

MONAGHAN  
FARM



MONTESSORI  
SCHOOL

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## School Parent Handbook

2019

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## *1: Introduction*

### **a. Mission Statement**

Our mission is to prepare children for life. We celebrate each child's individuality and help them discover how they can best contribute to our world and culture. We strive to be present in every moment.

All children are naturally curious and love to learn; we support this innate drive by providing environments that meet children's developmental needs, by creating a staff of loving and well-prepared adults and by building a community of families that actively support our mission

### **b. Affiliations and Memberships**



**South African Montessori Association**

**c. If I Had My Child to Raise Over Again**

If I Had My Child to Raise All Over Again,  
I'd build her self-esteem first, and the house later.  
I'd finger paint more, and point my finger less.  
I would do less correcting and more connecting.  
I'd take my eyes off my watch, and watch with my eyes.  
I would care to know less and know to care more.  
I'd take more hikes and fly more kites.  
I'd stop playing serious, and seriously play.  
I would run through more fields and gaze at more stars.  
I'd do more hugging and less tugging.  
I'd see the oak tree in the acorn more often.  
I would be first less often, and affirm much more.  
I'd model less about the love of power,  
And more about the power of love.

Diane Loomans

#### **d. The Outcomes of a Montessori Education**

At Monaghan Montessori we strive to achieve, following educational outcomes.

##### **Intrinsic Motivation:**

Intrinsic motivation is the innate desire that drives the child to engage in an activity for enjoyment and satisfaction.

##### **Ability to Handle External Authority:**

The child is able to accept the ground rules established by external authority as appropriate boundaries in his or her interactions within the school community. These ground rules are internalised, enabling the learner to function with or without the presence of the external authority.

##### **Creativity and Originality of Thought:**

Children are confident using the knowledge and skills they have acquired to express their own ideas and creativity. They recognise the value of their own ideas, respect the creative process of others and are willing to share regardless of risk. Children find joy and satisfaction in self-expression.

##### **Social Responsibility:**

Social responsibility requires the awareness that one's actions impact the welfare of the group and that one cannot attain complete independence and autonomy until one contributes constructively in a group process. Individuals are able to make a positive contribution to their community and groups within that community.

##### **Preparation:**

Academic preparation entails providing children with skills that allow them to become independently functioning adults and life-long learners. As children master one level of academic skills they are able to go further and apply themselves to increasingly challenging materials across various academic disciplines. Children recognise that there is always room to grow in their abilities to read, write, speak, and think clearly and thoughtfully. Children learn how to learn by doing—experiential learning.

Children are encouraged to explore materials, integrate new concepts, analyse data, and think critically. Academic skills are essential to learning and knowing, not the aim of learning and knowing.

##### **Autonomy:**

The autonomous child is self directed, composed and morally independent. The ability to complete a task is an important skill taught in the Montessori classroom.

##### **Confidence and Competence:**

The confident and competent child perceives himself as being successful, has a realistic understanding of accomplishment and has the ability to learn from his mistakes. Competence is the capability for success through taking risks, reflection and self correction.

##### **Spiritual Awareness:**

Spiritual awareness is embodied in the child who is compassionate, empathetic and sensitive to the natural world and the human condition.

From a religious perspective, we are ethically bound not to sow confusion in young minds, with vastly differing information at home and school. However, as Dr Maria Montessori's fundamental motive was not to teach children (fill their minds), but rather to develop an education for peace which would be lasting, the thread of tolerance is deeply ingrained.

*"If education is always to be conceived along the same antiquated lines of a mere transmission of knowledge, there is little to be hoped from it in the bettering of man's future. For what is the use of transmitting knowledge if the individual's total development lags behind?"*

*“Establishing lasting peace is the work of education; all politics can do is keep us out of war.”*

*“Our care of the child should be governed, not by the desire to make him learn things, but by the endeavour always to keep burning within him that light which is called intelligence.”*

#### **e. Staff of Monaghan Montessori**

##### **Garth Mackenzie: Business Head (Director Finance)**

Garth holds a BCom degree from RAU with majors in Economics and Accountancy. He has spent his entire working career in the stock market, trading equity derivatives within the banking industry. Since 2009, Garth has run his own business - Traders Corner - where he guides and educates professional traders on analysis and strategy on local and overseas stock markets. He also consults to Standard Bank to provide stock market analysis. He is the founder and editor of a weekly TV show on BusinessDay TV (DSTV412) called TradersCorner. Garth got involved with Monaghan Farm Montessori School in late 2016 in an effort to turn around the ailing school. He runs the business aspects of the school, including all strategy, financial matters and budgets. Garth saw the potential for the school to flourish in 2016, and took on the challenge of turning it into a successful business that could harness the growth potential in the alternative education space. Since taking over the business aspects of the school in 2016, the school has begun to see its numbers grow and profitability improve. Garth owns a 45% shareholding in Oak Tree Education - the company that operates Monaghan Farm Montessori School.

##### **Martin Pinchen: (Director Education)**

###### **6-12 Director**

What led to my interest in Montessori Education? I worked as a Music teacher at a Montessori school in Randburg, South Africa. In my time there the Principle gave me a book to read on Montessori education called "Discovery of the Child", I was blown away. My interest in alternative education grew from then on. How can there be an educational institute that allows children to move at their own pace and with so much FREEDOM? I decided to do a 3-6 diploma and work in the space as well. I was lead director for about 5 years in the space and moved to the 6-12 after completing my 6-12 training. There is something very important for children to experience in our world, it is dominated by educational stress, a world that seems to encourage endless judgmental thinking, that causes so many to feel that they are under-achieving. As a Montessori teacher, I know I can do just a little something about it. Montessori helps our children really achieve. It helps them build that hugely important self-esteem that will give them confidence and strength. My biggest passion is to do this and help them require a particular belief and a particular approach to education. That's what is important to me: Montessori makes children enjoy their own success at their level and, along the way, we teach them not to make the destructive (and meaningless) comparisons that can spoil it all. This is the biggest experience I have had in Montessori, watching child after child not being compared to one another. I have seen this from the Primary to elementary levels. And this Excites me immensely!!.

##### **Albert van der Burgh:**

###### **6-12 Assistant**

Albert van der Burgh is a qualified biokineticist and holds an honours degree from the University of the Free State. He has gained valuable experience both locally and internationally in various fields of interest including biokinetics, teaching, music and business.

He gained experience as a junior lecturer at the University of the Free State. He has also spent many hours teaching and mentoring biokinetic students during their clinical rotations at the practice he worked at.

He has been playing guitar since the age of 14, and gave his first music lesson at the age of 17.

Albert was involved with Creare Training Centre throughout his high school and university career, both as a student and a lecturer. In 2016 he spent six months in Russia and Europe with Creare Training Centre, where he was involved with teaching and upliftment projects at schools, orphanages and refugee camps.



Albert is a natural teacher with a lot of patience. He has a gift to see the potential in children.

**Mienkie Pinchen:**  
**3-6 Directress**

Lead Directress in the 3-6 Environment

Mienkie Pinchen strives to recognize the potential and gifts in every child she has the privilege to spend time with. She has 13 years of teaching experience and studied under Kym van Straaten (President of SAMA) and Sharon Caldwell (Montessori consultant) where she gained invaluable insights into

Dr. Montessori's philosophies and approach to guiding children.

Mienkie grew up in the little town of Graskop - Mpumalanga with her parents (also teachers) and 5 siblings. She is married to Martin Pinchen (Principal of Monaghan Montessori) and loves being a mommy to their two wonderful boys.

She studied dance, drama, music, photography and art at Creare School of the Arts in Bloemfontein after school. Two years later, Mienkie received a Diploma in Somatology before realizing that teaching is her real passion and pursued it ever since.

Outside school, Mienkie is a passionate photographer and takes pride in looking for beauty in all situations and people.

**Thembi Hlabangana:**  
**3-6 Assistant**

Thembi is married with two beautiful girls aged 17 and 13. She resides in Soweto with her family. She was introduced into the world of Montessori 3 years back at Wansworth Special Needs School. She decided to study a Montessori teaching course at Randburg Montessori Campus (3-6 childhood development) which she enjoys immensely, and this is her final year.

**Grace Tomlinson:**  
**Toddler Directress**

I have been so lucky in the wonderful life my parents provided for me. I was very fortunate to grow up in the beautiful Garden Route. Childhood there is innocent and free. My Mum and Dad worked from home and always made themselves available to my sisters and I am the youngest of four girls. Growing up in Knysna was such a huge blessing. I used to walk to school most days and in the afternoon I would spend my time exploring the forest playing down at the lagoon catching crabs and riding my bicycle. Outdoor play was just natural down there.

I've always had a passion for working with children and worked in a little school in Knysna for a few years. I was then very fortunate to have been given an amazing opportunity to work with Hayden who was 2 years old at the time and recently diagnosed with Autism. Hayden's family put me through training and I began doing therapy with him. I worked with Hayden for just about three years and through him I discovered Montessori. I facilitated Hayden for a year at Knysna Montessori school before moving up to JHB to my then boyfriend now Husband James. When I got here I started working at Monaghan Montessori school and studied through Randburg Montessori Campus. I have really loved becoming a part of the family here and couldn't picture my life any differently.

My days are full and so is my heart. Every day I am in awe of what new experiences the toddlers have at school and what discoveries they make. Each child is so unique and brings something totally different to the environment. Each child follows their own path into becoming their own beautiful little person and I just feel so incredibly lucky to be a part of it. I have absolutely loved every moment of my journey being a Montessorian. I have learned so much from all the children and it has been such an adventure getting to know them and watching them grow.

My husband James and I have recently welcomed our beautiful baby boy into the world, Leo and we are totally besotted. We have four dogs that share our home and heart too in our free time we enjoy visiting markets and going camping. The outdoors feeds our souls.

**Anna Mosomane:**  
Toddler Assistant

My husband and I have 4 children and I love working with children under 3. I started working for Multi-Choice in 1993 and stayed there for 15 years. I then moved to ADCON Montessori where I worked for 4 years. In both environments I worked with infants and toddlers, and in June 2010 I joined Monaghan Montessori.

**Susi Baird: (Director Operations)**

Susi has a Bachelors degree in Journalism (RAU).

Her most recent work experience was with the Shanduka Group, under the Shanduka Foundation, running the Cyril Ramaphosa Education Trust.

Working with a visionary such as Cyril Ramaphosa (now President Ramaphosa) she was introduced and exposed to many influential business people and politicians alike. She was involved in the fund- raising initiatives of the Shanduka Foundation, (through which she is still affiliated) and was exposed to the power of true nation building through these leaders and nation builders.

Uplifting young people became a passion for Susi during her time with the Shanduka Foundation, and she realised the importance of educating young people in empowering a nation.

When she became mother to her daughter, she further realised her passion for alternative models of education, as her own child guided her to the natural methods of education by following the child's natural inclinations.

She enrolled her daughter at the original Monaghan Montessori school under Xanthe Besters guidance, until Xanthe announced her exit.

Susi's passion for the child lead methods of teaching, motivated her to volunteer as a trustee in taking over from Xanthe to preserve the school, which has grown from strength to strength under the educational leadership of Martin Pinchen and financial leadership of Garth Mackenzie. Susi currently handles operational matters at Monaghan Montessori School.

**2: School Hours**

**a. School Hours**

**Toddlers:** 08h30 - 12h30 (Sport activity Fri - 10h00 - 10H45)

**Pre-School:** 08h30 - 13h30 (Sport Mon - Thur 13:30 - 14:15)

**Primary School:** 08h00 - 14h00 (Sport Mon - Thur 14h15 - 15h00)

**Aftercare:** Ends at 17h00 (Please pack a healthy snack)

- The teachers on duty arrive at 07h30. Our staff cannot come in earlier, nor remain later than 17:00. Please be respectful of their time. **Late aftercare collections will be fined a R300 penalty.** This will be paid to the teachers on duty.
- **Children are requested to be at school by the stipulated times in order to participate in the full work cycle**

### **Picking your child up early**

Naturally, there will be occasions where you will need to take your child out of school early for a doctor's appointment or similar obligation. To ensure that your child will be ready, please let his/her class teacher know the time that you will be picking him up.

### **Saying good-bye**

Initially, it can be difficult for parents and young children to separate at the beginning of the school year. We have found that a short and positive good-bye is easiest for the child.

We would like to encourage you to spend time with your child in the afternoon, rather than the mornings. Refrain from disappearing once the child is distracted as this leaves the child with a feeling of abandonment. Feel free to call the school for reassurance that your child has settled in and is adjusting well.

### **Dropping off and Collection**

Unless we receive specific permission from you to do otherwise, we will not release your child to anyone other than either parent or legal guardian. We must receive a note (or email), or in an emergency, a phone call, from you in order to release your child to someone else.

This rule also applies to children going home with school friends as well.

All people dropping and collecting the children should have fingerprints in order to come through the security gate of Monaghan Farm. Please request a form from Susi in the office should you not have this.

### **b. Attendance**

Even though Monaghan Montessori is less formal and more flexible than many schools, consistent attendance and prompt arrival are still essential.

Children are expected to be in class by the stipulated class times and to be present in class for the full morning session. Late arrival is disruptive and inconsiderate to the rest of the class.

Consistency and routine are important to every child's educational and social development.

Whenever your child misses a day or more of school for whatever reason, please inform their teacher.

### **c. 2019 4 Term Calendar**

#### **Term 1:**

Start: Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> January

Close: Friday 15<sup>th</sup> March

#### **Term 2:**

Start: Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> April

Close: Friday 14<sup>th</sup> June

#### **Half Term:**

Close: Friday 26<sup>th</sup> April

Return: Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> May

#### **Term 3:**

Start: Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> July

Close: Friday 20<sup>th</sup> September

#### **Term 4:**

Start: Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> October

Close: Friday 6<sup>th</sup> December

### 3: School Life

#### a. Dress Code

We take pride in giving the children the freedom to express themselves, be it through art, conversations or clothing. However, the children are expected to dress in outfits that are neat, clean, comfortable, and appropriate for school. Younger children should dress in clothing that they can put on and fasten or unfasten for themselves: pullover shirts, elastic waistbands, Velcro shoes, etc.

#### Please do not allow your child to come in wearing:

- High heeled or wedge shoes
- If your daughter prefers to wear skirts or dresses, please have her wear leggings or shorts under them.

#### b. Requirements

General:

- All belongings to be clearly labelled.
- A child sized school bag, containing a warm and cool change of clothes, sun hat and water bottle to be brought daily.

#### c. Lost Property

A lost property basket is kept in the office.

#### d. Toys

Children are allowed to bring a toy to school which will be packed away during the work cycles. PLEASE NOTE we will not take responsibility for lost or broken toys. This is just one of the many opportunities for our children to take ownership of their belongings.

#### Show and Tell

Children are welcome to bring in an item from nature, a special souvenir from a trip, something they have made, or their favourite books (please ensure your child's name is clearly written inside).

#### e. Extra Mural Activities

Seasonal sports take place Monday - Friday and are inclusive of school fees: Athletics, Tennis, Hockey, Cricket, Soccer, Rugby, Netball, basketball and hopefully swimming in future.

Monday to Thursday at 13h30 - 14h15 (3-6) and 14h15 - 15h00 (6-12)

Friday at 10h00-11h00 (Toddler class)

#### Extra Murals not included in school fees:

Pottery/Art - Monday:	3-6 at 12h30 - 13h15 (Lee Maddern)
	6-12 at 13h30 - 14h15
Taekwondo - Wednesday:	3-6 at 15h00 - 15h45 (Norman Magua)
	6-12 at 14h45 - 16h30
Ballet/HipHop - Friday:	3-6 at 12h30 - 13h15 (Leanne van Breda)
	6-12 at 13h15 -14h00

#### **4: Food and Meals**

##### **a. Nutrition**

The Monaghan Montessori community places great emphasis on the importance of good nutrition as the first step to a lifelong wellness education program. Meals are a very important part of your child's school day, and of his/her wellness education as well.

- **Please ensure you pack a healthy and nutritious snack. Please do not send these items; juice, chips, sweets, chocolates, biscuits, cake.**
- The school runs neither a Halaal nor Kosher kitchen.
- Children are never rewarded or punished with food.
- We try to avoid making any emotional attachments with food.
- Children are never forced to eat or drink at school. It is important for the child to realise when they are hungry or thirsty and how much food or water they need. Teachers will let you know if your child's appetite has been particularly poor.

Lunch is served at 11am. Children are involved in table setting and are encouraged to dish up their own food. The menu changes from time to time and you will be sent the menu variations. With each meal the children get a fresh fruit and raw vegetables i.e. cucumber/tomato/carrots etc. Breakfast is not included

##### **b. Snack**

A healthy snack is encouraged for mid-morning. Should your child need to stay for aftercare, please ensure a healthy snack is provided.

##### **c. Birthdays**

Children love to celebrate their birthdays with their friends. We have a special birthday ceremony in which we tell the class the story of the birthday child's life. It is especially nice to send in a special snack in honour of your child's birthday. A cake or cupcakes, enough for all the children, work well.

Please do not send party packs, chips and cold-drink for the children.

Parents are welcome to join the Birthday Circle at school and may arrange a suitable time and day with the class teacher in keeping with the work cycles and break times.

## 5: Health

### a. When your child is ill

Please let your class teacher know if your child is going to be absent.

A child with any of the following symptoms will not be allowed at school in order to prevent cross infection:

- Eye or any other contagious infections (eg. Ringworm)
- Head lice
- Any contagious illness
- Runny tummy or vomiting
- Fever
- The first 48 hours of an anti-biotic course

Children with infectious diseases, such as chicken pox, strep throat etc, must stay out of school until the contagious stage has passed. For the sake of the other children's health, it is vital that you let the class teacher know the doctor's diagnosis as soon as possible.

### b. If your child gets sick at school

If your child is ill, we will contact you to arrange for him/her to be picked up right away.

We understand how difficult it can be for working parents to break free during the day, and yet all of our children get ill from time to time. You will want to make arrangements with a friend or relative in advance.

**Remember: Because colds, flu and other childhood illnesses spread from child to child with alarming speed, please do not send your child to school if he has a fever, nausea, or any other symptoms of illness in a 24hour period.**

### c. Children hurting one another - Tolerating Caterpillars

A peaceful classroom is not a classroom where the adult ensures that no conflict can occur, but one where the children, themselves, develop ways and means of resolving real life disputes as they arise. Each new child entering the environment upsets any equilibrium which has been established, and presents new opportunities for learning.

Montessori teachers and administrators can help parents to become partners in this process by highlighting that peace in the environment is a process which is on-going. Inappropriate aggressive behaviour in young children should be seen as an 'error.' Errors provide opportunities for learning and children can be helped to use visual and verbal cues from others to moderate their own behaviour. As a child gains control of his will and greater control of a variety of communication strategies, so he will begin to either avoid conflict or to handle disagreements and challenges in proactive ways.

By all means, the teacher should intervene if a child is in real danger of being injured, or severely distressed. Occasional tears, hurt feelings, or physical discomfort are, on the other hand, important constituents of emotional growth. Standing back and ignoring disputes, or brushing off a child's distress is, indeed, abandonment. Rushing in to prevent a potentially aggressive situation or to resolve all disputes is the affective domain's equivalent to doing a child's math problems for him, or directly correcting the child's work. Guiding a child to understand that you are available if your help is really needed, but clearly conveying to the children that you have the faith that they are able to handle a variety of situations alone is immensely empowering.

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#### **d. Emergency Care**

Most of our faculty and staff are trained in first aid and CPR.

In the event of any medical situation that requires immediate medical attention, we will want your child to see a doctor right away. Please be sure to keep your emergency information form up-to-date and inform the office immediately if there is any change in your address or phone number during the academic year. We must be able to reach you at any time during the school day.

**If your child needs immediate medical attention, and you cannot be reached, your enrolment agreement authorises us to seek medical care in your name. We will take your child to the emergency room and naturally, we will continue our efforts to contact you.**

Accidents happen at school and at home in split seconds. Therefore we try to be as vigilant as humanly possible. We will endeavour to provide a safe environment at all times for the children and parents. Should medical attention be required we will contact you immediately to make you aware of the incident. Record will be kept of any incident requiring first aid.

#### **e. Medication**

Except under extraordinary situations, we do not administer medication at school. Please do not send in any medication with your child, including vitamins.

Antibiotics and other medications should be scheduled so that doses are due during hours when the child is at home.

In cases involving long-term medication for chronic conditions, an authorisation form must be filed with the school each year in January. Any medication changes during the school year must be accompanied by a new medication form.

We will strictly adhere to this policy.

### **6: Parents and the School**

#### **A community built on trust, friendship and mutual respect**

Stability and a true sense of community within the school means a great deal to many of us at Monaghan Montessori. Children know that they belong, that they are respected, and that they are cared for not only by their parents, but by the larger community of fellow children, teachers, and other parents in the school, many of whom have known them almost all their lives.

Monaghan Montessori brings together families who have chosen to identify with a common commitment to the shared concerns, values, and expectations they have for their children. We come from different backgrounds, but our sense of community exists in spite of, or perhaps because of it.

Monaghan Montessori teaches our children to understand and appreciate cultural differences and shared human values: peace, independence, human dignity, and a celebration of life.

#### **b. Communication between home and school**

The school maintains regular contact with parents with regards to announcements, updates, and information by means of the school and class whatsapp groups, as well as via direct emails.

### **c. Observing the classes at work**

Parents are invited and even urged to observe the children at work. Set dates will be made available in order for you to book a time to come through and observe your child working and their lunch period.

You will want to see the class at its normal routine and not responding to the novelty of your presence; therefore, when you visit, please sit in the designated visitor's chair in the classroom. A great deal can be learned by patient and quiet observation of your child and his or her classmates at work.

During the first sensitive weeks of the school year, children (especially the younger children) are familiarising themselves with a new routine and new environment. For this reason, we ask parents to avoid class observations during this period.

### **d. So, what did you do at school today?**

Have you experienced frustration when asking this question?

Did you get the common answer, "nothing." Possibly they tell you every day that they did the same thing such as play-dough or spooning beans. Don't be alarmed. We can assure you that your child is very busy at school doing a variety of learning activities designed to support his development.

Young children often have difficulty talking about what they do at school. They have done so many things that they often cannot sort out the specifics. Sometimes they don't remember the name of the materials that they used, such as the trinomial cube, the metal insets, or the addition strip board.

In addition to the difficulty children may have talking about their school experience, you may have noted that not many worksheets come home. The children can be doing complex math, word building, writing in a sand tray or on chalk boards, geography, and science lessons, all with manipulative materials that will have no paper trail to show you their progress.

So how can you find out what your child is doing in school?

- Ask your child questions that are more specific. "Did you do a counting lesson today? Did you build the tower or work with colours?"
- Occasionally bring your child into the classroom to show you his/her favourite lessons.
- Set up a time to observe your child in class.
- Read a Montessori book.
- Stop in after school and talk to your child's teacher, or set up an appointment for a formal conference if you prefer.
- Come to school meetings and workshops.
- Play school with your child at home. Sometimes children will show you through their play what they are learning.
- Be patient. In time it will be obvious that your child is growing and learning every day.

"Joy is the indication of internal growth." Maria Montessori



## **7. Communication**

Communication between staff and parents is vital to ensure the well-being of the child. Could parents please inform staff of any changes that may be taking place in the child's life, e.g. moving house, separation of parents, new baby, death in the family, etc.

### **a. Parent Information Evenings**

During the year, parent information evenings will be held. This will give both staff and parents a chance to socialise with each other. A brief talk on various child related topics will be held.

### **b. Family Conferences**

It is very important for teachers and parents to establish and maintain close communication. Please feel free to ask questions or discuss anything related to your child's progress.

We ask however, that you understand that the teacher's responsibility during school is to the children. Morning arrival in particular is a very sensitive period when the teachers are greeting each learner and setting a calm, pleasant tone for the day. Interruptions need to be kept to a minimum. If you must speak with a teacher in the morning, please make arrangements to meet before school begins.

Alternatively you can correspond via e-mail with Susi where a suitable date and time can be arranged for a face to face meeting, preferably from 2-3pm for 15 to 20 minutes Monday to Friday

### **c. Evaluation of children's progress**

The Montessori curriculum is carefully structured and sequenced and the teachers maintain careful records of each learner's academic progress.

Because Montessori Schools do not compare children against an arbitrary standard or the performance of their classmates, we do not use familiar letter grades. We send home written narrative reports annually and we also do parent-on-ones at least twice a year to discuss the children's development and discuss how the Montessori program is contributing to their growth.

### **d. Facebook/Instagram**

Please join our Facebook group and Instagram accounts for regular updates, photographs and videos on our daily school experiences. This medium is used to strengthen community between children, parents and staff, therefore, we ask that you don't abuse this medium by placing advertising, unless specifically related to the school or parents of the school (second hand goods etc) on our page.

## **8: Ground Rules**

As a school founded on the Montessori ideals, we believe that every person deserves respect. Monaghan Montessori motivates children to demonstrate kindness, courtesy, and respect toward the school and fellow children, parents, teachers, and staff.

The goal of all Montessori education is to establish safe, warm, and caring environments within which we teach children positive and appropriate ways to handle situations. This attitude allows us to aid children to develop a strong sense of self-discipline, responsibility and courtesy; to develop an atmosphere conducive to peaceful studies.

When anyone at Monaghan Montessori finds it difficult to follow the school's expectations about interpersonal conduct, we will quickly bring the child, family, and staff together to work toward a solution.

We follow an approach based on empowerment, mutual respect, and trust. Neither corporal punishment, nor physical nor emotional intimidation, is allowed at Monaghan Montessori. If anyone consciously or flagrantly violates the social contract regarding safety, kindness, and courtesy, our response is to identify the appropriate and natural consequences of their actions.

Any learner who repeatedly breaks the ground rules, or who on even one occasion endangers the health and safety of others, may be asked to leave the school by the Principal.

Please note that parents are not allowed to confront, talk to or intimidate other children at our school, about any behaviour that may not be appropriate.

We have worked together to create a system of ground rules to create freedom within boundaries

Ground rules are created and discussed with the class at the beginning of each term and frequently referred to throughout the year.

Examples of these ground rules are:

1. We may not hurt anybody
2. We may not break anything
3. It must work for the group as a whole

### **a. Admission policy**

Monaghan Montessori reserves the right of admission due to capacity limits/age. Admission is also subject to the outcome of a credit check.

### **b. Speeding fines on the estate**

The Monaghan Estate has a strict speed limit of 40km/hour. Please adhere to the speed limit. It is there to keep us safe. Monaghan Estate issues the fines directly to the school, which then requires processing and invoicing. They will be issued with a R50 processing fee.

## **9: The Montessori Method**

### **a. Where did it originate?**

Dr. Maria Montessori, the first woman to graduate from the University of Rome Medical School, became interested in education when she, as a doctor, was treating mentally handicapped children. After returning to the university for further study, she began her work with non-handicapped children in 1904.

After many years of intense observation of children across the globe, Dr. Montessori noted specific characteristics associated with the child's interests and abilities at each level of development. She argued that a school carefully designed to meet the needs and interests of the child would work more effectively because it would not fight human nature. Montessori taught teachers how to "follow the child" through careful observation, allowing each child to reveal his/her strengths, weaknesses, interests and anxieties; and strategies that work best to facilitate the development of the child's human potential.

This focus on the "whole child" led Dr. Montessori to develop a very different sort of school from the traditional adult-centred classroom. To emphasise this difference, she named her first school the "Casa dei Bambini" (The Children's Home)

### **b. What is the Montessori Method?**

It is a system of education based on the child's developmental needs for freedom within limits and a carefully prepared environment that nurtures development on all levels and in all spheres. It is designed to take full advantage of the self-motivation and unique ability of every young child to develop his/her own capabilities.

Key principles of Montessori education are:

1. Children are respected and treated as individuals.
2. Children possess unusual mental ability to absorb and learn from their environment.
3. The most important years of growth are the first six years of life.
4. Children have a deep love and need for purposeful activities.

Montessori identified 'the universal characteristics of childhood' from her observations of children of different cultures at various stages in their development. These characteristics are as follows:

#### **1. The Absorbent Mind:**

A child has what Dr. Montessori called an absorbent mind, one that unconsciously soaks up information from the environment, learning at a rapid rate. This capacity to learn in this way is unique to the young child and lasts for the first six years of his/her life.

#### **2. Sensitive Periods:**

Dr. Montessori noticed that children pass through phases when they will focus on one aspect of their environment. They will repeat activities time and time again, developing knowledge and new skills through their senses. It is at this time that tantrums are prevalent as it is the child's only way of saying that his/her need to learn (experience) is unsatisfied.

3. Children want to learn
4. All children learn through active engagement
5. All children want to be independent
6. Children learn through play.

Having identified these 'universal characteristics of childhood', Maria Montessori then concentrated on how best to implement these discoveries in the education of children. To do this she formulated what is now called the Montessori Method.

The main aims are:

- To facilitate the development of the child's unique personality.
- To help make it possible for him to develop to his full potential.

#### **c. Is this method of learning suitable for my child?**

The Montessori system has been used successfully with children from birth from all socio-economic, emotional, mental and physical levels. We believe very strongly that intelligence is not fixed at birth, nor is the human potential anywhere near as limited as it sometimes seems in traditional education. This system allows children to develop a meaningful degree of independence and self-discipline, which sets a pattern for a lifetime of good work habits and a sense of responsibility. Children learn to take pride in doing things for themselves carefully and well.

We treat each child as a unique individual. Children learn at their own pace, and we teach in ways that work best for them to discover and develop their own talents and possibilities.

We teach children to think, not simply to memorise, regurgitate, and forget.

#### **d. Freedom of movement**

Children learn by doing, and children in our environment are free to move about, working alone or with others at will. They may select any activity and work with it as long as they wish, so long as they do not disturb anyone or wilfully damage anything and once they have completed their task they return it to its specific place and proceed to select another activity.

The independence the child gains is empowering on a social and emotional basis, and also helps the child to become comfortable and confident in their ability to master the environment and learn without needing to be spoon-fed by an adult.

#### **e. The Prepared Environment**

Children learn through active participation, exercises are designed to draw the child's attention to the sensory properties of objects within their environment. Gradually they learn to pay attention, seeing more clearly small details in the environment around them. They have begun to observe and appreciate their surroundings. This is the key in helping the child discover how to learn.

#### **f. Class size and mixed ages**

A class usually contains children evenly divided among the three age levels. By consciously bringing children together in a group that allows for two-thirds of the children to return every year, the school environment promotes continuity between children and staff.

The recommendations by the International Montessori Council include an average class size of 25-30 with one qualified Montessori Guide and an assistant. We however wish to remain a micro school with a maximum of 20 children in each class with one Montessori guide and an assistant.

Traditional schools assume that the teacher is the sole source of instruction, a very limited resource. Often the best teacher of a 3-year-old is another child, who is just a little bit older and has mastered a skill. This process is good for both children as children learn positively from their peers. The age range allows the more advanced child the stimulation of intellectual peers, while still having the freedom to socialise with peers of the same emotional standing.

#### **g. The Guide**

Maria Montessori uses the term "Directress" and "Director", as the teachers are not to rule, never to master, but to guide, lead or direct the attention of the child.

The Guide works with individual children, introducing new materials and giving guidance where needed. The goal is to give the children just enough to capture their attention and spark their interest, intriguing them enough so that they will come back on their own to work with the materials alone.

#### **h. Fantasy or Imagination**

According to Jean Piaget, a prominent educationalist, the young child's mind (under 6 years), is unable to differentiate between fantasy and reality. This is why Montessori encouraged adults to help the child develop the wonderful gift of imagination by initially basing it in reality. We live in an abundant society with a diversity of cultures and extraordinary natural heritage. For example it takes as much creative thought to visualise a North American Indian child's life in a tepee as it does to imagine a fairy living in a toadstool. One of these however will create an understanding and therefore an acceptance of the differences in cultures without prejudice. The other will have no significant meaning for the child because he will never be able to see the fairy or experience life in a toadstool.

Our planet and universe is buzzing with fascinating real life events with an interesting narrative, thereby developing the child's love for books and increasing their understanding of the world around them in a fun and imaginative way.

#### **i. The Montessori Materials - A road from the concrete to the abstract**

The basis of our approach is the simple observation that children learn most effectively through direct experience and the process of investigation and discovery. In her studies of children's learning, Dr. Montessori noted that most children do not learn by memorising what they hear from their teachers or read in a text, but rather from concrete experience and direct interaction with the environment. Asking a child to sit back and watch us perform a process or experiment is like asking a one-year-old not to put everything in his mouth. Children need to manipulate and explore everything that catches their interest. This led Montessori to emphasise the overriding importance of concrete learning apparatus and to the development of the Montessori materials for mathematics, sensory development, language, science, history, and geography.

The Montessori learning materials are not the method itself, but rather tools that we use to stimulate the child into logical thought and discovery. They are provocative and simple, each carefully designed to appeal to children at a given level of development.

Each material isolates and teaches one thing or is used to present one skill at a time as the child is ready. Montessori carefully analysed the skills and concepts involved in each subject and noted the sequence in which children most easily master them.

To facilitate the prepared order of the environment, the guide arranges the materials on the shelf following their sequence in the curriculum flowchart. The materials are displayed on low open shelves that are easily accessible to even the youngest children.

They are arranged to provide maximum eye appeal without clutter. Each has a specific place on the shelves, arranged from the upper-left-hand corner in sequence to the lower right. Materials are always arranged in sequence, from the most simple to the most complex, and from the most concrete to those that are the most abstract.

#### **j. Preparing tomorrow's innovative thinkers today**

In a world of rapid change and new discoveries, we can only guess at the skills our children will need to succeed in the 21st century. Now, more than ever, the essential lesson is learning how to learn.

The most important years in our children's education are not high school and university, but, instead, their first twelve years of life. This is when their character and values, self-image, basic skills and knowledge, and appreciation for culture and the arts are formed.

Monaghan Montessori offers our children a world-class education, along with an education of the heart that nurtures their self-confidence, personal creativity, and entrepreneurial spirit. We can

see our children as they truly come to love learning and begin to discover their true potential as young men and women.

The staff at Monaghan Montessori endeavour to look at the 'whole' child, to care and nurture your child on all levels and to allow your child to reach his/her full potential through purposeful activity.

Thank you for choosing Monaghan Montessori.