Welcome Pack' with copies of policies and procedures.

Staff show good understanding of the EYFS and have been through recent in-house training about implementing Montessori within EYFS, as well as holding First Aid certificates.

The head keeps written weekly reflections discussed at staff meetings. She also completes

staff appraisals. Students receive full support and training opportunities, including training through the Local Authority.

All members of staff show respect towards each other and children, and they work together as a team in a professional and calm manner.

Name of Assessor Andrea Dalling/Maria Evanson Date of report 15 November 2008