



Les Pouces Verts

Les Pouces Verts is a unique Montessori school on the Côte d'Azur. It offers an alternative approach to traditional childhood education. Surrounded by nature, the school welcomes children from the ages of 2 to 15.



The Montessori teaching method is founded on the following principles:

- **knowledge of the child and his needs**
- **respect for his rhythm, personality, and personal development while facilitating his social integration**
- **development of his autonomy, his intrinsic motivation and his sense of responsibility**
- **a specially adapted material to actively integrate learning**

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Visitez-nous à www.montessori-les-pouces-verts.fr

1. Introduction

Established in 1976, Les Pouces Verts has been run by Ludmyla Lesourd with the help of colleagues, parents, friends, and of course, the children.

The purpose built center is located in a quiet setting between Mougins and Valbonne.

The school welcomes boys and girls from 2 to 15 years old. 110 pupils were enrolled for the scholastic year 2005/2006. The classrooms are specially designed to nurture cognitive function and optimal instruction. They provide a prepared environment for children to respond to their natural tendency to work. Their innate passion to learn is encouraged by spontaneous and purposeful activities which are offered by the specially trained staff. Classes accommodate the natural cycles of development which are broken down into the following 5 stages:

Stage 2-to-3 years (part-time or full time)

Stage 3-to-6 years (part-time or full time)

Stage 6-to-9 years

Stage 9-to-12 years

Stage 12-to-15 years

The teaching staff consists of 8 female , 3 male and 10 part-time teachers.

A child “graduates” from one group to the next one, not according to his age, but according to his level of maturity. Similar materials may be present in corresponding classrooms aiding in the transfer from one cycle to the next.

It is our experience that children who have left the school are well adapted to integrate into other educational systems.

2. “Experiencing life” at Les Pouces Verts

2.1. The Maria Montessori Method

Maria Montessori (1870-1952), was an anthropologist and a doctor in Italy. She dedicated her whole life to educating children - creating schools throughout the world: Italy, Spain, India, Holland....From the observation of children, she developed a very elaborate set of pedagogic materials and created the base for a new approach to education. Several times a Nobel Prize nominee and elected “citizen of the world”, she was, and remains one of the great pioneers in the field of education. Today, centres using her method are found globally including the U.S.A, Japan, Northern Europe...

The Montessori method is based on a profound knowledge of the child. The method is one of observation, research and reflection.

“The educator must observe the child, not with the intent to educate him but rather with the goal of learning from him how to educate him”

(Maria Montessori)

The method:

- **aims at allowing each child to blossom, with emphasis on social integration**
- **develops autonomy, intrinsic motivation and a sense of responsibility**
- **stimulates an awareness of his responsibilities for our planet**
- **uses didactic materials that allow the acquisition of in-depth knowledge**
- **respects the child's needs, individual rhythm, personality and dignity**
- **develops confidence and competence**

2.2. Our Goal... Our Challenge

What we invest in children today will enrich society tomorrow.

It is our challenge to transmit to our children our belief in the human spirit. It is vital that they understand that although they are young, they have not only a role to play, but a message to carry forth to the rest of the world.

We want to meet this challenge for the future in partnership – teacher, parent, child – to create a new vision of education for a new quality of life.

« Let us not raise our children for today's world.
This world will no longer exist when they are grown up.
Thus we must, with the highest priority, help the child cultivate
His skills for creativity and adaptation. »

(Maria Montessori)

2.3. How Does One Answer the Fundamental Needs of a Growing Child?

How can we help the child find his/her place the world?

- A rich social environment, with a mix of children of different ages in the same classroom, creates the right climate for developing social awareness based on mutual help and respect, and the joy of giving and receiving. This enables the children to “teach” each other.
- Pedagogic materials allow the child to build and acquire knowledge through experimentation. Like a scientist, the child proceeds by searching, through trial and error, before discovering the “law”, “rule” or “theorem” . Experiments lead to the integration of intellectual knowledge.
- Expanding horizons beyond the family, through visits to companies and craftsmen allows children to experience first hand the working world of adults.
- By providing a safe environment in which to take risks and assume added responsibilities, children gain a sense of freedom and self confidence.

A Montessori education is not only a teaching method but an intelligent response to education, incorporating the natural stages of physical, biological, psychological, mental and spiritual development of the child and adolescent.

2.4. The 0-to-6 Stage

The basic needs of the child from 2 to 6 years are:

- to be loved
- to love
- to be allowed to be himself and follow his own rhythm
- to be autonomous
- to feel secure
- to enjoy spontaneous and creative activities
- to live harmoniously among other human beings

How does Les Pouces Verts respond to these needs?

Our establishment is not a nursery, but gives the child the possibility:

- to grow in his(/her) overall development
- to learn to respect himself and others
- to develop his language
- to discover and develop his 5 senses
- to develop manual dexterity and the coordination of his movements, the hand being the starting point for the development of intelligence
- to achieve various intellectual objectives: writing, reading, mathematics, geography, sciences, botany, zoology...
- to be self-assured and self-confident

All these are achieved through:

- practical learning materials
- sensorial materials
- language and reading materials
- arithmetic and mathematics materials
- an atmosphere that embraces « space » culture, music, painting and art
- an atmosphere of clear and honest communication, both with the teacher and with the other children

All the above enrich the child allowing him or her to accept the differences that bring riches to the soul, leading to the respect and acceptance of others just the way they are.

2.5. The 6-to-12 Stage

At this stage of growth, the child undergoes enormous physical and psychological changes and develops a great intellectual curiosity. The needs of the previous stage are still present however new ones emerge:

- a need for privacy
- a need to be considered seriously
- a need to be respected and treated as a responsible person
- a need to be listened to in order to express himself freely
- a need to be esteemed in order to be able to develop self-esteem
- a need to be responsible, to enable him/her to discover for himself/herself the

consequences of his/her actions

In short, the child's fundamental need is to construct his moral self.

The child of 6-12 years has a need to integrate the manners and customs of society and to understand social relationships. He/she has a need to feel at home with his/her fellow man. This is achieved by positioning himself/herself :

- in the universe
- on earth
- in history
- in the history of his/her family
- in his personal history
- in present time
- in the present world
- in nature
- in man's labours on earth

All these discoveries must be made through personal observation and experience by the child himself rather than by theoretical teaching based on the explanations and experiences of adults.

3. Additional Information

The Montessori method provides a quality foundation for the education of each child at Les Pouces Verts. Furthermore, the natural and friendly environment contributes to the happiness and development of the child. Below are listed other aspects of the school that might be of interest to parents.

3.1. Language

The language used at the centre is french. Foreign children quickly learn to communicate in french. English is taught from the age of 3. Les Pouces Verts welcomes children of all nationalities.

3.2. Religion

The centre is non-religious and as such, no religious education is provided. The Montessori method respects all religious beliefs and develops the child's spiritual integrity.

3.3. Access and Transport

The centre is located at 200 metres from the D3 from Mougins to Valbonne, 15 minutes from Cannes and 25 minutes from Nice via the A8 highway. Most children are driven but public transport is available within walking distance.

3.4. Vacation schedule

We follow a cycle of 7 weeks of school, followed by 2 weeks of holidays not always coinciding with the vacations of the National Education Board. School resumes at the beginning of September and closes at the end of June. The school opens at 8:30am and classes begin at 8:45am. Those attending on a part-time basis finish at 11:30am, but full-time students are finished at 4:30pm.

3.5. Meals

Maria Montessori placed a great deal of importance on respecting nature and our stewardship of the world. Consequently, we have chosen to provide a balanced, vegetarian regimen using only organic products. The kitchen staff prepare all meals on site, and all children and teachers dine together.

3.6. Sports

Team sports are regularly practised by the 9-12 and 12-15 classes. The garden allows for children to play freely. Sandboxes, slides, swings, climbing equipment and table tennis are provided amongst other things.

3.7. Music and Art

Artistic expression is highly prized at Les Pouces Verts. Painting and singing are important class activities. Special musical workshops are provided in class. In addition, private individual lessons for piano, harp and flute, or group djembe lessons may be taken during the day. Plays are written and produced by the older classes while younger classes attend workshops on corporal expression.

3.8. Outings and Parties

The center organises group outings that correspond to the curriculum such as trips to such places as the Brague River to have a picnic, and Villa Kerylos to study ancient greek architecture.

Throughout the year, children and teachers invite parents to the school to enjoy school plays and talent shows, christmas concerts, and various other festivals.

3.9. Respect for the Environment

The Montessori method emphasizes stewardship and an environmental conciousness. Children are encouraged to care for the school's kitchen garden and parents contribute to the maintenance and watering of the gardens and school property. The Montessori environment helps children to develop self, cultural, community and environmental awareness and to extend this awareness of social responsibility beyond their families and their school to the local and global communities.

3.10. Meetings

The Montessori Centre *Les Pouces Verts* feels very strongly that parents play an active role in their child's education. This is achieved in the following ways:

- Each parent is invited to accompany his or her child in class for half a day, actually seeing and sharing what happens in the classroom. This is particularly informative and stimulating for the parent.
- Each parent is invited to meet the teachers involved in his or her child's education and to maintain an open dialogue.
- The « feuille de route », which is completed by the children on a weekly basis to outline daily activities, progress, and events, provides weekly communication between children, teachers and parents.
- The centre is supported by a parent-friends association. Parents may join various committees (management, communications, works, etc.)
- The centre regularly holds pedagogical evening meetings with parents on a variety of topics. There are also various social events organised throughout the year such as coffee mornings, dinners at restaurants, and family breakfasts at school.

4. The “Parent-Teacher” Training Centre

We offer continuous training for teachers and supply-teachers of "*Les Pouces Verts*" as well as for parents who wish:

- for an in depth discovery of the educational psychology and philosophy of Maria Montessori.
- for a deepening of their personal psychological search.

This training is also open to people specialised in the field of Childhood and Education. It provides a practical experience with the Montessorian pedagogical curriculum, through the sensory experience of everyone. It offers :

- time for advanced psychological training
- time for work and research on personal experience
- weekly dialogue of the educational team with a view to a permanent questioning of everyone in his relationship with the child.

What is the purpose of the parent-teacher training center?

We believe in the parent-teacher training because parents are the first teachers of their child. However, children teach their parents as well.

If our goal is to help our children to live true to themselves, we, parents, teachers and today's role models, must set an example of self-searching, of honesty to ourselves, of our vision for humanity and our desire to live in harmony with ourselves, our children and the world.

5. The Association and Funding

The Montessori Centre *Les Pouces Verts* is managed by the "Centre Montessori, *Les Pouces Verts*" a non-profit association (under the 1901 statute) which has existed since 1976 and whose mission is to manage educational and cultural centres for both children and adults.

Founded 30 years ago, it is an institution recognised by the French National Education Board but does not receive any grants from the State. It is therefore financed only through the school fees paid by parents who strongly believe in the Montessori method and in the Centre Montessori *Les Pouces Verts*. Because the centre is non-profit, fees are kept as low as possible to make the school financially accessible to as wide a range of families as possible.

6. Enrollment

After having submitted your application form and a letter outlining your motivation, you will be contacted by the school to arrange for a meeting with the teachers of the cycle corresponding to the age of your child. A visit to the class may be proposed for your child, depending on age and previous experience. This allows the child and the teachers to provide feedback to aid you in the enrollment decision.

You are also invited to ask questions and tour the school with parents of current students.

