

Extra Curricular Opportunities

Our Preschool has a reputation for undertaking a huge amount of extra-curricular activities – and we constantly get comments from parents about how appreciative they are. The importance of children having opportunities to gain experiences in areas both inside and outside of the Preschool environment means our extra-curricular options are full and varied.

With an emergent programme where each day is different, and our educational learnings reflecting the children's interest and needs, parental requests, staff pedagogy and National Interests – the children at Saint Kentigern have 'a world of opportunity' at their feet.

LANGUAGES - Each week the children learn two languages – Te Reo and French. As our Preschool children have uncluttered brains that are highly active with an innate ability to learn, the chance to experience unfamiliar languages is met with fun and excitement. Their natural curiosity and lack of fear of failure as they experiment with new sounds and ideas makes the learning of other languages easier at this young age.

All staff have knowledge and appreciation of Te Reo and it is used throughout the day in greetings, commands, colours, songs, numbers, and once a week the children enjoy a full 'Maori mat time'. This supports our future generation of children to ensure Te Reo and our National language and culture continue to be strong.

French is taught by a past parent who is fluent in 6 languages and has been taking our French lessons for 6 years. Each lesson starts with greetings, numbers from 1-20, colours, days of the week and is followed by a small number of new words that relate to our current topic of interest. The children have a strong base knowledge of French as they leave Preschool to continue on to our schools.

FITNESS - With the focus at Preschool being to create healthy bodies and healthy minds, a daily fitness programme supports this. Action songs to music help develop a 'midline' – crucial to help with learning to read and write. Set actions for songs reinforces repetition, extends skills to learn and participate in a

supportive environment as well as having fun as they exercise. In addition, more active sports are also introduced through the Little Champs – Sports Programme where children learn about resilience, turn taking, working together, more advanced hand eye coordination with balls, competition and participation.

SWIMMING - Our swimming programme takes place during Terms 1 and 4. Our staff have undertaken the Swimming NZ programme and take the children's lessons. This is a highly successful part of our programme and is the only 'extra cost' for parents. Up to 75% of our children choose to take lessons that are structured around each child's ability with the ratio a maximum of 1:2 with initial lessons being 1:1. The children LOVE these lessons as they feel confident already with the trust they have in their Preschool staff.

YOGA AND MINDFULNESS - Our staff regularly attend PD courses, and these are updated to bring in new ideas. Each child has their own yoga mat and can lead their own yoga sessions, as well as follow our weekly session with staff. Our Interactive TV is regularly used with 'Cosmic Yoga' where popular children's stories like 'The Very Hungry Caterpillar' are acted out through yoga poses. Our mindfulness programme has been instilled throughout Preschool since we opened. Calm sessions of mindfulness are hugely beneficial to children throughout their day.

TRIPS OUTSIDE OF PRESCHOOL - Although many ECE centres do not undertake trips, we feel that the benefits for the children through educational, social and learning experiences outweigh the risks. Clear RAMS are done before any trip and all parents sign a separate permission slip per trip. MOE regulations are 1:4 however the majority of Preschool trips see our ratios at 1:2 due to the interest and support from parents. Trips this year have seen the children go to Stardome, Pumphouse Music show, Matariki Puppet show, Treasure Island musical at Boys' School, Mt Albert Grammar School farm, Celtic Day, Flora MacDonald Day, Wearable Arts Show at the College, Auckland Zoo – Bug Lab, Kelly Tarlton's, Trips to Auckland airport and plane spotting, Kumeu farm to drop off chicks, pet shop, fruit shops and Remuera Library!

All of this ensures that a well-rounded, comprehensive and engaging learning environment is available for our children. As staff we are fully focused on the children while going beyond best practice is the norm for our children to make sure they have every opportunity to have a great start in their educational journey at Saint Kentigern. I appreciate the support my staff give to making this such an integral part of our identity and to everyone supporting us to make sure this Extra Curricular Programme is possible.

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Mrs Sue Nash
Preschool Director



Making Maths Concepts Fun

Observations by our staff saw a gap in some of the children's understanding of maths concepts and numbers. A focus on all things to do with maths, especially numbers, saw a much higher level of understanding by the children over a short period of time. Being able to rote count is a learnt behaviour but the ability to recognise the numbers in written form and identify objects to match the quantity is quite another skill and we were pleased with their ability to pick up and retain these concepts. Counting in 2's, 5's and 10's and being able to know what numbers come before and after numbers up to at least 10 were also a focus. It was a very positive outcome to see the improvement when an area of focused immersion is undertaken. Making Maths fun was the key!

The Positive Effect of ICT

Recent research about ICT in Preschool Environments has shown how it can have a positive effect on children's learning when used wisely and grounded in a clear understanding of the purpose, practice and context.

At Preschool we ensure aspects of ICT use are incorporated throughout our Preschool programme. The use of any form of technology is used to complement and enhance the children's learning.

The nine Preschool iPads have educational apps that support our pre-literacy and pre-numeracy focus and are used frequently in the programme. The software is carefully selected by staff to engage exploration, weave together knowledge and skills, extend language development and learn skills of sharing and turn taking. The focus of ICT integration into our teaching programme is planned, structured and monitored. These devices are used alongside staff with small groups of children. Each child is shown how to turn an iPad on and off, navigate their way through the games, enhance their fine motor and eye hand co-ordination skills, and show respect for the resource.

Staff also use laptops with small groups of children to research and navigate around Google or with large groups connected to our interactive screen. During these teaching and learning sessions, the children gain investigation skills and build learning experiences into topics that we are focussing on.

Digital, iPad and mobile phone cameras are another enjoyable, interactive learning tool. Taking photos of themselves and their friends - before working alongside staff to attach them to the laptop to print off are always a highlight in the day. The children love to see photos of themselves and these are visibly displayed around the Preschool environment with captions and stories to match.

Recent Ministry of Education research stated that 'the value that ICT can add to young children's learning environments depends on the choices the practitioners make about the tools to select, when and how to use it to support children's learning, development and play.' Our staff ensure all ICT use is clearly and positively discussed, and actively and deliberately implemented within the programme - ICT complements and supports our learning environment for the children.



Flying High

The children's fascination with all planes that fly over Preschool, making paper planes, parents who work for Air NZ and have collections of planes, and staff member, Olivia having a plane radar app on her iPad, saw the focus turn to planes and flight. Impromptu trips with two groups of children to Auckland airport and the plane viewing area were met with great excitement. Visits from two Air New Zealand air stewardesses in their uniform to talk to us about what they do led to some amazing conversations - and some of our children looked great in the Air New Zealand beret and scarf - as well as a surprise visit from a drone. Fly high!





Dinosaur Roar

A special visit from 'Dinosaur Dig' saw all the children learn so much about dinosaurs and fossils. The facilitator was most impressed on how knowledgeable the children were - especially a 4-year-old boy who knew the name of every dinosaur! She said she has been to 100's of schools and Preschools and never before has she not been able to stump a child on a dinosaur! The children each had a chance to make dinosaur fossils with shark teeth.

The arrival of Sue's brother's 4-metre-long Tyrannosaurus Rex on the deck at Preschool was met with looks of disbelief from the children! This proved to be a great learning adventure for them, and the new knowledge these young children can absorb is quite phenomenal. Over the following weeks there were impromptu visits to the museum with some children to see the dinosaur display and an amazing array of artwork produced by the children - their interpretations of each dinosaur through the medium of art amazed us all! Dinosaur discovery didn't just stay inside - there were fossils in the sandpit, walking like a dinosaur synchronised fitness songs, dinosaurs in the water trough inside ice cubes amongst other activities - every day was like living back in Jurassic Park!



Snow Drop

This is the 8th consecutive year that it has 'snowed' in Remuera, albeit it in a very targeted area in the locality - our Preschool playground! A drop of 4 tonnes of snow was met with blue skies, and 58 very, very excited Preschool children! A large crowd of parents and extended family members came for the morning to see the children at play. There were snow balls to throw, snowmen to make, snow to taste and snow to roll in - all in all a great morning of wintery fun!



Mindfulness

The inclusion of mindfulness in our programme when Preschool first opened 8 years ago was viewed cautiously by some. However, over the years the importance of people young and old including this in their lifestyle has become evident. Our Preschool children can lead their own sessions - through CD's, books and through their play. Each day staff ensure there are spaces set up throughout the environment where children can have quiet time as well as role model and scaffold mindful play with the children and each other. Research has shown that mindfulness increases connectivity in the frontal lobe of the brain - improving attention, memory processing and decision making. We have found it supports the children in increasing their ability to self regulate their emotions - fear or anger, over-excitement or sadness - all through being able to talk to their teachers and friends - and show care and empathy for how others are feeling and helps build resilience in children. It closely links with our Saint Kentigern Values and we regularly have comments from people about how well behaved, self controlled, caring and compassionate our children are.





We Love Our Mums and Dads!

With well over 50 children on the roll, Saint Kentigern Preschool is always a busy place, but for two special mornings a year, coinciding with Mothers' Day and Fathers' Day, it's particularly busy as we welcome a large influx of Mums and Dads and other special family members!

The Mothers were first to be treated to a morning at Preschool. Time was spent working and playing with the children inside the centre and outside in the fresh air before watching how well the children have learnt to tidy up, wash their hands and sit at tables to wait quietly for their morning tea. Children and adults alike enjoyed some special fare while Director of the Preschool, Mrs Sue Nash spoke about the privilege of being able to be make a difference in the lives of these young children. She explained the importance of the Saint Kentigern Values that our children learn from a very age; Christian values that are a daily part of life as they move on through our amazing Saint Kentigern family of schools.

To finish the Mothers' Morning, the children and their visitors spent some final time together, making each other a personalised wooden bead bracelet to remember a very special morning for some very special visitors to Preschool.

Following on, the arrival of 100 plus Dads, Grandads, Uncles was equally special! It was fantastic to see the key male role models spending time to interact in the Preschool environment including men in suits in the sandpit and lying on the floor doing puzzles!

The children shared their favourite fitness songs earning lots of smiles from the visitors. A BBQ lunch of 'bacon butties' and sausages in bread was consumed with gusto by the adults and children alike - who could resist that smell! Each child had made a puzzle for their gift - a picture hand drawn by them of their Dad, broken into pieces and put in a bag for them to make up at home - although the children were unanimous in the fact they didn't think their Dads would be clever enough to do them!

