

Collaborative Montessori Accreditation (CMA) Report

Name of Assessor: Hannah Khiani

Date/s of Assessment Visit: 24th April 2024

Name of Setting: Maynard Montessori

Address of Setting: Stebbing Primary School, High Street, Stebbing, Essex, CM6 3SH

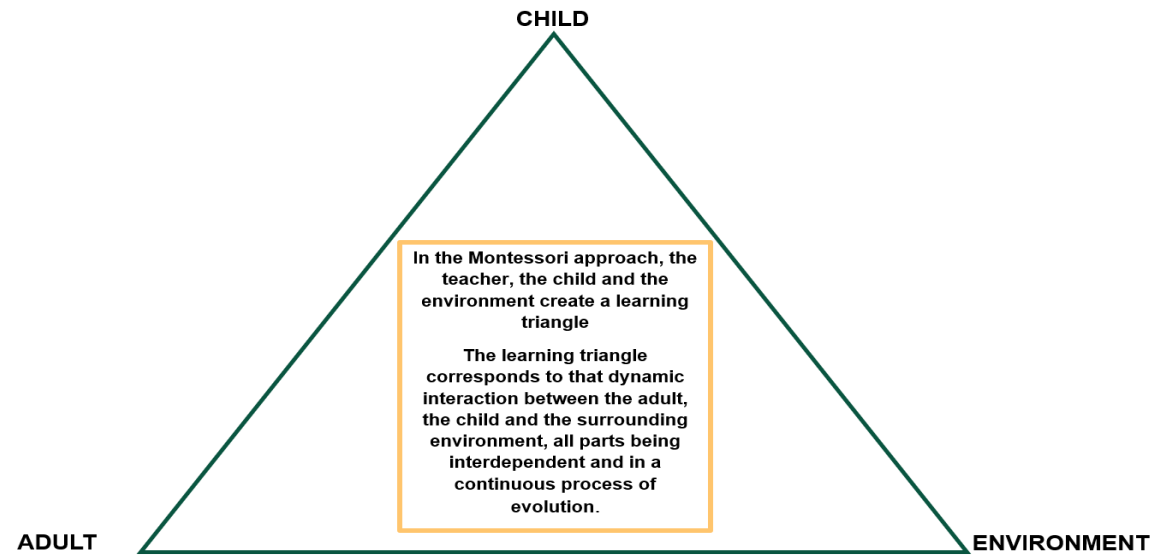
Setting type: Term-time nursery

Facility type: Purpose build

Ownership of the Setting: Privately owned

Date Setting opened: 2009

Date and grade of last Ofsted / relevant national inspection: 14th November 2018 / Outstanding



The accreditation criteria draw on the principles of the dynamic learning triangle, which is at the core of the Montessori philosophy and approach. The adult, the child and the environment create the learning triangle, with dynamic interaction and interdependence between all three parts. In effective practice these dynamics enable continued improvement of quality. This triangle underpins all documentation for reflection and assessment in the CM Quality Assurance Programme.

This report is based on the information submitted by the setting (including its self-evaluation), on the Parents Questionnaire and on the evidence gathered during the Assessor's visit.

The Environment

Summary of evidence and assessment of practice: The experienced and welcoming staff team provide a home from home for the children. The light, airy and carefully planned spaces at Maynard Montessori (MM) provide an inviting and calm environment for the children and adults alike. Large windows overlook the open fields and the adjacent outdoor area, offering picturesque views. The indoor space is effectively partitioned: there is an area for food preparation, eating and for craft activities as well as a cloakroom, a space for 'building', a place for resting and a book corner. The other activities and resources are on low shelves and are organised by curriculum area. These materials offer a broad range of carefully curated activities to entice the children to explore and discover. The environment is prepared thoughtfully and provides children with a beautiful space to immerse themselves in various learning experiences.

Parents describe the school as "Amazing, calm, friendly, incredible and welcoming with a real focus on the children."

The physical environment

Indoors

The Montessori materials are organised sequentially to scaffold the children's development. All the activities are visually appealing and complete. Loose parts are available for the children to play with and explore along with the opportunity to paint and stick and form beautiful creations. Natural materials and blocks were also used during the accreditation visit to build houses and a garage for the lorries. Activities within the Knowledge & Understanding the World shelves reflect the children's current interests such as Space, Bird Watching, the Human Body and Vehicles; this area was well-utilised by the children during the visit. The book corner was well-stocked and story sacks provide the children with the chance to re-tell familiar stories.

Outdoors

The spacious and enticing outdoor area includes a beautiful sandpit with different tools for the children to dig and rake and build. Children engage in supervised risk-taking as they use the climbing netting to scale the wall, come down head-first on the slide and roll down the sloping garden. A shady area under a tree provides the perfect place to rest and have a tea-party; a playhouse with books and tables for drawing provide additional quieter spaces for the children. The mud kitchen was used for making a range of 'hot drinks and cakes'. Children also rode a variety of vehicles at top speed demonstrating their driving and manoeuvring skills. Balls were thrown, basketball skills perfected

and children took turns with wheelbarrows, a pretend lawnmower, buggies and prams. The raised beds and planting provide the children with the chance to take care of their environment as they look after plants and flowers that they have helped grow from seeds.

The spiritual environment

Order

The resources have been carefully planned and set out to scaffold the children’s development and there is order within the classroom which is organised into curriculum areas. The children contribute to this order as they returned activities to the shelves after use and clean their brushes in the ‘painting sink’. This sense of order was also apparent through the different routines of the day; children were confident in what they needed to do next: “I need to go and put on my wellies because I want to play with sand”.

First-hand experiences and active learning

Inside the classroom there are a wide variety of activities for the children to discover through first-hand experiences. Children are currently exploring the life cycle of a butterfly so, as well as models, cards and books, there are also real caterpillars for the children to observe. The children experimented with colour mixing using primary colours: “Look, I made a new colour”. All areas of the classroom are rich in opportunities for the children to follow their interests and were well used on the day of the visit. There are natural loose parts such as pinecones, wooden tree circles and shells for the children to explore. Outside, children found insects and worms and brought them to show their teachers: “Look, this is a wiggly worm that has no legs.” Outside, the water butt was used by the children to water plants, make mud-cakes and ‘hot chocolate’. On the day of the visit, some of the children explored the life cycle of plants as they were shown how to plant beans. Bird feeders, identification books and binoculars enabled the children to engage in bird watching. Children grow and harvest vegetables and plants as well as confidently wielding tools in the sandpit and hauling and stacking tyres to make a new home: “This is my house, and I can hide in it”.

The Child

Attendance on the day of the accreditation visit:

Age in years	How many children were present		
	Morning session	Afternoon session	All day

0 – 2	0	0	0
2 – 3	3	3	3
3 – 5	21	20	21
Over 5	0	0	0

Summary of evidence and assessment of practice: The children are purposeful and confident in the environment and demonstrate care for each other through small acts of kindness: “You dropped your paper – here you go!” and “You can play with me and we can look after our baby together”. The ground rules rarely needed to be mentioned as the children and adults were respectful and thoughtful in their conversations and interactions. There are also emotion stones and the *Colour Monster* story with props to help children identify and explore emotion states. Montessori believed that children should be inspired by creation and encouraged to invent and innovate. At MM the teachers support the children to do this as they explore open-ended materials and communicate peacefully. The teachers encourage and role-model ways to be kind and generous; they also point the children towards a respect for their wider environment as they re-use and recycle resources, supporting awareness of care for the environment and the planet. Independence and confidence are fostered through an awareness of others and the ability to make decisions while embracing social responsibilities: “This is my activity but you can use it after me”. Parents note that MM is “really lovely” with a “happy, welcoming atmosphere”.

Independence

The children are greeted at the door and independently remove their coats and find their pegs. They can choose whether to work inside or out and access the activities independently. The children are self-reliant, responsible and are trusted to, for example, use scissors and knives to prepare snack; they are also autonomous in their self-care and are confident in asking for help when they need it. The children wash hands and wash up their snack bowls and water glasses when they have finished; they choose their meal for lunchtime and use brooms and the Hoover to clean their classroom. The children are self-sufficient as they move around the garden, choosing how and where to play. Outside the children also use and carry tools such as rakes, spades and trowels safely and change clothes and shoes when they need to. Children are free to join group activities such as paint mixing, the presentation of the life cycle of a butterfly and story time; they are free to decline the invitation too. Children are encouraged to take turns and to let others speak and express their opinions. Children test out their ideas when, for example, considering which slope to roll down from: “Look, I can do rolling and here I go faster”.

Socialisation

The teachers role-model grace and courtesy as they greet each child in turn and shake hands on arrival. The children talk to their teachers throughout the day, listen to others with respect, wait to speak and turn-take with a wide variety of activities. During lunch, children held interesting conversations with each other: “I got gravy at my house” and greeted visitors with curiosity: “I am X, what school do you go to?”. In the garden, the different spaces afford the opportunity for involved and animated role play: “Me and X got a new baby” and, in the sandpit: “I digging to Lanzarote where there is a big swimming pool, and it is hot”. Children worked together at the art table as they collected their Montessori workbooks and described the artwork they had already included: “This firework picture with all sparkles” and “This is me when I was a baby”. Children know each other well: “Your mummy got babies in her tummy” and “You like pink ones so you can have this”. When playing with the sea creatures, the children shared their experiences: “When I went on holiday, I went fishing for a crab”. Children also respected the views of others: “She said she will play later but not now”.

Exploration

Children were observed exploring the sea creatures: “This one funny” (Sea cucumber) and “This water extremely cold”. Children used blocks to make a house and tested different hypothesis: “This is going to fall – it is not balanced’. They were also observed using the tap on the water butt, exploring volume and flow: “That is too much now – look it is going over”. Nature findings and shells are available for the children to touch and feel. Binoculars and bird feeders allowed the children to see the visiting birds close-up: “I see a bird – it eating!”. At the creativity table, children made a nest from shredded paper and a collage. In the garden, children found worms and millipedes and made messy mixtures in the mud kitchen as they combined soil with water.

Movement

Throughout the accreditation visit children were active and busy. The environment is beautiful and spacious for the children to move around. The Activities of Everyday Living shelves are equipped with a wide variety of activities to support the development of children’s fine motor skills. Different materials were also used at the creativity table too as children honed their hand-eye co-ordination using scissors, pencils and paintbrushes. The free-flow to the outdoor environment means that the children have a wide variety of different physical experiences throughout the day: balance bikes and tricycles and buggies, prams and toy lawnmowers...all can be pushed and pulled. Children practised their skills on stilts and jumped and hopped and rolled. A ball was used for throwing and bouncing and the climbing wall and balance ball were used throughout the day by different children. The slide also proved very popular with children sliding down in a variety of ways. Children used their pouring skills to water the plants.

Communication

The teachers are respectful and calm as they speak to the children and each other. Conversation is used, throughout the day, in a positive way to encourage children to connect with each other and to share ideas, feelings and news from home: “Look, I got new shoes – they white.” Children know their teachers well and are able to joke with them. Story sacks and a range of books help introduce interesting and varied new words. Teachers support language development through re-casting and by giving children plenty of time to listen and respond. Signs, pictures and Makaton also help children’s understanding and communication. The assessor was invited to read stories: “This one is really good”, to play with blocks: “Do you want to play with us? You can make a house, and this can be the family” and also to read the children’s Montessori books that display the children’s photos: “Look, do you recognise me, this was when I was very small, and now, I am bigger”. The assessor was also confidently taken on a wonderful tour of the garden: “Let me show you, here we plant flowers, this is where there are stinging nettles so you need to be very careful that you don’t touch them, here you can dig in the sand, and this is the slide where I can go really fast down”. Parents said that they really value the excellent levels of communication at drop-off and pick-up times, the meetings with teachers, updates through the app and how responsive the staff team were to emails and to any queries. Some parents said that they would always be open to receiving more information via the app but that they appreciated the current levels too.

The Adult

Adults present during the accreditation visit.

Initials, roles and responsibilities	Qualifications	Length of time at the setting	Part time	Full time
RS (Manager)	Montessori Level 4 Diploma, Foundation Degree in Early Childhood Studies, SENCO L3	10 years		*
CW (Deputy Manager)	Montessori Level 4 Diploma	12 years	*	
VT (Practitioner)	NVQ Early Years (Level 2)	25 Years	*	
NM (Practitioner)	PGCE, QTS	2.5 Years	*	
KW (Practitioner)	Montessori Level 4 Diploma, BA Hons Early Childhood Studies	9 Years	*	
LN (Practitioner)	Montessori (Level 2)	3 Years 7 months	*	
SE (Practitioner)	Montessori (Level 3)	2 years 6 months	*	

GF (Practitioner)	Montessori (Level 3)	3 years 7 months	*	
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Summary of evidence and assessment of practice: Communication amongst the staff team members is warm and respectful. The teachers work together in support of the children and the manager works hard to ensure relevant information, planning and dynamic goal setting are shared effectively. The team is experienced, with most teachers holding a Montessori qualification; all teachers have undertaken continuing professional development (CPD) and additional training to be able to best apply Montessori principles as they work with children and families. The teachers are caring, kind and friendly and were observed working with enthusiasm to prepare the environment and to attend to the needs of every child. Parents commented that they appreciated the “Dedication in creating a safe and welcoming environment”. The committed pre-school director is the owner of the school and also leads initiatives around CPD, providing inspiring training to promote Montessori practice that supports the staff in their development and understanding of effective early years provision. To explore different aspects of practice, teachers access online courses and also attend topic-specific training courses. Staff contribute their own ideas and support each other well in the smooth running of the setting. All the staff team undergo supervision meetings during the term and annual appraisals. This facilitates reflective practice and an ongoing commitment to personal development.

The Leadership Team

Parents value the ‘open door’ policy encouraged by the manager and appreciate participation in the classroom such as when reading to the children and sharing their life experiences and hobbies. Parents also appreciate how children with additional needs are “helped to thrive.” The leadership team have also built positive relationships with outside agencies such as speech and language and occupational therapists. This helps all the staff team to have a consistent approach in supporting all the children in their holistic development. The leadership team also know the local schools well and invite their teachers into the setting during the summer term to support children’s transition. This helps MM to foster relationships within the wider community. The leadership team ensure that the setting’s policies are relevant and up to date and that they clearly reflect Montessori principles of mutual respect and inclusive practice to ensure a safe and secure environment for everyone.

The Teaching Team

The teaching team were described, by parents, as ‘brilliant, so lovely, warm, knowledgeable and easy to talk to and really helpful with advice.’ Where children with additional needs required support in developing speech and language, the teaching team were praised for their help and for enabling children to grow in confidence too. Parents also highlighted the “expertise of the staff, and their warm and empathetic approach”. During the visit all the teachers worked hard to allow the children independent exploration of activities while offering lively and interesting conversations to further the children’s understanding. For instance, conversations about the human body resulted in children’s contributions about their own bodies: “I got strong muscles” and “This bones and I got a skeleton inside me”. Children explored sea creatures

and were shown how to pick up a crab safely: “Crabs go snap snap with their pincers”. The conversations throughout the day were engaging and the children’s responses demonstrated their obvious interest and positive relationships with the teachers. While lunch was being delivered, a lively and enthusiastic reading of *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* entertained all the children, who remained seated throughout, interjecting, answering questions and joining in with words.

The Key Person

Parents value their relationship with the key person and the fact that all the teachers know all the children well. Parents enjoy reading observations on the app. Each key person at MM helps to settle new children in and build strong relationships with parents to build a ‘home from home’. All the teachers “work with all children to help enhance their learning but also to encourage independence and self-esteem”. The key person at MM is, in line with the Montessori method, an important role model for the child whom they can relate to and rely on. The key person ensures that each child in their care feels safe, understood and cared for. This was evident on the day of the visit as children leant in for hugs and asked for help when they needed it. Conversations between the key person and the children demonstrate strong relationships: “I know you like numbers – would you like to do adding or subtraction today?” An I-pad was used to take photos of children’s activities to use in conjunction with their observations: this enables each key person to identify each child’s learning style. On the day of the visit, teachers discussed with each other how to scaffold the children’s understanding as they provided new challenges or introduced new materials. Information about the children is shared consistently between team members and with parents.

Commendations

- The environment is planned with care and attention to detail, following the changing interests of the children.
- The teachers are consistent and respectful in their approach. They are calm and considerate in the way they communicate with each other and the children, who are listened to with interest and are given time to respond.
- The staff team work very well together to support the children to become confident, to try new things, to explore and to act autonomously.

- The teachers share a commitment to promoting the Montessori method in practice. The teachers' commitment to CPD, training and the shared ethos ensure consistency of practice and a relaxed and welcoming atmosphere for all.
- The children are free to access the outside environment which is planned with different areas to provide them with lots of opportunities for gross motor movement.
- Close relationships with the local primary schools help support children through transition.

Recommendations

- With this experienced and dedicated team, there is scope to be ambitious in the outside area to challenge the children further, for example, with activities such as bug hunts using clip boards and tally charts and identification books. Outdoor tasks that mirror some of the activities used indoors (addition and subtraction, exploring light and heavy, length and width, colour mixing on a wider scale, science experiments) could enable the children to test their hypothesis and make new connections as they practise their skills in a variety of contexts.
- When the new lunch time routine, with cooked meals, is further embedded, children can be encouraged to participate more actively. For example, children could help serve part of the meal and then clear away afterwards by wiping their own spaces and tables.
- Teachers can continue to reflect on the balance between standing back to allow children time to explore independently and stepping in to provide support.
- Teachers can support children looking for adult praise to develop their own self-esteem and to take pride in their own accomplishments; offering specific acknowledgements on children's efforts and achievements can create a more meaningful experience for a child seeking external validation.

Conditions

The Accreditation Assessor has concluded that the setting meets CM main requirements for Accreditation and therefore no conditions are set.

Name of Assessor: Hannah Khiani

Date of Report: 9th May 2024

The CM Accreditation Report has been reviewed by the CM Accreditation Board. The Board has verified the Assessor's recommendation to accredit the setting.

Award

Accreditation is therefore granted to:

Maynard Montessori

Validity period:

From: May 2024 to: May 2027

Receiving accreditation carries the expectation that the setting will continue to implement the Commendations, develop on the Recommendations and fulfil the Conditions (if applicable) highlighted in this Accreditation Report to continue to strive for best Montessori practice.

The report does not directly address the standards of practice that are the responsibility of the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted).

The report does not provide any assessment of financial aspects of the setting.