

The Montessori Children's Academy Parent Handbook.

This handbook is designed to provide parents with essential information on our school, to communicate important details regarding our registrations, approvals, policies and procedures, and to assist you in the introduction of your child to our school and your ongoing communication with the school and our staff. We recommend that you read the information carefully and invite you to raise any queries that you may have with our school principal, Christina.

Our Mission

The Montessori Children's Academy, guided by the philosophy of Dr. Maria Montessori, inspires the development of individual children in a safe, supportive, culturally-diverse environment that gives them the freedom to explore, co operate, create and become. We are guided by fully trained and qualified staff and continue to assist the growth of the Montessori method by cooperation with training colleges and sharing our experience with student teachers. Our substitute teacher is also fully trained and Garda vetted. As part of our participation in the ECCE scheme we also integrate the objectives of the Aistear and Siolta programmes.

Enrolment

Children must be 2.8 years when enrolling unless agreed by Christina.

An application form does not guarantee a place in the school. Enrolment is only confirmed, once parent and child has visited the school, returned a completed enrolment pack, read and signed the parent handbook and upon receipt of a booking fee of 200euro.

Booking fee is not payable until a place is offered.

Children need to be fully toilet trained to enroll. We do not have appropriate changing facilities required by Tusla for Nappy Changing, therefore we implement a policy that all children need to be fully trained before starting with us. We appreciate that toilet training may take longer for some children and we will work in partnership with parents as best we can to help the process, with teachers giving gentle reminders and helping where possible a child to the bathroom.

However, It is important to note that teachers cannot change a child who has had a bowel movement accident and parents will be called to come and pick up their child. Bowel movement accidents can be an indication that a child is not well. Parents cannot use the classroom toilets for changing their child as this would breach our Child Protection Policy.

Re-Enrolment

Re-enrolment for your child's second ECCE year will need to be confirmed by the end of October in order for the place to be held. Re-enrolment forms will be issued by management at the end of October and must be completed and returned by all parents.

If you choose to re-enroll your child for the next ECCE year, your original booking fee of 200euro will be kept and applied to the following year's enrolment. As mentioned above, enrolment is not complete unless we have a completed enrolment pack and booking fee, without both of these, your child's place is not secure.

Refund of this booking fee is as outlined below and only when the child's place has been again confirmed by DCYA for their second ECCE year.

<https://www.dcy.gov.ie/viewdoc.asp?DocID=1143>

Fees, Refund, Withdrawal

Fees

Booking fee of 200EURO is required on offer of a place in order to secure your child's place with us.

Booking fees are only accepted if a place is offered and accepted by parents/guardians.

Please note, it is school policy that in all other circumstances (i.e. change of mind, moving from the area, accepted to another school etc.) the booking fee is non-refundable.

The Dept. of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) regulates fees, refund and withdrawal of children availing of the ECCE programme. Parents will receive notification from the Dept. of the current fees immediately prior to commencement of the school year via notices sent via the school.

Refund

Under the rules of the ECCE scheme, the booking fee of 200EURO is returned to the parent once the Dept. confirms the child's registration via their online platform.

Refunds of monthly fees are not made due to illness, holidays or temporary school closure due to unavoidable circumstances.

Withdrawal

We require four weeks notice of withdrawal and in the absence of such one month's fees will be due.

A parent may be asked to withdraw their child due to the child or parent's failure to adjust to our school's routines or procedures.

Booking fee will not be refunded.

Parent declaration forms which the Dept. of Children provides once your child's registration onto the ECCE scheme is approved, outlines the terms and conditions regarding withdrawing your child from an ECCE programme. We advise parents to make themselves aware of these rules.

Late Pick-Up Fee

A late pick up fee of 10EURO per hour or part thereof will be charged if a child is consistently picked up late. Extenuating circumstances will be taken into consideration.

School Year

The school calendar runs from August/September to June. Calendars are forwarded by email to all parents at the start of the year. These calendars are approved by the DCYA to insure we complete the required number of service weeks. Calendars are also displayed in the school and on FAMLY.

Montessori Hours **Maynooth School**

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|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| ECCE ONLY(MORNING) | Monday – Friday 9am to 12pm |
| ECCE + | Monday – Friday 9.10am to 12.40pm |
| AFTERSCHOOL 1 | Monday – Friday 9.10am to 1.30pm |
| AFTERSCHOOL 2 | Monday – Friday 9.10am to 2pm |
| ECCE ONLY (AFTERNOON) | Monday – Friday 12.30pm to 3.30pm |

Celbridge School

ECCE ONLY Monday – Friday 8.50am to 11.50am

Drumcondra School

ECCE+ Monday – Friday 9.15am to 1pm

Wrap Around services

Early Drop 8.55am

Late Collection 1.30pm

Any 5 hour Part Time Programme

(For more information regarding the wrap around service, please email

info@drumcondramontessori.com)

We recommend strongly that your child's time of arrival and dismissal is punctual.

Absence of child/Attendance

Please notify the school by FAMILY App if your child will be absent from school and the reason. This includes notification of holidays, appointments etc. For children availing of the ECCE programme this is required by the Dept. Our attendance records are inspected and we must be able to evidence any absences in our register.

School Closings

Severe weather or other unavoidable emergency may make it advisable to cancel school. This information will be communicated by FAMILY app.

Parent/Teacher Meetings

Parent teacher meetings will be held at the end of January or early February. During these meetings the school will be closed for all children to facilitate these. The date has yet to be confirmed but you will be notified well in advance. During these meetings, lead teachers give a detailed description of your child's progress within the classroom, academically, socially and physically. We will also address any concerns that the teacher or parent may have and put a plan in place. Parents are also given the opportunity to read their child observations and progress reports carried out by the teacher. They also have the opportunity to ask any questions in relation to their child with regards to primary schools etc.

Meetings will last for 10 minutes and you will be notified of your time a month ahead of meeting.

Early Closing Last Day of Term

School will close early on the last day of each term before Christmas break/Easter/Final day before the Summer break. Times will be notified on FAMILY.

ECCE Programme

In order for your child to be registered with the ECCE programme, we are required to ask all parents to provide us with their child's PPS Number. The Dept. of Children will look for PPS numbers each year your child registers for the ECCE Scheme. We will require this number on an official document, which will be provided to you in September. Please do not text or email PPS numbers to the school. Once we have registered your child's PPS number onto the Pobal online platform, the PPS number is no longer required and is therefore destroyed.

Once your child is approved by DCYA, parents will also be required to sign 'parent declaration' forms which will outline the terms and conditions of the ECCE programme. The DCYA also approve our school calendar, fees lists and service information letters and once approved will be given to parents. Parents will also be required to sign these documents.

All documents relating to the ECCE Programme MUST be signed on school premises. Date of which is yet to be confirmed.

A copy of all documents will be displayed on our school noticeboard.

For all ECCE administrative concerns or issues you can be contact a member of staff on info@maynoothmontessori.com

Settling in Period

Before starting school, all new children will have visited the school on 3 different occasions. The first would have been their initial visit, with two more occurring where the child will meet with other new children and drop off some of their belongings such as their class folders and indoor shoes. (These visits are usually one in the month of June and one is the day before we start back to school).

From the end of August/start of September our school implements a settling-in period, where in the initial weeks (**approx two weeks**) school hours will be shorter than usual, 1.5hrs per day. We have over the years found this is of great value to young children in adjusting to a new environment and in lessening the distress they might feel.

Both new and returning students will have adjusted hours to facilitate the integration of the new group and themselves. We use a staggered timetable in order for new children, particularly young children who have never been to pre school to settle in at their pace and for the whole group to get to know class routines and for all children to establish friendships.

Young children enrolled on a **part time basis** are required to attend daily during this 'settling in' period and then switch back to their scheduled days.

The school will advise parents regularly and reserve the right to change the timetable should we feel it would better suit your child. Please contact us if you have any questions regarding this. We will endeavor to accommodate any particular requirements if we can.

Items you child will need for school.

1. Lunch / Lunch Bags

Children will need to bring a **lunch bag**. We require **PACKIT** style lunch bags as they can store food at a safe temperature. They can be bought online from Bumble.ie or from Stock Design in Dublin. (Opposite Stephen 's Green SC.) We cannot accept lunch bags that do not keep the children's lunch in a refrigerated manner. Please ensure they are placed in the freezer overnight. Please pack lunch in containers that the children can open by themselves.

2. Change of clothes

Children will need a **full change of clothes** in a cloth bag with a handle. Please include a number of 4/5 changes of underwear and socks.

Please label ALL belongings inside the bag and place a photo and your child's name on the outside before dropping the bag in to the school.

Photos help those children who cannot yet read and allows staff to identify bags quickly.

We would also ask that replacements are returned promptly. If during the year your child has an accident and there is no change we will ring you to ask to make arrangements for clothes to be dropped into the school.

3. Footwear Indoor shoes/Wellies

Children will need a soft-soled indoor shoe that needs to be left in school.

No slippers, open sandals, crocs or the like.

Again, for health and safety of all children we ask for indoor shoes to be of a good fit and changed throughout the year as the child grows. Please label shoes. Many can be the same style and size.

We also ask for wellies to be provided and left in school during the winter months. Please label wellie.

4. Photographs

Our school creates a 'family tree' of our children's families to further create a sense of community and belonging for the children. We ask for a group family photograph to be sent in as part of our enrolment procedure.



We also ask for 7 photos of your child for school purposes, eg. children's coat hooks, lunch bag shelf etc. Passport size photos are ideal.

5. Folders

Children will require 2 A4 folders to store their art/colouring and paper activities. Please write your child's name on the outside and attach their photo.

Children will also need a display type folder (one with **50 plastic pockets** already inside). This is used to store children's work from throughout the year so as to have a record of their progress. Again, please label with your child's name and photo.



6. Hazards

Please **NO WHEELIE BAGS or backpacks**, we have little storage space and we follow Health & Safety guidelines regarding trip hazards.

First Days

We know that first days of school can be stressful. Our experience has shown that the best approach is to make your goodbye brief and to allow the teachers to comfort your child if needed.

We understand for young children going to school for the first time that you may want to walk your child into the building and the school will facilitate this .

We do ask that you understand that this is fine during our settling in period but that as soon as your child is comfortable then you need to allow them to go into the classroom independently.

We usually communicate with parents of distressed children through the FAMILY App to let them know how they are doing and to reassure them.

We have years of experience at settling in little ones. Whilst the upset may seem traumatic, it subsides very quickly.

A Typical Day

Our school follows the philosophy and methodology of Dr. Maria Montessori. Our head teachers are fully qualified Montessori teachers.

School begins with the children being greeted by a teacher at the main door and getting themselves ready for class by taking off coats and putting away their lunch bag. They will then go into the class where they will change into their indoor shoes. The children are helped and shown how to do this in the initial weeks. The children are free to chat and catch up with friends as they wait for circle to begin. This Circle time comprises of calendar, songs, news etc., After circle the children have individual activity time where they are free to choose what they would like to do. During this time teachers will also present planned activities to children. Most activities are presented individually or in small groups. Teachers present lessons from all curricular areas and record each child's progress.

How we do Snack

Snack time is independently chosen by the child. We have a designated table for snack.

We use a simple 'name peg' system to get snack started and so that children can indicate their wish to have their snack. All children have their own name peg and when there is a space at the table they simply get their name and put it on their table space. They can then go and get their lunch bags and wash their hands. This also allows staff to track who has eaten and who hasn't. There are occasions when a child does not want to eat, whilst we will encourage, we do not insist that they eat. We will notify parents if this continues. Please note, during our settling in period children can bring in a **small** lunch, one item and water, so that we can show them how snack is done. Some children during this time will not feel hungry so don't be concerned

Snack is taken by the child when she/he is hungry. The snack tables accommodate a number of children so as to allow another opportunity to socialise. The children wash their hands and set out their lunch. After lunch they will tidy up their table ready for the next child. All of this is done independently by the child which is why we recommend having a bag, containers etc that they can manage themselves. Again this is something that staff supports in the early weeks so that the children can learn how to do it themselves. ***Please consider how much your child might need to eat.*** Often lunches can be too large and children might spend a long time trying to finish. If we feel the child has had enough we will suggest they finish it at home. Please label lunch bags.

Water is available during school time daily.

If weather permits we will sometimes have a picnic lunch outdoors.

Project Time

The school days often involve themed project or craft work based around a holiday or notable date, perhaps a current event and is centered on art projects and crafts. The freedom to express themselves creatively is important in development.

Circle Time

Toward the end of the morning we come together again for circle and get ready to go outdoors for playtime. During this circle, we discuss a specific theme, sometimes planned and sometimes arising from an interest provoked by a child /children. Many of the themes are topical such as Autumn, Winter, Halloween etc.

Arrivals

Once settled

After an initial settling in period we encourage parents to say a quick goodbye at the door and allow your child to be as independent as possible in taking off their coats and putting their lunch away.

Saying Goodbye

Again we encourage a quick goodbye at the door, our experience has shown that this works best for your child. If your child is not able to adjust to our arrival routine please make an appointment to discuss with the teacher a plan to help them adjust. We have a lot of experience in settling young children into our school.

Once the children are settled we ask parents **not to come** into the entrance area as it can make it more difficult for the teacher on the door to supervise those children who come in on their own and it presents a risk to the children. If you do feel you need to come in and help your child we would suggest waiting until most of the other children have gone through to the classroom.

We find with guidance and support from teachers and observing the other children attending the children quickly establish this routine and enjoy this responsibility.

Belongings

We have a toy box for items the child might like to play with a playtime. We also have a box for hats, gloves etc. We advise labeling all belongings. The school does not take responsibility for toys etc but we do take all necessary steps to ensure they are safely stored. We do not have storage for strollers, bikes etc.

Toilet

Please inform the teacher if your child to the toilet before going into classroom if they have not been that morning.

Dismissals

No people other than those listed on child's enrolment form may pick up your child. People can be added to this list during the year using the FAMILY App on the day with the details. The pick up person must be an adult sixteen or older. If your child is going for a play date with another child or is being collected by a relative/friend on a once off then we ask that you use the FAMILY App to inform the teacher so that all staff can be aware of the change.

If the pick up person is not familiar to the teacher – they must present photo identification. In some instances, a parent will be called to verify identification. No child will be released to a pick up person if a teacher suspect's impairment. Whilst these requirements may seem strict we are obligated by Child protection policies and by common sense to strictly enforce these rules. **There will be no exceptions under any circumstances.**

Clothing for School Time

We encourage all children to be as independent as possible. For small children we recommend clothing that makes going to the toilet manageable by the child (e.g no dungarees/ long dresses or skirts).

Also it is helpful if sleeves are not too tight fitting at the cuff, as it can be difficult for young children to push their sleeves up when washing their hands.

We also recommend that shoes that the children wear to school are easy for the child to open and close. It would be helpful if you could check if your child can place his/her foot into the shoe. Some styles are indeed very difficult. Practice at home can help your child be more independent. We have had at times two or more children with the same type shoe coming into school and as these are taken off by your child it can be difficult to sort out who owns which pair, particularly if they are the same size. We recommend that you label your child's shoes.

The children will be encouraged to increase their independence in the above. Staff are very supportive in helping the children reach this level of independence and we find they quickly let us know when they are ready to "do it by themselves".

School Policies

The school has over 85 policies and can be inspected should a parent wish. The following are ones, which are more necessary to communicate to parents.

1. Healthy Eating Policy and Advise in helping young children become independent eaters.

We are required under regulations to adopt a healthy eating policy. Only **water or milk** is recommended.

We recommend that a re usable drink bottle as many children find the shop water bottles difficult to open. If you do prefer or need to use bottled water then it would be helpful if parents could open and then close the top again before school. Also we find that some children cannot open such items as cheese strings or frubes. If your child cannot open cheese strings, crackers etc we would suggest you send them in **open** in their lunch. We supply spoons for yogurts but these can be difficult for small children as they can be knocked over. We find containers for these items can work better. Frubes can also be put into a small container. Over time the children will become more independent in these skills.

PLEASE NO NUTS OR NUT PRODUCTS SUCH AS PEANUT BUTTER/ CHOCOLATE ETC.

2. Illness Policy

Young children are very susceptible to communicable diseases therefore parents are asked to keep any child showing signs of fatigue or ill health (i.e. Persistent cough, running nose, fatigue, fever or any form of infection that is contagious) at home. Please do not send children to school if they have run a fever/ been sick the night before or in general "off form". It can be difficult for them, if tired or unwell, to keep up with a busy, active class.

Under Tusla regulations and advise from the HSE, children who have vomited or have diarrhea must **not return to school until 48 hours have passed since their last episode**. This is to ensure the bug/illness has subsided and there is little chance of them passing it onto other children or staff.

If a child has been given an antibiotic by a doctor, **the child cannot return to school until 24 hours has passed after first receiving the antibiotic**. This is to ensure the child does not have any adverse reactions to the medication.

If a child in school develops symptoms of illness, the child will be separated from other children and the parent (or person designated for emergencies - please ensure you have given details of someone other than parents) will be contacted.

Parents will be notified first and if unavailable to reach you then we will contact the back up person .The child will need to be taken home as soon as possible.

When a serious accident or illness occurs the head teacher will immediately obtain necessary medical assistance and then notify the child's parents.

3. Administration of Medication Policy

Only medication for severe allergic or asthmatic reactions will be administered. This will be done according to directions from the child's parents/guardians or doctor.

Parents will be required to complete our Administration Of Medicine Form.

If medicine is given by a member of staff, a record will be maintained in the child's file documenting the time, amount and by whom it was administered. It will also include written authorization from the parent.

The medication must be in its original container labeled with your child's name and instructions.

ALL MEDICATION MUST BE HANDED TO TEACHER AND NEVER LEFT IN A CHILD'S BAG.

4. Anti Febrile Medication Policy

All parents are asked to give their written permission to the school to administer ' capol ' to their child in the event of their temperature spiking or a delay in them being collected and the child having a temperature. This permission is given when you complete 'our permissions' form upon enrolling. If capol is given to your child you will also be asked to sign our records stating you have been informed of the date, time dosage,staff member who administered the capol and the reason for giving it. We will always endeavor to make contact first and get your permission again whenever possible, however we remind parents to read our illness policy.

Your child should not be given capol at home and then sent to school under any circumstances.

5. Behaviour Policy

We approach discipline by encouraging positive behaviour. Children will be given a reminder if he/she is being disruptive and if he/she continues they will be asked to come sit near a teacher so that they can settle down. Repeated disruptive behaviour will be discussed with parents and a plan of action devised.

Please Note: The school is duty bound to ensure the provision of a safe environment for children and staff. We are also obligated to ensure that the delivery of our service remains equal and uninterrupted for all children. To this end we are obliged to advise parents that serious or persistent issues relating to behaviour may result in parents being asked to withdraw their child from the school. We are very aware of how difficult this is to address for parents and staff and look for co-operation in this.

6. School Resources Policy

We are required to advise parents that the school operates with a staff ratio and with resources, both material and human, that allow us to accommodate certain learning challenges and social issues. However, observation and experience with a child may reveal that a level of resource is required that is not available to the school. In the best interests of the child, the school may advise that alternative, more appropriately resourced services should be sought. Again the school acknowledges that this can be very difficult for all involved and we strive to do our best.

7. Child Protection Policy

We implement Children First National Guidance for the protection and welfare of children.

8. Head Lice Policy

If your child has head lice they will not be allowed to participate in school until it has been treated and the nits, eggs and lice are removed.

9. Dogs on the Premises

Dogs are not permitted on school grounds.

10. Smoking Policy

Smoking is not permitted on school grounds.

11. Communications Policy

Communication is essential to our school to promote understanding, problem solving, efficiency and the introduction of new ideas. There are various channels of communication within our pre-school.

- The FAMILY App
- Parent teacher meetings. (January)
- Email info@drumcondra.com

FAMILY App

Parents are required to download the FAMILY app to ensure smooth and efficient communications. This is our principal form of communication. This app is only available for current parents and children registered in the school. This app is used to remind parents of events/news, upload photos and share our monthly newsletters. It is important that all parents are familiar with the app and are comfortable using it. This is also the main way of parents communicating with the teacher if their child is absent/sick etc.

Updates

Staff will provide informal updates from time to time. Should a parent wish to address a specific issue you must email us detailing the issue and request a meeting with senior staff. An email to the school on info@maynoothmontessori.com to make an arrangement can be arranged. It is not possible or appropriate, for us to discuss principal issues at collection or drop off times, as there is neither the time nor the privacy necessary to have a beneficial discussion.

Meetings

Parent teacher meetings will be held in January/February and school will be closed for the children to accommodate same. During these meetings, lead teachers give a detailed description of your child's progress within the classroom, academically, socially and physically. We will also address any concerns that the teacher or parent may have and put a plan in place. We ask that you email any concerns you have two weeks before the meeting and we will address these first. Parents are also given the opportunity to read their child observations and progress reports carried out by the teacher. They also have the opportunity to ask any questions in relation to their child with regards to primary schools etc.

12. Changes to Collection Policy

Any changes to collection arrangements, either time or person collecting, must be notified to us in writing, through the FAMILY App. You must also remind teachers on the morning if there is a change.

13. Data Protection Policy

Our service is mindful that we collect data relating to families, children and employees and understand we have an obligation to protect the data we gather and use the data under the regulations governing it. The individuals from whom we gather this information have the right to understand the purpose of and consent to the collection and retention of their personal information.

Information is collected for the following:

Under CCS Scheme- the parent's PPS Number

Under ECCE Scheme- the child's PPS number

Child Enrolment Forms-child's details

Photographs/video of children.

We strive to ensure that only gather information to facilitate our compliance with childcare regulations and sufficient information to facilitate the education and care of the children.

The information is obtained and processed fairly.

We will only keep it for one or more specified and lawful purposes.

We will ensure the information is processed only in ways compatible with the purposes for which it was given to us initially.

We will keep it safe and secure.

We will keep it accurate and up-to-date.

We will ensure that it is adequate, relevant and not excessive.

We will not retain it longer than is necessary for the specified purpose or purposes.

Upon request, we will give a copy of his/her personal data to any individual.

Only staff involved in the management of the service, authorised representatives of government funding and regulatory bodies will have access to data collected.

Data will be stored in a safe and secure location.

Data will be stored in accordance with statutes and disposed in an appropriate manner.

Staff and parents are made aware of this and all policies governing our service.

14. Feedback Policy

Our company has been established for over 20 years. During this time we have enjoyed a reputation as a high quality provider of Early Education. A key part of our continued excellence is the feedback we receive from parents. We are also proud that many parents have found us to be a valuable resource as they work with us at home to reinforce and develop what we do in the classroom. If you would like help with setting up exercises and work at home then please do ask. It makes our class life easier and will help your child to get the very best from what we can offer.

We also give parents Feedback Forms after your Parent Teacher Meeting. This is an important tool for us to make changes that we may not have seen or give us a boost if we are doing a good job. We ask that all parents fill these forms out, anonymously, and return them to any member of staff. We truly appreciate your honest and constructive feedback and these forms help us to grow and change in accordance to your advice.

15. Parent Involvement Policy

We actively encourage parent involvement in the school. ***If you have a job, hobby, skill or interest*** that is suitable for us to share with the children then we ask you to

please bring it to us. These events add variety and interest and are important parts of broadening the children's interest and experience. Even if it's just to read a circle time story, or sing some songs, it is all most welcome.

We also plan events that bring parents into the school on special occasions and we would encourage parents to make sure that they attend as often as possible for example our Christmas Concert, Easter Celebrations, Sports Day and End of Year Celebrations. All parents and families are welcome to join us.

Information with details will be posted closer to the time on the FAMLY App.

16. Access to Records and Information Policy

Parents are entitled to access to their child's records, policy information and health and safety information upon request.

Contact numbers

To only be used in the event that the FAMLY app is not an appropriate method.

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| Maynooth School | 085-1503705 |
| Christina | 083-1708334 |
| Andy | 083-1768911 |

School Insurance

We are insured by Kidd Insurances.

School Registration

The school is notified and registered with Tusla.

Professional Affiliation

The school and staff avail of professional guidance, training and continued professional development with Kildare County Childcare Committee and Early Childhood Ireland.

Garda Vetting

All staff members are Garda vetted.

First Aid

All teaching staff are trained first aiders.

Student Teaching Practice / Transition Year Students

Our school is actively involved in providing placements for students. This year we will be working in partnership with Dublin City University/St. Patrick's Teacher Training College and will provide placements for students of their new BA in Early Childhood Studies.

Please Note that this Parent Handbook is a “Living Document”. We may publish addenda and updates to this document throughout this, or subsequent, school years. A new Parent Handbook will be issued each academic year. Updates, changes or clarifications will be issued to Parents by email as they are published.