

Sept 2016



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The Downley School Site (TDS)
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Dear Parents,

I am well aware of the concerns that come with finding a nursery place that your child can grow and be happy in. I have three children of my own and have found at each step along their path of development that I have had to make decisions wondering if they were right for my child.

One of the best decisions I made, over 25 years ago, was to study for the Montessori Diploma. I completed my studies believing strongly that the Montessori Method can be right for each and every child. It showed me, through the structure of the room and the day, that every child can learn and achieve in their own unique way.

I saw how following the Montessori Method allows for the development of the individual and the depth and breadth of the activities was eye-opening. I saw the joy in the eyes of the young child, who has mastered a skill no matter how small, and the importance of a caring, sharing, quiet and peaceful environment.

This strong passion and belief in the Montessori Method fuelled my desire to open my own nurseries and enable more children to benefit from such a unique method of early education. All the staff attend regular Montessori workshops as well as other development opportunities.

I do hope the information in this prospectus encourages you to get in touch and ask questions. The Sunshine Montessori team look forward to meeting you and your child in the near future.

Yours sincerely,

Virginia Roden
BEd (Hons), Mont Dip.
Principal/ Owner

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The Montessori Method

Dr Maria Montessori (born 1870) was a most remarkable woman of her time. She was the first female doctor of medicine in Italy, and through her interest in paediatrics, psychiatry and educational theory, she proposed her own philosophy of child development. This forms the basis for a most successful and enduring method of teaching now known as the Montessori Method. Some of her main points are outlined below: (To aid conciseness, I refer to your child in the masculine - apologies to all the girls!)

- **All children have 'absorbent minds'**

They have a phenomenal inborn ability to learn with ease, especially from birth to the age of 6 years, but to reach their full potential their environment must be rich with learning opportunities. On entering the Montessori classroom, your child will instantly be able to choose from a great range of activities appropriate to his stage of development.

- **Children have an inborn drive to learn**

Hence the barrage of 'how' and 'why' questions! In the Montessori classroom, the teacher does not impose learning on your child but harnesses this desire to learn, guiding your child within a carefully structured environment designed to help him reach his full potential.

- **Children learn through being active**

Few young children are good at sitting and listening. They learn in an active, concrete way. Most activities are self-correcting, so after being shown once, your child learns through exploring and experimenting with this unique material. From their earliest days in school, children are introduced in a fun and practical way to a far-reaching curriculum including numeracy, literacy, science, history, geography, music, art, games and dance, languages and social skills.

- **Children pass through 'sensitive periods'**

These are phases in a child's life when he becomes particularly interested in certain skills, and learning is therefore especially fast and acute. An obvious example is the sensitive period for language development from birth to 4 years. In the classroom, your child is given the freedom to choose his activities and therefore can focus on his particular interests until he moves on to his next sensitive period.



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Our Aims

To understand how the Montessori philosophy translates into a method of education, let us look at the most important of Maria Montessori's aims – to assist the development of the whole child, with equal emphasis being given to his emotional, social, physical and intellectual development:

- **To support the development of your child's unique personality**

This is achieved through providing a secure, calm, ordered environment with a happy family atmosphere where your child's rights and individuality are respected. Learning is not imposed; rather your child is guided within a carefully structured environment rich with learning opportunities.

- **To encourage your child to become a balanced, independent member of society**

The Montessori materials and the structure of the day help your child to develop independence, confidence, self-control and respect for his environment and others. Multi-cultural learning is an important feature of the curriculum.

- **To encourage your child to become physically competent**

Your child learns primarily through 'doing'. The early materials in particular, encourage your child to become dextrous, develop hand/eye coordination and concentration. Other activities refine gross motor skills such as PE, dance and our popular excursions to the adjacent common and Forest School sessions.

- **To help your child to reach his full intellectual potential.**

Through the use of the Montessori materials, your child will quickly become an independent learner and will therefore be able to develop at his own pace following his inborn motivation. The huge scope and versatility of the materials provides equally for the child with special needs, the less able and the very able child. They are designed to encourage your child to explore, experiment and develop his creativity.

Even the earliest activities start your child on his path to literacy and numeracy. The cultural and aesthetic subjects are also important, providing both breadth and depth to his learning. By the end of his stay with us we hope that your child will be able to go out into the world with happiness and confidence, ready to extend himself to the full and equipped with a love of learning and the necessary skills to enable him to reach his potential in life.



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The Structure of the Day

So what should you see as you step through the classroom door? A beautiful environment with perhaps little vases of flowers brightening up the tables. All the activities should be within reach and freely available to your child. They should be set out in a pattern to lead the young child from the simple short activities to those that are more challenging for the more mature child.

At the start of the day your child will be busy selecting activities of his choice and suitable to his individual level of learning. He will take his activity to a space - be it table or floor- use it and then return it to the same spot, ready for the next child to use. There is a wonderful peace and quietness throughout the classroom brought about through concentration on the task in hand. Many of the early exercises use objects often found around the home, such as small jugs for the popular pouring activities; dusting and polishing exercises; folding and buttoning activities to name just a few. These are designed to teach the children life skills, increase their dexterity and concentration and, as the children are familiar with the objects used, will help to make a smooth transition from home to school.

Soon afterwards your child will be introduced to the Montessori materials specifically designed to help develop his sensory awareness and his ability to make fine discrimination in size, shape and colour for example. These are later followed by materials ingeniously designed to develop the child's concrete understanding of language, maths and all the other areas of the curriculum. When reintroduced to these concepts in his primary school, this physical understanding will be invaluable to him.

Each day your child will be involved in one or more small group activities. Group work is considered important especially in developing social skills and is used particularly when teaching the cultural subjects, art and craft, drama, music and games. At the end of a busy, fulfilling session, your child is ready for collection and yet tells you nothing, or very little, about his day! But in time you should notice differences, perhaps subtle, perhaps very obvious that will tell you that the magic of Montessori is working for yet another child.

The Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum

Sunshine Montessori Nursery follows the requirements of The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Framework, developed by the Department for Education. This sets out both the regulatory and legal requirements for early childhood education and care, together with wider guidance for "best practice". It provides a coherent and flexible approach to care and learning and must be followed by all childcare providers in receipt of government funding.

Our daily plans allow for access to activities to promote the seven areas of learning identified in the EYFS Framework. These areas together make up the skills, knowledge and experiences appropriate for babies and children as they grow, learn and develop.

- Personal, Social and Emotional Development
- Physical Development
- Communication and Language
- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding the World
- Expressive Arts and Design



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Settling your child

The prospect of leaving your child in the care of others can be a worrying time - I have been a working parent all my life and know some of the heartaches that may be making you feel anxious. At Sunshine Montessori Nursery, we will aim to provide as positive a settling-in period as possible. We do this in a number of ways:

- Newcomer's welcome sessions are organised for you and your child to come together and enjoy all that our nursery has to offer the term before your child is due to start at our nursery.
- We ask you to provide as much information about your child as possible by completing our 'child profile' so that, as far as possible, we can adjust our routines to your child rather than the other way around.
- True to the Montessori ethic, we provide a flexible settling-in period in which you are welcome to stay with your child until he/she settles before, in consultation with you, arranging for you to leave, initially for short periods if this is deemed in the best interests of your child.
- Whilst you are away from your child we are happy to answer queries by telephone during the day.
- Confidential discussion times can be arranged at short notice to discuss the needs and interests of your child with your child's key person and the nursery manager.

We aim, and will do all that we can, to ensure that your child's first few weeks at Sunshine Montessori Nursery will be the foundation of a very happy, secure, fulfilling childhood whilst your child is with us.

The Key Person

The EYFS Statutory Framework (2014) states that every child must be assigned a Key Person to support their emotional development.

The role of the Key Person is to:

- Help ensure every child's care is tailored to meet their individual needs
- Help the child become familiar with the setting
- Offer a settled relationship for the child
- Build a relationship with their parents

At Sunshine Montessori Nursery, we take this responsibility seriously and believe that children thrive from a base of secure and safe relationships. We aim for your child's Key Person to become a familiar point of contact for you and someone your child will turn to for support, comfort and reassurance.



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Visiting and Registering

We welcome visitors by appointment only.

If you would like to arrange a visit to the Nursery, please contact us by telephone on **01494 531565** or by email at sunshinemontessori@btinternet.com

To register for a place, please download the Registration Form or contact us for a hard copy. When we receive a completed form we will contact you about available sessions and collect the relevant information we need before your child starts.

Frequently Asked Questions

- **What are the staff to child ratios?**

At Sunshine Montessori Nursery, we adhere to and often exceed, the EYFS statutory requirements which are:

1 adult to 3 children aged 0- 2 years

1 adult to 4 children aged 2- 3 years

1 adult to 8 children aged 3- 5 years

- **Can I receive Government Funded hours for my child?**

Yes, you can claim 15 hours per week, during term time. This funding starts the term after your child turns 3 years old. If your child is 2 years old, and you receive certain benefits, they may be eligible for up to 15 hours funded by the 'Two Year Old Early Education' programme. Please contact us for more information or go to Bucks Family Information Service at <https://www.bucksfamilyinfo.org/kb5/buckinghamshire/fsd/family.page?familychannel=2>

- **How will I know how my child is getting on?**

We hope to keep you fully informed about your child's progress at all times. This is achieved in several ways: firstly we have an open-door policy in which you can observe your child during a session. Secondly, each term you will be invited to a confidential formal feedback session in which your child's progress will be discussed in detail. Other confidential meetings can be arranged on request. A newsletter is distributed every week and other information is pinned on the notice board in the entrance hall. There is also time at the beginning and end of the session to pass over information. Parent Information Evenings are arranged each term in which a particular area of the Montessori curriculum is explained and ideas given for extending your child's learning at home.

Finally, when children move into full time education, staff write a comprehensive report of the child's learning and development for parents. The reports are designed to be shared with the new school to support your child's transition.

- **Do you offer the full Montessori curriculum?**

Yes, we offer a curriculum for under 5 year olds that encompasses all areas of the Montessori curriculum. This includes our activities for everyday living; sensorial exercises; language (including speaking, listening, reading, writing and story/ poetry appreciation), numeracy, science, history, geography, art, cookery, drama, music, dance and physical education. We have adapted our curriculum to ensure that we comply with the requirements of the EYFS Framework.

We look forward to meeting you, and your little one, soon!!