

STATEMENT AND POLICY

At Storybook Montessori we follow the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Curriculum, delivered through the Montessori Approach. Montessori education, which encourages children to become able, confident and independent learners, is highly compatible with the EYFS. It is based on a deep understanding of the way children learn through choosing, trying and participating in activities for themselves. If a child can choose independently they will concentrate for longer and therefore learning is more likely to take place.

Children choose from low-level open shelves with prepared, high quality resources and activities which offer learning and development opportunities across all areas of learning. Practical Life shelves offer activities to promote hand eye co-ordination, fine motor skills and using tools for a purpose such as pouring, transferring and dressing. On other shelves, children can choose from a large selection of exciting maths, language, cultural and sensorial activities. Our outside areas are richly resourced to support the all-round learning of children; activities include growing, gross motor skill development, problem solving, creativity, exploration and a sense of wonder at the natural world. We play and learn outside every day – regardless of the weather.

We give the children enormous freedom in the activities they choose and each child is encouraged to respect the views and values of others, be kind and to share. As a result, children flourish and receive the greatest opportunities to fulfil their potential taking into account individual starting points and capabilities. We encourage children to see themselves as unique individuals and value cultural differences whilst remembering a smile is a smile in any language.

CURRICULUM

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) sets the standards that all Early Years providers must meet to ensure that children learn and develop well and are kept healthy and safe. It promotes teaching and learning to ensure children's 'school readiness' and gives children the broad range of knowledge and skills that provide the right foundation for good future progress through school and life.

The EYFS is based on four central principles: The Unique Child; Positive Relationships; Enabling Environments; and Learning and Development. These are very closely linked to the fundamental principles of Montessori which emphasise the importance of following the child, providing a favourable environment; and creating warm, loving, supportive relationships.

Within the EYFS there are seven areas of Learning and Development. These must shape the educational programmes in early years settings. All the areas must be delivered through planned, purposeful play with a balance of adult-led and child initiated activities both indoors and outdoors. All areas of learning and development are important and inter-connected.

Three areas are particularly crucial for igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, and for building their capacity to learn, form relationships and thrive.

The three Prime Areas are:

- **Communication and Language development** involves giving children opportunities to experience a rich language environment; to develop their confidence and skills in expressing themselves; and to speak and listen in a range of situations.
- **Physical Development** involves providing opportunities for young children to be active and interactive; and to develop their co-ordination, control, and movement. Children must also be helped to understand the importance of physical activity, and to make healthy choices in relation to food.
- **Personal, Social and Emotional Development** involves helping children to develop a positive sense of themselves, and others; to form positive relationships and develop respect for others; to develop social skills and learn how to manage their feelings; to understand appropriate behaviour in groups; and to have confidence in their own abilities.

As Providers we must also support children in four **Specific Areas**, through which the three prime areas are strengthened and applied.

The Specific Areas are:

- **Literacy** involves encouraging children to link sounds and letters and to begin to read and write. Children must be given access to a wide range of reading materials including books, poems, and other written materials to ignite their interest.
- **Mathematics** involves providing children with opportunities to develop and improve their skills in counting, understanding and using numbers, calculating simple addition and subtraction problems; and to describe shapes, spaces, and measures.
- **Understanding the World** involves guiding children to make sense of their physical world and their community through opportunities to explore, observe and find out about people, places, technology and the environment
- **Expressive Arts and Design** involves enabling children to explore and play with a wide range of media and materials, as well as providing opportunities and encouragement for sharing their thoughts, ideas and feelings through a variety of activities in art, music, movement, dance, role-play, and design and technology.

For Montessorians, the curriculum is described in a slightly different way, but the aims are largely the same. In a Montessori school the areas of the curriculum are: Practical Life; Sensorial; Cultural; Maths; Literacy; Creative Arts.

The Nursery school's curriculum will:

- View all children as individuals with the right to be treated with equal respect to the adults around them. This includes the freedom to choose when they want to interact with their peers and carers.
- Provide a safe, caring, stimulating environment with supportive adults offering a wide range of activities, experiences and materials, suited to the children's needs and interests.
- Give children the opportunity to choose activities and experiences and to develop independence within the curriculum.
- Give children the opportunity and structure to build positive meaningful experiences and relationships with peers and adults.
- Create a partnership with parents to support and enhance the development of children.
- Provide equal learning and development opportunities for all the children
- Ensure that each child has positive experiences of success at his/her own level, in order to give him/her confidence and motivation for learning in the future.
- Provide a balanced curriculum which takes account of, and responds to, the child's developmental needs, and allows each child to make progress related to his/her own abilities.

Annex A sets out how our Montessori curriculum links directly to the Early Years Foundation stage.

We acknowledge parents as primary educators and encourage parental involvement as outlined in our Parents and Carers as Partners policy. We build strong home links in order to enhance and extend children's learning both within the nursery school environment and in the child's home.

We share information about the EYFS curriculum with parents and signpost them to further support via the following websites:

- www.foundationyears.org.uk/
- www.education.gov.uk/schools/teachingandlearning/curriculum/a0068102/early-years-foundation-stage-eyfs

Appendix A – Delivering the EYFS Curriculum through Montessori teaching and learning

Personal, Social and Emotional Development

- Personal, social and emotional development involves helping children to develop a positive sense of themselves and others; to form positive relationships and develop respect for others; to develop social skills and learn how to manage their feelings; to understand appropriate behaviour in groups; and to have confidence in their own abilities.
- Storybook Montessori maintains an atmosphere where children can explore and make their own choices thus building up their self-esteem. Staff are trained to be sensitive to their needs and always answer their questions honestly, trying to use positive language at all times. They help the children build relationships and solve disputes. The children learn in open plan classrooms where they benefit from working with children of mixed ages. Each child has their own individual aims which are prepared by their group teacher (key person). We have large circle times including all the children as well as small circle times with group teachers. Activities include sharing their weekend news, show and tell and small projects. We have a communal snack table where the children are encouraged to pour drinks and share fruit and vegetables with their friends. They are also encouraged to wash up and leave the area clean for the next child. While the group teacher has an important role, we like to ensure that the children get the opportunity to work with all staff. The practical life activities help the children do things for themselves which increases their independence and confidence. Children are encouraged to develop a wide range of self helps skills, for example they learn to put on and take off their coats and shoes, feed themselves and serve their own food, snacks and drinks and to tidy away their activities. Staff give children choices so that they begin to make decisions and build their confidence by making good choices.

Communication and Language

- Communication and language development involves giving children opportunities to experience a rich language environment; to develop their confidence and skills in expressing themselves; and to speak and listen in a range of situations.
- At Storybook Montessori children are exposed to an environment which inspires conversation and dialogue. There is constant learning and interaction throughout the day. Informally the staff are constantly engaged in conversation with children and there are many points of language learning in the classroom in terms of both scheduled events (Show & Tell, stories, drama, songs) and materials (games, books, audio materials). We aim to identify early and respond to any particular difficulties in a child's speech development, co-ordinating with outside specialists as appropriate. We are aware of those children for whom English is an additional language and make special efforts to assist them. We recognise that numerous skills need to be in place prior to the teaching of writing. These include the development of comprehension of spoken language, phonetic awareness, rhyme, rhythm, visual discrimination, small motor control and pincer grip.
- Staff use positive language and avoid use of negative terms such as 'do not' 'naughty' and ask open questions which encourage children give fuller more considered responses for example rather than asking a child "Do you like the colour blue?" Our staff will ask "What colour do you like?" and follow that question up with "Why do you like the colour blue?". Staff talk to babies and young children all of the time, singing songs, reciting rhymes and telling them stories. Babies and young children have a range of toys and equipment which encourage them to listen and to make and copy sounds.

Physical Development

- Physical development involves providing opportunities for young children to be active and interactive; and to develop their co-ordination, control, and movement. Children must also be helped to understand the importance of physical activity, and to make healthy choices in relation to food.
- The large open plan rooms encourage movement throughout the day. The practical life materials provide an extensive range of activities designed to refine and strengthen fine motor movements. Gross motor development is nurtured through a wide variety of activities including balancing equipment, walking blocks, obstacle courses, drama, music and movement and yoga. We go outside every day and the children have the opportunity to use large play apparatus. When exercising we help them notice the changes in their bodies through discussion and example. Opportunities for the development of the senses are offered by the sensorial material. We have a strong focus on the importance of healthy eating introducing the children to new foods and using real food in the classroom. Children learn about the origins of different foods, they have a growing area in the outside play area and children sample the produce which is also used in the menu planning. We cook regularly, choosing healthy, nutritious recipes from around the world. Lunch time is a social occasion where the value of healthy eating is discussed and celebrated. Children are taught to wash their hands before eating. We have a snack table where children can independently help themselves to fruit, vegetables and water when they are hungry or thirsty. We provide time and opportunities for children with physical impairments to develop their physical skills, working with physiotherapists and occupational therapists and using additional adult help if necessary.

Literacy

- Literacy development involves encouraging children to link sounds and letters and to begin to read and write. Children are given access to a wide range of reading materials (books, poems, and other written materials) to ignite their interest. These are situated in a comfortable and well-presented book corner. Books are refreshed regularly and represent different cultures, topics and languages.
- When the child is ready to commence formal written work, we approach this via the well-structured sequence of Montessori materials (sand paper letters, large moveable alphabet, pink boxes etc). We are careful to teach children according to their own stage of development and not to push them before they are ready. We have an extensive array of writing equipment to encourage mark making, exploration and creativity. Children learn about the shape and sound of letters through a wide variety of activities, songs and rhymes. They see familiar words regularly for example the days of the week in circle time and their own name on place cards. Children are learning about other languages and have the opportunity to sing songs and recite rhymes in other languages. In addition to the wide range of books and visual resources at the nursery school, the children regularly visit the local library to listen to stories and to join in with activities and events hosted by them.

Mathematics

- This involves providing children with opportunities to develop and improve their skills in counting, understanding and using numbers, calculating simple addition and subtraction problems; and to describe shapes, spaces, and measures.
- The development and training of the senses is central to the unfolding development of the human being - "There is nothing in the brain which did not first enter through the senses". The Montessori sensorial materials provide opportunities for the refining of all the senses which lay a foundation for problem solving, reasoning and numeracy. Tactile skills are addressed through the touch tablets and fabrics; olfactory with the smelling boxes; auditory with the sound boxes; sight (both visual discrimination and colour perception) with the knobbed and knob less cylinders and colour boxes; and taste with tasting exercises and in our many cooking activities and in experiencing food from other cultures. Other materials

address the sensation of weight, pressure and temperature. Materials such as the broad stair, pink tower and long rods offer multiple sensations (in these cases, dimension and weight). Another set of the sensorial materials embodies mathematical concepts, notably the broad stairs, pink tower, knobbed and knob less cylinders, geometric and solids, constructive triangles and the binomial and trinomial cubes.

- In line with Montessori thinking the children are helped to approach mathematics working from concrete to abstract and from simple to complex. There is a well-structured sequence of material with which the children learn the meaning and symbols for numbers from zero to ten (large and small number rods, sand paper numbers, cards and counters, short bead stair) as well as more advanced numbers (golden beads, Séguin boards, number strips). This formal Montessori material is supplemented by a large range of puzzles, books and other mathematical apparatus. Furthermore, we aim to promote general mathematical awareness in much of what we do in the course of the day - through songs, rhymes, stories and games, as well as the opportunities that arise in cooking, small groups, in creative activities and with construction materials.

Understanding of the World

- Understanding the world involves guiding children to make sense of their physical world and their community through opportunities to explore, observe and find out about people, places, technology and the environment.
- In the Montessori curriculum, the cultural area covers not only the traditional cultural aspects - learning about different countries, peoples, languages, foods, festivals and cultures - but also elementary biology (life cycles, terminology cards), geology (globes and maps, land forms, volcanoes) and science (floating and sinking, tasting, gravity, states of matter, properties of air etc). We have drawers full of natural and scientific objects for the children to explore and experiment with. The children are encouraged to use ICT equipment such as stereos, cameras, computers and programmable toys. The curriculum includes regular science and cooking sessions and is further extended by a schedule of well-planned outings to theatres, museums, libraries, fire stations, parks, farms and ecology centres.

Expressive Arts and Design

- This involves enabling children to explore and play with a wide range of media and materials, as well as providing opportunities and encouragement for sharing their thoughts, ideas and feelings through a variety of activities in art, music, movement, dance, role-play, and design and technology.
- We offer a range of opportunities for children's creative development. The children have permanent access to graphic materials (pencils, crayons, pens, chalk), paint, collage and three dimensional modelling, as well as introduction to a wide variety of artistic materials and techniques (clay, plaster, play dough, stencils, stamps, rollers, sponges, water colours etc) on a rotating basis. The children have access to dressing up clothes and role play equipment so that they can create their own stories. The children relate their stories to the teachers who record them and then enable the children to perform their stories. Music and musical instruments are available at all times. There is teacher led singing daily and a specialist music teacher comes in once a week. We use a wide variety of construction materials to model people and animals, which provides opportunity for the children to create stories.