

Assessor's Observation Record on how *St Andrews Montessori School* meets the Montessori Education (UK) criteria for accreditation

Assessor's Name: Margaret Dillane Date of visit: 2/10/19 Age group observed: 2-6 years

Criterion	Observed evidence	Met	Not Met
1. Safeguarding: Children are safe, secure and safeguarded at all times	It is clear to see that the team at St Andrews Montessori take Safeguarding very seriously. The front entrance is securely locked and there is no access to the outdoors unless an adult is with a child. All visitors are required to sign in at the entrance to the nursery and parents are allowed into the setting accompanied by a staff member. Mobile phones are not allowed in the classroom and must be kept in the office. When the children are taken to the garden for outdoor time they are accompanied by members of the staff and an area is safely blocked off to ensure the children are kept safe from the public. All files are kept in the office which is locked and not accessible.	X	
2. Qualifications of staff: The school is led by a Montessori qualified teacher; non-Montessori qualified staff are undertaking Montessori professional development; class teachers are qualified at, or working towards Montessori qualifications relevant to the age group they're working with.	The school is led by a Montessori qualified teacher: The school is led by a Montessori qualified teacher who has a clear passion and love for the Montessori Method of education. This is clear in her leadership ability and her ability to motivate the team.	X	
	Non-Montessori qualified staff are undertaking Montessori professional development. Ongoing Montessori professional development is evident in the courses and events the team partake in. Non-Montessori staff are encouraged to attend training and are supported in understanding the Montessori approach through in-house training and staff induction days.	X	
	Class teachers are qualified at, or working towards Montessori qualifications relevant to the age group they are working with. St Andrews Montessori hosts 10 Montessori qualified staff members whose love of Montessori is evident in their interactions with the children. All staff are encouraged to attend training sessions, conferences and workshops on Montessori	X	
3. Vertical grouping: Classes are a mixed-age group.	Vertical grouping is evident across the classroom; children ranging from 2.6 to 6 years attend the nursery. Although the 4 -5-year-old children have use of a separate room there is still a vertical group ethos throughout the classroom as the older children are free to move between the rooms and the younger children are free to access the side classroom. There were examples during the observation of the older children helping the younger children and a suggestion was made that the older children could help their younger colleagues to prepare their snack.	X	

Criterion	Observed evidence	Met	Not Met
<p>4. The work cycle:</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>The work cycle lasts for an uninterrupted period of at least two and a half hours, preferably three</p> <p>The work cycle starts at 8.45 am where the children enter the classroom and hang up their coats to begin their work. Although the work cycle was seen to work very well there were a few interruptions on the morning of the assessment. The snack time tends to impede on the natural flow of the work cycle as the children use all tables to eat their snack thus there were incidents of the children having water on the table with their activity. It was also evident that once the snack was ready the children began to tell the others that it was time for snack. This had a domino effect thus ending with the children stopping their natural flow. During the team feedback session, a discussion took place with management and the team where it was agreed that the team would be happy to introduce individual snack. During the morning of the observation some of the children were taken to the garden for outdoor time, as there is no free access to the garden owing to the fact that the nursery is housed in a church hall. At this time, it became apparent that children who were engrossed in their work were asked to put their work away to join the others in the garden while other children continued with the work cycle. Although the reasoning behind the team taking the children to the garden was correct it was agreed that this would become more fluid where the children who were engrossed in their work would not be interrupted.</p>	X	
	<p>The children mostly work individually during the work cycle</p> <p>There is a lot of opportunity for the children to work individually during the work cycle as the classroom is set up in a way that allows ample opportunity for individual work. The assessor observed many children working individually and this was more evident with the children working on floor mats. The opportunities for children to work independently on the tables were less as there are no individual tables which resulted in the children sitting at shared tables. The shared tables led to the children being interrupted when they began to work which can be disruptive to the development of concentration. The adults in the classroom were also hovering a little too much over the children's work and during feedback it was agreed that this is something that is not necessary as the children are very capable of choosing their work and completing their cycles of activity. With the introduction of single tables, the team also believe that the children will have more opportunity to work without disturbance.</p>	X	

Criterion	Observed evidence	Met	Not Met
	<p>The children come together when they wish to in small groups</p> <p>The children have many opportunities to come together in small groups, story time groups took place naturally with a small number of children and a teacher. On a few occasions' children were eager to have story time and this was accommodated within the work cycle. The older children who prepared the snack food worked very well together and set up the snack table for their friends.</p>	X	
	<p>The children come together when they wish to in larger groups</p> <p>The only larger groups observed during the assessment were set groups for ballet where some of the children went to ballet in another room. The work cycle continued without issue.</p>	X	
<p>5. Care: Care routines embody the Montessori ethos</p>	<p>All care routines embody the Montessori ethos; children have access to hand washing, scrubbing, dusting and care of the environment along with self-care activities in line with the Montessori principles.</p>	X	
<p>6. Activities and materials: Children have continual and free access to a full range of the Montessori materials and other materials and activities based on Montessori philosophy that are appropriate for their ages and stages of learning.</p>	<p>There is a range of materials in the classroom within all areas of the Montessori curriculum where children have continual and free access. However, some of the materials will benefit from updating, for example, the polishing activities to be used with the sequence of steps, pink tower and brown stair to be painted, geometric cards to be laminated, Binomial Cube could be updated, Constructive Triangle corners to be mended, touch boards- the sandpaper is worn, Geometric Solids need renewing, the nature table to reflect the season, update and add new materials to the cultural area, introducing more science activities, the introduction of history activities, event chart or past and present, and introduce more map puzzles owing to the fact there is a five year old child in the nursery. The Sandpaper Letters could be changed as the sandpaper is worn. The pink and blue materials need to be updated to reflect uniformity in colour and font size.</p> <p><i>Attach completed Details of Curriculum Areas Form</i></p>	X	

Criterion	Observed evidence	Met	Not Met
<p>7. Prepared environment:</p> <p>A Montessori 'prepared environment', suitable for the ages and stages of development of the children within it, is set up and maintained so they can actively engage with materials and activities that are designed from a developmental point of view and which lead them to successive levels of discovery about their world.</p>	<p>Environment suitable for all the ages catered for</p> <p>The environment is set up to allow freedom of movement throughout all areas of the nursery. The prepared environment is beautifully set up with a variety of activities across all areas of the Montessori curriculum. As the environment is set up with such care and with an understanding of the principles of the Montessori philosophy it would be very beneficial to introduce single tables to allow the children to have their own space to concentrate. At present with the use of tables of 4 children get interrupted by other children joining the table and presenters are not protected during the presentation. When children are using table mats, they all overlap which results in the children's work not portraying the order required to allow the great inner work of the Montessori method to take place.</p>	X	
	<p>The set-up and maintenance of the environment</p> <p>The classroom is set up with care and love and it is clear to see the passion and love of the Montessori ethos that all staff imbibe. The class is maintained to a high standard and once the materials that need updating are in place the classroom will reflect this. As the nursery is set in a beautiful church hall all possible areas of the church are used very well. At the entrance to the nursery there is a well organised information system for parents. As there is no free flow access to the garden which does not allow for the outdoor area to be set up the children have access to outdoor backpacks filled with beautiful outdoor activities.</p>	X	
<p>8. Classroom management:</p> <p>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. The attitudes of the teachers support this.</p>	<p>Freedom to make spontaneous choices</p> <p>Children have ample opportunities to make spontaneous choices and the freedom to move around the classroom without disturbance. Children were observed choosing activities independently, for example, cylinder blocks, cultural animals, colouring, cultural puzzles, Brown stairs, Pink tower, painting, pipette, locks and keys, threading, food preparation, small moveable alphabet, LMA blue box, reading books, projects. There were incidents of children dropping materials which were dealt with in an unobtrusive manner.</p> <p>The team would benefit from standing back more to allow more opportunities for children to use their spontaneous choices without assistance.</p>	X	

Criterion	Observed evidence	Met	Not Met
	<p>Independence</p> <p>The children have lots of opportunity to develop independence and this is seen in the individual choices they make. Children are very confident with strong self-esteem. They are free to move about the classroom and on many occasions the assessor was approached by the children to be asked the purpose of her visit. During these wonderful discussions the assessor asked 2 girls if they like coming to nursery to which they replied. "Yes" and on further investigation of what they like about the nursery they proceeded to let the assessor know that they both like <i>"the teachers, the children and the activities"</i> and their favourite activities were 'make-up and the trinomial and binomial cube.' There were many such incidents of children drawing pictures of work they were doing and a young girl was very happy to show the assessor her Anna and Elsa project which was exceptional.</p>	X	
	<p>Completion of cycles of activity</p> <p>Children are very confident in completing cycles of activity and the team are very aware of this aspect of the Montessori philosophy, where on occasion staff were observed reminding children to push their chairs under the tables. It is clear to see that the children have been introduced the complete cycle of activity and when required are reminded where certain activities live.</p>	X	
	<p>Having a sense of responsibility</p> <p>Children have a wonderful sense of responsibility; they are eager to help each other and complete their work is now a natural part of their day. The older children prepare their own snack, which was carried out with great ease, enjoyment and confidence with no help from an adult. Once the snack food was prepared the children proceeded to tidy everything away and prepare the snack table for their friends. On this occasion there was a child who wanted to tidy his maze away and with a gentle suggestion from the teacher that he could do with being helped the other children were eager to help him.</p> <p>It was suggested that the older children help the younger children to prepare their snack so that the younger children can eventually do this independently.</p>	X	
	<p>Using materials correctly and appropriately</p> <p>All materials are used correctly and for their intended purpose; children use a range of Montessori materials are aware of where they are kept on the shelf.</p>	X	

Criterion	Observed evidence	Met	Not Met
	<p>Working alone</p> <p>It is difficult for the children to work alone on the tables as the space is not enough when 4 children are sitting at the tables; this causes a certain amount of disturbance to the free flow of independence and concentration. However, on the floor mats there is sufficient opportunity to work alone.</p> <p>A suggestion was made to bring single tables to the nursery which the management and staff are very eager to introduce.</p>	X	
	<p>Working with others</p> <p>Children work beautifully together and are very helpful and appreciative of each other. Children were observed sitting in the library engrossed in discussion; children helping each other to tidy work away (the maze), preparing snack together and serving each other. Children were also very aware of the feelings of their friends, which was evident when a little girl wanted to go to ballet and was rather tearful - her little friend consoled her by telling her he was going to ballet and she could watch, which was dealt with, with care by the adult.</p>	X	
	<p>Attitudes of teachers</p> <p>The staff are very good team who work so well together. They are very welcoming and show a sincerity and kindness in their interactions with the children and each other. They have a beautiful rapport with the children and are all very passionate about the Montessori method. Their positive approach to the children was evident on the day of the assessment in the way they dealt with children dropping materials, the child who wanted to join ballet, the children who wanted to have many discussions with the assessor and in the way they approached the day to day happenings of the setting.</p> <p>The team would benefit from standing back more and being mindful of the importance of on-going grace and courtesy</p>	X	
<p>9. Materials:</p> <p>Materials are displayed in an orderly way, well maintained and complete.</p>	<p>Orderly display</p> <p>The materials are displayed in order and in line with the areas of the Montessori curriculum. Each area of the Montessori curriculum is well organised.</p>	X	

Criterion	Observed evidence	Met	Not Met
	<p>State of maintenance</p> <p>The materials are well maintained overall, however some of the materials need updating... for example, the polishing activities to be used with the sequence of steps, Pink Tower and Brown Stair to be painted, Geometric cards to be laminated, Binomial cube could be updated, Constructive Triangle corners to be mended, Touch Boards- the sandpaper is worn, Geometric Solids need renewing, the nature table to reflect the season, update and add new materials to the cultural area, introducing more science activities, the introduction of history activities, event chart or past and present, and introduce more map puzzles owing to the fact there is a five year old child in the nursery. The Sandpaper Letters could be changed as the sandpaper is worn. The pink and blue materials need to be updated to reflect uniformity in colour and font size.</p>	X	
	<p>Complete</p> <p>The materials are complete; however, the cultural area will benefit from adding more science activities, early history and continent maps</p> <p><i>Give details on attached Details of Curriculum Areas Form</i></p>	X	
<p>10. Observation, planning and assessment:</p> <p>The school undertakes written observations of the children which inform their assessment, review and planning of the provision.</p>	<p>Observations</p> <p>Teachers carry out detailed observations of the children with photographic evidence of their progress. Observations are used to tailor the children's planning and progress</p>	X	
	<p>Planning</p> <p>Planning is carried out on a daily basis where teachers use their observations to tailor their plans. Each teacher uses their children's record cards in their classroom which is updated on a daily basis. The planning is carried out to a very high standard.</p>	X	
	<p>Assessment</p> <p>The teachers carry detailed assessments of the children which is supported by the observations and the planning.</p>	X	

Criterion	Observed evidence	Met	Not Met
<p>11. Montessori-driven management structures:</p> <p>Management structures allow for the implementation of Montessori principles and support staff in their professional development.</p>	<p>Management structures allow implementation of Montessori principles</p> <p>The management structures are very thorough and allow the implementation of Montessori principles...this can be clearly seen in the strength of the team and the support and partnership offered to parents.</p>	X	
	<p>Management structures support staff in CPD</p> <p>Ongoing professional development is strongly supported by the management structures. Staff are encouraged and supported to attend conferences, training and workshops. Evidence of CPD is clear to see in the nursery.</p>	X	
<p>12. Policies and procedures:</p> <p>Effective policies and procedures relating to implementing the Montessori approach and monitoring its effectiveness are in place, and available to staff and parents.</p>	<p>Policies and procedures relate to implementing Montessori approach</p> <p>Policies and procedures represent the Montessori approach which can be seen in the implementation in the nursery and with the partnership with parents</p>	X	
	<p>Policies and procedures are monitored and reviewed</p> <p>Policies and procedures are monitored and updated regularly. Evidence of this is seen in the paper work.</p>	X	
	<p>Policies and procedures are available to staff and parents</p> <p>Policies and procedures are available in the office for all staff and parents.</p>	X	
<p>13. Partnership with parents:</p> <p>There is an effective partnership with parents</p>	<p>The nursery has a very strong partnership with parents which can be seen in the information available to parents. The management support parents with Montessori talks and information on Montessori</p>	X	