

Prospectus

Little Elms Montessori Nursery

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Welcome

Dear Parent/Carer,

Thank you for taking the time to read our prospectus, which we hope will answer your questions about our Nursery and what a Montessori-style education can offer your child. The nursery previously achieved the 'OUTSTANDING' rating at the Ofsted inspection carried out in 2022. We aim to keep our practice at the highest standards possible.

I took over this setting in 2023 and have made significant positive changes aimed at making our relationship with the parents stronger. Little Elms has an excellent reputation with local schools, both state and independent, for providing children with excellent preparation for their school life. We have access to a hectare of natural grounds at the rear of our nursery and our own fully equipped private playground containing a wide range of age-appropriate outdoor equipment. This beautiful space provides wonderful opportunities for ample outdoor learning during our regular Montessori-enriched, hands-on outdoor sessions. Our building is welcoming, child-friendly and secure with ample car parking. The amount of space available by the Nursery is a considerable bonus and provides the children room to grow and learn about themselves and their environment.

*Our experienced Montessori staff aim to provide quality care in a safe, happy and well-structured environment. The children receive high-quality care and attention, due to our high ratio of qualified staff to children. We provide care and education for children between the ages of 2-5 years, and our opening hours are 8am to 4pm. The Nursery is open **term time** only and follows the local schools opening dates as closely as possible.*

Little Elms Montessori Nursery School uses the Montessori Method of early education. This is a child-centred approach, in which each child can learn and develop freely at their pace, following their interests and inclinations.

Little Elms Montessori Nursery aims to plan a curriculum using Montessori methods within the framework of the Early Years Foundation Stages, providing the children with learning experiences of the highest quality. This method considers both, the children's needs and achievements, and a range of learning experiences that will help them to make progress towards and, where appropriate, beyond these goals.

We work in partnership with parents to help children learn and develop, offering children and their families a service that promotes equality and values diversity.

If you would like to visit the Nursery, please feel free to contact us.

If you would like to enrol your child, please complete the Enrolment Form which can be emailed to you on request, and return it to us with a payment of £170.00 to cover your child's Enrolment Fee and Refundable Deposit.

We look forward to hearing from you and showing you around our Nursery.

Yours sincerely

*Nishrin Alibhai
Director/Manager*

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What Is Montessori?



Dr. Maria Montessori (1870-1952) was born in Italy; she founded the Montessori Method of education in 1907. Her ideas and theories revolutionised education and were recognized worldwide.

Montessori was the first woman to graduate from the University of Rome La Sapienza Medical School, becoming one of the first female doctors in Italy.

Maria Montessori felt that children should be sensitively guided, rather than controlled, through activities. It is important to observe individual children and plan the activities around their interests and continue to develop their existing skills.

Montessori schools encourage children of different ages to work together as a social group and do not normally split children by sex or age. Montessori realised that it was natural and very easy for the younger children to learn by watching and listening to the older children and actively supporting and helping each other.

Children are natural learners, Little Elms Montessori Nursery see that the overall happiness, self-confidence and self-discipline are improved when they are allowed to follow their natural development. Children only stop loving to learn when they are forced to go against their natural impulses. Therefore, we believe that each child is an individual and should be encouraged to work at the pace that is right for him or her. There are no grades or tests, children are never in competition with each other, therefore do not have any added pressures.

The Montessori Method allows the child to learn in totally free play using specially designed materials and equipment through the medium of a carefully prepared environment. Materials through which, the children can develop their skills for independence and academic knowledge.

For example, the material known as the pink tower is made up of ten pink cubes of varying sizes. The preschool-aged child constructs a tower with the largest cube on the bottom and the smallest on top. This material isolates the concept of size. The cubes are all the same colour and texture; the only difference is their size. Other materials isolate different concepts: colour tablets for colour, geometry materials for form, and so on.

Classroom Activities & Montessori Materials

At the core of the Montessori Method is a carefully structured classroom in which the children can choose amongst individual, purposeful activities or join in group activities. The trained Montessori teacher helps the children by showing them how activities are performed, observing their work, and individually introducing new challenges when a child is ready for them. At all times, the teacher is careful to encourage freedom of choice and expression. Gradually the children reveal qualities for which they are not usually given credit, such as intense concentration and surprising attention span, a sense of order, self-discipline and respect for others.

The environment is set up as a bridge between the home and the wider world. Montessori called this place a Casa dei Bambini or Children's House.

In each classroom we have low-level shelving so the children are able to select materials of their choice, this encourages independence. The materials have been specifically designed to use the children's senses to learn naturally. The classrooms are all arranged in five main areas:

1. Practical Life Activities

These are designed to build skills in everyday activities which the child may be familiar with at home. Practical life activities promote independence, coordination, and fine and gross motor skills. These also prepare the child for later mathematical and language work, whilst developing the child's concentration span.

Examples: threading, polishing, dressing frames (buttons, zips, poppers), pouring, spooning, sorting, dusting, sweeping up and carrying a chair.

2. Sensorial Activities

These attractive materials are specially designed to heighten the child's awareness of the world around, them by broadening and refining each of their sense. They help prepare the child for many later Montessori activities, especially the Maths and Cultural work.

Examples: pink tower, red rods, cylinder blocks, sound cylinders, rough and smooth boards, tasting drops, colour tablets and baric tablets.

3. Language Activities

Early language experience is gained through books, storytelling, poems, and songs with props. When interested in letters and reading, the child is introduced to Montessori language materials. First, the sounds and shapes of the letters are taught a few at a

time in individual lessons. Then reading and writing are introduced through various structured activities.

Examples: sandpaper letters (used to learn letter sounds and shapes), moveable alphabet (cut-out letters that the child can use to write words phonetically), object boxes (toy-sized things with three-letter names that the child can read phonetically) and reading folders (packed showing alternative spellings of common word sounds).

4. Maths Activities

Early number experience includes counting, sorting, weighing, matching, and pairing, particularly in the Sensorial activities. When ready and interested in numbers, the child is introduced to a variety of maths activities, progressing from the simple to the complex and from the concrete to the abstract. Arithmetic, for example, is learned through the use of beads that come in ones, tens, hundreds, and thousands.

Examples: Number rods, sandpaper numbers, numbers and counters, spindle box, addition/subtraction bead and fraction circles.

5. Cultural activities

These activities are usually conducted as group work, to promote social interaction. They cover all aspects of learning that make a culture rich and interesting. Each term, special projects are run in nature, science and history, including ongoing cultural work.

For art, an easel is always up in the classroom so the children can paint when they like, and there is a daily art/craft lesson such as painting, sticking, printing, modelling, collage, and sculpting.

For dance, the children are encouraged to join in with movement to music which promotes body awareness, gross and fine motor control, rhythm, balance, and coordination. During music, the children are introduced to songs, rhythms, and different instruments).

***Yoga** is a new method combining Montessori and Yoga, taught by a specially trained teacher for children to build confidence and self-esteem, improving balance, senses and memory skills.*

***Drama** is taught by a professional Drama and music teacher, with an emphasis on fun and role-play using the language.*

Provision of the Early Years Foundation Stages

1. Early Years Foundation Stage

The Early Years Foundation Stages begin from birth. Children aged between three and five are constantly encountering new experiences and seeking to understand them in order to extend their skills. The Early Years Foundation Stages outlines early learning goals which most children are expected to achieve by the end of their reception class year at school.

The six areas of learning are as follows:

- Problem solving, reasoning and numeracy*
- Physical development*
- Creativity*
- Knowledge and understanding of the world*
- Communication, language and literacy*
- Personal social and emotional development.*

2. Planning

The six areas of learning will provide the basis for our planning.

- a) Each term the nursery decides which topics will be covered throughout the term; the planning and activities will also be shaped and initiated by the children's interests. Parents are advised of the areas that are intended to be covered by way of the notice boards and newsletters and are encouraged to help their child to find items from home to support the topics/shapes and colours being studied.*
- b) The topics are then broken down to show which activities will be offered to cover each of the six areas of learning. The plans for the activities may be shown as a spider chart or in some other form to enable ideas to be discussed, selected and sorted.*
- c) The activities are then broken down again into weekly and daily lesson plans to show which goals are being encouraged from the six areas of learning.*
- d) To give an idea of how the nursery provides for the foundation stages and some of the learning outcomes that are encouraged a few examples are given in the table overleaf.*

3. Learning through Play

Our toys, resources and activities help to encourage the development of children in different areas so that even when children seem to be just playing they are learning at the same time. All the toys and activities put out at Little Elms have been planned to cover certain areas of a child's development within the Early Years Foundation Stage as shown above. During the nursery session, the staff present the activities/equipment to the children to encourage the planned learning outcome. The children are observed continuously and the information gained to assess each child's development against the predicted ages of attainment.

Example of Activities for each area and Learning Outcomes

For each area, the level of progress that children are expected to have attained by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage is defined by the Early Learning Goals. These goals state what it is expected that children will know, and be able to do, by the end of the reception year of their education.

Areas of Development & Learning	ACTIVITY AND AREAS	ENCOURAGED LEARNING OUTCOMES
MATHEMATICS	<p><i>Counting cups and plates at snack time</i></p> <p><i>Making patterns and pictures with shapes</i></p> <p><i>Sorting and matching</i></p>	<p><i>Begin to count beyond 10</i></p> <p><i>Talk about, recognize and recreate simple patterns</i></p> <p><i>Use appropriate shapes to make representational models or more elaborate pictures</i></p>
PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT	<p><i>Practical life activities</i></p> <p><i>Outside play/activities</i></p> <p><i>Action songs</i></p> <p><i>Tracing pictures</i></p> <p><i>Picture lotto</i></p> <p><i>Montessori maze</i></p>	<p><i>Help control body movements</i></p> <p><i>Move with balance and coordination</i></p> <p><i>Relate and make attachments to members of their group</i></p>
EXPRESSIVE ART AND DESIGN	<p><i>Musical instruments</i></p> <p><i>Making our own instruments</i></p> <p><i>Cooking from around the worlds</i></p> <p><i>Exploring textures/art materials</i></p> <p><i>Group/circle time games</i></p>	<p><i>Tap out simple repeated rhythms and composing our own</i></p> <p><i>Talk about what we see and what is happening</i></p> <p><i>Enjoy joining in with dancing and group games</i></p>
KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD	<p><i>Listening to music and stories from around the world</i></p> <p><i>Exploration of the garden</i></p> <p><i>Discussions about what they have achieved and their experiences</i></p> <p><i>Cultural festivals</i></p>	<p><i>Examine objects and living things to find out more about them</i></p> <p><i>Remember and talk about significant events at home and at nursery</i></p> <p><i>Gain an awareness of cultures and beliefs</i></p>
COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY	<p><i>Circle time show and tell, group discussions</i></p> <p><i>Listening to stories, retelling stories</i></p> <p><i>Drawing, writing own shopping list</i></p> <p><i>Discussion about sunshine and rain helping things to grow/our world</i></p>	<p><i>Build upon attentive listening, responding to what they have heard with relevant comments, questions or actions</i></p> <p><i>Use writing and mark-making as a means of recording and communicating</i></p> <p><i>Ask open-ended questions often in the form of Where or what</i></p>
PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT	<p><i>Role play e.g. Shopkeeper, Doctor, Restaurant</i></p> <p><i>Sand pit , water play</i></p> <p><i>Looking and exploring things on the nature table</i></p>	<p><i>Seek out others to share experiences</i></p> <p><i>Have an awareness of the boundaries set and of behavioural expectations</i></p> <p><i>Show curiosity</i></p>

Daily Routine

We organise our sessions so that the children can choose from, and work at, a range of activities and, in doing so, build up their ability to select and work through a task to its completion. The children are also helped and encouraged to take part in adult-led small and large group activities, which introduce them to new experiences and help them to gain new skills, as well as helping them to learn to work with others. Outdoor activities contribute to children's health, their physical development and their knowledge of the world around them. The children have the opportunity and are encouraged, to take part in outdoor child-chosen and adult-led activities, as well as those provided in the indoor playroom(s).

The routine below shows a sample of a typical day at our Nursery:

Morning Session

8.00 am Breakfast Club available

9:00 am Doors will be opened and children welcomed in

9:15 am Morning Circle / Registration

9:30 am Montessori work cycle commences, free choice from all areas of learning – Numeracy, Literacy and Language, Sensorial, Knowledge and Understanding of the World, Activities of Everyday Living, Art and Construction, Music and Movement, and Role play. Snack - Families prepare their child's snack at home and bring it with them on the day in a snack bag to minimise contamination.

10.30am: Football/Drama / Yoga

11:00 am: Outdoors play

12:00 am Home time

12:00am - 1:00pm Lunch club available within their classes

Children are required to bring their packed lunch; this is a great opportunity for children to learn social skills at meal times followed by free play.

Afternoon session

1.00 pm Session begins with Registration and Afternoon Circle

1.20 pm Montessori work cycle commences, free choice from all areas of learning, Free flowing snack – from their snack bag

1.45pm: Outdoors play

2.20 pm Tidy away. Final circle and Storytime

3.00 pm Home time

3- 4pm Afterschool Club (please enquire)

Current Fees

*When you enrol a non-refundable registration fee of £70 is required to hold a space for your child. When a place is available and has been accepted, a refundable deposit of £100 is payable. **This deposit will only be refunded if a terms written notice has been given in advance, please see our full Terms and Conditions policy which includes deferring.***

A child starting at the Nursery will be expected to attend for a minimum of three sessions per week for the first term, rising to more sessions for subsequent terms if required. By the time a child is three years old, we recommend that your child attends Nursery a minimum of five sessions per week.

Once we have agreed with you what sessions have been allocated to your child for the term, those sessions cannot be varied and so if your child misses a session, for whatever reason, that session cannot be replaced with one on a different day.

Little Elms Montessori Nursery offer a number of grants and schemes please see below if you are eligible, or for more information please contact Hertfordshire County Council at www.hertsdirect.org

Current Fee structure-

8 - 9am	Breakfast Club	Monday - Friday	£10
9 - 12am	Morning Session	Monday - Friday	£30
12 - 1pm	Lunch Club	Monday - Friday	£10
1 - 3pm	Afternoon Session	Monday - Friday	£20
3 - 4pm	Afterschool Session	Monday - Friday	£15

Breakfast Club – Breakfast is included and will consist of Toast, Cereal, Fruit, Milk etc.

Lunch Club – children will need to bring an appropriate packed lunch into Nursery, that does not need cooking or reheating.

Snack – The nursery will no longer serve snacks, Children are asked to bring their own prepared snacks in a lunch bag to minimise contamination.

Children in Receipt of the free early education grant for three- & four-year olds

All three and four-year-olds are entitled to 15 hours per week of free early education for up to 38 weeks of the year from the term following your child's 3rd birthday. This applies until they reach compulsory school age (the term following their fifth birthday). These places are subject to availability.

When can my child access a free 3 or 4-year-old funded place?

<i>A child born in the period</i>	<i>Will become eligible for a free place</i>
<i>1 April to 31 August</i>	<i>1 September following the child's third birthday</i>
<i>1 September to 31 December</i>	<i>1 January following the child's third birthday</i>
<i>1 January to 31 March</i>	<i>1 April following the child's third birthday</i>

Classrooms

The 15 free early education entitlement can be taken flexibly within the following limitations:

Caterpillar Class

All children will start Little Elms Montessori Nursery in Caterpillar Class and can attend either morning or afternoon sessions. Their 15 free early education entitlement can be taken only for the morning sessions. All afternoon and lunch sessions are chargeable.

Butterfly, Ladybird

The places in these classes are available to children, who are eligible to receive 15 or 30 hours free funded hours. These places are allocated to children depending on their date of birth.

The education provided in Butterfly and Ladybird classes prepares children for starting Reception and the 15 free early education entitlement hours can only be taken over the Morning Sessions. This means that children offered a place, in these classes, will be expected to attend Nursery each weekday morning 9-12pm. Additional hours are available on request for breakfast, lunch and afternoon Sessions, and are charged at our hourly rate.

We accept 30 hours of funding too

All Nursery fees must be paid and cleared in advance by the last day of the previous Term by BACS or cash to hold your child's nursery place. Fees should be paid by the date given to avoid occurring late payment fine of £75 in the first week of term. We reserve the right to withdraw your child's place if the balance is not paid, or the place is confirmed. Please discuss any issues with us as soon as possible *

If the nursery must close, due to Bank holidays, emergencies, Coronavirus (Covid-19) or any other pandemic, weather conditions, Government advice or any other unforeseen circumstances, the nursery term will not be extended nor will any part of the fee be refunded.

Childcare Vouchers

Please ensure that your Childcare Voucher provider includes your child's name as a reference, so we can identify who the payments are for. These are some of the companies

we work with Care Four, Busy Bees, Computershare, SodexoPass Ltd, Edenred/ Childcare Vouchers Ltd, Kiddivouchers, Early Years Vouchers, Fideliti Childcare vouchers and many more...

Uniform

The uniform pack may be purchased from the Nursery for £50. The nursery pack consist of:

<i>Jogger pants</i>	<i>£10</i>
<i>Nappy bag</i>	<i>£5</i>
<i>Book bag</i>	<i>£9</i>
<i>Sweatshirt</i>	<i>£15</i>
<i>Polo-shirt</i>	<i>£11</i>

Children will also need to have in nursery a pair of soft indoor shoes, a pair of Wellington boots, waterproof trousers, a full set of spare clothes and depending on the season, a coat, sun hat etc. All items brought into the nursery should be clearly marked with your child's name.

Children need to wear their uniforms every day. We recommend at least 2 sets of trousers and t-shirts as children get very messy. All children should wear clean uniform every day

Consumable charges(per term)

We request a small consumable charge of £75 per term which merely comes to merely around £1 a day. This small charge goes towards cooking ingredients, resources, events, cleaning materials, and other miscellaneous expenses at the nursery. We strive to maintain a high quality childcare at Little Elms and your small contribution helps us to to run the nursery efficiently

Little Elms Montessori Nursery Key Policies

The setting's policies and procedures are available for all to see at the setting. Our policies help us to make sure that the service provided by us is a high-quality one and that being a member of the Little Elms Montessori Nursery is an enjoyable and beneficial experience for each child and their families.

The staff and parents of the setting work together to adopt the policies helping us to make sure that the policies are enabling the setting to provide a quality service for its members and the local community.

Safeguarding children

Our setting has a duty under the law to help safeguard children against suspected or actual 'significant harm'. Our employment practices ensure children are protected against the likelihood of abuse in our settings and we have a procedure for managing complaints or allegations against a member of staff.

Our way of working with children and their parents ensures we are aware of any problems that may emerge and can offer support, including referral to appropriate agencies when necessary, to help families in difficulty. Our Designated Safeguarding person is Nishrin Alibhai.

Key Person and Your Child

We want your child to feel happy and safe with us. Our setting uses a key-person approach. This means that each member of staff has a group of children for whom she/he is particularly responsible. Your child's key person will be the person who works with you to make sure that the childcare we provide is right for your child's particular needs and interests. When your child first starts at the setting, the key person will help your child to settle and support them throughout their time at the setting, to enable them to benefit from the setting's activities.

Children's Development and Learning

We assess how young children are learning and developing by observing them frequently. We use information that we gain from observations, documenting their progress and where this may be leading them. We believe that parents know their children best and we ask them to contribute to assessment by sharing information about what their children like to do at home and how they, as parents, are supporting development.

Learning Journey

The key person is responsible for completing the check using information from ongoing observational assessments carried out as part of our everyday practice, taking account of the views and contributions of parents and other professionals.

The setting keeps a Learning Journal and art book for each child, this helps us to celebrate together her/his achievements and to work together to provide what your child needs for her/his well-being and to make progress. It will also enable the key person to identify your child's stage of progress. You and the key person will then decide on how to help your child move on to the next stage.

Parent Partnership and Involvement

Our setting recognises parents as the first and most important educators of their children. Parents are valued, respected, kept informed and involved, consulted and included. All of the staff see themselves as partners with parents in providing care and education for their children. There are many ways in which parents take part in making the setting a welcoming and stimulating place for children and parents.

We have an open-door policy which welcomes parents to drop into the setting, to see the children's learning journals and to speak with the staff.

The setting has a parent support group who are part of the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA). In our setting, we share with this group, some of the tasks involved in event planning and fundraising. Our PTA depends on the goodwill of parents and their involvement to keep going, parents help to shape the service we offer. This is an important link between the families and the Nursery and building friendships with other parents in the setting.

Equality and Values

We actively promote inclusion, equality of opportunity, the valuing of diversity and British values. Under the Equality Act 2010, which underpins standards of behaviour and incorporates both British and universal values, we have a legal obligation not to directly or indirectly discriminate against, harass or victimise those with protected characteristics. We make reasonable adjustments to procedures, criteria and practices to ensure that those with protected characteristics are not at a substantial disadvantage. As we are in receipt of public funding we also have a public sector equality duty to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, foster good relations and publish information to show compliance with the duty.

Special Educational Needs

As part of the setting's policy to make sure that its provision meets the needs of each child, we take account of any Special Educational Needs a child may have. The setting works to the requirements of the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice (2015). Our Special Educational Needs and Disability Co-ordinator is Nishrin Alibhai.

Positive Behaviour

Our setting believes that children flourish best when their personal, social and emotional needs are met and where there are clear and developmentally appropriate expectations for their behaviour. Positive behaviour is promoted at all times by all staff through praise, rewards and encouragement according to the child's age and stages of development.

Meals and Snacks

Little Elms Montessori Nursery regards snacks and mealtimes as an important part of our day, a social time at which children and adults eat together within their class bubble groups.

We encourage parents and carers to provide their children with healthy and nutritious snacks/lunches and teachers will be there to support and encourage children at mealtimes. We would like to remind you that we are a nut-free nursery so please be mindful of the food you provide your child at nursery – e.g. no peanut butter or Nutella.

Health

All children who attend the setting must be in good health (please see our Coronavirus Policy). We have implemented a good hygiene and cleaning regime which will significantly reduce the spread and transmission of viruses. We promote health by identifying allergies and preventing any contact with allergenic substances. For any child in need of regular medication a medical healthcare plan must be completed – please visit the office to do so.