

# Policy 17 - Philosophy

Written: July 1999.

Reviewed: July 2000

Reviewed: July 2001

Reviewed: July 2002

Reviewed: June 2003

Reviewed: June 2004

Reviewed: May 2005

Reviewed: May 2007

Reviewed: May 2008

Reviewed May 2009

Reviewed May 2010

Reviewed July 2012

## **A description of the centre's philosophy and its impact on the programme experienced by the children.**

What makes our centre distinctive, and what we are trying to achieve in our approach, is to provide an early childhood environment based on the Montessori philosophy of education. The main emphasis of the Montessori philosophy, as defined by Maria Montessori, is to provide an environment which cultivates the child's own natural desire to learn. Airdmhor's own personal philosophy statement states:

*"I can't change the direction of the wind, but I can adjust my sails to always reach my destination"*

We believe that children are endowed with innate powers to absorb the culture in which they live. Our aim is to work in partnership with parents to provide a safe, creative and loving environment, where each child is nurtured and their individuality is acknowledged and enhanced. If the adults in this environment value and model, respect for others, independence, collaboration, wonder at the world, a sense of joy, and peaceful relationships, these are what young children will absorb. These will be the ropes they will have to adjust their sails to reach their destination.

This philosophy statement was written before Airdmhor Montessori opened in 1999 and each year we have reviewed it and kept it in its original form. We all feel strongly that it is very relevant in present times, because of the alarming rate that knowledge is changing in the world. Children do not need static knowledge they need to have the tools to prepare them for coping with situations to find out answers and ways to understand and solve the mysteries of the universe.

The features of our programme which reflect our philosophy and how this approach impacts on the programme experienced by the children are outlined below:

The Montessori Learning Environment:

Our centre is a child-centred environment the focus of activity in a Montessori setting is the children's own learning, generally the children work individually or in small, self selected groups.

A responsive prepared environment: The environment is designed to meet the needs, interests, abilities and development of the children. The teachers have designed and adapt the environment with this community of children in mind.

A focus on individual progress and development: Within our Montessori programme, children progress at their own pace moving on to the next step in each area of learning, as they are ready. The layout and operation of the centre, qualification and experience of the teachers, resources and the low child ratios make it possible for teachers to work with children to meet their individual needs on a daily basis.

Montessori Learning Activities:

**Hands on learning:** The focus is on direct personal hands on contact with either real things under study or with concrete models that bring abstract concepts to life as that allows children to learn with much deeper understanding.

**Spontaneous activity:** The children are encouraged to move about freely, with reasonable limits of appropriate behaviour. Much of the time they select work, which captures their interest and attention although teachers also strive to capture their interest in new challenges and areas of inquiry.

**Self-directed activity:** As one of Montessori's key concepts is the idea that children are driven by their desire to become independent and competent beings in the world to learn new things and master new skills. Independence is encouraged at all times

by the prepared environment and the teachers who believe in the importance of helping a child to “do it myself”

**Freedom within limits:** Our children enjoy freedom of movement and choice. They are free to do anything appropriate to the ground rules of the community, but the rights of others are respected at all times.

## **The Montessori Teacher**

We have a highly qualified and experienced staff, all trained teacher's will have teacher registration by September 2013 and nearly all have completed Montessori early childhood training. We have had experience lecturing the Apherfield Montessori Early Childhood Diploma and in recent years some courses have been held here at Airdmhor Montessori, in the evenings.

## **Observer**

Montessori teachers are trained observers of children's learning and behaviour. Procedures are in place for observations to be recorded daily both in written or photographic form. This information is used by the team to infer where children are in terms of their development, and gives teachers information as to the needs of each child. Teachers can then use this information to facilitate the learning process by making a match between the learner and knowledge or skills, which will be the best response to the changing interests and needs of each child as a unique individual.

The environment is well resourced and organised to ensure that the materials needed to provide the help each child needs, is easily accessible for the teacher to use at 'the teachable moment'. As Montessori educators we truly accept that children learn in many different ways and at their own pace. As a team we understand we must 'follow the child' adjusting our strategies and timetable to fit the development of each pupil. We have purposely planned the layout into five separate areas. In the day-to-day operation of the centre, each teacher is rostered to an area on a regular basis. This enables continuity of learning for the children.

At Airdmhor Montessori we recognise that our role is not to teach but to inspire, mentor and facilitate the learning process. The real work of learning belongs to the individual child. Montessori said “no one can be free unless he is independent”. Because of this, as Montessori educators, we remain conscious of our role in helping

each child to fulfil his or her potential as a human being and of creating an environment for learning within which children will feel safe, cherished and empowered.

After compiling the materials in preparation for this audit, I feel confident that what is happening for children at Airdmhor Montessori reflects our philosophy, prepares children to be life long learners and to be able to “adjust their sails to always reach their destination”.

We look forward to your visit and discussions on what is happening for children at Airdmhor Montessori.