

6.4 Family Orientation and Enrolment

Preamble

Enrolment and orientation processes procedures form the strong foundation for relationships between families and early education and care settings and promote a quality experienced of education and care for children.

Goals

Enrolment and orientation processes are planned and implemented.

Due consideration is given to culture and language in undertaking processes.

Documentation, including authorisations, is completed during the enrolment and orientation process.

A thoughtful process is planned in consultation with families, to orient a child and family to Castlecrag Montessori School.

Procedure

Castlecrag Montessori School welcomes visits from prospective parents. Parents are invited to complete a classroom observation during their initial enquiry. This provides them the opportunity to view the classroom in action and meet one of the teachers. Questions can be answered and the Montessori philosophy more fully explained.

Following an observation, a family may wish to place their child's name on the waiting list. After consideration of the availability of a position by the Administrator and Class Director, the child/ren may be offered a place at the school. The family will be asked to accept an offer of the position and sign a bond agreement (**Appendix XXIV**).

Enrolment

The Administrator will conduct an enrolment process following the acceptance of an offer. An enrolment package will be given to the family and will include:

- New Starter Letter
- A confidential information record that includes authorisations and immunization record;
- A current fee schedule and payment details
- A definition of the 3 year cycle (**Appendix XXIV**)
- Fee Invoice
- School Calendar
- Arrival and Departure Policy
- Child Care Benefit (for Registered Care) Fact Sheet (**Appendix XXIX**)

Prior to conducting the enrolment interview the Nominated Supervisor should consider the language and cultural needs of the family.

Families will provide the following, prior to the agreed start date for the child:

- A completed confidential information record including authorisations (**Appendix XV**)
- A bond payment as outlined in the fee schedule
- Current immunisation records. It is a requirement of admission at the school that the child's immunization status is as recommended by the NSW Department of Health. In the

event of an outbreak, non-immunised children will be required to withdraw from school for the duration of the outbreak. **(Appendix X)**

- Birth Certificate, Passport or other identification,
- Current contact information for parents and emergency contacts;
- Information on the child's additional needs (including medical conditions, health and developmental concerns).

This information will be kept at the school in accordance with the school's policies and the Education and Care Services and National Regulations 2011.

Admission Policy

The Castlecrag Montessori School admits students of any religion, race, colour and national or ethnic origin. In allocating places to children on the waiting list, the following factors are taken into account:

- Department of Education and Communities requirements
- the age and gender balance of children in the School, with age the dominant factor
- the time spent on the waiting list
- whether the child is a sibling (see below for details regarding sibling priority)
- the commitment of the families to the full three-year program
- the commitment of families to the philosophy and policies of the school
- whether the child is transferring from another Montessori school
- the special needs of children with learning difficulties and whether the school can accommodate that child.

Access and accommodation adequacy for disabled persons shall be provided in accordance with the provisions of the DDA, including but not limited to:

- Accessibility of all required teaching and specialist spaces.
- Provision of suitable facilities to suit the needs of disabled persons.
- Provision of non-slip trafficable surfaces.

The Student Population

The student population consists of children aged from 3 to 6 years of age. The cultural mix of the school includes Chinese, Japanese, Indian, Greek, Italian and Caucasian families, almost all of whom are from a high socio-economic status.

Sibling and Transferee Priorities

Priority will be given to siblings of children at the school, provided that:

- siblings are entered on the waitlist within 3 months of birth, or where this is not possible (e.g. for transferees), within 3 months of the older sibling joining the waitlist.
- the family has continued to demonstrate support for the School and Montessori education, including commitment to the three year cycle. In the event that an older sibling does not complete the three-year cycle, priority wait-listing for a younger sibling will be forfeited and the younger sibling will revert to the general waitlist based on date of application. (This does not apply to families who have prematurely withdrawn a sibling from the three year program due to extraordinary circumstances as defined in the Bond Agreement – see Appendix XXV).
- Priority may also be given to children transferring from other Montessori schools provided a place is available.

Determining Readiness

The decision to admit a child is discretionary and is taken only after there has been a parent interview with a Director and an assessment of the child's readiness. Children should be capable of separating from their parent/carer, be fully toilet trained (as required by Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011) and be able to use the bathroom facilities unaided.

The placement of new children in the AM or PM class is always done with a view to creating the most harmonious and age/gender balanced groups, in order that each class will function at its maximum potential. Parent preferences will be considered but cannot always be accommodated.

The above guidelines apply at the discretion of the Executive Committee, whose decision is final.

Notice of Placement

Demand often exceeds positions available. Bearing in mind that parents want to know as early as possible whether their child has a place at the school, places may be offered well before the child turns three. Towards the end of the term preceding the proposed start date, an interview involving parent and child is scheduled with the Director. Providing the Director is confident of the child's readiness, a classroom visit is arranged and a place is confirmed. If the Director determines the child is not ready, a more suitable start date will be found.

Very occasionally after commencement, the Director may deem that the child is not settling well, (e.g. acute separation anxiety, ongoing toileting problems). The Director and the Executive Committee may then advise the parents of the following actions:

- Request the child's attendance at the school be delayed until a more suitable time, usually no longer than one term's delay.
- Request to terminate the child's enrolment. In this situation the Parent Bond would be refunded in full.

Children are admitted to the school in Terms 1, 2 and 3. Children are rarely admitted in Term 4, and then only at the Directors absolute discretion.

Children are admitted usually in the term in which they turn 3 years of age. However, the Director determines the exact date. When several new children are due to commence in one term, the individual start dates are staggered to assist the children in adjusting to their new environment, as well as minimising disruption to the rest of the class. Children will start in the designated term in order of readiness relative to the other children. The start date is dependent on the Directors' assessment of the child irrespective of whether or not the child is a sibling. Older children are admitted only in special circumstances (e.g. transferring from other Montessori schools) and only if a vacancy occurs. Tuition fees for new children to the school will be calculated on a pro-rata basis for the child's first term at school. The fee payable will be based on the number of weeks (or part thereof), that remain in the term at the time the child commences. (Participation levy & Membership fees will not be calculated on a pro rata basis).

Immunisation

It is currently a requirement of admission at the school that the child's immunisation status is as recommended by the NSW Department of Health. The school needs to sight an

Immunisation Record for each child. In the event of an outbreak, non-immunised children will be required to withdraw from school for the duration of the outbreak.

In accordance with the changes in legislation to the Public Health Act 2010, effective from January 2014, proof of a child's vaccination status must be provided prior to enrolment.

Parents/guardians must provide documents from their GP that show the child:

- is fully vaccinated for their age, or;
- has a medical reason not to be vaccinated, or;
- has a conscientious objection, including religious beliefs, to vaccination or;
- is on a recognised catch-up schedule if their child has fallen behind with their vaccinations.

The amendment will prevent the school from enrolling a child from 1 January 2014 unless the mandatory documentation is received.

In the event of an outbreak, non-immunised children will be required to withdraw from school for the duration of the outbreak.

Definitions and Policies on 'Extended Day'

The Three Year Cycle

The Montessori philosophy works in three year cycles and the Montessori classroom is structured accordingly. When the child commences the cycle he attends school for 3½ hours per day from 8.30am to 12 pm. When the Director determines the child is ready he will move into the "extended day" part of the program and will attend school from 8.30am to 2.30pm.

Early withdrawal of a child from this learning cycle is disadvantageous for the child and for the school. The child misses the most fruitful part of the Montessori experience. The final year in the classroom is the most rewarding in the cycle. It offers the child the opportunity to build on and consolidate skills, to realise the potential of the Montessori materials and to extend and enrich his understanding of the world. If a child is withdrawn prematurely the remaining extended day students lose one of their peers and the younger children lose a potential leader, teacher and role model. The older child cannot simply be replaced with a younger child and hence the age and gender balance of the class is disturbed.

Readiness for Extended Day (Kindergarten)

The Director will determine when a child is ready to commence extended day. This will usually, but not always, be on or around the child's 5th birthday. In assessing whether a child is ready to commence extended day the Director will take into account a number of factors including the following:

- the child's social, emotional and learning needs;
- the child's capacity to remain at school for the longer day;
- the needs of the extended day group;
- the needs of the classroom as a whole.

Completion of the Three Year Cycle

The Director will determine whether a child has completed the three year cycle. Usually, but not always, this will involve completion by the child of between three and seven terms of extended day, with completion occurring at the end of the school year. Extended Day is

defined as a minimum of three terms. By then the Director and parents of the child will have consulted regarding the child's readiness to move into another environment.

The following table illustrates scenarios for start and end dates for completion of extended day as per academic and bond agreement requirements. This table is not a reflection on when a child is eligible to start extended day but simply a reference for the completion of the cycle.

STARTS ED	MAY FINISH	MAY GO TO
2018 Term 1	2018 Term 4 (4 terms)	
2018 Term 2	2018 Term 4 (3 terms)	2019 Term 4 (7 terms)
2018 Term 3	2019 Term 4 (6 terms)	

Castlecrag Montessori School has approval from the Board of Studies to educate children up to and including the kindergarten year.

Failure to complete the three year cycle will result in a loss of priority on the school's waitlist for siblings yet to enrol. Under the current Bond Agreement (2016) it will also result in the forfeiture of the bond.

Prior to formally commencing at the service:

- Prior to the child's first day of school, educators and staff will familiarise themselves with information about the child from the enrolment information provided. They will ensure they are aware of any medical conditions and how to manage them if required.
- The teacher will meet with the parent/s and child and complete the new starter checklist. The teacher will engage with the child and provide activities for him/her to complete, should he/she wish to do so, whilst chatting with the parent/s and answering any questions they may have. The teacher conducting the interview will be replaced by another member of staff to ensure required ratios are met.
- If the parents are concerned about separation difficulty, the child is invited to come for playtime the week prior to commencement. A family member will remain on the premises during these orientation visits. The child cannot be left at the service until they have formally commenced at the service.

Upon Commencement

On the first day of attendance educators and staff will welcome the family and the child, ensuring that the child's locker is ready for their belongings. Educators will reassure the family and assist with separation if required. Parents are welcome to phone and check how their child is settling.

Relevant Legislation

Children (Education and Care Services National Law Act Application) 2010: 175
Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011: 102, 160, 162, 177, 181, 183, 184
National Quality Standard: 6.1.1, 7.3, 7.3.1, 7.3.5

Related Policies

Confidentiality
Privacy
Bond
Fee
Family Participation and Communication
Anti Bias
Cultural Diversity

Sources

Community Child Care Co-operative (NSW)
Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations – www.deewr.gov.au