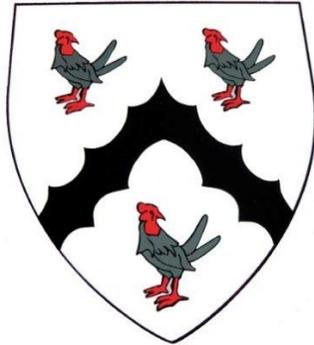
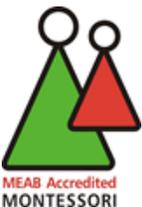


ST. THOMAS MORE



Montessori Pre-School

Prospectus





Welcome to St Thomas More Montessori Preschool

St Thomas More Montessori Pre-school is set in the grounds of St Thomas More primary school and provides a Montessori education for children between the age of 12 months to 5

years . Our Catholic faith is reflected in our teaching and learning. We have an outdoor play area and classroom that is freely accessible to the children all day.

We operate term time only, 38 weeks per year, opening Monday to Friday

Morning session 8.30 am to 12.30pm.

Afternoon session 12.30pm to 3.30pm.

Full day 8.30am - 3.30pm

Mission Statement: We aim to provide a safe, secure and happy environment where your child can be guided through the Montessori curriculum by adults with a full understanding of the Montessori Method. We will support 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. We encourage self-discipline, caring for others, social interaction and care of the immediate environment and will provide a wide and varied day, incorporating a full learning programme and allow freedom of movement during the learning activities, physical exercise indoors and outdoors and encourage creativity in art, craft and musical expression.

"The goal of early childhood education should be to activate the child's own natural desire to learn."

Maria Montessori

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 essence of independence is to be able to do something for one's self. Adults work to finish a task, but the child works in order to grow, and is working to create the adult, the person that is to be. Such experience is not just play, it is work he must do in order to grow up."

Maria Montessori

The Montessori Learning Programme

The 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 them.





The Montessori Classroom

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 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. 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.

If you would like to learn more about the Montessori method please visit the website [The Montessori Method - St Thomas More Montessori](#) or feel free to speak to our staff.

The Learning Environment

From the start of your child's learning journey they will be working sub-consciously towards the goals of reading, writing and arithmetic.

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 the knobs on the wooden blocks you will see on the sensorial shelves. The child will be shown how to grip tweezers in the same way when using them 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; as the child runs their fingers across sandpaper 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.

"What the hand does the mind remembers." ~ Maria Montessori

Montessori Areas of Learning

Early learning - Area of Everyday Living

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.

Creative

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 group time and activities to enjoy.





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.

Literacy

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.

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.

Play and Activities

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



"Let the children be free; encourage them; let them run outside when it is raining; let them remove their shoes when they find a puddle of water; and when the grass of the meadows is wet with dew, let them run on it and trample it with their bare feet; let them rest peacefully when a tree invites them to sleep beneath its shade; let them shout and laugh when the sun wakes them in the morning." ~ Maria Montessori

Parental Involvement

Parents are welcome at any time to come and be part of life at St Thomas More. We recognise parents as the first and most important educators of their children. 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.

From time to time the pre-school holds learning events for parents. These usually look at how adults can help children to learn and develop in their early years. Courses on similar topics are held locally. Please look at our Parents Information Board for further details about courses and parent groups.

Children's Learning and Development

We aim to ensure that each child is in a safe and stimulating environment and is given generous care and attention due to our ratio of staff to children. Each child has the chance to join in with other children and adults who help support the play, work and learn together. Each child is supported to take forward his/her learning and development and build on what they already know and can do.

We assess how young children are learning and developing by observing them frequently. We use information that we gain from observations, to document their progress and where this may be leading them. We believe that parents know their children best and we ask them to contribute to the assessment by sharing information about what their children like to do at home and how they, as parents, are supporting development. We make periodic assessment summaries of children's learning journeys based on our ongoing development records. These form part of children's records of achievement. We undertake these assessment summaries at regular intervals, as well as times of transition, such as when they go on to school. Our record keeping system within the preschool is an online system that parents are able to access daily via a Parent app. We record visual evidence and observational records of your child's progress and achievements and plan individually for your child, producing a clear visual record of the activities which have captured the child's interest.

Any child who is self-sufficient, who can tie his shoes, dress or undress himself, reflects in his joy and sense of achievement the image of human dignity which is derived from a sense of independence." ~

Maria Montessori

Key Person

The pre-school 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 pre-school is providing for your child's particular needs and interests and is available to discuss concerns or to share your child's achievements!

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.

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 pre-school they have selected will keep their children safe and help them to thrive.

Commitment to Ofsted

The provision for children's development and learning is linked to The Early Years Foundation Stage published by the Department for Education.

<https://www.gov.uk/early-years-foundation-stage>

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 experience, even those unplanned situations, and they 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

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.



Children with Additional Needs

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. We aim to ensure that each child is supported in reaching their full potential and is regarded of equal worth, irrespective of age, gender, race or ability.

Children and young people with additional needs have unique learning requirements and social, emotional, cognitive or physical needs 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.

We use the graduated response system for identifying, assessing and responding to children's needs. We monitor and review our practice and provision and, if necessary, make adjustments. We liaise with and help support parents and children with additional needs through a range of strategies and work in partnership with other agencies in meeting individual children's needs.

For further information please see Essex Local Offer website. The Local Offer is published as part of the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) reforms under the Children and Families Act 2014.

[Home - Essex Local Offer](#)[Essex Local Offer](#)

We very much look forward to working together with you and your child. If you have any questions about additional support for your child, please speak to our SEND coordinator.

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

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 and 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 note that no food or drink products should be sent into the pre-school containing nuts or nut ingredients.

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.

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.

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. All staff hold fully enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service checks and regularly update qualifications in Safeguarding, Early Years, Positive Behaviour, Paediatric First Aid, Food Hygiene and Health & Safety.

Pre-school Policies

We hold a comprehensive file encompassing all the detailed policies and procedures. They can also be found on our website. These policies help us to make sure that the service provided by the pre-school is a high quality one and that, for you and your child, being part of the pre-school is an enjoyable and beneficial experience. We review policies regularly to ensure that they are enabling us to maintain a quality service for children, parents, staff and the local community

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.

Admission 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 Admission form. 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.

Invoices/Termly Fees

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

We accept childcare vouchers / tax free childcare payments and can offer the option to pay your fees by instalments. Please note that this is by prior arrangement with the Montessori Head Office and is subject to an administration fee.

We do not accept cash or cheque payments due to bank charges.

Our termly fee structure includes an Extra Service Charge which is not covered by Funded Early Education Entitlement (FEEE)

If your child is eligible for FEEE and you would be unable to pay the Extra Service Charge, please contact us for availability of a fully-funded only place. These places are very limited and allocated on a first-come, first-served basis.

The fees are calculated by how many mornings, afternoons or all day sessions attended for one week. The fee is the same for all three terms, Autumn, Spring, Summer, irrespective of the length of the term.

The Universal/Extended Funded Early Education Entitlement hours will be deducted from the termly fees invoice.

If you require a fees cost breakdown please email finance@mymontessori.org.uk

Childcare Choices

The Childcare Choices website [Childcare Choices | 30 Hours Free Childcare, Tax-Free Childcare and More | Help with Costs | GOV.UK](#) provides details of entitlements and help available to support families with the cost of childcare.

Two Year old Funded Early Education Entitlement

15 hours of Funded Early Education is available for eligible two year olds whose families are receiving government financial support. Parents must make an application to Essex County Council and provide the setting with the child's TYF number.

[Help with childcare costs : Free childcare for 2-year-olds - Essex County Council](#)

Universal Funded Early Education Entitlement Information (15 hour)

Eligible 3 and 4 year olds are entitled to 15 hours of Funded Early Education per week until they either go into a Reception class or reach compulsory school age. The entitlement is paid from the term **after** your child turns 3 years old. The cut off dates are as follows: - 31st March, 31st August and 31st December.

Extended Funded Early Education Entitlement (30 hour)

Eligible working parents/carers of 3 and 4 year olds will be able to access an additional 15 hours of funded childcare per week, depending on individual circumstances.

How to claim the Funded Early Education Entitlement

St Thomas More Montessori Preschool apply for the Funded Early Education Entitlement on your behalf from Essex County Council. Each term you will need to complete a new parent/carer funding agreement form. This is your commitment to the Preschool and Essex County Council for your child's funded place, for the coming term. The FEEE will be deducted from the termly fees invoice.

Essex County Council - FEEE guide for Parents - please click on the link to access further information. [feee-guide-for-parents-2021.pdf \(essex.gov.uk\)](#)

Contact Information

To notify us that your child will be absent or for queries which are specific to your child, your first point of call is always with the Pre-school Manager or pre-school staff. Please do not email or telephone Head Office in these circumstances as it may mean that your message is delayed.

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.

Telephone: 01371 831902

Head Office: Email: office@mymontessori.org.uk

Finance Email: finance@mymontessori.org.uk