



## **Local Offer Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND)**

The New Montessori Pre-school is an inclusive and wonderfully diverse environment. We recognise that **everyone is uniquely and equally different**. We ensure that children and their families are included in all aspects of learning and pre-school life.

Our Local Offer describes the range of our provision and the support available to support identified children as and when appropriate.

### **Questions from a parent/carer's point of view:**

#### **1. How does The New Montessori Pre-school know if children need extra help and what should I do if I think my child may have special educational needs or disabilities?**

As parents/carers you are your child's primary educator. Parenting may be a whole new experience to you and if this is not your first - or last child - you too are getting to know this little person - this will take a lifetime! Your early observations and findings of your child are crucial.

You will need to share with us your knowledge and experiences of your child and together we will review documentation, such as health assessments or paediatric reports, you may hold from your family general practitioner, health visitor or other. Perhaps you have none of these yet but you feel worried about your child's development or progress and you just need to share with us your concerns.

Identifying your child's progress, strengths and needs early is critical as any delay at this stage can give rise to learning difficulty and subsequently to loss of self-esteem, frustration in learning and behaviour difficulties. Early action will promote positive outcomes in health and wellbeing, learning and development and will enable appropriate support for you and your family. This will build an integrated review that will be used to plan services and provision that will contribute greatly to the reduction of inequality for your child's outcomes that are essential in helping your child prepare for life.

## 2. How will The New Montessori Pre-school's practitioners' support my child?

The attitudes and behaviour of our practitioners demonstrate how unremarkable it is that children with an SEND (special educational need or disability) are part of a wide cross-section of our local community using our setting. Attitudinal training around disability and other equality issues continue to take part in training about inclusion and our practitioners have developed skills to communicate effectively with each child and encourage all children to develop ways of communicating with one another. Our practitioners are highly responsive and meet children's needs without making them different or any more special than anyone else.

Our experienced practitioners recognise that some children, from time to time, require additional support for a set period of time to help meet their needs or improve their learning. The decision to do this is made by you and/or our pre-school and is based on a variety of factors including making effective observations of the child's progress, and/or assessments carried out by teaching practitioners or by other external professionals. It may also be based on ensuring children have a smooth transition into school or require support when going through significant change either at home or school.

Some children will require support for a longer period of time to ensure they can access the curriculum effectively and be included fully in classroom learning and school events. Support will be planned by school practitioners and where appropriate by external professionals. Parents/carers will be kept informed about this support.

Children who require support in terms of their acquisition of English are not considered SEND pupils but as they may require additional support their needs are reflected in our local offer.

We will always see and put **the child before** their additional support needs. We ensure that our practitioners have necessary training to work with and support all children, including children with additional support needs. We have realistic and high expectations of all our children within their own capabilities.

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### 3. How will the curriculum be matched to my child's needs?

At The New Montessori Pre-school activities and lessons are led by each child's interests and enthusiasms and take place with regard to any likes, dislikes and specific needs each child may have.

Children with special needs find that the multi-sensory, interactive environment created by the Montessori Method is the perfect setting for learning. There is a high degree of stimulation and children are highly involved with their learning.

The Montessori classroom is filled with beautiful materials that engage all of the senses. The materials are hands-on, therapeutic, enticing, and include a built-in control of error. In most cases they teach only one skill at a time. They offer opportunities for children with special needs to use their hands and their senses to explore and learn.

The fact that children with special needs often excel in a learning environment based on the Montessori Method has generated a great deal of interest globally.

There are many reasons why the Montessori Method has proven so successful among children with special needs. There are advantages inherent in the use of mixed age groups and the provisions made for individualization for each child within our supportive and functional classroom community. We encourage the development of independence and the ability to make choices. There is value in the classical Montessori demonstration that develops work patterns in children. There is a great emphasis on the value of repetition within the Montessori environment. Children are encouraged to move ahead at their own pace and take up a new activity only when they are comfortable that they have learned enough from the previous activity.

Another technique that is highly supportive for children with learning disabilities is the degree of personal attention each child receives. Montessori practitioners move throughout the environment observing and assessing each individual child.

The Montessori Method embraces uniqueness. Differences in learning styles and pace are handled with ease. For this reason, the Montessori Method is equally successful with many types of children, including children with special educational needs and because the pace of learning is decided by the child, children stay motivated and build positive self-esteem.

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#### **4. How will both you and I know how my child is doing and how will you help me to support my child's learning?**

You will be provided with a variety of opportunities for formal and informal consultations to discuss how best to build on your child's interests, meet your child's needs and promote participation in our setting - and at your home - in addition to our normal reporting arrangements.

For all children aged between two and three we provide a short written summary of your child's communication and language, physical development and personal, social and emotional development. This progress check would identify your child's strengths and areas where your child's progress may be a little delayed or slower than expected. It will also detail what additional support might be needed and it will reflect where positive progress is being made. If there are significant emerging concerns, in partnership, we would develop a targeted plan to support your child and this may involve other professionals - and these plans would be on-going and reviewed to ensure their effectiveness.

We adopt a graduated approach with four stages of action, **assess, plan, do and review**. Through sharing information we would together have carried out analysis of your child's needs. This initial assessment would be reviewed regularly to ensure that support is matched to need. Should there be little or no improvement in your child's progress more specialist assessment may be called on from beyond our setting with your agreement.

These health services or other agencies may have been with you from the beginning and already be involved and working with you.

#### **5. What support will there be for my child's overall well-being?**

Everyone is warmly welcomed on arrival and wished well on departure in a way that suits them. Each parent/carer too feels welcome and valued as an expert on their child, with a continuing key role in helping enable your child to take a full part in our setting.

Each child and adult is respected and valued as an individual with equal rights and choices and exercises those rights and choices. Discriminatory language or behaviour would be addressed and discussed sensitively with any child or adult involved.

All practitioners are aware that attitudes, environments, structures and policies need on-going attention in order that no one is disadvantaged.

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We promote a positive message about inclusion by sourcing pictures, equipment and resources that reflect people's lives as part of a wide representation of children's differing backgrounds and experiences.

Practitioners seek to remove all barriers to learning and participation and will provide alternative ways of giving access to experiences or understanding for children who cannot engage in particular activities and provide opportunities for all children to succeed and achieve. Practitioners recognise and allow for the additional time required by some children to take part in activities and experiences.

## **6. What specialist services and expertise are available at or accessed by The New Montessori Pre-school?**

The Montessori Method has its earliest roots in special education and early childhood education. Dr Maria Montessori, in the early part of the 20th century, was the first woman to receive a medical degree in Italy and her work as a physician in a children's home for children with special needs initially fuelled her interest. Because of Dr Montessori's successful experiences with these children she next initiated a special education teacher training programme and eventually her work gained considerable attention and recognition and has been applied throughout the world.

The Montessori Method and approach is specialist and it has at its roots the importance of respecting each child as an individual, having a thorough knowledge of child development and being a sensitive observer of the child.

The New Montessori Pre-school benefits from the many wonderful services that West Sussex County Council provides for children and families. There are many types of additional specialist services and expertise that we access regularly and we actively work closely alongside these external professionals and organisations and value their contributions to each child and their family.

With this wealth of support and advice readily available we can all work together to ensure each child makes progress towards the desired learning and development outcomes.

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## **7. What training are the practitioners, supporting children with SEND, had or are having?**

We employ 16 practitioners with varying qualifications and experience. A full description of these can be found on our website and our Prospectus. We fully support the development and delivery of continued training and endeavour to make sure that a child with a SEN gets the support they need.

We access our training through many different providers; Montessori training colleges, local council guidance and instruction; but what is of the utmost importance, is that regardless of training, qualification and/or experience, it is the individual child that we follow. We will always put the child before the disability.

## **8. How will my child be included in activities outside the early years setting including trips?**

Occasionally, and only with parental/carers consent, we may take our children out of our setting to either a trip to the local shops, park, museum, beach or even a visit to one of practitioner's allotment.

By ensuring that we have suitable staff ratios and also by carrying out an appropriate risk assessment, where we would identify any potential hazards and consider control measures to reduce those hazards, a trip to one of these destinations should never pose an issue.

During the summer term we hold an annual fundraising event in our local park and all families are invited. Our Sponsored Wheels Event, for example, is where a child can be pushed, push a pram, cycle or scoot a lap around the park and afterwards have a well-deserved picnic with their families, their pre-school friends and their families.

## **9. How accessible is The New Montessori Pre-school's environment? (Indoors and outdoors?)**

Although situated on a busy road with limited parking there will always be a senior member of staff readily available to assist you and your child on arrival and departure at our main front gate.

The New Montessori Pre-school has sole occupancy of a beautiful flint faced church and our classrooms are on the ground floor. Children can use wheelchairs or walking aids to move around the setting without experiencing barriers to access such as those caused by doorways, steps and stairs.

The New Montessori Pre-school is a very ordered and uncluttered environment. Furniture and equipment has been thoughtfully selected, adjusted and located appropriately and has a neutral décor with signage considered. Steps are made to reduce background noise and improve acoustics by using soft furnishings.

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Our outdoor environment provides sheltered areas as well as space for ball games, wheeled equipment or role play. Just as our classrooms stimulate the senses our outdoor environment encourages and incites with carefully selected equipment and resources.

Our toilet and wash room facilities host one adult sized toilet, one low level disabled toilet cubicle and two low level children toilets, urinals and wash basins.

Emergency and evacuation systems are set up to inform all pupils and adults with both visual and auditory components.

## **10. How will the early years setting prepare and support my child to join The New Montessori Pre-school and transition to primary school?**

If you are comfortable for us to come to your home for an initial visit that would serve well in becoming familiar to your child as well as gaining and sharing information. We recommend four one-hour visits for all children to our setting. The first two one-hour visits would be accompanied (with you) and then we trial two one-hour unaccompanied visits. It is important for your child to feel safe and secure with us and it is important that you too feel safe and secure! If your child needed longer to settle we would take our lead from your child and together ensure a smooth entry into our setting.

Every child that comes to the end of their time with The New Montessori Pre-school will receive a Learning Album that journals their time with us. This will include photographs, examples of their activities, written summaries and observations. These will generate an **Early Years Foundation Stage Profile** that will provide you, other practitioners and teachers with a well-rounded picture of a child's knowledge, understanding and abilities. This profile would usually be completed for children in the final term of the year in which they turn five. This is particularly helpful for children with certain educational needs and would inform plans for future learning and identify any extra support that may be needed.

Together we will arrange and organise further support for your child by planning and preparing, before they move on to primary, meetings where we can share this information with the receiving setting or primary school.

We will encourage you to allow us to accompany you on your on visits to the place of transition and together we will support your child through preparing them for this next stage through all sorts of resources and materials.

## **11. How are the New Montessori Pre-school's resources allocated and matched to children's special educational needs?**

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## **12. How is the decision made about what type and how much support my child will receive?**

## **13. How are parents involved in The New Montessori Pre-school? How can I be involved?**

There are so many ways that you can become actively involved and this is greatly urged. Parents are encouraged to join our Management Committee and our Fundraising Committee and influence what goes on in our setting as a whole. You will not only be a continuing key role in helping us enable your child to develop, you could also have opportunities to be involved with managing budgets, support or even organise fund raising events, assist in the care and maintenance of the building, be a face for public relations or be warmly welcomed as a parent volunteer in the classroom.

## **14. Who can I contact for further information?**

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you require further information! Our pre-school's designated Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator is Claire Morgan who ensures the implementation of support for children with SEN. Claire is also our School Manager and has 14 years of relevant experience. The role of the SENCO involves ensuring all practitioners in the setting understand their responsibilities to children with SEN and the graduated approach to identifying and meeting SEN. Our SENCO will ensure that you are closely involved throughout and that your insights inform action and will liaise with professionals and agencies beyond our setting.

Do come and visit us - it is important that you experience our environment and consider the possibility of our Montessori pre-school for your child.

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