

Curriculum, Teaching & Learning Policy

Say, O Lord, increase me in knowledge!

Qur'an 20: 114

This policy has been developed with reference to:

The Education Regulations, 2014

Part 2, paragraph 5 of The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) 2015 & 2018

Independent School Standards Guidance for Independent Schools April 2019

Aims of this Policy

To outline:

- the aims, methods and principles of education employed at Rawdah Montessori
- the broad curriculum goals
- the early years and elementary curriculum

Curriculum Aims

Rawdah Montessori's curriculum aims to present the world to children as a place of interconnected knowledge and experiences rather than an assortment of unrelated pieces of information. The curriculum follows a Montessori-based child development approach and seeks to provide broad and balanced learning experiences where knowledge and skills are contextualised through what Montessori educators refer to as 'Cosmic Education'.

In this way, we intend to help children build a matrix of understanding through an open-ended approach that encourages a deep level of learning while encouraging detailed, individualised exploration. Our curriculum seeks to build on successive levels of understanding to provide depth and refinement.

Rawdah Montessori will consider routines and behaviours, as well as the events, activities and a wide range of opportunities that go beyond the classroom towards nurturing ethical children with a thirst for learning and a love of work. Our curriculum is responsive to and supportive of the individual needs and interests of each child. It also recognises the importance of working with parents and other people of expertise in supporting children to make the best progress possible and attain the highest of standards.

Broad Curriculum Goals

Through our curriculum, we intend to nurture and encourage:

- ❖ Each child according to their needs and potential,
- ❖ The skills needed to become independent and collaborative learners,
- ❖ A thirst for knowledge and a love of work,
- ❖ The ability to express their thoughts and feelings,
- ❖ Self-discipline, independence, initiative, resilience, curiosity, self-confidence and spontaneous creativity,
- ❖ Spiritual awareness and mindfulness,
- ❖ Positivity and respect of other cultures and people regardless of their differences,
- ❖ The ability to peacefully resolve interpersonal conflicts and differences,

- ❖ The development of ethical behaviour based on moral, ethical and spiritual values,
- ❖ An appreciation of the local area and the community,
- ❖ A concern for the environment, society and all living things, and a desire to make positive contributions to each,
- ❖ The development of the skills and attitudes needed for the opportunities, responsibilities, and experiences in later life in contemporary Britain, with British Values being fully embedded in the curriculum.

Approach

The curriculum we present at Rawdah Montessori is balanced and relevant to pupil's holistic learning and development. It is rich and consists of stimulating learning opportunities and activities designed to meet the requirements of the Montessori curriculum and the seven areas of learning covered by the National Independent School Standards.

The Rawdah Curriculum promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, social, emotional, intellectual, and physical development of pupils at the school. We emphasise pursuing a healthy, balanced lifestyle in developing the mind, body and soul, in our allocation of subject time between academic, physical and spiritual/religious activities. This is portrayed in our adopted curriculum model, arranged in four quadrants as "Knowledge of God, Knowledge of Self, Knowledge of the Natural World, and Knowledge of Society", together with the attitudes and qualities we aim to nurture, of servanthood to God, conscientiousness and mindfulness, stewardship of the Earth, and service to humanity. We also strive for a balance between independent learning, small group lessons, and whole class teaching. The curriculum provides learning opportunities, responsibilities, and experiences to benefit pupils throughout their lives.

The curriculum is based on the principles of 'Cosmic education' which recognises the whole of humanity as one family irrespective of natural differences between them¹. This understanding promotes respect and love of all people and an ability to help and serve humanity while focusing on commonality and universal values through the prism of the Muslim faith. The Universe is viewed as one interconnected whole, connected to life, and human life specifically. This promotes an environmentally conscious approach which protects the Earth and its resources, through cultivating an attitude of giving back to the Earth rather than taking from it. Political thought is presented within the context of historical development, and the promotion of partisan political views by teachers in the teaching of any subject in the school is strictly prohibited.²

Characteristics of a Montessori Community

A Montessori learning community is a distinctive, planned environment for children to explore and flourish. Key characteristics of a Montessori classroom and community include:

Freedom to choose one's own work; to explore and study a topic that appeals to the imagination. Freedom needs to be balanced by responsibility. Children who choose work spontaneously are responsible for their choices of work.

¹ age, race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, belief, religion, gender, sexual reassignment, sexual orientation, disability, marriage, civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity

² Where political issues do arise, for example during a history lesson or when discussing the news, they are presented in a balanced manner with various or opposing views being discussed. The expression of extreme views by staff or children, whether political or religious, is viewed as a matter for concern. In the event of any pupil offering (or reported as offering) extremist views, the matter should be reported to Ben Gilmore, the Prevent Officer. See Policy on British Values.

Limits: the work should be constructive and productive. Pupils must understand that work choice needs to include individual targets (e.g. to improve poor spelling, reading, x tables etc.) as well as work that is necessary in their cultural context.

Clear Expectations of work habits and behaviour. At Rawdah, positive discipline methods are employed to develop inner discipline in children, so that they begin to set their own expectations in line with those of the group or community they hold themselves accountable to. Children are reminded of class expectations with positive language. Any pupil who displays unacceptable behaviour will be given time to reflect on their behaviour and self-correct by taking responsibility for their actions. They will then be guided towards making better choices. If a pupil continues to make choices that cause disharmony and disruption, the root causes and solutions must be explored to seek a positive outcome in the long term.

Group Work: We allow the children to choose who they will work with (according to friendship or interest rather than ability). This makes the formation of society possible; when given this choice, they learn skills of cooperation. At some point, they learn that they must give up their personal preference for the good of the group. Responsibility is shared. Children work on one piece of material, taking turns, sharing responsibility for its completion. The skills of cooperation, communication, collaboration, and compromise are practised.

Hard Work: We convey the expectation that we are asking the child to meet a standard of work worthy of his or her ability. They need to know that they can be successful on their own. Success motivates the child to continue. Children who can't manage this degree of freedom are supported in choosing something appropriate.

Talk: a constant hum of conversation, with the noise levels of individual pupils ranging from silence, to whispering, to—most commonly—‘indoor voices’.

Care of the Environment: ultimately, the organisation and maintenance of the classroom is the adult's responsibility, but the children as part of the community make their contribution to it. We have a rotating system of class jobs (Service to the Classroom Chart). Eventually, we hope that the chart will become unnecessary because all children will be aware of what needs doing.

There are usually three stages to care of the environment:

1. The teacher supervises and orchestrates
2. Teacher involvement is reduced
3. Children initiate it on their own.

Planes (Phases) of Development and Transitions for Mixed-Age Classes

The planes of development or age bands for the Primary School classrooms are based on Maria Montessori's work, and roughly equate to 0-6 years and 6-12 years. These phases can be subdivided into 0-3 years, 3-6 years, 6-9 years and 9-12 years. Montessori age groupings are called planes of development since Maria Montessori found distinct differences in the type of learning and needs within each age group.

At the Rawdah, 4-6 year-olds are catered for in the Children's House class, and 5-11 year olds are catered for in the Primary class(es) which together are equivalent to Reception through Year 6. However, the ages of transition from one class to another are not fixed, since children naturally develop and mature at different rates. The upper end of the Children's House programme and the lower end of the Lower Primary curriculum (for 5-6 year olds) overlap. Six-year-olds in Year 1 may remain in the Children's House class throughout that

year, or go up to join the Lower Primary class depending on their personal readiness for more formal learning. This may coincide with whether they have an early or late birthday (e.g. nearer to the beginning of the school year, as compared with pupils who turn the right age for a year group during the summer months just before school starts). In this way, any disadvantage to the younger child with a summer birthday, or a child who is developing more slowly can be reduced.

Our Primary programme is divided into two stages: Lower Primary for Years 1-3, and Upper Primary for Years 4-6. Just as with the transition from the Children's House to Lower Primary, children at the top end of the Lower Primary curriculum, in Year 3 or 4, may transition mid-year if they are ready.

Our pupils remain in the same classroom with many of the same children for the duration of the Lower and Upper Primary years due to the small size of the school. Each year, one-third of a Lower or Upper Primary class will move up to the next class, while a new third will join the class.

Integrated Curriculum and Thematic Teaching

Dr Montessori was one of the early European educators who emphasised the benefit of cross-curricular themes. Many of these themes are reflected in the current National Curriculum. Montessori Education, therefore, is particularly suited to achieving these aims while also preparing a child for his or her next school. At Rawdah Montessori, in our primary classes we follow an 'Integrated Curriculum' approach and, where possible, try to link topics across all subjects. For instance, the topic of time is traditionally taught within the Mathematics curriculum but can also be delivered within the context of History. Children learning about Ancient Egypt as part of their History studies may also construct models of pyramids or irrigation tools as Art or DT activities.

The Rawdah curriculum lays a solid and rigorous foundation for further study and provides suitable challenges to pupils in their learning. We plan to continually review our curriculum to ensure that it continues to be stimulating, relevant and engaging for all learners.

Curriculum and Lesson Planning

At the Rawdah, we use a cycle of assessment, curriculum development, planning, observation and evaluation as a means of achieving excellence in teaching and learning. Primary curricula at the Rawdah is planned in three stages: long-term, medium-term, and short-term. (See also our [Assessment & Planning Policy](#).)

- **Long-term curriculum maps** cover the programmes of study for all subjects within a plane of development or age band, during which time pupils will be exposed to a certain logical progression of topics ("WBET"). Within the broader curriculum that they are exposed to, pupils will be expected to master a subset of skills (will be able to, or "WBAT"). The latter targets will be treated as benchmarks at the end of each 3-year cycle of learning.
- **Long-term Integrated Curriculum cycles** - We also plan topics in 3-year cycles ("Cycles A, B and C") for certain subjects, including History, Geography, Science, Art and DT, which are taught in the afternoons. All primary pupils learn selected topics in those subject areas during a given year through whole class teaching, supplemented by personal exploration of the topics during the morning Work Cycle (for example, the Solar System, or Ancient Civilisations). In whole class teaching of specific topics and subject areas, the expected outcomes will differ from one year group and child to the next.
- **Medium-term Individual Education Plans** are devised per year group and arranged on a half-termly basis in advance according to what topics will be presented or taught to children in each

curriculum area. Although lessons are generally planned to be taught or presented to children in specific year groups, our half-termly plans are personalised per child, according to their readiness, needs, interests and abilities. Detailed lesson plans or activity plan descriptions are contained in our Montessori teaching albums and, more briefly, in the Transparent Classroom cloud-based system, and form the basis of our short-term weekly and daily planning.

- **Short-term Lesson Plans for whole class teaching** contain details including Pre-requisite knowledge, Learning Intentions, how the lesson will be differentiated, resources used, and the success criteria for the lesson.

Inclusion and Differentiation

The Montessori approach incorporates differentiation into lesson planning and assessment since each child is individually planned for and assessed on a daily and weekly basis, so that the needs of the individual child are met.

Whole group lessons and small group lessons are differentiated according to the needs of the individual pupils in the group. Details of how group lessons are differentiated are contained in each detailed lesson plan.

Early Years Teaching and Learning

At Rawdah Montessori, we believe that the nurturing and development of children which takes place in the first six years of life is a vital foundation for their future. Our early years provision combines the Montessori method with a Prophetic approach for children aged 4-6 years. The Montessori approach ensures that all children are learning and developing according to their own interests and abilities throughout their time at the school.

The Early Years Environment

The learning environment at Rawdah Montessori is set up to cover all the areas of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) as well as the Montessori curriculum areas. The materials provide a sequenced framework that enables children to progress through the curriculum as they learn and develop. The environment is both enticing and stimulating, inviting the children to explore and satisfy their natural curiosity. Much of the learning that takes at Rawdah is through the children's independent exploration of the environment, and the Montessori materials which are designed to help children internalise new concepts.

Indirect Teaching in the Early Years

The staff at Rawdah Montessori are trained to recognise the valuable learning experiences in children's spontaneous play and exploration. The Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) is reported to have advised people to play with their children until age 7. We now know that it is in the various forms of play that the child develops a love and enthusiasm for learning that allows them to flourish in any field of their choosing.

Play is facilitated through the provision of a large range of materials, indoors and outdoors. A full range of Montessori materials are available for pupils to explore independently. Children may explore the materials of their choice. Staff observe child's play in order to ascertain their interests and the best next steps for the child.

Children also learn indirectly and incidentally by example, as shown by the adults in the classroom environment, and through peer learning with and through other children in the class. Although such lessons are not formally planned, they still form an invaluable aspect of a child's total learning experience.

Direct Teaching in the Early Years

Rawdah Montessori also recognises the importance of direct teaching on a child's development of skills, attitudes, and understanding of concepts.

Each day, new lessons and materials are presented to the children by teachers, either in individual lessons or through small group lessons. Each child is planned for individually using observations as the basis for each pupil's next step. These next steps are then directly introduced to pupils. At Rawdah, we recognise that there must be a balance between direct teaching, indirect teaching and play and facilitate this through our planning. We also include children's observed interests and parental feedback of interests into both direct and indirect teaching and learning through the play equipment, toys, activities and books that we include in the indoor and outdoor environment and through teacher-led circle times.

Children's Interests

The Montessori method of teaching is based upon following each child's natural path of development. Teachers must closely observe pupils to see what stage of development they are at and what activities can help them to develop further. Teachers should pay special attention to pupil's interests and plan group lessons to further their interest. Teachers should pay attention to parent's feedback on interests from the daily or weekly conversations and feedback contained in each pupil's Parent Log and on Transparent Classroom to inform the planning cycle.

Planned Themes and Circle Times

Careful observations will be the starting point for planning suitable periodic themes that will allow children to further their interests. At the start of each year staff will make a note of seasonal themes, religious holidays, and festivals. These will be integrated into the yearly planning; however, staff recognise the importance of following the interests of the child, and therefore these themes are flexible and will be changed to suit the needs of the current children. Themes will be designed in such a way that they reflect the diverse cultures and traditions of the local community.

Montessori Children's House Curriculum

The Montessori Children's House classroom is divided into seven main areas, with the other areas being covered through Circle times, group lessons and outdoor play. The curriculum spans the Nursery and Lower Primary, which is equivalent to Reception and Year One. Children are given free access to the seven areas listed below:

1. Practical Life

The practical life curriculum is the starting point for all children entering our Montessori programme and lays the foundation for all other learning to come. The activities encompass both direct and indirect aims, which together support the child in becoming both physically and mentally independent and responsible. Through the practical life curriculum, the child develops concentration, coordination, muscle control and one-to-one correspondence. The child is also indirectly exposed to mathematical and language concepts. Activities such as pouring beans provide the child with the direct aims of independence of pouring without spilling, but also allows them to develop muscle control, concentration, hand eye coordination and indirectly introduces addition and subtraction as well as preparing the child's eyes for scanning from left to right which is a necessary skill for reading.

2. Sensorial

Maria Montessori recognised that the development of the senses plays an important role in the overall development of the child. She refers to the period between 3-6 years as a time to refine the senses and thus, she developed a unique curriculum that caters for this need. Through the sensorial curriculum the child will become more aware of the subtle differences in his surroundings, be able to acquire clear conscious information, start to develop organisational skills, and learn to classify objects within his environment. Each one is a fundamental prerequisite for learning in all other areas.

3. Mathematics

The Montessori mathematics curriculum initially provides children with concrete materials, which allow them to acquire precise mathematical knowledge. Through the use of these concrete materials, the child develops a firm foundation of the decimal system and the four operations. As the child masters basic mathematical skills, he is naturally drawn to abstraction which will enable him to perform mental arithmetic with ease and joy.

4. Language

The Montessori environment is set up as a 'language arts laboratory' in which the child is able to acquire clear and concise language in all aspects and areas of the classroom, whether listening, speaking, reading or writing. Multisensory materials encourage phonics awareness (encoding/writing and decoding/reading), developing the fine motor control needed for handwriting, and experimenting with print and invented spelling, through a wide variety of resources including sandpaper letters, moveable alphabet, and stencils. Through this rich environment, children in our Montessori class develop an interest in written language and are then supported through the rigorous curriculum, which systematically guides them along the path of writing (usually started first) and reading.

5. Arabic and Qur'an

At Rawdah Montessori, we recognise the importance of young children being exposed to Arabic, since this is the age at which they acquire language with ease. We endeavour to provide the children with exposure to Arabic in a living form through a skilled, native Arabic teacher who only speaks to the children in (modern standard) Arabic. To enhance the children's spoken Arabic, our curriculum prioritises the acquisition of conversational language and vocabulary. They also start to learn classical Arabic vocabulary, the language of the Qur'an, which is reinforced through the oral learning of short *surahs* (chapters) of the Qur'an for daily prayers through a method of 'listen and repeat'. As children progress in their understanding, they are presented to the written form of the letters following the steps of our Montessori-based Arabic curriculum.

Joining up letters in Arabic to form words and sentences will not be introduced until children have learned to read and write English well (usually in Lower Primary), to avoid confusion in directionality between Arabic and English when the child is still learning left from right.

6. Cultural Curriculum (History, Geography and Science)

The Cultural curriculum encompasses the Sciences, History, and Geography. Through the activities, children gain an in-depth understanding of the world around them as well as a developing awareness that they are part of a unified universe, connected to everything around them. Through this, the children develop a sense of awe and wonder, and come to love and respect the world around them.

7. Arts and Crafts

It is through art that a child can observe the world, exploring shape, form, texture and balance. To participate in artwork is to appreciate the sheer complexity and beauty of creation, thus witnessing the Artistry and Perfection of the true Artist. Our School has a dedicated art area where the children have many opportunities to use a wide variety of materials and experiment with different art forms.

Other Early Years Subjects

Religious Studies

Spirituality, ethics and religious faith and practice are woven throughout the school day, for instance, in Morning Assemblies, circle time discussions, group prayer, and brief, daily recitation of the Qur'an. More specifically, children have weekly half-hour classes in Islamic Studies on topics appropriate to their age and understanding, primarily through storytelling.

Much of the focus in the early years is that of the example of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) as an model of how to live a good and virtuous life, in devotion and service to God. We strive to bring alive his example and practice in all aspects of the running of the school. Children are also presented with the lives of earlier prophets (peace be upon them all) and good people of later generations through inspiring stories and activities, and are taught the basics of Islamic faith and practice, such as the five pillars and Islamic holidays.

Children of other faiths and none are welcome at Rawdah Montessori. Our Children's House pupils are made aware of other faiths and ways of living, and the various holidays that are observed within the larger Bradford community. Primary-aged children learn more about the beliefs and practices of the world's major religions in the context of world history.

Gym, Martial Arts and Forest School

Movement and exercise are essential to develop and refine children's motor skills, co-ordination and confidence. Movement keeps our children active, alert and healthy, and also positively benefits their cognitive, social and emotional development.

At Rawdah Montessori, we realise that many children today, especially those living in cities and busy families, have limited opportunities for exercise, free play, and the exploration of nature. Our timetable provides opportunities for children to be active and fit outdoors every day, to help them build healthy habits from a young age. Our PE programme for early years includes free play on a variety of equipment, stretching, simple gymnastics, developing skills in things such as running and skipping, jumping, balancing, throwing and aiming, group games, and an introduction to 'baby' Brazilian Jiu Jitsu, or BJJ. We also make use of our beautiful setting for children to explore their natural surroundings with Forest School activities, and intend to build an outdoor classroom for this purpose.

Music and Rhythm

Children between the ages of 0-6 years are in a sensitive period of developing the auditory sense; they naturally show an interest and inclination to activities involving rhythm and beat. During this stage, it is important for children to not only develop an understanding of pitch, rhythm and beat, but to refine it to the best of their individual potential. Like art, music is a form of communication and can be a way for a child to express themselves.

At Rawdah Montessori, children are provided with rich auditory experiences through the songs and rhymes sung daily. Musical activities to develop rhythm and beat are given in short weekly lessons, as well as the opportunity to learn to play the open hand drum (daff). Songs are sung in both English and Arabic, and include traditional English songs as well as classic Arabic *qasidas* and modern *nasheeds*.

The Montessori Primary Curriculum (Years 1–6)

"This then is the first duty of an educator, to stir up life but leave it free to develop."

The Montessori Elementary classroom is an interactive environment designed to help children become self-directed independent learners. Children are taught individually and in groups; they work on their own and participate in collaborative activities. Within the classroom, pupils are given lessons and are free to practice and refine the skills of each lesson at their own pace. They are guided to manage their time wisely, and to meet the responsibility of working on a broad curriculum. Children cannot choose only to work on the subjects they find most interesting. The teacher encourages children to find connections in the work and helps them to see interest throughout.

As children pass from Children's House to the Primary Classroom there are profound changes to their bodies and minds. The child wants to explore the world through imagination and experience, to learn what is right and wrong, and to evaluate meaningful roles in society. A primary-aged child has a thirst to know how things have come to be, the history of the universe, the world, humans, and why they behave the way they do. For this age, Dr. Montessori said, "We are to give the child the cosmos".

Cosmic education is integral to the methodology of the Primary 6-12 classroom. It relies on first giving a holistic, top-down vision of the structure of an idea in its totality such as 'life on Earth' or 'written language', and then giving many connected lessons that create knowledge and experience of the parts of the whole. This education is more meaningful to the elementary child because of how it builds on itself. Story and idea, narrative and concept, intellectual curiosity and academic skills are woven into a comprehensive fabric that by its very nature will stay with the child long after handwriting and memorization skills are mastered. Those skills, far from seeming pedestrian or dull, will be valued because they are understood in their context. The long-term goals for pupils immersed in this practice include informed and mature self-direction, enlightened curiosity, emotional well-being, an understanding of how the world has come to its present state, confidence in their ability to contribute to the world positively, and the initiative to do so.

An Overview of the Primary Curriculum

The main curriculum areas at Rawdah primary are:

1. Islamic Studies
2. English Language
3. Arabic (MFL) & Qur'an
4. Social, Moral, Spiritual, Cultural and Cosmic Education
5. Science
6. Mathematics
7. History & Cultural Studies
8. Geography
9. Genius Hour/ Micro Enterprise
10. Physical Education
11. Art and Design
12. ICT & Engineering
13. Music
14. Advanced Life Skills
15. Outdoor Life Skills

The Curriculum is delivered in 4 main ways

1. The Montessori Learning Environment – Morning Work Cycle
2. Whole Class Lessons – Afternoon Lessons
3. The Great Lessons – A Framework for the Elementary Curriculum
4. Out of School Learning – 'Going Out' Trips

Morning Work Cycle

The morning provides time for independent reading ('read to self'), a whole-school assembly, a Morning Meeting for the class, and an additional 2 ½ hours of independent work, and individual or small group lessons. The morning Work Cycle is where the children access the Montessori learning environment, which includes activities from all subjects in the curriculum. Pupils then have time for a brief snack before daily Qur'an recitation, or may eat their snack independently during the Work Cycle. From 12.30 there is time for outdoor play, noon prayers and lunch, before coming in at 1.45 for afternoon whole group lessons. (The order of midday activities during the break varies depending on changing prayer times throughout the year).

Afternoon Lessons

In the afternoons, children engage in whole-class lessons taught by specialist teachers as well as lessons that require out-of-class learning like Outdoor Skills and Physical Education. Once a week on Wednesdays they have an opportunity to plan and work on their own micro-business or special project during 'Genius Hour', unless a special trip is planned for the day.

Montessori Great Lessons

Another major component in our curriculum is the incorporation of the Montessori Great Lessons and Cosmic Education as a curricular framework and anchor. The primary curriculum is built around six Great Lessons, which are given each year:

- **The Story of the Universe** explores the formation of the stars, solar system, sun and the earth.
- **The Coming of Life** introduces the children to the idea that life has not always existed on our planet, and that its coming signalled a new balance on the earth.
- **The Story of Humans** emphasizes the coming of humanity to the earth as thinking, loving, working creatures.
- **The Story of Writing** presents language as a part of history, and investigates the various milestones that served to create our alphabet and various writing and communication systems around the world.
- **The Story of Numbers** introduces the child to the history connected with our numerals, counting, money and measurement.
- **The River of Life** shows the child how all of life of earth and all people are interconnected and interdependent.

The Great Lessons are connected stories that span enormous frames of time and space. From this story framework emanate the details of the disciplines: science, maths, cultural studies, and language. The story provides an overview and stimulates the imagination. The children then study subjects in detail: biology, chemistry, geology, geography, physics, history, art, music... The unifying thread of the Great Lessons means that no subject is studied in isolation from the others.

'Going Out'

Finally, Dr. Montessori's vision for this age includes an element of the curriculum called 'Going Out'. The Going Out program allows children to get first hand learning experiences. Children are also led to greater social autonomy as well as building a connection with the world outside the classroom, through Going Out trips.

A Montessori Philosophy of Primary Education

The Developing Child

The Primary classes educate the child in the 6-12 plane. Somewhere between the ages of 5 and 7, the child changes physically, mentally, emotionally and socially into a more self-sufficient person. It is like a metamorphosis such as the caterpillar changing into a butterfly. The period of 6 – 12 years is a period of

stability before puberty. Dr. Montessori highlighted special things about the development of the child in this period, emphasising the holistic nature of the development of the child and three notable characteristics of this period:

- The need for wider horizons, to go out and explore the world
- The move from concrete to abstract thinking
- The development of a sense of morality closely allied with an intense interest in the social group.

The Development of Abilities of Abstraction

As in the Children's House, there is a rich selection of purpose-designed Montessori Activities available to guide the children in their development. The transition from a sensorial, physical approach by a child to understanding abstract concepts forms the basis of much of the Montessori material available in the classroom. The materials scaffold the learning of the child as they move from physically holding an object to being able to deal with the concept in an abstract manner. Concrete representations allow the child to build a mental schema enabling the child to confidently move to abstraction.

Social Development

The social development of the child in the 6-12 years stage is probably the most prominent we can observe. Suddenly from being quite self-centred the child becomes oriented towards the group. Friends become of great importance, and the rules of the group become the centre of his or her life. Socially, children identify their role in groups within society and learn the rules for this. This is a basic social skill which will be necessary for adult life.

On a practical level the implication of this "new sociability" is that lessons are presented to pupils in small groups, who may then work together if they choose. When motivated, pupils usually ask for more challenges as they gain competence, and will begin on small group projects to expand their knowledge when their interest has been inspired. The children may come together as a whole community at certain times of day, but tend to spend much of the regular school day exploring their world on their own or in small groups. In this way they develop the skills of an independent researcher (such as the ability to direct their own learning), and experience collaborating on joint projects with their peers (younger, older or same-age), while broadening their knowledge of the Universe and deepening their appreciation of the inter-connectedness of everything in it.

Moral Development, Democratic Values and Conflict Resolution

The moral development of the child in the 6-12 years stage is closely associated with their social development. This is the age when the child starts to distinguish more clearly between right and wrong. The limits of right and wrong are strongly influenced by social pressure, so the time when the child is becoming interested in what his/her friends think is linked to the development of moral awareness. The child is attracted to join a group, and also attracted to the rules and activities created by the group. At this point in development, the human tendency for order tends to focus on the rules of the group.

At Rawdah Montessori, pupils have opportunities to work together to learn, and to build meaningful relationships with adults and peers. The emphasis on reflection, mindfulness, meditation, care of self, care of others and the environment provides pupils with a harmonious learning environment that fosters positive social interactions. Pupils learn to resolve and respect differences between themselves through the use of the Peace Table. They discuss various contemporary issues during Morning Meeting and engage in class meetings when needed to address whole-group problems. Through these means, children start to develop the social skills needed to maintain relationships when faced with differences. These are also means through which the British Values of individual liberty, mutual respect and tolerance are actively promoted.

Rawdah Montessori uses a democratic classroom approach through both Montessori and Responsive Classroom methods, where Class Rules are discussed, agreed and signed up to by each class. Children also learn about the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. In this way, pupils develop an awareness of the needs of children everywhere, as well as in their own learning community, with agreed roles and responsibilities taken by all members. This process upholds the British Values of the Rule of Law and Democracy.

Ecology and Sustainability

Our Cosmic Education curriculum allows pupils to explore who they are and to understand their immense human and personal potential, thereby raising their self-esteem and confidence. Pupils are enabled to reach out to others to build a community based on the values of love, mercy, compassion and peace. Cosmic Education, our Virtues and Character curriculum and Forest School sessions provide pupils with opportunities to collaborate with others in groups to care for their immediate and local environment, guided by the principles of balance, natural order, harmony and respect.

Awareness of the sacredness of life, coupled with the understanding that each individual has an effect on the future of the planet due to its profound interconnectedness, aims to inspire pupils to work for the greater good of life on earth. Rawdah Montessori aims to involve pupils in sustainability and green living, to encourage global citizenship and active participation in community initiatives to help solve environmental challenges that affect us on a local and global level, including awareness of the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals. We hope to nurture model citizens of our global community with a genuine concern for humanity and the world around us, and the integrity and strength of character to act on the knowledge they have.

Summary of Curriculum Areas

Integrated curriculum	All subjects are treated as part of an integrated curriculum. While teaching manuals with individual lesson plans are made for each subject area, the lessons are presented in the approximate order they would be presented in the life of the child. So, the early/foundational activities of all the areas are presented parallel to each other at the beginning of the course. This continues in an age-appropriate sequence. In this way pupils see the interrelationships among the areas, and this helps prepare them for interweaving all the subject areas together.
Islamic Studies & Virtues Curriculum	Emphasis is placed on the nurturing of faith in and love for Allah (God), and following in the footsteps of His beloved Messenger (peace and blessings be upon him). Children are taught the basics of the Islamic faith and its practice, stories of the Prophets and biography of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and his Companions, the history of the early Muslim community, notable Muslims of early and later periods, good character, manners and etiquettes, and how to live a virtuous life of devotion and service.
English Language	All aspects of listening, speaking, reading and writing are taught. Listening and speaking are developed during Morning Meeting, Closing Circle and Junior Great Books. The 'Daily Five' approach to literacy, including 'read to self', 'read with someone', 'listen to reading', 'free writing', and 'word work' help to structure language learning experiences. A synthetic approach to Phonics is used to help children decode increasingly longer and more complex words. Vocabulary building, including the study of Greek and Latin word roots, is included, and further extensions in reading and language exercises lead to reading with understanding. Pupils are exposed to children's classics and a wide variety of literary genres including poetry and drama. Comprehension and word study is aided through the personalised SRA Reading Laboratory, listening to stories read aloud by the teacher, and the Junior Great Books programme. Children learn the story of language, the history of writing, word study, spelling, grammar boxes and related classification along with grammatical analysis of simple, compound and complex sentences, and punctuation. Simple logic (e.g. analogies), critical and creative thinking skills help to develop strong writing ability and expression. Writing proceeds from short stories to longer compositions and essays of various types,

	the structure of paragraphs and composition, appreciation and the development of style, using a 'six traits of writing' approach. Pupils are also taught how to use dictionaries, thesauruses and encyclopaedias, to memorise poetry, write in Italic handwriting, take part in short dramas and role plays, and give short speeches and presentations.
Arabic (MFL) and Qur'an	At Rawdah Montessori, learning Arabic as a foreign language is through immersion; instruction takes place in the foreign language itself. Children develop their oral language skills in Children's House, then build on them in the Primary, gaining exposure to spoken Arabic and engaging in vocabulary building. Pupils learn basic conversation, how to read and write simple sentences, and basic grammar, with the introduction of nouns, verbs and prepositions. Primary-aged children also learn core Qur'anic vocabulary and grammatical differences between Classical and Modern Standard Arabic to aid their understanding of the Qur'an as they embark on memorising and reciting longer <i>Surahs</i> .
Social, Moral, Spiritual, Cultural and Cosmic Education	Cosmic education and social, moral, spiritual and cultural education are embedded within the whole school. Pupils learn about the core values of unity, compassion, cooperation, love, peace through gratitude arising from an interconnected understanding of themselves, others, community, society, the planet and the Universe. They also learn to appreciate British Values, including citizens' rights and freedoms, equality, tolerance and respect.
Science (Biology –including Anatomy, Botany and Zoology–Physics, Chemistry, Ecology)	Science is explored through stories, experiments, charts and activities. The study of science includes two main areas: botany and zoology. Botany begins with The Story of Plants and then proceeds to look at the needs of plants, the function of leaves, roots, stems, flowers, fruits and seeds as well as their varieties and their classification. Zoology includes story material about animals, examination of body functions and classification. Botany and zoology are united in a study of ecology. Children also learn about their own anatomy. Physics and Chemistry are learnt about informally and studied in more detail from 8-11 years.
Maths: Arithmetic, Money, Time, Measurement, Pre-Algebra and Statistics	The introduction to mathematics includes the development of the Mathematical Mind, indirect preparation leading to abstraction in mathematics, and the purpose and use of hands-on mathematical material. The curriculum includes The story of Numbers, continuation of the hierarchy of numbers, linear counting, long multiplication and long division, laws of operations, multiples, factors, divisibility, group division, fractions (and their related operations), squares and cubes of numbers, and powers of numbers. Pupils are introduced to concepts in pre-algebra and basic statistics, and learn to tell time, calculate money transactions, and use metric and Imperial measures.
Maths: Geometry	The development of the Mathematical Mind also includes Geometry. Geometry and Algebra are intertwined in Mathematics. Studies in Geometry include the concepts of equal, similar and equivalent; exploration with constructive triangles and 3-D figures; and a study of polygons along with circle/angles/lines in all their details.
History & Cultural Studies	Stories, timelines and charts aid in the presentation of both natural history and human history. Natural history is where History overlaps with the Science curriculum, and includes geological changes in the Earth over time along with the coming of life on Earth. Human history includes the coming of human beings, the fundamental needs of humans, hunting and gathering food, the development of farming and the agricultural revolution, the growth of settlements, development of civilizations, migrations, and the growth of culture, to the present day. Pupils move from telling time on a clock to a linear representation of time that enables them to grasp the length of time that it has taken for all of the above to happen. An integrated Humanities curriculum is presented in a three-year cycle so that children can explore and learn about some topics in more depth. The basic structure of the cycle is (A) Ancient Civilisations, (B) the Middle Ages, and (c) the Modern Age. British History is taught in each cycle, and Islamic History in Cycles B and C (see the Integrated Humanities Primary Curriculum Overview)
Physical, Human and Economic Geography (Including Geology)	Geography is the study of human interaction with the earth, and is explored through the use of stories, experiments, charts and children's activities. Geography study has two main sections: natural geography and human geography; as children get older they also learn about economic geography and the environment as subdivisions of human geography. Physical Geography includes creation of the earth, earth's composition, laws that elements must follow, movements of the earth and their consequences, along with the work of air and water. Human geography includes how

	people have met their needs while living in different biomes on Earth, the interdependence of humans in society, and economic geography.
Genius Hour / Micro-Enterprise	Children will be given the opportunity to develop their own ideas for micro-businesses, charitable projects, inventions, or other projects that involve long-term planning, experimentation, trial and error. They will learn about business and projects that other children and young people have done, will speak to people who have started their own enterprises, and will have opportunities to earn income for the school and/or chosen charities.
Physical Education	Pupils will develop fine and gross motor skills, build agility, flexibility, strength, balance, control and coordination through individual and group games, stretches, martial arts, swimming, archery, horseriding, and competitive and cooperative activities which become increasingly challenging while building skills. Once basic skills have been learnt, they are linked in sequences to build more complex movements or skills. Through the PE curriculum, pupils will also learn how to evaluate and assess their personal performance in order to improve their fitness.
Art and Design	Fine Art, Textiles, Crafts and Design are explored through the study of line, shape, form, colour, value, texture, and space. Elements and principles of design, pattern, and colour theory are taught. Pupils learn the skills necessary to be able to use a variety of tools and media. Activities may include collage, print, calligraphy, textiles, clay, paper craft, woodwork, sculpture, photography, recycled materials, and electronic drawing tools. Pupils are encouraged to be creative while exploring a variety of different methods of decoration and expression. Art history and appreciation are presented and explored through traditional arts and crafts from around the world and by looking at the works of famous artists.
ICT & Engineering	Pupils will learn about technology and its uses through timelines, stories, and the study of computing, electronics and product design. The study of technology in an integrated way allows pupils to explore a variety of technologies and how to design products and processes using them. Children will learn about the history of ICT and engineering, the impact on society of different technological ages, keyboarding skills, word processing and spreadsheets, the safe use of the Internet, presentation skills, stop frame animation, systems and control, and structural engineering.
Music	Areas covered in music include singing, listening, music theory and ear training, movement and rhythm, playing the duff (open hand drum), Eastern/Islamic musical scales, and learning songs in English and Arabic.
Advanced Life Skills	Pupils learn important life skills enabling them to become more independent when caring for themselves, others and the environment. Pupils learn personal hygiene, food safety and nutrition, how to prepare simple snacks and foods, cleaning and tidying, and health and safety practices in a variety of situations (fire safety, electricity, gas, Internet and telephone use, natural disaster preparedness, etc.) They also learn to organise and work with materials such as fabric and wood, and do basic DIY. Grace and Courtesy lessons are also part of Advanced Life Skills, including hosting guests and planning outings.
Outdoor Life Skills and Forest School	Pupils are given the opportunity to work with nature by working on skills related to caring for houseplants, gardening, care of trees and flowers; agriculture, involving rearing and caring for animals, growing and harvesting fruit, flowers and veg; forest school activities, involving working with nature, building dens, identifying bugs, fungi, birds, orienteering; principles of beekeeping and making bee products (honey, beeswax, hand cream, etc.); recycling, composting and sustainable living using Permaculture principles.

Review

This policy will be reviewed annually or sooner or if there is any change in statutory guidance or legislation. See 'Policy Review Schedule'.