Henley in Arden Montessori Primary
& Merrydays Montessori Nursery

Annual School Review
September 2022 – July 2023

We returned in September 2022, excited to anxious and everything in between, the start of a new school year elicits a whole of feelings for teachers and pupils alike. Within the first two weeks we received our long-awaited Early Years inspection from Ofsted – which was a very positive experience throughout, resulting in an Outstanding rating.

"The child who concentrates is immensely happy."
Montessori

Over the summer months we invited parents of our youngest pupils to put together photographs of significant people in their lives to support our "All about me" topic. They also returned with scrapbooks, shells, leaflets, and ticket collections to share their news about their summer break. This has proved so successful that we are repeating the request this year.

Because Montessori is at the centre of all that we do we invited all parents to take part in birthday celebrations – the Montessori birthday walk. This has been so successful this year that we hope to continue this as a regular event with each child's birthday.

Our monthly Friday open mornings for the primary pupils have proved to be a huge success and one which we will continue into this next academic year. It has enabled pupils to show parents what they have been studying and show them all the artwork they have produced - something that they have all excelled in. Parents can informally speak to us and ask any questions that may arise.

I have mentioned the artwork produced – this has proved to be a highlight in the weeks' timetable. The pupils realise that everyone can enjoy drawing and "to draw what they see not what they think they see." The self-portrait project is worth checking out on our news pages.

In October, Jujhar and Taaru's mum Gurbani came and explained to us about the articles of faith they wear everyday as a baptised Sikh – the 5 Ks.

Gurbani knows that there are a few pupils interested in a career in the police and she put us in contact with Sergeant Ash Dhariwal who works at Birmingham Airport Policing Unit. He shared information about his job, his uniform, the police cars and answered a multitude of questions culminating in them all trying on his very heavy High Vis Jacket.

In November and again in April, Years 1 – 6 had a visit from Paramedic Marnie Dolman, they were shown essential lifesaving skills and those all-important phone numbers: 999, 112, 911. I would personally feel very safe in their hands. This is something we hope to continue

but unfortunately Marnie has just advised me that she is relocating so if you know of anyone who could teach our pupils please get in touch.

Wootton Hall, archive day. On Tuesday 15th November, the pupils in years 2- 6 had a trip to Wootton Hall, in Wootton Wawen. They were shown artefacts, photographs from the 1930's, 1940's and 1950's. They had an excellent time and enjoyed the bus trip from Henley to Wootton (for some it was the first time on a bus). They were allowed to write their name in chalk on a brick in the attic for future historians to find. So, when they go past and say they have their name on a brick, they really have! We are keeping all lines open so that we don't miss any other opportunities.

November and Nursery Rhyme Week is always a favourite with young and old. The four walls were full of happy children singing their favourite rhymes and learning new ones too. If any parent has any rhymes that they were sung to as a child that they could share for this year we would welcome learning them.

In December we participated once again in the Christmas Tree festival and our clay robins won first prize! Community links were fostered again with our participation in the local Estate agents colouring competition.
This year we were able to perform for the parents and friends of all our pupils within the four walls of the school once again. The school was filled with music, laughter, and song from all around the world. What a fantastic feeling that was.

January heralded the Young Voices concert at the Resorts World Arena in Birmingham. Nine of the pupils in the primary took part in the nationwide Young Voices concert on 25th January. Since September they had been learning new songs in order to take part. It was amazing and something we will do again.

Community links continue to be a priority and after not being able to visit the residents of Dell Court since 2019, it was great to establish links again. The pre-school and Reception have started to go once every two months to play board and card games.

February marked Wellbeing Week with Place2Be when we 'Dressed to Express'. Pupils and teachers all dressed up to demonstrate our likes and hobbies out of school.

In March, we participate World Book Day. Our day provided the children with the fantastic opportunity to focus and celebrate reading for pleasure, and embedding a habit of reading that brings a wide range of benefits.

World Water Day also took place in March an important day in our Eco School calendar. It was reassuring how our younger pupils took on board and suggested ways to save water. In true Montessori way, learning by being part of an activity is much easier to remember and understand. The pupils took part in the relationships between different living and non-living parts of an ecosystem by a series of interconnected pieces of string. And what happens when that relationship is broken!

This year we have continued to support our children in growing vegetables and wildflowers in our garden. They also took part in a community-based Sunflower growing competition. I don't think any of ours are prize winners, but it is the taking part that counts!

Practical skills are seen as just as important as academic skills – the EYFS have been learning woodcrafting at Forest Skills and the pupils in the school have been learning cycling and road safety skills. We hope to revisit these annually.

Fire Safety education department. Year 1 learned about how to stay safe in their homes and school.

Our trip to the Heritage Centre in Henley in Arden in May was a resounding success – to quote a pupil in Year 1 "this was the best trip ever; I can't wait until we go again."

We continue to use our Independent Schools Association membership to the benefit of all the children in the school encouraging them to enter competitions as they arise. Congratulations to everyone for their efforts and participation.

March is Chatter Matters month – it was certainly helped this year with the snow fall that fell that week. There was a lot of chatter about the snow, how it felt, etc. Mrs Atherley and I continue to support all the children with their language development through the Wellcomm Screen programme.

Another highlight of the school and nursery calendar this year was the King's Coronation Street party celebration. We dressed up, we marched, sang, danced round the maypole, and participated in country dancing - a huge hit with all the parents.

June and July were busy months. We had a whole school trip to Stratford upon Avon. The pupils caught the train from Henley in Arden and then walked down to catch the canal boat. As well as being an enjoyable experience for all involved it gave them lots of experiences to come back and share by designing and making their own information booklets and leaflets.

Our big Dig at the front of school to provide the pupils with firsthand experience of local history and understanding how it links to our everyday lives. Every day the pupils arrived prompt and with enthusiasm with their trowels and sieves in hand. The finds have been sorted and will be displayed in the school entrance and Heritage Centre.

Writing is seen as a very important skill, and we have been working hard with all year groups to develop these. We used Tom's six-month work in Mauritius to encourage pupils to ask him questions about his work and the country itself. We were also contacted by an International Montessori School in the Czech Republic to become penpals. This has been greeted with great enthusiasm and we await the post with enthusiasm and patience. So far they have written about what they like to do in their spare time, Christmas and summer holidays and we have received information about Christmas, Lent and Easter.

Capitalising on being Montessori citizens of the world we always encourage sharing any festivals that impact our school community. Our Chinese families helped us celebrate the

Chinese Lunar New Year (story of the rabbit) and stories, story maps were made as well as many arts and crafts. Any parent who wishes to share the festivals they celebrate at home, please contact me.

Towards the end of term, our face-to-face parent meetings were a very enjoyable experience for all, a celebration of how hard the children work and a celebration of their successes.

Rob from Sea Legs Puppet Theatre returned to for a 12-week workshop in the spring term 2023 for all years in the school. This was immensely successful and talked about by all pupils sharing their skills learned in the day at home. We had puppets made on every available spare surface in readiness for the end of term puppet show. The puppet shows were a resounding success. The pupils' enthusiasm prompted Rob to gift us his first performance of his new show on the last day of the school year.

The annual Warwickshire Junior Book Awards has become a firm favourite amongst the older pupils. They worked hard reading four books to be reviewed and were invited to vote for the best author. It is also an opportunity for the pupils to take part in the competitions. It was well worth it this year as Timothee won first prize in one of the competitions. Congratulations!

Professional Development is crucial for us to maintain our best practice and Montessori training is always top of the list. I have completed a Montessori Coaching course which was attended by Montessorians worldwide. An amazing opportunity to learn and share from like-minded people. Through the training I have the materials to build the skills and to create a strong and cohesive staff team and cultivate a consistently optimal environment for the benefit of all our families. I have also been asked to be on the accreditation panel for nurseries and schools throughout the UK.

Safeguarding is always top of our agenda as we know that an effective safeguarding culture helps to ensure that our children and young people are able to learn and play in a safe environment where they feel secure. It also empowers staff to recognise if a child might be at risk of harm, and to be able to take appropriate action if they are concerned. So, as well as talking to the children on how to keep themselves safe, "Internet Safety Day" is always marked on the calendar and resources used to help and support them. This is a day/week that enables us to check in and ensure that our pupils understand how to stay safe when online and also to be able to share any emerging online issues and current concerns to parents.

We concentrated our annual charity support with the MacMillan Coffee Morning raising £300.00.

We have also retained our WincKs award which is for excellent inclusive practice in supporting children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and their families.

Our hopes of developing and building on our partnership with parents, including making the most of parents' skills that could be shared with the children have really benefitted the school and nursery. Thanks to Kamalpreet, who shared her love and skills in calligraphy with

our Year 6 pupils. The sessions were a huge hit, and she promises to return to teach paper cutting. Thank you to Lauren, Denbigh's mum who came and shared with us what they as a family do to celebrate Thanksgiving and Independence Day.

We ended the year saying goodbye to 5 nursery pupils who are moving to other schools to start their new journey in Reception, and we will be welcoming 3 from pre-school to start Reception. We are also saying goodbye to Timothee, Ayden, Angelo, and Libby from Year 6 who are moving on to the next stage in their education. We know they are more than ready for this move and wish them all the very best.

The school has 27 primary pupils for September 2022 and the nursery has filled 28 places with more to start in January 2023 and Easter 2023. We are extremely proud that we can support so many pupils and families – but also acknowledge that there are so many pupils and their families that would also benefit from our provision. It is essential that we balance the increase of numbers against the effectiveness of us providing the best possible experience for the pupils and their families.

Our staff are a team of intelligent, dedicated, and hardworking people. It is a pleasure to work with them, they are strong Montessorians with great energy and commitment to their work. A big thank you to them!

I am looking forward to the next academic year.

"Perhaps a great future leader or a great genius is with us and his power will come from the power of the child he is today. This is the vision that we must have."

Maria Montessori