



## Childcare Curriculum

Ballybrack/Killiney Montessori Preschool is designed to offer full teaching in the Montessori method for pre-school children along with opportunities for structured creative and interesting play. Through the prepared environment of the school the children will learn new skills, build their independence, confidence and intellect. Due to the high qualifications of our staff, we are able to offer an all-round education to our children, taking the best from each method and adapting it to our own needs. We have ten year's experience in the childcare sector and this greatly aids us in developing a curriculum that is challenging and stimulating for our children.

We try to work closely with the local national schools and while some of our curriculum does overlap, we work very hard at providing a parallel curriculum so that the children have new challenges when they move on to primary school.

After the child has settled and is becoming independent, learning social skills and group behaviour, the main purpose of our curriculum is to prepare the child for school, encourage good learning practices and to foster and stimulate the imagination, all in a very happy and enjoyable environment.

To this end, we cover early numbers and alphabet sounds (recognition and formation) and other cultural subjects including nature, history and geography. We believe art is an essential area of the children's expressions and we cover all aspects of this subject (e.g. painting, modelling, collage etc.). We do much seasonal project work and try to bring all aspects of the curriculum to this. We also provide opportunities for imaginative play and social skills through roleplay and small world play. We also have lessons in music, dancing and movement, Irish language, Speech and Drama and Handwriting.

As we have great outdoor facilities and know how important it is for children to do physical exercise, we have incorporated gym and small apparatus work into our programme. We have planned our curriculum to work closely with Siolta and Aistear and document all of the children's learning and achievements.

### The Montessori Prepared Environment

- The equipment in the pre-school environment follows a clear progressive sequence and so of itself furnishes the curriculum of the class, setting objectives in a concrete way before each child and yet providing challenges adapted to his/her natural abilities.
- The prepared environment is adapted to suit the age-group of two and a half to 6 year olds.
- The open shelves offer the child a range of equipment, providing him/her with incentives and opportunities for purposeful movement in key areas of his developmental and cultural needs.
- The equipment range remains basically the same from day to day, but the child is introduced to more and more activities as they develop and build their skills. The order of the equipment

provides a framework of security, offering the possibility for the child to repeat activities, which builds concentration and meets the inner need of the child.

- The Montessori activities will encourage each child to develop self-reliance. They do things for themselves and learn to help others, teaching them respect for other people.
- The children will develop their initiative through the gradual increase in their ability to choose their own activity.
- As the equipment is generally self-corrective this allows the child to make independent progress at a pace suited to his abilities and without undue intervention from the teacher.
- The children will do grace and courtesy lessons throughout their day through examples and demonstrations shown by the teacher.
- For example they will learn:
- How to greet a person, how to introduce themselves, how to walk around someone else's work, how to blow their nose, how to cough, how to walk not run in the class, how to ask to be part of an activity. These lessons support the children's self-reliance and are an aid to life. They are very enjoyable to partake in.

### **Some Montessori Views**

Each child is unique but shares with all other children universally common developmental interests. The child under six years is gifted with a mind capable of absorbing and learning without effort. It is vital that they be exposed to as many worthwhile areas of learning and culture as possible during this time.

*The Montessori Method applies the fundamental principles of nature to the education of the children.*

Children's periods of readiness to learn should be recognised and utilised to the fullness of their potential.

A child's most important instrument of learning is movement especially that of the hands.

At all times and particularly in the classroom a child must be given the opportunity for meaningful activity. Through repeated exercises that demand a mental effort a child's will is strengthened leading to self-discipline and preparing him for intellectual achievement.

The Montessori Teacher prepares the classroom environment. It must be very orderly and homely rather than academic. The teacher must observe the children closely in order to understand their stage of development so they she can demonstrate the appropriate activities.

The liberty of the child in the prepared environment is one of the fundamental principles of the Montessori Method. It is a freedom with limits. Once the child has been shown activities they are then free to choose what they want to work with. The small ones in the beginning are less free as they must be shown everything and helped a great deal. The activities encourage movement about the classroom. The freedom to choose one's own work quickly leads to order, harmony, self-development and therefore to self-discipline.