



Knysna Montessori School

Preschool Environment

Parents Handbook and Information Guide

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INTRODUCTORY WELCOME

We would like to take this opportunity to extend a very warm welcome to all our Pre-School Parents, old and new.

This brochure contains important and useful information about our Pre-School for you to read and keep on hand for easy reference.

However, should you have any queries, need any further information - or even just need a shoulder to lean on - please remember that our Staff have an Open Door Policy. We are always happy to make ourselves personally available should you wish to see us for any reason.

We value your support and hope that you will continue to enjoy the growth of your child/ren within this loving and caring Montessori environment.



ANNUAL EVENTS

Please note that parents are welcome at all appropriate school events, but that the following first four events are COMPULSORY, and for the sake of your child, we ask you to make every effort to attend:

- **Orientation Day – (*Compulsory attendance for new parents and pupils*):**
The day before school opens, all new children are invited to visit the school, meet their teacher, find their locker and familiarize themselves with their school surroundings before the big start the following day.
- **Parent Information Evenings – (*Compulsory attendance*):**
These meetings are held on evenings during the first term and afford all parents the opportunity of meeting other parents. It also gives parents a chance to ensure that all their contact details on the school records are current and correct, which is of **vital** importance in the event of us needing to urgently contact you.
These meetings give an excellent overview of Dr Maria Montessori's methods and philosophy. They relate to specific age groups, cover the current stages of development of your child and inform you of how to assist at home as a Montessori parent. Meeting dates for this year will be in the term newsletter and Engage year calendar.
- **Outings:**
Class outings will occur once a term. We ask parents to kindly assist us to ensure safe transport. Details of destination and cost will follow nearer to the time of

each outing. Please make sure that you sign the permission slip issued before each outing - no signature, no outing.

- **Innings:**

From time to time a professional company/person may give a talk or demonstration at the school.

- **Family Camp:**

This is held in the first term and is an opportunity for families and staff to get to know one another in an informal environment.

- **Athletics Day**

Athletics Day is held during the first term. Details will follow nearer to the event and parents are encouraged to come and watch the children run and participate in some fun activities.

- **Optometrist**

During the first/second term, all Grade R children have their eyes checked free of charge. A feedback report will be given to the parents.

- **Annual General Meeting – (*Compulsory attendance*):**

The Annual General Meeting is held at the end of every third term. It is a feedback session and a voting meeting. It also covers finance and any questions for the Trust.

- **Grade R Parent Meeting and Tour:**

An open day is held in the third term specifically for parents of children who will be entering into Year 1 in the following year.

- **Orientation Day for Grade R, Year 3 and Year 6 children:**

This is a day held in the third term. The students visit the next environment to which they will be moving the following year to meet their teachers and to meet children of the next phase. This gives them the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the new environment.

- **Spring Tea**

Our Spring Tea is held on the first Friday in September every year. We ask parents to supply eats and drinks. The children each invite a special guest (e.g. a grandparent), and present music and poetry. It is important for **every** child to have someone special there on this special occasion. The highlight of the event is children create their own hats and a parent competition for the wearer of the best-dressed hat, and we have had some spectacular creations over the years!

- **Family Day:**

Fly-a-Kite and Picnic Day

This takes place on a Saturday in the beginning of the fourth term. Details will follow nearer the event.

- **School Photos:**

Formal photos are taken by a professional photographer during the third term.

- **School Play**

The play is held at the end of the fourth term for all Preschoolers willing to participate. We encourage parents to get involved with props, costumes and make-up. We celebrate Christmas after the school play. We invite all parents to join us for handing out presents by Father Christmas. Parents are asked to supply a wrapped gift for Father Christmas to give to their child.



ALL ABOUT OUR SCHOOL WEEK

Daily program: Toddlers (18 months – 2.5 years)

	7:30 – 8:30	8:30 – 10:15	10:15 – 10:30	10:30 – 11:30	11:30 – 12:00	12:00 – 12:30	12:30 – 2pm	2:00 – 2:15
Monday	Arrival time Free play	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Morning Ring • Demonstrations • Work Cycle 	Tea Time	Free Play	Ring Story Wee & Wash	Lunch	Sleep Time	Home Time
Tuesday	Arrival time Free play	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Morning Ring • Demonstrations • Work Cycle 	Tea Time	Free Play	Ring Story Wee & Wash	Lunch	Sleep Time	Home Time
Wednesday	Arrival time Free play	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Morning Ring • Demonstrations • Work Cycle 	Tea Time	Free Play	Ring Story Wee & Wash	Lunch	Sleep Time	Home Time
Thursday	Arrival time Free play	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Morning Ring • Demonstrations • Work Cycle 	Tea Time	Free Play	Ring Story Wee & Wash	Lunch	Sleep Time	Home Time
Friday	Arrival time Free play	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Music class • Sports with Fiela 	Tea Time Tuck	Free Play	Ring Story Wee & Wash	Lunch	Sleep Time	Home Time

Daily Program: Seahorses (2.5 – 4.5 years)

	07:30-10:30	10:30-11:15	11:15-11:45	11:45-12:15	12:15- 12:30	12:30-1:00pm	1:00-1:30pm	1:30 – 2:00	2:00 – 2:15
Monday	Arrival time <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Toilet training • Demonstrations • Classroom activities • Work Cycle • Ring Time 	Outside free play	Washing hands and potty Nappy change	Lunch time	Helping Hands Younger children go for nap	Free Play	Afternoon Group Activity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Music and Movement • Art/Creative activities • Percussion • Gross Motor skills development 	Story time	Home Time
Tuesday	Arrival time <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Toilet training • Demonstrations • Classroom activities • Work Cycle • Ring Time 	Outside free play	Washing hands and potty Nappy change	Lunch time	Helping Hands Younger children go for nap	Free Play	Afternoon Group Activity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Music and Movement • Art/Creative activities • Percussion • Gross Motor skills development 	Story Time	Home Time
Wednesday	Arrival time <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Toilet training • Demonstrations • Classroom activities • Work Cycle • Ring Time 	Outside free play	Washing hands and potty Nappy change	Lunch time	Helping Hands Younger children go for nap	Free Play	Afternoon Group Activity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Music and Movement • Art/Creative activities • Percussion • Gross Motor skills development 	Story Time	Home Time
Thursday	Arrival time <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Toilet training • Demonstrations • Classroom activities • Work Cycle • Ring Time 	Outside free play	Washing hands and potty Nappy change	Lunch time	Helping Hands Younger children go for nap	Free Play	Afternoon Group Activity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Music and Movement • Art/Creative activities • Percussion • Gross Motor skills development 	Story Time	Home Time
Friday	Arrival time <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Toilet training • Art Activities • Sports with Coach Fiela • Music Lesson with Dinny • Nature Walk 	Outside free play	Washing hands and potty Nappy change	Lunch time and Tuck	Big Builders Younger children go for nap	Ballet	Free Play		Home Time

Daily Program: Loeries (4.5 – 6 years)

	7:30 -11:00	11:00 – 12:00	12:00 – 12:15	12:15 – 12:45	12:45 – 1:00	1:00 – 1:30	1:30 – 2:00	2:00 – 2:15
Monday	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrations • Classroom activities • Work Cycle 	Ring time Free Play Grade R swimming	Wash hands and toilet	Lunch Time	Helping Hands	Free Play	Story Time	Home Time
Tuesday	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrations • Classroom activities • Work Cycle 	Ring Time Free Play	Wash hands and toilet	Lunch Time	Helping Hands	Free Play	Story Time	Home Time
Wednesday	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrations • Classroom Activities • Work Cycle 	Ring Time Free Play	Wash hands and toilet	Lunch Time	Helping Hands	Free Play	Story Time	Home Time
Thursday	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrations • Classroom Activities • Work Cycle 	Ring Time Free Play	Wash hands and toilet	Lunch Time	Helping Hands	Free Play	Story Time	Home Time
Friday	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Art Activities • Friday Nature Walks • Sports with Fiela 	Music class	Wash hands and toilet	Lunch Time Followed by Tuck shop	Big Builders	Ballet Grade R Assembly	Free Play	Home Time

Daily Drop-off and Collection Routine

The school office opens at 07:30am. Please note that class starts at 07:45. Latecomers are disruptive and should please enter the class as quietly as possible. School ends daily at 2:00 pm; children gather in their classes and parents should collect them from their class. Any child not collected by 2:15 will be signed into aftercare and the parents will be billed accordingly.

If someone other than usual is to collect your child, please inform the office in writing for the safety and security of each child. School closes at 11am on the last day of each term. Aftercare follows as per normal.

Extra-mural Activities

Please enquire at the office about current extra mural activities.

Aftercare

Aftercare is available to our parents from Monday to Friday 2:15pm – 5pm daily. This is at an additional cost and you will be billed accordingly. The staff member on duty will sign your children into aftercare and you are requested to sign your child out with the aftercare teacher on duty. **Aftercare will run as normal on the last day of each term for all our enrolled aftercare children.**

Languages and Greetings

Afrikaans, Xhosa and other languages are incorporated into the morning cycle.

Show and Tell (Toddlers and Seahorses)

Show and Tell occurs every Friday morning in morning ring. Children may bring something of interest to school (e.g. a favourite plaything or a bird's nest) to show and talk about.

Show and Tell (Loeries)

Show and Tell occurs any day except Friday, only real items (from nature), can be theme related.

GENERAL INFORMATION

MEALS

School Meals

This is an optional extra for which parents may sign up at the office. The menus are changed weekly and are posted next to the notice board. Meals provided are cooked, balanced meals, and children are encouraged to eat most of their meal and one vegetable or salad on their plate. Dessert is served twice weekly and fruit on the other three days.

Snack time and Lunch Boxes

Please pack your child a healthy snack for our snack time during the morning. This must include all food groups and contain no unhealthy food items. If your child brings his

own lunch to school, please ensure that you pack **healthy** lunch meal. We have a microwave in the preschool and can heat up leftover dinners if packed. Please note that no chips, sweets or fizzy cool drinks are allowed at school.

Water Bottles

Please ensure that your child brings a clean marked water bottle every day to school. They are able to fill their water bottles from our class water tanks if they run dry.

Baker's man (Home baked savoury items or fruit)

Friday is Baker's day. The children 'buy' the treat from the baker – learning about money and entrepreneurial skills. You will find out if your child is on duty in our bi monthly Pre-school newsletter. Please would you send R5 with your child each Friday, so that they may buy the treat from the baker. These funds go into our class kitty and help towards buying classroom resources. Please no refined sugars.

HEALTH ISSUES

Accidents

If your child has an accident at school, the teacher will put an Incident report into your child's bag, notifying you of the accident. If the accident is of a serious nature, you as the parent will be notified immediately and if necessary to collect your child. Please ensure you have the school telephone numbers saved on your phone and that we have the correct contact details.

Lice

We check for lice on the first day of every term. Any child with live nits or lice will need to be sent home for treatment until completely clear. A clinic certificate of clearance is required before your child may return to school and needs to be given to the school office. Long hair must be tied up to prevent the spreading of lice.

Illness

If your child has a **fever, contagious illness, diarrhoea, or a rash of any kind, is vomiting or is on antibiotics, please keep him at home until he is well.**

If a child shows any symptoms of illness at school, parents will be phoned and asked to collect him. Please note that NO medication will be administered by any staff. If your child requires medication they should be kept home.

Chronic Health Conditions – Please refer to Administering of Medication Policy in the General School Brochure

Hats, Caps and Sun block

Most parents are aware of the dangers of over-exposure to our strong South African sun. Please make sure that your child arrives at school with adequate protection for outside play and sport. NO HAT NO PLAY in summer or on hot days. School hats and caps are available at the office.

IMPORTANT ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Recommended Reading

We encourage our parents to read “How to raise an amazing child the Montessori way”, by Tim Seldon, who was one of our main guest speakers at the South African Montessori Association Conference hosted by our school in 2008

School Readiness Policy (Grade R):

These are generally conducted in the third term of the Grade R year.

Please note that although your child may be cognitively school ready, the school will determine if your child is socially and emotionally ready to cope in the next environment.

Toys

Please note that **NO** toys are allowed at school other than those for Show and Tell on a Friday (toddler and seahorses class), which should be something that can fit comfortably into a school bag. The school will not be held responsible for loss, breakage or damage to anything brought to school. Allowing special items to be brought to school can prove very tempting to these little people. Equipment can also frequently disappear from the class at this age, and should you find something in your child’s bag please ask him to return it and apologize for taking it, so that he can learn that this is inappropriate.

Lost property

The school cannot be held responsible for lost property. Please mark **ALL** possessions and encourage your children to look after their belongings by placing them in their locker. Bottles and dummies must be marked with nail polish or stick on labels.

School bag

Please note that it is compulsory for children to bring a bag to school with a change of clothes, a pair of shoes for walks (wellies may be left in lockers for rainy days or in winter), a hat, water bottle and a packet to place wet clothes into. Please make sure it is a bag that your children can open and close on their own.

Clothing Policy

Showing respect for children and appreciation of their individuality is important to the development of their self-esteem. However, clothing worn should fit correctly, be comfortable and easy for the children to put on and take off by themselves. As safety is our first priority, we ask parents and guardians to be mindful of what their children wear so they can partake in the entire learning program.

Long dresses are dangerous when climbing on the jungle gym and riding bikes. Tight skinny jeans make climbing difficult. Comfortable shorts, ski-pants, tracksuits pants, leggings are the better option. Just as Velcro, large buttons and elastic are easier to open and remove than small buttons, buckles and laces.

Potty training children – Please do not dress your child in dungarees as this can hinder their independence in learning to potty train correctly. No pull up nappies.

Parents and Guardians are responsible for:

- Providing appropriate footwear and clothing to enable your child to participate fully and safely in the program, including messy play, climbing and relaxing.
- Providing appropriate footwear for your child.
- Providing clothing and footwear to encourage your child's independent skills.
- Providing SUNHATS for term 1 and 4.
- Providing warm clothing during the winter months for outdoor play.
- Placing your child's name on items of clothing for easy identification.
- Supporting your child's need for comfort and security by providing appropriate spare clothing in a zip lock bag to either stay at school or remain in their bags.

Birthday Policy

We would like the parents of this age group to become involved and assist their child in putting together a timeline of his/her life which includes photo's and events for each year lived. All children in the Montessori environment then bring this timeline to school on a birthday and do a Montessori birthday ring with their own timeline. We do not allow parties at school. However, cakes may be brought to school on birthdays to share with the class.

FUNDRAISING

The Friday Market

This is our own supper and craft market, and our main source of fundraising. All school parents are expected to do no more than two bar duties per year as their contribution to fundraising. This involves no more than serving drinks at our Friday Market bar from 5:00 – 8.00pm on a Friday evening. The duty roster is sent out during July/August just before the start of the new market season. If for any reason you are unable to attend your allotted duty, please notify the office, or find a replacement. If you have to miss your duty, a fee is applicable in order to pay for a staff member to stand in for you.

The Friday Market is our main annual fundraiser, but should we be raising funds for something specific, we will inform you and ask for your support.

COMMUNICATION

Class Representative:

We have a Parents Event Committee (PEC). A representative from each phase will meet with the principals and other parent representatives once a term to work in assisting the school with events and maintaining open channels of communication with all parents.

Pre-School Newsletter

Every second Friday the Pre-school sends out a newsletter via Engage. This is a vital source of information about current and future events. Please read your newsletters and diarise important dates. This newsletter also includes information about what your child is learning and current themes.

Reports and Parent Meetings

At the end of the first term, all parents will receive a report graph on Engage, and will be expected to attend a formal parent feedback meeting regarding your child's progress. In the second term, you will receive a formal written report on Engage of your child's progress. At the end of the third term you will once again receive a report graph on Engage, if there are any areas of concern, your child's class teacher will reach out to you and schedule a meeting. In the fourth and final term you will again receive a formal written report on Engage.

Absence from school

If your child is ill and will not be attending school, please phone the office and leave a message to notify his teacher, as we are always concerned about the children. If your child will not be attending school for any other reason, please notify the school in writing, contact numbers may be found on the last page of this brochure.

Stationery List

The stationery list is available on the Engage portal.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. What is the difference between Montessori and traditional education?

A. Montessori emphasizes learning through all five senses, not just through listening, watching, or reading. Children in Montessori classes learn at their own, individual pace and according to their own choice of activities from hundreds of possibilities. Learning is an exciting process of discovery, leading to concentration, motivation, self-discipline, and a love of learning. Montessori classes place children in three-year age groups (3-6, 6-9, 9-12, and so on), forming communities in which the older children spontaneously share their knowledge with the younger ones. Montessori represents an entirely different approach to education.

Q. Can I do Montessori at home with my child?

A. Yes, you can use Montessori principles of child development at home. Look at your home through your child's eyes. Children need a sense of belonging, and they get it by participating fully in the routines of everyday life. "Help me do it by myself" is the life theme of the preschooler. Can you find ways for your child to participate in meal preparation, cleaning, gardening, caring for clothes, shoes, and toys? Providing opportunities for independence is the surest way to build your child's self-esteem.

Q. Why do Montessori Schools have mixed age groups?

A. At each level, Montessori programs are designed to address the developmental characteristics normal to children in that stage.

- Montessori classes are organized to encompass a two- or three-year age span, which allows younger students the stimulation of older children, who in turn benefit from serving as role models. Each child learns at her own pace and will be ready for any given lesson in her own time, not on the teacher's schedule of lessons. In a mixed-age class, children can always find peers who are working at their current level.
- Children normally stay in the same class for three years. With two-thirds of the class normally returning each year, the classroom culture tends to remain quite stable.
- Working in one class for two or three years allows students to develop a strong sense of community with their classmates and teachers. The age range also allows especially gifted children the stimulation of intellectual peers, without requiring that they skip a grade or feel emotionally out of place.

Q. Why Does Montessori Put So Much Stress On Freedom And Independence?

A. Children touch and manipulate everything in their environment. In a sense, the human mind is handmade, because through movement and touch, the child explores, manipulates, and builds a storehouse of impressions about the physical world around her. Children learn best by doing, and this requires movement and spontaneous investigation.

Montessori children are free to move about, working alone or with others at will. They may select any activity and work with it as long as they wish, so long as they do not disturb anyone or damage anything, and as long as they put it back where it belongs when they are finished.

Many exercises, especially at the early childhood level, are designed to draw children's attention to the sensory properties of objects within their environment: size, shape, colour, texture, weight, smell, sound, etc. Gradually, they learn to pay attention, seeing more clearly small details in the things around them. They have begun to observe and appreciate their environment. This is a key in helping children discover how to learn.

Q. What are sensitive periods?

A. Montessori says "Sensitive periods are like a beam that lights interiorly or a battery that furnishes energy. "The sensitive periods furnish energy to explore specific areas of the environment and to master certain skills. Montessori explains: "It is this sensibility which enables a child to come into contact with the external world in a particularly intense manner. At such a time everything is easy; all is life and enthusiasm. Every effort marks an increase in power." It is very exciting to realize the ease with which the child can learn during one of these sensitive periods.

IN CONCLUSION ...

Should you need to discuss any of the above, or have any queries, please remember our open door policy, and don't hesitate to call on any of us at appropriate times. We hope you and your child have a wonderful, happy and productive journey through The Knysna Montessori Preschool with us!

SCHOOL CONTACT DETAILS

Knysna Montessori School
4 Narnia Lane
Welbedacht
Knysna
Western Cape

P.O. Box 2237
Knysna
6570

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WhatsApp: 072 696 5184

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THE PRE-SCHOOL TEAM

Sonia Heaton	Head Directress
Tania Wentzell	Head of Preschool Directress (2.5 - 4.5)
Modi Mbonde	Assistant
Tatu Smurfit	Directress (4.5 – 6)
Hilda Jantjies	Assistant
Joey Keyser	Directress (18m – 2.5)
Marlene Jantjies	Assistant

[Kindly note- that in the event of a natural disaster or pandemic certain aspects of this brochure may be amended to fall in line with current protocols or directives.]

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