

## **Montessori Evaluation and Accreditation Board**

### **School Accreditation**

This report is a supplement to the setting's previous MEAB Accreditation Final Report, which is published in conjunction with this report.

**This report was prepared following, and is based on, two accreditation visits made on behalf of the Montessori Evaluation and Accreditation Board.** It considers how far the setting follows relevant criteria in "The Guide to the EYFS in Montessori Settings" (2012/14). During the second visit the progress made with the recommendations set out in the report from the first visit was assessed and any further findings made during the second visit were considered.

The report does not address the standards and quality issues that are assessed by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), which reports separately. Also the report does not provide any assessment of financial aspects of the setting.

Receiving accreditation carries the expectation that the setting will continue to work on the issues highlighted in this report and will remain committed to the ongoing development of its practice. Furthermore, that it will report to the MEAB office any relevant changes such as to premises address, ownership, hours of operation, or to the age range of children attending.

### **Pippins Montessori Kindergarten**

Whites Farm, Bures Road, White Colne, Colchester, Essex CO6 2QF

Dates of previous MEAB accreditations: June 2011 and June 2015

This accreditation is valid until December 2022

This accreditation report relates to the provision for children aged  
3 months to 5 years

#### **Description of the setting:**

Pippins Montessori Kindergarten opened in 1992 and has been run under the current ownership since 2004. It is located in the rural village of White Colne. The setting consists of the main building (a converted barn), which houses the nursery. The pre-school children (aged 3 to 5 years) are on the ground floor and the 2 to 3 year olds are on a mezzanine, accessed by stairs secured by a gate. This nursery building has adult and child toilets on both the mezzanine and ground floor, a kitchen and the manager's office.

Baby Pippins (for children up to 2 years of age) opened in 2011. It is in purpose-built premises on the opposite side of the outdoor area from the nursery and consists of an

entrance area, staff room and secure main room. Within the main room there is a partitioned sleeping area, nappy changing facilities including a hand wash basin at the child's level, and a small kitchen for the preparation of food and milk. Doors open onto a partitioned area of the outdoor space shared with the nursery.

The outdoor area is accessed from the ground floor room of the nursery building onto a covered wooden patio, which has tables and shelves. There is also an area of artificial grass, along with sand and water pits and a garden area. A bark-chipped area has balancing beams and stepping-stones. The whole setting has access to a long meadow, and there is also direct access to orchards for nature walks.

The setting is open every weekday from 08:00 to 18:00 for 47 weeks of the year. It is registered for 15 children aged 3 months to 2 years and 30 children aged 2 to 5 years, with 88 currently on roll. Children generally attend for a full day although morning only sessions are available for the 3 to 5 year olds. On the morning of the second reaccreditation visit there were 12 babies with six staff, seven 2 to 3 year olds with three staff and fifteen 3 to 5 year olds with four staff. Two 3 year olds went home before lunch and one went after lunch. For the afternoon session there were 12 babies with six staff, four children aged 2 to 3 years with three staff and fifteen 3 to 5 year olds with four staff. A hot lunch is cooked on site daily and breakfast, snacks and afternoon tea are also provided.

Visiting teachers provide French sessions on Monday mornings for the 3 to 5 year olds, music on alternate Wednesday mornings for 2 to 5 year olds, sports coaching on alternate Wednesday mornings for 3 to 5 year olds, and dance and drama on Friday mornings for 2 to 5 year olds. Forest School sessions for 3 to 5 year olds are also run by a visiting teacher – these are held on the setting's meadow on alternate weeks. These additional activities are offered as part of the work cycle and children can choose whether or not they wish to take part. Swimming lessons are available on Tuesday afternoons at extra cost. The setting supports children with additional needs, including those with English as an additional language.

The manager is mostly supernumerary and works full-time. She takes responsibility for the day to day running of the setting and holds level 4 qualifications in both Montessori pedagogy and early years practice. The owners of Pippins Montessori Kindergarten do not attend regularly but they are involved in management decisions regarding the running of the setting. In addition to the manager there are 15 members of staff, of whom 11 have relevant Montessori or other early years qualifications; ten of these attend full-time. The four further members of staff include two who are working towards a level 2 apprentice qualification, a cook and an administrative assistant. There are full-time, qualified Montessori teachers in both rooms of the nursery section. The leadership team comprises the manager, along with the three room leaders, who are currently undertaking Montessori training. In the manager's absence she appoints one of the room leaders as deputy manager.

## Summary

Pippins Montessori Kindergarten is a high quality Montessori setting. The manager's strong leadership skills and attention to detail support the staff team in creating an environment where children have many learning opportunities. Despite recent staff changes, the manager continues to ensure that each team member has a good understanding of Montessori principles and of how to apply these with each age group. This is demonstrated by the fact that two of the newly recruited staff have already joined two established staff members in undertaking external Montessori training. Children in this setting show high levels of confidence, co-operation and independence. The nursery's practice of regularly grouping the 2 to 3 year olds with the 3 to 5 year olds creates a very sociable environment; it benefits the younger children as they learn from their older peers whilst helping the older children to consolidate their learning.

Parents state that they initially chose the setting primarily because of its excellent reputation. Although they may not have had prior knowledge of the Montessori approach they report that, since joining the setting, they have gained a good understanding from staff of how it benefits their child. They also appreciate the informative online learning journal, which is now used to monitor and assess their child's learning and development. This secure online planning and recording system was adopted by the setting following the recommendation from the previous MEAB accreditation that it should continue to improve in records the link made between the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) learning goals and the Montessori curriculum. Parents can now clearly see how the Montessori curriculum links with the EYFS when reading their child's learning journal.

Following a further recommendation, that the setting should continue to develop a culture of observation and reflective practice, the manager has continued to implement a programme of peer observations and it is planned that this will soon be extended to include observations of staff by staff members from other rooms.

The adults know every child extremely well and they work together to provide a good range of opportunities for children's learning. Following the first reaccreditation visit further outside activities have been incorporated into the planning and this has enhanced children's learning and development. In addition, the layout and the range of Montessori materials available in the 3 to 5 year olds room have also been reviewed, with positive benefits for the children. In Baby Pippins children have access to appropriate early Montessori materials. Following the first visit the layout and quantity of non-Montessori activities in this room has been revised to create a less cluttered environment.

***The setting provides an education which follows the principles of the Montessori approach and environment. The setting has successfully addressed 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:***

- establish a schedule for the replacement of worn Montessori materials, to ensure that these are always in good condition; and
- continue to develop the peer observation system.

**An Action Plan has been drawn up with, and retained by, the setting to address these recommendations.**

### **Philosophy:**

The manager of Pippins Montessori Kindergarten has a thorough understanding of Montessori principles and these are reflected in the nursery's mission statement, which is clearly displayed throughout the setting. She realises that the children's desire to learn must be nurtured by adults who understand the importance of the physical environment in facilitating children's learning, and also the importance of their own interactions with the children. Since the first reaccreditation visit there have been several staff changes and the manager has considered it a priority to ensure that new staff members, although already trained in early years, are supported and guided towards an understanding of Montessori philosophy – even before they undertake formal training – and this understanding is evident. On the day of the first visit one staff member, who was working with a child using a Montessori resource, was explaining extremely patiently how to use the word 'similar' in context. She also explained it to several other children who joined in with the discussion. Through daily guidance and also more formal training, the manager engenders a shared vision of good Montessori practice amongst staff across the setting.

### **Learning and Development:**

Provision for learning and development is very good. Since the previous MEAB accreditation the setting has fully embedded its online planning and recording system. Planning in all rooms is thorough. Staff members plan for individual key children and the Montessori curriculum is now linked to EYFS areas of learning and development by the system. All adults can work with any child in their room; they can document their observations on the digital system and can see the child's recorded next steps. Planning is also informed by a Daily Reflection Form which staff members complete for each age group. In addition to planning for individual children, the team in each room creates a six-week topic plan together, linked to the EYFS, and this is then broken down into a weekly plan, allocating different activities to each staff member. At the end of the topic the room team discusses how well the overall plan went and records these reflections on a 'How did it go...' form, for future reference.

Following the first reaccreditation visit the team in each room has also created weekly plans to ensure that the outdoor environment offers children opportunities for learning in all areas. On the morning of the second visit children were particularly interested in an outdoor activity which linked model animals to habitats. Children from the 2 to 3 year old and the 3 to 5 year old rooms also went to the Forest School. They greatly enjoyed

activities such as using tools to sculpt a hedgehog from a pumpkin and experimenting in the mud kitchen.

The manager uses the online system effectively to evaluate provision across the setting and also to monitor children's progress. Furthermore, she offers guidance to parents so that they can make valuable use of the records of their child's progress.

### **Prepared Environment: resources and materials**

The condition and variety of resources at Pippins Montessori Kindergarten are good. Each room has been arranged to make resources easily accessible to the children, with low-level shelving and appropriately sized furniture. The children love the life cycle cards and models and, on the day of the first reaccreditation visit, several were sharing with each other their knowledge of the life cycle of a frog. The garden areas have all-weather surfaces and, following the first visit, there is now a good selection of activities offered outside for all areas of the curriculum, including for sensory, physical and creative play. On the day of the first visit children were enjoying a weaving activity, which was linked to the topic of 'Royalty'.

Following the first visit the layout of the Montessori materials in the 3 to 5 year olds room has also been reviewed, to better define the areas of learning. Furthermore, key items of Montessori materials have been added to enrich the provision. However, some of the Montessori materials are showing signs of wear. Establishing a schedule for replacing these will help to maintain the quality of the learning resources. The layout and quantity of materials in Baby Pippins has also been reviewed following the first visit and this environment is now less cluttered and appears calmer.

The manager is dedicated to ensuring that the environment is attractive and accessible to all children. This is evidenced by the confidence and interest with which the children explore their surroundings.

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

The level of children's independence at Pippins Montessori Kindergarten is excellent. Following the first reaccreditation visit an 'Outside Apple Tree' board has been introduced so that children can place their photograph on the tree to show that they wish to go outside. Many more children made use of the garden during the morning work cycle on the second visit than on the first.

The adults have high expectations of the children and they help them to meet these expectations through patient guidance and by providing activities and routines appropriate to each child's stage of development. When children arrive in the morning they are encouraged to change their shoes, hang up their belongings and self-register. A rolling snack time during the nursery's morning gives further opportunities for independence and for co-operation because only two children can access it at any time.

All children have group snack in the afternoon. Those in the 2 to 5 year old age range have lunch together. On the day of the first visit it was seen that children were invited to lay the table and could choose where they wanted to sit. Some of the older children chose to sit with younger peers and to help them as they served themselves with vegetables.

The environment is also set up to encourage children's independence, for example in the 2 to 3 year olds room they confidently help themselves to practical life activities and are able to return them to the correct place because photographs of the activities are fixed to the shelves in their room. In Baby Pippins there is a small enclosed area where, at specific times, the children are shown how to use a tablemat and how to choose an activity from low-level shelving. Offering similar activities in their main room will enable the children to practice these skills at will. On the morning of the second visit babies were also observed moving confidently between their room and the garden, where activities had been prepared for them. The adults encourage all the children to show care for others.

#### **Montessori Practice: links with parents, including reports and records**

Links with parents are excellent. On joining the setting families are given a 'Parent and Child Induction Pack' explaining how the setting operates and also giving information about Montessori and the EYFS. Parents are confident that they can approach their child's key person or the manager should they have any concerns. They appreciate the information staff give on the 'Going Home Slips'. In addition to keeping parents informed about their child's progress and enabling them to contribute their own observations, the online record-keeping system is used by the setting to inform them about events such as parents evenings and nativity plays. Each room also has a whiteboard to let parents know about topics, themes, menus and other news. Parents are invited to contribute to topics – on the second accreditation visit children were proudly showing each other natural items which they had collected with their parents for the 'Autumn' topic.

Parents receive termly newsletters via email. When children leave the setting, parents are able to download their child's learning journal. In addition, teachers complete a Local Education Authority development form together with a short paper report for each of their key children.

#### **Staff: qualifications, deployment, and performance management**

The team at Pippins Montessori Kindergarten is well trained and its members are fully supported in their roles. The manager has excellent procedures in place for the induction of new staff and for identifying training required for all staff. She holds annual appraisals with each staff member, and the room leaders help manage the performance of their room's team very effectively. Whole staff meetings take place every six to eight weeks. These are documented and provide an opportunity for all staff members to be involved.

The manager plans to continue with the implementation of the peer observation system by extending it to include observations of staff by room leaders and by colleagues from other rooms. The setting has recently established an innovative and supportive apprenticeship programme, with assessments of each apprentice's progress being made every two weeks. The manager is committed to supporting staff members who are not yet Montessori qualified. As well as sourcing external training, she conducts regular in-house Montessori training sessions in order to maintain the high quality of provision across the setting.

Name of Assessor: Susie Norman

Date of first visit: 6<sup>th</sup> June 2018

Date of second visit: 16<sup>th</sup> October 2018

Date report submitted: First visit – 8<sup>th</sup> June 2018  
Second visit – 18<sup>th</sup> October 2018