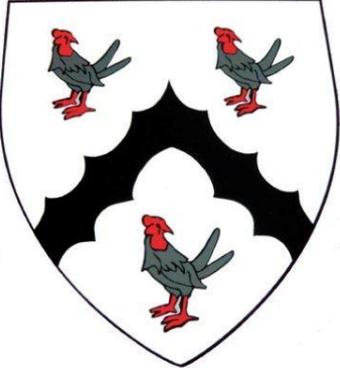


ST. THOMAS MORE



Montessori Pre-School

Prospectus

South Road,
Saffron Walden,
Essex
CB11 3DW



Welcome to St. Thomas More Montessori Preschool

St. Thomas More Montessori Preschool is set in the grounds of St. Thomas More Primary School where we have use of the school facilities. We are a Catholic preschool where our Montessori teaching and learning reflects our faith. We have an outdoor play area and classroom that is freely accessible to the children all day.

We operate a term time only preschool for children between the ages 2- 5 years. We have two rooms – our Preschool room for rising 3's and our Nursery room for rising 2's and open Monday to Friday 8.30am –3.30pm (3pm for Nursery Room) on a session basis.

- **The morning session runs from 8.30am to 12.30 pm.**
- **An afternoon session runs from 12.30pm to 3.30pm. (Nursery Room 3pm finish)**
- **An all-day session runs from 8.30am to 3.30pm. (Nursery Room 3pm finish)**

Mission Statement:

We aim to provide a safe, secure and happy environment. In this environment your child can be guided through the Montessori education system by adults with a full understanding of the Montessori Method. We will help your child to find their own potential and independence and whilst on this journey of self-discovery, aid them in becoming a balanced, well-mannered and confident individual.

- To provide a safe, secure and happy environment for your child.
- To lead your child to the joy of learning and self-discovery.
- To observe your child as an individual and to help them to find their own potential.
- To provide a wide and varied day, incorporating a full learning programme.
- To allow freedom of movement during the learning activities and to provide physical exercise indoors and outdoors.
- To encourage creativity in art, craft and musical expression.
- To encourage self-discipline, caring for others and social interaction.
- To promote independence and care of the immediate environment.

WHY MONTESSORI?

Maria Montessori pioneered the Montessori Method of Education early this century. In developing this method of education she combined a philosophy with a practical approach based on the idea of freedom and independence for the child but within a structured environment. The Montessori Method takes into consideration the child's physical, intellectual, emotional and social abilities and develops these in a specially prepared environment. What is most unique about the method is the detailed emphasis given to sensorial experiences, developing the five senses and providing a solid foundation for speech, writing and arithmetic. We recognise that children want to learn but it is vital that they are taught how to learn and through the Montessori method the child will gain this ability, thus creating a solid base on which they can build for their future learning. We want to help your child become a balanced, well-mannered and confident individual, who through the Montessori education system will have a flying start at their next school and for life.



THE MONTESSORI LEARNING PROGRAMME

A Montessori learning programme aims to develop the child's self-motivation, independence and self-respect. It places no restraints on a child's ability and provides children with a step-by-step understanding of complex abstract concepts through the use of concrete materials.

A child's early years, from birth to six, are the period when he or she has the greatest capacity to learn and the greatest appetite for knowledge. It is during these years that the foundation is laid for all their future learning, for their sense of themselves, their confidence, self esteem, respect and interest in the world around the truly education for life.

THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

The Montessori classroom is a 'prepared environment' consciously designed to support the child's developmental needs. Every child develops at a different rate and because the classroom is equipped with a wide range of unique Montessori materials the child is able to choose freely from the materials suitable to individual progression. The special qualities of the teacher and the unique classroom environment combine to allow the maximum opportunity for intellectual growth at the same time promoting emotional and social development and self control, thus enabling the child to reach their full potential.

THE MONTESSORI CLASSROOM

The first aspect parents notice when entering a Montessori classroom for the first time is the quiet and calm atmosphere of the children busy at work!

The Montessori classroom can be a bewildering place for parents who for the first time watch what is happening in the classroom. The equipment looks attractive and interesting but very different to the toys you are used to seeing your child play with at home. The teacher seems very fussy about the way the children handle the equipment yet no-one will appear to be controlling what they choose to work with or how long they work with it. The children all seem confident and calm, working quietly, tidying up after themselves and sharing their time and equipment.

The unique Montessori environment is carefully planned; every item is designed to meet the needs of your child. It is a child-sized world where the adults treat the children in their care with respect and understanding, guiding them through their most important years of learning. The child has the freedom to make their own choices and work freely with equipment that interest and stimulates them. The activities they have to choose from are carefully selected by the teachers and provide variety, interest and the necessary learning properties to stimulate your child. All the exercises have an in-built control of error, which enables the child to work with it on their own but guides them in reaching the correct conclusion. On entering St. Thomas More Montessori Preschool your child will be working sub-consciously towards the goals of reading, writing and arithmetic from the very beginning. A good example to use to show this, is writing: to first strengthen a child's fingers in preparation to hold a pencil without tiring, the teacher will encourage the child to use his pincer grip to hold tweezers to transfer beads from one bowl to another when doing practical life work. They will then go onto to learn the shapes of the letters using sandpaper letters; as the child runs their fingers across the letters and mouths the sounds, the whole multi-sensory experience is absorbed. The child will then go on to become dexterous enough to draw the shapes with a pencil.



MONTESSORI AREAS OF LEARNING

Early learning/ Practical life

During these early stages emphasis is placed on developing practical life skills. The child learns to be independent and to take care of the environment. Importance is placed on exercises being carried out in an exact and organised manner. Many of these early materials are designed to prepare the child for the later stages of reading, writing and number work.

Sensorial

Children use materials designed to lead them to an understanding of the senses. This lays the foundation for future mathematical and literacy work.

Maths

The children, using a wide range of unique materials, develop a concrete understanding of numbers and quantity. Children will reach the stage of using materials and then transferring their findings to paper. We would stress that your child will move naturally through the different stages when he or she is ready.



Language

We use a wide range of sound learning and recognition activities to build phonic awareness before moving on to using the sandpaper letters. The child will learn through a multi sensory method the skills for word and sentence building. Specific materials prepare hand control for later written work. Your child will have his or her own pattern of progress and each new stage depends on your child's readiness.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

The Montessori curriculum also provides a sound introduction to history, geography, nature and science. Some of the materials are standard Montessori equipment but we also use equipment made by our teachers and the children to follow up a project of particular interest.

Creative/Physical

The children have free flow access to the outside classroom and play area and our art and craft area is well stocked with materials to aid each child's creative development. There are music and movement sessions and circle time games and activities to enjoy.

Religious Education

The school aims to provide an education guided by the beliefs of the Catholic Church and seeks to develop the spiritual potential of each child whilst incorporating an awareness of other cultural beliefs. The children will follow 'Come and See' which is the national syllabus for Religious Education in Catholic Schools.

COMMITMENT TO OFSTED

The provision for children's development and learning is also linked to The Early Years Foundation Stage published by the department for education and skills.

The Early Years Foundation Stage

A child's experience in the early years has a major impact on their future life chances and for all children in our care we link to The Early Years Foundation Stage. (EYFS)

The EYFS framework sets out four key principles underpinning effective practice in the care, development and learning of young children. Its purpose and aims state that every child deserves the best possible start in life and support to fulfil their potential.

The framework guides practice in settings where babies and toddlers are cared for and to help young children to achieve the five 'Every Child Matters' outcomes of staying safe, being healthy, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution and achieving economic well-being.

A secure, safe and happy childhood is important and it provides the foundation for children to make the most of their abilities and talents as they develop. When parents choose to use early years services they want to know that the Preschool they have selected will keep their children safe and help them to thrive.

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is the framework that provides that assurance. Our setting is guided by and promotes the four principles:

A Unique Child - Every child is a competent learner from birth who can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured. We recognize the uniqueness of each individual child by acknowledging their individual potential and pace of development.

Positive Relationships - Children learn to be strong and independent from a base of loving and secure relationships with parents and/or a key person. We acknowledge the parents' unique role as the child's first educators and we ensure a respectful partnership with parents and carers. We work closely with other Early Years professionals who support children outside of the nursery such as child minders, other settings, therapists and health visitors.

Enabling environment - The environment plays a key role in supporting and extending children's development and learning. The Montessori principle is founded on the principle of the favourable environment, which supports the child's self construction.

Learning and Development - Children learn and develop in different ways and at different rates and all areas of Learning and Development are equally important and inter-connected. We see the child's education as a key to the child's development. The Montessori learning materials serve as tools to enable the children's learning. Children start to learn about the world around them from the moment they are born. The care and education offered by our Preschool helps children to continue to do this by providing all of the children with interesting activities that are appropriate for their age and stage of development.



Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

At St. Thomas More Montessori Preschool we aim to provide an environment in which all children achieve the best possible education and care and become confident learners with a growing ability to communicate their own views and are supported by the preschool to reach their full potential during the Early Years.

Children and young people with SEND have unique learning needs, socially, emotionally, cognitively or physically that make it harder for them to learn than other children and young people of the same age. These children and young people may need extra or different support from that given to others.

Our Aims

- We have regard for the DFE Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Code of Practice 2014.
- We include all children in our provision as required by the Equality Act 2010.
- We provide practitioners to liaise with and help support parents and children with special educational needs (SEN)/disabilities.
- We identify the specific needs of children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities and meet those needs through a range of strategies.
- We work in partnership with parents and other agencies in meeting individual children's needs.
- We monitor and review our practice and provision and, if necessary, make adjustments.
- We use the graduated response system for identifying, assessing and responding to children's special educational needs and disabilities.

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities - News

What is the Local Offer?

The Local Offer is published as part of the SEND reforms under the Children and Families Act 2014 and will be developed over time, with all partners involved in reviewing it.

The Local Offer will:

- Give you information about education, health and care services
- Give you information about leisure activities and support groups
- Hold all the information in one place
- Be clear, comprehensive and accessible
- Make service provision more responsive to local needs and aspirations
- Be developed and reviewed with the service providers and service users

For further details please see the Essex Local Offer website

<http://www.essexlocaloffer.org.uk/content/about-local-offer>



OTHER INFORMATION

Children's Welfare and Safeguarding

St. Thomas More Montessori Preschool works together with Social Care and the Essex Child Protection team whose combined duty it is to protect the welfare and safety of children. All the preschool staff attend Essex Safeguarding Children training courses.

Parental Involvement

Parents are welcome at any time to come and be part of life at St. Thomas More Preschool. We recognise parents as the first and most important educators of their children. The staff are partners with you in providing the best care and education for your child.

There are many ways in which parents can take part at St. Thomas More, such as:

- Exchanging knowledge about their children's need, activities, interests and progress with the staff;
- Sharing their own special interests with the children, especially ones that may be topic related;
- Being part of the storytelling rota, particularly fathers;
- Taking part in school trips and other events;
- Building friendships with other parents in the setting.

Key person and your child

The setting has a key person system. This means that each member of staff has a group of children for whom they are responsible. The key person observes and guides the child, planning for each stage of your child's development and education and will help your child to settle and engage with the environment.

Your child's key person will work with you, as parents, to make sure that the Preschool is providing for your child's particular needs and interests and is available to discuss concerns or to share your child's personal achievements!

My Montessori Child

Our record keeping system within the preschool is called 'My Montessori Child'. This system runs using iPad's to record visual evidence and observational records of your child's progress and achievements whilst they are with us at Preschool. The system allows the staff to plan individually for your child and produce a clear visual record of the activities which have captured their interest. The exciting part is, as a parent, you can log in to the system with a unique pass code, to view pictures and observations which have been recorded for your child. The system includes a 'parent's page' which will keep you up to date with the preschool news and Montessori updates.



My Montessori Book

Each child has their own book in which both the individual child and staff celebrate achievements during the weekly sessions attended. Your child's book helps us to celebrate her/his achievements and by staff and parents working together provides what your child needs for her/his well-being and development.

Outdoor Learning

The children have access to outdoor areas, at all times in all weathers, except when conditions are unsafe. We encourage children to move in and out as they wish, extending their activities in the outdoor classroom and zoned areas - willow dome, small animal area, music den, bike track, sandpit and climbing frame. The children can work under cover or out in the large garden, ensuring they move as much as they need to meet their physical, emotional and intellectual needs. We ask that children bring in suitable clothing, including sun hats and sun cream in summer and warm, waterproof clothes and welly boots for winter.



Uniform

We supply 2 items of uniform when you enrol your child. This consists of a rucksack, polo shirt or sweatshirt. Additional supplies of uniform are available to purchase. We also advise that you send your child to preschool in 'old' clothes as there will be lots of opportunities for your child to engage in messy play!

School Lunches

School lunches are available for all the children. If your child has any special dietary requirements please ensure you inform the preschool office. St Thomas More Primary School provides our lunches and is a National Healthy School operating its own catering service. They have a friendly catering team who offer nutritionally balanced but traditionally cooked lunches, freshly prepared on our premises on a daily basis, offering fresh vegetables (and salad in summer months), with a choice of home cooked deserts, or a selection of fresh fruit or yogurt of the child's choice. This is based on a 4 week rolling menu. School lunches are included in the fees.

Staff Qualifications

As well as gaining qualifications in Early Years Care and Education, staff attend regular training days, either in house or at a local authority venue, to help them keep up to date with current thinking and best practice in the Early Years Care and Education sector. All staff hold enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service certificates and regularly update qualifications in Safeguarding, Early Years, Positive Behaviour, Paediatric First Aid, Food Hygiene and Health & Safety.

School Handbook & Policies

The setting information book is on display in the Preschool Office area for parents and visitors to read and learn more about the Preschool and its ethos. A file containing our current school policies is available to read in the Preschool Office area by parents, visitors and outside agencies.

These policies help us to make sure that the service provided by St. Thomas More is a high quality one and that, for you and your child, being part of St. Thomas More is an enjoyable and beneficial experience.

Staff and trustees work together to adopt the policies and all have the opportunity to contribute towards the policies. We review policies regularly to ensure that they are enabling us to maintain a quality service for children, parents, staff and the local community.

Registration and Waiting Lists

Once your child has been registered to start at our preschool s/he will be placed on the waiting list. We will inform you whether you have secured a place in the term before your child is due to start. For our September intake the waiting list will be followed in strict order of receiving your child's registration form and fee. For those children who register with us to start at other times during the academic year we will make every effort to accommodate the preferred start date and sessions but this is conditional on available spaces.

Grant Funded Early Education Entitlement Information

All 3 and 4 year olds are entitled to 15 hours of grant funded early education per week until they either go into a Preschool Office class or reach compulsory school age. The entitlement is paid from the term *after* your children turns 3 years old. The cut off dates are as follows: - 31st March, 31st August and 31st December.

There is also funding available for two year olds whose families are on low incomes or receiving certain benefits.

How to claim Grant Funded Early Education Entitlement

St. Thomas More Montessori Preschool will be able to apply for Grant Funded Early Education Entitlement funding on your behalf from Essex County Council. The funding is then paid directly to us on a termly basis.

Each term we will ask you to sign a parent/carer agreement form. The form is your commitment to St. Thomas More Montessori Preschool for your child's place for the coming term. We will then submit the form to Essex County Council to claim the Grant Funded Early Education Entitlement for the forthcoming term. The entitlement will be deducted from the total of each terms fees.



From September 2017 – 30 Hours Free Childcare Entitlement

Working parents/carers of 3 and 4 year olds will be able to access 30 hours of free childcare per week, depending on individual circumstances. Please see the following website for more information www.childcare-support.tax.service.gov.uk For those families who wish to access their 30 funded hours with no additional cost, the children will be able to attend any or all week days between the hours 9.30am – 3.30pm, subject to availability. School lunches will be optional for those children accessing only 30 hours free childcare.

Preschool Fees

At the start of each term parents will receive an invoice for the forthcoming terms fees. The fee is the same for all three terms (autumn, spring, summer) irrespective of the length of the term. Please contact the preschool office for an up to date fee charges sheet or please see our website: Admissions and Fees page.

Childcare Vouchers Childcare vouchers are available from some employers as part of your salary. We accept these.

Contact Information

If you need to contact the preschool between 8.30am- 3pm or to inform the staff of a child's absence then please telephone: **01799 523248** and press 3 to speak to the preschool or alternatively please email stm@montessorigroup.org

The Preschool location is:

South Road,

Saffron Walden,

Essex

CB11 3DW

For general administration enquiries relating to admissions, waiting lists or session availability please telephone: **01799 523248** and press 3 to speak to the preschool or alternatively please email stm@montessorigroup.org

For invoice, payment and grant funding queries please contact our Bursar, Emma Briggs either by email bursar@montessorigroup.org or telephone: **01763 836996**

The address for all correspondence is:

St. Thomas More Montessori Preschool

c/o Spriggs Yard

Little Sampford,

Saffron Walden

Essex

CB10 2SA

Website: www.stthomasmontessori.co.uk



TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF ATTENDANCE:

To maintain the high standards of the Preschool it is necessary to stipulate the following regulations:

- Preschool Room -Morning session - 8.30am to 12.30 pm daily. Afternoon session - 12.30pm to 3.30pm. An all day session - 8.30 am to 3.30pm.
- Nursery Room – Morning session - 8.30am to 12.30 pm daily. Afternoon session - 12.30pm to 3.00pm. An all day session - 8.30 am to 3.00pm.
Please remember that your child could become distressed if you are late or regularly late. Children do not like to be the last to leave or may worry that you may not come to collect them. If you are delayed in traffic or something unavoidable please telephone us promptly.
- Our snack cafe is free flow and available all morning. Milk and water will be supplied, but we would ask that you supply a piece of fruit or vegetable, bread sticks, rice cakes or crackers each day to develop a healthy approach to eating and sharing with others.
- The children will sit down to lunch at 12pm.
- If someone other than yourself is collecting your child, please notify your child's key person and complete the collection book in the main Preschool Office area. Our staff will not release your child to anyone other than you unless this notification has been carried out.
- Please supply a named bag for your child containing spare clothes, nappies and wipes, as appropriate. They will require a raincoat or a winter coat, wellington boots, sunhat and sun cream for outside play. All items of clothing brought to the school should be clearly labelled with your child's name.
- Acceptance of children who are not fully toilet trained is customary.
- It is important that the Preschool is notified immediately if your child cannot attend due to illness. Please then ensure that they have fully recovered before returning to school. In the case of sickness and diarrhoea please ensure that your child does not return for 48 hours after the symptoms have ceased. This is in line with the Department Of Health regulations and guidance. Any infectious illness **must** be reported to us immediately.
- We can only administer prescription medicines with parental permission and the relevant completed healthcare form. In the case of long term medication being necessary, please speak to the Preschool leader who will require written permission to administer such medicines and a completed healthcare form detailing your child's medical needs.
- On **no account** must your child be sent to school in charge of his or her own medication. Medication should not be added to any food or drink in the child's lunchbox.
- If your child becomes unwell whilst at school we will make every attempt to contact either yourself or the emergency contact person. Please ensure that you keep the Preschool informed of any changes in your contact details.



