

# Welcome Handbook

## Montessori Rive Gauche

Children's House Classes



# Introduction

Dear Parents,

We wish to extend a very warm welcome to all the children and parents of Montessori Rive Gauche. This information booklet contains necessary information regarding the philosophy of the school, the responsibilities of the staff, parents and children, and information about safety and security matters.

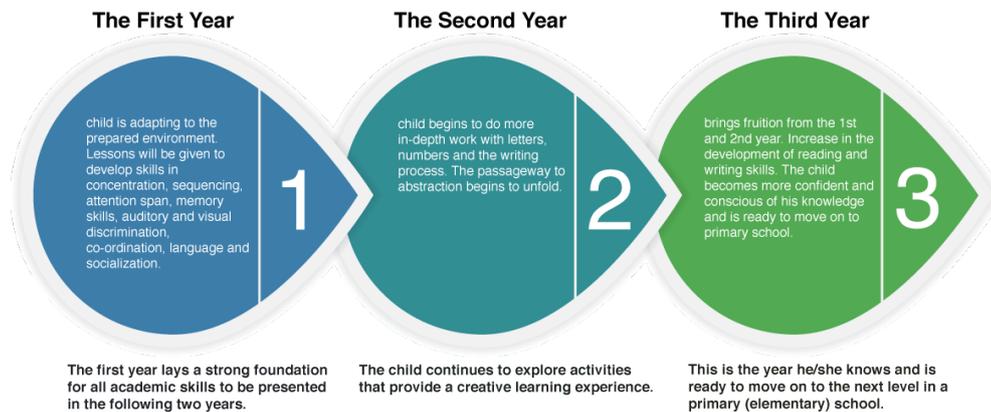
Montessori Rive Gauche follows the Montessori method which is unique as it guides teaching staff through a journey taken together with the children. By choosing to enrol your child in our school, you aspire to a safe, caring, secure and prepared educational environment that focuses on individual learning in a collaborative atmosphere. Our school nurtures each child's individual needs while emphasising the development of self-confidence and self-esteem. We assist children's growth towards independence while letting them evolve at their own pace.



In order to make the best of the Montessori teaching method, the three-year cycle is crucial.

This three-year cycle can be compared to that of a plant. The first year we plant the seed, the second year the plant begins to grow, and the third year our plant blossoms.

Between 3 and 6 years old, the motto is : “ **Help me to do it myself**”



A new cycle begins with the 6-12-year-old group whereby children continue to develop their own independent reasoning process.

Between 6 and 12 years old, the motto becomes : “ **Help me to think for myself**”

# 1. Communications

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Please inform us of absences by message on the class phone number.

## **Children's House classes**

Green class: 079 967 80 52 [classe.verte@montessori-rive-gauche.ch](mailto:classe.verte@montessori-rive-gauche.ch)

Blue class: 079 967 80 54 [classe.bleue@montessori-rive-gauche.ch](mailto:classe.bleue@montessori-rive-gauche.ch)

## **Primary I and II classes**

Ginkgo class: 079 880 46 85 [classe.ginkgo@montessori-rive-gauche.ch](mailto:classe.ginkgo@montessori-rive-gauche.ch)

Sequoia class: 079 967 76 06 [classe.sequoia@montessori-rive-gauche.ch](mailto:classe.sequoia@montessori-rive-gauche.ch)

Baobab class: 079 773 57 45 [classe.baobab@montessori-rive-gauche.ch](mailto:classe.baobab@montessori-rive-gauche.ch)

Telephones are consulted before 8am, at 12:00 and 3:45pm

**After-school** phone number (3:30pm - 6:15pm): 078 807 82 62

Helen's email address: [parents@montessori-rive-gauche.ch](mailto:parents@montessori-rive-gauche.ch)

School Directress: 078 806 22 42 [info@montessori-rive-gauche.ch](mailto:info@montessori-rive-gauche.ch)

School website: [www.montessori-rive-gauche.ch](http://www.montessori-rive-gauche.ch), password : Montessori2020

Our **website** provides information about :

- school's weekly menu
- holidays
- extra-curricular activities
- contact details of specialists

## **Getting in touch with the teaching staff**

We encourage **enhanced communication** and collaboration with parents about their child. Parents are welcome to address staff via casual conversations at pick-up time, using messages, and through regular individual meetings or conferences.

We also encourage you to inform us of any changes taking place at home - a move, separation, the arrival of a new-born, a variation in your child's daily routine, an absent parent, a new nanny, or simply a bad night. These occurrences often affect the behaviour of children at school so informing us helps us understand and better accompany your child through any difficulty he/she may have.

**You can either inform us during the morning welcome session** ((if not too long but still useful for the smooth running of the day), by message on the class phone, or at the end of class.

**Please note that when the teachers are busy working with the children, they are not available to respond to individual queries. If you need to pass on urgent information for the smooth running of the day, you can send a message to the class phone. It will be seen more quickly than an email.**

Extra encounters can also be organized upon agreement between teachers and parents concerned.

At Montessori Rive Gauche, decisions are made at a team level, so feel free to share any requirements you may have with our staff, we will consider them carefully and get back to you.

## 2. Daily schedule

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### Welcome

**From 8:00 am to 8:30 am at the latest**, to avoid disturbing the class once it has started. Your child will also integrate more easily into the group if he/she arrives at the same time as his/her classmates. Throughout the first month of school, we organize integration groups from 8:30 to 9:00. Thank you for bringing your children to school on time to benefit from these groups.

A teacher will meet your child in the school car park and take him/her to the classroom. Please do not enter the classroom unless necessary, so as not to disturb the class.

### 'Goodbyes'

We recommend parents take the time to say goodbye to their child, but we also advise parents to leave the school immediately after having said goodbye so children understand their parent has gone. The shorter it takes, the better. Drawing out the goodbye time confuses children. If you trust your child and the staff, your child will feel this and do the same.

### Cloakroom

Allow your child develops his/her independence as soon as he/she enters the school premises. The cloakroom is already a place of learning where younger children learn to put on or take off their coats, shoes and slippers, with the possible help of the teacher "help me to do it myself". The older children continue to learn to organize and respect their belongings. The children have here a moment dedicated to this learning process. This is an important time, which does not always happen at home.

### Gate

The gate will be open between 8am and 8.30am for welcome and will then be closed. For obvious security reasons, we ask you to **keep the gate closed from 8.30 am**.

**The code to the gate is 1263**. A tip to remember the code: the school welcomes children aged 3-6 and 6-12 (the numbers are inverted: 12-6-3). **Do not give it to your child for his own security and for the security of the youngest children**. However, remember to provide anyone who may collect your child from school with the code.

A typical day	
<b>08:00-08:30am</b>	<b>Welcome time / individual work</b>
08:30-11:30am	Individual work or work in groups of 2 and 3
11:30-11:45am	Group time
11:45-12:30pm	Lunch
12:45-13:40pm	Playtime in the garden
<b>13:30pm</b>	<b>Departure time for half-day group</b>
13:45-14:00pm	Group time for full time group
14:00-15:30pm	Work time
<b>15:30pm</b>	<b>Departure time for full time group</b>
<b>15:30-18:15pm</b>	<b>After-school (possibility to leave at any time)</b>

Please respect the departure times strictly, for the well-being of your child and the school.

### **Snack time**

The school provides a morning snack for every class. We offer the children seasonal fruit and ask that you do not give them anything extra.

### **Toilets (more details on the document provided by Helen during the introduction course)**

During class, children usually go to the toilet by themselves but the teacher will help if necessary. It is important you teach your child to be independent in this respect at home.

During the first few weeks, we regularly remind children to use the toilet.

We always change children who wet themselves and avoid making any comments about the incident.

We will return their dirty laundry in a small bag. Please remember to provide them with an extra set of clothes the next day. This stage rarely lasts long.

To help your children use the toilet on their own, please dress them in clothes that they can remove easily.

### **Group time**

This is a privileged moment during which we gather together to sing, read, role-play, etc. The 4-5 year-old group study the calendar and work on specific themes.

### **Lunchtime**

From a very early age, we teach children to lay and clear the table, help themselves, eat properly, stay at table until the end of the meal, and fold their napkin. Meals take place in a peaceful atmosphere where adults and children share meals which is considered a social activity. We encourage children to take part in pleasant conversation and to taste foods and flavours. We do not force them, we simply suggest it. The children set and clear the table with pleasure. They help each other.

Children are not spoon-fed by the adult. Learning should have taken place at home before coming to school.

### **Recess**

Unless it is raining hard, children play outside in the garden after lunch. There is no morning recess in accordance with the Montessori principle (3-hour work cycle). Please make sure children are dressed appropriately in comfortable clothes. Children wear boots and rain trousers which allow them to play outside even if it is wet.

### **Nap time**

There are two options:

- either the child does a daily nap, after the outside playtime, in a separate room under the supervision of an adult
- or on demand when the child feels tired, he can lie down on a little bed in the classroom.

### **After-school (upon registration) : 3:30pm to 6:15pm**

School days are very full and can be exhausting. Some children will be comfortable staying at the after-school program while it will overtire others. We suggest parents pay close attention to their child's rhythm and make sure they are getting enough quiet time.

Please give 24 hours notice of any changes.

### **Parking**

In the morning, a Kiss&Fly is organised. For parents with children who need more time to separate, we ask you to park on the left side (lake side), to ensure the smooth running of the Kiss&Fly.

This parking is drop-off only and occupation is limited to 15 minutes.

The school only owns a few of the spaces available but arrangements are made for special events.

For good neighbourly relations, we request that you do not double-park on Chemin des Gotettes.

## 3. The child at school

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### 3.1. Adjustment period for newcomers

The first day of school is an important day, both for parents and children. Make sure you prepare your children for this special day by **informing them of the sequence of events that will build up towards it**: wake-up time and departure time, their teachers' names, who will collect them and what they will do after school.

Please ensure children are in good health, sleep well the night before, receive the attention they need, and are calm before coming to school, we suggest avoiding the television.

If your child suffers from separation anxiety, we recommend you ask someone else to do the drop-off. Plan enough time between 8:00am and 8:30am and show your child the example by remaining calm and composed. This will help your child embrace this new experience.

Your child should not watch television in the morning, this will enable him or her to use their own creative mind and give them the time to prepare independently.

As the parent-child separation may prove challenging on the first day of school, we exceptionally allow you to accompany your child to the cloakroom. Please speak quietly as other children may already be in class.



The adjustment period will vary for each child and we try to adapt to children's individual needs.

The length of the adjustment period depends on a number of factors such as habits, routines, and emotional independence.

For your child to enjoy coming to school, **the first morning must be a pleasant experience.**

If all goes well, the first morning will end around 10:30am. The second day your child will be able to stay until 11:30am.

As soon as we feel children are ready, they stay for lunch and playtime with their peers until 1:30pm.

During the adjustment period, we plan routines and activities daily according to our observations.

Please be available during this time, we may need to get in touch with you if the separation is too difficult for your child.

Also remember that this period of adjustment only happens once in your child's life! It is worth giving some of your time to this event.

## 3.2. Life in the classroom

### **Individual work**

During the day, children study at their own pace. First, the teacher introduces the child to the didactic material and, in time, children choose their own activities: free choice is one of the main principles of the Montessori philosophy. The belief is that each individual child, guided by the Montessori teacher, is at the centre of his or her own learning process.

The guide's role in the classroom is to observe all the children in the community, help each child make choices for purposeful and meaningful work, and offer a variety of workshops and group activities.

### **The atmosphere in the classroom**

The Montessori method gives children the freedom to explore and develop to their fullest potential in the areas of practical life, sensorial, mathematics, language, music, art, science, history and geography within a prepared environment. We create a pleasant environment where furniture and materials are designed for the child's appropriate physical and psychological needs: shelving is low and open to allow easy access, there is a cleaning area with brooms, sponges, a brush & pan, cloths, etc. All this encourages children to be independent, to care for their classroom, and to take care of themselves. It is important for children to be in a pleasant environment which encourages their involvement. A clean and well-organized environment provides a sense of security, calms the children, and helps them concentrate.

### **Didactic material**

The scientifically elaborated Montessori didactic material is unique. It encourages children's development while respecting their sensitivity.

- A single item of each material or activity to avoid competition between children and favour mutual aid, solidarity and tolerance;
- Items are real objects (not toys) made to scale: they are adapted to the children's size and strength;
- Aesthetic: good quality didactic material which are well maintained by the teaching staff on a daily basis attract the pupils to the related activities;
- Items are breakable to make children aware of their strength and teach them to control their movements.

The didactic material develops intellectual abilities by going from concrete and expanding to abstract, thus going from simple concepts to more complex ones. The degree of difficulty of the activities increases slowly so that the child consolidates each stage and avoids any sense of failure. The didactic material is set up according to its level of difficulty and follows the concept of print: the easiest didactic material is placed in the top left, and the most difficult is placed in the bottom right. This also favours independence as the children can measure their progress.

### **Languages**

English and French are naturally and daily present in each class through educators and the linguistic diversity of children. All children receive presentations in both languages, according to their level of understanding.

From the age of 6, German classes are also part of the curriculum.

The child will learn the basics of reading in his or her strong language, for greater self-confidence, understanding of what he or she is reading and for smoother progress. Learning to read in the second language starts when the child is comfortable reading in the first language and when there is no risk of confusion.

### **Workshops**

The school organizes workshops and special classes regularly: music, singing, yoga, RMT (rhythmic movement training), sophrology, cooking, German, gardening, nature exploration, sports activities (motor skills, climbing, ice-skating, etc.)

### 3.3. Dress code

Clothes must be suitable for outdoor activities but must also be adapted to a serious learning environment. Please avoid the following clothing to avoid distraction in the classroom:

- sequin clothing
- stuffed animal slippers
- toy watches / watches with games
- clothing/accessories that your child may play with (costume jewelry, fancy dress/costumes)

In order to encourage your child to be independent, dress them in comfortable clothes that they can manage on their own when they go to the bathroom. Even though we are very careful to protect clothing when in class and in the garden, accidents do happen so do not dress your child in their Sunday best on a school day. Children must wear slippers that do not fall off and allow them to move freely.

They sometimes need to be changed during the year: growth, warmer shoes in winter / lighter shoes in spring.

At the beginning of the year, children must bring rain boots and rain trousers, For children under 6, please remember to bring two labelled sets of clean clothes in case children get dirty or wet themselves.

During winter time, please make sure your child has gloves and warm boots at school or comes in the morning with a pair of durable and waterproof winter boots.

Before the summer, please provide your child with sunscreen and a hat. These items will be kept at school until holidays.

### 3.4. Objects from home

We would prefer it if pacifiers stayed home in order to enhance speech. Soft toys (transitional objects) are welcome for children who need them, they will have a place in the cloakroom.

Children should not bring their own toys and games to school (to avoid arguments). Books are welcome; they may be read in class and shared during group time.

Please do not send your child to school with food, sweets, or chewing-gum.

Please make sure children have breakfast at home before coming to school.

### 3.5. The white bag

The Montessori method first teaches children using hands-on activities before slowly evolving towards writing. Results are not quantified according to how much paper children use so please **do not measure progress by the quantity of work on paper your child brings home; there is no correlation between that and the effort put into classroom activities.**

When your child does bring work home, show interest and look over it carefully. By doing so, you value children's work and encourage them to pursue their efforts. Once every six weeks, children will bring home their work in a white bag. Getting the bag ready is the child's responsibility; thank-you for respecting this rhythm and please remember to return the white bag when it is empty.

Because children sometimes go through subconscious processes and are on a different timescale to ours, it is sometimes difficult for them to detail their school day or even remember it. This is why we are available to answer any questions you may have.

### 3.6. Birthdays

Birthdays are a privileged moment for children so we like to celebrate them with the group. Please discuss a date with the teacher the week before the event so that your child can share a cake with his/her peers. We like to put together during class a photographic timeline for our pupils so please bring photos of the following moments in your child's life:

- At birth with details of weight, height, and place
- Age 1
- Age 2
- Age 3 etc. up their current birthday.

This timeline will be given to you when your child leaves our school.

If you are organizing a birthday party for your child, we suggest you send out the invitations using either **standard mail or e-mail** so as to avoid invitations getting lost and disappointment when children are not invited.

### 3.7. Absences and lateness

The Montessori teachers, the prepared environment, the Montessori didactic material, and the children together create a Montessori community. Each child is important to the group, and each period in the life of the group is important for each child. The result is a child growing in a strong self-image, a sense of self-esteem, and a feeling of belonging. This is why we require that children attend school regularly and have a stable routine. Please inform us of any absences you plan for your child.

When children are away from school for a long time, it may be difficult for them to reconnect and come back to their own personal development. However, children who are ill must not attend school - especially if they are carrying a contagious illness (gastro-enteritis, conjunctivitis, or strep throat). In case of chickenpox, we can welcome your child back to school once the fever has disappeared - as recommended by the Youth Service. To avoid the spreading illnesses, we ask parents who suspect their child is ill to advise staff immediately. The school will also inform all families of any illnesses being passed around.

Please inform us of all absences, both planned and unexpected. It is perfectly acceptable for children to miss school for a couple of weeks when they are small. As the children grow older, however, it is better to avoid prolonged absences so children do not miss learning stages.

### 3.8. "Borrowing" Montessori didactic material!

The Montessori teaching didactic material is beautiful, rare, unique and well cared for by the educators and pupils. Some objects, which may seem trivial to you (small objects such as beads, magnets, blocks, etc.) are, on the contrary, very important!

If by any chance your child comes home with something that does not belong to them, please encourage them to bring it back to school by explaining that the entire group would miss it, or bring it back yourself. Thank you in advance!

### 3.9. Lost and found

When the cloakroom is empty and clean, lost objects often reappear. If your child has lost something, please look in the lost and found which is located by the entrance of each building.

Two times a year, what remains unclaimed will be donated to charity.

### 3.10. School events

During the year, we will do a fire drill. The children are prepared for this exercise, as the teachers explain it in detail and tell children what is expected of them.

Also, children put together a performance which they present at the end of the school year. This is the result of several weeks of hard work so please: feel free to bring family and friends, be discrete during the performance, turn off your mobile phones and make sure younger children are calm. Please respect the children's work and avoid leaving before the end of the show.

During the year, we organize cultural, sport, and educational activities outside school. You will be informed by email. Outings in the area are also spontaneous, without prior communication (if permission to go out spontaneously was accepted at the beginning of the year by the parents on the Transparent Classroom).



## 4. Parents at school

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### 4.1. Information meetings & training sessions

One of the objectives of the school is to enable each parent to better understand their child and the Montessori teaching method. It is crucial that parents attend school meetings, as this will help them to accompany their child. If you have questions, please ask the staff.



**The school organizes several types of meetings and gatherings during the year:**

- Three meetings are organized when school starts:
  - o New arrivals - usually parents of 3-year-old children - to present teachers, the school, and the curriculum
  - o Parents of 4-year-old children, with a special presentation on the didactic material used in order to explain what your child does at school
  - o Parents of 5-year-old children, with a special presentation on the didactic material used
- Celebrations (Escalade, End of year, Sponsored Walk etc.)
- Individual meetings take place with parents throughout the year: end of November for 5 year-olds, in January for 4 year-olds, in February for the 3 year-old group with an extra one for the 5 year-olds in May
- Workshops for parents (hosted by Helen)
- Parents Café will happen regularly, ask Helen for details
- Conferences

**Please note that meetings are open to all parents, nannies and Grandparents.**

### 4.2. School reports

Following the Geneva Department of Public Instruction (DIP) model, once children are four years old - which means they are apt for compulsory education by the Swiss Harnos model - parents receive a school report at the end of each school year.

### 4.3. Class observation

We encourage parents to come and observe the class their child is in once a year. Your visit will show your children that you are interested in their work and stimulate them. Observation will also help you understand what your child is capable of and trigger dialogue.

We request that parents be respectful of the class, which might be a little disrupted by your presence. Please inform us if you wish to come in, as observations must be planned ahead of time and can only take place after the month of September - as this is a time of adjustment - and before the end of May. Observations last an hour and usually take place on Tuesdays from 9:00am to 10:00am.

We will explain Montessori observation in more detail during our parent-teacher meeting and on the day, we will provide you with more details.

#### 4.4. Workshop by the parents

If you have ideas, projects, or skills you would like to share, we would be thrilled to learn about them. This could include presenting your profession, an instrument, a pet, etc. Please get in touch!

## 5. The transition between age cycles

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During the first three-year cycle, children are fortunate to learn at their own pace. They develop their personality and gain considerable self-confidence.

In Primary, children will continue to evolve in an environment adapted to their new needs. They learn abstraction and reasoning and open up to the world. At this stage, children do a lot of group work as they need each other to learn. Collaboration stimulates them and optimizes their learning experience.

The transition to the Primary group takes place slowly over the year and is closely monitored by the teachers.

Thank-you for taking the time to read this document.

Kind regards from the Montessori Rive Gauche team.