



The Montessori Curriculum

“Adults work to finish a task, but the child works in order to grow, and is working to create the adult, the person that is to be.”
Maria Montessori

Throughout this school we follow the Montessori Approach to Education. With qualified staff and the unique environment that has been created, every child receives a true Montessori experience. This means that each individual is valued for what he/she has to offer. Through observation and close interaction, each child's learning experiences are developed to meet his/her needs. In this way children acquire learning and social skills which help them to reach their potential during their time at the school and throughout their lives, becoming purposeful and valued members of society.

We recognise the EYFS and the National Curriculum, and are confident that through the Montessori Curriculum and approach to education the required goals are met and all the children have the best possible start to their learning experiences and early education. Planning for each child is done by following the natural progress of the materials from 'the known' to 'the unknown' and from 'simple' to 'more complex', this happens throughout the school for children of all ages and allows each child to develop in his/her own time. By working individually and in small groups, children are able to learn from the older children and they in turn are able to reinforce their learning by supporting others.

In the Montessori classroom, the space is divided into different learning areas, so that the child moves seamlessly from one to another, gaining experiences across the curriculum. There is also a subtle change from the simplest activities to the more complex ones. The children are unaware of this but as they develop they are seduced towards the more challenging materials.

The Montessori Curriculum is an integrated thematic approach that ties the separate disciplines together into studies of the physical universe, the world of nature, and the human experience. In this way, one lesson leads to many others. Each material isolates one concept or skill that has been specially designed in a way that children are naturally drawn to want to work with it with little or no input from adults. Each material has also been designed so that a child can normally check his own work; we call this a built-in "control of error." The intention of the materials is not to keep the children dependent on these artificial learning aids forever; they are used as tools to help children work and learn at their own pace, to see abstract ideas presented in a very concrete, three-dimensional way, and to help them grasp and understand what they are working on.

Children at Grantham Farm Montessori School learn not to be afraid of making mistakes. They quickly find that few things in life come easily, and they can try again without fear of embarrassment. This encourages the children to learn in a natural way and to practice until they are able to reach the goal, each child at his/her own pace. All the children throughout the school become happy, confident learners with a desire for knowledge and self-motivation to reach goals that many adults would consider beyond the capabilities of a young child.

Practical Life

This area of the curriculum is designed to invite the young learner to act and work on real life tasks that foster independence, coordination, order and concentration. It is in a sense the doorway to the Montessori curriculum. This is the area where the child may first choose independent work. The practical life area contains many attractively displayed object familiar to the child, including a variety of items commonly used in the tasks of daily living, like eating dressing and cleaning. As the children progress through the school they move from the Montessori principle of 'process not product' to carrying out these tasks in order to meet a goal e.g. tidying the classroom at the end of the day, sharpening pencils and polishing brass.

They offer the child meaningful, non-threatening modes of activity. The materials are also carefully designed and demonstrated to help teach skills involved with caring for the environment and the self, to encourage responsibility, autonomy and to promote high self-esteem.

Sensorial

Dr. Montessori saw the senses as the "doorway to the mind." She considered sensory and manipulation not only an aid to the development of maturing sense organs (eyes, ears, nose, tongue and skin) but a starting point for the intellectual growth. she believed that by helping children to order, compare and classify sensory stimulation, their intellectual development would be greatly assisted and future learning would be more meaningful and useful. The basic sensorial exercise inspires careful observation and calls attention to specific qualities requiring identification of similarities and contrasts. The mind must judge, compare, classify and draw conclusions. These exercises tend to fascinate children because they are difficult enough to represent a real and meaningful challenge. They are then better prepared for future learning in math, language, and science and making sense of life's experiences and information in general.

Mathematics

The central purpose of the Math materials in the early years is to lay the foundation for later cognitive development and to prepare for the gradual transition to abstract thinking. The primary value of these earlier activities in mathematics is found in the way they transform ideas into actions on concrete materials. Students who learn mathematics by rote method often have no real understanding or ability to put their skills to use in everyday life. Montessori students use hands-on learning materials that make abstract concepts clear and concrete.

In the primary Class these aims continue, giving every child practical experiences with both Montessori Mathematics materials and other learning materials so that each child builds a firm understanding of mathematical concepts through practical experience. Only when each child feels confident, does he/she make the natural step to working in the abstract. Through these practical experiences children are able to become competent mathematicians at an earlier age than is often expected.

Language

Language development is a concern of the entire Montessori classroom. Many activities in other areas as well as the language area foster vocabulary development, listening skills, communication skills, writing and reading. At Grantham farm Montessori School we put a strong emphasis on the development of language knowing that this is the key to becoming a sociable part of the community and many learning experiences.

In The Children's House the child is prepared for reading and writing through the many practical life exercises and language development materials. The language area offers a large variety of reading readiness materials, including materials for phonetic analysis and word-building, as well as materials for the refinement of motor control for writing.

As the children progress through the school, they develop the skills to become competent readers with the ability to read a range of written materials. Then we give him the key to read all the words he can encounter. Reading skills normally develop so smoothly in Montessori classrooms that the children tend to exhibit a sudden "reading explosion" which leaves the children and their families beaming with pride.

Maria Montessori's research confirmed what observant parents have always known: children learn best by touch and manipulation, not by repeating what they are told. Her manipulative approach to teaching children how to read phonetically is nothing short of brilliance and should have long ago become a basic element on every Early-childhood classroom around the world.

In Grantham Farm the children develop these reading skills by studying the sounds in more complex words and soon become very competent readers. Every child reads with an adult every day which results in rapid progress and individual support for those that need it.

As children master the skills of writing they start to write spontaneously and over time develop their skills so that they are able to use these in a variety of contexts. Each child progresses toward joined up writing as he /she is ready.

Cultural Subjects

Science is an integral element of the Montessori curriculum. Among other things, it represents a way of life: a clear thinking approach to gathering information and problem solving. The scope of the Montessori science curriculum includes a sound introduction to botany, zoology, chemistry, physics, geology and astronomy. The Montessori approach to science cultivates children's fascination with the universe and helps them develop a lifelong interest in observing nature and discovering more about the world in which we live.

Our teachers introduce history and geography as early as age three. The youngest students work with specially designed maps and begin to learn the names of the world's continents and countries. Later in Grantham Farm they see the world's cultures in greater depth. They learn to treasure the richness of their own cultural heritage and those of their friends.

We support our cultural subjects with trips whenever appropriate. The children really enjoy these opportunities and by encompassing the wider environment it adds to their experiences and the depth of their learning.

Creative Development

Music and movement education as well as drama is also an important part of the curriculum as well as the Arts. They offer children ways to express themselves, their feelings, experiences and ideas. Children through their own positive experiences become confident performers and are able to develop their creativity with a wide range of high quality materials. We are lucky to have an excellent music teacher who is a strong role model in this area and inspires the children to use music confidently and creatively.

Through art and craft and design opportunities the children develop a sense of space a shape, with an appreciation of colour, texture and different materials. Through experience and guidance they enjoy all creative opportunities.

Physical Development

Montessori schools are very interested in helping children develop control of their fine and gross-motor movement. The Practical Life Exercises and the very nature of the environment encourage every child to use both these skills in every day situations.

We are very lucky to have Sports Coaches who visit each week and develop the children's skills in a variety of physical activities and sports.

ICT

We have computers in the school which are used to support children's learning and for them to use as a reference tool. The children all become competent at using a computer and are usually pleased to be able to monitor their progress in this way.

Religious Education

As a Christian based school we base our entire ethos on Christian values and beliefs. The children learn to respect the many different religions that are found in the world and are encouraged to develop their own beliefs. We celebrate the festivals of other religions as well as an emphasis on Christmas and Easter. As children progress through the school they are able to discuss their understanding and beliefs and develop an awareness of the similarities and differences between different cultures and religions.

At Grantham Farm Montessori School the curriculum is not set in stone. We follow the interests of every child and by working closely with parents and carers, we do our best to offer every child a variety of learning experiences that will be enjoyable and allow each child to develop naturally. As the child grows in confidence he/she is able to engender a positive approach to school life and the joys of being a pupil in a stimulating learning environment.