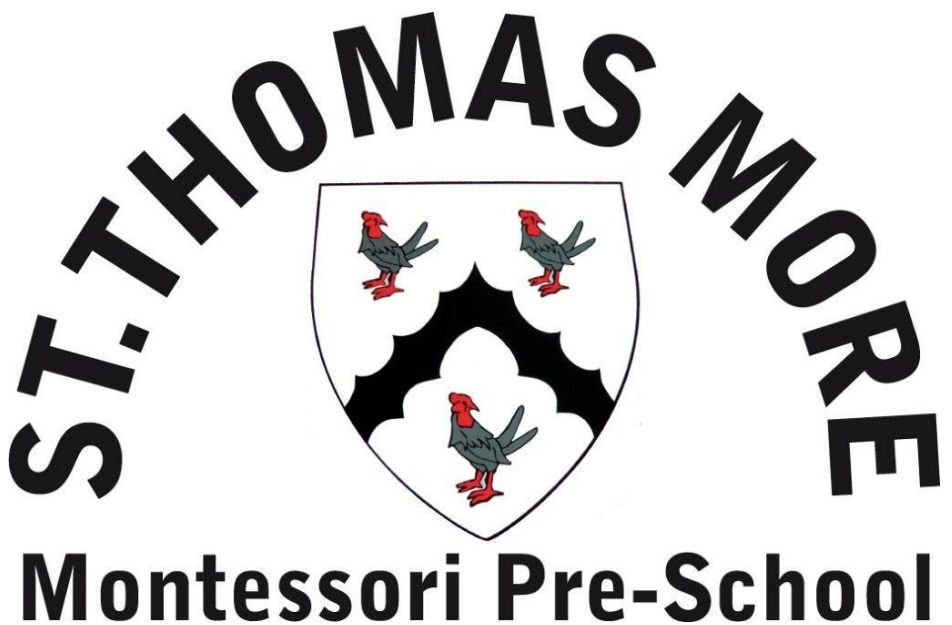


**Essential Guide to
Starting at**





Hello and a warm welcome to St Thomas More Montessori Pre-school.... We think our Pre-school is a very special place for children to learn, have fun and make friends. We pride ourselves on our nurturing environment and hope that you and your child will enjoy your time with us.

Helping your child to settle.....

It is important to remember that children will vary in their emotional reaction to the changes taking place and the length of time it takes them to settle. We operate a flexible approach to -children settling in.

Common reactions on starting Pre-school include;

Walking in without a backward glance

Walking in without a backward glance for the first few times *then* showing signs of anxiety

Protesting loudly on separation but becoming settled within a few minutes

Unsettled on and off throughout the first weeks but gradually improving

All these reactions can be difficult for you to deal with but it is important to remain **calm and consistent**.

Saying Goodbye.....Provided that you and your child have previously visited the pre-school, smile and reassure your child that you are coming back later, hand him/her over to a member of staff, wave goodbye and walk away. There is no need to stay if your child settles at an activity on his/her own or with a member of staff. You are welcome to phone and speak to a member of staff later, if you are worried. If your child becomes *very* upset at separation, offer to read a story or stay for a very short time, sharing an activity. Any upset is much shorter if you give your child confidence. Encourage your child to walk in rather than be carried and to wave goodbye.

Be patient.....some children take longer to settle than others, but they always do in the end!

The Daily Routine

Our morning session begins at 8.30am and when you drop off your child you need to enter at the side gate to the right hand side of the main school building. The preschool is located to the rear of the primary school.

Upon entering the classroom a member of staff will be waiting to greet and register your child for the session. Your child will need to find his/her name label, attached to the fuzzy board and choose a tray to stick the name label onto. We'll put any correspondence, My Montessori book or work your child produces during the session in here so it is a good idea to check each time your child is in preschool. The staff member who greets you on arrival at the preschool, in the morning, will take a lunch register to confirm numbers and menu choices. There are always two options for hot dinner each day and all dietary requirements are catered for. There is a small cloakroom area and every child has their own peg, with their picture above it, to hang coats & bags on. Please encourage your child to look for their picture and to hang up their own belongings. The children's toilets are located at the other end of the room, near to the art and craft area. Please note that your child does not have to be potty/toilet trained to start preschool, all we ask is that you provide nappies, wipes and nappy sacks in their bag. Staff will record every time your child's nappy is changed during the session.

Our session ends at 12.30pm for a morning or 3.30pm for a full day attended. Please arrive promptly and enter by the side gate. If the gate is closed please press the silver call button, where you will be asked for the password that you provide us with, in order to gain access to the school grounds.

8.30am	Drop Off and Name Finding Free play, activities & access to the outside throughout the
9.00am -11am	Snack Cafe Opening Hours
11.45am	Group Time with teachers. The children gather to say good morning, talk about their day and sing songs. We pray together
12pm	Lunchtime starts
12.30pm	Morning session finishes Free play, activities & access to the outside throughout the session
3.15pm—3.30pm	We gather together for stories and prayers. Full Day finishes

Montessori Ethos and Aims

It is a goal of Montessori education to make the child independent and be able to do things for themselves. This is achieved by giving children opportunities to move, to dress themselves, to choose what they want to do in our prepared environment and to help adults with tasks.

When the children are able to do things for themselves there is an increase in their self belief, self confidence and self-esteem .

"Never help a child with a task at which he feels he can succeed"

Maria Montessori

So how can you help?

Clothing & Footwear

Please remember to dress your child in suitable clothes and sensible shoes for messy play! Aprons are available but paint and glue may still end up in the wrong places! Children need to be able to move freely for physical play and simple comfortable clothing that they manage to take off or put on independently would also be helpful when going to the toilet.

Shoes are particularly tricky, especially ones with laces. If possible please try and get your child shoes with Velcro straps so they are able to get them on and off easily by themselves. We venture outside in all weathers so please make sure that your child has appropriate clothing for the weather conditions that day: a raincoat or a winter coat, wellington boots, hats, gloves and scarves or sunhat and sun cream.

Play and Activities

Young children are usually more concerned with the 'doing' than the end result so please do not be surprised or disappointed if your child does not bring anything home. No doubt your child has been very busy with other activities and their Key Person will be happy to share this with you at the end of the session or you can look on our record keeping Parent App for updates. At this age it is usual for children to play alone or alongside other children at first and it is often in the final year at pre-school when playing together really begins.

There is free flow access between the inside and outside so children can choose where they want to play and when. Children's free play will be supported by adult initiated activities, including group times, singing, stories and other activities to support personal, social and emotional development.

Pacifiers

Many of our young children use pacifiers during the night and sometimes during the day. Whilst at pre-school we encourage children to use their voices and language is a big part of growing independence. Pacifiers make it hard for our children to speak, be understood and strengthen their facial muscles in order to be able to speak. Please, if possible try and encourage your child to leave their pacifier at home or even in the car.

Potty Training

Using a potty is a new skill for your child to learn. It's best to take it slowly and go at your child's pace. Being patient with them will help them get it right, even if you sometimes feel frustrated. Children are able to control their bladder and bowels when they're physically ready and when they want to be dry and clean. Every child is different, so it's best not to compare your child with others.

Try potty training when there are no great disruptions or changes to your child's or your family's routine. It's important to stay consistent, so you do not confuse your child. Bear in mind that most children can control their bowels before their bladder.

- by age 1, most babies have stopped doing poos at night
- by age 2, some children will be dry during the day, but this is still quite early
- by age 3, 9 out of 10 children are dry most days - even then, all children have the odd accident, especially when they're excited, upset or absorbed in something else
- by age 4, most children are reliably dry during the day

It usually takes a little longer for children to learn to stay dry throughout the night. Although most learn this between the ages of 3 and 5, up to 1 in 5 children aged 5 sometimes wet the bed.

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/potty-training-tips/>

Working Together

When your child starts, you will be asked to share information about your child. This is called an Entry Profile and forms part of the settling-in procedure. A child as young as two may not have the necessary language to tell the staff about his/her needs, so it is especially useful to have some background information. Your child's appointed Key Person will discuss the profile with you, especially noting any concerns such as allergies, special needs, etc.

Your child's future development and progress is measured against the Entry Profile and provides a balanced and holistic picture.

Your Key Person will share with you, information about your child's time within the pre-school and creates a Learning Journey featuring your child's activities and interests, noting next steps for learning. This is accessible via a secure Parents App so that you can share your child's learning experiences at pre-school. At the end of each session we appreciate that it is often busy in the classroom; please take a few minutes to wait for your child's Key Person to be free if you would like more information about your child's day.

During the Spring Term we hold Parent's Consultations where you are invited to speak to your child's Key Person about his/her development and education. If you would like to speak confidentially to your Key Person, about your child or any aspect of the pre-school please make an appointment at a mutually convenient time.

Knowing how your child is progressing on a regular basis and being able to support this gives you an active role in your child's education and welfare, forming a positive beginning to the education system. Please remember, we are here to support the whole family and our door is always open.

Parent Helpers

This is voluntary and enables us to provide the occasional extra pair of hands for activities such as walks, forest school or gardening. It may be that you have skills, talents or activities that you are able to share with the children or are happy to read stories in the book corner. Please speak to a member of staff if you would like to help out.

Our Commitment

The Early Years Foundation Stage

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. We create learning experiences that are diverse and inclusive.

We respect each child and his or her individual qualities, characteristics and temperament. The Montessori environment promotes learning by doing and creating learning experiences to meet the individual needs of each child. These experiences are child led and self correcting ensuring children become confident learners.

ENABLING ENVIRONMENTS

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

While participating in their self-chosen activities children's responses will be observed and recorded. We are aware that there is learning in every thing the children's experience, even those unplanned situations, the children will be supported through these experiences some of which will be comforting and some of which will be challenging. We will ensure that the learning experience is enjoyable and safe. The child will benefit from a range of experiences using the Montessori materials enhancing their sensory perception, knowledge and increasing their independence. Our planning starts with observing the children their interests, current development and learning, encouraging the children to use all of their environment both indoors and outdoors.

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 year's professionals who support children outside of the nursery such as child minders, other settings, therapists and health visitors. The key person will support your child through their learning, creating a trusting relationship.

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 pre-school 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. Through self discovery they discover connections and come to new and better understanding of concepts relating to all areas of learning.

Personal, Social and Emotional

Communication, Language and literacy

Problem Solving, Reasoning and Numeracy

Knowledge and Understanding of the world

Physical Development

Creative Development

Communication

We will keep you up to date with pre-school news, events, projects, celebrations, concerts and other news by email, letter or notices on our board in the reception area. Please regularly check our website www.stthomasmoremontessori.co.uk for up to date information regarding term dates, invoicing/termly fees & other relevant and interesting articles and news.

Partnership with the Primary School

One of the advantages of our pre-school is the excellent relationship that we have with the main school. This enables us to take full advantage of the school facilities, such as the field, library and music suite, and also means that we are fully included in the school community. The children are invited to attend assemblies and Mass if desired and soon become used to the gentle bustle of 'big school', preparing them well for the next stage.

The children are able to take part in many events such as Sports Day and Charity Fun Days, as well as joint ventures such as the Christmas Party and Concert; Our Pre-school parents are welcome to join the thriving PSA.

Snack Time

As children may be hungry at different times, we provide a snack café so that the children have a choice of when they would like to eat and snack time becomes an integrated activity within the session. Snack time is organised so that it is a social occasion in which children and staff participate and by sharing, helping each other and taking turns, especially when new to the group, the children will learn and improve their social skills. As the children's confidence grows they become independent in preparing their snack and serving themselves unaided. If you continue this practice of pouring their own drinks at home it supports their feelings of independence..... Allow them to help set the table for dinner.

We always have a member of staff to help prepare snack with the children (with due care given to hygiene) and provide support for the children with self service routine and tidying away and maintain a dietary/allergy list which is checked before each session.

We ask that parents contribute to snack time by supplying either/or fruit, vegetables, salad items, bread sticks, rice cakes, crackers.

Meal times

We organise lunch so that it is a social occasion in which children and staff participate by helping each other and taking turns. At lunch time children sit at a table with other children and a member of staff to encourage a positive eating experience and table manners. We provide children who bring packed lunches with plates, cups and cutlery as necessary.

School Lunches

Hot lunches are available for all the children. 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.

Packed Lunches

We kindly request that parents pack children's lunch boxes in insulated lunch bags with freezer blocks, where possible, to keep the food chilled until lunchtime. All lunch boxes, food containers and drinks containers should be clearly labelled with the child's full name.

Please ensure that you provide a healthy packed lunch that should include the following:

- At least one portion of fruit and one portion of vegetable
- Meat, fish or other source of non-dairy protein every day
- A starchy food such as any type of bread, pasta, rice, couscous, noodles, potatoes or other grain
- Dairy food such as milk, cheese, yoghurt, fromage frais or custard water, diluted fruit juice, milk, yogurt/milk drinks

We discourage packed lunches that consist largely of processed foods, crisps, sweet products or sugary drinks.. **Please note that no food or drink products should be sent into the pre-school containing nuts or nut ingredients.**

Absence and Medical

We kindly request that you inform us of a child's absence due to illness on the first day and, if you are intending to take holiday during term time to inform us of the dates that your child will be away from pre-school. It is vitally important that we have up to date emergency contact details for your child. These details will be used if your child is unwell or has an accident whilst in our care and we are unable to contact you directly. Please ensure that you inform us of any changes to those emergency contact details and any changes to your contact details.

Communicable Diseases

We aim to maintain high standards of health, hygiene and safety, and the co-operation from parents is essential in this. We politely ask that children who are unwell and taking prescribed medication or pain or fever relief medication, are kept away from the pre-school until they have recovered. Pre-school life can be demanding and the environment is not conducive to supporting children's recovery as we do not have the facilities or staff to nurse sick children who need individual attention.

In cases of sickness and diarrhoea the Health Protection Agency advise that 48 hours **MUST** elapse after the last episode of illness before a child can return to pre-school. This is particularly important in cases of infectious diseases, as one child's illness can so easily spread throughout the children and the staff team.

Children taking prescribed medication must be well enough to attend the setting and we are only allowed to administer prescribed medication. It must be in-date and prescribed for the current condition and labelled with the child's name. **It is imperative that parents/carers notify staff if they have administered medicine or if they suspect their child maybe unwell before leaving them for the session.**

Minor bumps and scrapes are inevitable accidents in the life of young children, and we cannot entirely prevent these. However, all play that involves risks is always supervised by at least one adult. Accidents are noted in the accident book and parents are informed of the circumstance and asked to sign in the book at the close of the session.

We have Paediatric First Aid trained staff on site at all times.

Late Arrival and Collection

It is important for children to start and leave on a positive note so we would appreciate parents and carers arriving on time for both drop off and pick up. It can be distressing for some children if you are late.

If anyone other than yourself will be collecting your child, please ensure that you inform a member of staff. You should complete the collection book in the Reception area. We will NOT release your child to anyone other than yourself, unless we have been informed otherwise.

Our Staff Team

We believe that our staff deserve the support and opportunities to gain qualifications in Early Years Care and the Montessori curriculum. We employ a variety of skills and experience and hold regular in house training to keep their knowledge fresh and up to date. Staff also attend training courses in the local area and wider community gaining valuable skills and information both for their personal career development and to enhance our pre-school practice.

Pre-school Policies

We hold a comprehensive file encompassing all the detailed policies and procedures. They can also be found on our website.

Non Smoking Policy

We would like to make parents/carers aware that the pre-school operates a non-smoking policy both on the premises and within the pre-school grounds and car park.

Mobile Phone Usage

We politely request that you do not use your mobile phone whilst you are on the premises of the pre-school, both inside the building and outside in the garden areas.

Safeguarding Children

As part of our role within the Early Years sector we are governed by Ofsted regulations and whilst your child is here with us, we have a duty of care towards them. Our Safeguarding role includes recording and reporting any child protection concerns to the Local Safeguarding Children Board. Please see our fully comprehensive Child Protection Policy for further details.

Contact Information

If you need to contact the pre-school urgently during classroom hours or to inform the staff of a child's absence then please telephone:

01799 523248

Option 2 — Pre-school

Or email: stm@mymontessori.org.uk

Head Office

Our Head office team deal with admission forms and queries, invoices, fee queries and payments.

Please do not email or telephone Head Office to contact the pre-school team or to advise of a child's absence or other queries. Your first point of call is always with the Pre-school Manager or staff.

Telephone: 01371 831902

Head Office

Email: office@mymontessori.org.uk

Finance

Email: finance@mymontessori.org.uk

Invoices/Termly Fees

Fee invoices are issued each term, in advance. We are a recognised recipient for the government Educational Entitlement funding.

We accept childcare vouchers and offer the option to pay your fees by instalments. Please note that this is by prior arrangement with the Montessori Head Office. We do not accept cash or cheque payments due to bank charges.

Childcares Choices

The government Childcare Choices website www.childcarechoices.gov.uk provides details of the entitlements and help to support families with the cost of childcare.

