

6.4 FAMILY ORIENTATION & ENROLMENT

INTRODUCTION

Lindfield Montessori Preschool is committed to ensuring that orientation and enrolment processes are 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.

At Lindfield Montessori Preschool, we will ensure:

- Children are provided with support and comfort to settle into the service and establish new friendships and relationships;
- A thoughtful process is planned in consultation with families, to assist in separating from their child;
- Educators are provided with a clearly explained enrolment process; strategies to support families in introducing children to our service, time to develop close professional relationships with families; and information about custodial issues if relevant;
- Home language, cultural background and family priorities are considered at all times during the process.

PURPOSE

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

Good procedures include consistent information around service operation and authorisations, promoting compliance and a safe and secure environment for children and families.

STRATEGIES

Lindfield Montessori Preschool welcomes visits from prospective parents. 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 and educators. Questions can be answered, and the Montessori philosophy more fully explained.

Prioritisation

During enrolment, Lindfield Montessori Preschool 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).

Enrolment Form

The Enrolment Form must be completed by each enrolling family. At enrolment, parents are encouraged to provide any further information about their child that will support continuity of care between home and the service.

The Enrolment Form will include the following information for each child:

- Full name, date of birth and address of the child.
- Name, address and contact details of each parent of the child; any emergency contacts; any person nominated by the parent to collect the child from the service; any person authorised to consent to medical treatment or to authorise administration of medication to the child; any person authorised to give approval for an educator to take the child out of the service.
- Details of court orders, parenting orders or plans.
- Details of court orders relating to the child's residence or contact with a parent or other person.
- Gender of the child.
- Language used in the child's home.
- Cultural background of the child and child's parents.
- Any special considerations for the child (e.g. cultural, religious or dietary requirements or additional need).
- Authorisations for our service to seek medical treatment for the child from a registered medical practitioner, hospital or ambulance service, and transportation of the child by an ambulance service.
- Authorisation for the service to take the child on regular outings.
- Name, address and telephone number of the child's registered medical practitioner or medical service.
- Child's Medicare number (if available).
- Details of any specific healthcare needs of the child including any medical condition.
- Details of any allergies or anaphylaxis diagnosis.
- Any medical management plan, anaphylaxis/asthma/diabetic management or risk minimisation plan.
- Details of dietary restrictions for the child.
- Immunisation status of the child.
- All information will be checked before enrolment is complete including the child's immunisation status.

A Privacy Statement which details:

- the name and contact details of the service;
- the fact that enrolling parents/guardians are able to gain access to their information;

- why the information is collected;
- the organisations to which the information may be disclosed;
- any law that requires the particular information to be collected;
- the main consequences for not providing the required information.

Enrolment forms will be checked and updated annually by families, or when a family's circumstances change, to ensure information is current and correct.

Enrolment Procedure

- Upon an enquiry, families are encouraged to book a school tour/observation.
- Following the observation, parents are provided with an enrolment pack.
- Families can then choose to be placed on the waiting list by completing the waiting list form and paying a \$200 fee.
- The preschool will send an email confirming receipt of payment and the child will be placed on the waitlist.
- In instances where the family opts to bypass the waiting list and enrol, they are to complete all the necessary enrolment forms found in the Enrolment Pack (consisting of the Enrolment Agreement, the Enrolment Form, Fees, About Montessori information, Frequently Asked Questions, a Lindfield Montessori Preschool brochure and the MSCA Montessori Guide).
- Families are sent a letter offering a position at Lindfield Montessori Preschool detailing all orientation and first day information, along with an invoice for the conditionally refundable placement fee of \$1,600.
- Once the placement fee has been paid by the family, the offer has been accepted.
- The family is sent a Welcome back which includes the Parent Handbook, the Immunisation Record, a Photograph/Video Permission Form, information regarding maintenance obligations, the Privacy Statement, an Evacuation Information form, information about the Parent Hours Program, the Parent Handbook and relevant key policies.
- Prior to the agreed start date for the child, the family is to provide the following:
 - A signed enrolment agreement
 - A completed Enrolment Form including all authorisations
 - Completed photograph permission forms
 - A signed Privacy Statement
 - The child's current immunisation record and a signed Immunisation Record form
 - Birth certificate, passport or other identification accepted under the Children (Education and Care Services National Law Application) Act 2010.
 - Information on the child's additional needs (including medical conditions, health and developmental concerns), and any medical/risk management plans
 - The Department of Education Consent form.

- Any custody, family court orders and relevant legal information
(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).
- The child attends the orientation visit prior to their start date.
- The Directress/principal will communicate any settling in concerns with the child's parents in the initial weeks of enrolment and is available for an informal chat if required.

Orientation

The orientation and settling in period will consider and respect the needs of both families and children.

We will always consider the feelings and time constraints that families may have in regard to participating in orientation processes and aim to make the experience a positive and welcoming introduction to the service.

Lindfield Montessori Preschool will provide options for orientation for families which includes:

- Inviting new families to visit the service with their child at a mutually suitable time, to familiarise families with the service prior to the child's attendance.
- Providing all new families with a tour of the premises which will include introductions to other educators.
- Ensuring each family has a Welcome Pack.
- Providing the opportunity to have any questions answered.
- Ensuring all new families are encouraged to share information about their child and any concerns, doubts or anxieties they may have in regard to enrolling their child 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, via a meeting with the parents if deemed necessary.

The teacher will meet with the parent/s and child and 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.

If the parents are concerned about separation difficulty, the child is invited to come for a visit/s during 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. Educators will reassure the family and assist with separation if required. During the first couple of weeks, parents are welcome to phone and check how their child is settling. The first two weeks of a child's enrolment will involve a build-up of hours until they are completing the full 3.5 hours of the morning work cycle. The directress will be guided by the child and how they are managing at school.

A typical staggered start may begin with 30 minutes on the first day, 60 minutes on the second day and so on until the child is comfortable and settled. This transition typically spans from 1 to 2 weeks.

Deferrals

Requests by parents for deferred entry are generally not granted but each case will be considered on its merits. Requests for deferred entry must be made in writing to the Directress. The school may advise a deferred start in which case a place will be held without imposition of fees until a commencement date.

Custody Arrangements

The Education and Care Services National Law requires our service to have details of all custodial and access arrangements.

Enrolling family members are responsible for informing the Nominated Supervisor of custody and access arrangements on enrolment, and must advise the Nominated Supervisor immediately of any subsequent alterations to these arrangements.

All relevant legal documentation is to be shown to the Nominated Supervisor and a copy will be maintained in the child's enrolment record.

The Student Population

The student population consists of children aged from 3-6 years of age. The cultural mix of the school is varied and most families live locally.

Determining Readiness

The decision to admit a child is discretionary and is taken only after the Directress has met with the family and conducted an assessment of the child's readiness. Considerations may include the child's level of independence such as toileting (as required by Education and Care Services National Regulations) and separation from caregivers.

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

Notice of Placement

Demand can often exceed 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 term preceding the proposed start date, an interview involving the parent and the Principal/Directress is scheduled. Providing the Principal/Directress is confident of the child's readiness, a classroom visit is arranged and a place confirmed. If it is deemed that the child is not ready, a more suitable start date will be found.

Very occasionally after commencement, the Directress may deem that the child is not settling well (e.g. separation anxiety, toileting problems). The Directress 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 a term's delay.
- Lindfield Montessori Preschool will endeavour to work with the family to support the child in attending school. However, if all support avenues have been explored and the situation has not been resolved, support will be given to find solutions outside of the services offered by Lindfield Montessori Preschool.

To deliver a holistic Montessori service, families need to be committed to completing 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.

Tuition fees for new children to the school will be calculated on a pro-rata basis for the child's first term at school (5 days = 100% tuition, 4 days = 80% tuition, 3 days = 60% tuition etc). The term fee payable will be based on the number of weeks (or part thereof), that remain in the term at the time the child commences.

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.

The documents must be stored in a secure location for three years, unless a child transfers to another child care centre.

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 works in three-year cycles and the Montessori classroom is structured accordingly. When the child commences the cycle, he/she attends school for three and a half hours per day from 8:30am to 12 pm, 4-5 days per week. 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 the NSW Kindergarten curriculum), children attend five full days per week from 8.30am to 2.30pm.

If the child is turning 5 prior to 31st July, or will turn 6 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

When the DDA requires a school 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 packs
- Maintaining a waiting list
- 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 enrolment forms are completed prior to the child's enrolment at LMP.
- Ensuring that parents/guardians of a child attending the service can enter the service at any time that the child is being educated and cared for, except where this may pose as a risk to the safety of children or staff, or conflict with any duty of the Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor or staff under the lar (Regulation 157).

- Developing strategies to assist new families to:
 - Feel welcomed into the service
 - Become familiar with service policies and procedures
 - To develop and maintain a routine for saying goodbye to their child
- Providing comfort and reassurance to children who are showing signs of distress when separating from family members.
- Sharing information with parents/guardians regarding their child's progress with regard to settling in at Lindfield Montessori Preschool.

Families

- Reading and complying with this policy.

MONITORING, EVALUATION AND REVIEW

This policy will be monitored to ensure compliance with legislative requirements and unless deemed necessary through the identification of practice gaps, the service will review this Policy every two years.

Families and staff are essential stakeholders in the policy review process and will be given opportunity and encouragement to be actively involved.

In accordance with R. 172 of the Education and Care Services National Regulations, the service will ensure that families of children enrolled at the service are notified at least 14 days before making any change to a policy or procedure that may have significant impact on the provision of education and care to any child enrolled at the service; a family's ability to utilise the service; the fees charged or the way in which fees are collected.

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) Public Health Act 2010 No 127; Part 5, Division 4, Section 87 Health Records and Information Privacy Act 2002 (NSW) Family Assistance Law www.dss.gov.au
Related to NQS QA	5.1, 5.2
Related Policies	Interactions with Children Policy Family Participation and Communication Policy
Sources & Further Reading	Policy adapted from Community Early Learning Australia AIS Guidelines for Enrolling and Supporting Students with Disability

POLICY REVIEWED	MODIFICATIONS	NEXT REVIEW DATE
January 2023	Checked regulations, updated copy	2025