



# Thomas More Christian Montessori School

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Dear Parent/Carer,

Thank you for your enquiry and interest in Thomas More Christian Montessori (TMCM) School for your child. We offer a wide variety of programs delivering excellence in education from age 0-12.

At TMCM School you will find a warm, welcoming and active community. In accordance with the Montessori philosophy, the goal of the school is to guide your child to reach their full potential, inspiring them to create a better world with their hearts, heads and hands. There is a shared emphasis on intellectual, social, emotional, spiritual, and physical development. We aim to provide a learning environment that allows your child to develop the skills to be a successful learner within the classroom, and more importantly, to develop self-confidence, independence, compassion, and a sense of responsibility, and to become a successful member of society long after your child's time at TMCM School is over.

TMCM School is a small, government and parent funded, Montessori School that has been operating for over twenty years in the Bega Valley. Our teachers hold recognized State, Montessori and Early Childhood Education qualifications and the school is a member of the MAF Montessori Australia Foundation and AIS Australia Independent Schools Association.

We currently offer a Montessori Parent/Child Program for children aged 0 to 3 years, a three-year program for children aged 3 to 6 years and we are also taking enrolments for students age 6-12 years. Children aged 3-4 (our prep students) are encouraged to attend a minimum of three mornings a week from 9:00am to 1.20 pm. Children move into an extended day program when they turn 5 years of age, attending school five full days (9:00am to 3:00pm) each week. The school is closed during the holiday periods.

## Please find enclosed the following:

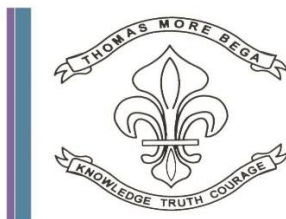
- Montessori Philosophy
- Differences between Montessori and Traditional Education
- Overview of TMCM School
- School Enrolment Process

Kind Regards,

**Donna McCulloch / Principal**  
**TMC Montessori School**

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[www.begamontessori.nsw.edu.au](http://www.begamontessori.nsw.edu.au)  
*"Developing your child's potential"*



# *Montessori Philosophy*

## **“Help me to do it by myself” Dr. Maria Montessori’s attitude to education**

Dr. Maria Montessori, physician, psychologist and noted humanitarian studied children of many racial, cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds for over fifty years.

Maria was born in 1870 in Ancona, Italy. When her family moved to Rome, she persuaded her parents to send her to a boys’ school that had an emphasis on science and engineering. Despite opposition, she studied to become a doctor and at the age of 26 was the first Italian woman to complete the degree of Doctor of Medicine. In 1900 she was appointed as the Director of the Orthophrenic School (a model school for training teachers of children with developmental disabilities) and there experimented with materials to stimulate the senses. It was here that she succeeded in fostering the development of some of the children to such an extent that they achieved the same results on state exams as typically developing school children.

The neuro-science research of today is constantly confirming the in-depth observations and analysis made by Maria Montessori 100 years ago. Her intense scientific observation of the human being from birth to maturity allowed her to distil a body of philosophical, psychological and pedagogical principles. These, together with a vast range of autodidactic (self-correcting) materials, came to be known as the Montessori Method of Education.

The Montessori approach offers a broad vision of education as an aid to life. It is designed to help children with their task of inner construction as they grow from childhood to maturity. It succeeds because it draws its principles from the natural development of the child. Its flexibility provides a structure which each individual child’s inner motivation, combined with self-discipline, guides the child towards maturity.

Montessori classrooms provide a prepared environment where children are free to respond to their natural tendency to work. The children’s innate passion for learning is encouraged by giving them opportunities to engage in spontaneous, purposeful activities with the guidance of a trained adult (the teacher). Through their work, the children develop concentration and joyful self-discipline. Within a framework of order, the children progress at their own pace and rhythm, according to their individual capabilities.

### **Four Planes of Development**

According to Montessori philosophy, the transformation of children from birth to adulthood occurs through a series of development planes. Montessori practice changes in scope and manner to embrace the child’s changing characteristics and interests.

There are four planes of development. Maria Montessori believed that if education followed the natural development of the child, then society would gradually move to a higher level of co-operation, peace and harmony.

#### First Plane – Infancy

Occurs between birth and six years and the child is characterized by his or her ‘absorbent mind’, absorbing all aspects of his or her environment, language and culture. This coincides with the development of the individual personality. It is a period when the child is moving towards physical and biological independence.

#### Second Plane – Childhood

Occurs between six and twelve years and sees the elaboration of mind and personality in the child. They use a ‘reasoning’ to explore the world with abstract thought and imagination. During this plane the child moves towards mental independence.

### Third Plane – Adolescence

Occurs between the ages of twelve and eighteen years. In this plane the adolescent has a 'humanistic mind' eager to understand humanity and the contribution he or she can make to society. They develop their social personality and move towards social independence.

### Fourth Plane – Maturity

Occurs between eighteen and twenty-four years. The adult explores the world with a 'specialist mind', taking his or her place in the world. Your child's social personality is elaborated on as he or she moves towards spiritual and moral independence.

TMCM School, which covers the first and second planes, is divided into four groups.

- Montessori Playgroup – for children aged 0-3
- Cycle 1 for children aged 3-6 years
- Cycle 2 for children aged 6-9
- Cycle 3 for children aged 9-12

### **Prepared Environment**

Walk into a Montessori classroom and you will invariably see happy and busy children working purposefully. The classroom itself will typically be beautiful and enticing. Great care is taken to create a learning environment that will reinforce the child's independence and natural urge toward self-development. This is achieved in three ways – beauty, order and accessibility where materials are displayed on low, open shelves. Each piece of material has a specific purpose and is presented to the children in a manner that will enable them to direct their own learning.

The Montessori materials are tools to stimulate the child into logical thought and discovery. They are provocative, enticing and simple. Each piece of Montessori equipment presents one concept or idea at a time and has with it known as a "control of error". If the child has done something incorrectly it will be self-evident. The geometric shape, for example, won't fit the hole; the water will spill on the table or the last label will not match the last picture. Being able to see his or her own mistake allows the child to work independently.

The Montessori classroom is not merely a place for individual learning. It is a vibrant community of children, where the child learns to interact socially in a variety of ways. The three-year age range enables older children to analyze what they have learnt as they teach the younger child, while the younger children are inspired to more advanced work through observing the older ones. With such a variety of levels in the classroom, each child can work at his or her own pace, unhindered by competition and encouraged by co-operation. Children can attend daily and for a three-year cycle.

### **The Montessori Teacher**

Montessori teachers have NSW teacher qualification as well as an additional Montessori Teacher Education Diploma or Certificate. The teacher is a guide or facilitator whose task it is to support the young child in his or her process of self-development. The teacher is foremost an observer, unobtrusively yet carefully monitoring each child's development, recognizing and interpreting each child's needs.

The teacher provides a link between the child and the prepared environment, introducing the child to each piece of equipment when he or she is ready in a precise, clear and enticing way. On a broader level the teacher provides a link between the classroom and the parent, meeting with each child's parents to discuss progress. He/she is an example of a calm, consistent, courteous and caring behavior.

## *Differences between Montessori & Traditional Education*

MONTESSORI	TRADITIONAL
Based on helping the natural development of the human being	Based on the transfer of a national curriculum
Child is an active participant in learning	Child is a passive participant in learning
Mixed Age Groups	Same age groups Child has allocated time for each particular task
Children learn at their own pace and follow their own individual interest	Children learn from a set curriculum according to a time frame that is the same for everyone
The teacher works in collaboration with the children	The class is teacher led
Children teach themselves using materials specially prepared for the purpose	Children are taught by the teacher
Learning is based on the fact that physical exploration and cognition are linked	Children sit at desks and learn from a whiteboard and worksheets
Understanding comes through the child's own experiences with materials and the promotion of children's ability to find things out for themselves	Learning is based on subjects and is limited to what information is given
Mainly individual instruction	Mainly group instruction
Child can work where he/she is comfortable, move around and talk at will while not disturbing others, active participation	Child is usually assigned own chair and encouraged to sit still and listen during group sessions, passive participation
The child's individual development brings its own reward and therefore motivation	Motivation is achieved by a system of reward and punishment
Environment and method encourage internal self-discipline	Teacher acts as primary enforcer of external discipline
Uninterrupted work cycles Child works as long as he/she wishes on chosen projects	Block time, period lessons Child generally given specific time limit for tasks
Working and learning matched to the social development of the child	Working and learning without emphasis on the social development of the child
Shared emphasis on intellectual, social, emotional and spiritual development	Main emphasis on intellectual development
Shared focus on the acquisition of academic, social, practical and life skills	Main focus on academics
The teacher's role is an unobtrusive role in the class, the facilitator	The teacher is the centre of the classroom, the controller
The environment and teaching method encourages self-discipline	The teacher acts as a primary enforcer of discipline, children become reliant on outside approval
Child sets own learning pace and reinforces own learning by repetition of work and internal feeling of success	Instruction pace usually set by group. Errors are pointed out or praise comes from the teacher
Child discovers own concepts from self-teaching, self-correcting materials.	Child is shown concepts by teacher and corrected by teacher

# *An Overview of Thomas More Christian Montessori School*

TMCM School is an independent primary school for children from 3-12 years of age. Our outdoor play spaces have interesting structures, wide open and beautiful views, access to the Lynjohn Park, a perma-culture garden with chickens, and the classrooms are fully equipped with Montessori materials. These environments are prepared for children at each developmental level and allow children to take responsibility for their own education. As a result, our students develop a life-long passion for learning.

A Montessori education will give your child

- the opportunity to work at their own pace in a non-competitive environment
- the opportunity to follow their natural curiosity
- follow systematic steps in learning, from the concrete to the abstract and
- an environment of stability, respect, order and beauty

All classes are multi-age, giving each child the opportunity to learn from others and the flexibility to develop their personality at their own pace, both socially and intellectually.

Children usually stay with the same teacher for three years, and this leads to strong teacher-student bonds and a deep understanding by the teacher of individual student characteristics.

## **Cycle 1 (Ages 3 to 6)**

Activities in this cycle are designed to allow your child to develop concentration, co-ordination, order and independence. Students work with concrete materials in tasks that include: manipulation of blocks; differentiation, discrimination and classification of materials; recognition and reproduction of letters; and identification of countries, animals and plants; painting, handcrafts and practical life activities.

Children aged 3 and 4 years attend School from 9:00 am to 1:20 pm for a minimum of three days a week, Monday to Thursday. This time is gradually extended to 9:00 am to 3:00pm based upon a child's readiness, not chronological age.

## **Cycle 2 (Ages 6 to 9)**

Activities in this cycle are designed to allow your child to research their own questions about the world, building more complex understanding of concepts and connections. The major themes (Great Stories) explored in Cycle 2 investigations are the stars, the planets, the story of life, the coming of humans, language and invention.

## **Cycle 3 (Ages 9 to 12)**

This cycle provides an increased scientific base for a higher level of synthesis and understanding. It includes more abstract concepts and more sophisticated problem-solving. Students work in the areas of language, mathematics, geometry, geography, history zoology and botany.

## **Specialist classes**

In each cycle, students participate in a range of specialist activities. These include (Spanish), Music, Art, Drama and Sport.

### **Early Years Programs (Ages 0 to 3)**

Parent/Child Program for children 0-School age.

Children of Toddler age (0 to school age) attending the Parent/Child Program will be offered the (according to their age and abilities) preliminaries of a Montessori program, covering the following elements:

- practical life
- sensorial
- pre-mathematics
- pre-literacy
- culture

These provide a stimulating learning environment. These sessions also provide a wonderful opportunity to learn about Montessori philosophy and practice.

The Parent/Child Program is coordinated by a Montessori Group Leader. The number of sessions per week and days on which they are held, may vary from term to term and year to year depending on the number of enrolments registered. We endeavour to provide enrolment to all applicants, however, it should be understood that places are limited, so timely application is encouraged.

## *School Enrolment Process*

To help understand the enrolment process, here are the major steps for enrolling your child.

1. Complete the Student Enrolment Expression of Interest Form.
2. Return the Student Enrolment Expression of Interest Form with \$50 non-refundable enrolment and Membership Fee.
3. Make an appointment with the Principal to attend a pre-enrolment interview. Bookings can be made by phoning the school on (02) 6492 2913.
4. Complete all enrolment forms and provide a Birth Certificate and current Immunisation Record.
5. In early December parents will receive a letter confirming their child's acceptance and starting schedule for the following year. In order to facilitate a gentle introduction to school for our new students TCM School conducts an initiation period over the first few weeks of the school term, gradually extending the number of hours per day and days per week spent at school. We have found this to be a most effective and appropriate introduction for our littlies or newest members of class. After the first two weeks of term this schedule will be reviewed following consultation with your child's teacher.
6. For those seeking a place at TCM School mid-year or after school commences all of the above process will be followed (except point 5).

You may have further questions, please contact our School Secretary on (02) 6492 2913 or via email [contact@begamontessori.nsw.edu.au](mailto:contact@begamontessori.nsw.edu.au)