

## QUALITY ASSURANCE

Southside Montessori School undergoes regular reviews of its curriculum, staff, classrooms, grounds and facilities. The school is recognised by three bodies:

- 1. The Montessori Australia Foundation recognises Southside Montessori School under their Montessori Quality Assurance Program and also recognises the school's commitment to the Montessori charter.
- 2. The primary school is registered with the New South Wales Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards (BOSTES).
- 3. The preschool is registered with the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority's (ACECQA) National Quality Framework (NQF).



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## WELCOME

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I would like to take this opportunity to welcome you to Southside Montessori School. Montessori Education is both a philosophy of child development and a rationale for quality in that development. The special method, named after the Italian physician Maria Montessori, stresses the importance of the development of a healthy self-concept. At Southside, education is a preparation for life, not merely a search for intellectual skills.

We provide a precisely prepared Montessori environment which fosters satisfaction in learning by discovery and a joy in achievement. The climate and selected activities are prepared to interest and motivate the child and to protect him from unnecessary failure. The Montessori materials develop basic problem solving and observational techniques. Each child begins in the concrete and manipulative materials and gradually works toward the abstract. It focuses on understanding rather than rote learning and provides the students with a wonderful preparation for life-long learning. The student's love of learning and their skill development ensure that they graduate from Southside confident and well prepared for the challenges of their high school education.

At Southside Montessori School there is an outstanding community who are positively involved in many aspects of the school. When you first enter the school you will quickly notice that it is filled with enthusiastic students, supportive families and dedicated staff committed to providing a quality and relevant education.

Over the years we have noticed that children thrive when there is a solid relationship between the school and the family. We build these relationships through classroom observations, social gatherings and open communication.

We know how important it is that you find the right school — a school that you can trust and one that exceeds your expectations for educating your child/ren. We strive to provide a safe environment and a place for children to be nurtured and encouraged to learn. We pledge to continue to live up to Maria Montessori's expectation that children are human beings to whom respect is due, superior to us by the reason of their innocence and of the greater possibilities of their future.





# COMMUNITY

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Community plays a pivotal role at Southside Montessori School, and we rely on the generous contributions of our families and friends.

The families in our community come from diverse backgrounds and locations. Our children travel from across Sydney, including the areas of South Sydney, Marrickville, Leichhardt, Canterbury, Strathfield, Burwood, Ashfield, Hurstville, Fairfield and Liverpool.

The Southside Montessori School is a tight-knit community of families working towards the common goals of the education and welfare of our children. On any given school day you will find parents and friends working around the school helping with gardening, cooking, maintenance, design, administration, among other things. Many projects have been completed by our dedicated group of parents and friends.

Once a term the parents and friends hold a working bee to help look after the beautiful school grounds. This is a wonderful opportunity for parents to meet and form friendships, with the all-important aim of helping out at the school.

The skills and experience parents and friends share with the school are varied and invaluable. We encourage every family to regularly contribute their time, skills and enthusiasm. There are so many ways to help — you are bound to find something that suits you.

## PARENT EDUCATION

Southside offers an optional Parent Education Curriculum (Parent Academy) through a series of workshops throughout the year. Our workshops provide parents with the opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of the Montessori philosophy and teaching methods.

## PARENTS AND FRIENDS GROUP

The school has a parents and friends group (P&F) who are involved in organising social events, working bees, building community relationships and fund raising. The executive meet regularly during term time and hold a general meeting once a term to keep the school community up-to-date on their progress and achievements.

All parents are encouraged to participate in the activities of the P&F. Meetings are held on the first Monday evening of each term at 7pm. Dates are published on our website.

Once again, a heartfelt welcome and thank you for your interest in Southside Montessori School. We hope to further offer you windows into our world and inspire you to join us.

Yours sincerely,



**Bruce Handley**  
Interim Principal  
Southside Montessori School

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On behalf of myself and Southside Montessori's Parents and Friends group I would like to extend a very warm welcome to you and your family.

At Southside we are dedicated to fostering the spirit of community. We encourage families to participate as an invaluable part of the school by volunteering their gift of time, ideas and talents.

The Parents and Friends Group is comprised of elected parents and members of the school community. The sole aim of the group is to enhance the experience of each student and their family while they are part of our school. I look forward to working with you, and on your behalf, to help ensure Southside Montessori School continues to be a successful pre-and primary school.

Yours sincerely,



**Amanda Altshuler**  
President  
Southside Montessori Parents and Friends Group





## PRIMARY CURRICULUM

Montessori primary education builds on the pre-primary experience and changes with the needs of the child entering the second stage of development.

### Mental Independence

Where the pre-primary child strives for physical independence, the primary child strives for mental independence and is no longer satisfied with the immediate environment; he or she wants to know ‘why.’ Typically, children of this age show an innate sensitivity towards compassion, justice and idealism.

The child’s questioning mind, and developing ability to reason and abstract, excites and enthuses the child to want to discover more. In Montessori primary, a child’s own questions provide the basis for learning. Education and knowledge is not imposed but comes from the child’s own intellectual exploration.

### Independent Learning

Through the Montessori approach to primary education, children develop a high degree of independence and discipline, whilst their natural curiosity is reflected in their ability to select and complete appropriate work.

Southside Montessori School prepares children for external testing including the NAPLAN Program. Along with various life skills that are taught in the Montessori classroom, examination technique is embraced as an essential life skill that needs to be mastered.

### Boundaries

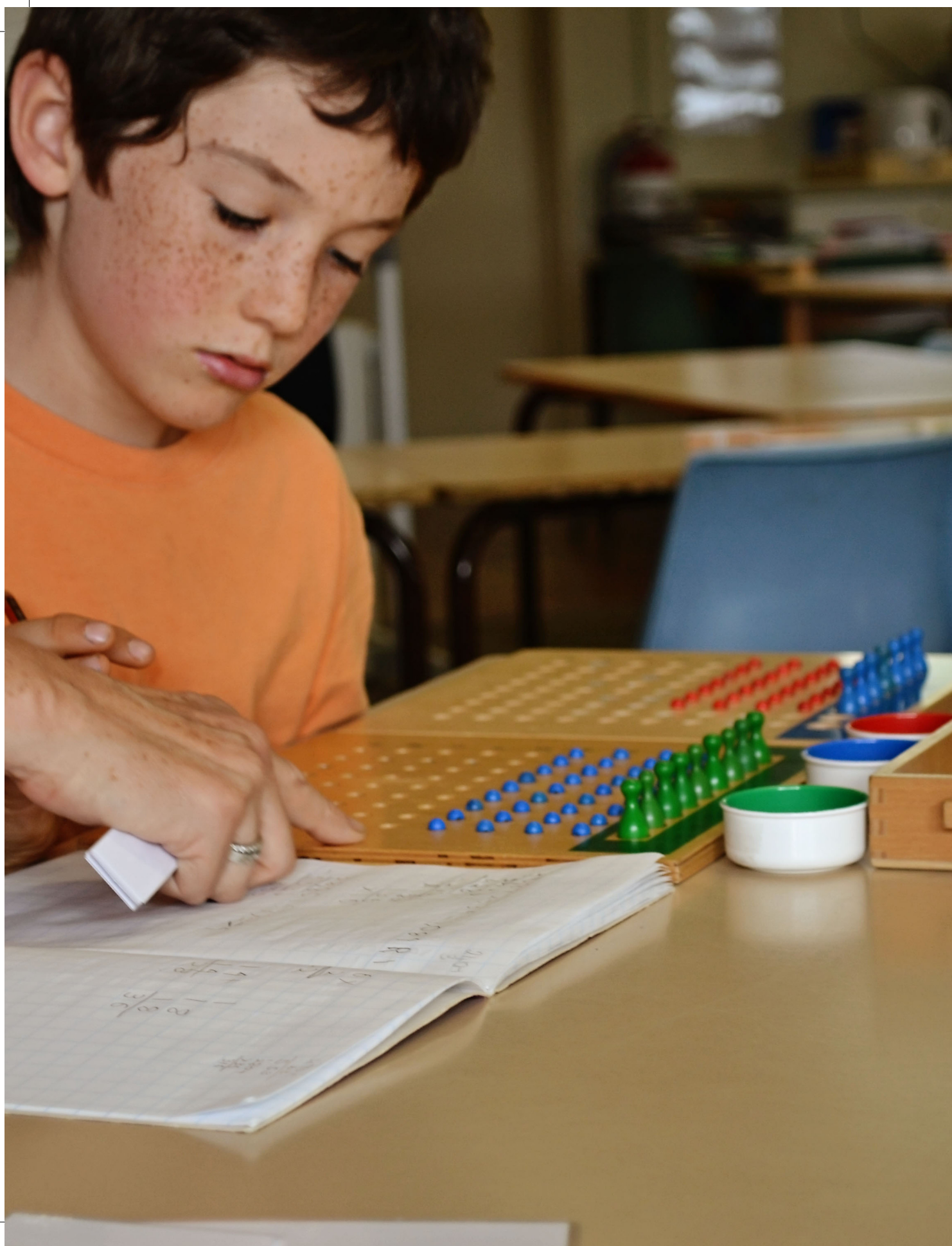
Children in our classrooms are free to follow their interests but within the boundaries and requirements set by the teacher following discussion with each child. Montessori educators are not passive; they are directors skilled in observing, monitoring and assessing each child individually. The basics of reading, writing and arithmetic and all necessary curriculum areas are adequately covered over the three-year cycle.

### Recognised Educational Standards

Southside Montessori School’s primary program satisfies both the Australian Montessori National Curriculum and the Board Of Studies Teaching & Educational Standards NSW syllabus requirements encompassing:

- english language
- mathematics & geometry
- history & geography
- zoology, botany & science
- personal development, health and physical education
- art, craft & music
- computer technology









## STAGE 3

(9 years–12 years)

Education in Stage 3 builds on the foundations set in Stages 1 and 2, moving still further into abstraction. The Stage 3 environment reinforces the knowledge already acquired and adds more detail. All prescribed work is still done within school hours: there is extensive individual work, creative endeavours, research and group projects, all with direction from teachers who support the students' independent learning by allowing them to follow their own interests.

As they master the subject matter, these modes of work also facilitate students' development of numerous life skills that will serve them for years to come – skills such as time management, responsibility, problem-solving and co-operation. The children in Stage 3 are expected to keep a detailed diary, recording starting and finishing times of work. Presentations in maths, language and geometry are ongoing, and there is a more structured schedule of tasks to be completed on each day.

The characteristic Montessori trait of extending knowledge over the curriculum remains strong in Stage 3, where everything done in the classroom is linked: maths, language, science, etc – all aspects of the NSW Board of Studies key learning areas are spread across a wide variety of activities rather than segregated into separate disciplines. This, Dr Montessori termed 'cosmic education', reflecting that the universe only works when everything is connected; nothing operates in solitude.

In the Stage 3 classroom, children are still in the 'second plane of development', moving out of themselves and into the world around them. There is no staged competition: each child is encouraged and allowed to learn at his or her own pace, with his/her happiness and personal best potential as the ultimate goals. The Montessori curriculum will have covered more than the traditional school curriculum by the time each child finishes Stage 3. This allows them to adjust to the rigours of high school with relative ease.

To support the increasing independence of children in this age group, an active goal of the Stage 3 classroom is to develop their 'going-out' programme: small groups of students with a shared interest, who have come to the end of their book knowledge, leaving the classroom to visit an outside venue such as a museum exhibit for extended exploration. The students plan every aspect of their going-out, developing a schedule, organising transportation, determining costs involved, all with help of their class director. Accompanied by a supervising adult in the background, students realise their plans and see the world outside the classroom walls.



## STAGE 2

(6 years–9 years)

The great change in primary children is that their interest expands beyond their immediate environment and they become ‘intellectual explorers of the universe’.

During Stage 1, children use concrete materials and all their senses to arrive at an understanding of basic concepts. Stage 2 differs from this as the children are presented with a wide variety of materials in order to consolidate and enhance the concepts they already know.

Stage 2 is where children move into what Dr Montessori called the ‘second plane of development’: out of themselves and into the bigger world around them. It is a very social age where children’s awareness expands to include others. It is here that they begin to move away from concrete objects and toward abstract concepts and start to see the bigger picture. The Stage 2 child not only reads but *understands*, not only writes the letters of the alphabet but can apply them to various text types, with a growing vocabulary and understanding of writing conventions.

The work they do in the classroom is different from what they did previously: where they used materials to construct themselves, their bodies and their minds, now they are using the same materials diagnostically, moving into the new realm of formal academics, where they learn to practice and build on academic skills, learning to work in a different way.

The sense of order they developed in past stages seems to abandon them: while they can still order their smaller environment, they come to realise that they have no control over the world around them. Because they are moving into the bigger world, there is considerable emphasis on grace and courtesy, and they develop an awareness of the needs of others, becoming confident enough to stand up for what is right.

The curriculum of the Stage 2 classroom is founded in Dr Montessori’s ‘Great Lessons’, a basis from which to explore the world through an integrated program that touches on biology, history, physical and political geography, physical science, health, cooking, sport, movement, drama, art and music, and that more than readily covers the NSW Board of Studies’ six key learning areas. The classroom director shares this information with the children, who in turn can take the information in different directions depending on their interests. Students in Stage 2 are afforded the gift of time to roam and discover the bigger environment, and to follow their inner compass.

## VALUES

Southside Montessori School is staffed with highly qualified and experienced educators who are committed to providing quality education in a caring environment. Our school endeavours to nurture the whole child by using the Montessori philosophy of developing independent, educated and socially responsible individuals.

### Southside Montessori School strives to:

- enrich and inspire the child by integrating modern innovative teaching practices
- encourage the child to develop a love of learning through their classroom experience
- ensure staff continually update their professional learning to meet the needs of the children
- update resources to meet the changing needs of the children
- treat each child as an individual and respect their needs and beliefs
- give children an appreciation of cultural diversity and teach respect for all
- build partnerships with parents through ongoing parent education
- promote the Montessori philosophy to the wider community
- provide stability to the child by providing the same educator and classroom over a three-year period
- explore ways of using technology to support open learning and communication
- have open communication between school and home
- enable children to grow into confident, happy and purposeful individuals.



## A BRIEF HISTORY OF SOUTHSIDE

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Southside Montessori School is located in a peaceful neighbourhood in the Sydney suburb of Riverwood, and has been serving the children and their families of the Inner/South West and beyond for over 36 years.

In March 1977 one of the founders of the school organised a public meeting in Kogarah Town Hall to ascertain local interest in establishing a Montessori preschool in the area. It was planned to be the first Montessori school in the Southern suburbs of Sydney. This public meeting was well attended by 70 interested parents, proving the need, enthusiasm and commitment for this new venture was definitely viable.

The founding Directress had an Association Montessori Internationale (A.M.I) Diploma from Washington Montessori Institute. She welcomed the first group of seven students in 1978, and set a firm foundation for the school.

A number of the founding members are still actively involved in the school. Their ongoing commitment shows dedication and a firm belief in a Montessori education. One of the school's founding parents continues to teach in our Stage 3 classroom as well as running the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Program.

Over the years Southside parents have made significant contributions to Montessori education at both State and Federal levels. This has included active roles in the creation and leadership of the NSW Montessori Association, the setting up and administration of the Sydney Montessori Teachers College and contributions to the work of the Montessori Australia Foundation.

Within this history we have seen a process of development at Southside Montessori School not unlike what Dr Maria Montessori herself realized is inherent within all children – that given opportunities, encouragement and respect they grow into eager and self-directed mature adults.

In similar terms we have seen Southside Montessori School grow from toddler beginnings, progress through the primary years, and blossom into a fully functioning educational community.





## STAGE 1

(3 years–6 years)

Stage 1 at Southside Montessori School is the equivalent of pre-school and kindergarten for children from 3–6 years of age.

As an extension of the home environment, the children learn from individual presentations (lessons) and gain social skills both from interaction with other children and specific social lessons. They move freely around the classroom working and gaining concepts using the very specific and specially designed self-correcting Montessori materials. By allowing children to learn in this way, they are able to develop concentration, motivation, independence and a love of learning.

Stage 1 consists of either a half day or full day program. The full day program hours are 8:45am–3:00pm. The half day program hours are 8:45am–12:00pm and is limited to children under 5 years of age. All children regardless of age attend school five days per week. Daily attendance establishes learning patterns during the best time of day for learning.

We also provide an optional extended hours program for Stage 1 children from 8–8.45am and 3:00pm–5:00pm. This enjoyable program incorporates both indoor and outdoor activities. It provides varied individual and group activities as well as energetic play outside.

### STAGE 1 CURRICULUM

The classroom is divided into 5 basic areas which are all interrelated and integrated.

#### Practical Life

Practical Life materials provide the link between the home and the school environment. The aim of these exercises is to enhance concentration, co-ordination and independence. They also allow children to perfect gross and fine motor skills. Activities include care of the environment (watering

plants, folding cloths), care of self (dressing frames, washing hands) and grace and courtesy (how to interrupt, how to move in an appropriate manner.)

#### Language

Language materials are found throughout the classroom. Children are introduced to letters using the sense of touch, sight and hearing and progress using specific concrete materials to composing their own written works. The children's release into oral and written language helps build their communication and socialisation skills, forming the basis for reading.

#### Sensorial

Sensorial materials were specifically designed by Dr Montessori to help the child refine their senses and to become more perceptive in their environment. The refining of the senses at this age leads to a greater awareness of detail and allows the child to focus on the world around them. Activities include; matching and grading whilst isolating the senses of sight, hearing, touch, taste, kinaesthetic (muscular) and smell.

#### Mathematics

Montessori concrete maths materials assist the child in discovering and understanding mathematical and geometrical concepts, forming a strong foundation for abstraction, problem solving and reasoning. The hands-on materials also stimulate absorption of the decimal system and the four mathematical operations.

#### Culture

Cultural materials in the Montessori classroom assist children in broadening their understanding of the world around them. Cultural diversity is present within every classroom and promotes appreciation and acceptance of all cultures.

“  
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Dr Maria Montessori





## PROGRAMS

Montessori programs are divided into 4 stages, each spanning 3 years.

### NIDO AND PARENT TODDLER PROGRAM

(0–3 years)

#### NIDO

NIDO (Italian for ‘nest’) is a parent-infant class. Parents and their children aged 0–18 months meet weekly with a trained educator to share knowledge about early human development as well as practical suggestions about the application of Montessori principles in the home. NIDO aims to foster independence, psycho-motor development and language acquisition during infancy.

Parents and children attend classes on the same day each week.

#### Parent Toddler Program

A unique early childhood program known as the Parent Toddler Program is offered here at Southside.

Once a child begins to walk until they are 3 years of age, they are able to join Southside’s Parent Toddler Program. Each child, accompanied by one parent or carer, attends one or more sessions each week in our specifically prepared ‘Bumblebees’ classroom.

The room contains toddler-sized furniture and activities that match the children’s physical proportions and developmental needs. Children use the materials with minimum adult assistance. The program is designed to facilitate the child’s growing independence, self-esteem, confidence and concentration span.

The range of activities includes:

- care of self
- care of the environment
- food preparation
- refining the five senses of sight, hearing, taste, touch and smell
- hand-eye coordination
- language enrichment
- art & craft
- gross and fine motor movement
- social relationships

By observing the children, parents gain an understanding of the importance of allowing their children to complete and repeat tasks without interruption. Parents learn how they can support this continued growth in the home environment.

The Parent Toddler Program is held from 9.00am–11.00am each weekday. Parents and carers have the option of attending one or more session each week with their child.





## THE MONTESSORI METHOD

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Over 100 years ago Dr Maria Montessori pursued a medical degree in what once was an all-male field, overcoming many barriers to become the first female doctor in Italy.

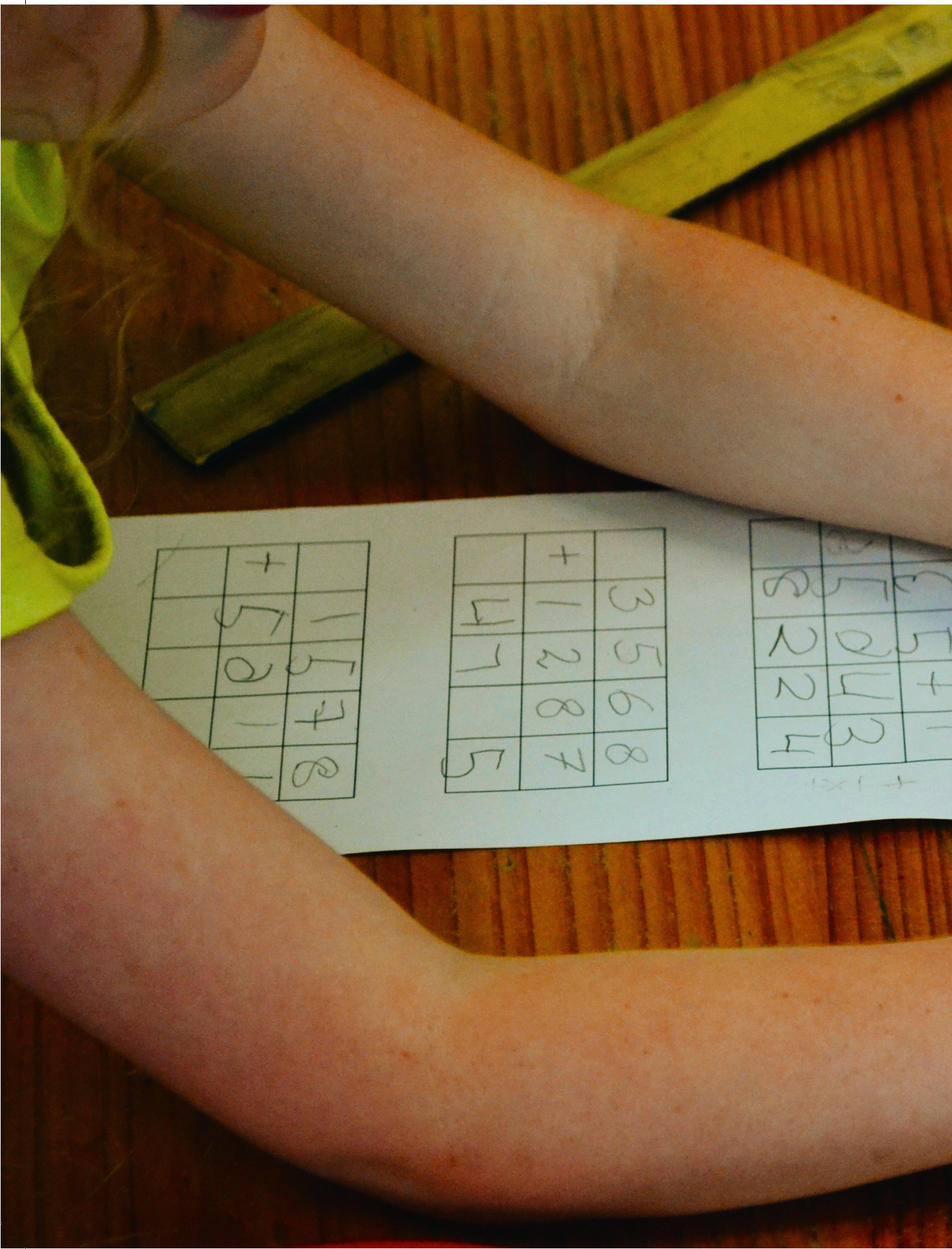
As a physician Dr Montessori chose paediatrics and psychiatry as her specialties. She treated many poor and working-class children and during that time, she observed that intrinsic intelligence was present in children of all socio-economic backgrounds. She conducted extensive research into early childhood development and education.

Dr Montessori observed that children under six absorb limitlessly and effortlessly from the world around them. She identified certain windows of opportunity for children, that she called ‘sensitive periods’, during which they are irresistibly drawn to things that assist in the development of their human potential.

Montessori’s success with developmentally disabled children spurred her desire to test her teaching methods on children who were not developmentally challenged. In 1907 the Italian government afforded her that opportunity and she was placed in charge of 60 students from the slums, ranging in age from 1 to 6 years. The school, called Casa dei Bambini (or Children’s House), enabled Montessori to create the “prepared learning” environment she believed was conducive to learning and creative exploration. The essence of this prepared environment is still used in Montessori classrooms today.

A fundamental belief of the Montessori Method is that children learn best within a social environment that supports and respects each child’s unique development — a comfortable setting filled with developmentally-appropriate materials and experiences that contribute to the growth of self-motivated, independent learners.







## LIBRARY

Our library is located next to the Stage 3 classroom, and provides students with resource materials, including PCs, and works of fiction, which can be borrowed.

## PRESCHOOL PLAYGROUND

The preschool playground is accessible to the Parent Toddler Program and Stage 1 students. It is in a lovely shady garden setting with paved and soft fall ground surfaces. There is a climbing gym which allows the preschoolers to develop their muscles and coordination through climbing, holding on, crawling and sliding, as well as a large sandpit.

## PRIMARY SCHOOL PLAYGROUND

The primary school children have a large grassed playground for running and playing ball games. They have a dedicated climbing gym area and a basketball court. In summer, shade gazebos are set up to provide the students with vital shade to rest in. Fruit trees provide the border for the playground.

## GARDENS

Our gardens are a combination of mature trees, fruit trees, flowering plants and vegetable beds. They are spread throughout the school grounds and are harvested by the children for use in our cooking program.

## STEPHANIE ALEXANDER KITCHEN GARDEN PROGRAM

Each week Stage 2 and 3 students spend the morning tending to the kitchen gardens. Delicious meals are cooked each fortnight, using ingredients they harvest, in 'soil-to-plate' style. These classes provide the students with invaluable life lessons and hands-on food education, leading to life-long good food choices.

This program has recently been extended to our 5-year-old children in Stage 1.

We are the only Montessori school in Sydney to participate in this program.

## HALL

Our airy and light-filled hall is used for drama, school concerts, incursions and indoor sport.

## KITCHEN

The kitchen is adjacent to the hall and is used by the students in the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Program. It is fully equipped for food preparation, cooking and storage. The kitchen is also used to cater for functions held in the hall.

## OFFICE AND MULTI-FUNCTION ROOM

The school office is at one end of the multi-function building and is the hub of the school. The Principal, Office Manager and Accounts Manager are located here.

The multi-function room is used as the staff room, and for meetings, parent academy evenings, morning teas, information sessions, small concerts and drama.

The computer lab is located in this area and is used by Stage 2 and 3 students to learn about and explore the wonders of technology.

## SWIMMING PROGRAM

In first term of each year all children over the age of five are involved in the NSW Swim Safe Program. A daily swimming lesson for a fortnight at a local council pool is enjoyed by all. The younger children learn water confidence and basic swimming techniques, whilst the older children attend stroke correction classes to improve their technique.

## MUSIC

Private tuition in Suzuki Violin and Piano are available on the premises of Southside Montessori School. Lessons can be scheduled during or after school hours.





## LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

### CLASSROOMS

In today's world, walk into any Montessori classroom and you will experience an atmosphere of serenity as you witness young children happily concentrating for surprisingly long periods of time. Our highly qualified Montessori teachers act as unobtrusive observers, inspiring and directing each child in the learning process.

Children work individually, in a group or with a friend and are free to choose materials that appeal to them. The morning lasts for three hours — which is known as the 'three-hour work cycle' where there is no fixed timetable. Dr Maria Montessori observed that a lengthy period of time was essential for children to develop the kind of concentration that you see when they become involved with something that is essential for their development.

Montessori classrooms use special materials that are beautiful and designed to help children develop concentration and work through the process of learning. These materials introduce concepts in concrete terms, which then enable abstract learning and reasoning when this is developmentally appropriate. Dr Montessori deliberately designed her materials so that children can spot their own errors, self-assess and complete tasks on their own. Errors are viewed as part of the learning process rather than things to be ashamed of (Montessori, 1967). All of this encourages self-sufficiency, problem solving and independence.

Montessori students learn in a variety of ways so that new information can be stored in multiple ways. They are free to move about the classroom at will, to walk to get a drink when they need it, to talk to a friend about an exciting new idea or maybe even to do a maths lesson by developing a graph showing how far each student can jump. Dr Montessori believed that movement and learning were rooted together, a concept backed up by current brain research on what is called 'embodied cognition' (Bennett, 2008).

In the preschool environment (Stage 1), the educator helps the children select their work and demonstrates how to carry out the task. The children are given the opportunity to perform the task by themselves and to ask any questions. Once the children are confident with the work materials, they are free to choose the materials with which they wish to work. This continues throughout their three years in Stage 1 as the children progress through the materials.

In the primary years, Stage 2 children are in the Montessori second plane of development — fitting into the bigger world around them. At this stage the child moves towards learning abstract concepts and starts to see the bigger picture. The Stage 2 child can read and understand their words with a growing vocabulary.

The materials the children mastered in Stage 1 are now used for diagnostics and moving into the realms of formal academics. The students explore the world through a program that teaches biology, history, physical and political geography, physical science, health, cooking, sport, movement, drama, art and music. The six key learning areas identified by the New South Wales Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards (BOSTES) are covered.

Stage 3 students are in the final phase of the Montessori primary education. They are prepared for their transition into high school, and are prepared to sit the NAPLAN and, where appropriate, selective school exams.

Stage 3 students work independently and more abstractly. They have developed the self-esteem, confidence, and knowledge required to adapt smoothly to high school. The values of independence, self-esteem, self-discipline, respect for themselves and for others, and passion for learning are tools which will continue to assist the Montessori graduates throughout their adult lives.

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Dr Maria Montessori