

## Montessori Evaluation and Accreditation Board

### School Accreditation

This report is prepared following two accreditation visits made on behalf of the Montessori Evaluation and Accreditation Board. It considers how far the school follows relevant criteria set out in “The Guide to the EYFS in Montessori Settings” (2012/14). The second visit sought to assess the progress made on the recommendations set out in the report from the first visit and considered any further findings made during the second visit.

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

Receiving accreditation carries the expectation that settings will continue to work on the issues highlighted in this report and will remain committed to the ongoing development of their practice. Furthermore, that they 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.

**Holly Grange Montessori Limited (Lymm)**  
36 Oughtrington Lane, Lymm, Cheshire WA13 0RA

Date of first accreditation visit: 7 November 2016  
Date of second accreditation visit: 10 February 2017

This accreditation is valid until 31 July 2021

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

#### **Description of the nursery:**

Holly Grange Montessori Ltd. (Lymm) is located on the outskirts of the village of Lymm, near Warrington. It has sole use of an extended two storey detached property, with parking, a small garden and a garden office to the front, and a large enclosed garden to the rear.

On the ground floor there are three rooms for the children: the Baby room for those aged 3 to 18 months, the Pre-school room for children aged 3 to 4 years, and in the single storey extension to the rear is Class 1 for children aged between 18 months and 2 years. All three rooms have their own sink units, and there are changing areas for the babies and Class 1. There is also an office and a kitchen on this floor. The garden office

to the front of the building is also used as the staff room. On the first floor are two classrooms which are joined by a small corridor. One room, Class 2, is for children aged 2 to 2½ years old and the other, Class 3, is for children aged 2½ to 3 years old.

The garden to the rear of the property is divided into three sections, separated by gated fencing. One section is for the Baby room, one for Class 1 and the largest is for all those over 2 years of age. The babies' garden has artificial grass, a large permanent gazebo and a small fixed wooden climbing/stage area. The garden for Class 1 is a mixture of turf and woodchip surfaces and has fixed wooden balance beams and a mud kitchen. The largest garden section has three areas: one with artificial grass, a concrete area, and a very large patch of woodland with a woodchip surface. Each garden has planters at a low height for children to enjoy, as well as seating. The small garden to the front of the building is used by all children, in groups, as a vegetable garden.

The setting is open between 07:45 and 18.00 daily, for 51 weeks of the year. Children can attend full- or part-time, although most attend full-time, and there are currently 68 on roll. The nursery is registered for a maximum of 32 children to attend at any one time. On the day of the second accreditation visit there were 27 children attending in the morning and 26 in the afternoon, 12 of whom were under 2 years old during the morning session, with 10 staying all day. There were 12 staff members present during the whole day, four of whom were working with those children under 2 years. Lunches and teas are cooked on site by the chef and are provided for all children who are attending at those times.

The setting is able to provide for children with additional needs and for those for whom English is an additional language. It was established in 2014 and is one of two Montessori nurseries owned by the managing director, who is in attendance here for the majority of each week. She oversees this nursery alongside the full-time manager. Both are Montessori qualified. There are 12 other childcare staff members, the team are well qualified and the majority of them work on a full-time basis.

## Summary

Holly Grange Montessori Ltd. (Lymm) provides a rich and individual learning experience for each child. This personalised approach by the nurturing staff team allows children to develop at their own pace and according to their own needs and interests. The range of activities available to the children, alongside the routines and practice of the staff all promote children's self-initiated activities. Staff members adapt the provision so that it fully meets the changing needs of the children to ensure that they remain interested in their learning and comfortable with the next steps of their progression. This could be enhanced further by introducing opportunities for children to reflect on their learning and experiences at nursery. The rooms are welcoming for children, and staff members support them in their exploration of the environment. The outdoor space is also a valuable resource that is used effectively to allow the development of free choice in a safe and yet engaging way.

Children of all ages demonstrate a great degree of independence during their time at the nursery. This is possible through a combination of staff offering good role-modelling and teaching of skills, coupled with the trust offered by them, and the opportunities that the children have to try things for themselves. Children appear comfortable and content in the nursery, and are able to freely express their personalities.

The members of the staff team are experienced and acknowledge the importance of self-evaluation of their practice. A peer observation system is a 'work in progress'. By ensuring that these observations take place regularly and with timely feedback, staff will have excellent opportunities for reflection and growth. Staff members demonstrate the desire to offer the best possible experience for children at the setting. The support that they offer each other also serves as a good example of positive social interaction for the children.

Parents are very supportive of the setting and of the personal, nurturing approach it offers. The very effective communication with them uses online, paper-based and face to face interactions, and enables parents to feel that staff know their children very well and are able to meet their needs.

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

- to continue to broaden opportunities for children to reflect on their day and on their progress over time; and
- to ensure that peer observations take place on a regular basis and that feedback to members of staff is done in a timely manner.

#### **Philosophy:**

The nursery delivers the Montessori approach very effectively for the benefit of each of its children. The personalised provision offered allows each child to develop at their own pace, guided by attentive and caring staff. They make and record numerous observations throughout the day that allow them to better know the children, and to provide for their next steps in a timely fashion. Children are given plenty of time to make choices, carry out activities and explore freely, which is an excellent indication of the trust that is shown to them; their liberty to follow their own learning path and to develop self-discipline is fully supported by the adults.

Although children are grouped by age across the five rooms there are daily opportunities for them to mix together, indoors and outside. On the day of the second accreditation

visit the children from Classes 2 and 3 and Pre-school were all together in the outdoor space and at lunch some children from Classes 2 and 3 ate with the Pre-school children. During periods in which some children are sleeping there are further opportunities for those who are awake to mix with children from other classes. As children move between rooms when they wake, staff members are able to react to numbers in each room and operate in a fluid way to ensure ratios of staff to children are adhered to without compromising the children's freedom.

The philosophy of the setting is defined on the website and in the prospectus and fully promotes the Montessori approach. It is reviewed annually, this process being led by the managing director.

### **Learning and Development:**

The areas of learning are clearly defined in each room of the setting. In the Baby room children are able to move around, making choices about where to go and which resources to explore. The arrangement of the room allows for maximum floor space to be available. The staff members in this room engage with the children in an enthusiastic and nurturing way, modelling conversations effectively. They are continually positive with the children and model social and emotional responses very well. Children are encouraged to join group times, for example to sing together, but are allowed to continue with other activities if they prefer during these times.

The children in Class 1 are given time to try things out, to make a mess and to help clear it up in a way that builds their understanding of their own capabilities alongside social responsibility. Staff members here speak to children in a respectful and encouraging way, using the daily routines to support children's development. They are free to make choices, for example whether they wish to go outside or remain indoors. On the day of the second accreditation visit the children in this room took part in a baking activity. The vocabulary involved was used repeatedly with the children, and the adults asked open questions to extend children's understanding. They were encouraged to join the group activity, but were able to leave if they wished.

Children in Classes 2 and 3 are able to move freely between their rooms, which allows for broader opportunities for social development and which also allows the staff members across these two rooms to share their observations. Children follow their interests and demonstrate independent choice in terms of how long they are working and who they are working with, reinforcing the trust that staff have in the children to manage themselves. As both these rooms are upstairs it is not possible for them to freely access the outdoor space. However, they are given the choice of staying inside or going out during the morning session and staff members are deployed where they are needed. The morning work cycle for those under 3 years of age incorporates children's individual routines, such as for eating and sleeping. Their afternoon work cycle also depends on the length of time they sleep.

In the Pre-school room opportunities for learning and development are also very good. The work cycle here runs for 2¾ hours during the morning session, after which children

have access to the outdoor provision. The design of the building does not allow any free-flow movement between the indoors and outdoors for the children in Pre-school. The access they have after the work cycle and in the afternoon is ample and provides the best possible for the children given the constraints of the premises. During the work cycle they are able to make spontaneous choices, and engage in work that both challenges and develops them. In the afternoons there are extra activities offered such as Forest School sessions, yoga and music and movement. Children in this room learn well through self-chosen activities and through the excellent planned adult-led activities. The adults assigned to each room have a secure knowledge of the children's development and are able to adapt the learning environment to meet children's current needs. The staff team is well supervised in their daily practice by members of the management team.

The outdoor space is large and well used by the children. The babies are brought out at least once a day, and benefit from their gazebo, which offers both shade and shelter throughout the year. The Class 1 garden has a range of equipment that promotes physical, cognitive and co-operative development. The garden for those over 2 years of age has an area for creative and visual arts, a large mud kitchen for sensorial and social play, room for ride-on toys to be used, space for large block play and fixed balance equipment. The woodland area includes raised staging, a playhouse, as well as tree stumps and coppiced trees to clamber on. The children are supported to identify areas of risk outdoors and mark them as such themselves. This awareness of risk is also being promoted more indoors, for example by children identifying items that are breakable.

Planning for individual children in all the rooms is based on the staff team's evaluation of their daily observations of the child. This ensures that any assessments are up to date and relevant. Long- and short-term planning incorporates themes such as 'seasons' and links effectively the Montessori curriculum with the learning and development requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. Children's learning and development is tracked thoroughly by staff members' use of the setting's comprehensive web-based recording system. This system is managed securely. The manager reviews all observations made and next steps planned for each child, and thereby assesses the effectiveness of the record-keeping and provision for the children. Children are encouraged to reflect on their day at nursery to enable them to develop an awareness of their own learning and development and to see how they have progressed over time. These opportunities could be broadened to encourage this reflection in all the children, helping them to develop their thinking skills.

Children with additional needs have individual assessments and provision made for them that are managed by the special educational needs and/or disabilities co-ordinator, who also oversees contact with parents and any outside agencies. This is effective practice. All the children at Holly Grange Montessori Ltd. (Lymm) enjoy a rich and rewarding learning experience.

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

Each room contains distinct areas of learning that are clearly organised. Resources are displayed on open shelving and are visible and easy to access for the children. This supports their freedom of choice about what they wish to engage with. The materials are well looked after by staff, kept clean and updated as children's interests change over time. Outside, the excellent range of fixed equipment is enhanced by additional resources that are stored in accessible sheds and outdoor cupboards for the children to choose from.

The Baby room has a long bar affixed to one wall to assist the children in standing and cruising, as well as low mirrors along the wall. There is a carpeted area with soft cushions which has a range of heuristic materials available for sensory exploration. Class 1 has appropriately-sized furniture which is arranged to allow the maximum amount of floor space for the children to move around easily and access materials of their choice. Children can also reach their own sink unit within the room. The range of home-made and purchased resources is very inviting, and early Montessori materials are introduced in this class, such as the toddler knobbed cylinders.

Classes 2 and 3 have open shelving around the edges of the rooms and low tables and chairs are arranged to allow floor space for exploratory play. The materials available are developmentally appropriate and the children engage fully with the resources across both these rooms. The materials offer a progression from those in Class 1 and a broader range of both Montessori and non-Montessori activities are found here.

The Pre-school's wide variety of materials also fully meets its children's needs and interests. The well-planned activities and resources are adapted as necessary. The quantity of materials available is suitable for the number of children in the room, and children have the choice to work where they prefer, at a table or on the floor. The adult-made activities here are designed to respond to particular interests, such as comic book hero sequencing cards which interest specific children.

Very good provision is made in each room for its children to sleep. For example, Classes 2 and 3 use one room for sleeping after lunch and one room for children to go into once they wake, this allows children to sleep for as long as they need to. Most children eat their meals in their own room. The setting of tables, serving and clearing up is done by the children with appropriate levels of support that are dependent on their needs and abilities.

The prepared environment across the setting is excellent. It allows children to follow their interests and have their needs met, and it is easily adapted as children develop. It is well cared for by staff and by the children, who are able to join in the cleaning using child-sized resources such as small brooms.

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

In the Baby room the children are able to develop their independence through their freedom of movement and their opportunity to explore. Staff members aid their easy access to all their resources and promote their use of cutlery at meal times. Independence is also developed through the interactions staff members have with these children as they model conversation and promote respect for others.

In Class 1 the children's independence is also developed through their exploration, by making mistakes and solving problems; this experience fosters a sense of self-awareness, and the adults support this in a sensitive manner. When the children were baking on the day of the second accreditation visit they were invited to break eggs, pour, measure and mix with appropriate support.

In Classes 2 and 3 children have the choice of which room to work in, and who to work with. Staff are deployed where they are needed – for example if the majority of children wish to work outside, then the children who are staying inside join together in one classroom. This flexible approach allows children to take the lead in their learning. In all rooms the children are free to repeat any activity they have chosen, and to spend as long as they wish completing it. The opportunity for children to create their own groups to work in is always available, and this choice is supported by the staff.

Snack is freely available for children in Classes 2, 3 and the Pre-school, along with fresh water. Children are given support in helping themselves to snack when they need it, thereby learning to recognise their body's needs. The younger children enjoy appropriate care routines including for feeding and sleeping. Lunch and tea times involve children acting as 'servers'. All children eat at their own pace, and can request more food if they wish to. The children are encouraged, if they are able, to clear up their place setting when everyone has finished in their room.

Grace and courtesy is promoted and modelled through daily interactions. For example, adults will encourage children to carry out tasks that require them to speak to other children or adults, reminding them of what to say whilst allowing them the freedom to go and try for themselves.

The key person system is used fully to promote children's independence beyond the setting. The key person discusses anything of note that the child has said or done with their parent or carer, and shares suggestions and ideas of how the child could be further supported at home. The induction process for new parents includes the sharing of ideas to support transition and to foster the child's independence before they begin attending. Families also have a range of resources to borrow, along with parent literature which explains Montessori principles and how these can be applied at home. Independence is extremely well promoted at the setting due to the combination of the high value placed upon it by the practitioners and the very effective routines and expectations in place.

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

Staff roles within the setting are understood well and records are kept up to date, which helps to ensure that links with parents are excellent. The key person arrangements are very effective. They give staff responsibility for the observations, planning and provision for the children in their group. Each child also has a secondary key person to provide continuity of care in the event of the main person's absence. The key person ensures that relevant information is passed on to parents through the password-protected record-keeping system, and they are encouraged to offer their input for planning for their child. Parents have responded very positively to this, some describing it as invaluable. A broad range of communication methods are used to give both general information about the setting and specific feedback regarding individual children. Parents have described this communication as 'brilliant' and are reassured by it. Closed Facebook groups and the online system allow daily information and feedback to be accessed by parents. Newsletters are also sent home on a weekly basis. Staff members in the Baby room in particular give detailed face to face feedback on a daily basis to keep parents and carers up to date with the health, wellbeing and care of these young children. Parents' evenings are held three times a year; these are also open for prospective parents. Appointments can be made to visit the nursery at any other time.

The mandatory two year old progress check is completed in the necessary time frame, and is added to the thorough and detailed records kept for each child. This is written for individual children by their key person and then shared with parents for their comments to be recorded. This check is also used to identify and explain what additional support may be required for the child. Transitions between rooms are managed by the key persons who will be involved. Parents complete a form to indicate their child's needs and interests to aid this move. Transition reports sent to schools when the children leave the setting detail their progress along with any specific needs a child may have. Teachers from the primary schools that children will be attending are able to visit the setting and see the children at work. Information is shared very effectively during transitions.

Parental feedback about the nursery is very good, they praise the high standard of care given to their children, they comment on the development of their child's confidence and independence at home, and on how inclusive and welcoming the setting is. Parents also become closely involved in voluntary aspects of the nursery such as in the upkeep of the vegetable garden, the 'Father's Day in the Forest' event and a Mother's Day tea.

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

The managing director is Montessori qualified to certificate level and has Early Years Professional Status (EYPS). The manager has a level 5 early years' qualification, is supernumerary and is responsible for the whole staff team. Two members of staff hold a Montessori diploma, including the manager, two have early childhood degrees and one member also has EYPS. Two are qualified in early years at level 3, with a further four being qualified at level 2, two of whom are studying for a level 3 qualification. The manager has recently qualified as a Forest School practitioner and two other members

