Curriculum policy

The Montessori Primary Curriculum a broad and balanced programme of study for years 1-6

Implementing Maria Montessori's philosophy and principles for primary education is a whole school commitment. Designed to fulfil the needs and potential of the individual child, Montessori's global curriculum aims to promote critical thinking, curiosity, creativity and love of learning that will endure a lifetime.

Our school will be divided into class cycles of normally three years, comprising of vertical aged children. Children learn from each other in a non competitive atmosphere of collaboration and cooperation. Older children sharing their knowledge with younger children which has the benefit of deepening their understanding, whilst older children gain confidence and leadership skills. In this way we can offer a nurturing academic environment where children have the time and space to develop holistically whilst staying in accord with Montessori philosophy. This seamless class cycle enables teachers (guides) to assess individual child progress more readily.

Language Arts, Mathematics, Maths Topic and Cosmic Education, form the four overarching areas of learning of the core curriculum.

The vehicle used to introduce the overarching core areas are 'The Great Lessons'. These six impressionistic stories are used as entry points into the spiralled curriculum: The Formation of the Universe, The Coming of Life, The Emergence of Peoples, The Story of Communication, The Story of Number and the River of life. These act as spring boards into the understanding of the universe, its history and the life it supports. The child research relating to these Great lessons involves many developing skills and competencies using information technology. in years 3,4,5,& 6. We view the use of I.T as a tool for research and will not advocate it use for social purposes.

The study of Mathematics follows a flow pattern for each term. This spirals throughout successive class cycles, children covering: place value, number operations, calculations and the decimal system, and with Maths Topic: measurement of area, volume and time. Fractions, geometry, data handling and algebra. The tangible qualities of the Montessori materials allows for the layering of concepts, leading the child towards abstraction. Children have the autonomy to approach, to repeat and consolidate according to their individual need. Teaching guides keeping children on track in line with term flow. If necessary a child can carry over practice of an objective into a new term within the same three year cycle.

The study of Language including: speaking and listening, reading, writing/penmanship and comprehension, spelling, punctuation, literary appreciation, grammar, word and sentence analysis, also follows a flow pattern and the same autonomous approach to acquisition.

The integrated spiralling nature of the Montessori Cosmic Curriculum is open ended to allow for individual research and development of passion,. Children are exposed to an interrelated study of humanities that is revisited repeatedly over time. With each repetition, a new piece of information or complexity is added so children are brought into an expanded awareness and understanding of a concept and its interconnectedness. In this way each level of mastery builds on each other, leading the child to continuous new insights, competence, confidence and abstraction. Research stems from key lessons in astronomy, geology, biology (both human and plant), zoology, physics, chemistry, history, geography, the arts and technology.

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PSHE

Montessori originally devised a further study area which she called Practical Life skills, this roughly translates to Care of Self, Care of the Environment and Care of Others, this is the basis of PSHE. To this we have added key lessons promoting the social and practical skills, knowledge and competencies that embrace the contemporary needs of children today. These enable children to develop the skills needed to become useful, productive members of society. PSHE is part of our Cosmic Curriculum.

Integral to our Montessori curriculum is the provision of prepared learning environments that both call and answer to the child's individual changing needs, enabling them to independently construct their own learning. Specific Montessori materials foster research and hone developing skills, children refining continuously their understanding. Our teaching guides form part of this learning environment: they facilitate knowledge, record and evaluate progress, maintaining harmony within the classroom. Teaching Guides also have a custodial role ensuring materials are optimal, inspiring the development of child interests and passions within a broad based curriculum.

The Montessori materials form the stepping stones to sustained and abstracted learning, in addition to these, we have a very comprehensive range of enrichment materials that supports the study of the sciences, humanities, technology and the arts.

Our teaching collective comprise of teaching guides who hold Montessori teaching qualifications and may additionally have degrees and or qualified teacher status in mainstream education. All staff have continuing professional development plans that require regular attendance of a wide range of educational courses, these ensure child learning remains relevant, current and enriched.

Whilst both curriculum areas and individualised learning style are quite different to that of mainstream education, these share many long term objectives. Staff regularly monitor, record, evaluate and map each child's learning journey, to both the National Curriculum Statements and the Montessori curriculum. In this way child progress is easily shared at times of transition. All activities and materials are developmentally appropriate and differentiated to support all children no matter there ability. The materials presented within learning environments are carefully chosen as as a result of observation, assessment and an understanding of child developmental learning.

Freedom is a fundamental tenet to the Montessori approach to learning, children exercise this daily when selecting themes and materials which they feel drawn to, similarly they are able to move freely around the classroom environments both indoor and out and the liberty to work independently or within a small group. These contribute towards a healthy mind, promoting high levels of well-being. Freedom is not without licence and is always be tempered with responsibility to both self and others.

The Montessori philosophy is acceptant that responsibility is pivotal to children becoming independent motivated learners and it recognised by our teaching guides that this is a skill that requires to be both taught and nurtured. Children's personal responsibilities includes the eventual management of study and supportive field trips. All Primary children 'go out' of the school environment regularly to enrich and support class based studies. In the early years of the 1st class cycle (Y1. to Y3) class guides initiate learning and arrange external educational opportunities, this onus gradually shifts to the child as they mature and are ready to take on more responsibility. Guides increasingly take on the role of mentor, offering support, ensuring learning is relevant, grounded and achieving the standards required by the core curriculum, ever mindful that sound progress will support the eventual successful transition to senior school. The benefits of the child taking control of their learning is many fold and includes; increased independence, maturity, responsibility and an investment of a deeper more sustained understanding of study.
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The tools we use to encourage study responsibility, stems from the child need to be independent, these are:

- **weekly guide/student planning meetings**, where the child's daily diary and weekly planner are jointly discussed with the teacher guide and the following week's study is planned, the child evaluates his work alongside a class guide, progress is discussed and if time has been well spent, support may be suggested and agreed upon.

- **weekly individualised planners** this sets out work plan for the week and is a platform for daily record keeping. The work plan is written by the teacher alongside the child who takes an active part in all future planning, they are guided by the joint evaluations of previous weekly plans, teacher guide notes, the child's diary and the interests of the child.

- **child daily diaries** child's own note memoir

- **student/group/class discussion** where individual, small group or class collaborative work is discussed, celebrated and supported by guides and or peers.

- **termly teacher/family/meetings** Progress celebrated and supported with child, family and guides. New studies and potential research discussed. Action plans agreed upon.

- **the My Montessori Child or Flex reporting tools** applications for parents who can access regularly pictures and anecdotes of child study and activity.

- **individual mapping documents** Child's progress is mapped against Montessori flows and National curriculum standards

Children are not assigned regular homework although daily reading and or spelling practice is encouraged, children may choose to undertake some aspects of their research projects at home.

It is all the above that fashions a Montessori primary education, shaping children into the men and women they will become.