



Montessori
Aotearoa New Zealand

Montessori Parent Guide

3–6 years



Choosing Montessori for your preschool tamariki

Contents

- 02** Using this guide
- 03** Vision and Leadership
- 07** The Learning Environment
- 17** The Trained Kaiako
- 21** The Community
- 25** Appendix

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

Choosing an education for your child is one of the most important decisions you will make as a parent/whānau. You may have made the choice to immerse your family/whānau in the Montessori method of education. But what now?

Montessori Aotearoa New Zealand has produced this Parent Guide to help you better understand Montessori education and to find answers to your questions about Montessori.

Montessori is a philosophy. There is diversity within the Montessori community worldwide and each early childhood centre is unique, reflecting its interpretation and practice of Montessori philosophy, Montessori training of kaiako (teacher(s)), the staff, family/whānau, the facilities, resources available and the vision of the early childhood centre (centre).

Parents frequently ask: “So, how do I know if it is really Montessori?”

So,

What are the essential elements of Montessori education?

What should you be looking for when you are considering a Montessori education for your young child?

Using this guide

To help you when choosing a Montessori environment, here are some elements to consider which are split into four sections. These elements are aligned to the [Montessori Journey to Excellence \(MJ2Ex\): Te Ara Ki Huhuatanga](#).

This Parent Guide is in four sections:

Vision and Leadership

The Learning Environment

The Kaiako (teacher)

The Community

In each section we have identified the following:



Essential Elements are provided to help you better understand what Montessori can offer your child. These elements are aligned to the Montessori Journey to Excellence *Te Ara Ki Huhuatanga (MJ2Ex): Essential Elements*, a document that early childhood centres are able to use as a tool for internal evaluations.



What it looks like examples are given of how each Essential Element may 'look' in practice.



Questions to ask staff some questions you could ask the staff to gain further insight.



Questions to ask yourself by observing in a Montessori early childhood centre you can answer some of your own questions.

Montessori Aotearoa New Zealand recommends visiting a Montessori early childhood centre to observe. When you observe, you will usually be asked to sit somewhere unobtrusive. This is so your presence becomes less obvious. When we stand and walk around, our presence grabs attention because we are so much bigger than preschool tamariki and take up more space. Our presence is like a magnet, pulling the children's attention. If adults sit quietly on a chair at the edges of the classroom observing, their presence tends to recede into the background more, and tamariki will likely carry on as if they were not there. This will allow you to see the class as it actually is and decide if this is somewhere your child(ren) will be happy.

When you observe, take paper and pen so you can make notes of what you see, questions you wish to ask and of your overall impressions. It is also good practice to visit more than once if possible so you can deepen your understanding of what the Montessori class at this level has to offer your child. Montessori Aotearoa suggests that you also visit other early childhood centres to understand how Montessori communities offer a different experience for tamariki in the preschool years. You could also visit a Montessori primary class in your area and see where Montessori can take primary-aged tamariki.

This *Parent Guide* may help you answer the question 'Can Montessori education establish a profound emotional, spiritual and academic base for my child at this stage of their life?'

Vision and Leadership

The leadership vision and advocacy within Montessori communities is key to ensuring that the quality of Montessori implementation is upheld in all governance and management decisions. Leadership encompasses committees, owners, centre managers and head kaiako (teachers).

Essential Element

The preschool has a clear, lived vision for how to be a great Montessori preschool.

What this results in

- There is a philosophy document that explicitly explains the importance of Montessori to the preschool and the steps it takes to ensure it remains so.
- The owner/centre manager makes both short and long term decisions that ensure adherence to Montessori philosophy and education.
- The preschool has a solid reputation for being consistently Montessori.

Questions you could ask the Owner/Manager/Kaiako

- What do you do when someone suggests you include another approach?
- Is there a fact sheet of the basic principles you adhere to and is this common knowledge?
- How do you decide what to focus on?
- Do you have Montessori experts come to review your preschool to help you set goals?

Questions you could ask yourself

- What are the priorities of this preschool that we can see, and do they fit with our family/whānau priorities?
- Do we think our tamariki will thrive in this kind of preschool?

Essential Element

Leadership ensures Montessori kaiako working in the akomanga (classroom) with tamariki are Montessori trained.

What this results in

- Kaiako working with tamariki are either in training or have completed a Montessori 3-6 year teacher training programme that includes face to face delivery. They know how to use the materials, how to run the environment and how to respond to each child where they are.
- The classroom works efficiently, tamariki are engaged, and learning is assured.
- Any untrained kaiako are supported directly by trained teachers to ensure that their work is in line with the philosophy of the preschool.
- Training is encouraged and supported by the owner/centre manager.

Questions you could ask the Owner/Manager/Kaiako

- How do you go about obtaining teachers trained in the Montessori philosophy and way of teaching?
- What process do you go through to make sure kaiako are staying true to that?
- How many of your teachers hold a Montessori 3-6 year training?

Questions you could ask yourself

- What is different about how kaiako interact with tamariki than we were expecting?
- Has the training made a difference to what the teachers do in the class, and how they are with children?

Essential Element

There is an avenue for parents/whānau to learn about the philosophy and functioning of the preschool.

What this results in

- There are regular opportunities for family/whānau to learn about what kind of education their child/ren are receiving.
- Current families/whānau are knowledgeable about what their tamariki are doing at preschool.
- There are current families/whānau for prospective families/whānau to talk to who are knowledgeable about the preschool's ethos.

Questions you could ask the Owner/Manager/Kaiako

- What kind of opportunities are there for us to learn more about what happens in the class if our child/ren come here?
- Is there a family/whānau with someone our child's age we could talk to about the preschool and how it works?

Questions you could ask yourself

- Are we committed to learning more about this style of education?
- Does this sound like a good fit with our family values?



The Learning Environment

The Montessori environment consists of the physical space (both indoors and out), the materials, tools and equipment provided for tamariki activity, the stories told and ideas discussed, the adults and tamariki. The environment also embodies the ambience found within the culture and interactions of the community members.

Essential Element

The Montessori preschool environment is orderly, beautiful, and calm. It is set out in such a way as the materials are easily accessible and there is freedom of movement, choice, workmates and long uninterrupted periods of time for engagement, concentration and independent learning.

What this results in

- The learning opportunities in the classroom are frequently changed to cater for the needs and interests of the current group of learners.
- Learning materials are arranged in curriculum areas eg. practical life, sensorial, language, mathematics and environmental studies.
- The classroom is structured so that tamariki can find anything they are interested in and learn quickly where things are.
- All learning materials are attractive so the children are enticed to use them – aesthetically pleasing, clean, complete and in good repair.
- Tamariki have real opportunities to develop motor control and to perfect their movements. Akomanga has child-sized furniture that is light and can be moved, floors that do not deaden noise or prevent breakages, and activities use breakable materials such as glass and china. There should be little plastic!
- Everything in the classroom is size appropriate for tamariki – from furniture to crockery to woodwork tools. The colour of the furnishings, floors, and walls should be soft and muted with limited wall displays so that the brightly-coloured Montessori materials attract the children and focus their attention.

- The class has an uninterrupted daily work/activity time with the ideal being a three-hour period free from interruption for whole group activities such as snack, mat time, group learning or communal celebrations where all tamariki must join in.
- The class has an atmosphere of calm with tamariki concentrating for periods of time which might surprise you.
- The outdoors are part of the working environment.



Questions you could ask the Owner/Manager/Kaiako

- 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?
- What will happen if my child does not put something back in the 'right place'?
- My child is very messy at home – how will he/she cope in this orderly environment?
- Why is a long uninterrupted period of time important for my child's learning?
- When my child needs to rest what will he/she do?



Questions you could ask yourself while you observe the class

- Do tamariki return their activities to their proper place – ready for the next child to use?
- Can I see children confidently using real implements to do 'real' tasks?
- Can I see tamariki of all ages using lots of china and glass - plates, cups, dishes etc?
- Can the children access everything they need without adult help?
- Do tamariki have a long uninterrupted time or are there frequent interruptions for set activities or whole group times?

Essential Element

The Montessori classroom is characterised by multi-aged groupings of three or more years.

What this results in

- In Montessori early learning centres tamariki start around three years of age and stay until they are six years old.
- Tamariki in the class are a mix of ages – eg. not just three and four-year-olds.
- The mixed age group allows the children to develop socially, intellectually and emotionally - it is an essential part of any Montessori centre.
- There is no segregation by age into separate morning and afternoon classes, or different rooms/areas during the day.
- The mixed age offers the opportunity for tamariki to grow into a teaching role; this gives immense satisfaction to the older child and offers a way to internalise their learning. The best teacher of a child is often another child.

Questions you could ask the Owner/Manager/Kaiako

- How does your centre decide when a child is ready to commence in the Montessori classroom?
- What is the optimal age to start? Why?
- How will my three-year-old get on with the bigger five-year-olds?
- How are older tamariki encouraged to 'teach' the younger children – how do they help?

Questions you could ask yourself

- Can we see tamariki of all ages in the class from under three to over five years?
- Do we see children segregated by age groupings or can we see children interacting across the age groups?
- Can we see older tamariki 'teaching' younger children and being encouraged by the adults to take on this mentoring role?

Essential Element

*There are materials and resources for tamariki to access as needed.
As much as possible, materials are made of natural components.*

What this results in

- A beautiful, spacious environment that encourages engagement.
- Natural materials encourage handling and tamariki can see that beauty is important in everyday life.
- The use of plastic is kept to a minimum.
- There are supplies and materials sufficient to engage in a range of work available to tamariki to access in their own time, without needing to go to a teacher.

Questions you could ask the Owner/Manager/Kaiako

- What happens when materials are broken, misused, or not put away?

Questions you could ask yourself

- Can we see natural materials in the environment?
- Are children handling materials well – does it look as though the materials are looked after?
- Is the environment relatively well ordered?
- What do the shelves look like?
- Are many tamariki completing a cycle of activity - from choosing an activity, engaging with concentration, finishing when they feel satisfied, cleaning the work and returning it to the shelves for another child to use?

Essential Element

The design of the environment fosters independent learning, engaged learners, variety, movement, and socialisation.

What this results in

- The tamariki engage in work irrespective of the presence of a kaiako.
- Children select and engage in activities which are interesting to them.
- Kaiako know the children well and respond to their unique interests and needs, engaging parents in this process.
- The majority of lessons are given individually.

Questions you could ask the Owner/Manager/Kaiako

- How is the day structured to allow tamariki to meet their needs?
- How does that aid their engagement in learning?
- 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?
- What opportunities are there for me to interact with staff about my child?
- If my child shows an interest in a particular area how is this responded to in the classroom? Can you give me some recent examples of this?

Questions you could ask yourself

- Are children peaceful, engaged and interacting positively with each other?
- Are tamariki moving freely about the room and is that movement, for the most part, purposeful?
- 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?
- Are tamariki able to work without frequent interruptions from kaiako?

Essential Element

The environment, including the curriculum and routines is responsive to all learners, including diverse learners.

What this results in

- Family/whānau are aware of what is happening in their child's educational journey.
- The centre is inclusive and accepting of different abilities.
- Each child is learning what they need as they need to.
- Tamariki who require additional assistance or resources have access to that.
- Different abilities and learning preferences are catered for.
- Tamariki are learning to be in social groups and there are lessons to help children master both social interactions and social conflict.
- Each child's individual needs are assessed through observation so when the child is developmentally ready new concepts and activities are introduced.
- The learning opportunities in the classroom are frequently changed to cater for the needs and interests of the current group of learners.
- The classroom routines and layout allow for learning in the following areas:
 - Practical Life Activities, Sensorial, Language, Mathematics, Environmental Studies (which include biology, zoology, history, science, geography).
- Individual Education Plans (IEPs) are developed where necessary to ensure a child's particular needs are met.

Questions you could ask the Owner/Manager/Kaiako

- What would you do for our child (if they have a special ability)?
- Our child is particularly interested in... How will this be catered for in this preschool?
- How does freedom work at this level?
- What happens if our child doesn't choose activities?

Questions you could ask yourself

- How will our child react to the freedom and choice in this environment?
- Will their special interests/needs be encouraged at this preschool?
- How could our child fit into this environment?

Essential Element

Tamariki are not limited to the classroom and kaiako for their learning.

What this results in

- The whole Montessori learning environment is available to all tamariki - there should be no restriction by age to certain curriculum areas.
- The outdoor environment is used as rich learning experiences for tamariki in the same way as the indoors. Activities are purposeful, real, encourage exploration and have a cycle of activity.
- 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.
- Tamariki have opportunities to garden, care for animals and observe nature as part of their daily programme.

Questions you could ask the Owner/Manager/Kaiako

- Can you explain how tamariki will access the whole indoor and outdoor learning environment?
- We are worried our child will be too tired to 'do Montessori' for long periods - can you explain how this will work for our child?
- What opportunities will our child have to explore the community beyond the service?
- How are the rhythms of nature acknowledged in the programme?

Questions you could ask yourself

- Is the outdoor environment being used as rich learning experiences for tamariki in the same manner as indoors - activities that are purposeful, real, explorative and have a cycle of activity?
- Are tamariki moving freely from the indoor to outdoor environment during the session?
- Do we think this style of education will enrich our child's emotional, spiritual and intellectual experiences?

Essential Element

Tamariki take part in ensuring the environment meets their needs.

What this results in

- Tamariki have ownership of their environment and are confident participants in it.
- Children are relaxed and confident with their classmates and teachers. Learning is fun and tamariki find joy in their discoveries and in the activities they choose each day.
- The focus of a Montessori classroom is on the creative exploration by the child of the Montessori materials and activities, not on plastic toys, puzzles, workbooks etc.
- Tamariki are free and encouraged to explore using the Montessori materials – the teacher does not insist on one ‘proper’ use of material but encourages the children’s open-ended exploration and experimentation, while encouraging a respect for the materials.
- All Montessori activities are limited in number – only one of most activities, including art, so that tamariki come to respect each item as a special and unique piece of equipment. They learn to develop patience as they wait for a turn, and they have many options available to them in the classroom so they learn to make alternative choices, rather than watching and waiting.
- The Montessori materials have an inbuilt ‘control of error’ which means no adult assistance is needed for tamariki to work with them, after their initial presentation.
- Tamariki become comfortable with making mistakes, trying again, developing problem-solving skills and the ability to see a task through to completion without adult direction.
- Montessori learning materials are beautifully created and presented in a way which appeals to children.
- The atmosphere is inclusive and accepting of and by, both tamariki and kaiako.

Questions you could ask the Owner/Manager/Kaiako

- How does the Montessori philosophy define the daily activities and routines of the classroom?
- 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?
- Do tamariki always get to choose what they do, how do you guide them to broaden their horizons?



Questions you could ask yourself

- Does this programme feel inclusive?
- Do all tamariki seem welcome and accepted?
- Are there lots of 'toys' in the classroom – puzzles, plastic toys, etc?
- Is there only one of each activity and what do the children do when they both want to do the same activity?
- Are tamariki engaged with the Montessori hands-on learning materials or are there lots of worksheets, colouring or copying exercises and 'book' work?



Essential Element

Te Whāriki is integrated with MJ2Ex (Montessori curriculum). See appendix for full names.



What this results in

- Te Whāriki is integrated into MJ2Ex as opposed to two separate curricula of Montessori and Te Whāriki.
- Tikanga Māori and Te Reo Māori are incorporated throughout the whole programme and all curriculum areas to reflect the society and time in which the children live.



Questions you could ask the Owner/Manager/Kaiako

- How do you integrate Te Whāriki and Montessori as a cohesive whole?
- Can you describe to me what the Montessori curriculum is and how it supports my child's learning?
- How are the cultures of the world celebrated in this class?
- Can you show me some examples of how my child will learn about his and other cultures?
- How do we know our child is learning what they need to learn in an Aotearoa New Zealand context?



Questions you could ask yourself

- Do we think our child will thrive in this kind of situation?
- Do we see evidence of Te Reo Māori in the classroom – for instance, phrases in te reo Māori being used verbally.



The Trained Kaiako

Kaiako are an active part of the Montessori triangle (kaiako-tamariki-prepared environment). The adult (called teacher, kaiako, guide or directress/director) is the 'dynamic link' between tamariki and the prepared environment. To be an effective link and to be able to prepare the environment well, the adult must be Montessori trained, able to observe thoughtfully, reflect deeply, and be committed to the challenging role of kaiako.

Essential Element

The majority of kaiako in the environment have the appropriate Montessori qualification for the age group.

What this results in

- Kaiako can support tamariki in the way that is needed in this important stage of development (0–6 years).
- Tamariki develop the ability to concentrate and to become absorbed in what they are doing.
- There may be some small groups, but mostly individual work happening as children are met where they are and extended from there.
- Teachers use Montessori strategies with tamariki (observations, individual and small group presentations, etc).

Questions you could ask the Owner/Manager/Kaiako

- How is Montessori teacher training different from state kaiako training?
- What do you do differently because of your training?
- Why do Montessori kaiako spend so much time observing tamariki?



Questions you could ask yourself

- Does the teacher speak knowledgeably and confidently about Montessori philosophy and practice and can answer our questions clearly?
- Is the teacher implementing Montessori in a way that is consistent with these guidelines?
- What can we see the Montessori teachers doing to protect the children's concentration?



Essential Element

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



What this results in

- When you visit a Montessori class it should be hard to see or hear kaiako. Look for adults who are engaged with children, who do not interrupt tamariki, who lower themselves to the child's level to communicate and talk in a quiet voice.
- Teachers give frequent 'grace and courtesy' lessons to tamariki – gently modelling courteous interactions with each other and tamariki and showing what behaviour is desirable.
- Adults model careful, respectful handling of learning materials and tamariki are encouraged to take care of materials.
- Respect is apparent in all interactions, teacher to children and tamariki to tamariki.
- There is an air of acceptance, no child is left out.
- Children step in to help each other where it is needed.



Questions you could ask the Owner/Manager/Kaiako

- 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 manage extreme behaviours?
- What about children who are different, how do they fit in?



Questions you could ask yourself

- Are the teachers very obvious in the classroom or are they calm, quiet and engaging respectfully with the children one on one or in small groups?
- Can we see teachers who show that they are enjoying the children?
- Is the relationship between kaiako and children warm and interactive?

- Are we confident that all tamariki are accepted for who they are?
 - Will our child be happy engaged in this kind of self-directed learning?
-

Essential Element

The Montessori learning community reaches its full potential when the number of adults is kept to the minimum, since the real work of learning belongs to the child.

What this results in

- There is a minimum of adults present in the Montessori early learning environment (in New Zealand there is a state requirement for one adult per 10 tamariki over two years of age).
- Tamariki are not reliant on kaiako, but are able to operate independently in the classroom.
- Parent involvement will be welcomed for specified times and community activities but the Montessori classroom focuses on tamariki becoming independent.

Questions you could ask the Owner/Manager/Kaiako

- What is the centre's teacher-child ratio?
- What do you need me to do to respect the children's learning space?
- How does your adult:child ratio encourage/foster independence?

Questions you could ask yourself

- How many adults are in the classroom? What are they doing?
 - In what ways are kaiako encouraging the development of independence?
-

Essential Element

The Montessori teacher is a trained observer of children. Teachers use these careful observations and their knowledge of the whole child 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.
- Kaiako know what tamariki are doing and how they react to what they are teaching.

- The teachers can make modifications when something is not working for particular children.
- Observations cover social interactions as well as academics, so kaiako can intervene or give guidance as needed.



Questions you could ask the Owner/Manager/Kaiako

- When you observe tamariki what kinds of things are you looking for?
- How does this support your planning for my child?
- How do we know our child is learning what they need to?
- What happens if our child is having difficulty socially?



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 tamariki?
- Are we confident that if our child has any issues or concerns they would be noticed and dealt with?
- Are we confident our child would get the help they need to succeed?



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 kaiako should attend 10-12 hours of Montessori-focused professional development each year, in addition to other teaching professional development.
- Teachers are up to date and apply relevant knowledge in the classroom.



Questions you could ask the Owner/Manager/Kaiako

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



Questions you could ask yourself

- Are we confident kaiako would use up to date strategies with our child?

The Community

The Montessori community is a collaboration of many, including, but not limited to: tamariki and kaiako; whānau, hapū, iwi, and the wider community; leaders and governance bodies; and all supporters who share the goals of the Montessori community.

Essential Element

Parents/whānau are welcomed into the early childhood centre as partners in their child's education.

What this results in

- Parents/whānau have someone to talk to about their child's education.
- Kaiako follow up quickly with any issues raised.
- There are formal and informal opportunities for parents/whānau to engage with the centre.
- Parents/whānau are listened to and considered experts on their child.

Questions you could ask the Owner/Manager/Kaiako

- What kind of opportunities are there for us to be involved?

Questions you could ask yourself

- Does this centre feel welcoming and accepting of us and our family/whānau?
-

Essential Element

Montessori centres, staff, administrators and owners, work in partnership with parents/whānau.

What this results in

- Montessori centres foster a dialogue with parents/whānau to promote understanding of Montessori philosophy and values.
- There is an orientation process for both the parent and child to the Montessori learning

environment.

- There are opportunities for parents/whānau to learn about Montessori philosophy and practice.
- There are Montessori books, magazines and resources available to borrow.
- Regular dialogue with staff and written feedback provides parents/whānau with information about their child's learning and experiences.
- Montessori centres offer suggestions about what you can do at home to support the work that happens at the centre.
- Parents / whānau share their aspirations for their child with the centre which are included in planning and assessment.
- Parents / whānau are welcome to share their culture, important events, and any other aspects of their lives to enhance the environment for tamariki.



Questions you could ask the Montessori centre staff

- How can I be involved with my child's learning in the Montessori environment?
- What support do teachers need?
- Where do we go if we need support during our child's time here?
- What kinds of *Parent Information Evenings* are offered and how often?
- Are there any books and resources we can borrow that will help us understand more about Montessori education?
- What kind of parents/whānau support networks operate in the centre and how will we get to know other parents/whānau?



Questions you could ask yourself

- Look at the noticeboards in the centre – what information is there for parents/whānau?
- Can I talk to other parents/whānau about their involvement in the class.

Essential Element

The Montessori community nurtures kotahitanga (the collective togetherness), supports the ethos of aroha (compassion, empathy), and role models whakamana (respect), all in the context of bicultural (and indeed, multicultural) understanding.

What this results in

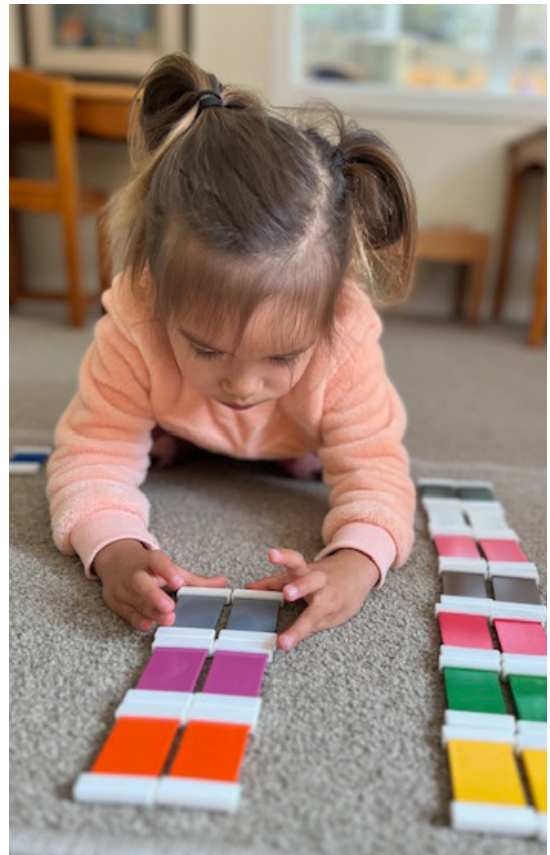
- Interactions between tamariki, staff, whānau and the wider community are characterised by respect, warmth and courtesy.
- Tamariki and kaiako are happy to come to the centre.
- There are places for interactions to occur.
- The atmosphere in the centre is peaceful and cooperative.

Questions you could ask the Owner/Manager/Kaiako

- How are peaceful and respectful interactions encouraged?
- What are your priorities for inclusion and acceptance of difference - gender, ethnicity, ability etc?
- How are issues dealt with? What if we are not happy with something, what do we do?

Questions you could ask yourself

- Do we support this kind of attitude towards others?
- Will we be happy for our child to be educated this way?
- Can we work within the structures the centre has for dealing with issues that arise?



Appendix

Glossary of Montessori Terms

Montessori Aotearoa	Montessori Aotearoa New Zealand is a collective of schools, early childhood centres, organisations and individual members who work together to provide and promote Montessori education in New Zealand.
MJ2Ex	<p><i>Montessori Journey to Excellence (MJ2Ex): Te Ara Ki Huhuatanga</i> provides a guide for establishing Montessori best practice, while recognising the influence of leadership in sustaining quality Montessori education and including a strong emphasis on Te Tiriti o Waitangi.</p> <p>It is intended to be an all-encompassing document for kaiako of all levels and within that context to be responsive and reflective of the educational landscape of Aotearoa.</p>
Montessori Principles/Strategies used to structure a Montessori Programme	<p>The Montessori classroom (indoors and out) is designed to optimise learning, social relationships, and self esteem. Some of the characteristics of this classroom (and its programme) – at all levels of Montessori education – include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Respect for the learner’s unique developmental needs and interests. Learners are not compared, they are valued for their individuality. Montessori education embraces multiple styles of learning and understands that each student’s learning journey is different.• Kaiako are warm and welcoming, trained to connect tamariki with meaningful and relevant experiences.• Kaiako utilise a variety of observation techniques to assist them in ensuring tamariki are engaged and making progress in their learning.• Freedom of movement and choice of activity are both encouraged, within the context of respect for others (“common good” and “common courtesy”).• Appropriate materials and resources are available to tamariki at all times, without needing to ask for the items needed for learning.• Independent effort is encouraged, as is peer collaboration.

- Mixed Age Range supports peer collaboration (tuakana/teina relationships). Typical age groupings are:
 - 0–15 months (infants, not yet walking)
 - 15 months – 3 years (confidently walking)
 - 3–6 years (early learning)
 - 6–9 and 9–12 years OR a combined 6–12 years (primary classes)
 - 12–15 years (middle school)
 - 15–18 years (high school)
- ‘Rewards’ are intrinsic to the programme therefore tamariki are encouraged to notice when they have worked well, and experience satisfaction as a result.

Planes of Development

The Four Planes of Development is the holistic framework upon which Dr. Montessori built her vision of developmental psychology. This theory encompasses human development from birth until maturity at age 24 years with each plane lasting approximately six years having its own characteristics.

Human Tendencies

Montessori philosophy has as its basis that all humans, no matter when and where they live, have the same tendencies and it is in meeting those tendencies that allow us to adapt to our time and place. These tendencies may differ slightly, from training to training, but for the purpose of this handbook are: to orient, to explore, to order, to move, to imagine, to repeat and perfect, to work, to calculate, to abstract, to communicate and associate. Dr. Montessori contends that the way these tendencies manifest at each age changes and therefore the environment that supports the development of said age needs to change to allow optimal growth.

Needs and Characteristics of the 3–6 Year Child

- Activities which challenge gross and fine motor development are available throughout the day.
- The needs of the individual and the community of tamariki (e.g. for exercise, interest, exploration, self-expression, food, self-care and care of each other) drive the programme and the activities available.
- Academic studies made possible by Montessori materials include language, mathematics, geometry, geography (both physical and cultural) and the passage of time.

Glossary of Māori words

Kaiako	Teacher
Tamariki	Child(ren)
Akomanga	Classroom, environment
Whānau	Family
Tuakana-teina	Older children supporting younger children.
Kotahitanga	Unity, togetherness, solidarity
Aroha	Compassion, empathy, love, respect
Whakamana	To enable, empower, or give prestige

Ministry of Education (MoE) Document

He whāriki mātauranga mō ngā mokopuna o Aotearoa - Early childhood curriculum (Te Whāriki).

This is underpinned by a vision for tamariki who are competent and confident learners and communicators, healthy in mind, body and spirit, secure in their sense of belonging and in the knowledge that they make a valued contribution to society.

