

In the “Montessori prepared environment” of Parklands Kindergarten, children are encouraged to be responsible for their own learning and to seek help from one another as well as from adults. Montessori Practical Life activities channel each child’s natural enthusiasm and curiosity into real life skills to encourage independence and responsibility. The beautiful Montessori maths, language and sensorial learning materials develop numeracy, literacy and sensory awareness of colour, sound, shape, texture, temperature, weight and taste. The Montessori materials are complemented by a range of quality educational puzzles, books, board games and open-ended construction, role-play and art materials that encourage creativity.

Through a balance of freedom and discipline children develop respect for themselves, others and the community and over time a cheerful, cohesive social community emerges in the classroom. Each child follows his interest and works at his own pace free from competition, compulsion and grading. Self-discipline, respect, patience, persistence and concentration – vital lifelong learning dispositions - develop as a result and prepare children well for the new school environments they encounter when they move on from Kindergarten.

### **Who and what is Montessori?**

Over 100 years ago the psychiatrist and educator Maria Montessori recognized the uniqueness of every child and children’s importance as architects of a better and more peaceful world. In 1948 she stated that *“humanity can hope for a solution of its problems, the most urgent of which are those of peace and unity, only by turning its attention and energies to the discovery of the child and the development of the great potentialities of the human personality in the course of its construction.”* She was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 1949, 1950, and 1951.

Realizing the fundamental importance of early childhood education, Dr Montessori developed an educational philosophy and method that are entirely consistent with the Principles and Practices of the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia of 2009. Her method recognizes and nurtures young children’s ability to think for themselves, to absorb information of their own choosing and to correct their own mistakes. She designed the prepared environment to provide children with what they need to develop their full potential.

Montessori philosophy and the reality-based prepared environment are as relevant as ever, and possibly more so, in this digital, virtual age. The Montessori teacher’s role is to observe and guide learning in a rich, ordered, attractive environment with a strong emphasis on nature and links to the outside world. Each child’s own way of acquiring knowledge is fostered to help them realize their social, physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual potential through self-directed, active learning. Montessori philosophy recognizes language and social development as being crucial to growth in all other areas and children’s activity is viewed as constructive, formative and central to this process.