

# Curriculum Policy



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## Contents

1. Brief Background
2. Aims and Objectives
3. Montessori Curriculum delivery alongside the Early Years Foundation Stage and the National Curriculum
4. Parental Partnership
5. Legislation and Guidance
6. Roles and Responsibilities
7. Organisation and Planning
8. Assessment and Tracking Progress
9. Inclusion
10. Monitoring Arrangements

### 1. Brief Background

The aims and objectives that we at the Brighton and Hove Montessori School adhere to originate from the work of Dr Maria Montessori who specialised in medical science and social anthropology. Dr Montessori's initial involvement with children was in a hospital for children with (what we now call) special needs. She created the Montessori Pedagogy and Curriculum from scientific observations of children's engagement with hands on activities. Materials were deliberately designed to spark interest, promote self-constructed learning at the same time as meeting Human Tendencies/Needs and specific Sensitive/Critical Periods at different phases of child development. Work deriving from WW1 and WW2 included further consideration of skills for positive leadership, collaboration and Global Citizenship skills. Ongoing development of the curriculum and learning programmes are shared globally through individuals and organisations referred to in this document. Education for peace is a foundational component of Montessori education at all levels.

### 2. Aims and objectives:

- To support the children to learn and develop their skills to the best of their ability and at their own pace, including developing a positive attitude towards learning. We want children to enjoy coming to school and acquire a solid basis for lifelong learning.
- Enable pupils to learn through a broad curriculum embedding strong foundations in literacy and numeracy, including being creative and developing their own thinking.
- To teach children about the developing world and to respect and value their environment so that they can learn to care for it, for future generations, as well as our own.
- To help children participate in Britain's cultural heritage and enable them to acquire positive attitudes towards the social and cultural norms of society.
- To teach children to have an awareness of their social obligations and the difference between appropriate and inappropriate behaviours.
- To help children understand the importance of truth and fairness, so that they grow up committed to equal opportunities for all.
- To enable children to have respect for themselves and high self-esteem, and to be able to live and work co-operatively with others.
- To support pupils' physical development and enable them to take responsibility for their own health and being active.

### **3. Montessori Curriculum Delivery alongside the Early Years Foundation Stage and the National Curriculum**

#### **In the Children's House**

The vertical age group 2 ½ - 6+ is a 'zone of proximal development' where each child can learn through being part of a diverse community – seeing, hearing, interacting with different children doing different activities. Activities are out and ready all the time for children aged 2 ½ to 6+. Activities can be adapted to meet varying needs of different children. Children are usually naturally attracted to activities that help meet their particular needs. Activities are ordered from left to right on the shelves with augmenting challenge

Practical Life activities focusses on the child's development of self-care, care of others and care of the environment. The sensorial material helps the children develop and refine their five senses: sound, sight, touch, smell, and taste, which will help them navigate the world around them. Sensorial activities are particularly helpful in identifying and helping children who might have different sensory needs.

Every activity has direct and indirect aims with associated gross and fine motor skills of coordination and language. Every skill learned is transferable.

One of the most unique features of the Montessori method is the Three-hour work cycle. It is self-directed, and individualised, and gives children a chance to work at their own pace.

Montessorians refer to the term 'normalisation' which means that the child has acquired the internal freedom to initiate work, be independent, and is able to adhere to the rules of the environment.

In parallel with our own philosophy, we follow the Early Years Foundation Stage and this is met within the programme that we deliver in the Children's House. Our programme planning encompasses the Early Learning Goals which are standards for learning including developing children's skills and experiences, as set out in National Curriculum at Foundation Stage level.

Our school fully supports the principle that children learn through active experience, and by engaging in a variety of well-planned activities.

#### **Key skills**

The following skills have been deemed 'key skills' in the current National Curriculum:

- communication;
- application of number;
- information technology introduced at elementary (primary) level;
- working with others;
- improving own learning and performance;
- problem-solving.

The Montessori Programme highlights these skills, so that the children's progress in all of these areas can be identified and monitored. Our school believes that all children need to make good progress in these areas in order to develop true potential.

## **The Elementary Group**

In Montessori Elementary, lessons are given in small groups with students taking the lead on project ideas, research questions, and the work that follows. Responsibility is nurtured by giving students that freedom to initiate, plan, and problem-solve.

In order to keep the child's self-esteem intact, work is not marked. The teacher notices one aspect of their work that needs attention and sets up subsequent lessons, along with others that need the same guidance, to iron out any misconceptions.

Personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education is an important and necessary part of all pupils' education. We use the Jigsaw scheme of work to cover:

- Being me in My World
- Celebrating Difference
- Dreams and goals
- Healthy me
- Relationships (including sex education)
- Changing me.

### **4. Family/Carer Partnership**

We are well aware that all children need the support of families/carers and teachers to make good progress in school. We strive to build positive links with the families/carers of each child by keeping them informed about the way in which the children are being taught and how well each child is progressing. We ensure that each child creates a close relationship with a member of staff for these purposes referred to as a 'key person'.

In the Montessori setting we are aware that each child and adult is different, and a child may be drawn to more than one adult. Communication between members of staff and families/carers is vital for the child's care and development. The lead teacher holds parent conferences at regular intervals and appropriate feedback is relayed to parents related to the staff. We call this the Home/School Partnership. Parents are still free to discuss issues with teachers outside of these times. A detailed school report in the summer term, is shared with families setting out children's achievements and future targets.

### **5. Legislation and guidance**

This policy reflects requirements for inclusion and equality as set out in the Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice 2014 and Equality Act 2010 and refers to curriculum-related expectations of governing boards set out in the Department for Education's Governance Handbook.

In addition, this policy acknowledges the requirements for promoting the learning and development of children set out in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework.

Guidance referred to includes:

The Education (Independent Schools Standards) Regulations <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2014/3283>

Non-Association Independent School Standards

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/independent-schools-inspection-handbook-eif/non-association-independent-schools-inspection-handbook-for-september-2023>
- <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/schedule/10>
- [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65aa5e42ed27ca001327b2c7/EYFS\\_statutory\\_framework\\_for\\_group\\_and\\_school\\_based\\_providers.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65aa5e42ed27ca001327b2c7/EYFS_statutory_framework_for_group_and_school_based_providers.pdf) - Dec 2023

## Montessori Guidance includes:

Quick explanations from American Montessori Society:

1. <https://amshq.org/About-Montessori/Inside-the-Montessori-Classroom/Early-Childhood>
2. <https://amshq.org/About-Montessori/Inside-the-Montessori-Classroom/Elementary#the-elementary-classroom>

More detailed Association Montessori International curriculum:

From April 2021 reference: [Montessori In Action – Building Resilient Montessori Schools](#) and [www.resilient-montessori.com](http://www.resilient-montessori.com) - including guidance for New World/virtual Learning:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1S1Jkx4I5qmrc4-OPf45RQypUfFhvOfsAB-WkjiTKbw/edit>

## 6. Roles and Responsibilities

### 6.1 The governing board

The governing board will monitor the effectiveness of this policy and hold the Head of Curriculum and Head of School, to account for its implementation.

The governing board will also ensure that: A robust framework is in place for setting curriculum priorities and aspirational targets.

### 6.2 Head of School and the Head of Curriculum

The HoS and HoC are responsible for ensuring that this policy is adhered to, and that all required elements of the curriculum, and those subjects which the school chooses to offer, have aims and objectives which reflect the aims of the school and indicate how the needs of individual pupils will be met.

The amount of time provided for teaching the required elements of the curriculum is adequate and is reviewed by the governing board.

### 6.3 Other staff

Other staff will ensure that the school curriculum is implemented in accordance with this policy and as directed by the lead teachers of the Children's House and Elementary and that Family Engagement is maintained.

## 7. Organisation and planning

- Advance planning includes opportunities and resources for learning through seasons, celebrations and events relating to different belief structures in and beyond the UK and annual days such as World Water Day, World Book Day.
- The Elementary Montessori programme (Cosmic Education Curriculum) has a yearly order for delivery, with group and individualised learning.
- Children follow up their interests by planning trips to gain further knowledge from the wider world.
- Lead teachers in Elementary and Children's House agree an overall plan for each term. This indicates what general topics are to be covered during the term. This plan is kept under review on the basis of need.
- Additional short-term plans in both the Children's House and Elementary groups take into account the needs of individual children in the class.
- The Montessori Programme adopts an interdisciplinary approach enabling the teachers to chart a varied and complete programme for the children as they make their explorations and discoveries.
- We plan so that there is coherence and full coverage of all aspects of the Montessori Programme with progression in all areas ensuring that both the early learning goals and the National Curriculum are covered.

- The Montessori Programme (or pedagogy) is value based and therefore also encompasses an ‘implicit’ programme which derives from the way the children are treated, the way they are expected to behave with one another and other adults and the way they interact with their environment.
- We aim to teach children how to grow into positive, responsible people, who can work and co-operate with others while developing knowledge and skills, so that they achieve their true potential.
- Our Montessori programme is underpinned by the values of Respect yourself, Respect others and Respect the Environment.
- The adults are the dynamic link between each child and the prepared environment. Weekly meetings in each group share information about the needs, and how to meet those needs, for different children individually and as groups and there is daily guidance on delivery of groups and 1:1 presentations from lead teacher to colleagues.
- Expert preparation of the learning environments ensures accessibility to all the children for the ‘work cycle’ as appropriate to development needs in each age and stage they are progressing through.
- Activities are presented individually or in groups depending on the child. The children can then explore the concepts further by working with the material which are well ordered on the shelves.
- At the Children’s House level the teaching of peace, social justice, and global citizenship is based on fostering respect for all people and living things, and helping children learn the tools for peaceful conflict resolution.
- The Montessori Elementary programme expands upon the learning fostered in the Children’s House but unusually in the UK, we also welcome children who may not have been in Montessori schools before. This may be because their needs may not have been fully recognised and they may be disaffected by other educational approaches. The particular compassion and skills of our colleagues and the existing community of children enable new children to transition, re-orientate and build confidence in themselves in a process that we call ‘normalisation through work’ in the groups and also through the attention to addressing SEND rights and responsibilities from our SENCo.
- The teachers guide the children through an extensive curriculum individually tailored to their own interests, needs, and abilities. Teachers monitor progress and expectations for student learning, including: academic preparedness, independence, confidence, autonomy, intrinsic motivation, social responsibility, and global citizenship.

## **8. Assessment and tracking progress:**

Each member of staff is aware of each child’s development through observation, record-keeping, (Montessori Compass), frequent staff meetings and is assigned roles and responsibilities. In the Elementary group, a weekly schedule is given out at the start of the week informing children of the presentations they will be receiving based on previous observations. The Elementary lead teacher has regular 1:1 meetings with each child who then record their work in their personal work journal.

The Montessori Programme adopts a multi-age and interdisciplinary approach enabling the teachers to chart a varied and complete programme for the children as they make their explorations and discoveries in all areas ensuring that the early learning goals and national curriculum are covered.

## **9. Inclusion**

The Montessori curriculum fosters a sense of independence and personal development. All children are unique. Each individual child is respected for who they are and treated with fairness and honesty. We value the spiritual and moral development of each person, as well as their intellectual and physical growth. We believe that each person in our community has an important part to play. We promote co-operation and understanding, including their rights in society. We hold high expectations so all children can succeed. We provide tasks that are engaging and of great interest, building self-esteem and increasing confidence.

Unusually in the UK, we welcome children who may not have been in Montessori schools before they come to us. Sometimes this is because their needs may not have been fully recognised and they may be disaffected by other educational approaches. The particular compassion and skills of our colleagues and the existing community of children enable new children to transition, re-orientate and build confidence in themselves in a process that we call

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'normalisation through work' in the groups and also through the attention to addressing SEND rights and responsibilities from our SENCo.

The programme in our school is designed to provide access and opportunity for all children who attend. The programme and approach via teachers can be adapted to support individual needs and we communicate with parents and other agencies for best advice and support to ensure every child succeeds to the best of their ability.

If a child has a special need, any disability, English as an additional language, particularly high attainment or low prior attainment and/or disadvantaged backgrounds, our school strives to meet these individual needs. IEPs and any other supportive documentation are set up through lead teachers and our SENCo. Learning may be through 1:1 or small groups. The children are encouraged to respectfully observe the work of others and are given the opportunity to share their knowledge with the rest of the class.

We comply with the requirements set out in the SEN Code of Practice in providing for children with special needs. If a child displays signs of having special needs, his/her teacher makes an assessment of this need. In most instances the teacher is able to provide resources and educational opportunities that meet the child's needs within the normal class organisation. If a child's need is more severe, we consider the child for an EHCP (Education Health Care Plan) referral and we involve parents and appropriate external agencies when making this assessment.

## 10. Monitoring arrangements

The lead teacher of each group is responsible for the prepared environments and all activities that are carried out by other teachers, assistants, students or volunteers, to deliver the learning programme to each and every child in the group including:

- delegating and organising tasks according to need and capability for colleagues and children
- providing strategic counselling and coaching
- supporting and offering advice to colleagues on related issues
- monitoring the implementation of the programme in relation to children's progress
- providing strategies for the teachers to help them achieve successful outcomes

The Head of Curriculum is responsible for the intent and implementation of the Montessori programme and ensuring that it is effectively practised in the school. The impact of the Programme is monitored throughout the school. The long-term and short-term planning is also monitored to ensure appropriate teaching strategies are used. Staff also are involved in peer coaching and individual staff are offered professional development as required.

The Headship programme through the Sussex Coast Teaching School Alliance [www.sussexcoasttsa.co.uk](http://www.sussexcoasttsa.co.uk) attended through 2019 until the lockdown in March 2020, provided useful local information and support.

With the lockdown and resultant opportunities for virtual and distant professional resources specific for Montessori schools we have found support via:

Ongoing training for professional development through: <https://www.mariamontessori.org/training/>  
<https://www.trilliummontessori.org/>