



# Curriculum Information Booklet for Parents and Carers

How the Little Tree Olive Tree Montessori curriculum meets the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS, 2021)

*“The goal of early childhood education should be to activate the child’s own natural desire to learn” (Maria Montessori)*

**Website:** <http://littleolivetreemontessori.co.uk/>



## **Intent: What is your aim for my child?**

I place a great value on the development of children as individuals, all with their own unique ways of learning. My role as a qualified early years educator is to provide a caring and inspirational learning environment that supports children to grow and develop, to become curious life-long learners and have a keen interest in the world around them.

## **By the time children leave my setting for school or nursery I aim for them to:**

- 1) **Have respect and knowledge about the amazing diversity of our planet and local communities** – this includes exploring the natural world, cultural diversity, environmentalism, sustainability and global citizenship as well as learning more about our local community.
- 2) **Be able to show kindness, empathy and understanding for those around them, forming friendships and respecting and celebrating different cultures, religions, disabilities and genders** – this is through exploring and celebrating the diversity of people and the importance of different job roles within our community, supporting local charities and enabling children to learn about the importance of friendship and kindness.
- 3) **Have a deep respect for themselves, to communicate effectively and to understand their emotions, where they have developed skills that have given them independence and confidence to progress on to the next step in their life** – this might include supporting children with self-regulation, exercise and looking after our bodies, mindfulness and yoga, taking off and putting on their own coat and shoes and hanging their coat on a peg, washing their hands at the sink and using the toilet independently.
- 4) **Not be afraid to try new things and to have a love for the great outdoors** – this might include climbing a tree, building dens, playing with the mud kitchen, riding a bike or tricycle, running in the rain and jumping in muddy puddles, feeling the wind in their hair.
- 5) **Have a love of books and stories** – this includes children knowing a few favourite stories well and having the opportunity to explore a diverse range of fiction and non-fiction books linking to all areas of the EYFS, such as knowledge and understanding of the world.
- 6) **Enjoy STEM activities and mathematics** – this is through activities and learning that support children to not be afraid to have curious and inquisitive minds. Children will be encouraged to have their own ideas and develop a deep level understanding of mathematics and science.
- 7) **Know a diversity of rhymes and songs and to explore music creatively** – this includes daily planned music sessions, such as exploring percussion instruments and body percussion.
- 8) **Not be afraid of being creative and to think outside the box** – to know that creativity comes in many forms and that all children have got the potential to be creative whether through mark making, art, reading and writing, sculpture, music, dance, role play, small world play, mathematics, science and engineering. Children will have opportunities to learn how to use tools and different materials to make and create things.

## **Implementation: How does your Curriculum meet the requirements of the EYFS (2021)?**

I am a Montessori trained early years practitioner, I hold an NCFE CACHE Level 4 Diploma in Montessori Pedagogy, Birth to Seven (Early Years Educator) trained by Montessori Centre International (MCI). I also have Hygge in the Early Years Accreditation. I am inspired by the Montessori, Hygge, Reggio Emilia and Curiosity Approach to early years education. Even though I follow the Montessori curriculum I also like to blend all these philosophies when creating a balanced curriculum that promotes curiosity, wonder and awe. In my setting children learn through play both independently and with others. I follow sustainable practice where I engage children in environmentally friendly activities and learning. I believe that it is important to teach children about our planet and sustainability from an early age. We learn about nature and spend time outdoors exploring our natural world. My childminding setting is kind, caring and inclusive where I promote understanding of our diverse world.

## **What is the Montessori approach?**

The Montessori approach is a child-led approach to education, where the environment is carefully prepared by the adult so that children can freely choose the activities that they would like to do. Montessori activities, learning materials, toys and other resources are carefully selected to support progression in children's learning. The Montessori curriculum covers practical life, sensorial, numeracy, literacy, creativity and knowledge and understanding of the world. Please read the rest of this booklet to understand how the Montessori approach meets the requirements of the EYFS (2021)



## **Impact – how do I know my child is progressing well? How will this curriculum support my child to be ready for school?**

My curriculum meets the needs of all children attending my setting. I follow the Montessori philosophy of 'follow the child'. I use the Montessori curriculum to guide my planning and I have adapted the curriculum to blend with other approaches so that I can meet the needs of all children in my setting, including babies, toddlers and children with SEND. I do termly assessments for each child, this includes initial observations (starting points) when the child first attends and termly narrative observations, this includes photos, children's artwork and the child's and parent's comments. This evidence is used to create next steps for the child, this is done in partnership with parents. This is added to the child's scrapbook learning journey to share with the children and for them to take home when they leave the setting. While I feel it is important to prepare children for school, I do believe that the role of an early years educator should be to prepare children not just for school but for life, this includes how to care for our diverse planet and communities, which is deeply embedded in the Montessori curriculum of 'peace education' and 'knowledge and understanding of the world':

***“The education of even a small child, therefore, does not aim at preparing him for school, but for life” (Maria Montessori)***

**The Montessori Curriculum covers 6 areas of learning, which are closely linked with the EYFS.**

**These 6 areas are:**

- 1) **Practical Life** – The Montessori Practical Life Curriculum provides activities and resources that children observe in everyday life. This might include baking and food preparation, cleaning, gardening, pegging activities, transferring activities – using spoons, ladles, tongs, tweezers to transfer into different containers or pouring drinks from a jug into a cup, threading activities, putting on and taking off coat and shoes and learning grace and courtesy. These activities develop children's independence, concentration, language and fine and gross motor skills.
- 2) **Sensorial** – Sensorial activities teach children to refine their senses of sight, touch, sound, smell and taste so that they can organise sensory impressions of the world. Sensorial activities teach children about size and dimensions, colours and shapes and how to distinguish different smells, taste and sound. Sensorial work also prepares children for mathematics including geometry, counting, sorting and categorising and shapes. Montessori sensorial materials include the pink tower, brown stairs, knobbed cylinders, colour boxes, geometric solids and trinomial cube.
- 3) **Mathematics** – The Montessori mathematics curriculum supports early mathematical development through hand on learning experiences, such as using a ten frame for counting natural objects found outdoors. The Montessori maths materials teach mathematics through the use of specialised Montessori materials, including sandpaper numbers, numerals and counters, spindle box and hanging beads.
- 4) **Literacy** – The Montessori curriculum provides children with the knowledge and skills to understand language and build vocabulary. This includes rhymes, songs, stories and conversation. The Montessori learning materials support early literacy through hands on learning, such as the sandpaper letters, moveable alphabet, insets for design and three-part vocabulary cards.
- 5) **Creativity** – this links in very closely with the EYFS Expressive Arts and Design – please read this section for further information.
- 6) **Knowledge and Understanding of the World** – The Montessori curriculum provides hands on materials such as land and water forms, sandpaper land and sea globe, continent globe, continent boxes and continent puzzles. Three-part vocabulary cards are also used alongside learning materials, such as matching farm animal family cards with the basket of toy farm animals.

## How the Montessori Curriculum meets the requirements of the EYFS (2021)

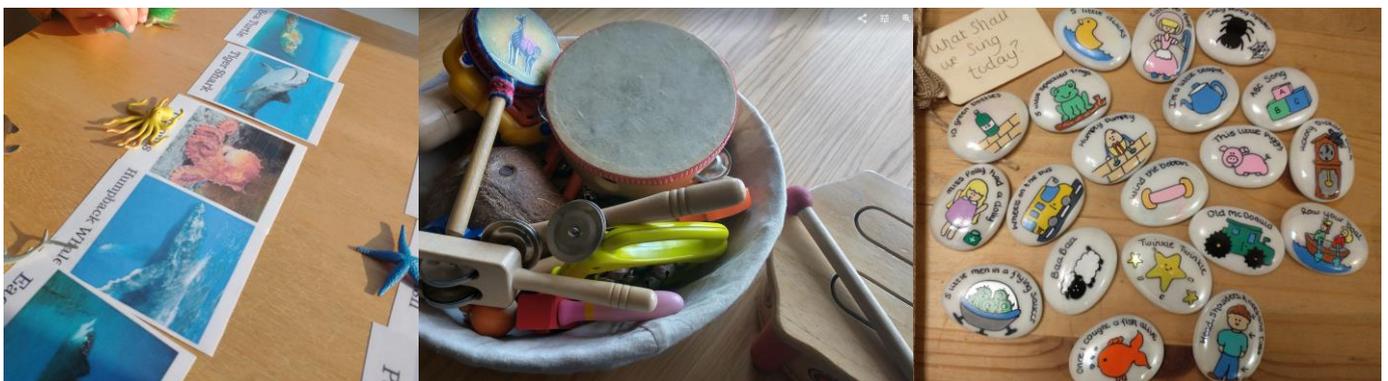
### Communication and Language

The EYFS (2021) states that the development of language underpins all seven areas of learning – this includes a language rich environment, such as access to a range of books, nursery rhymes, story-telling, role play, conversations, modelling language and sustained shared thinking.



**Montessori approach** – In my setting children have daily access to nursery rhymes, songs, stories and musical instruments. Children are encouraged to join in and contribute when ready. Children do mindfulness activities, such as the Montessori silence game which encourages focused listening and lying in the garden with our eyes closed listening to the sounds that we can hear. Babies and young children engage in meaningful two-way conversations and are given time to respond appropriately.

Learning materials are used to support communication and language, including Montessori vocabulary cards that are used alongside objects to support the development of language. Children listen to instructions from myself and peers and this gradually becomes a routine as the child matures and settles into daily life. Spoken language is supported through appropriate modelling of language, appropriate use of language, extending vocabulary through conversations, books, stories and activities. Children who speak different languages at home are supported through acknowledgement of the child's home language as well as supporting the emerging language spoken in my setting. Sustained shared thinking is used to encourage the extension of ideas and language, this is often during play, creative activities, storytelling and exploring knowledge and understanding of the world activities. Parents and carers are given support and guidance on how they can support their child's communication and language development at home.



## Personal, Social and Emotional Development

The EYFS (2021) focuses on the importance of attachments, with strong, warm and positive relationships, and the role of self-regulation. This section also includes self-care such as looking after our bodies through healthy eating, regular physical activity and dental care.

**Montessori approach** – Babies and young children are supported to separate from the main caregiver and are given time to settle in an environment that is calm and gentle. As I am a childminder your child only has myself as their keyworker, this supports a strong attachment and bond. This then hopefully gives your child a sense of emotional security and well-being, a safe base from which to explore the world around them.

I support children with their interactions with other children attending the setting so that children learn how to make good friendships, understand emotions, co-operate and resolve conflicts. As children become used to the routine of the setting they are encouraged to help to tidy up after an activity and to respect other children's work, this includes independently selecting an activity from the shelf and replacing the activity when finished.

Children are supported to learn to respect other children's space, to express their own needs, feelings and views in an appropriate manner. As children become older they learn to engage with other children through play and taking part in discussions and negotiations.

Practical life activities support independence, self-awareness and self-esteem. Practical life activities include transferring, threading, pouring, opening and closing, baking, polishing and dusting. Children learn to care for the environment, such as using mops and brushes to clean, washing up or loading the dishwasher, gardening and watering plants, making bird feeders and bug hotels, recycling and feeding and grooming the dog. Children learn to care for themselves through healthy snack and food choices, helping to grow and prepare healthy meals, keeping physically fit and learning how to risk assess and remain safe. Children learn how to wash their hands at the sink, take off and put on own shoes, hang coats on the peg, blow their nose, brush teeth and brush hair.



## Physical Development

The EYFS (2021) focuses on the importance of the development of gross and fine motor skills and the importance of physical development to children's all-round health and development, including social and emotional well-being.



**Montessori approach** – I provide opportunities both indoors and outdoors to support development of children's core strength, stability, balance, spatial awareness, co-ordination and agility.

Babies and young children are given opportunities to move freely inside and outside using his/her whole body with growing control and effectiveness. This includes free movement for babies, where they can explore their surroundings and engage in sensory experiences, such as rolling on the floor to reach a toy or crawling on the grass outside. I offer opportunities for toddlers and older children to engage in a wide range of movements, such as

dancing, yoga, climbing on climbing frames, balancing on logs, running freely in the park, jumping and kicking a ball. Practical life activities support the development and refinement of manipulative skills, eye to hand co-ordination, flexibility of the wrist, lightness of touch and careful handling of objects and materials that prepare the child for daily life as well as for writing.



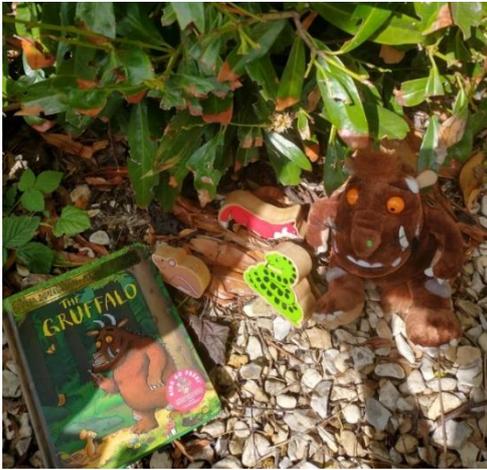
**Fine motor skills** are developed through activities such as the Montessori pink tower or knobbed cylinders, puzzles, drawing with crayons, painting with brushes, craft activities and small world play. Practical life activities that support fine motor skills include transferring, pouring, cutting, threading and sewing.



**Gross motor skills** are mostly developed outdoors, such as ball games, balancing on logs, climbing and running and mark making activities using water, mud and sand. Practical life activities that support gross motor development include carrying heavy watering cans to water the plants, sweeping, mopping and using tools for gardening.

## Literacy

The EYFS (2021) states that developing a life-long love of reading is crucial and that reading consists of two dimensions: language comprehension and word reading. Language comprehension starts from birth with caring adults who talk with children about the world around them, read books (fiction and non-fiction) and share rhymes, poems and songs together. Word reading and writing are taught later on, often when the child starts school in reception class.



**Montessori approach** – In my setting I have a large range of fiction and non-fiction books ensuring that they are inclusive and reflect diversity. We read stories and sing songs and nursery rhymes every day. Stories, songs and rhymes reflect a range of cultures and languages and families are encouraged to share the stories, rhymes and songs the children have at home. I often use books linked to activities, for example, reading 'The Hungry Caterpillar' when growing caterpillars into butterflies. I like to take story telling outdoors, such as reading 'The Gruffalo' when walking in the woods and taking story telling characters/props with us to bring the story to life. Stories are used to extend conversations and learn new vocabulary.

As children become older and when they are ready we might practice phonetic sounds, such as using an initial letter sound object box or basket with the corresponding sandpaper letter, such as exploring the initial letter sound 'a'. We will explore key concepts in print, such as showing children that sentences and names start with a capital letter and how some words are longer than others. We will explore rhyme and alliteration, such as changing the words to traditional rhymes and exploring words with the same initial letter sound.



Children are encouraged to draw freely and as they become older they start to give meanings to the marks they make, such as "that's mummy" or make marks on a picture that stands for their name. I provide mark making opportunities on a daily basis, through the use of pavement chinks outside, mark making in wet sand, clay or playdough, using sticks to make marks in mud, painting with large brushes and water and eventually introducing smaller tools as fine motor skills develop, such as painting with fine brushes, using pencils and charcoals for drawing. As children become older and only if they are ready through the

development of gross and fine motor skills, I might start to introduce Montessori literacy materials, such as insets for design, sandpaper letters and the large moveable alphabet which give targeted opportunities for writing, such as learning to write their name. Early writing activities might include using clipboards outdoors when going on a nature hunt or notepads or chalkboards when pretending to play cafes.

## Mathematics

The EYFS (2021) focuses strongly on the importance of embedding a deep understanding of numbers to 10, including the patterns and relationships between numbers and the pattern within those numbers with frequent and varied opportunities to build and apply this understanding. It is important the curriculum provides rich opportunities for children to develop spatial awareness skills including shape, space and measures. Children should develop a positive attitude and interest in numbers, not being afraid to make mistakes.

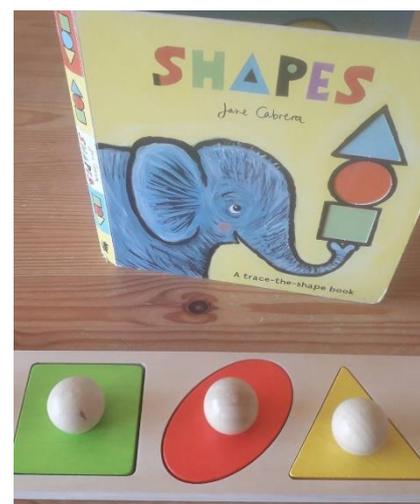


### Montessori approach

**Numbers** - throughout the day we practice counting such as counting out apples when shopping at the market or counting steps as we walk down the stairs. We do finger rhymes, such as “1, 2, 3, 4, 5 once I caught a fish alive” or “round and round the garden” and explore changes in the amount of something, such as “5 little ducks” or “5 currant buns”. We also use books to support counting, such as ‘Ten wiggly wiggly caterpillars’. I use sorting baskets, counting frames and number pebbles to introduce children to early sorting and counting. I will often take these outside so that children use natural manipulatives, such

as stones, pinecones, shells, flowers petals, leaves and sticks for sorting, grouping, counting, adding, subtracting and progressing on to matching the numerals alongside the quantity.

**Shapes, space and measure** are explored by providing opportunities for babies and toddlers to explore treasure baskets with a range of objects that provides a sensorial early understanding of maths, this includes exploring different shapes, such as balls, spoons, pans, vegetables, blocks, CDs and wooden pegs. I provide wooden baby and toddler toys and puzzles, such as shape sorters and stacking cups, where children are learning to put objects inside others and take them out again. As children get older we will explore 2-D and 3-D shapes, using blocks, shapes, shape puzzles and shape sorters. We explore size, length, weight and capacity through activities, such as water play in the garden where we use different sized containers, growing sunflowers in the garden and measuring them as they grow and weighing ingredients when baking.



**Montessori learning materials** - The children have opportunities to learn about shapes, space and measure systematically using the Montessori **sensorial materials**, such as the pink tower, broad stair, knobbed and coloured cylinders, the long rods, solid shapes and flat shapes. As children become older I might start to introduce the Montessori mathematical materials, such as the number rods, sandpaper numerals, number rods and cards, spindle box, cards and counters and sequin boards and beads.

## Understanding the World

The EYFS (2021) gives examples of ways in which children make sense of their physical world and their community, such as visiting parks, libraries and museums and meeting people in important job roles, such as police officers, fire fighters and nurses. This also includes the importance of experiencing a wide range of books, rhymes and poems to foster the understanding of 'our culturally, socially, technologically and ecologically diverse world' including enriching vocabulary.



**Montessori approach** – Sustainable practice is embedded in everything that we do.

We go for nature walks and I have a wildlife garden, that includes bird boxes, bird feeders, bug hotels, wildflower areas and herb garden that attract bees, butterflies and other wildlife. On nature walks we go bug hunting, carefully looking under stones and logs and using magnifying glasses and identification charts to learn more about the creatures that we find. We collect different natural materials on these walks and add them to a nature basket to be further explored using books and resources to extend knowledge and understanding. We learn about the seasons through reading books, listening to songs and seasonal activities, such as walks in the woods in

Autumn when the leaves fall from the trees, running with long ribbons in the wind and splashing in muddy puddles on a rainy day. I provide opportunities to learn about the lifecycle of plants and animals, such as growing caterpillars into butterflies or growing a sunflower from a seed.

Montessori activities include learning about space and our planet, such as matching model planets with planet cards, using the Montessori sandpaper globe and land, air and water jars and using the Montessori continent globe, continent puzzle and continent boxes. We might progress to learning more about the structure of the earth and its physical features, such as learning about volcanoes, mountains, rivers and rainforests. Children learn about how things work, such as building with blocks, Duplo and Lego, using pegs with boards, magnets and magnet tiles, cameras, microscopes, wind up torches and using utensils when baking, gardening and carpentry.



We explore the diversity of the world around us including sharing our knowledge about ourselves and families. This might include photo books of the children growing or timelines of parents and grandparents, asking families to share interesting objects, books, songs or rhymes from home. I carefully select books and resources that model positive differences between people, including race, religion, disability and gender. We learn about different celebrations including foods and festivals and we celebrate each child's birthday with the Montessori birthday walk, where children learn that it takes a whole year for the earth to rotate around the sun. Children learn about the range of different occupations and this is explored through activities, role-play, books and first hand experiences, taking care to avoid gender stereotypes. We learn about our local community through walks in the local neighbourhood and visits to the local museum, art gallery, market and other local areas of interest. We engage in local community projects, such as donating resources to local charities and filling a shoebox with items for local homeless people.

## Expressive Arts and Design

The EYFS (2021) states “the development of children’s artistic and cultural awareness supports their imagination and creativity”. Children need a variety of opportunities to engage with the arts and to explore a range of media and materials.

### Montessori approach

**Music and movement** - we explore music from diverse cultures, this includes traditional nursery rhymes, folk and modern music and music from different countries. We play with percussion instruments on a daily basis, make our own instruments and improvise with making sounds and music outdoors, such as making a drum kit using saucepans and a wooden spoon or tapping different objects with sticks when on a walk in the woods. Movement and dance are used alongside music, such as waving silk scarves when dancing or joining in with action songs, such as ‘sleeping bunnies’ or ‘here we go round the mulberry bush’. As children become older we explore elements in music, such as rhythm, pitch, tempo and amplitude.



**Art and Design** - Children are given a range of opportunities to explore mark making, such as painting indoors and outdoors, for example making large leaf prints outside using paint and leaves collected in the garden or the park. We play in the garden on a regular basis and this includes large mark making activities, such as water play, where children mark make using water and large brushes, sticks to make marks in mud or large pavement chalks. I provide a range of materials for children to explore and manipulate, such as junk modelling materials, clay, homemade playdough, paints, mud, sand and natural materials such as wood, sticks and leaves. Tools are used alongside the materials, such as rollers and cutters when manipulating clay and playdough and scissors and glue spreaders for

making collages. Drawing materials, such as paper, crayons, pencils, chalks, charcoals and paints are provided for children to develop their drawing. Colour mixing is used when painting to explore colours and children learn about different artists from different times and cultures.



**Pretend and Imaginative Play** - Around 2 years old children start to participate in pretend play, such as playing with the baby dolls and putting them to bed or use objects, such as a wooden block as a pretend mobile phone. As children become older their play becomes more complex, such as using small parts to add to play, for example using leaves, herbs and pinecones in the mud kitchen and pretending to make soup. Open-ended dressing up materials and small world play is added to the provision to give children opportunities to take their play to deeper and more complex levels.

## Resources for Parents/Carers

If you would like to know more about the different approaches and philosophies to early years education here are some useful links. Most early year settings tend to blend the different approaches in a way that suits the setting and the children attending. The Hygge approach takes many of its principles from Reggio Emilia and the Curiosity approach weaves in elements of Montessori and Reggio Emilia philosophies.

**Learning through play is a fundamental principle within all of these philosophies:**

<https://literacytrust.org.uk/resources/10-reasons-why-play-important/>

### Montessori Approach to Early Years Education

<https://montessori-ami.org/resource-library/facts/biography-maria-montessori>

[Learning Together - Montessori E-book.pdf](#)

<https://www.themontessorinotebook.com/setting-up-your-home-for-montessori-children/>

<https://livingmontessorinow.com/how-to-start-using-montessori-at-home/>

**Book Recommendations:** 'Teach me to do it myself' by Maja Pitamic and 'The Montessori Toddler' by Simone Davies

**What is the Hygge approach?** - Hygge (pronounced Hu-guh) is a Danish word that acknowledges a feeling or moment and sense of well-being, togetherness and friendship. It is about embracing the simple joys in life. In early years education this is about creating an environment and ethos that supports the 'whole' child, meeting their emotional needs and supporting good mental health. The Hygge approach to learning encourages an appreciation of the outdoors and nature as well as creating warm cosy spaces. The Hygge approach closely links with the curiosity approach to early years education, creating enabling environments that promote awe and wonder.

<https://www.thecuriosityapproach.com/blog/hygge-in-the-early-years>

**What is the Reggio Emilia approach?** - The Reggio Emilia approach to early years education follows the philosophy that children have "endless numbers" of ways of learning. That children are curious individuals who can take the lead in their own learning, sometimes with support and guidance from others, including other children, parents, grandparents, carers, educators and other people within their community and wider world. This approach is a community approach to learning where the philosophy is that learning doesn't just happen in a classroom, that children learn from the people and world around them and that there should be a partnership in learning between educators, parents, family members such as grandparents and other people in the community. <https://www.reggiochildren.it/en/reggio-emilia-approach/100-linguaggi-en/>