



Equal Opportunities Policy

The 'Montessori Children's House, St Andrews operates an equal opportunities policy. Montessori education aims to help children see themselves as both members of their communities and as 'citizens of the world' (Dr Montessori). We believe that we benefit greatly from difference and diversity within the school and are enriched by the contribution made by people of differing backgrounds and experience. We take care to treat all people as individuals irrespective of their ethnic origin, religion, cultural traditions, linguistic background, life experience, special educational needs, sexual orientation or disability.

We consider it important to provide a range of experiences and an environment that will instil in the children a positive outlook towards all people. Our setting is committed to anti-discriminatory practice to promote equality of opportunity for all children and families. We aim to:

- Provide a secure and accessible environment in which all our children are treated as individuals and in which all contributions are considered and valued
- Include the contribution of all families to our understanding of equality and diversity
- Ensure that consideration and respect for others underpins all areas of the curriculum, all areas of staff recruitment, employment, management and training and all aspects of relations with parents
- Reflect positive attitudes towards difference and diversity throughout all the curriculum areas
- Draw on the resources of cultural, ethnic and religious diversity relevant to our staff members and families to enrich the experience of everyone in the community
- Improve our knowledge and understanding of issues relating to promoting equality and valuing diversity
- Make all families feel welcomed at our school

Guidelines for Implementation

Regarding Ethnic Origin

Young children observe difference but do not discriminate on the grounds of race or ethnic background except where attitudes have been learnt.

Any behaviour, language or action that creates disadvantage or discrimination is instantly challenged.

Regarding Religion

- It is our aim to give equal value to the religious beliefs of the families served by Children's House and we work in partnership with parents to make sure that the information we give children is accurate and respectful.
- We recognise that some families are not religious.
- In all cases we preface our explanations with 'some people believe that...'
- We aim to establish the cultural and historical context for religious beliefs rather than the beliefs themselves.
- Information is pitched at a level that the children can comprehend.

Regarding Cultural Traditions

- It is our aim to take full advantage of the cultural diversity represented by the Children's House community and to actively involve parents in our preparations for projects and celebrations.
- Our Montessori approach to 'knowledge and understanding of the world' provides a broad world-view and many opportunities to explore the cultural traditions, geography and history of diverse communities.

Regarding Linguistic Background

- Many of our children speak more than one language but there is not a dominant second language spoken in the nursery. We aim to focus the children's attention on different languages by teaching greetings and songs.
- Children learn Spanish with a native speaker on a weekly basis.
- Children who come to Children's House with little or no English have equal access to all areas of the curriculum in line with their general developmental level.
- Because of the age of the children in our care, non-native speakers of English are supported in their learning of English in a similar way to that of native English speakers.

Regarding Life Experience, including gender and sexual orientation

- We balance supporting the children's developing awareness of gender differences against reinforcing stereotypes, which are challenged and discussed.
- We do not make assumptions about the interests and aptitudes of boys and girls. All activities are open to everyone and staff have a duty to ensure activities are made available to all children to choose.
- We recognise that individual families are differently constituted and try to cater in a positive way for such differences.

Regarding Impairment, Special Needs and Disability

- The needs of all the children are met by working through the curriculum individually, at their own pace, in line with their stage and level of development and with their own interests.
- Every effort is made to accommodate children and parents with physical disabilities and additional needs.