



Parents' Handbook

2024

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WELCOME TO MONTESSORI AT OTARI PRESCHOOL

**Our vision is to nourish the human spirit to create a better world
Ka whāngia te wairua o te tangata kia hangaia he ao painga atu**

Nau mai haere mai and a very warm welcome to your child(ren) and your whānau! Thank you for choosing our Preschool. We hope that you enjoy many happy years of involvement with Montessori at Otari Preschool.

This Parent Handbook provides information and guidance for parents. You can also find it on our website: www.otaripreschool.school.nz. It includes:

- the structure and operation of Montessori at Otari Preschool, and
- your responsibilities and expected participation in the operation of the Preschool.

Our Preschool is a not-for-profit incorporated society and registered charitable entity.

The Preschool is run by a Council made up of parent volunteers who are elected at the Annual General Meeting (AGM) every year in March. We can maintain our affordable fees because of the significant amount of work undertaken by the Council that would in most organisations be undertaken by paid staff. During your child's time at the Preschool, please consider joining the Council for a year or more, or contacting the Council and volunteering your services for a project.

Without the input of parents the Preschool could not function. The contribution of all families is required for the following rostered duties:

- working bees
- driveway duties
- morning tea provision.

More detailed information on these duties is provided in the newsletter (e-mailed to you once a term), on the noticeboards in the Preschool foyer, and inside this Handbook. Please make yourself familiar with this information. Read the contents carefully and if there is any matter that needs clarification or more information, please contact the Preschool.

Your cooperation with the requests contained in this Handbook will assist us greatly in the smooth running of our Preschool and will ensure that you family gets the most out of what we offer at our preschool.

ABOUT MONTESSORI AT OTARI PRESCHOOL

Vision

Nourishing the human spirit to create a better world.

Ka whāngia te wairua o te tangata kia hangaia he ao painga atu

Purpose

Our purpose is to provide excellence in Montessori education closely woven with Te Whāriki/NZ Early Childhood Curriculum and honouring Te Tiriti o Waitangi. We are a not-for-profit Preschool for tamariki|children aged around 3 to 6.

Philosophy statement

We offer a child-centred programme, supporting the independence and the holistic development (physical, social, emotional, spiritual and intellectual) of each tamaiti|child. Our goal is for each tamaiti to reach their potential, become lifelong ākonga|learners, equipped with life skills to thrive in a changing world, and having the confidence to positively contribute to their community.

Values

Our values guide our Preschool. They support our decisions, lead our conduct and reflect the special nature of Montessori at Otari Preschool.

Our values are:

Akoranga: We promote independence, curiosity and creativity, in a Montessori prepared environment that allows individual freedom balanced with responsibility.

Kaitiakitanga: We support, nurture, protect and respect each other, our community and the environment, now and for the future.

Manaakitanga: We show kindness, respect and aroha in everything we do, to enhance the mana of tamariki, kaiako and whānau, where everybody feels welcome and valued.

Whanaungatanga: We collectively foster positive and meaningful relationships.

Kotahitanga: We provide a safe and inclusive environment that is equitable for all and celebrates diversity, to build unity within our community.

History

The Karori Montessori Society was formed in 1976 to organise a learning group for preschool children based on Montessori principles. It was a parent cooperative and money was contributed by parents to buy equipment. The learning group met in parents' homes and went on to organise outings.

When the Preschool was incorporated, the Society's assets were transferred. The Preschool operated at St Michael's Church Hall, Kelburn, from March 1978 until March 1985. The Preschool then transferred to St Anne's Church Hall, Woburn Road, Northland.

The Preschool rapidly expanded from one class of 20 children to two classes of 25 and in 1990 an afternoon class was also opened to go some way towards meeting demand for places. In May 1995 the Preschool moved to classrooms within the Otari School.

In 2009, the Preschool established the Montessori-at-Otari Playgroup for babies and toddlers up to the age of three years old. This is run by a parents committee and the twice weekly sessions are led by a Montessori-trained supervisor. It has become an important 'feeder' for the Preschool. (see the section about Playgroup in the A-Z of General Information)

Montessori at Otari Preschool is located on the grounds of Otari School, set amongst the beautiful natural environment of Otari Bush. Montessori at Otari Preschool was the first Montessori preschool in the Wellington Region, and has a long history of providing quality early childhood education. As we are a community-based Preschool, parents play an active role in the overall running of the Preschool. One of our key strengths is the ongoing partnership that develops between the parent council and staff.

The Preschool has remained a parent cooperative with an annually elected parent Council to manage it. The Preschool is a licensed and chartered early childhood centre and is reviewed by the Ministry of Education's Review Office (ERO). A copy of their latest review is available in the Preschool foyer and Office or may be obtained from the Education Review Office website or by writing to the Review Office.

Philosophy

Montessori at Otari Preschool bases its philosophy on the Montessori method of education, developed by Dr. Maria Montessori (1870-1952) who founded the first Montessori community, called "The Children's House" in 1907 in Rome, Italy. Today, the Montessori pedagogy is the single largest method in the world with over 22,000 schools in more than 100 countries on 6 continents.

The aim of Montessori education is to place all the children in the world at the center of society and to assist them in becoming caring, self-motivated, resilient and fulfilled individuals, able to create a sustainable and peaceful future for humanity. Montessori advocated that the role of Early Childhood education was not to prepare children for school but for life.

Based on this principle, children are provided opportunities to explore a wide range of activities that foster their independence, concentration, coordination and self-esteem. Our

prepared environment (indoor and outdoor) provides rich learning experiences for the child to choose from. Activities are purposeful, real and explorative, and have a clear cycle (beginning, middle and end). The environment is orderly and simply structured to enable the child to make independent choices for their own learning and construction of self.

The choices that a child makes through the day are respected. Tamariki can choose their own individual activity, or work and play with or alongside their peers. This enables them to develop social skills, as they learn to cooperate, negotiate and turn-take.

Based on the observations of the teachers, children are guided towards constructive activities that they may never have experienced before. The teachers function as caretakers of the environment, providing a link between the child and the activities available to them.

There is great emphasis on taking care of the environment, which the children contribute to on a daily basis. Through these activities a community of children is fostered. They have daily opportunities to learn and use practical life skills that enable them to develop concentration. For example, they learn to prepare kai|food for morning tea, to wash dishes, to fold clean washing, to get changed, to clean windows, to sweep the floors... Becoming competent and skillful develops a strong sense of self-esteem and independence.

THE MONTESSORI APPROACH AND YOUR CHILD

Introduction

Montessori educators carefully prepare the learning environment (indoor and outdoor) referred to as the 'prepared environment', based on the children's developmental needs. The Montessori educator also observes and supports the interactions of individual children with the materials provided and is the link between them. Based on these observations, the materials available in the classroom are adapted to the children's developmental needs. This child-centred approach to education is based on the belief that children themselves are the best guides to showing us what is right for them.

The 'Sensitive Periods'

A concept originally formulated by Dr Maria Montessori, the sensitive periods refer to those periods in the child's life when a certain aptitude manifests itself strongly. During these periods the child has an especially strong sensitivity towards a particular piece of knowledge or skill. The sensitivity lasts for a certain period and does not recur. It is demonstrated as an all-encompassing interest (almost to the exclusion of all others) which produces, on the part of the child, an immense amount of intellectually directed activity. In the period from 0 to 3 years, the child experiences the following sensitive periods:

- Language Acquisition
Starting before birth and carrying on to approximately 3 years, the child is geared to effortlessly acquire spoken language, which then forms the basis for the child's literary skills. Thereafter, the sensitive period for language continues as the child develops written language (writing and reading) until the period finishes around the age of 6 - 7 years.
- Movement
In the period between birth and approximately 2½ years the child achieves fine and gross motor skills that result in being able to balance in an upright position and being in full control of the use of the hands. From 2½ - 4 years there is an extra sensitivity to refine these skills resulting in more precise gross and fine motor coordination.
- Order
This sensitive period is the strongest during the period between approximately 6 months and 2½ years. Thereafter the importance of order in the environment and daily routine become gradually less important between 2½ - 5 years old. The sensitive period for order helps the child to classify information.
- Interest in Small Details
A special ability to notice the tiniest details exists between 18 months and 2½ years. This is often manifested when looking at books or exploring nature.
- Sensorial Exploration

A sensitive period for nuances in sight, pitch, taste, smell and touch exists between birth and approximately 3 years old. Thereafter between 3 to 6 years (the Montessori preschool stage) this ability is refined.

- Tactile Exploration

Between approximately 2 - 3½ years there is a heightened sensitivity for different experiences of touch. This is referred to as the sensitive period for development of the stereognostic sense, i.e. distinguishing shapes by touch alone.

Absorbent Mind

This is how Maria Montessori described the special way in which the child's mind operates during approximately the first 6 years of life. The absorbent mind takes in all information without discrimination or judgement. There is little ability to distinguish between reality and fantasy, good or bad. Secure and happy children actively seek out opportunities to learn more. The child's attention gives us clues to the inner drive of the child - it is a connection between what is inside the child and what the outside world offers.

Because children at this age are forming a picture in their minds of the world around them, Maria Montessori believed we should give them information that is based on reality.

More information on the Absorbent Mind can be found in books from our Parents Library.

Hands - 'Instruments of Intelligence'

You may notice that many of the activities are aimed at refining the use of the hands. Maria Montessori believed that young children learn by doing and she called the hands 'instruments of intelligence'. Work with the hands engages the brain by stimulating the senses and establishing pathways for muscle coordination and classification of sensory input.

Activities include:

- Refinement of small movements - exercising greater precision or offering different variations to the movement of grasping.
- Exercise and development of eye-hand coordination, such as sewing and threading.
- Development of the coordination of two hands working together, with the exercises of Practical Life (such as pouring, transferring, sewing, cutting).

In everything you do with your child, the more they can use their hands at this age, the better it is for them.

Encouragement versus Evaluation and Praise

To become themselves, children need to be free from the pressure of evaluative praise. Self-esteem, self-direction and self-discipline rely on inner motivation and self-evaluation.

The way we speak and the words we use have great power. Language is the vehicle for meaning; it awakens the character and shapes the self-esteem of our tamariki.

Children need acknowledgement and encouragement, but the actual evaluation needs to be left to the child otherwise we run the risk of our children relying on outside approval more so

than trusting their own evaluation. When we encourage a child at our Preschool, we focus on the behavior and give specific, simple language, such as: “I can see you are being helpful at emptying the dishwasher”, “Thank you for practicing cleanliness by cleaning all our tables today”; “I saw you were so patient when you had to wait a long time to wash your hands:...We aim to use positive strategies in our communication with all our ākonga. It gives us powerful tools to focus on the positive with every child and re-direct the behavior in a purposeful way.

You are of great importance to your child, therefore, you can rest assured that your child will be keen to please you and to display his/her best level of competence.

You can be of greater assistance to your child’s development by being someone who enjoys exploring things together rather than a tester of the child’s knowledge!

Fantasy versus reality

Montessori believed that a child between the ages of 0 and 6 is striving to build a solid understanding of the world in which s/he lives. Therefore, s/he seeks experiences which are real and concrete. Because of this, fantasy can be overwhelming and in some cases even frightening for the young child. It is important to recognise the difference between fantasy and imagination. A child can use their imagination but still be grounded in reality. However in the case of fantasy, the young child can become confused as to what is true and what is not. Also, fantasy play may be an adult-product, rather than coming from the child’s imagination.

Individual work and sharing

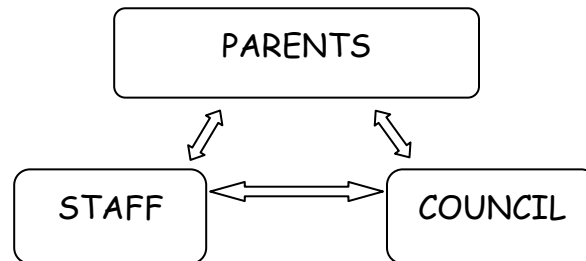
The Montessori environment is set up to facilitate sharing, following the child’s social needs and development. Usually only one child can work at an activity at one time, children learn to wait for their turn. They also learn to negotiate and get the opportunity to practice this every day with “Grace and Courtesy” lessons. Children learn to respect the environment and to be aware of each other. Therefore we do not so much ask them to ‘share’ but rather to be aware of others and by so doing learn to coexist and cooperate peacefully with others.

Freedom with Boundaries

In a Montessori environment children are free to choose, with the guidance of the teacher. The teacher demonstrates how to use a range of materials appropriate to the child’s age and stage of development. The child can choose when to have his morning tea, or what activity he would like to do. He can also choose to repeat an activity, or to put it away and choose an alternative. The role of the teacher is primarily to observe the child, and to then provide opportunities for further learning and development. Freedom or structure comes from the need to always respect the environment and the materials while retaining an awareness of others.

STRUCTURE

Montessori at Otari Preschool Inc is a non-profit organisation operating within the dictates of its charter as specified by the Education Act. The organisational structure is made up as follows:



Staff

Centre Leader

Florence Coram-Lasnier

Qualifications: St Nicholas' Montessori Diploma; NZ Graduate Diploma of Teaching (Primary); NZ full Teacher Certification

Teachers

Seedevi De Silva

Qualifications: Bachelor of Teaching and Learning; Aperfield Montessori Diploma; Diploma of Teaching ECE; Diploma of Early Childhood Management; NZ Full Teacher Certification

Mary Nelson

Qualifications: LMC Montessori Diploma; NZ Diploma of Teaching ECE Equivalency; NZ Full Teacher Certification

Helen Champion:

Qualifications: Aperfield Montessori Diploma; NZ Bachelor of Teaching ECE; Certificate I Te Ara te Reo Māori, NZ Full Teacher Certification

Gill Lamb

Qualifications: Bachelor of Laws (Honours); Graduate Diploma in Early Childhood Teaching; Certificate in te Reo Māori | Te Ara Piko; Certificate Te Ahu o te Reo Māori (Ministry of Education); NZ Full Teacher Certification

Julia Healey

Qualifications: Graduate Diploma ECE; Primary Teaching Diploma; Montessori Diploma (AMI); NZ Full Teacher Certification

Vivienne Shi

Qualifications: Bachelor of Economics; Master of Science in Business Management; Graduate Diploma in Teaching ECE; NZ Full Teacher Certification

Administrator: **Nicola Clark**

School Council

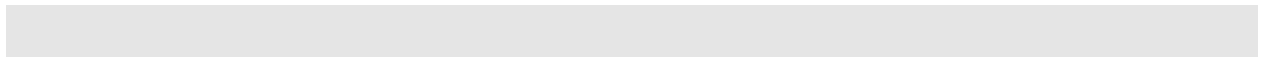
The Council responsibility is governance, which is concerned about partnering with the Centre staff and thinking about the Preschool's future, developing and designing the vision and mission statement, and determining directions, goals and priorities. The Council also sets policies and budgets, and ensures the Preschool complies with statutory regulations.

The Council supports the management aspect of the preschool, with other tasks such as:

- Fundraising;
- Assisting with staffing;
- Overseeing enrolment/ waiting list.

The Council is dependent on the diversity of talent within the parent body for input into the development and operation of the Preschool. Your participating on this forum is welcomed and actively encouraged. Each family is welcome to have one parent representative on the Preschool Council. This is an annual appointment and a variety of roles are available for your participation. Council meetings are held once a month at the Preschool.

Minutes of Council meetings are available in the Preschool Office.



TEACHING SESSION DETAILS

All children are enrolled for five mornings from 8.30am to 1:00pm. There is a possibility of adding a minimum of 2 afternoons, and a maximum of 5 afternoons, that finish at 2:45pm. Children are enrolled for 4 terms per year that are similar to the primary school dates as set by the Ministry of Education.

Details of class routine

Morning Session

This session runs from 8:30am to 1:00pm, five days a week.

The main door is open at 8:30am, to welcome children and whānau until 9:00am. If you need to stay with your child, you are able to do so until 9:00am, when the work cycle starts for the children. If you arrive after 9:00am, we ask that you farewell your child at the classroom door and quietly hand over to a teacher.

Children and their parents/caregivers are greeted by the staff who are available to take messages or answer brief queries. Please advise if the child is being collected by other than the parent/caregiver.

The work cycle goes from 8.30am until approximately 1pm. Possible activities would include individual independent work or small group lessons involving the Montessori materials; reading with the children; music; drama; art and craft; project work following a particular interest, baking or preparing food.

When the garden opens (around 10am) the children have the choice to go out if they wish or stay inside. During the individual work time children choose when to have their morning tea, once it has been prepared by the children. Water is always available. Parents provide the morning tea on a roster basis. Rosters are displayed on the notice board in the foyer and/or the teachers will remind parents closer to their time and provide a list of what is needed.

Lunch: We have a rolling lunch, between 11am and 12pm. Children help set up the lunch table. Children bring their own lunch, in a lunch box. Please provide lunch in a named container. We recommend small portions, with easy to open containers and healthy choices (no lollies, chocolate or junk food). We have glasses and jugs for water, so drinking bottles are not required. There are glasses, plates and cutlery available for lunch, if needed. **WE ARE A NUT FREE PRESCHOOL:** please do not include nuts, including muesli bars and nut spreads in your child's lunchbox. We have a **Food Allergy Policy** (refer Policy at back of this Handbook).

Children going home at 1:00pm, get ready in the corridor and are farewelled by a teacher, at the door, to be collected by a parent/caregiver. Please make sure you are on time to pick up your child.

Full day

If you would like your tamaiti to attend afternoon sessions immediately after starting morning sessions, please talk to the Administrator or the Centre Leader upon enrolment. There is also a transition stage for afternoon sessions to be discussed with the Centre Leader and teachers. Your child needs to be toilet trained, doesn't need an afternoon nap and provided there is space in the afternoon sessions. There may also be a waiting list to manage demand and places might be offered by age order, giving priority to the oldest tamariki.

There is an expectation that around the age of 4, a child will start with 2 afternoons to slowly increase to 5, if not already enrolled in any afternoons.

A full day means that your child is staying all day, from 8:30am to 2:45pm. You may choose a minimum of two afternoons and a maximum of five.

The afternoon session continues on from lunch, from 1:00pm to 2:45pm. Children follow the work cycle, similar to the morning, until approximately 2:30pm. Numbers are lower in the afternoons, allowing more flexibility in the programme. Extending the afternoons help children develop confidence and independence; it also gives them more opportunities to explore the advanced Montessori materials, spend more time on project or topics they are interested in, and increase social and emotional skills.

There are other options that can only happen in the afternoon, due to smaller numbers; for example: visit to the school library on Fridays; the primary playground, the school field for games; we also go on a bush walk to Otari Wilton bush on Thursday afternoons.

At around 2:30pm, children and adults tidy up the environment. This can be followed by some reading, games or singing. Children get ready in the corridor and are farewelled by a teacher, at the door, to be collected by a parent/caregiver. Please make sure you are on time to pick up your child.

Keeping your child beyond 5, at the Preschool

Our Preschool is set up for children up to 6 years of age. We observe enormous benefits for children staying beyond 5, such as:

- They are allowed to continue in a familiar environment at a time when many new skills are beginning to emerge. This means that the children continue to blossom free of the additional stress of coping with a new environment.
- Every child experiences being the oldest child in the class: they become our leaders for the younger ones. The confidence they develop knowing they are much more capable than the younger children is a delight to see, especially when they eagerly share their skills with the younger children and help them in everyday tasks. This develops excellent social skills, nurtures their self-esteem, builds their confidence, and gives them a tremendous feeling of independence.
- The 6 year old is much more able to cope with the change of environment than a 5 year old. By 6 they take a change in their stride. At 5 they often approach it with apprehension.

- The Montessori Curriculum is designed to cater for the developmental needs of children from 3 to 6. We have a full range of materials to ensure that the children continue to progress. Some of the more advanced materials are generally presented around 5 or after 5, for children who are now showing an interest in such work.

PARENT RESPONSIBILITIES AND INVOLVEMENT

All parents are encouraged to support the education of their children by understanding and accepting the Montessori philosophy and providing a supportive attitude and environment at home.

Attendance

The **Attendance Sheets** are available for parents to sign their child in and out, as a true record of enrolment times and days. It is a Ministry of Education requirement that the Preschool ensures that parents and/or caregivers sign this register on a daily basis. The Attendance Sheets for each class are located in the foyer.

The Montessori Method requires **regular attendance** by the child. Regular attendance is important in helping the child to develop a sense of belonging and continuity. The Montessori Method is sequential and builds on prior learning. The child benefits the most from attending for at least two years on a regular basis.

Classroom Etiquette and Principles, following Grace and Courtesy lessons:

Children are encouraged to learn the work cycle according to the Montessori philosophy which includes;

- Going to the shelf to choose an activity that has been presented by a teacher, working with it for an appropriate length of time and then tidying it away. This promotes responsibility and taking care of their work.
- Once a child chooses an activity this becomes 'their' work until they place it back.
- Children have the right to work alone or with a partner or a small group if everyone involved is agreeable. This helps the child make their own decision and develop freedom of choice.
- Children respect each other's work by waiting for their turn, and by trying not to interrupt unnecessarily.
- Children and adults should move around the mats on the classroom floor, not over them or anyone else's work. This shows respect towards people's work and their own space. Children learn to be considerate of others.
- Children and adults are asked to use a soft, quiet voice, instead of calling out to anyone across the classroom or interrupting a child's work. Everyone is responsible to protect the child's concentration and work.
- Children and adults use appropriate voices and behaviours, both indoors and outdoors.

Driveway Duty

This is a parent's initiative, only relying on their good will and participation to its running. Every parent/caregiver is required to sign up to do driveway duty for three mornings a term, even if your child does not yet use the system. The sign-up schedule is on the whiteboard in the Preschool foyer. It is your responsibility to swap duties if you are unable to do the duty on the day.

On your duty morning, please be at the Preschool by 8:20am, to enable enough time to collect your "gate monitor" badge and high vision vest and be on the driveway ready to accept children at 8:30am.

Gate monitor duties include opening the car door and assisting the child to exit the car, escorting the child safely into the Preschool foyer, through the internal door into the corridor of the Preschool. Gate monitor duty concludes at 9:00am. The gate monitor parent is also responsible to sign in the children.

Fundraising

Fundraising is an important aspect as fees only cover the basic needs of the Preschool. From time to time fundraising activities are organised and products are placed on sale, from which we receive a commission. Parents work together to develop ideas and organise activities. People who may not be able to attend Council meetings on an on-going basis may wish to volunteer, please see Nicola in the Office.

Information Sessions for Parents:

Information evenings are held for parents, once or twice a year. These evenings are for parents on the waiting list and new parents. The evenings serve to inform attendees about the Preschool, the Montessori philosophy and how you can support it at home.

Information Pockets

On commencing at the Preschool each family is allocated an information pocket for receiving and sending any mail eg circulars, invoices, notes from the Preschool or other parents, party invitations etc. It is a very effective means of communication and you are advised to check your pocket every visit to the Preschool.

Montessori Aotearoa New Zealand (MANZ)

The Preschool is a member of the Montessori Aotearoa New Zealand. There is an excellent website with a section for parents: <http://www.montessori.org.nz/>. Each term a copy of the MANZ magazine, 'Voices', is given to each family and placed in their information pocket.

Morning Tea Provisions

Approximately twice a year, every parent is rostered to provide the food which the children prepare for morning tea. Your child's name will be on the noticeboard in the foyer or in your child's pocket with a date on which you should bring the food. The list of food required is also on the noticeboard or available from the class teachers.

Noticeboard

There is a noticeboard in the entrance foyer. This is used to inform parents of Preschool matters and events of interest, such as Council Minutes, morning tea duties and a current list of policies. Please check with the Centre Leader before placing any item on the noticeboard.

Parents as Partners

Many parents have skills or experiences they may like to share with the children in the classroom. Over the years we have enjoyed all kinds of demonstrations from parents. For example, a mother bathing a baby, a hairdresser who gave their child a haircut, a chef making winter vegetable soup, a doctor bandaging us up, and so on. If you have had an interesting experience, can demonstrate a craft or musical instrument, have a special collection, come from another culture or would like to contribute in some way please talk to the team. Live demonstrations provide a wonderful learning opportunity for the children.

Other ways to help in the classroom are to donate recyclable items, eg corks, clean bottle tops, wrapping paper, small boxes, old greeting cards, fabric, and office paper.

Parent Education Sessions

We aim to hold Parent Education Sessions once a term at the Preschool. These daytime sessions are designed to be interesting and informative and explain the methods of the Montessori work in all planes of development, as well as offering ideas on childcare issues.

A particular topic is presented and is followed by questions and a group discussion. These informal sessions are a great opportunity to increase your knowledge. If there is a particular topic you would like more information on, please speak to the Centre Leader. All parents are encouraged to attend these educational sessions.

Parents in the Classroom

The first Montessori preschool, opened in Rome in 1907, was called “la casa dei Bambini”, the children’s house. Maria Montessori termed it so because it is a place for children to develop and grow and a place that children feel is their own.

Montessori preschools do not usually need parent help during session time. One of the aims of Montessori philosophy is to foster independence in the young child. The more adults that are present, the more the classroom dynamics change. Specifically when many adults are present, children will rely on them to solve problems and challenges. However, when there are less adults, children are more likely to have a go themselves, often resulting in success. This enables the child to develop greater self-esteem and confidence.

During normal session times, we encourage you to depart from the Preschool after dropping off your child. A younger child may need a parent to come in for a few moments to settle them in to an activity and you are more than welcome to do that. If you are unsure and need guidance to say goodbye to your child, talk to one of the teachers and they will give you some tips. Once a child is well settled in the environment, you may want to take advantage of the gate monitor system, enabling your child to come into the Preschool all by themselves.

Parents are invited to attend a special birthday celebration held for their child. They are also invited to come and talk to the children about anything of interest, such as their work, culture or favourite hobby. Parents are also invited to assist with preschool outings and other special events with the children.

We provide other opportunities where you can spend some time with your child, such as for Children's Day, Mother's Day, Father's Day and International Day. When visiting, please help us reinforce what we do with your child, by supporting the following points (also see Classroom Etiquette and Principles):

- Children are responsible for choosing and putting away their own work;
- Children may choose any activity that is not currently in use, and that they have been shown how to use by a teacher;
- If children would like to work with another child, they are encouraged to ask before joining in.
- As a visiting parent, please do not select the Montessori equipment from the shelves unless you know how to use them.
- Use a quiet voice inside.
- Walk around the mats.
- Tuck in your chair.
- Please do not sit on tables.

Parent Library

There is small Parent Library in the Preschool Office. It comprises a stock of books and magazines about Montessori education, general education, child health and development, parenting...Come any time the Office is open to borrow an item; it is a self-issuing system, that allows to keep track of the items.

If there are any books you would like to see as part of the library, please let the Office Administrator know. There is also a folder in the foyer with interesting articles regarding a range of topics from nutrition and parenting through to child development at your disposal. You are welcome to have a read whenever you would like. The staff would also be happy to photocopy any articles you find particularly useful. Just ask one of us!

Parent-Teacher Meetings | Hui Whānau (PTI)

Parent meetings are a time for you to come and talk to the teachers about your child's learning. Please book a date in advance so your child's teachers have time to prepare. A Parent/Teacher meeting form is available near the calendar, in the corridor. Parents are encouraged to complete and return this prior to the meeting so that questions, suggestions, aspirations or concerns can be addressed directly.

Meetings are held from 8:10am to 8:30am. Booking a meeting is easy; there is a calendar outside each classroom for you to choose a date that suits you.

- **KOWHAI: Hui Whānau are held on Thursday and Friday**
- **KAURI: Hui Whānau are held on Tuesday and Wednesday**

It is up to you how many meetings you attend and this may vary according to your child's needs. Teachers would like to have at least one meeting a year but some parents come once a term; it is really up to you. If the morning times are not suitable for you and your family, please talk to your child's teachers and we will find a way to make it work, via Zoom or another time of the day.

Parent meetings are for regular scheduled catch-ups. If you have an urgent matter to discuss, or you need advice, please come and see us straight away. We are here for you anytime.

Planning and Assessing for your child's learning

We follow Te Whāriki, our NZ Early Childhood Curriculum, interwoven with our Montessori pedagogy. Underpinning Te Whāriki is the vision that children are: *"competent and confident learners and communicators, healthy in mind, body and spirit, secure in their sense of belongings and in the knowledge that they make a valued contribution to society"* (p.6) Both Montessori and Te Whāriki look at the child in a holistic manner, meaning that it is the whole child that we consider. We plan as a team for each child, individually, focusing on their unique strengths, personality, learning dispositions and areas for development, guided by the goals and learning outcomes from Te Whāriki, using the Montessori curriculum (such as the Montessori materials, as well as the way we do things) to achieve this.

When your child starts, we gather as much information as possible to get to know them and build a relationship. Filling out the "All About Me", coming for a visit prior to starting, inviting you to an initial Hui Whānau (Parent Teacher Meeting) are just some of the ways we collect vital information. Then we observe the child 'in action', plan for some goals and start presenting simple lessons that will help their orientation in their new 'prepared environment', to develop their independence and increase their sense of confidence and agency.

The purpose of the learning stories is to make their learning visible; it is a way to share what they have done or been working on, their progress, and what could come next; it is also a way to involve you, to contribute to their learning journey, with input such as what's happening at home', if you have observed similar things...

We cannot record everything – even though pretty much every day the tamariki do amazing things!! So we focus on important goals and share what is significant. Each child's portfolio stays at Preschool; it gives them an opportunity to reflect on what they have done, revisit an activity, talk about their family and what they like doing.

How can you support your child's learning? Take time to be with them, slow down (they need lots of repetition, practice and encouragement), nurture their independence; their self-care skills, talk to and with them, ask them questions, read their learning stories with your child and talk about it, foster their curiosity, allow them to take risks (within reason!), give them freedom of choice and movements, with simple clear consequences...and please, let us know about their development, their interests or achievements at home, by adding photos or

comments to their stories so we can also follow up at Preschool, when appropriate and possible.

Preschool Newsletter and Class Updates

The Preschool newsletter is published each term with updates and information and is emailed to each family at the Preschool. The newsletter is also available on the Preschool website.

Teachers sometimes send update about what is going on in the classrooms/garden.

Regular email notices are sent out with updates about the preschool, when required.

We also recommend our preschool website which is full of information and can be found at; <http://otaripreschool.school.nz/>

Storypark/Individual Profile Book

We use online portfolios to record your child's learning. On arrival at Preschool, every child will be enrolled to Storypark, an online platform used to record the child's learning journey at the Preschool, including stories, observations, photographs or videos. Parents will be encouraged to contribute to their child's E-portfolio. Teachers will also add generic/group stories about events, celebration or special visits. We also use Storypark on a regular basis for community notices.

An individual profile book (plastic clearfile) will be available for each child and kept at Preschool for the child to consult (one-off cost of \$20); the learning stories and generic stories (published on Storypark) as well as relevant samples of work or artwork will be kept in the profile book. It is available to be taken home and will be given to the child upon leaving Preschool.

What to Bring to Preschool Each Day

Hat: Upon enrolment, you are able to purchase a wide-brimmed sunhat to wear to Preschool during terms 1 and 4. We have the policy of 'No Hat – No Play! Even on a cloudy day!' Please make sure that your child's hat named and it can be left in the hat basket in the classroom. Caps are not appropriate.

School Bag: This will be placed by the child on their named hook in the hallway. School bags should be big enough to carry a full set of spare clothes (from socks and underwear to a jumper even during the summer period), and a lunch box. It is essential that all items are labelled. Bags will come home each day and they need to be checked for notes and dirty clothing. Please note that push clips are very hard to open, the child must be able to open and close the bag without any help.

Jacket: As the Wellington weather is very changeable, please do send your child with a named jacket every day.

Lunch: Children bring their own lunch, in a lunch box. Please provide lunch in a named container. We recommend small portions, with easy to open containers and healthy choices (no lollies, chocolate or junk food). We have glasses and jugs for water, so drinking bottles are not required. There are glasses, plates and cutlery available for lunch, if needed. **WE ARE A NUT FREE PRESCHOOL:** please do not include nuts, including muesli bars and nut spreads in your child's lunchbox.

Please **read carefully** the Ministry of Health regulation about reducing choking hazards. We are following those guidelines.

<https://www.health.govt.nz/system/files/documents/publications/reducing-food-related-choking-babies-young-children-early-learning-services-dec20.pdf>

Gumboots: Each child needs to have a pair of gumboots that stays at Preschool, to use outside.

Working Bees

Working Bees are held once per term, with each family required to participate in one per year. At the beginning of each school year, parents will be notified regarding the dates for working bees. Each family will be alphabetically assigned to a working bee date. If parents are unable to attend the working bee to which they are rostered they may organise to swap with another family. If you do not attend your working bee duty, you will be asked to pay a Family Cleaning Levy of \$75.00. In addition, from time to time, tasks and repairs of materials that are needed will also be posted on the noticeboard. Your assistance with these additional tasks is much appreciated.

A - Z OF GENERAL INFORMATION

Birthdays

Birthdays are celebrated with a party for all the children whose birthdays fall in the same month. Teachers will contact the parents to organise details about the date and food. It might happen in the morning from 8:30am to 9:00am, from 12:30pm to 12:50pm or in the afternoon from 2:20pm to 2:40pm. Parents will be asked to bring healthy food options, like froyezballs.

Bond Repayment on Departure

If a family wishes to withdraw their child from the Preschool they may have their bond (\$150) refunded **provided no less than four weeks' term time notice in writing is received by the Preschool.**

If less than four weeks notice is given the \$150 fees administration bond will be forfeited. In addition, the equivalent of two weeks funding that would have otherwise been received will be charged. **See Departure and Frequent Absence Policy.**

Car Parking/Use of Driveway

We share the driveway and car parking with Otari School and this can result in congestion at pick up and drop off times. The Montessori at Otari Preschool Council and the Otari School Board of Trustees are concerned about the high risk of serious accident on the school driveway. For the safety of our children the rules for driveway use are as follows:

- The parking spaces available are designed to assist those of our parents who have infants with them, or are carrying multiple children, or are bringing in a cumbersome load (such as morning tea). Please note, the parking spaces are **not** provided for younger **walking siblings**.
- If you are dropping your child off, please let them out of the car with the Gate Monitor. There is no Gate Monitor at lunchtime and in the afternoon, so the driveway is **solely** for use of those eligible to park in the spaces provided, as above.
- If you are going into school or plan to spend time at the playground, please park on the street or in the Otari-Wilton's Bush car park.
- Do not leave your car unattended in the driveway under any circumstances, however brief! (Please note the yellow no parking lines)
- The speed limit in the driveway is 5km/h at all times.
- Children are not to walk or run across the turning circle/driveway at any time.
- If your child is escorted by a nanny or other caregiver it is your responsibility to ensure they understand the rules of the driveway and the importance of everyone following them.

Car Pool- Authority to collect

If you have made regular arrangements for collection and/or delivery of your child, please make sure the teachers or the office administrator have been informed. Also please update

your child's enrolment agreement in the Office, with the names and contact details of people authorised to collect your child.

Clothing

Children's clothes should allow freedom of movement and be easy for them to manage alone. It is worth the extra time to look for clothes with manageable fastenings. It is a great triumph for young children to be able to dress themselves. It contributes to a feeling of self-confidence to be able to pull up their own pants, buckle their own shoes or zip up their own jacket. Your time will be rewarded by a growing independence on your child's part and a developing sense of pride in their appearance.

Children should not feel reluctant to wash, polish, paint, climb or dig out of consideration for their Preschool clothes.

It is the parent's responsibility to label their child's clothes. The Preschool is not responsible for lost items.

Complaints Procedure

A copy of the Education (ECE) Regulations is kept in the foyer and in the office and is available for whanau/families. Should any parents have concerns about non-compliance of the Regulations, they can raise with either the Licensee (the Centre Leader) or the President or the Parent Liaison Officer or the local Ministry of Education office (Level 2, 19 Market grove, Lower Hutt 5010; phone number: 04 463 8000)

Driveway Drop-Off

The driveway duty system allows parents of morning children to drive down the driveway in the mornings and drop off their child to a waiting parent 'gate monitor', who will escort the child safely into the Preschool foyer.

Driveway drop-off is between 8:25am and 8.45am daily.

For the safety of your children, please do not drop off your Preschooler before 8:30am: the internal doors do not open until 8:30am and there is no-one to watch them in the foyer before that time.

Excursions

Outings may be organised during the year, if it fits our programme or the interests of children. These may include a trip for a performance, going to the zoo, the Museum of City and Sea, the Marine Laboratory, a walk in the Botanical Gardens, a trip to the library, etc... Parents might be asked to volunteer to help supervise. These outings/excursions might incur a cost to parents. Teachers will keep the parents informed of the excursions and if they need help.

Fees

The Ministry of Education provides the Preschool with some funding (20 Hours ECE). In addition, the Preschool in accordance with its Financial Management and Annual Plan Policy charges the following fees:

Enrolment Fee

An enrolment fee of \$50.00 is payable when a child is entered onto the Waiting List. This fee is a one-off fee per child.

Family Subscription Fee

All families with children on our waiting list or attending the Preschool are required to be members of the Montessori at Otari Preschool Inc. The annual family subscription for this membership is \$25.00 (billed at the beginning of term 4). Those families enrolling their child between March and July pay \$12.50 initially.

Starter Pack

To reduce the use of plastic bags, you can purchase a 'swim bag' for wet clothes and a canvas bag for spare clothes, to be left at Preschool, on your child's hook. You can also purchase a wide-brimmed sunhat to wear to Preschool during terms 1 and 4. Ask our Administrator for prices.

Fees Administration Bond

When a child commences at the Preschool a Fees Administration Bond of \$150 is payable. This is refunded when a child leaves the Preschool provided that no less than four weeks' term time notice is given in writing. You may wish to donate this sum to the Preschool when your child leaves. See above regarding **Bond Repayment on Departure**.

Individual Profile Book

An individual profile book (plastic clearfile) will be available for each child and kept at Preschool for the child to consult; this is a one-off cost of \$20.

Session Fees

Fees apply to 2 year olds, as well as to 3, 4 and 5 year old children enrolled for **more than 20 hours at this Preschool or at another service**. Fees are billed and payable at the commencement of each term.

The following table sets out the fees from the start of Term 1, 2024.

	Enrolled hours per week	Hours beyond the 20 ECE hours	Hourly rate	Fee per WEEK/ per child
5 Mornings (8.30-1pm)	22.5	2.5h	\$8.25	\$21
In addition you may choose:	Enrolled hours per week	Hours beyond the morning sessions	Hourly rate	Fee per WEEK/per child
1 afternoon (2.45pm finish)	24.25	+1.75h	\$8.25	\$14.50
2 afternoons	26	+3.5h	\$8.25	\$29
3 afternoons	27.75	+5.25h	\$8.25	\$43.50

4 afternoons	29.50	+7h	\$8.25	\$58
5 afternoons	31.25	+8.75h	\$8.25	\$72.50

20 Hours ECE

The maximum '20 Hours ECE' (6 hours per day, 20 hours per week) that can be claimed for each child (3 years old and over) is 20 hours per week across all services that the child is enrolled in.

The fees set out above are set under the presumption that the total hours enrolled are claimed under the '20 Hours ECE' initiative with Montessori at Otari Preschool. Any hours enrolled that are not claimed by Montessori at Otari Preschool under the '20 Hours ECE' will be charged an additional fee, being the loss of MOE funding.

Scholarships: We strive to be an inclusive Preschool. Therefore, we offer full or partial scholarships on a case by case basis. If you need financial assistance for Preschool fees, please feel free to contact our administrator or centre leader.

Fees review

Please note that the fees are reviewed annually. Fees may increase in the future depending on the overall financial situation of the preschool.

Food

Each child needs to bring a lunchbox with them to Preschool. We encourage good nutritious eating habits at the Preschool and support the Ministry of Health recommendation to include fruit, vegetables, carbohydrates and protein, in your child's lunchboxes (see MoH publication "Eating for Healthy Children, from 2 to 12 years" available at <https://www.health.govt.nz/resource/eating-healthy-children-aged-2-12ng%C4%81-kait%C5%8Dtika-m%C5%8D-te-hunga-k%C5%8Dhungahunga>).

Please **read carefully** the Ministry of Health regulation about reducing choking hazards. We are following those guidelines.

<https://www.health.govt.nz/system/files/documents/publications/reducing-food-related-choking-babies-young-children-early-learning-services-dec20.pdf>

We encourage children to eat enough food to keep their energy level up throughout the day. We will never force a child to finish their lunch and will respect their choice if they say they are full.

There are glasses, plates and cutlery available for children to use. Water is easily available at the preschool. Drinking bottles are not required.

WE ARE A NUT FREE PRESCHOOL.

Please keep in mind that there are also children in our Preschool who have other food allergies. If you are preparing food to bring to the Preschool, please check the list of current food allergies in the foyer; make sure you label the food clearly and hand the food to a staff member when you arrive, mentioning that it contains the ingredients.

Allergies

Parents are requested to indicate on the enrolment agreement if their child has a food allergy, sensitivity or intolerance so as to ensure the child is catered for accordingly. If a child has a severe allergy and/or risk of anaphylaxis is indicated, then parents must (and in the case of any other food allergy the parents may) provide the Preschool with a written allergy or anaphylaxis action plan to be followed in the event of a reaction. Parents shall provide the Preschool with written consent for Preschool staff to administer any medication provided to the Preschool.

See Food Allergy Policy.

Frequent Absence

A child's continued absence on a regular basis will have an effect on the funding received by the Preschool from the Ministry of Education. This includes any absences, including holidays, sickness, appointments, other activities and timeout.

The following frequent absence rule must be applied:

- When a child is absent on the same enrolled day or days of the week for more than half of these days in a calendar month or
- When a child attends fewer days per week than they are enrolled to attend, in more than half of the weeks in a calendar month or
- When a child attends fewer hours than they are enrolled to attend, on a daily basis, on more than half of their enrolled days in a calendar month.

Families will be charged for any loss of Ministry of Education funding incurred due to their child being frequently absent from the Preschool as defined above. For more information please see the Office Administrator and/or the Departure and Frequent Absence Policy.

Hours

The Preschool operates for the following hours each day of the week during the public school terms. An optional holiday programme will also be offered during the two weeks of the school holidays in April, July and October (except the Christmas holidays). Families may choose to enroll their child, according to their enrolled hours.

Monday to Friday 8:30am to 2:45pm

Please ensure your child arrives and departs on time. Arriving on time provides the child with a regular routine and develops within the child a respect for the Preschool and the children and staff working there. A regular routine gives young children a sense of security. It is also easier for the child to develop his sense of belonging and to settle in quickly when he is dropped off on time, consistently.

Always let the Preschool know if your child is going to be late.

Children may be picked up by their caregivers or nominated others but if someone else is to collect your child please advise the teaching staff. In the event a child has not been picked up from Preschool, or an emergency arises and the parents cannot be contacted, the names nominated in the information sheets as emergency contacts will be called to come for your child.

Office Hours

The Office is attended by the Administrator on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday from 8:30am – 3:15pm. NOT ON WEDNESDAY. Phone messages and emails are cleared regularly by staff. The Centre Leader shares her time between the Office and the Classroom/garden.

Playgroup

In May 2009, a group of enthusiastic parents and teachers set up our Montessori playgroup. It provides a friendly, peaceful environment, based on the Montessori philosophy, especially designed for young children aged 0-3 years. Montessori @ Otari Playgroup is a not-for-profit cooperative run by parents. They have Ministry of Education certification. Our Montessori trained supervisor develops the curriculum and runs the session. She is also responsible to prepare the environment to meet the needs of the children, to guide them with their chosen activity, to support the parents and promote the Montessori philosophy and method during the session and at home.

The Playgroup and the Preschool have close links, but are financially independent. Playgroup sessions are designed to complement the preschool's environment, for 3-6 year olds. Attending playgroup helps the child make a smooth transition to preschool. Children who regularly attend playgroup for a year, receive priority status on the preschool's waiting list, provided they have been on the waiting list by the age of 18 months.

What generally happens during a session?

"The first essential for the child's development is concentration. The child who concentrates is immensely happy." Maria Montessori

The playgroup environment is simple, ordered, clean and attractive. The children choose the Montessori materials they want to work with. Parents are encouraged to sit with their child while they explore the activities, especially chosen to foster concentration, coordination and self-esteem.

The children are encouraged to develop a sense of responsibility for the environment by tidying away their work. They help prepare morning tea and generally make bread. Later there are shared activities like singing, and story time, which helps young children experience being part of a community.

The Playgroup operates twice a week on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 8:45am to 11:45am, Term time only. You can attend one or both sessions. Arrive any time you like after 8:45am.

Sessions are suitable for infants and toddlers from birth to three years. The cost is \$90 per term for one session a week, or \$140 for two a week. We meet in one of the classrooms, of Cardinal McKeefry Primary School, 66 Albermarle Road, Northland.

Please contact the Preschool Office Administrator on 475 9688 or email: wcmp@xtra.co.nz for more information.

Policies

All our policies are available for your perusal in the Policies folder in the office.

Preschool Photographs

School photographs are taken annually and parents are advised of the date and procedure well in advance. The purchase of Preschool photos is optional.

Please feel free to take pictures or video of your child at Preschool. Please be sensitive that other families may not want their child photographed or videoed, and that the teachers may not want their picture taken. If your photo or video includes another child or teacher, then please use it for your family's viewing only. When posting your photos on social media websites, please be aware that such photos should not include other adults or children unless you have sought the permission of the other adults or the children's parents. See Photograph/Video Policy.

Sickness

While regular attendance is important and desirable for each child there is no advantage in sending a sick child to Preschool and it also places the whole Preschool community at greater risk. Please do not send your child to Preschool if any of the following conditions exist:

- Above normal temperature - child should be at normal temperature without medication for 24 hours before returning.
- Rash.
- Vomiting or diarrhea - child cannot return to Preschool until he/she is free from symptoms after returning to a normal diet for 48 hours.
- Conjunctivitis - exclude until discharge from eyes has ceased.
- Sore throat or persistent cough.
- Fresh cold with a profuse, cloudy discharge from the nose.
- Child not well enough to play outside.
- Impetigo (school sores) - exclude until sores have sealed over and remain covered.
- Ringworm (tinea) - exclude until day after treatment is started.
- Scabies - exclude until day after treatment is started.
- Pediculosis (head lice) - exclude until day after treatment is started and all eggs are removed.
- Trachoma (contagious disease of the eye) - exclude until day after treatment is started.
- Any type of contagious disease for the period specified by the Ministry of Health.

In the event of an outbreak of the vaccine-preventable diseases (eg diphtheria, whooping cough, measles, mumps, influenza, etc) children who have not been vaccinated for that

disease will be excluded from attending the Preschool until the risk has passed according to Health Regulations.

Should a child suffer a chronic condition (eg asthma) symptoms related to this condition must be discussed with the child's teacher.

Parents are requested to advise the Preschool promptly when your child will be absent and notify the Preschool if your child contracts a contagious disease, eg Chicken Pox. This is so that parents of other children can be advised of possible exposure and members of the Preschool community who may be at special risk, eg pregnant, can be notified.

Should a child become ill during the course of the day, or arrive too ill to participate in the daily activities, the parent or nominated carer will be notified and asked to take the child home.

Medication: If your child is taking prescription medicines you must give the staff written permission to administer the medication by signing the Medicine Book. The written permission must accompany the original prescription bottle and must include specific instructions as well as the prescribing doctor. See Medicine Administration Policy.

Sun Safe and Insect Free

Sunhats are compulsory and must be worn from beginning of term 4 until end of term 1. We have the policy of 'No Hat – No Play! Even on a cloudy day!' Please also apply sunscreen to your child before they arrive at Preschool. Sunscreen will be available to apply during the day.

If your child is susceptible to sandfly bites please apply insect repellent before they come to the Preschool.

Term Dates for 2024:

Term 1

- Starts: Wednesday 7 February
- Ends: Friday 12 April (Preschool closed for Easter – Friday 29th March and Monday 1st April)

Term 2

- Starts: Monday 29 April
- Ends: Friday 5 July (Preschool closed for King's Birthday-3rd June and Matariki-Friday 28th June)

Term 3

- Starts: Monday 22 July
- Ends: Friday 27 September

Term 4

- Starts: Monday 14 October
- Ends: Friday 20 December (Preschool closed for Labour Day- Monday 28th October)

Toys

Please do not bring toys to the Preschool. There are plenty of activities available at Preschool and a toy can often be distracting, get lost or damaged. Your child would understandably get upset. The Preschool is not responsible for lost or damaged toys.

Waiting List

Our waiting list procedures are determined by our Enrolment and Waiting List Policy. Once your child is enrolled, you will receive an email of confirmation. Siblings receive enrolment preference. Next preference is given to children on the waiting list who have attended Playgroup for a year or more, and then a child transferring from another Montessori Preschool. Other families on the waiting list are then offered places depending on availability and the date of enrolment. During the year, Information Evenings are held for parents with children on the waiting list aged two years and over and you will automatically be sent an invitation to attend.

POLICIES

Our Preschool Policies, listed below, are available for your perusal in the Policies Folder available from the Office. They are regularly reviewed by our Council and Staff.

- Child Protection Policy
- Financial Management & Annual Plan Policy (includes information on Fees and Bond)
- Departure and Frequent Absence Policy
- Food Allergy Policy
- Food Policy
- Scholarship Policy
- Parent Involvement, Information & Communication Policy
- Personal Grievance Policy
- Culture & Identity Policy
- Serious Misconduct Policy
- Laundering of Linen Policy
- Nappy Changing Policy
- Accident & Illness Policy
- Provision of Food Record Policy
- Medicine Administration Policy
- Outings & Excursions Policy
- Review Procedure Policy
- Emergency Management Plan Policy
- Professional Growth Cycle Policy
- Positive Guidance Policy
- Privacy Policy
- Work Health & Safety Policy
- Curriculum & Assessment Policy
- Parent Needs & Aspirations Policy
- Selection & Appointment Policy
- Information & Complaints Policy
- Sleep Monitoring Policy
- Photograph/Video Policy

- Children with Special Needs Policy
- Policy to Prevent Smoking, Alcohol, Drug use
- Partial Fees Payment Policy
- Enrolment & Waiting List Policy
- Pandemic Plan