



# Children's House Curriculum Guide

  
**SOMERSFIELD**  
Montessori & Middle Years Programme **ACADEMY**

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# The Origins of Montessori Education

Montessori is an educational philosophy based on the scientific research and observations of the great pioneer, Dr. Maria Montessori (1870 - 1952). Montessori lived during a time when many adults failed to recognise the young child as an intelligent human being, capable of learning. In her quest to gain a better understanding of the child's abilities and capabilities, Montessori's "discovery of the child" was a true awakening in the advancement of early education. Dr. Maria Montessori noted that all children from different cultural, economic and racial backgrounds are naturally motivated to learn, are born to be curious, and that there are sensitive periods when they possess a unique and amazing aptitude for learning.

Dr. Montessori believed that education begins at birth and that the first six years are the most important in a child's life as these years will largely determine the kind of person the child will become. She spoke of the child's mind as the 'absorbent mind' because of its great ability to learn and assimilate effortlessly and unconsciously from the world around them. As such, Montessori placed a strong emphasis on the teacher's role, the physical and prepared environment and the didactic materials, all of which awaken the children's interest in learning and are contributing factors in their physical, mental and spiritual growth.

The Montessori Method is dedicated to facilitating the development of the whole child in an empowering, collaborative, integrative learning environment that fosters independence, and social and environmental responsibility. Dr. Montessori was confident that if these critical values were instilled in children, a harmonious and peaceful society would evolve.

Although Maria Montessori's child development theory and educational method were initially controversial, advances in science and our current understanding of human development have since reversed this perspective. Montessori's educational theories are now strongly supported by leading neuroscientists, developmental theorists, cognitive researchers and educational experts. Montessori's deep insight and inspired teaching methods introduced the world to a new and exciting dimension to education. She created the foundation and approach to education which is increasingly widely accepted as the most effective.

# What is the Children's House Programme?

The Children's House programme is for children ages 3 - 6 and focuses on the development of each child's full potential using teachers specially trained in the Montessori Method and philosophy.

Our teachers use both concrete teaching materials and a well-defined innovative curriculum tailored to address each stage in a child's development. Visitors to the first "Children's House" in Rome in 1907 were impressed by the children's spontaneous love of work and by the quiet, busy atmosphere that dominated the room. This same atmosphere prevails in the "Children's House" at Somersfield.

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**The Montessori educational approach enhances performance, interest, persistence, memory, and creativity in learning.**

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## Key Elements of a Montessori Education

- *To foster competent, responsible, adaptive citizens who are lifelong learners and problem solvers. This goal is aligned with the basis of the IB Programme which also focuses on holistic learning. Montessori education puts as much emphasis on developing the child's character as it does on academics.*
- *To promote learning in an inquiring, cooperative, nurturing atmosphere through self and teacher initiated experiences.*
- *To support learning through the senses, by manipulating materials and interacting with others, leading to the abstract understanding of concepts.*
- *To consider the individual as a whole: physical, emotional, social, aesthetic, spiritual and cognitive needs and interests are inseparable.*
- *To reflect on self, others, the environment and all life.*
- *To cultivate good character in each child.*

## Profile of a Somersfield Learner

Somersfield Academy encourages students to achieve high academic standards and to become peaceful, global citizens who are curious, life-long learners. These goals are clearly reflected in the principles of the Montessori and IB Programmes, and in the school's 'Promise' and 'Core Values'. Our teachers inspire students to strive to be:

<b>Inquirers</b>	Students develop their natural curiosity.
<b>Courageous</b>	Students use courage and take risks when confronted with new and difficult situations and face obstacles with assertive communication.
<b>Knowledgeable</b>	Students explore concepts, ideas and issues that have both a local and global significance.
<b>Imaginative</b>	Students use their imagination for the construction of knowledge.
<b>Thinkers</b>	Students think critically to engage themselves in solving complex problems.
<b>Communicators</b>	Students express themselves and their knowledge through various modes of communication.
<b>Peacemakers</b>	Students learn to be open-minded, to accept and appreciate cultural differences, and to develop a sense of peace and harmony.
<b>Principled</b>	Students act honestly and with a strong sense of fairness, justice, and respect for the dignity of the individual, groups, and communities.
<b>Responsible</b>	Students are given freedom to plan their work and to choose appropriate and challenging tasks.
<b>Compassionate</b>	Students show respect, care, and humility towards the needs of others and to all living things.
<b>Reflective</b>	Students give consideration to their own learning and experience.
<b>Balanced</b>	Students understand the importance of intellectual, physical and emotional balance to achieve personal well-being.

## How is the curriculum structured?

The curriculum structure is holistic and child-centred with an educational goal to nurture a child's intrinsic desire to learn. Our curriculum was designed to intrigue children and develop in them a life-long love of learning. The spiral of the Montessori curriculum has no end, and the depth to which any topic can be pursued is limited only by a student's interests and ability. Our objective is to cultivate the child's character, curiosity and interest in learning, while nurturing creativity, independent thinking and spontaneous intellectual inquiry. To accomplish this goal there are three essential components required:

- **The Montessori Teacher**
- **The Prepared Environment**
- **The Montessori Curriculum**

### The Montessori Teacher

The teacher's role is to observe, guide, nurture and stimulate children to become self-motivated, independent, self-confident, self-disciplined joyful learners. For children to attain these goals the teacher must:

- Observe in order to determine each child's developmental needs.
- Prepare the environment and materials to meet individual needs.
- Facilitate and guide the child's learning.
- Encourage children to make free choices responsibly, to interact and discover the materials and to inquire, investigate and discover new concepts and ideas.

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***“The Montessori teacher creates a “nurturing environment that is physically and psychologically supportive of learning.”***

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## The Prepared Environment

The physical appearance and layout of the learning materials must adhere to specific standards which include:

- Structure and order in organising and sequencing materials (structure and order helps to build a child's internal order).
- An attractive, inviting classroom that also reflects the children's culture.
- Materials that provide active practical life experiences that engage children in learning how to live in the real world.

## The Montessori Curriculum

### Areas of Learning

The curriculum is divided into five main areas of learning:

- Practical life
- Sensorial
- Language
- Mathematics
- Cultural Subjects (Biology, Geography, History, Science)

### Character Development

Integrated into our curriculum are:

- Grace and Courtesy
- Peace Education

### The Co-Curricular Subjects

In addition to the Montessori Curriculum we offer:

- Art and Art Appreciation
- Music and Movement
- Foreign Language
- Physical Education



## Subject Descriptions

### Practical Life

One of the strongest urges for children during their early years is to imitate the adult, so it is a natural process for them to engage in everyday living experiences. To accommodate this process, children are given lessons in grace and courtesy which focus on their social interactions with other children and adults, and on building character. In addition, they are introduced to meaningful, structured activities using familiar materials they recognise from their home experience. Children happily wash dishes, scrub tables, polish shoes and pare vegetables. Everyday 'Practical Life' experiences are an integral part of a child's overall development.

The goals are to develop and perfect the child's:

- Coordination
- Concentration
- Attention to details
- Work habits
- Social skills

No learning can take place without the ability to concentrate and attend. Children simply love to work in the 'Practical Life' area.

### Sensorial

Children meet the world through the constant use of their five senses. The sensorial materials allow them to explore new information in a way that makes it easy and natural for them to learn. Each material isolates a single quality such as colour, weight, size, shape, texture, sound and smell, thereby allowing the child to concentrate on one sense at a time.

These materials also introduce children to five important concepts:

- Matching
- Sorting
- Grading
- Base Ten
- Geometry

Children develop a heightened awareness of their five senses and the world around them.

All activities are designed with a specific purpose in mind: sequencing, fine and gross motor development, and spatial relationships. The children are able to develop their skills while enjoying their learning experience.

A light green, wavy-edged banner with a blue border containing the word "Language" in blue text.

## Language

Our approach to reading and writing is multi-sensory so that children see, hear, feel and move as they learn to read and write and understand the grammatical aspects of our language.

## Reading and Writing

Learning to read and write involves a number of steps and activities.

- Listening to stories and sharing books with adults from an early age.
- Playing rhyming and memory games that help to build an awareness of sounds in language.
- Learning the letter-sounds through the use of sandpaper forms; matching letter-sounds with objects and learning high frequency words and sight words (words that cannot be sounded).
- Constructing phonetic words based on objects and pictures using the moveable alphabet.
- Constructing and writing phonetic sentences using the moveable alphabet.
- Developing comprehension skills through story sequencing, talking about books and introducing specific vocabulary to develop and enhance comprehension.

- Reading simple phonetic books to develop decoding and encoding skills and gain proficiency in reading fluency. Once a child has a good grasp of the phonics other readers are introduced.
- Handwriting is developed through the sandpaper letters, the moveable alphabet, and a formal handwriting programme.

Children love to learn, but to learn to read and write is possibly the most exciting prospect of all, as it presents boundless opportunities to stretch the imagination and to learn about our world and universe. A child's sheer joy and wonder at developing these remarkable abilities is a great pleasure to observe. Parents are encouraged to read to, and listen to their children read to further develop these invaluable skills.

## Grammar

Children are introduced to the basic parts of speech and are able to recognize and symbolize them within sentences.

- Nouns
- Adjectives
- Action Verbs
- Articles
- Prepositions



Children are happily engaged in lessons and a variety of interactive small group games to develop an understanding of the role each of these parts of speech play in our everyday language.

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**“Education is a natural process carried out by the human individual and is acquired not by listening to words, but by experiences in the environment.”**

**- Dr. Maria Montessori**

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## Mathematics

The main purpose of the mathematical materials is to allow the children to feel comfortable as they explore. The introduction to mathematics is to take an abstract concept and turn it into something concrete. There are eight material areas, each representing a specific concept:

- Introducing the concept of numbers and their numerical symbols and corresponding quantities.
- The Decimal System and the four basic mathematical functions; addition, subtraction, multiplication and division.
- Numbers 1 - 9,999.
- Learning essential combinations for each mathematical function.
- Identifying fractions.
- Identifying and naming units of money.
- Identifying basic geometric shapes and lines.
- Applying all the knowledge gained to solve sums in the abstract and to apply it to simple word problems.

Through individual and small group lessons children enjoy their mathematical experiences and gain a concrete understanding of important math concepts.

## Cultural

The cultural lessons created for each subject progress from the concrete to the abstract. Lessons build slowly on a solid foundation and are designed to expose the child to the world and all that live within it. It is important for children to learn about the natural and man-made environments and to distinguish between them.

## Biology

Biology is the science of living organisms. It is subdivided into Zoology (the science of the Animal Kingdom) and Botany (the science of the Plant Kingdom). Children develop a love of nature as they learn about outdoor gardens, the function of trees and their leaves, farmyard animals and their families, life cycles and the classifications of the animal kingdom.

## Geography

Geography is divided into human, physical, economic, political elements and the study of cartography. Children develop a clearer sense of spatial orientation through enriched interactive experiences, and become keenly aware of, and accepting of other cultures. Dr. Montessori believed that by studying the world children develop caring attitudes towards all people so that the future world could be a more peaceful place. She saw the child as a 'citizen of the world' and hoped that this holistic approach and understanding of the similarities and differences between us all would prevent major world conflicts. Children learn about the solar system, the structure of the earth, continents and countries, and animals of the world.

*"Free the child's potential, and you will transform him into the world."*

## History

Children become familiar with the natural history of the world. Lessons provide them with a clear sense of the concept of time: past, present and future, representing the story of the universe and the role of humans in it. Initially children are introduced to their individual time line of life which immediately captivates their interest. They see their own development through a series of photographs from birth to the present day. Following the individual time line children are exposed to the prehistoric time line. Children are always excited to learn the interesting and exhilarating aspects of history.

## Science

Children are briefly exposed to the way in which our world works by studying life and the laws and structure of the universe. Children learn to observe, to question, and to collect and analyze information. The focus is on presentations of simple experiments to pique their interest in the sciences so that it will take root and grow over time. They are introduced to concepts that can be explored and developed such as floating and sinking, living and non-living, solutions, the state of matter, air, light, energy, and magnetism. Children are natural born explorers and scientists.

## Character Development

### Peace Education

Peace education is at the heart of our curriculum and is based on Dr. Maria Montessori's beliefs about 'Peace and Character Education', and upon the school's 'Core Values'. Our 'Core Values' are instilled in the children through our 'Virtues in Us' programme which is designed to cultivate good character in each child. Virtues such as peacefulness, generosity, caring, unity, responsibility and joyfulness are introduced during weekly peace circles, and every day the children practise these virtues at school and at home. The school's teachers and parents are inspired to help raise thoughtful, respectful and understanding children for they are the peacemakers of tomorrow.

### Grace and Courtesy

The students are introduced to the skills of active listening and conflict resolution, which are an important part of Montessori grace and courtesy lessons. Basic skills are demonstrated and examples practised that give students appropriate choices in social situations that require: taking turns; reacting to problem situations; understanding another's point of view; communicating that understanding clearly; stating one's feelings and needs; creating win-win solutions to conflicting needs; and acting as a third party mediator for others with conflicting needs.

## Co-Curricular Subjects

Specialist teachers provide children with opportunities to explore and develop their creative and athletic talents, and to experience a foreign language and its culture. Specialist teachers work closely with the classroom teachers in providing lessons that complement and support the Montessori curriculum.

### Foreign Language

The Foreign Language programme for the Children's House is taught using the Accelerative Integrated Method (AIM), which aligns with many Montessori core beliefs. Like Montessori, the goal is to help students find joy in learning and to help them acquire a language naturally, as they did their first language. AIM is based on the belief that when language learning is supportive and fun, it enhances participation and learning. There are no textbooks in the AIM programme. This is an interactive programme utilising gestures to convey meaning and reinforce high-frequency vocabulary. Emphasis is on partner and group activities in order for students to practise the language skills and develop the highest level of proficiency possible.

AIM incorporates drama, music, writing, and dance in a dynamic and kinesthetic environment that appeals to various learning styles of students. The programme structure is designed as a basic introduction to foreign languages with a concentration in French but Spanish elements will also be introduced. The emphasis is on speech, culture and diversity. AIM explores the similarities between languages as well as how their usage is different from English. Students at the end of the programme are well prepared to transition into the Lower Primary Foreign Language Curriculum.



## Art and Art Appreciation

The Art programme is designed to encourage the awakening of the confident, capable and creative artist within each child. The programme offers a basic introduction to art practices, concepts, artists and their techniques, as well as proper use and care of art supplies (i.e. brushes, glue, and palettes).

Students are given a wide range of experiences to help them appreciate the art around them. The children work with such media as pastels, ink, water colours, charcoal, acrylics, tempera paints, markers, crayons and coloured pencils, and learn about various artistic techniques such as collaging, sculpture, weaving, and print-making. The art teacher also collaborates closely with class teachers regarding school based art events.

## Music and Movement

Music lessons follow the Montessori approach of developing the child's whole nature of body, mind and spirit. Therefore students engage in song, movement, and exploration of instruments, demonstrating their musicality during circle time, concerts and the extended day programme.

Music is aligned to its cultural roots and is studied as an expression of ethnicity and as part of the fabric of a given culture at a particular time. Therefore music appreciation is a large part of the experience including world music and instruments, cultural music, and composer studies within various musical genres.

Students explore the basic elements of music such as pitch, rhythm, timbre and dynamics. Each element is given more depth with the addition of non-traditional notation as they move up through the years in the music programme.



## Physical Education

Physical education offers children the opportunity to explore the capabilities of their bodies and the variety of ways in which they are able to use them to solve simple problems, tackle appropriate physical challenges, manipulate equipment or apparatus, and express themselves in a range of situations. Children are exposed to a number of activities that will assist in their gross motor skill development.

Children become aware of safe behaviour practices when engaging in physical activities, recognise the importance of fair play, cooperative behaviours and the ability to function as part of a group. Children are introduced to some of the ways exercise affects their bodies.

### P.E. Skills Areas Covered:

Fall Term				
	Sept. - Oct.		Nov. - Dec.	
	Indoor	Outdoor	Indoor	Indoor
Pre-Primary	Body Control	---	Gymnastics	---
P1	Body Control	Adventure Challenge	Gymnastics	Gymnastics
Winter Term				
	Jan. - Feb.		Feb. - Mar.	
	Indoor	Outdoor	Indoor	Outdoor
Pre-Primary	Games	---	Healthy Activities	---
P1	Games	Body Control	Healthy Activities	Games
Spring Term				
	April - May		May - June	
	Indoor	Outdoor	Indoor	Outdoor
Pre-Primary	Games	---	Movement to Music	---
P1	Games	Games	Movement to Music	Adventure Challenge

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## Parents are always welcome

Parents are always welcome to participate in various activities and events that take place in the classroom.

Teachers extend an invitation to parents to participate in our 'Read Aloud' and 'Listening to Readers' programmes, as well as various class events and field trips. In addition, parents who wish to observe their child in a classroom may make arrangements with the teacher to visit.

However, it is requested that parents wait until after the start of the school year as this time line allows children to become more settled and independent and less likely to be distracted from their work cycle during the visit.

Formal observations take place prior to spring break and the second parent-teacher conferences. Our families are very important to us and we embrace their gift of time and talent.

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## Supporting your child's learning

Parents are expected to read to their child every day for approximately ten minutes.

In addition, children who are able to read are expected to read to their parents every evening for the same amount of time to further their fluency and comprehension skills.

Parents are encouraged to engage their child in rhyming and number games to reinforce concepts while at the same time have fun! It is also very important that parents' guide their child toward independence by providing opportunities for self-care and to share housekeeping responsibilities.

Children should be encouraged to dress themselves, set a table and enjoy the just "doing" of the everyday living experience. "Help me learn to do it myself!"

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## Library Resources

Each class has their own mini-library of books for children to enjoy. Teachers explain the Library's function and how to care for books. Children are introduced to the concept of authors, illustrators and genres after which many decide they want to write a book or draw the pictures!

Children in P1 go to the Library for half an hour each week. During that time, they learn the Library's function, how to select books and how to care for them. They are treated to a story by the Librarian or a teacher and by February, the children are able to select a book, check it out and take it home, which is very exciting for them.

## Assessing Students

Our teachers guide the children in their learning, establishing goals based on the curricular framework, and a child's interest and readiness in learning specific concepts.

Teachers assess the children's understanding of the various concepts taught through daily observations, open ended questions and a review of the actual work the children produce.

If a child has not understood a concept the teachers may reintroduce a lesson using a different approach, ask questions to help guide awareness and provide opportunities for additional practice and repetition. Assessment is a process which is an integral part of instruction as teachers respond to individual students.

To assist the teachers in their ability to observe and keep accurate notes on every student, each classroom will use a computer programme called Montessori Compass. Montessori Compass provides the teacher with a simple, yet effective way to track student progress, to have easy access to the curriculum, and a communication bridge between home and classroom.

If the teachers determine a child is exceeding academic expectations, or struggling academically or behaviourally, they enter discussions with the Learning Resource Coordinator who, along with the

teachers, determine if the student requires additional enrichment, a formal assessment, or a specific intervention. Parents are always a part of the discussions when determining a child's needs.

For further information on assessment procedures, please refer to the Student Support section of the *Parent-Student Handbook*.

## Report Cards

The academic year is divided into 2 semesters with formal reports being prepared and made available at the end of each semester.

Semester	Report Cards	General Reporting Period
Semester 1	Report 1	September - December
Semester 2	Report 2	January - June

The report cards provide an in-depth assessment of a student's progress by both the homeroom and specialist teachers. **These reports are made available to parents via the Parent Portal. All reports are archived on the Parent Portal.**

### STUDENT PROGRESS UPDATES

Mid-semester progress updates are shared during Parent Teacher Conferences and are designed to give a general, overall view of student progress at a mid-point in the semester. Parent Teacher Conferences occur twice a year: October and March. They are mandatory for all Children House parents.

## The School Day

Children work in all areas of the classroom moving through various activities in Practical Life, Sensorial, Mathematics, Language and Culture, receiving small or large group lessons or simply mastering a concept on their own. Teachers delivering our Foreign Language, Art, Music and Physical Education programmes work closely with the classroom teachers in providing lessons that complement the curriculum. Children enjoy all we have to offer.

### A typical daily routine...

1. Quality circle time followed by a work cycle which includes combinations of the above topics.
2. Children visit the snack table and enjoy a variety of nutritious foods.
3. Specialist subjects generally take place during the morning work cycle according to class schedules.
4. Outdoor play for our 3 year old children is followed by dismissal at 11:50 a.m.
5. Children in the 3 Year Old Half Day Programme are collected by their parents.
6. Children in the 3 Year Old Full Day Programme remain with their classmates to enjoy their lunch and playtime. At 12:50 they are taken to the classroom designated for this programme to have a nap or rest time followed by interactive activities with the teacher.
7. Lunch and playtime for full day and primary one children followed by the afternoon work cycle.

## 3 Year Old Full Day Programme: 12:00 - 3:00 pm (FDP)

FDP is a fee paying programme intended for children whose parents have a work commitment. Children in this programme remain with their classmates to enjoy lunch and an outside playtime. At 12:50 pm they are taken to the classroom designated for this programme to have a nap or rest time, followed by interactive activities with the teacher(s). Rest time is very important for these little ones as they tend to be quite tired from their morning routine. Children who do not nap are required to have a 30 minute rest period. Those who do nap are wakened by 2:30 pm to prepare for going home. Parents receive a monthly newsletter highlighting the children's in-class activities.

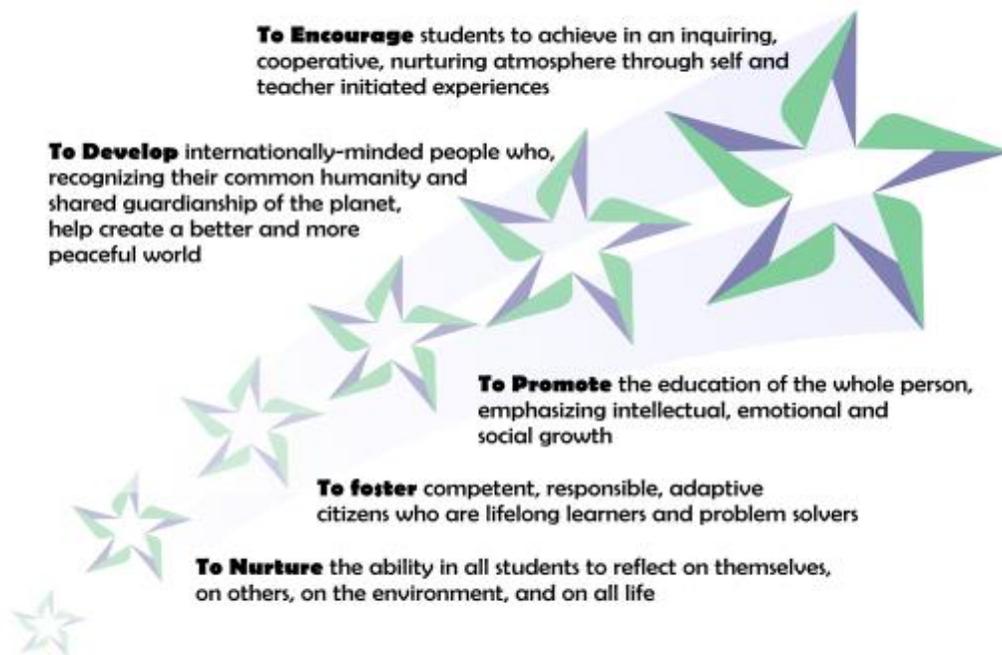
## The Extended Day Programme: 3:00 - 5:30 pm (EDP)

EDP is a fee paying programme intended for children whose parents have a work commitment. The hours are from 3:00 - 5:30 pm and first priority is given to children in the 3 Year Old Full Day programme. Children who were in EDP previously are automatically given a space provided the family needs remain the same.

A schedule of activities is sent to parents at the beginning of each term which may include any one of the following: arts and crafts, music, gardening, yoga or cookless cooking. The EDP Coordinator and classroom teachers ensure that the children's experience is enriching and enjoyable. This programme is also supported by some of our students in the Secondary Division who engage in community service as a part of their coursework.

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## Our Aims





## ***The Somersfield Promise***

*To stimulate intellectual  
curiosity and accomplishment;  
to instil compassion and  
respect; and to always honour  
the daring dreams and hidden  
talents of the individual.*

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