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**Policy for Careers Education,**

**Information, Advice and Guidance**

**Policy context**

‘Careers guidance and access for education and training providers’, *Department for Education*, October 2018.

‘Good Career Guidance’, *Gatsby Foundation*, 2014

**Purpose of this document**

Each young person will one day step out of our school, and into the world. For most this will be higher education, for some it will be the workplace. It is our mission to support these young people today in ways that prepare them for tomorrow.

One aspect of that preparation is 'career guidance' – guidance that informs young people of the opportunities available for their future, in the world of work, and to help them start to make decisions about their future careers with knowledge and clarity.

The world of work is transforming. Pandemics, resource scarcity and climate change present existential threats, while artificial intelligence and green energy present powerful opportunities alongside expanding conceptions of freedom and more equal distributions of power. It is helpful to acknowledge that people’s journeys are unique and unpredictable, and that this was true even when the world of work was much more rigid than it is today. Our careers guidance programme considers 4 questions:

1. Meaning and purpose in work
2. What we mean by ‘the world of work’
3. Orientation to the ‘world of work’ as a developmental need for adolescents
4. How we put young people in contact with the ‘world of work’

**Meaning and purpose in work**

Maria Montessori had an ecological and interdependent view of existence: that human beings were a form of life, and that all forms of life lived in harmonious balance with each other within an environment that met their needs. In this worldview, all things that exist are connected and form part of a harmonious whole.

This metaphysics or philosophy is shared with the children from the age of 6. Starting from their very first day in the Elementary, children are immersed in a series of stories that allow them to make meaning of their lives. These stories are grand narratives that encompass everything – from the origin of the universe, to the pencil in their hand – so they can see where everything fits, and can find meaning and purpose in it all.

The series of narratives they are exposed to, systematically and continuously over their 6 years in the Elementary, emphasises the harmony of the Universe, and the role each thing that exists plays in maintaining that harmony. This role is described as the ‘cosmic task’ of that aspect of reality. For example, the sun has a cosmic task, as do the rivers, the leaves of a plant, the bee and the drone, the cell in an organ, the mitochondria in a cell. Everything that exists has a task that puts it in a certain relationship with the greater whole, right up to that greatest whole – the cosmos.

This ecological worldview includes the work of human beings. In this world view, human beings too have a ‘cosmic task’ – theirs is to work together to transform the earth (to study it, to come to love it, to serve it) and make it more beautiful and more conducive to Life in all its harmonious diversity. In this worldview, we take the stance that human beings find joy, fulfilment, meaning and purpose in contributing to the world in ways suited to them as unique individuals shaped both by personality and life experience.

This ecological conception of life, and of the role of human beings as *transformative stewardship*, has been a stable part of Montessori pedagogy for over 100 years now.

Its relevance in this document is that it sets out the values that guide our work and the values that we explicitly and implicitly communicate to the children we serve.

**What we mean by ‘the world of work’**

Human beings are social animals. Living and working in groups stems from our origin as modern humans some 40,000 years ago. Groups gradually got bigger, and more connected. We now live in a world where human beings are connected across countries - forming one global society. There isn’t yet unity, and there isn’t yet peace, but we are all connected. Those connections are first and foremost economic: a person in one part of the world produces something that is exchanged for something produced in another part of the world. That economic unity amongst human beings is what we call ‘the world of work’.

At this school, we identify the fact of interdependence amongst human beings, and we emphasise the spirit of serving one another that underlies it. We invite the children and young people into a view of the world where people go to work in order to serve humanity; where their actions are motivated by a desire to help and be of service, trusting that their own needs will be met. It is not to dismiss the vast inequalities that exist in the world today – rather it is to paint a picture of what *can be*, and to invite the children and young people to step into that vision so that their actions can help create it. We see education as fundamentally being a force for transforming the world into one that works for everyone. We believe that life is most fulfilling and joyful when service is central to our lives. The ‘world of work’ to us represents all those ways in which human beings serve each other and other living beings – Life with a capital L – and we have found this vision to be alluring and energising to all children.

Opportunities to serve through our work are unimaginably diverse. One person makes a living hand-crafting leather shoes in a small town in Wales, serving a number of clientele who are life-long customers. Another person is a manager at a RSPCA rescue centre for reptiles, having first volunteered there for a number of years. A third is a senior manager at a bank; he visits small and medium sized-businesses to explore their financing needs. Although a physics graduate he finds great satisfaction getting to know business owners and helping them succeed. A fourth person was given a seed by his grandmother when he was 5, and it turned into a plant that flowered; today he is a horticulturalist in a small organic market garden. A fifth person fell in love with newspapers as a boy – the feel of the paper between his thumb and forefinger, the smell of the paper, and the buzz of the newsroom - and became a photographer who sells his work to national newspapers. These are just a few of the ordinary human beings who are connected to the school community, and who have found ways of serving in the world, and are able to make a living doing so.

**Orientation to the ‘world of work’ as a developmental need for adolescents**

Children transform themselves through the period of childhood and adolescence. This transformation occurs at all levels of being.

Young children experience themselves as being a part of nature. When they move into adolescence, they step outside of that world of nature, and into a new world, made of human beings. That distinction between childhood and adolescence is fundamental.

When the child enters adolescence, they enter into human society. Society, made up of human beings, is most easily conceived of as a ‘world of work’. Young peple see society as a human creation, and their role to enter it, and give shape to its future.

In the same way that the young child possesses powers and sensitivities (the capacity to stand erect, the capacity to acquire language) that shape their individual lives, the adolescent possesses powers and sensitivities (for justice, for personal dignity) that give shape to society. They are drawn towards their society – to understand it, to grasp it, to acting on it, to transform it.

This process takes time. When they enter adolescence, they are as newborns in adult society. Like infants once again, they go through a series of stages in which they adapt to the new world they have entered, and become able to function in it. Our role as adults is to facilitate the young person’s understanding of the world of work by putting them in direct contact with it. Little by little they are drawn to contributing in certain ways rather than others – based on their personalities, motivations, strengths, and the opportunities they are given. Little by little they become oriented to this world.

Who am I? What am I here for? What is my role in the world? How can I prepare for that? Helping each young person answer for themselves these most existential of questions form the context of our careers guidance policy.

**How we put young people in contact with the ‘world of work’**

Our approach is through the lens of the following three questions:

1. What are the different kinds of work in the world?

2. What might I be suited for?

3. What steps would put me in a position to do that work well?

1. What are the different kinds of work in the world?

*Careers evenings*

Every 6 weeks we host a careers evening. Students indicate the kinds of careers they are interested in finding out more about, and we invite parents and members of the local community who work in those areas to come in and talk for 5-10 minutes about their work and then take questions from the students. Typical evenings include:

* Health and social care
* Software engineering
* Marketing
* Performing arts
* Fashion
* Natural sciences

Attendance to these evenings is mandatory for the 14-18 year olds and optional for the 12-14 year olds.

*Informational interviews with parents*

Between the ages of 14-18, students also meet with parents whose careers they are interested in and conduct informational interviews. This is often at their workplace but is sometimes at the school.

*Work Shadowing*

Where possible, from the age of 14, students are given the opportunity to shadow an adult (usually a parent) in their role for a day.

*Work placements*

Where possible and appropriate we open up work placement opportunities. In the past this has included working at the RSPCA Reptile Rescue Centre, working on a building site (at the school) as part of a contracted team of builders, and with an architect surveying and drawing up plans for a building extension.

*Post-16 Experiences of ‘The World of Work’*

From age 16 we look to arrange for each student the opportunity for regular participation in the world of work. The purpose of this set of experiences to be ‘in the world’ – the specific work is less important than being out in the world, with other people, working. The goal is to allow for students to have a sustained mediated experience of being outside both school and the family.

2. What might I be best suited for?

*Psychometric test*

We conduct a psychometric test administered by Cambridge Online Assessment as they approach the end of the first sub-plane (12-15) of the third plane of development. The test helps them reflect on their interests and strengths and points to careers that are based on those interests and utilise those strengths. This is shared with parenst.

*One-to-one interview*

Following on from the COA aptitude test, each student participates in a one-to-one interview with an independent, external, careers guidance advisor. The notes from this interview are shared with parents.

*Strengths profiling*

Building on the annual reports written to the young person from the time they were 6 years old, a member of the team conducts a motivational interview where they draw out from the young person the circumstances, areas, and ways in which they have achieved and enjoyed achieving, individually or in a team. This is shared with parents.

These three, taken together, form the basis of a series of discussions with the young person and the lead guide to discuss options for the next step.

3. What steps would put me in a position to do that job well?

An initial decision on post-16 choices is taken towards the end of the first sub-plane (age 15). This can be revisited over the course of the following year. The following help is given to students to identify their immediate next steps.

*Qualifications or training needed*

When students indicate the career that is of interest to them, they are helped to become aware of the qualifications or training needed for that career.

*Open days*

Open days at universities and technical colleges are advertised to students who are encouraged to attend these from the age of 14. All students are encouraged to attend the UCAS exhibition each year.

*Other colleges*

At The Montessori Place students have the possibility of studying for their A-levels. This will be a suitable choice for most but not all students. The best choice for students who do not wish to embark on an A-level course of study may be to attend another institution part-time or full-time. Open days for relevant institutions in the local area are advertised internally. As permanent guides with a small mixed-age group of young people , relationships develop over years and we have early conversations about likely alternative paths and the preparation needed for those.

*Key Stage 5*

Where students intend to continue studying at The Montessori Place through to age 18, subject choices for KS5 study are indicated by the end of their first sub-plane (12-15). These can be revised during the first year of the second sub-plane. Students and parents meet with subject tutors to learn more about that subject, the way it is taught, and the work or further education opportunities it opens up. Students have taster sessions for courses that they might not have tried before, for instance in psychology, or economics.

Students are expected to take a minimum of 3 A-levels. In addition there is a requirement to take a number of non-assessed enrichment courses each term, in areas outside of their A-level study. An indicative list of courses include:

* Genes and Society
* Landscapes of Sussex
* Euclidean Geometry
* Statistics for Citizens
* Techniques in breadmaking
* Introduction to Politics
* The Tudors
* Revolutionary Russia
* The Odyssey
* Introduction to Psychology
* Economics 101
* Clothes-making for Beginners

*University application*

Students at The Montessori Place take two GCSEs in Maths and English Language, in the year they turn 16. When applying to university, rather than relying on predicted grades and the uncertainty that creates, our students will apply to university as post-qualification candidates in the year after they turn 18. This allows for an uninterrupted 2-year cycle from 16-18.

In the June of the year they turn 18, they would take their A-level examinations, and then prepare for university admission. The following support is offered at the school:

* Identifying their university and degree choices by January of their final year. We use BridgeU to help them make these choices.
* Helping them complete their UCAS application for October 15 submission. We use an independent external consultancy to manage this process.
* Preparation for admissions tests and interviews where applicable, using external consultants.

*Work experience year*

From the autumn of their final year they start to define their post-18 work experience plan, with the help of a tutor. Together we develop a bespoke plan for that year, tailored to the young person's interests and possible future career, and in line with their personal development goals.