

**This spot check report is the judgement of the ME(UK) Assessor approved by the Council of Montessori Education (UK) on how *Merrydays Montessori School* meets the key standards laid down by Montessori Education (UK) in line with the philosophy and theory of the Montessori Approach to education originally established by Dr. Maria Montessori. The granting of ME(UK) Accreditation is recognition of authentic Montessori practice.**

## **SPOT CHECK REPORT**

**Name of School:** Merrydays Montessori School

**Name of Assessor:** Martha Mason

**Trainee Assessor:** Laura Carr

**Date of visit:** 26<sup>th</sup> February 2016

**There are no issues for mandatory action.**

### **Recommendations**

Many excellent activities are provided, however several are duplicated and areas are not clearly defined, such as more than one area for practical life, cutting and art are provided. These should be limited and this will enable clearly defined areas. The excellent mixed age group will be further extended as children will move throughout the setting to access the materials and activities.

Promote concentration and further independence by following the role models that the majority of the staff provide, by talking quietly to the child next to them and not across the room or loudly. Further promote concentration and independence by ensuring staff walk away to write notes, record findings and also to ask themselves why they are sitting with a child and if it is promoting purposeful work.

Most of the materials are in good condition, some excellent, however a few need to be updated for example the Capital Sandpaper Letters and Knobless Cylinders. More table mats need to be provided and a floor mat that fits Colour Box Three when made into a sun. The mats will promote independence and concentration.

### **Environment:**

Merrydays Montessori Nursery School is set in Large Memorial Hall with the use of several linked rooms. The hall and rooms are spacious, bright and warm. The hall also houses a Primary Montessori school; the Children's House group can access this room for further materials, for example sensorial and cultural materials. The mixed age is impressive, as is the feeling of calm and independence that permeates the setting. The assessor and the shadow assessor were greeted by the owner and shown around the provision including the outside areas and the Primary Room. The assessment time table was discussed and a provisional plan agreed. The overall impression made to assessors was of a well resourced, spacious Children's House, supporting freedom of movement and a high degree of independence. The materials have to be put away after some sessions and the children access a Forest School one day a week.

Merrydays has a full three hour work cycle.

The very well resourced setting provides for the full age and abilities range. There are several opportunities in different rooms, for the children to, for example, use practical life or cutting strips. The enthusiastic staff have handmade many activities, of particular note are the labels made by staff and children, the seasonal planting chart and the 'signing in chart' for going outside. One of the washing tables has photographs for the children to follow fostering independence.

All the activities are well prepared, however the abundance of materials and the fact some are duplicated, results in the areas not being clearly defined. Providing only one opportunity for the children to, for example pair socks and action free art, will ensure the children use the whole environment and encourage further development of the mixed age group. The children have an impressive range of materials and activities to use that are mainly in good and sometimes excellent condition. However, some would benefit from updating for example the sandpaper letters (capitals) and knobless cylinders. Nature and a sound knowledge of the seasons are promoted throughout the setting with plants, fresh flowers, nature tables, gardening and bird watching to name a few. A well stocked book corner and puzzles promote cultural awareness. There is a CD player for the children to use together with an inactive mobile phone allowing the children to use technology.

The staff are aware of the whole environment and were seen to care for it whenever it was needed.

Some staff use large note books which they put on the table next to the child, this was seen to interrupt the child and also interfere with the child's work space. Small note books or walking away to write notes would ensure they are not sitting with children that do not need them to be there. This will develop and support concentration and independence.

The outside area is limited and the very best use has been made with a range of activities including a hoop for basket ball, chimes to play, gardening activities, musical instrument and balance beams etc.

### **The Children**

The children entered the setting happily and were greeted individually. They are very independent and hang their coats up, use the 'going outside board', access snack, for example, without any prompting. Behaviour was extremely positive and any disputes were resolved by the children without any adult intervention. Several presentations were observed, such as the geometric solids and cards, a singing group, pouring activities. All were clear, the children used mats when available - but they are not provided for all exercises. Floor mats that are big enough (the one for the colour wheel is too small) and table mats will promote delineation of the child's space fostering concentration.

The mixed age group starts at two and the two year old area is working well with a suitable range of materials. The older children can access activities through the primary door which is left ajar. Primary children come into the Children's House to access floor mats, art and the very well supplied snack table. One Primary child told the assessor, "I usually sit with my friends, but when my little sister is here I sit with her for a snack", an impressive mixed age group.

The majority of the staff talk quietly and move calmly in the rooms providing excellent role models. This positive role modelling needs to extend to all the staff and this will further ensure concentration is not disturbed and add to the mainly calm atmosphere. The original full report had no mandatory issues and there are none at present.

**Statement of Recommendation**

I recommend to the School Accreditation Board of ME(UK) that Merrydays Montessori School receive accreditation for a further three years.

**Name of Assessor:** Martha Mason

**Date:** 28<sup>th</sup> February 2016