

Parents & A

Barbara Isaacs and **Clare Healy Walls** answer your questions on the transition from nursery to primary and keeping the Montessori philosophy alive at home.

Q How will my child fit in with a more traditional system after leaving Montessori nursery?

All early years' provision in England (and this includes reception classes in all schools) is required to follow the Early Years Foundation Stage. This statutory framework is based on principles of good early years' practice and gives Montessori nurseries a real opportunity to showcase just how good Montessori really is in providing children with developmentally appropriate learning opportunities and in enabling environments supported by positive relationships with children and adults. Bearing this in mind, the transition from a Montessori nursery to a reception class should be smooth and without major difficulty. Many nurseries work closely with primary schools on seamless transition from nursery to school. They make sure that they visit schools and support children in their first visits to primary schools. They document and celebrate the children's achievements at nursery, and these documents follow children to their new settings, giving the teachers in the school a clear picture of the child's loves and interests, and enable them to make links and engage with the child as soon as they arrive in their new setting. But the most important factor which influences the child's transition from one setting to another is the child's confidence, self assurance and ability to focus on activities as well as their polite respectful manners. It is in the area of personal and social

development where "Montessori children" are helped with their transitions into their new learning environments.

Q When I ask my young son what he did at his Montessori school he often says 'nothing'. How do I find out what he has been doing?

Young children are interested in the process rather than the end result and they live in the present. It is NOW that is important to them. So when you ask your son what he did you're most likely to hear 'oh nothing' or 'I played outside'. This is not because he didn't do anything; on the contrary so much has taken place that it may be only things that are part of his daily routine that he can remember – like playing with friends outside.

Profile books, parent teacher meetings and newsletters are used by Montessori schools to inform parents. Do not hesitate to make time with your child's teacher to discuss any issues. Montessori schools might differ in some ways but the well-being of children is the focus of every Montessori community.

Next time try asking your child 'How was your day?' instead of 'What did you do at school?' Comment on something specific like how good the garden looks or how big the fish has become! Then wait and listen. You'd be surprised at some of the things you'll hear.

(This Q&A first appeared in *Montessori Voices*, a magazine for families published by MANZ)



Q My child is leaving his Montessori nursery to go onto primary school. I would like to continue using the Montessori philosophy at home. Can you suggest practical ways I can prepare my child for his new school?

Montessori education is good at helping children to cope with changes like going to a new school because it builds inner confidence. One of the main ways Montessori education does this is by allowing children to make choices but at the same time offering very clear guidelines so that the child knows what he is choosing. You can offer him simple choices like choosing his own new lunchbox, but at the same time advising him as to what would be useful for his new school. Let him take charge of telling the other members of the family about his experiences. If he is shy and does not want to talk about his new school, you should simply drop the subject. It is his new school and he should be

allowed to feel in control of the experience. Do not make too big a fuss, talk about it as though it were an ordinary event. Making a fuss may make him nervous and feel much is expected of him. However, having said that try and be observant and willing to listen when needed. Ask about his day, do not push for an answer but observe carefully so that you will pick up on any little worries he may have.

Clare Healy Walls is a Montessori teacher and trainer working in Scandinavia and Ireland. She has written about Montessori for all age groups and her particular interest and expertise is adapting Montessori as a life philosophy for parents, students and others.

Barbara Isaacs is currently the Academic Director of Montessori Centre International and the Senior Accreditation Officer for the Montessori Evaluation and Accreditation Board. Both of her children benefitted from Montessori Nursery education

Have you got a question you would like answered by one of our experts?

Drop us a line at Montessori Q&A, Montessori International magazine, 18 Balderton Street, London W1K 6TG or email amanda@montessori.org.uk. The copy date for the spring issue is the 1st February.