



INFORMATION & ENROLMENT BOOKLET

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INTRODUCTION

Montessori @ Howick Primary opened in 2003. Students attend from throughout the eastern and southern suburbs of Auckland. Our experienced teachers, specialised learning materials and community focused school make Montessori @ Howick Primary an exceptional school to attend. Montessori education is provided within the framework of the New Zealand National Curriculum and in addition our students participate in school wide cultural, social, sporting and arts programmes.

Our Montessori community wants our children to reach for their full potential, by encouraging a lifelong love of learning, through respect for others and our environment and by enabling them to grow in confidence and independence.

MONTESSORI @ HOWICK PRIMARY (www.montessorihowickprimary.school.nz)

At Montessori @ Howick Primary we aim to provide and promote an education, inspired by the Montessori philosophy, which nurtures in the child a lifelong love of learning through self discovery. We aim to provide an education for the development of the whole child where activities promote the development of cognitive skills, of social skills, of emotional growth and also physical coordination. Children at Montessori @ Howick Primary work, learn and progress at their own pace and have individualised learning plans. The teachers guide and encourage the children responding to each child's unique learning style.

Within our large multi-aged classroom, our 2 teachers and teacher's assistant work with the 6 – 8 and 9 – 11 year old groupings. Our classrooms have a wide range of specialised Montessori resources and materials. There is a strong emphasis on providing a peaceful and orderly environment which enhances the children's ability to learn.

HOWICK PRIMARY SCHOOL (www.howickprimary.school.nz)

The School's vision is a "successful learning environment for children and teachers". The school is extremely supportive of the Montessori Unit and in turn the children have a strong sense of belonging. Montessori students attend school assemblies, take part in school events (walkathons, book week events), school productions (choirs, dance festivals) and school sports teams and are therefore well integrated into Howick Primary School. They wear the Howick Primary school uniform.

Howick Primary has one of the largest primary school grounds in Auckland but maintains very much a community focus, with less than 400 pupils. Facilities include an extensive library and information technology suite, a newly refurbished hall, a swimming pool and two playgrounds. The grounds have several garden features including vegetable gardens. Music programmes, life skills programmes, chess classes and many after school activities are offered. The school is not zoned.

Children in the Montessori Unit undertake Ministry of Education Assessments in a similar way to other children at Howick Primary. They are also offered the same opportunities for gifted children and for children with learning difficulties.

HOWICK AND PAKURANGA MONTESSORI ACADEMY TRUST

The Howick & Pakuranga Montessori Academy (HPMA) Trust oversees activities required to implement the mission of developing a Montessori community and delivering Montessori education at Howick Primary School. It is independent of the Howick Primary School Board of Trustees. Trustees (who are all volunteers) are responsible for Finance, Resources, Enrolments, Trust Administration, Promotion and Marketing and Family Event Planning. The Trust makes financial provision to teachers (salaries and training) and the classroom (materials and equipment). Parents are encouraged to become Trustees and play a role in the school. Parents are also encouraged to help the Trustees in a support capacity (eg organising family events, assisting on school trips and working bees etc).

The Chair of the Trustees also represents the Montessori Unit on the Howick Primary School Board of Trustees – thus ensuring the integration of the Unit within the School and also playing a role in the governance of Howick Primary School. Our Trust Members and Board of Trustees Meeting Dates are listed on our website.

OUR TEACHERS

Dee Gordon, the Directress, is the Senior Teacher of the Montessori Unit and also a Senior Teacher of Howick Primary School. Working along side her are Charlene Jacobs and Dawn Young (who is the Teacher's Assistant). Our teachers have a true passion for Montessori teaching and are an exceptional team. They attend regular Montessori training and development courses and seminars, as well as all the required State school training programmes. See our website for the teacher's biographies.

APPLICATION PROCESS

Who can apply

Montessori @ Howick Primary welcomes applications from children attending a Montessori preschool in New Zealand or overseas. Transfer from another Montessori primary school is also possible (subject to availability of class places). Children commence at the school at age 6.

Registration of interest form

It is important to place your child's name on the waiting list as early as possible by completing the registration of interest form (which is available on the website). Once you are on the waiting list we will keep in contact with you (mostly by email) and will send you copies of our newsletters and invitations to family and educational events.

Enrolment application form

To apply, you need to complete the enrolment application form (which is available on the website), ensuring that you meet the eligibility criteria. Please take note of the enrolment timelines. Prior to the offer of a place, all prospective parents are invited to meet with the Trust and Teachers and your child's readiness to move to primary will be reviewed by the Teachers at one or more school visits. Places in the Montessori unit are limited and applications will be considered on a fair and equitable basis.

Family commitment

Parents need to show an understanding of the Montessori philosophy and teaching methodology and demonstrate a commitment to support the programme. Montessori education is most effective where this understanding and support occurs. Additionally parents must be willing to be actively involved and support Trust initiatives, fundraising ventures, working bees, parent education evenings and social events. Parents are asked to complete a Parent Assistance Form, where they are also able to indicate their own particular skills and preference for areas they would like to assist with.

Eligibility criteria

- Where possible, your child has been placed on the waiting list at least 2 years prior to their expected start date. A registration of interest form must have been submitted.
- Your child has at least two years Montessori preschool experience.
- Your child will start at Montessori @ Howick Primary at age 6. An earlier start date can be requested. The teachers will review a child's readiness to move from preschool to primary, however most children will start at age 6. This review is in the form of one or more school visits.
- Your child has built up his/her pre school sessions, so that by 4 ½ s/he is attending 5 half days and by 5 years old s/he is attending at 5 full days per week.
- It is preferable that your child has stayed in the Montessori system prior to entering Montessori Primary school (i.e. has not been to a mainstream primary school after leaving a Montessori preschool). Each application will be considered by the Trust and Teachers on an individual basis.
- Parents have completed the enrolment application form and paid the \$50.00 application fee.
- Parents and their child have met with the Trust and the Teachers and demonstrated an understanding and support for the Montessori programme.
- Parents have indicated an enthusiasm and willingness to assist the Trust on a voluntary basis.
- Parents have signed a contract for services which details payments and conditions of attendance at Montessori @ Howick Primary.
- Prior to their child starting school, parents have paid the initial donation of \$1,125.00, a bond of \$660.00 and they must have commenced their automatic payment for school resource contributions (at least 2 weeks prior to their child starting school).
- The ability of the Trust to make places available for siblings.
- All placements are at the discretion of the Trust.

Enrolment timelines

It is expected that parents would submit a registration of interest form by the time their child turns 4. This gives the prospective family time to learn more about Montessori @ Howick Primary and about Montessori education. An enrolment application form should be submitted prior to or by the child's 5th birthday. Contracts and payments are completed and commenced in the term prior to the child starting school.

Contract for Services

Once your child has been accepted at Howick @ Montessori Primary you will be required to sign a contract for services which details payments and conditions of attendance at Montessori @ Howick Primary. Every place in the Montessori unit is reviewed at the end of each year and is dependent on adherence to the contract for services.

PAYMENTS & CONTRIBUTIONS

In order for the Trust to offer and maintain a quality Montessori education, parents pay a resources contribution of \$660.00 per term per child (payable in advance by automatic payment). In addition to this, a one off initial donation is payable once a child has been accepted at the school. This is a tax deductible donation of \$1,125.00. A non refundable application fee of \$50.00 is payable on lodgment of the enrolment application form to cover administration costs. A bond equal to one term's resources contribution is paid prior to the child's first term which covers the child for their final term's resource contributions.

The resources contributions pay a portion of teacher's salaries (the balance being paid by the Ministry of Education), they pay for teachers Montessori training and development, for the purchase and maintenance of Montessori resources, for other classroom equipment, for the Trust's administration, financial and legal costs, for marketing and promotional costs and for MANZ membership. (MANZ is the national organisation representing and promoting Montessori in New Zealand). The Trustees are volunteers and are unpaid officers.

The terms and conditions for all payments are set out in a contract for services which all parents must sign once their child has been offered a place at Howick @ Montessori Primary. This contract clearly sets out parental obligations with regards to payments as well as other conditions of attendance at Montessori @ Howick Primary. Every place in the Montessori unit is reviewed at the end of each year and is dependent on adherence to the contract for services.

Enrolment Application Fee

A completed enrolment application form must be accompanied by a (non-refundable) application fee of \$50.00 (including GST). Failure to include this fee with your enrolment application form makes the application invalid. Note – payment of this application fee does not automatically guarantee a place in the Montessori class.

Initial Donation

This donation is payable in the term preceding your child starting at school. Upon a written offer of a place by the Trust, a one-off, non-refundable donation of \$1,125.00 (including GST) is payable. The donation must be paid within one month of accepting the position offered for your child to join Montessori @ Howick Primary. Failure to pay the donation within the given time will be deemed a decline of the position offered. The available place will be offered to the next eligible family.

Notice of Withdrawal

In the event of notice of withdrawal prior to, or within the first five weeks of the child's term of commencement, the \$1,125.00 donation paid at the time of acceptance will be refunded only at such time as a replacement child deemed eligible by the Trust has been accepted to start and has paid his/her donation. A further condition to a full refund is that the original receipt given at the time of payment of the \$1,125.00 donation needs to be returned to the HPMA Trust. If you have already presented this to IRD for tax purposes, HPMA cannot refund the donation, due to our charitable trust status.

Bond

A bond equal to one term's resources contribution of \$660.00 (including GST) is payable 2 weeks prior to your child starting at school. Following your notification in writing of your child's final leaving date from the Montessori class, this bond will be used as your child's resource contribution for his/her final term in the Montessori class. Notice of withdrawal must be given a minimum of one full term in advance. In the case of withdrawal without the required one full term's notice, the bond will be used for the term following departure, in lieu of proper notice being given.

Resources Contribution

Each term there is a resources contribution of \$660.00 (including GST). This payment is to be made to the HPMA Trust by automatic payment direct into the HPMA Trust bank account. Payment of \$220.00 (including GST) may be made monthly. Alternatively payments of \$110.00 (including GST) may be made fortnightly or a payment of \$55.00 (including GST) weekly. An authority for automatic payment is to be submitted with the signed Contract for Services. This automatic payment authority is re-signed at the beginning of each school year.

Howick Primary School Donation

An annual (tax deductible) donation of \$180.00 is requested by Howick Primary School and is payable in full or in part payments at the School Office.

VISIT OUR SCHOOL

We welcome you to visit Montessori @ Howick Primary either at one of our open days (held in Terms 1 and 4) or at advertised information seminars or by arranging a special visit to watch a class. We can also put you in touch with other parents to talk to. Our open days are not only an opportunity to watch a class in action, but also a chance to talk to the teachers and to some of the trustees and parents. Open days and a location map are advertised on our website.

To come and observe a class, please contact us to arrange a time to visit. Only by watching the children learn will you get that “aha” moment of why a Montessori primary education is such a unique opportunity for your child. Please download a copy of the observation guidelines from our website which you will need to observe when you visit the class.

In addition once we have your details, we can start sending you our newsletters and details of Montessori events at our school. You are welcome to come to any of our family or educational events to meet and talk with other parents and to the trustees.

MONTESSORI PRE SCHOOLS

Attending a Montessori pre school is a pre requisite for joining the primary class. However a child without such experience may be admitted, but only after assessment by the Directress. Pre schools prepare children for primary by teaching them to work independently and by encouraging them to care for the classroom environment. At Montessori pre schools children gain sensorial experience with Montessori materials and overall are familiar with the Montessori approach by the time that they start at Montessori @ Howick Primary.

Montessori defined the stages of child development (she called them planes of development) from 0 – 6, 6 - 12 (and then 12 – 18 and 18 – 24). She based this on scientific studies (still valid today) that a child’s physiological development reaches a new stage at these ages. This is why Montessori primary schools start at age 6. Socially and emotionally, as well as academically, the development of a child between 5 and 6 is significant. Though many parents may feel that their children are “ready” for school, they come to realise that waiting until they are 6 allows the child to take advantage of leadership and other learning opportunities at pre school. Both academically and socially the child makes much progress between age 5 and 6 (including consolidating their early learning by sharing it with other young children) - and they settle better into primary school as a result of this.

Montessori @ Howick Primary maintains contact with the local Montessori pre schools and, as required, works with them in the transition of a child from pre school to primary school. Our teachers may also visit the local pre schools to talk to both pre school teachers and pre school parents.

***Note.** From July 2010 the government has stated that 20 hours free early childhood education (ECE) will be available for children up to the age of 6 (previously age 5) – a significant financial benefit for families. For more information contact your Montessori pre school or <http://www.minedu.govt.nz/Parents/EarlyYears/HowECEWorks/20HoursECE.aspx>*

A list of local Montessori Pre Schools is available on our website.

STARTING SCHOOL

Enrolment at Howick Primary School - Children at the Montessori Unit are enrolled both with the Trust and with Howick Primary School. A copy of the School’s Ministry of Education Enrolment Form will be sent to you. This is a triplicate form and therefore only available in hard copy. A copy is also available from the school office – to where the form should be returned.

Starting school - a reference guide to Montessori @ Howick Primary

You can download a copy of this guide from our website – or one will be posted to you with your child’s starter pack.

Uniforms & Stationery

Montessori students wear the Howick Primary uniform available from John Russell Menswear in Howick. Stationery packs (ask specifically for the Montessori pack) are available from Paper Plus in Howick. The list required may change slightly each year. You will be emailed a list by the enrolments administrator before your child first starts school.

MONTESSORI BENEFITS

Maria Montessori saw the child as the creator of him/herself:

“The foundation of education must be based on the following facts: that the joy of the child is in accomplishing things great for his age; that the real satisfaction of the child is to give maximum effort to the task in hand ; that happiness consists in well-directed activity of body and mind in the way of excellence ; that strength of mind and body and spirit is acquired by exercise and experience”

The goals of a Montessori education are to encourage each child to reach for their full potential and to encourage a lifetime love of learning. At the primary level Montessori provides an environment in which the spirit of discovery has a supportive atmosphere and where the child can experiment and take risks with their learning. Developing capabilities such as creativity, initiative, independence, self discipline and self confidence is part of the primary programme. The children are starting to understand how they relate to each other and how they fit into the wider world, and therefore there is an emphasis on being part of the Montessori community (both in and outside the classroom). The integrated curriculum connects children's learning into a coherent whole rather than an unrelated series of facts. The Montessori curriculum and materials provide children with both a structure and the tools on their journey of self discovery. The uninterrupted 3 hour work cycle allows children to complete detailed work and to develop strong concentration skills.

Maria Montessori recognized that “true learning only resulted from the self motivation of the child” and this is what Montessori primary education offers – learning based on the child's own needs and learning that is meaningful to the child. The Montessori environment is designed to maximize independent learning in both the choice of work and in completing the work activities themselves. Because children learn at their own pace, they can progress at their own pace as well. As the child succeeds in their self chosen activities they are motivated to learn more and their self esteem builds. As the children experience the joy of learning so in turn this develops self confidence.

Montessori education is not just about academic development, it is about educating the whole child – therefore social skills, cooperation, empathy and respect are skills learnt and developed in the Montessori environment. Hence the importance of the mixed age groups within the classroom as well as a non competitive environment and the absence of a rewards based learning system. The children are encouraged to develop a sense of social and moral responsibility towards the community and the environment. As they learn that everything is interconnected (eg climate, crops, culture, poverty and disease) they come to see themselves as part of a bigger picture to which they need to learn to contribute constructively.

When parents at Montessori @ Howick Primary were asked “why did you send your child to Montessori?” they answered as follows:

It gives my child flexibility and freedom to learn at his/her own pace; it promotes self directed learning ; it's the best available education system ; it instills the desire to learn and value education ; it nurtures independence ; it offers a unique learning environment ; it encourages respect for others ; the teacher: child ratios.

And as for the children – what do they say about their Montessori class?

We get to learn the fun way ; we get to choose our own work ; the teachers are kind and helpful ; people always help each other

Two of our graduating students in 2009 wrote the following about their time at Montessori @ Howick Primary:

- I will remember my silly and funny friends, and all the wonderful trips that I have been on. I will remember and have enjoyed the past 6 years at Howick Primary School and in Montessori. I will remember most the awesome teachers, my wonderful friends and my friendly classmates. I loved Primary.
- I will remember the trips, the friends that I made and the teachers. Most of all how it was to be six and then eleven and I know that these years were worth it

Did you know? That Sergey Brin and Larry Page – the founders of Google – have credited as a factor in their success, their years as Montessori students? They said that at Montessori schools they learned to be self-directed and self-starters and that Montessori education allowed them to learn to think for themselves and gave them the freedom to pursue their own interests.

MONTESSORI PHILOSOPHY

“Our aim is not to make the child understand and still less to force him to memorize, but to touch his imagination so as to enthuse his innermost core”. Maria Montessori.

Maria Montessori (1870 – 1952), Italy’s first woman doctor, developed a scientific approach to education. She opened a school in the slums of Rome to test her theories about children’s learning and development. A century later scientific research is showing her educational theories were ahead of their time. She based her work on the principle that schooling should work with the child not against it. She recognised that children have a natural curiosity and desire to learn, without the need for rewards or punishments and without constant adult intervention. She further recognised that true learning only resulted from the self motivation of the child. From these theories and deductions she developed a unique approach to education that is now one of the largest educational philosophies in the world with over 22,000 schools in more than 100 countries on every continent.

Montessori Philosophy has 3 essential elements – the Directress (teacher), the prepared environment and a culture of respect.

The role of the Directress is to awaken the child’s curiosity and then to act as a facilitator in the child’s learning experience by guiding, assisting and encouraging the child. The child is thus motivated to learn through the work itself (and not by the teacher’s “talk and chalk” approach). As each child has an individual programme, the teacher’s role is to follow the child’s progress and interests, take into account the child’s style of learning and to present new material at the appropriate time. As the children work at their own pace they are able to move on when they are ready. Independence is encouraged as this helps develop self confidence.

The prepared environment refers to the scientifically developed materials designed to help the child learn independently. Montessori materials build sequentially, are generally self correcting and will usually isolate one principle. This structured environment however still allows the child to make independent choices as to what they will learn. The children are free to select activities that correspond to their own interests and level of readiness. As the children experience success in an activity they are motivated to repeat the task and then build on it. Thus the development of concentration, self-discipline, confidence and independence begins.

Educating for peace is a fundamental part of Montessori and therefore developing a culture of respect for others and for the environment is a feature of the Montessori classroom. Grouping children in mixed ages, the emphasis placed on cooperation and the non-competitive nature of a Montessori classroom all play a role in developing a sense of social and moral responsibility towards the community and the environment. Grace, courtesy and respect for others are inherent in everyday classroom life. The children are able to work either individually or in small groups and older children become role models and can often be found teaching the younger children thus reinforcing their own learning. The younger children see what can be achieved by the older children and are eager to learn more.

MONTESSORI CLASSROOM

“The child is much more spiritually elevated than is usually supposed. He often suffers not from too much work, but from work that is unworthy of him”. Maria Montessori

In the Montessori classroom the environment is designed to maximize independent learning and exploration.

Children and teachers respect concentration and do not interrupt those who are busy at work. The 3 hour morning work cycle enables the children to develop great powers of concentration and allows them to become fully absorbed and complete the work that they are doing without interruptions. It also means that they are learning to become independent learners. The children are free to move around the room instead of staying at desks, however they must still respect the space and concentration of other children. The children are used to working independently and this enables the teachers to teach children one at a time or in small groups.

The Montessori classroom itself is very peaceful and orderly (with less wall displays than state classrooms). This allows the children to concentrate on their work without many distractions around the room. The learning materials are set out neatly on the shelves with everything having a specific place and in a particular order. This means the child can always find what they need and what comes next in their learning.

Programme planning and evaluation ensure that a child's development is monitored and extended. Individual learning plans (including goal setting) are developed for each student - by both the student and the teacher. The teacher maintains comprehensive records of each child's development and progress based on ongoing and systematic observation.

The learning plan offers challenging activities while providing opportunities to succeed. Each successful step in the learning process builds the child's confidence to take further risks and make wider explorations. Each step is taken as the child becomes ready, without feeling threatened by being pushed ahead too fast, or stifled by being made to wait for others to catch up. As the children work independently they therefore have the freedom to choose the work that interests them and that is at their level. As the child makes learning choices, they are further developing their judgment and time-management skills and thus taking on responsibility for their learning.

The learning materials build on each other in a scientifically designed sequence. They are also designed to be attractive to the children. The self-correcting nature of the materials accustom the children to working alone constructively. A carefully planned series of successes ensures that the child believes in his ability to learn by him/herself. As tasks are mastered the child's confidence grows and so too does their love of learning. The extensive use of Montessori materials means that children are working with concrete and tactile objects which will enable them to then understand abstract concepts. The children are supported in their learning and they eventually work abstractly and successfully (without requiring the materials).

Teachers in a Montessori classroom will first be quiet observers, identifying each child's needs and stage of learning. Only then do they become active in guiding and encouraging the child. Teachers are continually looking at ways to extend a child's interest and potential from both their past experiences and from what motivates them to learn. The skill of a teacher to take advantage of the "teachable moment" is a feature of Montessori teaching. The mixed age groupings mean that a child and his/her teacher will ideally be together for 3 years. This allows the teacher and child to build a strong relationship and for the teacher to acquire a detailed knowledge of the child.

The Montessori Primary curriculum is quite specific to ensure that children learn fundamental concepts and skills. There is however a choice of ways that the children can explore the concepts and practice their skills. The Montessori Links Document has been developed to provide a framework in which the Montessori Primary Curriculum links with and covers the New Zealand State Curriculum.

At any given time different children will be studying any number of different subject areas, at varying degrees of complexity. All subjects are interwoven, not taught in isolation. This means that the children will understand the relevance of what they are learning and place it in context. They learn that everything is connected: climate, crops, culture and so forth. The aim of an integrated curriculum is to make education a coherent whole rather than an assortment of unrelated bits of information. The children have a 3 hour work cycle every morning and in the afternoons they cover additional parts of the curriculum such as music, physical education and art. In addition, the Montessori unit also offers weekly French classes taught by a native French speaker.

Children may choose to work outside or inside. The freedom to work outside is monitored by how responsible the child is. The curriculum is not solely classroom based – children have opportunities to learn outside the classroom. Most terms children go on school trips that are relevant to the topics that they are learning about. Every week the children take turns in working in the gardens growing flowers and vegetables (to be cooked in the classroom). When a new garden is planned the children will design it, apply for funding, go to the garden center to purchase the plants and then finally plant and tend to the new garden.

Children are grouped in classes of mixed ages and mixed abilities. Younger children look to the older children for guidance. They watch what can be achieved by the older children and seek to learn more. Older children become role models often teaching the younger children, thus reinforcing and consolidating their own learning, as well as playing a leadership role. Group work gives children the opportunity to mix with different ages and different abilities. This all helps develop a spirit of cooperation and empathy.

Montessori believed (and modern scientific data and testing is now confirming this) that rewards systems and competition to meet external standards are ineffective tools to motivate children to learn. This relates back to the essential part of Montessori philosophy that children have an inner drive to develop and learn. So you will not see reward systems in Montessori classrooms and testing is kept to a minimum. However as part of the State Curriculum, children in the Montessori Unit are required to be assessed in relation to national standards in a similar way to other children at Howick Primary.

A copy of the Integrated Curriculum and a Sample Timetable can be downloaded from our website.

MONTESSORI RESOURCES & LINKS

Parent's Library

These books (and many others) are available from our parent's library in the classroom. A comprehensive list of books available can be downloaded from our website.

Basic ideas of Montessori Educational Theory	Maria Montessori
A Parents Guide to the Montessori Classroom	Wolf
Montessori – A Modern Approach	Polk Lillard
The Essential Montessori	Elizabeth Hainstock
Montessori – The Science behind the Genius*	Angeline Stoll Lillard

*This is a fabulous book demonstrating how current scientific research is providing support for many of Montessori's theories. The book details what happens in the classroom, why it happens and why it works.

MANZ – Montessori Aotearoa New Zealand

MANZ is the national organization representing and promoting Montessori in New Zealand. Their website www.montessori.org.nz is a superb and indispensable resource for parents wanting to find out more about Montessori education and also has a Parent Guide 6 – 12 (Guide to Choosing a Montessori Primary Education). This is downloadable from their website or we can post you a hardcopy – please contact us.

Website Links

www.montessori.org.nz

www.montessori.org

www.montessori-ami.org

www.montessori-science.com

www.goodatdoingthings.com

www.amshq.org

www.tmi.edu

www.montessori.edu.au

Montessori Association of New Zealand
The Montessori Foundation – The
International Montessori Council
Association Montessori Internationale
Author site of Angeline Stoll Lillard
Site of Dr Steven Hughes, Associate
Professor of Paediatrics and Neurology
American Montessori Association
Toronto Montessori Institute
Montessori Association of Australia

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Here are some frequently asked questions, but please feel free to contact us if you have any more. The MANZ website (www.montessori.org.nz) also has a question and answer section.

How does the Montessori unit work within a state primary school?

The children are enrolled at both Howick Primary School and with Montessori @ Howick Primary. The Montessori Unit occupies 2 classrooms and all lessons are taught here. The unit uses all the school facilities (library, sports, play grounds etc) in the same way as all other classes.

How is the Montessori unit run?

The HPMA Trust oversees activities required to deliver Montessori education – including enrolment, finance, resources and marketing. The teaching staff are responsible for delivering the curriculum (both State and Montessori) and all matters relating to the classroom.

Why do children start at a Montessori Primary School at age 6?

Montessori defined the stages of development as 0 – 6 then 6 – 12. She based this on scientific studies that a child's physiological development reaches a new stage at these ages. Socially, emotionally and academically a child will settle more effectively into a Montessori primary school at age 6.

Can my child start before s/he turns 6? If so, how does Montessori @ Howick Primary decide when my child is ready to start?

An earlier start date can be requested, however most children will start at age 6. The teacher will assess, at one or more school visits, a child's readiness to move from pre to primary school.

How much does it cost? And why does Montessori schooling cost more than state schooling?

A quality Montessori education requires additional resources. These pay for a range of things including Montessori materials and equipment, teacher salaries and training and development. Our classroom is extremely well resourced and our teachers have Montessori qualifications.

How does the Montessori curriculum integrate with the New Zealand State Curriculum?

The Montessori Links document has been developed to provide a framework in which the Montessori Primary Curriculum links with and covers the New Zealand State Curriculum.

Can you give me an example of a timetable to show what the children cover during the week?

You can download one from the Montessori Classroom section on the website.

How will my child fit back into mainstream education at the end of his/her Montessori primary education?

Children who attend a Montessori Primary school acquire many skills – independent learning, motivation to learn, ability to make personal choices and to take control of their work. All these skills enable them to pursue their next level of schooling with many advantages.

If my child is able to decide what work s/he does, how does the teacher ensure that my child covers the required curriculum?

The Montessori Primary Curriculum is structured and very detailed. The prepared environment ensures that a wide variety of materials are accessible to the children. These materials are arranged in an attractive, sequential and progressive order. The children's interest is piqued both by the materials presence and by seeing others work with the materials. The children then request a lesson and then may work with the desired, scientifically designed resources. Some lessons are planned for the children and taught in sequence as well, to ensure a healthy coverage of skills and topics. With freedom to choose comes responsibility and teachers ensure that children cover the required work areas by monitoring their work diaries and maintaining detailed records.

How is a child's progress monitored in the Montessori classroom – both on a daily basis and on a longer term basis?

Individual learning plans are developed for each student. The teacher maintains comprehensive records of each child's development and progress, based on ongoing and systematic observation. Children record the work that they complete in worksheets or work diaries on a daily basis.

Can you tell me why testing is kept to a minimum in a Montessori Primary School? And why is there no rewards system?

Montessori believed that the inner drive of a child to learn was a stronger motivator than the drive to do well in tests and gain irrelevant rewards. The real reward of learning should be increased knowledge and job satisfaction. As part of the State Curriculum, children in the Montessori Unit are required to be assessed in relation to national standards in a similar way to other children at Howick Primary, but testing is kept to a minimum. This system also helps foster cooperation.

Montessori education focuses a lot on the child working independently – are the children taught as a group at all?

Most of the 3 hour work cycle focuses on the children working independently or with one or two others. Group work takes place mostly in subjects such as I.T., sports and music or in classroom discussions on topics such as Virtue Education.

How does the Montessori approach assist with both gifted children and children with learning difficulties? How do different levels of ability work in the classroom?

Because children have individualised learning plans and work independently, they are able to progress at their own pace and complete work that is at their level. They are not pushed ahead too quickly or stifled and held back.

Why is the mixed age group so important to Montessori Education?

A mixed age group enables the older children to become role models and they can often be found teaching the younger children, thus reinforcing their own learning as well as playing a leadership role. In turn, the younger children seek guidance from the older children and see what can be achieved by them and are thus eager to learn more. This all helps develop a spirit of cooperation and empathy.

What scientific basis is there supporting Montessori Education?

Maria Montessori was both a scientist and an educator and modern scientific research is now providing support for many of her theories. Take a look at the Resources page which lists several websites and books and find out more about the "Science behind Montessori".