# Cobham Montessori School

Education for life

# Curriculum Policy

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**Key References:** In addition to this policy Cobham Montessori School takes due regard for, and refers to, any additional details found in the following publications:
The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations, 2014
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/800615/Independent_School_Standards-_Guidance_070519.pdf

Links are current as at 1st September 2026 Please refer to our full policy list for related policies.

*"And so we discovered that education is not something which the teacher does, but that it is a natural process which develops spontaneously in the human being. It is not acquired by listening to words, but in virtue of experiences in which the child acts on his environment. The teacher's task is not to talk, but to prepare and arrange a series of motives for cultural activity in a special environment made for the child."*

**Dr. Maria Montessori, *Absorbent Mind*, 1967**

## 1.0 Curriculum Aims

The Curriculum we present at Cobham Montessori School is broad, balanced and promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, social, emotional, intellectual and physical development of children at the school and within society and provides learning opportunities, responsibilities and experiences for later life.

Through our Curriculum we aim to develop:

- Mastery of key knowledge, understanding and skills within a coherent, broad and balanced curriculum;
- Global, Social, Health, Environmental, Financial, Entrepreneurial, Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural awareness and understanding;
- Curiosity and Inquiry within the children, so that they become independent learners with a deep love for learning,
- Thinking and Learning Skills.
- Active thinking and learning dispositions.
- Information, Media and Technology Skills.
- Positivity, mindfulness and meaning and purpose in the here and now;
- Widening of horizons and raising aspirations about the world of work and further education.
- Children who are respectful, understanding and tolerant of other cultures and people regardless of our differences.
- Awareness of, and engagement with, local, national and international communities.
- Recognition that personal development is essential to wellbeing and success.
- Children with skills for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences in later life in contemporary Britain as part of a global society.

## 2.0 Curriculum Delivery – The Montessori Method

We follow the methods and detailed curriculum developed by Dr. Maria Montessori for children aged 2-11. Dr. Montessori viewed education as an Aid to Life in its broadest sense. The Montessori approach puts the individual child's potentials and interest in the centre of its curriculum. Our curriculum is based on the vision and potential of the adult the child will become in the future. Based on Montessori principles, we provide specific environments which serve children's developmental needs at different stages of their development and appeal to their particular characteristics at each stage. The Montessori approach provides breadth, balance and relevance to the modern world, as well as securing the fundamentals of literacy, numeracy and scientific enquiry. There is a strong emphasis on children's personal development, including the development of learning and thinking skills, and personal, social and emotional skills.

The resulting education is:

- **Learner-centric**: it is designed to be adaptable to the needs and potential of each learner and supports the highest possible outcomes for each and every child.
- **Personalised**: the approach takes account of each child's prior attainment, aptitude and interests and planning and assessment is undertaken on an individual basis.
- **Contextualised**: the Curriculum enables learners to develop their knowledge, skills and dispositions in a real world context. Research has shown that, "The brain learns best in real-life, immersion-style multi-path learning…fragmented, piecemeal presenting can forever kill the joy and love of learning" (Jensen, 1996[i])
- **Self Directed**: Children learn through self- directed discovery and practice with appropriate guidance from trained adults.

## 2.1 The Montessori Environments for each Stage of Development

The learning environments we prepare reflect the cultural heritage the children are a part of. For the youngest children this may mean tools that help them learn to prepare a snack for themselves. For the older children it includes educational materials that help orient them in the landscape of disciplinary knowledge. Our approach is concerned with the whole child, or the child as a holistic being. We speak especially of the mind and the body, and of not dividing the two.

The Montessori prepared environments for each community are interactive environments designed to help children become self-directed independent learners.

The curriculum is delivered in two mixed-age learning communities:

- The Children's House for children aged 2.5-6
- The Elementary for children aged 6-11.

## 2.2 Characteristics of each Montessori Community

**Freedom**: to choose one's own work both inside and outside; to explore and study a topic that appeals to their imagination. Freedom needs to be balanced by responsibility. Children who choose work spontaneously are responsible for their choices of work.

**Limits**: the work should be constructive and productive. They must understand that work choice needs to include individual work targets (e.g. to improve poor spelling, reading, x tables etc.) as well as work demanded culturally.

**Clear Expectations**: This includes work habits and behaviour. Positive discipline is employed to develop inner discipline in the child, so that they begin to set their own expectations in line with those of the group or community to which they then hold themselves accountable.

**Group Work**: We allow the children to choose who they will work with. This makes the formation of society possible. If given this choice they learn cooperative skills. At some point they learn that they have to give up their personal preference for the good of the group. Responsibility is shared. Children work on one piece of material, taking turns, sharing responsibility for its completion. The skills of cooperation, communication, collaboration and compromise are practised.

**Hard Work:** We convey the expectation that we are asking the child to meet a standard of work worthy of her ability. They need to know that they can be successful on their own. Success motivates the child to continue. Children who can't cope with this freedom are supported to choose.

**Talk**: a constant hum of conversation; it isn't silent!

**Care of the Environment**: ultimately it is the adult's responsibility, but the children, as part of the community, make their contribution to it taking increasing responsibility appropriate to their age.

## 2.3 Curriculum Overview

**Children's House (age 2.5-6 approximately)**

For children between the ages of two and a half to six years – (EYFS to Year 1 approximately) - we provide an environment which fosters the child's growing physical independence and gives them opportunities to explore the world with all their senses and through movement. The detailed Montessori curriculum and materials provide firm foundations in all subjects which allow a smooth transition into the next stage of education. The EYFS seven areas of learning are embodied within the Montessori Curriculum which is divided into the following areas:

- Practical Life
- Sensorial
- Language and Literacy
- Mathematics
- Culture

- Art
- Music
- The World of Plants
- The World of Animals
- Geography
- History (limited at this age)

Social and emotional development is embedded within the functioning of the Children's House as the children learn the skills required to act as a member of their class community, such as self-control, consideration of others' needs, listening skills, acceptance of rules and boundaries etc.

**Elementary Class (age 6-11)**

For children between the ages of six to eleven years (approximately year 1 to year 6 in traditional schools) we provide an environment which fosters the child's growing mental independence and gives them opportunities to research the world with ever growing skills and more refined tools. Children's development will be assessed against our vision of holistic development, ensuring we provide an environment which fosters each individual child's skills and personality.

Dr. Montessori highlighted rather special things about the development of the child in this period. As ever she stressed the holistic nature of the development of the child, bringing out three notable characteristics of this period:

- The need for wider horizons, to go out and explore the world
- The move from concrete to abstract thinking
- The development of a sense of morality closely allied with the intense interest in the social group.

For this age, Dr. Montessori said, "We are to give the child the cosmos". 'Cosmic Education' is integral to the methodology of the Elementary classroom. It relies on first giving a vision of the structure of an idea in its totality such as 'life on Earth' or 'written language' and then giving many connected lessons that create knowledge and experience of the parts of the whole. This education is more meaningful to the primary age child because of how it builds upon itself. Story and idea, narrative and concept, intellectual curiosity and academic skills are woven into a comprehensive fabric that by its very nature will stay with the child long after handwriting and memorization skills are mastered.

The long term goals for pupils immersed in this practice include informed and mature self-direction, enlightened curiosity, emotional well-being based on an understanding of how the world has come to its present state, confidence in an ability to contribute to the world positively and the initiative to do so.

Within the classroom pupils are given lessons and are free to practice and refine the skills of each lesson at their own pace. They are guided to manage their time and to meet the responsibility of working on a broad curriculum. Children cannot choose only to work on the subjects they find most interesting. The teacher encourages children to find connections in the work and helps them to see interest throughout.

For practicality, lessons in the Elementary curriculum are given under the following headings:

- Mathematics
- Geometry
- English
- Botany
- Zoology
- History
- Geography
- Art
- Music

IT skills are presented as tools to support all areas of learning and the skills required for computing (language and logic) are largely developed through the detailed language, mathematics and geometry curricula. E-Safety is delivered as part of the PHSE curriculum.

In addition to classroom-based work, children are encouraged to 'go out' to conduct real world research on a topic of interest to them. Although supported by the teacher and accompanied by a chaperone, 'going out' is mostly undertaken as a result of the independent planning and organisation by the child/ren.

Additions to the Montessori curriculum for the Elementary class cover:

- Modern foreign language – Mandarin
- Physical Education
- Outdoor Learning
- Yoga

## 3.0 Monitoring and Improvement

The approach to assessment of children's progress is described in the Planning and Assessment policy. As a result of ongoing assessment improvements may be identified and implemented at any time. All staff are encouraged to offer ideas for improvement to the delivery of the curriculum.

Children's views are also welcome and considered carefully.

## 4.0 PHSE Curriculum

The approach to delivering the PHSE Curriculum is described in the SMSC Policy, the RSE Policy and the PHSE Curriculum.

[i] Jensen, E. (1996) "Brain-Compatible Learning" International Alliance for Learning, Summer 1996, Vol. 3 #2. AL, Encinitas, CA