



Phase One: Standards & Training Accreditation Review - Accreditation Assessor Report

Name (legally registered name of setting):	Fountain Montessori Nursery and Pre-School St Albans
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Section 1: Overview

The purpose of this assessment for **Fountain Montessori Nursery and Pre-School, St Albans** is for a Standards & Training Accreditation Review (STAR) Phase One Accreditation. The Team of Accreditation Assessors involved in this assessment include **Helen Lerebours** and **Jo McIntyre**

This report is based on a review of information submitted by the setting (including self-analysis evidence) and additional evidence gathered throughout the assessment process comprising desk-based materials, discussions, interviews and on-site visits.

The scope of provision for the purposes of this report relates to formal educational provision within **Fountain Montessori Nursery and Pre-School, St Albans** acquired in November 2019. Recently refurbished, the setting has expanded to provide provision for 65 children aged 6 months to 60 months. The setting's family community come from wide and diverse backgrounds.

Within this context, **Fountain Montessori Nursery and Pre-School, St Albans** provides a central service for its local community; STAR aims to amplify this important role and provide professional insight and relevant scrutiny as evidence to external audiences and families of the essential duties carried out by this setting for its young people. The purpose of the STAR framework is to enable comparison and continuity regarding practice, principles and application of learner-centred philosophy for all applicant settings, providers and schools globally.

Fountain Montessori Nursery and Pre-School, St Albans can be assured that their application has been considered via a rigorous and robust assessment process, concluded in **March 2023** and we are pleased to confirm **SUCCESSFUL** Phase One Accreditation within Montessori group's Standards & Training Accreditation Review (STAR) framework. **Congratulations!**



Section 2: Summary of Findings

As illustrated by the Montessori Group's Commitment to Quality Enhancement, STAR is a vital part of our approach to ensure the availability of high-quality educational provision through the UK and overseas. It is in support of this vision that our panel look to highlight good practice; provide narrative and commentary to share the uniqueness of each provider and highlight areas of particular notes for challenge, development or celebration now and in the future development of the provider.

Standards

- Children are nurtured by well-informed and responsive staff members who support active play and exploration, helping children develop creative thinking skills, autonomy and confidence.***

Principles	Evidenced
<p>ESSENTIAL</p> <p>1.1 Children's spontaneous learning is of paramount importance. Such learning is nurtured by sensitive and well-informed observers who prepare rich, dynamic indoor and outdoor learning environments that actively support children's play and exploration to enhance independence.</p>	<p>Fountain Nursery St Albans express a strong commitment to the care and development of the child. Their love for the children they care for is highlighted in the Core values page presented on their website and reinforced at team meetings – evidence provided.</p> <p>At the start of their learning journey every child is allocated a Key person to develop effective and positive relationships with the child, the family, and the Nursery. Each classroom is bright, spacious and well equipped with a range of Montessori and non-Montessori resources. The outside garden and play area provide ample space for a wide range of activities including climbing equipment, messy play, sand pit, tricycles and dress-up.</p>
<p>ESSENTIAL</p> <p>1.2 Holistic support and provision for children considers the needs of the whole child and promotes physical, cognitive, social, emotional, psychological and spiritual development.</p>	<p>The leadership and staff demonstrate a strong commitment to provide a stimulating learning environment to support the holistic growth of every child through self-exploration, open-ended resources, and some evidence of supported 'every day' living activities: dustpans, brushes, wipes and self-serving snack tables.</p> <p>Children attending the setting are clearly confident and well supported, this was observed at the on-site visit.</p>
<p>1.3 Children are supported to prepare for real-life, encouraged to develop tools in resilience, self-esteem, independence and self-discipline.</p>	<p>Suitable low-level furniture, washroom and cloakroom areas promote children's independence and self-esteem. The Butterfly room 6-12 months is well equipped with age-appropriate toys and equipment. Raised equipment is provided to promote development of gross motor skills – Children were actively using this equipment for climbing and engaging in self-led play. The main areas of focus in this room are to - nurture and encourage, bond with their carer, develop physical, language and communication skills.</p> <p>It would be nice to see China and glass crockery to further support the individual's independence and autonomy.</p>



<p>ESSENTIAL:</p> <p>1.4 Every child is a unique person who is continually learning at their own pace and in their own way; leading to creative thinking.</p>	<p>In the room for the older children (Lions 2.5 to 4 yrs) the materials and shelves are arranged in areas of learning. The children are encouraged to be creative by using open ended materials. These materials such as pencils, paint, cardboard, paper, chalk, etc are accessible to the children at all times. The website states that the children also participate in group activities such as French, ballet, cooking, woodwork and storytelling. There was evidence of children working independently to complete cycles of activity as well as working alongside their peers.</p>
<p>1.5 Children learn through positive social interactions that are warm, loving and foster a sense of belonging. Staff nurture each individual child in a harmonious and peaceful environment and are responsive to children’s needs, ideas and feelings.</p>	<p>The leadership and staff understand that good relationships between children, parents and staff promote a positive and respectful culture as evidenced in the Settings Behaviour policy and in their Core values. Staff endeavour to promote positive behaviour in a caring and respectful manner.</p> <p>In the Parrots room (18m to 2.5 years) there was evidence of a Montessori trained practitioner observing a child’s cycle of activity; facilitating uninterrupted learning, offering support only when required.</p> <p>We look forward to seeing further dissemination of this practice at Annual monitoring.</p>

2. Children are offered the freedom to learn at their own pace and according to their individual interests, uninterrupted, during the ‘work cycle’.

Principles	Evidenced
<p>ESSENTIAL</p> <p>2.1 Staff trust each individual child in his/her efforts to ‘construct an individual’.</p>	<p>Fountain Nursery implement themes and principles of EYFS curriculum and Montessori principles to achieve an educational program that supports the holistic development of the individual. Staff are keen to prioritise children's learning at their own pace by ensuring that the routines are flexible and by following the child’s interests and next steps. The room layout ensures that activities are on the children's level, and they have freedom of choice through activity and staff offering flexibility.</p> <p>To further support this practice, it is important to regularly check that learning materials are complete, and that surfaces are reserved for learning materials only.</p>
<p>ESSENTIAL</p> <p>2.2 The setting offers a continuous provision of activities and resources with which children engage freely and repetitiously.</p>	<p>The setting maintains its ongoing practical provision within a well-resourced range of Montessori activities and a rich range of resources, combining Montessori and other materials, all of which can be accessed freely.</p>
<p>2.3 Settings maintain the principles of freedom of choice; children are always given the choice to engage with an activity or not; the principle of “following the child” is embedded in practice.</p>	<p>Children engage in a 2.5-to-3-hour work cycle. Evidence of children working freely, in a designated time frame, was seen in Lions room at the on-site visit. This work cycle was interrupted as the setting prepared for lunch. As lunch is prepared on-site the aroma and general adult preparations are evident across the setting. Allowing the children, the freedom to complete their activities and participate in the communal lunch session at their own pace would further embed the principle of ‘following the child’.</p>



<p>2.4 Children’s spontaneous learning follows ‘cycles of activity’. Each cycle is determined by the child’s selection of an activity/resource, engagement with it and completing and returning of the resource to its original place, as appropriate.</p>	<p>As previously mentioned, there is clear evidence of ‘cycles of activity’ in Parrots and Lions room (children 18 months to 4 yrs.). Children were seen to work independently as well as in peer groups. A deeper understanding of the value of observation and less adult intervention will promote further independence and autonomy. We look forward to seeing more of this in practice at annual monitoring.</p>
<p>2.5 Consistency is achieved in establishing clear boundaries of behaviour.</p>	<p>As previously mentioned, there is a clear behaviour policy in place. A Key person is assigned to disseminate the codes of practice to new staff and keep up to date with current sources, to promote positive behaviour in correspondence with Personal, Social and Emotional training. Adults work closely with parents/carers to understand and support individual behaviours.</p>

3. The learning environment (indoors and outside) enables children to follow their natural path of development and offers stimulating and challenging activities, both indoors and outside, throughout the ‘work cycle’.

Principles	Evidenced
<p>ESSENTIAL</p> <p>3.1 A favourable environment is carefully planned, prepared and maintained to offer accessibility, consistency and continuity of learning.</p>	<p>An embedded understanding of social and personal responsibility is clearly evident throughout the submitted documentation. Rooms provide well equipped shelving and ample floor space for gross motor development in the baby and toddler rooms and sufficient floor space in the 2.5 to 4yrs rooms for floor work and creative activities. Resources are easily accessible.</p>
<p>3.2 The environment offers a mixed age range in each classroom. This age range is aligned to established developmental planes (such as birth to three years or three to six years). Where this is not possible, the children have plenty of daily opportunity to learn from each other and enjoy a wide age range and spectrum of activities.</p>	<p>Fountain Nursery offers provision from the age of 6 months to 4 years spread over four classrooms with the younger classes being on the ground floor and the more capable 2.5 to 4 years upstairs. Butterflies room (6-12 months) is well equipped with age-appropriate furniture/resources, cots for nap time and low-level feeding chairs. Staff record nappy changes, mealtimes, naps and activities on eyLog along with photos/videos for parents to view. Ages 18 to 30 months are also on the ground floor. These rooms are partitioned by a low-level opening gate, offering deeper opportunities for vertical grouping, as well as encouraging inclusion. There was clear evidence of child-led play and peer on peer learning.</p>



<p>3.3 Learning materials are appropriately arranged; well maintained, attractive and clean. There is space in each classroom and outside for individual and group activity. There are areas for quiet and sedentary play as well as active, energetic play.</p>	<p>The Setting's website offers a virtual tour of the Nursery layout, demonstrating a clear consideration for easy access to resources, with open floor space and child height tables. This was further evidenced at the on-site visit.</p> <p>A spacious, well organised environment with a comprehensive array of learning materials allowing space for adult and child led group activity as well as areas for role-play and quiet time.</p>
<p>ESSENTIAL</p> <p>3.4 The enabling environment offers resources relevant to all the children's cultures and communities and supports development of a positive sense of identity and culture. The child's need for independence is respected, enabling autonomy and initiative. The adults, and how they prepare the environment, support individual efforts and independence.</p>	<p>The website gives a detailed insight into the Montessori curriculum. Further evidence is needed to show how the Montessori pedagogy is put into practice. The setting is moving over to 'birth to 5 yrs' from the EYFS curriculum. The setting has a number of structures in place to monitor development and next steps these include; child observations, next step boards and weekly team meetings. Cultural diversity is celebrated through storytelling, diverse lunch menus as well as celebrating key holidays and celebrations throughout the year.</p>
<p>3.5 Support is available for children to take risks and explore freely, enabling them to learn to do things by and for themselves. Intrinsic motivation is highly valued as a critical element of the child's holistic development, as is the development of concentration.</p>	<p>The outside area is well-equipped with sufficient space to offer a generous selection of activities. Climbing apparatus, tricycles, messy-play, dress-up and an outdoor reading corner make up an all-round favourable outdoor learning environment.</p> <p>The staff training and development policy outlines the importance of professional development and training to ensure practitioners are constantly improving their Early years practice.</p> <p>Senior team members are passionate to embed Montessori pedagogy throughout the staff and setting. Further in-house training and CPD will anchor a deeper understanding of why and how.</p> <p>We hope to see further dissemination of Montessori principles amongst staff in practice at annual monitoring.</p>

4. The learning environment is prepared with reference to each child's needs and interests, which is reflected in effective planning and assessment.

Principles	Evidenced
<p>ESSENTIAL</p> <p>4.1 The favourable environment is set up to provide for the individual needs and interests of the children, giving each child the opportunity to develop his/her unique potential.</p>	<p>The rooms are bright and clean. Limited space requires the setting to be imaginative in the set up and rotation of learning materials.</p> <p>Little Lions 2.5 to 4 years are situated upstairs. The room is well equipped with resources and materials to encompass all areas of the curriculum. Free flow arts and crafts including painting and messy play were evident at the on-site visit. Children were engaged in independent activities – completing cycles of activity and engaging in child-to-child learning.</p>



<p>ESSENTIAL</p> <p>4.2 Staff observe children, looking to nurture their unique characteristics and learning dispositions/styles. They understand child development theory and how this aligns with pedagogy and practice.</p>	<p>The school uses EyLog to document engagement with the individual and map progress. Photographs are used to document and celebrate with parents, both indoors and out. Daily observations are shared with staff in the same room, next steps are documented and displayed for easy viewing.</p> <p>Additionally, annual local authority categorisation reviews and a mock Ofsted report in April 2021 reflect how the setting are continually looking to revise their practice.</p>
<p>4.3 Staff demonstrate knowledge and skill in assessing the overall effectiveness of the provision for learning and development.</p>	<p>Staff use EyLog to record observations and plan relevant follow-on experiences.</p> <p>Staff may need support to link children's experiences to Montessori pedagogy.</p>
<p>4.4 The recording of children's needs, interests and progress is supported by evidence that documents their engagement with activities and others within the setting, both indoors and outside.</p>	<p>Fountain Nursery St Albans use on-line recording tools to document engagement with the individual and map progress. Monthly Key-person observations are loaded onto EyLog. For children over 2 yrs, the setting provides a scrapbook for work completed at home. 'I can' cards are provided for any extra support required.</p> <p>Additionally, in-house mock Ofsted inspections reflect how the setting are continually monitoring their nursery practice.</p>
<p>4.5 Where possible, staff assessments and reflections on children's learning are contributed to by parents/carers and, where appropriate, by other professionals and by the children themselves.</p>	<p>There is an active commitment to maintaining effective engagement with families. Parents contribute to the EyLog software. Home learning and activities are shared through the child's scrapbook and Key staff engage with parents at drop-off and pick up. The Parent involvement policy^{78*}- gives further insight into their parent communication commitment.</p>

5. The adults are led by highly skilled, experienced and qualified senior staff in each class of the setting, and all staff engage in on-going professional development.

Principles	Evidenced
<p>ESSENTIAL</p> <p>5.1 The setting is led by skilled professionals who have a profound understanding of, and commitment to, implementing a child-led and Montessori/ Montessori-inspired philosophy. They inspire their team to offer excellent, sustainable and relevant provision and they inspire others beyond the setting likewise.</p>	<p>Leadership have a minimum of 5 years' experience in teaching and leading, with Montessori qualifications level 2 and above. Leaders are also trained SENCO's.</p> <p>Regular reviews, supervisions, and appraisals are a priority. Staff are subject to the settings safer recruitment procedure and internal training and monitoring plan – involving essential online training via educare and an orientation pack for new staff. Internal monitoring in the form of; learning walks, mock Ofsted, advisory teacher visits, SENCO needs and wellbeing, identify areas for monthly and whole setting training requirements.</p>



<p>5.2 The setting's policies, procedures and practice are documented and linked clearly with Montessori / Montessori-inspired principles. These enable the adults to effectively manage the safety, well-being and development of the children.</p>	<p>Fountain Nursery policies are updated regularly. Elements of the Montessori principles can be seen in the settings policies. Particular areas to support and develop the individual - child and adult alike – are reflected in the following policies: Valuing diversity, parental involvement, menopause policy and behaviour policy.</p>
<p>5.3 Whilst home languages are valued, the children are encouraged to develop a good level of primary language of the setting, where multiple languages are spoken.</p>	<p>English is the primary language spoken in the school. Other languages and cultures are celebrated. The Knowledge and understanding of the world areas are well equipped, linking languages and culture through play and stories.</p>
<p>ESSENTIAL</p> <p>5.4 Staff members are excellent communicators. They nurture and enrich the language and communication skills of the child.</p>	<p>Staff role model respectful language and positive behaviour towards everyone, encouraging gentle hands, waiting, sharing. The Promoting positive behaviour policy along with the Achieving positive behaviour policy outline the settings commitment</p>
<p>ESSENTIAL</p> <p>5.5 The training and development needs of all staff members are considered regularly to ensure quality development at the setting. These needs are recorded clearly and are met proficiently. Staff members are encouraged by the leaders of the setting to gain Montessori training and qualifications where possible.</p>	<p>Management proactively monitor day to day progress with regular staff meetings and supervision to monitor personal progress and training requirements. Weekly team meetings monitor the impact of materials and learning. Weekly online management meetings to share concerns and objectives – these are filtered down to staff. Monthly peer reviews and observations to promote self-reflection and evaluation. Individual observations are filmed for the staff to review and reflect on for personal development plans.</p>

6. The adults promote positive relationships both within and beyond the setting, including strong links with each child's family.

Principles	Evidenced
<p>ESSENTIAL</p> <p>6.1 All adults at the setting value and respect children and families equally. All the adults guide the children with respect, knowledge, skill and consistency.</p>	<p>The values and policies suggest a deep commitment to create a setting that values and respects the children and their families. Fountain Nursery purposes to provide a caring, inclusive and progressive space for children to flourish.</p>



<p>ESSENTIAL</p> <p>6.2 The key person is a significant individual for the child and their family, closely monitoring their needs and nurturing the child's learning and development. The full staff community work together to support the child in building positive relationships with other children and adults in the setting. The child's main carers are respected in their role as primary educators of their child.</p>	<p>Each student is assigned a Key person. This person works closely with the child and family during the settling in period to ascertain learning style and understand cultural background. The Key person maintains that relationship throughout the family's time at Fountain nursery for continuity. Adults within the setting develop relationships with children across their classroom to support the safe inclusive environment as well as the transition from indoor to outdoor play.</p>
<p>ESSENTIAL</p> <p>6.3 Children thrive when there is a strong partnership in their learning environment between staff and their family. This provides the setting and the family with the means to assess and discuss the child's needs, achievements and progress collaboratively.</p>	<p>The Parent Portal on the Nursery's website offers access to the settings terms & conditions and policies, links to external child development websites, along with access to information to support families financially and insight into the Montessori Curriculum. Parent events are held throughout the year – these further encourage parent/nursery relationships.</p>
<p>6.4 The setting offers regular opportunities for parents and other stakeholders to learn about the ethos and approach of the setting; Montessori-inspired practice and how a child-led focus can be used beyond the setting.</p>	<p>Fountain, St Albans offers a warm inviting environment for the children and staff alike. Their commitment to provide high quality education in a loving, encouraging space is evident. The leadership are keen to develop their practice of Montessori principles to further embed the pedagogy throughout their setting. This along with the detailed website will further support practice beyond the nursery setting.</p>
<p>ESSENTIAL</p> <p>6.5 All the adults understand that children who have opportunities to make choices in an atmosphere of freedom with responsibility, and who are encouraged to be independent in their actions and decision-making, develop a strong sense of self, natural confidence and curiosity as well as a sense of well-being and belonging. These qualities will serve them well throughout life.</p>	<p>The setting demonstrates a clear commitment to support children's independence, confidence, freedoms and responsibility. On-going training and continued deepening of the Montessori pedagogy within the staff community will ensure consistency and growth.</p>



Additional commentary:

From Assessors:

Fountain Montessori Nursery and Pre-school, St Albans, offers a bright warm environment to nurture the development of the individual child. Classrooms are well-equipped for learning with sufficient space and freedom for creative development. Staff are warm and engaging facilitating an environment of safety. The setting benefits from an on-site kitchen offering the aroma of freshly cooked meals to announce that lunch/supper is on its way. The leadership demonstrate a rigorous process of supervision, with regular staff/managerial meetings to ensure good practice. With their current knowledge of the Montessori ethos and continued immersive training, the setting is well positioned to further enhance, embed and disseminate these principles to build on the child's holistic growth. We look forward to seeing more of this at Annual monitoring.

From **Fountain Montessori Nursery and Pre-school:**

Report complete.

STAR summary:

Following a thorough assessment and analysis of the self-evaluation processes and evidence materials submitted by **Fountain Montessori Nursery and Pre-school**, the Assessors have been able to learn more about the individual context and specific considerations, important for the owners, managers, staff team and wider community at by **Fountain Montessori Nursery and Pre-school** at this time. The observation visit in **March 23** to see the setting in-action, has assisted in this process and enabled further opportunity for by **Fountain Montessori Nursery and Pre-school** to indicate the current challenges and opportunities that are relevant for their children; staff and wider communities.

The STAR assessing team have scrutinised evidence and deliberated over findings to agree on this formal STAR Phase One accreditation report and taken their findings through our moderation process. The report document has been independently reviewed and fact checking by the setting directly.

Montessori group are pleased to award the STAR through this assessment process and wish your children, staff and families well through this coming year.



Annual Monitoring due by 31/03/24

OFFICE USE: Compliance record

Date issued (1): 18/04/23

Date returned (1): 02/05/23

Date moderated (2): 31/03/23

Date of completion (2): 02/05/23

If you are happy to accept this report and move forwards with your public involvement with STAR, please complete the attached **STAR declaration**:

Receiving accreditation carries the expectation that the setting will continue to develop and to work maintaining compliance with all STAR Phase One Standards & Training Accreditation framework elements to satisfy a firm commitment to the Phase One Standards & Principles.

I, **Arike Aiyetigbo, Director**, confirm that **Fountain Montessori Nursery and Pre-school, St Albans** satisfies all features detailed above and acknowledges this award of STAR. We have read, understood and agree to **STAR's Terms and Conditions** .

Upon successful completion of the accreditation process, we agree for Montessori group to publish our contact details (as stated on our application form) on behalf of STAR on our website.

Signature: Arike Aiyetigbo

Date: 2/5/23