

Collaborative Montessori Accreditation (CMA) Report

Name of Assessor: Hannah Khiani

Date/s of Assessment Visit: July 18th 2023

Name of Setting: Flitch Green Montessori Pre-School

Address of Setting: Tanton Road, Little Dunmow, Dunmow, Essex CM6 3GG

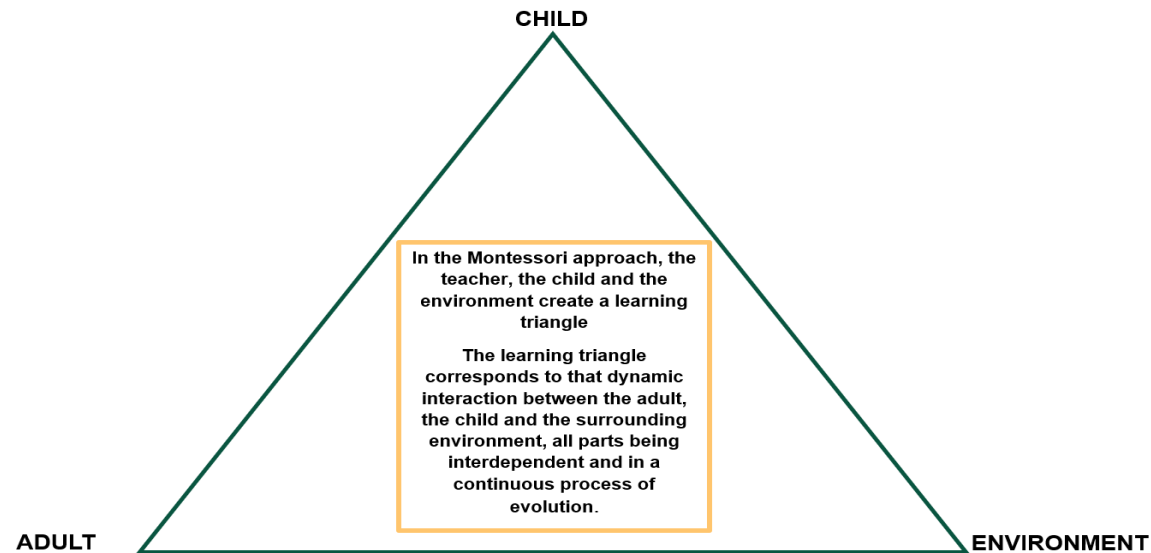
Setting type: Nursery School (Term-time only)

Facility type: Purpose built

Ownership of the Setting: Privately owned

Date Setting opened: 2009

Date and grade of last Ofsted / relevant national inspection: July 2022 (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. These dynamics in effective practice 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) and on the evidence gathered during the Assessor's visit.

The Child

Attendance on the day of the accreditation visit:

| Age | How many children were present | | |
|--------|--------------------------------|-------------------|---------|
| | Morning session | Afternoon session | All day |
| 0 – 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 2 – 3 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| 3 – 5 | 1 | | 19 |
| Over 5 | | | |

Summary of evidence and assessment of practice:

On the day of the visit, the children were confident as they entered the nursery with smiles and were ready to engage in conversations. They found their pegs, got ready for the day, chose their own activities and decided where and how to work, joining adults or working independently; children working with friends shared ideas and worked together collaboratively. The children were observed showing care for each other and the environment as they used a wide variety of activities; for instance, they co-operated on ways to rescue two ladybirds who had fallen in the water tray, they watered plants and tidied away activities after use. The children were free to move inside and out and were busy and purposeful.

Independence:

The children are free to choose activities that interest them, are free to observe others and are given time to carry out tasks and to repeat activities. They were observed deciding whether to work at tables or on the floor and independently finding sun hats and wellie boots when they got ready to go outside. Children washed hands, prepared snack and helped get ready for lunch and washed up afterwards. In the garden, the children were observed using a wide range of tools as they swept, dug and watered the various plants and vegetables. The children's independence and freedom to choose were respected throughout the day as they were encouraged to make independent decisions about where and how they played, both indoors and out. Parents appreciate the way that the children are encouraged to be independent, saying they liked the way that the teachers 'encourage my child's independence in day-to-day activities...', for instance by 'clearing away toys after using them, cutting up snack and pouring drinks'.

Socialisation:

The children enter the nursery full of news to share with their teachers; they call out to each other to work together with activities from the shelves. Children were observed playing in pairs with the Animals of the World activity: "Now it is your turn – this one has animals from Africa." and bringing different fruit to share with their friends for snack. "Look, I got a giant pineapple". They played and talked to teachers. "Look, I got a plaster." and shared news about transitions. "I am four and a half and I gave my friend this dress because it is too small for me because I am getting bigger and going to big school soon. We are going to the same big school!". The children are polite, confident and spontaneously share their ideas: "I need to make it more longer" (using blocks). Strong bonds were observed with children holding hands and hugging and choosing to play together for much of the day. The teachers also role-modelled grace and courtesy as they greeted the children and interacted with them. Children understand the social norms within the school, using kind words and saying 'Please' and 'Thank you' without being reminded. They look out for each other and help one another as they turn take with materials and pick things up when they fall to the floor: "Here you are, this is your blanket".

Exploration:

During the visit, the Montessori metal insets and art materials were used by lots of children for extended periods to create new shapes, patterns and designs: "Look, I made a beautiful snail". Guttering was used outside to race cars and make sand go 'really fast'; this exploration was extended further with the creation of the 'high railway'. Inside, block play allowed children to build

interesting structures while outside they used the water tray to investigate sinking and floating with a wide variety of objects. Children were encouraged to hypothesise about which objects might sink and also record their findings. Children were invited to closely observe the butterflies and a grasshopper that were found in the forest school area; natural resources and magnifying glasses on the shelves provide further opportunities for exploration and discovery. -The children also explored with their whole bodies, sliding backwards and forwards and jumping off high tunnels to see if they could be more like 'Spiderman'.

Movement:

The children move around the classroom freely and safely. With thoughtfully planned activities on the shelves, children have plenty of opportunity to practise their fine motor skills through pouring, transferring, and using scissors and knives safely. At the art table, the children used a variety of physical skills as they made book-marks and collages. In the garden, the children ran, jumped and rolled down the mini hill and joyfully slid down the slide, backwards and forwards. Children used bats and balls, bikes and trikes to ride around; in the sand area, they were busy digging and transferring sand. On the day of the visit, the children also participated in a yoga class, practised some action-songs and danced together too, with much enthusiasm. Children also had the chance to rest and to just 'be': there are comfy cushions in the book area and quiet corners in the garden; books are available inside and out to facilitate opportunities for more restful pursuit.

Communication

The teachers are respectful and calm as they speak to the children; they use questions and open-ended statements to encourage children to share their ideas and to choose how they could do things, such as saying, "You decide", to support independence and creative thinking. Conversation is used, throughout the day, in a positive way to encourage children to connect with each other and to share their feelings. A wide range of books in the book corner prompt interesting discussions and help to introduce interesting new words. When reading stories, teachers gave plenty of time for the children to comment, contribute and to complete story gaps. Teachers facilitate language development through re-casting and by giving children plenty of time to listen and respond; Makaton signs support some of the children in their verbal interactions. Parents value the way the school communicates with them: the mobile App is used efficiently, teachers are approachable and regularly inform parents/carers about any issues.

The Environment

Summary of evidence and assessment of practice:

The indoor classroom is very light and airy, with shelves and activities placed at child-height. Children have trays with their names on them where they store some of the beautiful artwork that they create during the day. The book corner is well-stocked with fiction and non-fiction books and is comfortable and cosy with plenty of space for children to sit and enjoy books together. The resources are organised by curriculum area and include a comprehensive range of activities for self-discovery and exploration. There is free flow access to an outside area and also to an additional grassy area that is used for forest school activities. On the day of the visit, games with balls and time for bug hunts took place spontaneously and at the children's own pace. Parents commenting on the atmosphere of the school note that the environment is 'welcoming and calm, happy and consistent'. Parents also value the 'welcoming and relaxed environment and the caring teachers.'

Order

The activities are ordered in a systematic way and grouped according to the Montessori areas of learning; resources were easily found by the children thanks to this order and activities from every area were equally used during the visit. Children returned the activities and their mats after use, to help ensure the order in the classroom was maintained. The children are familiar with the routines and they move around the classroom carefully; in the art area, children use mats to protect the tables and wipe them down afterwards for the next person who will use them.

The physical environment

Indoors

The activities at Flitch Green (FG) are numerous and wide-ranging, offering interesting experiences to the children on a daily basis. Montessori activities sit on the shelves alongside activities that are made or sourced by teachers to provide alternatives and extensions. The appealing resources on the Activities of Everyday Living shelves engage the children throughout the day; there is an area where children can sort rubbish to be recycled. The literacy shelves include opportunities for mark-making,

writing and reading. During the visit, numeracy materials were used to explore numbers from one to ten and beyond as children worked with different Montessori maths materials. Children used the maps in KUW, looked at the life cycles resources and explored the sensorial materials. The art area had different collage materials, glue and scissors and drawing materials. In the afternoon, the 'Girls World' styling head model was very popular: various new hairstyles and hair clips were used and tried out on both the model and the teachers!

Outdoors

The outdoor classroom is set up with care and thought by the teachers. Tarpaulins are used to keep the areas safe and clean overnight and are cleared away daily to reveal a large digging area with lots of tools that were used throughout the day for various projects. There is an area for bikes and trikes where the children invented new games using chinks and 'traffic lights' made from coloured tennis racquets. There are bats and balls available, a tunnel, a slide, and the sensorial materials taken outside provide opportunities for the children to engage with the Montessori materials in different surroundings. A giant Spindle Box with sparkly numerals complements indoor numeracy materials. The train set was popular, being used in different ways across the garden. The children's creativity was also evident with other activities outside: for example, water was used to care for plants, to make a volcano, for mark-making with paint brushes, for creating sand-pies and for sinking and floating experiments. In the afternoon, the children were also taken into the adjoining field for small group activities in nature.

First-hand experiences and active learning

FG provides children with first hand experiences both indoors and outside. The outside environment offers opportunities for role-play through a mud kitchen, and hands-on exploration of caring for plants, growing vegetables, digging, raking, and meeting all kinds of mini beasts. The children also climbed trees and explored the outside with their whole bodies. In the mud kitchen, children are given ample opportunity to explore freely with their friends and they were comfortable in assigning and covering designated roles: "You can be the mummy and can make the lunch". The adults in the environment were also observed initiating activities, such as using a bat and ball, mark-making using chinks or paint brushes with water: "This is my name – look". They were also observed standing back to allow the children the opportunity to extend their understanding by exploring independently.

The Adult

Adults present during the accreditation visit:

| Initials, roles and responsibilities | Qualifications | Length of time at the setting | Part time | Full time |
|---|---|-------------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| CG (Manager) | Montessori Diploma L4 and Early Years Foundation Degree | 14 years | | √ |
| WS (Deputy Manager and Health and Safety Manager) | Montessori Diploma L4 | 5 years | | √ |
| CB (Senco) | Montessori Diploma L3 | 4 years | | √ |
| TB | Montessori Diploma L2 | 13 years | √ | |
| LT | Unqualified | 16 months | √ | |

Summary of evidence and assessment of practice:

The adults speak warmly to and about each other. They are a strong team and are caring and enthusiastic; they are observant and know the children well. They use conversation and open-ended statements to prompt the children in sharing their own ideas. “What makes you think that?” and children are quick to respond, with conversations flowing naturally throughout the day. Invitations are offered to children who are observing at a distance. “Would you like to join us?”. The staff are warm and friendly; children were seen leaning into the adults in the setting and seeking hugs and reassurance when they needed it. The adults are

adept at supporting children in their holistic development by scaffolding learning with new activities and challenges; they sensitively support the children throughout the day – especially during transitional moments such as getting ready for lunch and getting ready for home time. The teachers check in with each other too, to ensure effective deployment. –Parents commented on how “caring and approachable” teachers are.

The Leadership Team

Parents value the ‘strong leadership’ and the ‘experienced teachers’. The teachers are encouraged, by the leadership team, to undertake training to extend their knowledge and understanding of child development, safeguarding and supporting children with special educational needs. The manager is committed to improving outcomes for children through the use of Montessori principles; the teachers praised the collaborative way in which the leadership team work to encourage and foster a strong sense of belonging and co-operation. Staff appraisals take place regularly to ensure that roles and responsibilities are clear; frequent meetings and daily conversations enable the staff to discuss children’s individual progress and their needs, to share opinions, find solutions to possible issues, and to contribute to the setting’s development plan. This commitment helps ensure that provision is consistent.

The Teaching Team

Parents noted that all the teachers are ‘helpful and knowledgeable’ and recognise the strong bonds built between the children and the teachers: ‘My child loves coming to school’. Parents valued the use of the online App as a source for information about their children’s progress, school events and ideas on Montessori activities; parents also appreciate the open-door policy which enables conversations with teachers at any time. Many parents cited ‘the amazing teachers’, the ‘dedicated staff’ and the ‘wonderful ladies’ as the aspect they most value about the setting; they praised the way the teachers ‘go above and beyond’ with the children and make the school ‘such a lovely place to be’. The teaching team works together to care for the children who may need additional support, providing carefully planned activities and one-on-one help.

The Key Person

Parents appreciated how the key person shared helpful tips and activities to be carried out at home with the children; great advice and ideas on ways to support understanding around phonic sounds and literacy were also mentioned. On the day of the visit, i-pads were used to take photos to add to the children’s recorded learning journey. The teachers work closely with each

child and the positive relationships were evident during the visit as the children sought out the teachers when they had questions and came for hugs when they needed comfort. Evidence of building on children's current interests and of scaffolding next steps was observed through various extensions of activities used earlier in the week.

Commendations

- The highly committed teachers work together as a united and enthusiastic team.
- The teachers carefully plan the environment to create an appealing space where the children thrive.
- Montessori principles of fostering independence and respect for others are integrated into all aspects of the day.
- Conversations at the door and parents' feedback in their questionnaires confirm that strong relationships are built between the families and the setting.
- Careful planning and the use of the outdoor environment provides the children with valuable first-hand experiences and the opportunity to explore and discover.
- With strong links with the local primary schools, transition to 'big school' is well-supported.

Recommendations

- Some parents asked for further opportunities to be more involved in the life of the setting and suggested the chance to come and read to the children. This suggestion is in line with the setting's development plan.
- The promotion of healthy eating and the use of more sustainable packaging to reduce the plastic waste were discussed. Children's participation and autonomy during lunch time could be enhanced by encouraging tidying away after eating.
- Consider ways to support children's understanding of the principles of cosmic education through making connections with other schools/communities. Review ways to extend children's understanding of sustainability through small projects, activities and books.

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: 31st July 2023

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:

Fritch Green Montessori Pre-School

Validity period:

From: September 2023

to: September 2026

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.