



## What's the Difference?

**It is a common question for parents to ask why our Montessori Pre-school is different to other centres such as kindergartens and childcare centres.** We are different in many ways. Importantly we carry the name of *Montessori* which means that our staff members have undertaken training and therefore implement the values and philosophy of the Montessori Method of Education. But without long explanations of the finer points of Montessori how can you recognise the differences for yourself?

If you visit our classroom you will notice that we have a team of teachers working together. **Our Montessori Pre-schools provide a higher ratio of trained staff than is required by regulation standards.** Working in this way we are able to deliver on our promise of providing individual attention and programming for every child. **Our teachers carefully prepare new learning experiences based on their observations of each child's individual interest and ability. The teachers engage children in individual lessons throughout the day.** Inviting a child to work alone with a teacher provides an opportunity for uninterrupted attention and allows the teacher the time to carefully assess each child's level of understanding and interest. With team teaching, whenever one teacher is engaged in an individual lesson with a child, there are at least two other teachers free to manage the needs of the rest of the children. A second teacher may gather a number of children to work together on a group activity in a separate learning area, leaving the third teacher to assist the remaining children as necessary. **Team teaching creates a manageable and cohesive classroom where children are constantly challenged by activities that are meaningful and productive.**

Within the classroom you will notice many differences if you observe the children working. Firstly there is a sense of order and calmness. **A Montessori environment provides children with an ability to work at their own pace in an unhurried and unstressed way.** It is wonderful to observe children as young as two years of age choosing work and responsibly occupying their time. At any given time during the session you can observe some children quietly working alone at a table engaged in an activity of their choosing, whilst other children may be working with materials on mats on the floor where they have carefully set up their own working space. Some children may be working with a friend, others involved in a group activity.

**If you listen to the way the children talk to each other and to the staff you will notice how they do not need to raise their voices for attention.** We encourage the children to use appropriate manners and socially acceptable interaction and so they know to ask politely if they need assistance. Children can move freely around the classroom discovering the many activities on the shelves. When children are finished with an activity they learn how to pack up and return things to the correct place on the shelf. **Children develop a sense of order and respect for the activities and special materials.** They appreciate the sense of trust placed in them to care for their environment and their friends. Our children become independent through the way we have prepared our classroom and the way in which we empower the children to be responsible and independent.

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Our teachers are trained to be observers in the classroom, carefully watching for the appropriate time to offer assistance or to direct a child's attention to an activity. We encourage the children to work independently as much as possible and our role in the classroom is therefore not a prominent one. The major part of our work has been done in the prior planning for each child and each session. When the children are present we are merely implementing a program that has already been extensively prepared. **The richly resourced classroom provides the stimulus for children to discover the many materials that incite creative thinking and intelligent learning.**

**Our pre-school belongs to the children.** Everything is accessible for their use on the open shelving around the room. Materials have been scaled down in size to allow for independent success and the children are encouraged to care for both the inside and outside environment. Our Montessori classroom is always presented tastefully with quality furnishings and materials. Children are shown how to deal with everyday tasks such as cutting fruit, washing dishes, sweeping, dealing with spills and cleaning up. **We believe that children should be trusted to use things that are real and have a real purpose. Children gain positive self-esteem through the satisfaction of making a useful and independent contribution during their daily activity.** Our Montessori classroom is designed to give children an opportunity to develop and practise the skills they need to become independent and to cope with daily challenges. Our children are encouraged to act responsibly by helping each other and contributing to the care of our classroom, plants, animals and garden.

**Our sessions are structured in such a way as to establish a routine and sense of order.** Children cope best when they can predict the routine pattern of their day. The children have a specified inside and outside time and are not free to simply spend all their time outside playing. We value constructive play however we also believe that meaningful activities are important and we encourage children to explore the many activities prepared inside the classroom that will stimulate curiosity and problem solving. Outside play occurs when all the children can socialise together and where staff can supervise at all times.

**Happy memories are built from the sense of feeling safe and valued.** The children at our pre-school feel a sense of responsibility for their environment and for each other. The positive way they are cared for and nurtured by our staff helps the children develop into confident and caring individuals. The education and care children receive at our Montessori Pre-school is excellent and we know that children who leave us to enter Primary School have received the very best preparation available to them.

**By the time children leave us they will have been exposed to our wonderful literacy and numeracy programs as well as the many other extensive learning experiences we provide to satisfy their curious and absorbent minds.** Most importantly we help children acquire the skills that will last a lifetime by helping them to be confident, independent, curious about the world and interested in learning.

**We hope you have an opportunity to observe our happy children at work during a session at our pre-school and compare us to other centres and kindergartens. We believe you will see the difference for yourself... a difference we are proud of.**