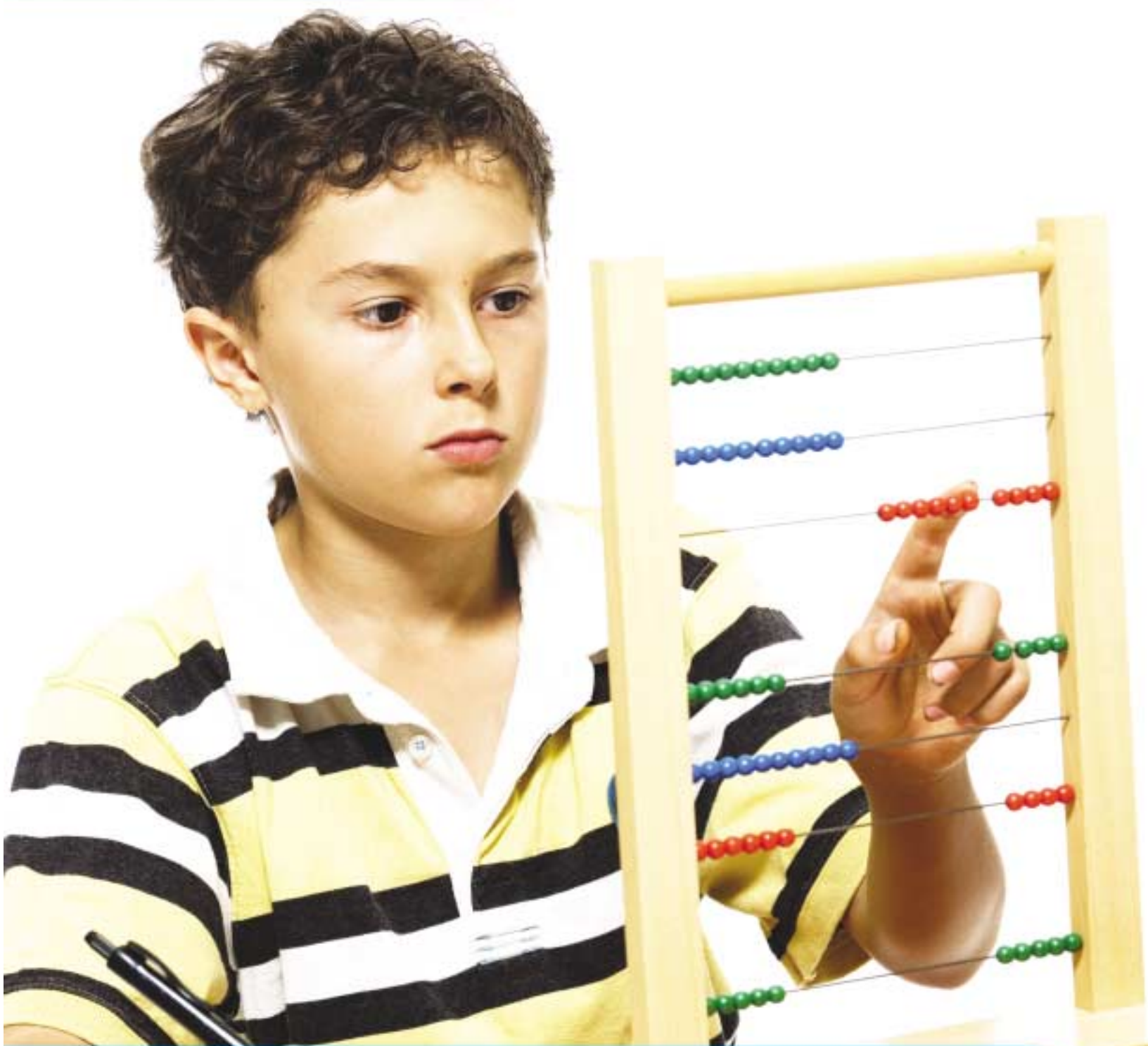


# Montessori PARENT GUIDE



## Choosing Montessori for Your Primary Child

Montessori  
AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND



# What do you need to know to choose a Montessori primary education for your child?



## Choosing an education for your child is one of the most important decisions you may make as a parent.

Being informed about your choices helps you to make good decisions for your family, your child and their future. Montessori is a philosophy. There is diversity within the Montessori community worldwide and each school is unique, reflecting its interpretation and practice of Montessori philosophy, the staff and parent-family community, the facilities and resources available and the vision of the centre or school.

**Parents frequently ask:** 'So, how do I know it is really Montessori?'

What are the essential elements of Montessori education? What should you be looking for when you are considering a Montessori Primary (6-12) education for your child?

## Your Parent Guide will help you to better understand Montessori education and to find answers to your questions about Montessori for six - 12 year olds.

Your Parent Guide is in three sections:

- The Montessori Learning Community
- The Montessori Learning Environment
- Montessori Teachers and Parents

In each section we have identified the following:

- **Essential Elements** ... are provided to help you better understand what Montessori primary can offer your child.
- **What it looks like** ... examples are given of how the essential element may 'look' in practice.
- **Questions to ask Montessori centre staff** .... some questions that you could ask the Montessori teachers are provided.
- **Questions to ask yourself** ... by observing in a Montessori primary class you can answer some of your own questions.

This parent guide may help you answer the question 'Can Montessori primary education establish a profound emotional, spiritual and academic base for my child's future?'

## How to Find the Answers to Your Questions

Montessori Aotearoa New Zealand recommends visiting a Montessori primary class, as you make your choice for your child.

Take time to observe the community of children. Visit the classroom more than once. Deepen your understanding of what the Montessori primary class has to offer your child. You could also visit some state primary school classes to understand how Montessori primary communities offer a different experience for children in the primary years.

# What do you need to know to choose a Montessori primary education for your child?

## How to Find the Answers to Your Questions

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# Montessori Learning Community (6-12)



## What age are the children in Montessori primary?

### Essential Element

The Montessori classroom is characterised by multi-aged groupings of three or more years. In Montessori primary children start at six years and stay until 12 years of age.

### What this results in ...

The children are a mixture of ages with groupings from 6-9 year-olds, 9-12 year-olds or 6-12 years. The multi-age groupings allow each child to find his or her own pace without feeling 'ahead' or 'behind' in relation to peers. There should be no segregation by age level or year level in any curriculum area. The mixed age group allows the children to develop socially, intellectually and emotionally at their individual pace- it is an essential part of any Montessori school.

## Questions you could ask the Montessori teachers

Are there enrolment criteria to enter the Montessori class or school?  
How does the school decide when my child is ready to start in the Montessori primary classroom?  
What is the optimal age to start? Why?  
Does my child need to have attended a Montessori early childhood centre?  
Why do children start in Montessori primary at six years?

## Questions you could ask yourself while you observe the class

Can I see children of all ages in the class?  
Do I see children segregated by age groupings or can I see children interacting across the age groups?  
Can I see older children 'teaching' younger children and being encouraged by the adults to take on this mentoring role?

## Why is a respectful community important?

### Essential Elements

The Montessori classroom is a community in which everyone learns from one another and everyone's contribution is valued.

### What this results in ...

The classroom functions as a community with each child playing his or her own part and contributing to the daily life and functioning of the class in a positive manner. Children will be confident and comfortable in their interactions with each other and adults. Children will be familiar and confident with classroom routines. Children will seek and offer feedback, ask and offer help not only with their teachers, but with each other. Students play a real role in deciding and managing classroom activities and routines from preparing food to be shared, community lunches, learning conflict resolution skills and hosting class meetings to presenting lessons to classmates and doing community service projects.

# Montessori Learning Community (6-12)

## Questions you could ask the Montessori teachers

How are the children taking responsibility for the classroom routines, environment and activities?

What community service projects are the children involved in?

## Questions you could ask yourself while you observe the class

Can I see children confidently asking adults and older children for help?

Do I see the children interacting with each other in nurturing and respectful ways?

How is conflict resolved?

Are respect, social graces and cooperative work evident?

Do I hear the teacher as well as the children respectfully acknowledging each other's efforts?

## How long do children attend Montessori?

### Essential Element

The most optimal Montessori primary experience is one where the children have come from a Montessori early childhood centre at six years of age and stay to complete the primary Montessori programme at 12 years.

### What this results in ...

Children starting later or finishing Montessori earlier will not make all the gains possible from a full Montessori early childhood (3-6 years) and primary programme (6-12 years).

The delivery of a rich Montessori primary programme is enabled by children who have already developed independent work habits and are familiar with the Montessori approach with a working knowledge of and respect for the Montessori materials and activities in and out of the classroom environment.

## Questions you could ask the Montessori teachers

What is the school's policy about the age at which children start and leave the Montessori classroom?

How long can my child stay in this Montessori programme - does the programme run until the children are 12 years old?

Do you have children starting in the class at five or do you take children who have not experienced Montessori early childhood? How do you manage this and what effect does it have on the Montessori primary programme?

## Questions you could ask yourself while you observe the class

Are there children in the classroom spanning at least a three-year age range?

## How do children socialise in Montessori?

### Essential Elements

Each child's individualised activity occurs within a community of children and spontaneous social interactions occur throughout the day.

### What this results in ...

Children interact respectfully with each other and adults.

Children interact with each other freely and show kindness to each other.

Children are supported by teachers to interact and are free to choose to work and talk with each other.

Through positive social interaction children learn many valuable social skills and experience the benefits of communal life.

## Questions you could ask the Montessori teachers

How do you help children to learn the skills of interacting appropriately in the classroom?

How do you support the development of a respective school community outside the classroom?

When children are free to be spontaneous in their socialising is EVERYONE included, nurtured and accepted by their peers?

## Questions you could ask yourself while you observe the class

Do I see examples of children offering to help another child?

Do the children respect the right of other children to work undisturbed?

# Montessori Learning Community (6-12)

Do I see responsive, respectful relationships between teachers-children, children-children, between teachers and between teachers and families?

Can I observe children using strategies to solve disagreements peacefully?

## Why are Montessori students motivated to learn?

### Essential Elements

In Montessori primary children learn because they are free to choose work that is personalised to their interests, needs and abilities.

### What this results in ...

Children are free to choose work that meets their current needs, interests and abilities, with appropriate limits negotiated with their teacher.

Montessori children take an active role in planning their work and setting goals for themselves.

Children do not work for grades or external rewards, nor do they simply complete assignments or worksheets given them by their teachers.

At any time the children in the classroom will all be involved in different tasks - you will rarely see a Montessori classroom with all the children doing the same subject at the same time.

Montessori children have the freedom to choose their own work and activities - they do not have the freedom to choose to do nothing.

### Questions you could ask the Montessori teachers

How will you involve my children in setting appropriate goals for learning and other aspects of their development?

What will you do if my child avoids a curriculum area - how will they be directed and encouraged to cover all aspects of the curriculum?

Are there any compromises or adjustments your Montessori class must make if it is within a NZ state primary school?

### Questions you could ask yourself while you observe the class

Do you see children all doing different activities?

Do I see children working with concentration and enthusiasm on their chosen activity?

Can I see children choosing what they would like to work on or is it predominantly teacher directed?

Are children encouraged to question? Are they given the freedom to seek out answers to the questions they have come up with?

Does the environment have a busy 'buzz' or 'hum'?

Are children able to work without frequent interruptions from the teacher?

## How are my child's interests and needs met?

### Essential Elements

Montessori teachers are skilled in 'following the child' - responding to the changing interests and needs of each child as a unique individual.

### What this results in ...

Children are engaged in activities which are interesting to them and become deeply focused and involved in what they are doing.

Teachers know the children well and respond to their unique interests and needs, engaging parents in this process.

Each child's individual needs are assessed through observation so that he is introduced to new concepts when he is developmentally ready and new knowledge is always built on what he already knows.

The learning opportunities in the classroom are frequently changed to cater for the needs and interests of the current group of learners.

### Questions you could ask the Montessori teachers

If my child shows an interest in a particular area how this would be responded to in the classroom? Can you give me some recent examples of this?

What would you do if my child was engaged in an activity and did not want to join a group time?

How will I know what my child does each day and what is being planned for his/her learning? What feedback will I get from the staff?

### Questions you could ask yourself while you observe the class

Are children choosing and focusing on their own chosen activity?

# Montessori Learning Community (6-12)

How does the staff respond to the questions and interests of the children?

## Will my child have fun?

### Essential Elements

Montessori learning environments meet the developmental needs of all children in a safe, interesting and caring community.

### What this results in ...

Children are relaxed and confident with their classmates and teachers. Learning is fun and children find joy in their discoveries and in the activities they choose each day.

### Questions you could ask the Montessori centre staff

Is this a place where my child will have fun? What do you enjoy about being with children each day?

### Questions you could ask yourself while you observe the class

Do the children and adults look like they are enjoying themselves? Will my child have fun in this learning community?

# Montessori Learning Environment (6-12)



## What is Montessori Cosmic Education?

### Essential Elements

In Montessori primary students experience a totally integrated curriculum referred to as cosmic education.

### What this results in ...

In Montessori primary students are given a totally integrated curriculum referred to as cosmic education. Most of the different subjects are introduced in a series of connected stories that spark the child's imagination called the Great Lessons.

Montessori cosmic education seeks to expand the child's knowledge by providing the learner with a coherent whole view rather than a mix of unrelated bits of information: this assists in helping the child to classify new information in a coherent way.

The stories give the child a context for all future learning, and a way of seeing the relevance in the detail of what they learn. Science and social sciences such as anthropology, biology, astronomy, geology, history and chemistry are integrated with mathematics, language, arts, music.

## Questions you could ask the Montessori teachers

How does the Montessori class respond to the logical reasoning mind of the primary-age child?  
Can you explain how the integrated curriculum works and how my child will be guided towards his own personal discovery of discover interrelatedness of different concepts?

## Questions you could ask yourself while you observe the class

Can I see children doing activities and learning across a wide range of subjects from math and language to sciences and art?

## What are Montessori materials?

### Essential Elements

The specially-designed Montessori materials enable the learner to literally see and explore abstract concepts and the primary child uses these concrete experiences to develop a deep, abstract understanding of complex concepts.

### What this results in ...

The classroom has Montessori materials to cater for the children of all age groups in the class.

The children have a wide range of Montessori materials and activities available to them and these materials provide a focus for the children's exploration and learning.

At any time the majority of children should be actively engaged with Montessori materials and activities, with limited book or worksheet work.

Montessori curriculum provides a scope and sequence - but each child always moves at their own pace.

Children not only select their own work most of the time, but also continue to work with tasks, returning to continue their work over many weeks or months, until finally the work is 'so easy for them' that they can teach it to someone else. This is one of many ways that Montessori educators use to confirm that students have reached mastery of skills and concepts.

The New Zealand state primary curriculum is met using a Montessori approach.

# Montessori Learning Environment (6-12)

NZ state primary assessments are done in such a way that the character of the Montessori programme is not compromised.

## Questions you could ask the Montessori teachers

How does the Montessori philosophy define the daily activities and routines of the classroom?

Can you describe to me what the Montessori curriculum is and how it supports my child's learning?

What if my child spends all day with one thing, or is interested in only one thing - how do you get them to engage in other aspects of the curriculum?

Does my child always get to choose what they do, or are they guided?

Can you explain how the NZ state curriculum is met in the Montessori classroom?

What assessments are done to ensure my child is meeting outcomes for his age?

## Questions you could ask yourself while you observe the class

Can I see most of the children learning through exploration with the Montessori materials?

## How does Montessori promote my child's learning?

### Essential Elements 6-12

Montessori focuses on children's learning and self discovery, not on teachers' 'teaching' and fostering independence is an important part of Montessori philosophy.

### What this results in ...

Children work individually or in small, self-selected groups; there will be more group lessons at primary level than in Montessori 3-6 classes, but little whole class instruction.

Children are supported to independently choose their own work or activity.

Teachers should not be constantly directing the child's work - but are actively involved in observing and assessing the child's choices and are ready to step in with new challenges and to guide children when the child is unable to choose for themselves.

The children must be able to access all activities independently or with help of a peer, without relying on constant adult assistance or direction.

All activities are limited in number - only one of each activity (including art) so that children learn the social skills involved in being part of a community such as sharing, turn-taking, negotiation and co-operation.

The child is left to choose their own work but is presented with new work regularly to increase their repertoire of choice and provide more opportunities for them to uncover their interests.

The Montessori child is put in charge of his/her own learning through his own exploration; this may seem a subtle distinction but it is a key part of the Montessori approach.

## Questions you could ask the Montessori teachers

What activities will my child be able to do when they first start in the class? How will they know what they can choose?

How does my child know what to choose each day and how do you guide his choice?

What kind of expectations do you have of children at different ages?

What will you do if my child chooses the same activity day after day?

## Questions you could ask yourself while you observe the class

Are the majority of children making constructive independent choices or are the teachers constantly directing and correcting?

Are children being given time to engage, time to observe, time to reflect, time for repose; are the children given the freedom to work things out for themselves?

## How is concentration promoted in a Montessori class?

### Essential Elements 6-12

While primary children are increasingly social and work in groups they still need long uninterrupted work periods to be able to concentrate and become fully engaged with their chosen work.

# Montessori Learning Environment (6-12)

## What this results in ...

The class has uninterrupted daily work periods with the three-hour work cycle as ideal. The work period should be free from interruption for whole group activities.

Within the work period you will see learners doing a range of different activities - the time is not broken up into subjects and students are working alone, in pairs or small groups.

Children are protected from interruptions so that they can concentrate and to become deeply absorbed in their chosen activity or work.

Primary children become deeply engaged in activities for long periods of time and are increasingly able to independently plan their daily and weekly work.

## Questions you could ask the Montessori teachers

How long is the class work cycle?

Why is a long uninterrupted period of time important for my child's learning?

Do you have any additional activities happening and how do you ensure this does not interrupt the long work cycle?

## Questions you could ask yourself while you observe the class

Do the children have a long uninterrupted time or are there frequent interruptions for set activities or whole group times?

Are children using strategies to redirect their focus?

## Does Montessori happen only at specific times?

### Essential Elements 6-12

Montessori is a way of being - it does not stop and start at specific times or occur only indoors!

## What this results in ...

The whole learning environment is available to all children - there should be no restriction by age to certain curriculum areas.

Children have access to quality Montessori environments throughout the day - if the school offers before/after school care or holiday care it should follow same principles as the Montessori classroom.

Outdoor environments are used as rich learning experiences for the children in the same way as indoors - activities are purposeful, real and explorative.

## Questions you could ask the Montessori teachers

Can you explain how my child will access the whole indoor and outdoor learning environment?

How will my child integrate with the rest of the state primary school?

How are the children included in wider school activities or the community?

## Questions you could ask yourself while you observe the class

Are children involved in learning indoors and outdoors?

Are all children able to access all areas of the classroom?

## How does the learning environment make learning accessible?

### Essential Elements 6-12

The Montessori environment is orderly and structured to facilitate the child to make choices for their learning.

## What this results in ...

All the learning activities are set out on shelves, with everything having a specific place so that the children can always find what they need.

All learning materials are attractive so child is enticed to use them - aesthetically pleasing, clean, complete and in good repair. Materials with missing or broken parts are removed from the classroom.

The colour of the furnishings, floors, walls should be soft and muted so that the brightly-coloured Montessori materials attract the children and focus their attention.

Primary children are actively involved in maintaining the order of their classroom environment and making decisions about how the classroom could work for everyone's benefit.

# Montessori Learning Environment (6-12)

## Questions you could ask the Montessori teachers

Can you explain how the classroom is structured to help my child become independent?

Why is it important that the classroom is orderly and beautiful? How does this help my child's learning?

My child is very messy at home -how will he/she cope in this orderly environment?

How does the orderly environment promote creativity in my child? Can they still be spontaneous and inventive?

## Questions you could ask yourself while you observe the class

Are the children actively involved in maintaining the order of the classroom, in looking after the learning materials and playing a real role in maintaining the classroom?

## Why do primary children do 'practical life' activities?

### Essential Elements 6-12

Practical life is real work and therefore an 'aid to life'. Primary children have daily opportunities to learn and use practical life skills and to make a real contribution to their community and environment.

### What this results in ...

Children take the initiative to actively care for each other and their environment.

Practical life materials have an observable application in the classroom; if Montessori children cook they cook food that can be shared with classmates. Children learn skills that they use daily in their class and home.

## Questions you could ask the Montessori teachers

How are the children encouraged to care for their class each day?

What kind of cooking and food preparation do the children do?

How are the children involved in taking responsibility for the class and other children?

What outdoor activities are the children involved in each day?

How does doing 'Practical Life' prepare my child for academic work?

## Questions you could ask yourself while you observe the class

Can I see children taking real responsibility for their classroom?

Do the children show and sense of ownership for their class and classroom routines?

Are the children working indoors and outdoors?

## Why is Montessori described as an 'education for life'?

### Essential Elements 6-12

Dr Montessori regarded education as 'preparation for life', not merely an academic preparation.

### What this results in ...

The Montessori environment is rich with learning opportunities for the children to explore their culture and the world.

Social, emotional and spiritual learning experiences are valued as highly as intellectual learning experiences.

Rich cultural experiences including music, art, singing, drama, celebrations from other cultures, plant and animal studies, are a feature of the classroom.

The children have opportunities to garden, care for animals, observe nature, and interact with their wider community.

In New Zealand Tikanga Maori and Te Reo Maori are incorporated throughout the whole programme and all curriculum areas to reflect the society and time in which the children live.

Montessori communities actively celebrate diversity and consciously seek to promote a global perspective.

## Questions you could ask the Montessori teachers

How are the cultures of the world celebrated in this class?

How is Te Reo Maori introduced to the children?

What happens in the classroom to promote the development of a peaceful community? Can you show me some examples of how my child will learn about his and other cultures?

# Montessori Learning Environment (6-12)

How are the rhythms of nature acknowledged in the programme?

## Questions you could ask yourself while you observe the class

How will this philosophy of education fit with my family's values and beliefs?

Do I think this style of education will enrich my child's emotional, spiritual and intellectual experiences?

## How does Montessori respond to my child's curiosity?

### Essential Elements 6-12

Montessori educators use the interests and discoveries of all students to enrich the classroom curriculum and as a springboard for exploration of other areas.

### What this results in ...

The learning environment is prepared with each community of children in mind, and the selection of activities available is constantly modified to meet the ever changing needs, interests and abilities of the children.

Children progress at their own pace and select work that captures their interest and attention, while the teacher strives to draw their attention and capture their interest in new challenges.

Montessori students experience self-created challenge - not teacher-imposed work sheets, or whole-class assignments.

Children learn how to research their topic of inquiry and find the information they need using reference books, online resources and experts around them or in the wider community.

Individual planning for each child, based on ongoing and systematic observations by teachers and negotiation and goal setting with the child.

## Questions you could ask the Montessori teachers

How do you know when my child is ready for new challenges?

If my child shows a special interest in an area of discovery - how will this be responded to?

How do you change the classroom during the year to respond to the needs of the new children that arrive?

Can you tell me what assessment is used to assess my child's progress and how this will be shared with me?

## Questions you could ask yourself while you observe the class

Do you see children using the Montessori materials to explore?

Do you see teachers inviting children to try new activities?

Do you see the teachers standing back and observing the class; making notes to use in planning for each child?

How will my child receive feedback from you to direct his work?

## How are Montessori children given freedom?

### Essential Elements 6-12

Montessori children enjoy considerable freedom of movement and choice; however their freedom always exists within carefully defined limits on the range of their behaviour.

### What this results in ...

Children are supported to understand that with the freedom of choice comes a large responsibility to their own learning and to the learning of the group.

Children are free to do anything appropriate to the ground rules of the community but are redirected promptly when needed.

Children have a variety of places to work - indoors, outdoors, at tables, on work mats on the floor.

## Questions you could ask the Montessori teachers

How do the children help to establish the ground rules of their learning community?

What happens if a child constantly goes beyond the acceptable limits?

How will my child in develop this concept of freedom with responsibility?

## Questions you could ask yourself while you observe the class

Can you see children helping each other to maintain the rules of the classroom?

# Montessori Learning Environment (6-12)

Are the children beginning to 'plan' their day to meet their commitments and responsibilities?

## Why is community service an important part of Montessori?

### Essential Elements

Montessori's spiritual perspective leads to the promotion of community service ranging from daily contributions to others within the class or school setting, to community service that allows children and adults to make a difference in the lives of others beyond the school.

### What this results in ...

Montessori children learn through their experience how to offer and receive help.

Their growing understanding of the needs of others enables children to grow into competent, empathetic world citizens.

Children learn that to help others brings a great feeling of satisfaction and achievement. Sharing what we have with others, whether our time or our resources, benefits both the giver and the receiver. Giving to others, and sharing part of our lives with others, becomes both a joy and a habit for children and they take this sense of service with them into the world.

### Questions you could ask the Montessori teachers

What community service programmes have the children in this class been involved in?

### Questions you could ask yourself while you observe the class

What help do I see children offering to others in the class?

## Why is collaboration promoted?

### Essential Elements

Dr Montessori observed that competition is an ineffective tool to motivate children to learn and Montessori students learn to collaborate rather than to compete against each other to meet external standards set by an adult.

### What this results in ...

Student self-assessment in own progress and work is actively encouraged.

Children are confident and seek feedback from their peers and teachers.

All learners compete only against themselves and quickly become unafraid to make mistakes.

Children learn at their own pace and teachers refrain from comparing students with one another.

Children have a great fondness for one another, and are free from one-upmanship and needless interpersonal competition.

### Questions you could ask the Montessori teachers

How will my child cope when they leave Montessori and move into schools and workplaces where competition is promoted?

### Questions you could ask yourself while you observe the class

Do I see children pleased with the achievements of others and with the skills to give and receive genuine compliments?

## How does learning occur beyond the Montessori primary classroom?

### Essential Elements

For the primary child learning needs to occur beyond the classroom; in Montessori primary learning this is accomplished by 'going out' forays into the world in search of knowledge and experiences not available through classroom study alone.

### What this results in ...

Exploratory trips differ from traditional field trips as they are initiated, planned and executed by the children, not the teacher, and they arise organically from the interests and work of the children, not from a plan of instruction made by adults.

### Questions you could ask the Montessori teachers

How have the children in the class been able to initiate their own learning beyond the classroom?

# Montessori Learning Environment (6-12)

What role do parents take in assisting with this learning?

## Questions you could ask yourself while you observe the class

Do the children look excited about their learning?

## How is the New Zealand State Primary Curriculum delivered?

### Essential Elements

The NZ State Curriculum is met using a Montessori approach??

### What this results in ...

The children are able to progress through the NZ state curriculum which is delivered using the Montessori materials encouraging self-discovery and learning and promoting the curriculum as a coherent whole rather than unrelated learning.

Children are able to move through the curriculum at their own rate rather than at the teacher's prescribed timetable for the whole class.

## Questions you could ask the Montessori teachers

How do you integrate the NZ state curriculum and Montessori as a cohesive whole?

## Questions you could ask yourself while you observe the class

Does the amount and level of activity I am seeing the children do in the Montessori primary class compare to the levels I have observed in other state primary classrooms?

## Are there Montessori schools for older children?

### Essential Elements

Montessori learning environments are offered for primary school children in many areas of NZ. As the number of children entering Montessori primary environments increases, so does the necessity for providing high school environments.

### What this results in ...

The school provides information about the Montessori high school programmes.

## Questions you could ask the Montessori centre staff

How do you support older primary children to transition to high school?

Are there plans to establish a Montessori high school in this area?

How would a Montessori high school build on the primary experience of children in this class?

## Why is Membership of Montessori Aotearoa New Zealand important?

### Essential Elements

The Montessori Aotearoa New Zealand has played a key role in supporting the growth of Montessori in NZ since 1982. MANZ provides high quality Montessori professional development and publications for educators and parents. MANZ provides national representation for Montessori in NZ.

### What this results in ...

A MANZ membership certificate is on display at the centre.

Information from the national association is on display or available to parents, including a monthly newsletter and magazine.

Teachers regularly attend MANZ professional development and conferences.

## Questions you could ask the Montessori centre staff

Does the Montessori primary school belong to and support the Montessori Aotearoa New Zealand?

What information will I receive from the national association?

Can I see some issues of the national association's magazine, Montessori Voices?

# Montessori Adults (6-12)



## What qualifications do Montessori teachers have?

### Essential Elements 6-12

Montessori teachers need specialist Montessori qualifications for the age group they teach eg. 6-9 years, 9-12 years. These qualifications are in addition to NZ primary teaching qualifications.

### What this results in ...

There is a diversity of Montessori qualifications in New Zealand and schools decide individually which Montessori qualifications they will accept.

Montessori qualifications can be achieved through distance learning, face-to-face diplomas and as part of a teaching degree. There are NZ-based courses and many overseas courses.

MANZ acknowledges that Montessori teacher education programmes or training courses can be hard to access throughout New Zealand but recommend Montessori courses that provide face-to-face instruction, especially for Montessori curriculum and materials. Montessori teachers will be better prepared when the face-to-face component increases; the minimum would be a face-to-face component of 80 hours moving through to a fulltime face-to-face course over nine months or more.

The Montessori teacher in the class will either have a Montessori qualification or be working towards it

## Questions you could ask the Montessori teachers

What Montessori qualifications and experience do you have?

## Questions you could ask yourself while you observe the class

Does the teacher speak knowledgeably and confidently about Montessori philosophy and practice and can the teacher answer my questions clearly?

Is the teacher implementing Montessori in a way which is consistent with these guidelines?

## How many adults should be in a Montessori classroom?

### Essential Elements 6-12

The real work of learning belongs to the individual child, not the teacher and so the Montessori learning community reaches its full potential when the number of adults is kept to the minimum.

### What this results in ...

There should be a minimum of adults present; in primary the ratio should be 1:28, unless there is a high number of children with special needs or a narrow age range of children in the class.

Parent involvement will be welcomed for specified times and community activities but the Montessori classroom focuses on the children becoming independent, which is possible only when adults are scarce!

Constant interruptions by adults or an imposed timetable detract from the child's ability to learn to concentrate and to become absorbed in their chosen activity or work.

## Questions you could ask the Montessori teachers

How can I contribute to the classroom?

What do you need for me to do to respect the children's learning space?

# Montessori Adults (6-12)

## Questions you could ask yourself while you observe the class

How many adults are there in the classroom?

## How do Montessori teachers develop respectful communities of children?

### Essential Elements 6-12

The Montessori educator deliberately models the behaviours and attitudes that she wishes the children to learn.

### What this results in ...

Teachers are exceptionally calm, kind, warm, and polite to each child.

Teachers look like they are enjoying being with the children!

Teachers give frequent 'grace and courtesy' lessons to children - gently modelling and showing what behaviour is desirable.

## Questions you could ask the Montessori teachers

What grace and courtesy lessons do you give and what is the purpose of these lessons?

How do you help children to understand the behaviour that is acceptable in the classroom?

How do you support children to find solutions to conflict?

## Questions you could ask yourself while you observe the class

Are the teachers very dominant and loud in the classroom - or are they calm, quiet and engaged respectfully with the children one on one or in small groups?

Can I see teachers who seem to be enjoying the children?

Is the relationship between the teachers and children warm and interactive?

## Why do Montessori teachers spend so much time observing the children?

### Essential Elements 6-12

The Montessori teacher is a trained observer of children's learning and behaviour. These careful

observations enable the teacher to guide the child's learning.

### What this results in ...

In order for the approach to be truly child centred and child initiated, teachers are constantly observing what the children's interests, strengths and dispositions are.

Montessori teachers are hard to spot in a classroom - they will be quietly working with individual children or small groups, presenting new lessons or quietly observing.

## Questions you could ask the Montessori teachers

When you observe my child what kinds of things are you looking for?

How does this support your planning for my child?

## Questions you could ask yourself while you observe the class

Do the teachers take time to stand back and observe or are they constantly engaged with children?

## What teachers will be in the class with my child each day?

### Essential Element

The child needs to experience the same Montessori teachers in the classroom every day.

### What this results in ...

A safe, caring community is built between familiar adults and the children.

Ideally the lead teacher needs to be the same person every day.

Ideally the other teachers in the class will be the same from day to day although this may not be possible when a staff member is training or on professional development.

## Questions you could ask the Montessori centre staff

Who are the teachers my child will interact with each day?

How will I know if my child's teacher is going to be absent?

What staff turnover does the centre have?

# Montessori Adults (6-12)

## Questions you could ask yourself while you observe the class

Do the children seem to be familiar and confident with all the adults in the classroom?

## How do Montessori teachers keep up to date?

### Essential Element

Montessori teachers need professional development to enable them to be reflective practitioners and lifelong learners.

### What this results in ...

Montessori Aotearoa New Zealand suggests teachers should attend 10-12 hours of Montessori-focused professional development each year, in addition to other teaching professional development.

## Questions you could ask the Montessori centre staff

How do you stay current with what is happening in Montessori and general education in New Zealand and the wider world?

## What is the role of parents in Montessori primary schools or classes?

### Essential Elements 6-12

Montessori schools work in partnership with parents for the benefit of the child.

Montessori centres foster a dialogue with parents to promote understanding of Montessori philosophy and values.

### What this results in ...

There is an orientation process to the Montessori learning environment for both the parent and child.

There are opportunities for parents to learn about Montessori philosophy and practice.

There are Montessori books, magazines and resources available to borrow.

Regular dialogue with staff and other written feedback provides parents with information about their child's learning and experiences.

Montessori is not something that needs to stop at the end of the session. Schools offer

suggestions about what you can do at home to support the work that happens at Montessori.

## Questions you could ask the Montessori teachers

How can I be involved with my children's learning in the Montessori environment?

What support do teachers need?

Is there a role for parents on the PTA or parent trust?

What kinds of parent information evenings are offered and how will I know when they are being run?

Are there any books and resources I can borrow that will help me understand more about Montessori?

## Questions you could ask yourself while you observe the class

Look at the notice boards in the school - what information is there for parents?

Ask if you can talk to other parents about their involvement in the class.

## What is the vision for Montessori in the school?

### Essential Element

The Montessori class or school has a clear vision for how it delivers Montessori education.

### What this results in ...

The Montessori class or school provides written information about its philosophy and vision for its students and its ongoing growth.

The operations manual or management folder with policies and procedures are available to parents at all times.

## Questions you could ask the Montessori centre staff

Is there an operations manual or management folder with school policies that I can read?

How does the school promote Montessori to the wider community?

If the Montessori class is part of a NZ state primary school, is there a clear agreement with the school to ensure that Montessori philosophy is protected?