



Little Olive Tree Montessori Childminder

## Information Booklet for Parents and Carers

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## About Me



Welcome to the Little Olive Tree Montessori Childminder setting. I follow the Montessori Curriculum and the Statutory Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) when planning learning for children. My home setting is a nurturing and caring place, where all children are welcome, regardless of race, disability and gender. I have a passion for using nature alongside learning, this includes time spent in the garden growing fruit and vegetables, developing a wildlife garden, recycling and embedding sustainable practice in all areas of my provision.

I am a trained Montessori Early Years Educator with a recent Ofsted grading of 'outstanding'. I received my Montessori training and level 4 Early Years Educator Diploma from the respected Montessori Centre International (MCI). I am currently studying towards an MA in Childhood Studies and Early Years Education. I have Hygge in the Early Years accreditation where I have developed my home setting and curriculum, bringing more wonder, joy and curiosity to the children and embedding nature into learning. I have over 10 years experience working as an Ofsted registered Childminder and in a Montessori nursery setting. Before I became a Childminder, I also worked as a registered general nurse.

I live with my husband, daughter and a dog. We live in a semi-detached house in Old Town in Barnsley. I love reading, walking my dog, yoga, gardening and being creative.

## Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)

I follow the EYFS statutory guidelines when providing care and learning opportunities for children. I provide lots of learning experiences, including messy play and mark making in the garden and outings to places like the local park. I plan for each individual child, taking into account their personal interests. I also take regular photographs and written observations of your child's learning development, this information is added to your child's individual learning journal.

<https://foundationyears.org.uk/files/2021/09/What-to-expect-in-the-EYFS-complete-FINAL-16.09-compressed.pdf>

## Montessori Approach

The nature-based curriculum I offer blends the Montessori, Froebel and Hygge approach to create an early years environment that supports slow and meaningful practice; including independence, freedom of movement, creativity, a love of nature, sustainable practice, mindfulness and curious minds.

My setting follows the Montessori philosophy of "follow the child". I believe that each child is a unique individual, with their own interests and learning styles. I observe and plan carefully for each child so that activities and experiences are tailored to their individual learning needs and interests. Activities involve lots of hands-on learning, including the use of Montessori learning materials both brought and hand-made to support the child's learning development. The Montessori curriculum I follow includes practical life, sensorial, numeracy, literacy, knowledge and understanding of the world and creativity.



## **Admissions Policy**

### **Number of children permitted in the setting**

I childmind a maximum of 3 young children (6 months-5 years old) per session. I do not childmind older school age children.

*"At any one time, childminders may care for a maximum of six children under the age of eight. Of these six children, a maximum of three may be young children, and there should only be one child under the age of one. A child is a young child up until 1<sup>st</sup> September following his or her fifth birthday"* (EYFS Statutory Framework, 2014).

### **Opening Hours**

Tuesday - Thursday 8am - 5pm

(Term time only)

### **Funded hours term-time provision**

**15 hours funded sessions:**

8.30am-4pm term time only (2 days per week)

Longer sessions finishing at 5pm and extra days can be offered depending upon availability - parents/carers pay for extra hours and sessions outside of the funded 15 hours. Please discuss additional fees in person.

**Summer holiday club** - covering 3 weeks of the summer holidays - dates advertised in advance and parents/carers need to book and pay for the extra holiday sessions.

**Early Years Funding Provision provided dependent upon availability. Tax-free childcare and childcare vouchers accepted.**

## **Payment of Fees**

If paying for childcare then fees are paid one month in advance on the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the month via bank transfer into my bank account.

An invoice will be emailed to parents at least one week before fees are due.

If paying for childcare please note that parents/carers must pay for contracted days and times in full regardless of attendance, for example if your child can't attend due to sickness or holiday. Parents/carers are paying for the space not the hours of attendance.

If I am unable to care for your child due to sickness, holiday or training then I will deduct any money that I owe from the following months invoice.

## **Late Payment Fees**

Payment is due by 1<sup>st</sup> of each month. If payment is more than 3 working days late then I will charge £5 per day until payment received and I have the right to refuse to provide childcare until payment is received. If payment is more than 10 working days late then I will terminate the contract immediately and your child will no longer be able to attend the setting. The deposit will not be refunded. If payment is late on a regular basis then I have the right to terminate the contract with immediate effect.

## **Security Deposit**

If parents/carers are paying for childcare sessions then a security deposit of 2 weeks of the regular fee amount is requested when a child takes up a place at the setting. If money has not been deducted for any non-payment then the full amount will be deducted from the final months invoice. If a parent changes their mind and decides not to take the place then the security deposit is non-refundable.

## **Waiting List**

I can't always guarantee a place can be held months in advance but I can place your child's name on a waiting list and contact you once a place becomes available.

## **Early drop off/Late Collection Fee**

My sessions start at 8am (8.30am if receiving funded hours), therefore I request that parents/carers do not drop their child off before the contracted start time. I will not open my door before that time. If you are late collecting your child, then I may charge a late collection fee of £5 per 10 minutes. I request parents/carers contact me as soon as possible if they are running late to collect their child as I do appreciate that occasionally delays can happen due to traffic and other reasons. However, if lateness becomes a regular occurrence then I will have to review the contract and I have the right to terminate the contract with immediate effect.

## **Settling in Period**

It is normal to have settling in sessions, where children can get used to myself and the setting before attending on a regular basis. Settling in dates can be discussed when a place has been agreed. Settling in periods are not covered by funded hours so parents/carers do need to pay for these sessions.

### **Cost of settling in sessions:**

£6/hour (8am-10am or 9am-11am)

£25 for a morning session (8am-12pm)

## **Notice Period**

If parents/carers wish to terminate the contract then I will require at least a 4 week notice period in writing. This also applies to parents/carers receiving funded hours. I also require 4 weeks notice if parents/carers want to reduce days and times the child attends the setting. If parents/carers require extra days, then

this will be dependent upon space. If the 4 week notice period is not given then I have the right to withhold the deposit. I will also give at least 4 weeks notice to parents/carers if I wish to terminate the contract or make changes to days, times, holidays and fees. When the contract is terminated the deposit will be refunded on the last invoice unless any money owing.

## **Term-time Contracts**

I only offer term-time contracts. The funded hours cover term-time dates for 38 weeks of the year. I offer a summer holiday club covering 3 weeks of the summer holidays. This will be advertised in advance and parents/carers need to book and pay for these sessions.

**Term-time contract:** I follow the Barnsley Council term dates for funded hours and for parents/carers paying childcare fees. If your child has an older sibling attending school please do not apply individual dates set by schools to my setting, for example inset/training days in a school are decided by the headteacher at the school not Barnsley council. If in doubt please refer to the Barnsley council website or talk to myself regarding term-time dates.

<https://www.barnsley.gov.uk/services/children-families-and-education/schools-and-learning/school-terms-and-holidays/>

## **Contactable Working Hours**

My contactable working hours are Monday-Friday 8am-6pm. To maintain work-life balance my contact number is my work number and my work phone is turned off outside of my working hours including evenings, weekends and when I am on holiday. If you need to contact me then please leave a message and I will get back to you as soon as possible during my working hours.

## **Behaviour Policy**

If I feel a parents/carers behaviour impacts upon the well-being and safety of myself, my family and other children and families attending the setting then I have the right to terminate the contract with immediate effect. If a child's behaviour is a cause for concern then a meeting will be arranged with parents/carers and a support plan put in place.

**Please refer to my behaviour policy**

## **Complaints Policy**

I hope I have a good working relationship with parents/carers and we work well together for the best interests of the child. However, if parents/carers have any concerns or complaints then I advise we arrange a meeting at a mutually convenient time in my home where we can talk through any concerns and document complaints. Drop off or collection times on the doorstep are not convenient times to have confidential discussions.

**Please refer to my complaints policy**

## **Holidays, medical appointments and training days**

Occasionally I may require additional days off for personal reasons such as hospital or doctor appointments, family occasions or training days. I will give as much notice as possible should I require additional days off and parents/carers are not charged for those days. I will try to offer alternative sessions for children receiving the funded hours but this might not always be possible.

If paying fees parents/carers do not pay for my holidays, family occasions, medical appointments or training days. However, parents/carers will still need to pay full fees if your child is unable to attend due to holidays, family occasions or medical appointments.



## **Sickness**

If I require days off due to sickness or if a family member becomes unwell then I will inform parents/carers as soon as possible and parents/carers will be refunded for any days I am unable to provide childcare due to sickness. This will be deducted from the following months invoice. I will try and offer additional sessions for children receiving funded hours to make up for any lost days if possible.

**Please consider very carefully if you have an alternative for childcare should I be unable to provide childcare due to sickness or bereavement, for example a friend or family member who could step in or flexible work arrangements.**

If your child is sick and cannot attend the setting, then you will still need to pay normal fees.

Please refer to this NHS link as a guide to when you should keep your child at home due to sickness:

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/is-my-child-too-ill-for-school/>

Please do not bring your child into the setting if they have a high temperature and feel unwell. Mild coughs and colds your child can still attend as normal as long as they are well and playing, eating and drinking as normal with no temperature. If your child has nausea, vomiting and/or diarrhoea then they need to be kept at home until 48 hours symptom free. I will not be able to care for your child if they are unwell and will phone you to collect your child as soon as possible, so please always err on the side of caution when unsure and keep your child at home.

**Medication** - I don't administer medication like antibiotics, paracetamol and ibuprofen for sickness. If your child has a temperature and is unwell then they need to be kept at home until they feel better.

**Please refer to my medication and infection control policies**

## Meals

**Lunch** - Parents/carers are requested to provide a healthy cold packed lunch for their child. Please refer to NHS healthy recipes for ideas for a varied and healthy lunchbox for your child.

<https://www.nhs.uk/healthier-families/recipes/healthier-lunchboxes/>

**Healthy snacks and water to drink are provided throughout the day with no additional charge.**

## Daily Routine

**8am/8.30am (funded hours)** - Children arrive at the setting and settle in before the day begins. If parents are going to be late dropping off their child please contact me to let me know.

**8am-11am** - Free flow play indoors or outdoors and any planned learning activities, such as nursery rhyme/music and yoga sessions. We might go on an outing to a local place, such as the park or museum.

**11am-12pm** - Lunch hour. We tend to have lunch between 11am-12pm.

**12pm-3pm - Nap-time:** Children begin their nap after lunch around 12pm-12.30pm and I allow children to sleep as long as they require. Nap-time is in the living room with the blinds drawn and fairy lights on to create a calming and relaxing space to sleep. Babies are rocked gently to sleep lying flat in a pushchair and older children sleep on a mat on the floor with a blanket. Babies that still require a morning nap will be placed in the pushchair to sleep in a quiet room while the other children are playing or will sleep outside in the pushchair when we are playing in the garden or on a morning outing. Children that aren't napping will play quietly in another room.

**3pm-5pm** - Free flow play and children getting ready for home time.

## **Outdoor Learning**

I have an outdoor learning ethos where we spend time outdoors every day, especially in my garden where we do lots of mark making with paints, chalks, water, mud, clay and sand. I have a mud kitchen area in my garden and we grow vegetables and herbs. We enjoy learning about nature and I have a wildlife area of the garden where we build bug hotels and grow wildflowers. We grow butterflies from caterpillars every Springtime and we get lots of visitors to the garden, such as bees, birds and squirrels. We do lots of physical play in the garden, such as climbing the climbing frame and ball games. We also go on outings to places like parks, reservoirs, woodlands, the local museum, art gallery and library.

I tend to visit places that are free to keep down costs for parents/carers, however there may occasionally be times I take children to places with a small fee, for example the local farm. Parents/carers permission will be sought beforehand and the fees will be added to the following months invoice.

**Transport** - Where possible we will walk to local places, such as local parks, the museum, library and art gallery. However, for locations further away I will drive the children or we may catch a bus or train. I have relevant car insurance, a full driver's license and the car is serviced on a regular basis. I use age appropriate car seats. All outings are risk assessed beforehand.

Written copies of risk assessments can be given to parents/carers upon request.

## **Equipment**

I request that parents/carers provide:

- Nappies, baby wipes, nappy cream, suncream, sterilised bottles and baby milk, comforters, outdoor clothing, for example coats, waterproof all in one suits, wellies and sunhats.
- We do lots of messy play outdoors, for example painting, mud kitchens and water play so please dress your child in clothes you do not mind getting dirty and provide at least one change of clothes in a bag. If your child is being toilet-trained please provide additional clean clothes.

## **Visiting the setting for prospective parents**

Prospective parents/carers are requested to visit before making a decision about their child attending the setting. Visit dates are arranged at a mutually convenient time. A visit is not a guarantee of a place being offered, this is dependent upon space and parents/carers paying a deposit and signing a contract. As it is a home-based setting rather than a larger nursery setting then it is important that families and myself feel comfortable that my setting is the right fit for your child and your own families ethos.

## **Policies and Procedures**

I would request that parent's access my policy and procedure documents on my website via the parent portal and then sign to state that they have read and understood them. The password and link will be emailed to parents/carers once a place has been accepted.

## 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)*

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 the children leave my setting for nursery or school I aim for them to have confidence and independence, respect and knowledge about the planet, show kindness and empathy to others and themselves, develop personal and social skills including effective communication.

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 currently studying for an MA in Childhood and Early Years. Even though I follow the Montessori curriculum I also like to blend other philosophies, such as the Froebel and Hygge approach, 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)



### **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:**

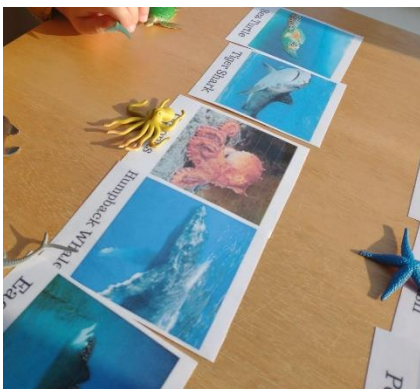
- 1) **Practical Life** - The Montessori Practical Life Curriculum provides activities and resources that children observe in everyday life e.g. cleaning, baking, gardening, pegging, transferring and threading activities. These activities develop children's independence, concentration, language and fine 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 and also prepare children for mathematics including sorting and categorising.
- 3) **Mathematics** - The Montessori mathematics curriculum supports early mathematical development through hands on learning experiences, such as using Montessori maths materials such as the 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, using the sandpaper letters, moveable alphabet, insets for design and 3-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 the sandpaper globe, continent boxes and 3-part vocabulary cards as well as first hand experiences when exploring the world around us.

## 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. 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 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'.



I provide mark making opportunities on a daily basis, through the use of pavement chalks 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 I will introduce Montessori learning 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.

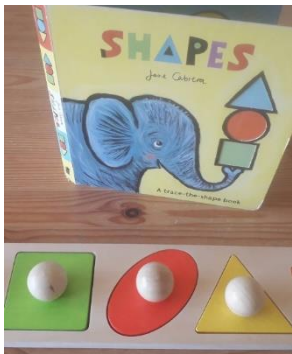
## Mathematics

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, sorting baskets, counting frames, number pebbles and natural manipulatives, such as stones and shells to introduce children to early sorting and counting.



**Shapes, space and measure** are explored by providing sensorial materials, such as treasure baskets for babies and for older children we 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. 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 ecological 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. We learn about the seasons through reading books, listening to songs and seasonal activities. 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 our families and the diversity of the communities in which we live. 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.

## 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'.



**Art and Design** - Children are given a range of opportunities to explore art and design such as mark making outdoors using paints and other materials. 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. We use different materials and tools for exploring art and mark making such as chinks, crayons, charcoals and paints.



**Pretend and Imaginative Play** - Children when ready start to participate in pretend play. I provide a range of open-ended toys and resources to support children to develop their imaginative play, such as story books, baby dolls, vehicles, small world toys, open ended dressing up clothes and a range of loose parts materials that children can add to their play.

## **Resources for Parents/Carers**

Even though the Montessori approach to education forms the core of the curriculum that I offer, I also like to blend different approaches to early years education, such as the Froebel and Hygge approach, that promote outdoor nature learning and learning through play. 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>

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

<https://carrotsareorange.com/montessori-at-home-for-parents/>

<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](#)

### **Different Approaches to Early Years Education**

<https://www.froebel.org.uk/>

<https://www.hyggeintheearlyyears.co.uk/blog>

<https://www.reggiochildren.it/en/reggio-emilia-approach/>