



Living Spring Guiding Principles and Our Montessori Curriculum

Living Spring Montessori is committed to ensuring the best care for all of our children. Our Montessori principles provide an aid for development and learning in full compliance with the government's Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage 2021 guidance. The Montessori Method concentrates on developing in our children a true love of learning, the ability to function independently and as part of a group. The Early Years Foundation Stage principles beautifully complement the Montessori Method.

Our main intention is to provide a safe learning environment where children have rich learning experiences, develop knowledge and understanding of the community and wider world, so as to create a solid foundation of skills to prepare for the next stage in their learning journey.

One of the main principles of the EYFS is the **Unique Child**; every child is a unique individual from birth, who is constantly learning and who can be capable, confident and self-assured. Children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates.

Maria Montessori observed that children are naturally social; she believed that by following the children's interests and in helping them to become functionally independent, they will develop according to their individual needs and that they will exhibit great love and care for each other.

To support the unique child, there must be **Positive Relationships** between the children and the adults who care for them (parents, carers and extended family, as well as nursery staff members; in particular the key person). Positive relationships with adults form a secure base from which the child can explore and develop independent skills. Children develop in the context of relationships and the environment around them; this is unique to each family and reflects individual communities and cultures.

Maria Montessori believed the adult to be the dynamic link between the child and the environment; we acknowledge the important role played by parents and we work in partnership with them to support them in their very important job as their child's first teachers.

Enabling Environments affirm that the environment plays a key role in supporting and extending the child's development and learning in the early years, set out with activities to follow the child's interests. Maria Montessori believed that the classroom or what she called "the prepared environment" was to be set out in such a way that it allows the child to make his or her own independent choices. The child develops and grows from being engaged in constructive activities of his or her own choice.

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The Characteristics of Effective Learning: Playing and Exploring, Active Learning and Creating and Thinking Critically are how children learn and are embedded within our curriculum. We plan and organise our systems to ensure that every child receives an enjoyable and challenging learning and development experience, which is tailored to meet their individual needs. We will help the child to become familiar with the school and feel confident and safe within it. We strive to develop a genuine bond with the child (and the child's parents) and offer a settled, close relationship.

Our curriculum is designed to offer children a wide range of activities to cover all aspects of child development, including Cultural Capital to enhance the learning opportunities – intellectual, physical and social available to children. Although each activity is a complete piece of work within itself, the activities are interrelated. A lot of care is taken to provide children with achievable challenges throughout their time at the school so that their self-esteem is nurtured and they are encouraged to even greater learning and exploration.

The activities offered are implemented in a Montessori classroom into the following areas:

Practical Life

Young children are attracted to and react to activities that they observe going on around them. This gives them independence and control of their surroundings. The objective of this area is for the child to develop concentration, independence, co-ordination of movement and mastery of skills needed for everyday life. As well as helping the child develop his/her physical co-ordination, there is added advantage that the child learns to focus attention for the entirety of an activity. Completing a task properly helps the child to achieve a sense of fulfilment.

Practical Life activities also focus on developing the children's social skills within a mixed-age school.

Practical Life activities are divided into the following:

- Exercises for increasing mastery and co-ordination of movement, e.g. pouring, spooning, folding, opening bottles and walking on the line.
- Exercises for the care of the environment, e.g. dusting, sweeping, washing up, and cleaning.
- Exercises for the care of the person, e.g. polishing, tying shoe laces, fastening dressing devices etc.
- Exercises of grace and courtesy, e.g. greeting people, lifting and moving chairs, looking after others, and how to ask for help.

Sensorial Activities

The child is vividly aware of the world, taking in impressions through all their senses. We have special sensorial materials which help to stimulate and train the senses not only visually but also through touch, sound, taste and smell, thereby developing perception. An experience using one sense may often be reinforced by experiences gained through another sense – for

example feeling a shape may reinforce a visual impression already gained. Many of the materials reflect qualities of the environment such as colour, size, shape, texture, sound, weight, etc., and therefore benefit the child's powers of observation, communication and exploration. The sensorial activities also indirectly prepare the child for later maths and language work as they enable the child to order, classify, and categorise things within their environment. We offer an environment within which children can fulfil their developmental potential- both as an individual and as a member of the group. We hope therefore to serve the immediate needs of individual children in our care, whilst providing them with a foundation for the future.

Mathematics

By introducing a wide range of mathematical principles in an original and exciting way, we provide an excellent foundation for numeracy. The Montessori mathematics materials enable even a very young child to achieve, through their own effort, a natural appreciation of basic mathematical concepts and avoid the mental blockages, which so often occur in those, faced with purely abstract concepts. The specially designed materials enable the child to gain very concrete ideas and sensory experiences of numbers, their quantities and mathematical operations. Gradually the child can move confidently towards the completion of abstract mathematical problems. Many Montessori educated children grow up with a love of numbers and mathematics.

Communication, Language and Literacy

Through the practical life and sensorial materials the Montessori child has a great deal of indirect preparation for language work. Children develop all aspects of language and can become good readers and writers at an early age. Speaking, listening, reading and writing are all closely inter-related. In a Montessori school, the environment is prepared to make it interesting and exciting for the children so as to encourage them to talk about what they see and do. We start by teaching our children the sounds in words, this gradually and rapidly progresses to word building, full recognition of words, and eventually total reading. Writing comes as part of the child's natural desire to express his or her new knowledge and nearly always precedes reading. Within the Montessori environment, we have activities that prepare the child for writing.

Reading and writing materials are placed in many areas to encourage children to use them.

There are many opportunities for the children to listen to stories, CDs and to one another. A quiet area is provided which is always available for looking at books or listening to stories.

Understanding of the World

Children have a natural interest in finding out how things work and creating their own models. Within the Montessori environment, children explore and develop their knowledge of people of the world, the environment and nature. We encourage the children to collect items of interest to display in the constantly changing culture area. This is an area where children can display their earth treasures and gain an appreciation of the wonder of nature.

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Montessori education extends the child's knowledge of history, geography, zoology, botany and science. Children gain an awareness of the world around them by exploring countries, customs, foods, climates, language, plants and animals. Extensive work is done to ensure the children explore many cultures from around the world. We have the globe, puzzle maps, flag maps and many other materials available for teaching the names of continents and countries around the world.

At an early age children are able to learn about the land and water forms of the world.

There is much emphasis on the plant and animal kingdom and children are encouraged to foster a love and appreciation for all living things.

Music and Creative Movement

Music offers children the ability to enjoy their rhythmic abilities in a multitude of ways. We explore singing, dance, making and using instruments, acting out stories and all the fun of putting on our presentations. We have various musical instruments in the environment which the children explore and learn to use.

We have CDs in the rooms for children to listen to songs and rhymes as well as dance.

Arts and Crafts

The children have access to a diverse range of materials with which to express themselves. Drawings, painting, crayon work, collage, working with clay, cutting, pasting, designing, modelling and many other activities help them to explore their imaginations and to share their thoughts and feelings with others.

Cooking and Nutrition

The children study the four basic food groups and learn what their bodies need in order to be healthy. They learn about, as well as cook food from different countries that enable them to further their understanding of different people and cultures. We regularly make fruit juices and explore different tastes of foods.

The children are involved in making their own food for tea time as well as serving themselves.

Physical Development

We offer children the opportunity to participate in physical activities. We provide them with tunnels, a ball pool, tricycles, balls, hoops, climbing apparatus.

Children also have to think and use their judgement to solve problems when taking part in physical activities. It helps to build self-confidence and develop their imagination. They learn to use small and large equipment safely and with increasing competence with minimal supervision required.

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Children are encouraged to use their imagination, develop social relationships and be self-selective.

Planning and Record Keeping

Each room has their planning records, activities and progress summaries which help to measure the impact of the curriculum provided. Examples of children's work and our planning is available in each room. Each child has an individual learning profile showing them at play and work, with observation notes made by their teachers highlighting how they are meeting the EYFS Curriculum. The children's records are a reflection of their personal interests and capabilities.

Planning is done on a weekly/ bi-weekly basis around a monthly, termly or annual theme.

Policy on Learning and Play

General

The school understands that play is something that a child best enjoys. A child's play has a purpose and can be a step towards the learning and understanding of valuable skills. It can help the child fit into the world physically, intellectually, emotionally and socially; and grow to be a healthy and competent individual. The school will endeavour to provide children with a stimulating environment, where playing and learning go hand in hand. A varied selection of activities will be provided throughout the day, using both indoor and outdoor activities. Consideration will be taken to ensure that provision is made for children with special needs and abilities.

Messy Play

A large variety of different mediums, such as cornflour, jelly, spaghetti and dough will be made available. These will provide different tactile and imaginative experiences and will encourage expressive language.

Sand and Water

These will be made available on a regular basis. They provide opportunities to experience scientific and mathematical concepts as well as encouraging social and language development.

Creative Activities

Activities such as painting, sticking, chalking and box modelling will be made regularly available.

Imaginative Play

The school recognises the importance of imaginative play to children and will aim to provide rich opportunities to widen the imagination. These will include dolls and accessories, road maps and cars, trains, dressing up clothes and many more. There is also a selection of

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construction toys which additionally encourage good hand/eye coordination, counting, sorting, etc.

Books

A variety of books are available for children to look at and read, both under supervision and alone. Children are regularly read to, individually and in groups.

Technology

A range of technology is used throughout the school. Each classroom has a CD player to listen to and dance to music, as well as mechanical toys. We have a variety of electrical appliances such as a bread maker, juicer, an electric whisk and microwave to use during cooking/baking activities. The children acquire basic skills such as turning on/off items or using them under supervision of a teacher. The older children are encouraged to learn about computers by learning the different parts of a computer and what different icons on the screen can mean, such as print.

Links to the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Section 1: The learning and development requirements 2017

Legal Framework

- Development Matters in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) 2020/21
- Equal Opportunities and Discrimination (Equality Act 2010)
- Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice: 0-25 years, January 2015
- Promoting British Values as part of SMSC in school in November 2014
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Working Together to Safeguard Children, 2018
- Early Years Inspection Handbook, 2019
- Statutory Framework for the early years foundation stage, 2021