

6.4 ENROLMENT APPLICATION PROCESS

INTRODUCTION

Lindfield Montessori Preschool is committed to ensuring that the enrolment application process is planned and implemented to meet the needs of the child and family, as well as ensuring all legislative requirements, including the Australian Government Priority of Access Guidelines, are adhered to.

STRATEGIES

Lindfield Montessori Preschool welcomes enrolment applications from prospective parents. Prior to or after an application is received, parents are invited to attend a tour/classroom observation. This provides them with the opportunity to view the classroom in action and meet the Principal/Directress and educators. After an enrolment application is received, the Principal will then consider the application and make a decision regarding enrolment or otherwise, based on the information in this policy.

Prioritisation

During enrolment decisions, Lindfield Montessori takes into account and prioritises students in the following way.

- Children who are at least 4 years old on or before 31 July in that preschool year and not enrolled or registered at a school;
- Children who are at least 3 years old on or before 31 July in that preschool year and from low income and/or Aboriginal families;
- Children with English language needs;
- Children with disability and/or additional needs.
- Children who are at risk of significant harm (from a child protection perspective).

The Enrolment Application Process

1. Initial enquiry

A parent expresses interest in finding out further information about Lindfield Montessori through the website, a telephone call, social media platform or in person.

2. Observation

Interested parties are invited to book a 20-minute observation time through the Lindfield Montessori website to see the Montessori philosophy action and learn more about our Service.

3. Enrolment application form & Information Pack

Parents/caregivers are provided with an Enrolment Application Pack which includes an Enrolment Application Form to complete and submit to the School, relevant fee information, information on the Start Strong Fee Relief program and a Montessori Schools and Centres Australia Parent Guide. Further information will also be provided about Lindfield Montessori and the Montessori philosophy and pedagogy. Submission of an application is an expression

of interest in enrolling and does not guarantee a place at the school.

4. Contact/interview & information gathering

The School will contact the family regarding their application, and if suitable, will arrange for them and their child to meet with the Principal/Directress. Lindfield Montessori will take this opportunity to understand the expectations of the family for the child's Montessori education and will discuss the Enrolment Application further with the parent/carer including the best ways the School can support the child.

5. Decision

In this step, an enrolment may be offered or declined based on information gathered in step 4.

6. Enrolment

A placement fee, refundable on the child's term enrolment fees is payable on acceptance of a place. The parent/carer will also be required to complete a comprehensive Enrolment Form and sign the Enrolment Agreement. The child's birth certificate or valid passport and AIR Immunisation record must be provided at this point in the process for the enrolment to proceed. Copies of these documents will be stored in the child's file.

7. Welcome letter & orientation

After receipt of the completed enrolment forms, enrolment agreement and relevant legal information as specified on the forms, families will receive a Welcome Pack. This will contain a letter detailing your child's orientation date and time, as well as their official school start date and time. The child's orientation is time for your child to meet the teaching staff, learn a little bit about the Montessori environment and for your child to enjoy some simple activities if they would like to, ready for their first day.

On the first day of attendance, educators and staff will welcome the family and the child.

Determining Readiness

The decision to admit a child is discretionary and is taken only after the Principal/Directress has met with the family and assessed the child's readiness. Considerations may include the child's level of independence. Children are expected to be toilet trained by their start date at Lindfield Montessori. During your enrolment application interview, you can seek guidance as to how your child might be supported to be ready to start at Lindfield Montessori.

Enrolments made in Advance

Enrolment offers will be made at a maximum of six months in advance. As children between 0-6 years of age go through a rapid phase of growth, it can be difficult to make a decision about the child's readiness, skills, abilities and needs, more than six months prior to turning three years of age. Families are welcome to submit an enrolment application prior to this time and will be placed on a waitlist until six months prior to their third birthday. The enrolment application process will proceed as usual from this time.

To deliver a holistic Montessori service, families are encouraged to complete the Montessori cycle which is usually 2.5 to 3.5 years. Children are admitted to the school in Terms 1, 2 and 3. Children are rarely admitted in Term 4, and then only at the Directress' absolute discretion.

Children are admitted usually in the term which they turn 3 years of age. However, the Directress 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 other children. The start date is dependant on the Directress' assessment of the child irrespective of whether or not the child is a sibling.

Immunisation

It is currently a requirement of admission at the school that the child's immunisation status is as prescribed by the NSW Department of Health. The school needs to keep a copy of Immunisation Record for each child.

Under the current NSW legislative requirements (Public Health Act 2010) proof of a child's vaccination status must be provided prior to enrolment.

Parents/guardians must provide a copy of one or more of the following documents to enrol in a childcare centre:

- an ACIR Immunisation History Statement which shows that the child is up to date with their scheduled vaccinations; or
- an ACIR Immunisation History Form on which the immunisation provider has certified that the child is on a recognised catch-up schedule; or
- an ACIR Immunisation Medical Exemption Form which has been certified by an immunisation provider.

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

The Three-Year Cycle

The Montessori philosophy is stage based and operates in three-year cycles. Children are grouped together as one 3–6-year age group. When the child commences the cycle, they attend school for three and a half hours per day from 8:30am to 12 pm each day. When the Directress determines the child is ready to include the afternoon session, they will have the option to attend the Afternoon Program from 12pm to 3:30pm, for an additional fee. Children enrolled in the kindergarten program are required to stay the full day and do not incur the additional afternoon program fee.



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/her 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)

During the third year at Lindfield Montessori Preschool (the Extended Day program, which aligns with NSW Early Stage 1 or 'Kindergarten'), children attend five full days per week from 8.30am to 3.30pm.

If the child is turning 5 years old prior to 31st July or will turn 6 years old at any time in the year, they will be eligible to be a part of the first year of school program (kindergarten).

THE DISABILITY STANDARDS FOR EDUCATION

Access and accommodation adequacy for disabled children shall be provided in accordance with the provisions of the Disability Discrimination Act (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

In all instances, Lindfield Montessori Preschool will follow the AIS guidelines for Enrolling and Supporting Students with Disability.

The Disability Discrimination Act deals in broad terms with what is required of schools for compliance with the Act. The standards clarify, and set out in more detail, the obligations of schools in relation to students and prospective students with disability. The Standards impose positive obligations with which a school must comply. It is unlawful to contravene the obligations set out in the Standards.

The Standards of Education

The standards address 5 areas: enrolments, participation, curriculum, development, accreditation and delivery; student support services; and elimination of harassment and victimisation.

In each area, the Standards set out:

- the rights of students – these are included to assist people to understand and comply with the standards set out in the obligation provisions;
- the legal obligations of schools – these are the standards with which the school must comply; and

- measures which, if implemented, will be evidence of compliance and provide a defence in the event of litigation. However, the measures may not cover the needs of all students with disability, or all educational level and contexts, and full compliance with the standards may require additional or alternative actions. Schools may comply with their obligations in ways other than the measures.

More information is provided at education.com.au/disability-standards-education-2005

Reasonable Adjustments

An adjustment is a measure or action taken to assist a student with a disability to:

- apply for admission or enrolment;
- participate in courses or programs; and
- use facilities or services,

on the same basis as a student without a disability. Adjustments may include administrative, resource and facilities, or procedural modifications, depending on the needs of the student.

An adjustment is reasonable if it achieves this purpose while considering the student's needs and balancing the interests of the student, the school, the staff, and other students. When assessing this, regards should be had to all relevant circumstances and interests, including;

- the impact of the student's disability
- the views of the student or the student's associate (this includes parents/carers)
- the effect of the proposed adjustment on the student, including on the student's:
 - ability to achieve learning outcomes;
 - ability to participate in programs or courses;
 - independence.
- the effect of the proposed adjustment on anyone else affected, including the staff, school, and other students; and
- the costs and benefits of the adjustment.

It is important to identify the adjustment before determining what is reasonable.

A key aspect of the Standards is that the School is required to consult with the student and/or his/her parent/carer about the proposed adjustment. This consultation can and should occur as part of the collaborative planning process.

Unjustifiable hardship

Schools are required to consider all measures required to meet a prospective student's needs, it does not require schools to accommodate a student or prospective student where to do so would require making a reasonable adjustment that would cause unjustifiable hardship to the

school. That is, required adjustments to enable a student with a disability to access education would impose an unreasonable burden on the school and are therefore not required to be

made. The failure to make adjustments in these circumstances would not constitute unlawful disability discrimination.

It is important not to confuse the concepts of *reasonable adjustment* and *unjustifiable hardship*. It is necessary to first decide if the adjustment is reasonable and then decide if making the adjustment will impose an unjustifiable hardship.

The unjustifiable hardship defence is available, not only at the point of enrolment, but also in relation to all aspects of a student's education throughout their enrolment at the school.

In determining what constitutes 'unjustifiable hardship, all the relevant circumstances of the particular case must be taken into account, including the following factors:

1. The nature of the benefit of the detriment likely to accrue, to be suffered by, and person concerned. This will involve weighting the benefits/detriments of the reasonable adjustment to all parties including the students and the school as well as the interests of the community at large.
2. The effect of the disability of any person concerned.
3. The financial circumstances and the estimated expenditure required to be made by the school to make the adjustment.
4. The availability of financial and other assistance to the school.
5. Any relevant action plans that address the reasonable adjustment and the impact it would have on the person or institution.

The threshold for successfully relying on the defence of 'unjustifiable hardship' is high. What is unjustifiable hardship will always depend on the particular extent of the student's needs and the circumstances of the school.

Disability Discrimination Act 1992, Section 11

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Nominated Supervisor will oversee:

- Providing enrolment applications and welcome packs
- Maintaining an immunisation register
- Tracking placement fees
- Offering places in line with this policy, and providing relevant paperwork for families in accordance with this policy.

- Storing completed enrolment forms in a lockable file as soon as practicable.

Educators

- Acting in accordance with the obligations outlined in this policy.
- Responding to enrolment enquiries on a day-to-day basis and referring people to the Principal / Business Manager, as required
- Ensuring that application and enrolment forms are completed prior to the child's enrolment at LMP.
- Developing strategies to assist new families to:
 - Feel welcome in the service
 - Become familiar with service policies and procedures
 - To develop and maintain a routine for saying goodbye to their child.

Families

- Reading and complying with this policy.

Relevant Legislation	Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011. Reg. 168(2)(k), 160, 161, 162, 177, 183 Children (Education and Care Services National Law Application) Act 2010 Privacy Act 1988 (Cth) Family Assistance Law www.dss.gov.au Disability and Discrimination Act
Related to NQS QA	5.1, 5.2
Related Policies	Interactions with Children Policy Family Participation and Communication Policy Family Orientation and Enrolment
Sources & Further Reading	AIS Guidelines for Enrolling and Supporting Students with Disability

POLICY REVIEWED	MODIFICATIONS	NEXT REVIEW DATE
New policy created August 2024		2026