

Developing Life-long Traits and Characteristics

During children's early years, it is important to have quality opportunities for learning.

As teachers, the influence we have on young lives is monumental and the importance of partnerships with families to help facilitate positive development of cognitive, social and self-regulation skills is crucial. As important as academic learning is - it is one part - cultivating positive characteristics and traits in children are just as important. Preschool focuses on balancing these traits in each child and ensuring parents understand the importance this plays in their overall development. All children are capable of extraordinary things when we believe in them and they have the building blocks to succeed. These start with a base of consistency from the adults involved in their lives. Children watch and learn from us as role models and it is imperative that we demonstrate these traits.

Resilience - This is not something that children have or don't have - but a skill they develop, it needs to be learnt, nurtured and actively encouraged. It is natural to protect children to make their life easier but teaching them how to handle problems, face challenges, teach problem-solving, whilst encouraging them to do their best to achieve - will ensure they develop competently. When children are resilient, they are braver, more curious, adaptable and able to reach out to the world.

Confidence - This is one of the greatest gifts we can give young children. Creating positive self-esteem helps children's happiness and belief in themselves. Keeping the balance between giving them opportunities to learn skills and gain experiences without putting too high expectations on them is a key. Having self confidence in their own abilities and doing their best - whatever that ability is - is far more important than being compared to the level or expectation of others.

Social skills - Giving children opportunities to learn how to communicate with peers, build effective and reciprocal relationships, develop social interactions and appropriate skills helps as they grow. Socialisation is an imperative part of developing emotional qualities and regulation. It is important that they learn the skills of being

able to relate to other children of their age in a positive, reciprocal way - not just with adults.

Independence - Instilling independence and expectations for children is a characteristic when fostered at a young age and is a crucial part of their development. Children gain confidence, new skills and qualities of perseverance, concentration and self-help skills when independence is encouraged. Promoting children to have a healthy sense of independence is a key for raising a child to be independent, self-motivated, showing integral personal and social development - with support of their parents and teachers. A key focus at Preschool is fostering independence - where children gain the skills necessary for school and life.

Empathy - Raising children with empathy helps them develop better emotional intelligence. As they develop, this characteristic needs to be fostered. Caring for others, showing empathy and kindness to those around them - no matter what age, gender, socio-economic group or culture is imperative. Concern and care for people and animals helps create a sense of empathy, incorporating skills needed for a life-time - a key part of our Preschool programme.

Self-help skills - Young children are often underestimated in their abilities to do tasks or gain personal skills. From a young age, doing chores around the home develops skills for life - and although it takes longer (when adults are busy), it is important to give children opportunities to develop these. At Preschool, children are encouraged to dress themselves after swimming lessons (even if buttons are in the wrong hole and socks inside out), carry their own school bag in, tidy up after themselves, independently feed themselves, clear their plate off after meals and take it to the kitchen and self-select activities. These skills are learnt with regular practice, role modelling by teachers and peers with support, expectation and encouragement are achieved at Preschool. Once at home, these self-help skills need to be continued -if you expect them to do it, they will rise to the occasion.

Children need to know that there are adults in their lives who believe in them and love them unconditionally. As teachers and parents working together with the shared goals of achieving the best possible outcome for the children, we will ensure that the values, traits and characteristics are instilled in them from a young age - and a strong foundation will be created for life.

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Mrs Sue Nash
Preschool Director



Christmas Cheer

The Christmas season is an exciting time of the year for the Preschool, as the children look forward to performing some of their favourite Christmas carols at different events.

The preschoolers travelled to Epsom and Rawhiti Retirement Villages to entertain the residents and sing Christmas carols as part of learning how to serve others. At Rawhiti, the residents put on a Christmas balloon party with candy floss and even a special visit from Santa!

One of the highlights of Term 4 was the Girls' School Carol Service held at the Holy Trinity Cathedral. The children were thrilled to be given the opportunity to perform in front of the large Girls' School audience and sing the 'Joy Song,' which was a perfect fit for this year's 'Joy' theme. Smiles of joy filled the Cathedral as the children performed the actions and sang at the top of their lungs.

The final Christmas event on the Preschool calendar was the Christmas Concert. The children took to the stage at the Girls' School in front their parents, grandparents, friends and special guests. Again, the preschoolers performed several Christmas songs with great confidence, remembering all the words and actions! What a great way to finish and celebrate the year that has been.



Grandparents' Day

Every year we have a tremendous turnout at our much-anticipated Grandparents' Day - this year was no exception! Grandparents streamed through the Preschool gates to be greeted by the preschoolers who were eager to show them around.

The morning was full of smiles and hugs as the children spent time with their loved ones reading stories, creating art and playing learning games.

To wrap up the morning, the preschoolers performed their favourite songs and gifted their grandparents with a poem which they had crafted.



Learning Through Baking

Learning to bake and cook meals is an important part of a child's learning and development, as it helps to build basic maths concepts, language skills and helps the children to gain positive social interactions with their peers. It also helps build self-confidence, collaboration skills and teaches the children how to share and work as a team, as well as helping to lay a foundation for healthy eating and an interest in food. It takes a bit of preparation ensuring everything is ready before the children start, especially making sure they have clean hands every step of the way.

From the maths and language concepts of measuring, weighing, adding ingredients, following a recipe with visual and verbal instructions, to exploring their senses through smell, taste and sight, and not to mention, eating the finished product, the children got to experience and enjoy it all!



Nurturing Ducklings

Research shows that from an early age, a child develops empathy through interaction with animals. At the Preschool, we introduce the children to as many animals as possible to help them learn how to care for, nurture and connect with the natural world.

One example this year was the arrival of four ducklings – which the children were ecstatic about. Abandoned by their mother duck, Sue's Mum, Marj thought it would be a great idea for the children to foster them – and what a great idea that was, the children loved it!

The children spent time every week cleaning out their enclosure, taking them for swims and making sure they had enough food. After three weeks, the children took the ducklings back to their home in Kumeu.



It's All a Buzz

September is New Zealand Bee month and every year we ensure that the children learn about the important role that bees play in our ecosystem. This year, apiarists visited in their suits, an international 'honey judge' came to talk to us, and the children made beeswax candles and discovered how bees make honey. Alongside this, the children created bee art, built beehives with blocks, visited the garden centre to buy bee-friendly plants for our bee garden and played language and maths bee games. The highlight this year was receiving our own beehive where we look after rescue bees from 'Bees up Top'. All areas of the Preschool curriculum were covered in this project – science, maths, language and books, art, social science and the living world. What a fabulous learning experience!





Sharing our Learning Portfolios

The Preschool programme is constantly evolving – this is evident by not only taking a walk around the preschool and looking at the walls, but by opening a child's learning portfolio.

These portfolios are a highlight for the families and extended families to enjoy and are even more loved by the children themselves. The children regularly sit and look through their folders, both individually and with their friends. The excitement and joy shown on their faces as they recall past events, share their experiences and revisit what they learned or enjoyed, is what makes these portfolios such a vital part of Preschool.

The photos taken or stories written and used in their learning stories, magic moments and events throughout the year, capture the fun and endless opportunities that our Preschools programme has to offer. Each term, the children have a large collection of new pages to include, with a careful balance between documenting their learning, developmental skills, social interactions with peers, Preschool events, parental aspirations and their interests.

As the children leave and take their portfolios home, the inclusion of their Transition to School Programme is added, leaving many children excited to share it with their new teachers!



Off to School We Go

Our Transition to School Programme ensures a seamless move from Preschool to Primary School. The children start with regular visits to either the Boys' School or Girls' School the term before they are due to start - meeting their new teachers and friends! Being involved in and visiting all areas of the school helps the children to gain an understanding of how school works, and makes them feel a lot more comfortable.

The children bring a packed lunchbox once a week during the term and sit together and learn about opening their packages and choosing their food to eat. This is a great learning curve and gives them the self-help skills necessary for independence at school.

Since the Preschool opened, our Transition Programme has been appreciated and valued by not only the children and their families but also the staff at the Boys' School and Girls' School, as they know the Preschool children are ready to start the next part of their learning journey. With more than 250 boys and girls who have started at our Saint Kentigern schools since we opened, the Transition Programme continues to be an integral part of Preschool in setting the children up for further success once at school.

