

Merrydays Montessori Nursery–Individual Class Observation Report

Assessor's Observation Record on how Merrydays Montessori Nursery meets the Montessori Education (UK) criteria for accreditation

Assessor's Name: Helen Prochazka Date of visit: 9th July 2019 Age group observed: 2- 5 + years

Classes 1-3 (Nominally in separate rooms but all free-flowing)

Criterion	Observed evidence and comments	Met	Not Met
<p>1. The work cycle: The working time lasts for an uninterrupted period of at least two and a half hours, preferably three. It follows the developmental rhythms of the children allowing for uninterrupted periods of work. During this time, the children mostly work individually but come together when they wish to, in small or larger groups. These periods are not set, but arise out of the needs of the children on a daily basis. Children have free access to snack throughout the work cycle.</p>	<p>The work cycle lasts for an uninterrupted period of at least two and a half hours, preferably three</p> <p>There was a really long work cycle which lasted from when the children arrived until lunch with free-flow to the outside area throughout.</p>	x	
	<p>The children mostly work individually during the work cycle</p> <p>Many examples of children of all ages working individually were observed, for example a 2 year old girl who was scooping, a boy doing sinking and floating, a girl matching the model animals to the pictures, a girl 'reading' to herself and the girl who was working with the giant dominoes outside.</p>	x	
	<p>The children come together when they wish to in small groups</p> <p>At the start of the visit 2 boys were observed sitting together drawing dinosaurs and discussing their drawings, and later on, outside, three boys were observed playing together with the ball run. Indoors one child chose the Rainbow Fish story bag and asked a staff member to read her the story. Another two children chose to listen as well and interact with the puppet.</p>	x	
	<p>The children come together when they wish to in larger groups</p> <p>Outdoors a spontaneous group formed when 6 boys decided to run races from one end of the tarmac to the other. A girl was laying out giant dominoes in the middle of their race track. A staff member intervened to negotiate with the boys that they would run around the dominoes, and the racing continued.</p> <p>During discussion with the staff following the observation they described how a whole school choir has evolved during singing sessions on a Friday, with the younger children gravitating to join the older ones for whom the session was intended. This was a spontaneous and gradual development initiated by the younger children that has become part of the routine.</p>	x	

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	<p>Children have free access to snack throughout the work cycle</p> <p>At 9:20 it was noted that the snack was all prepared, set up and ready on a big side table. 5 dedicated round tables were available for children having snack to sit at. At 9:40 the first child was observed sitting at one of the tables while a boy was being shown how to slice his own apple. At 9:55 four children of mixed ages were having snack, entertained by a primary child playing on the piano.</p>	x	
<p>2.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>Throughout the morning there were many examples of children working with materials they had accessed themselves. Rather than having materials duplicated in the various rooms the materials for each curriculum area are displayed together and the children are confident moving around the environment to access what they want to work with. This encourages a lot of gross motor movement throughout the whole session because of the space the environment as a whole offers.</p>	x	
<p>3.Prepared environment: 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, and focusing particularly on developing independence, language, movement and healthy social skills.</p>	<p>Environment suitable for all the ages catered for</p> <p>The environment has a full range of Montessori materials and activities suitable for the range of ages attending. However the practical life materials are set out in the main hall, which is a very big space for the youngest and newest children to settle in to. There is scope to create a smaller and cosier space for the youngest 2 year olds to ease their transition from home to school.</p>	x	
	<p>The set-up and maintenance of the environment</p> <p>Merrydays is an amazingly rich environment and beautifully presented considering it has to be set up every day from scratch. The shelves are uncluttered, and the materials on them easy for the children to see and access.</p>	x	
<p>4.Classroom management: 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; and to use the materials properly.</p>	<p>Freedom to make spontaneous choices</p> <p>The children were observed to be highly independent in terms of making choices of what to do. This continued throughout the morning and none of the children was observed to be having difficulties in terms of choosing what to do.</p>	x	
	<p>Independence</p> <p>When staff members were observed supporting children they did so in a way that encouraged the children to be as independent as possible. For example, the staff member showing the boy how to cut the apple organised the apple slicer so it was halfway into the apple, and left the child to push down himself to complete the slicing process.</p>	x	

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	<p>Completion of cycles of activity</p> <p>For the most part the children replaced their materials in their proper places when they had finished with them. A notable example was a younger girl who was busy with a jigsaw when she realised she could join in with something going on outside. Despite her obvious desire to go out she remembered she needed to put her jigsaw away, and did so as quickly as she could before she rushed off.</p>	x	
	<p>Having a sense of responsibility</p> <p>The example given above is indicative of the sense of responsibility this child has developed towards the environment and the others in it.</p>	x	
	<p>Using materials correctly and appropriately</p> <p>Only one exception was observed, a boy of about 4:6 who was working with the sandpaper letters and the sand tray, after having a presentation from a staff member. It was clear from the outset that although he was engaged with her he was not engaged with the materials and the staff member correctly suggested that he tidy up. She moved away, and the boy started trickling the sand through his fingers and generally just playing with it in a distracted way.</p>	x	
<p>5. Materials: Materials are displayed in an orderly way, well maintained and complete</p>	<p>Orderly display</p> <p>The materials are displayed precisely, in order of progression and thoughtfully positioned and arranged so that the children can access them easily.</p>	x	
	<p>State of maintenance</p> <p>Overall the materials are in higher than average condition, although clearly they are all frequently used. For the most part they are well maintained, although the pink language materials could do to be refreshed.</p>	x	
	<p>Complete</p> <p>A spot check of materials that might be incomplete, the counters for the cards and counters exercise and the knobs on the shapes in the geometric cabinet revealed that all were present and correct.</p>	x	

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<p>6. Teachers:The teachers and their assistants are the dynamic link between the children and their environment. Their attitude reflects Montessori ethos and values: they are an unobtrusive presence in the classroom, they treat the children with respectful equality yet firmness, and they facilitate children's development through their presentations of material, observation of the children's activity and facilitation of their social development through grace and courtesy exercises and role modelling.</p>	<p>Dynamic link</p> <p>The teachers most certainly are a dynamic link between the materials and the environment. A staff member was observed working with the large numeral cards to reinforce a child's understanding of how to read them when they are stacked. This was a thoughtful and engaging presentation which was effective in meeting the child's needs.</p>	x	
	<p>Unobtrusive presence</p> <p>Just as the children flow freely through the environment, so do the staff. They are unobtrusive in their movements, but ever-watchful and ready to step in as needed, as for example when a second staff member encouraged the boy with the sand tray to begin to tidy up.</p>	x	
	<p>Respectful yet firm attitude towards children</p> <p>This was very clear from the interaction between the staff member and child mentioned above. The staff member was firm that the activity had to be put back on the shelf and the sand swept up before he could go on and do something else. Her objective was eventually fully attained, by virtue of her remaining firm, positive, encouraging and focused.</p>	x	
	<p>Presentations</p> <p>Examples of thoughtful and effective presentations were observed during the morning, including the numeral cards one described above, and a patient and focused demonstration of folding to a child for whom observing closely is a skill he needs to develop.</p>	x	
	<p>Observations of activity</p> <p>One specific instance was observed of a staff member observing the activity of a child. The child was engaged in scooping, but not being very accurate. The staff member watched from a distance but refrained from intervening, and so the girl was able to continued her activity uninterrupted.</p>	x	
	<p>Grace and courtesy and role modelling</p> <p>The attitude of the staff towards the children was uniformly respectful and considerate.</p>	x	