



EDUCATION REVIEW OFFICE  
TE TARI AROTAKE MATAURANGA

Education REVIEW REPORT:  
MANA MONTESSORI PRESCHOOL INC

NOVEMBER 2008

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This report has been prepared in accordance with standard procedures approved by the Chief Review Officer.

## 1. About the Centre

Location	Whitby, Porirua	
Ministry of Education profile number	60277	
Type	Sessional Education and Care Service	
Number licensed for	50 children over 2 years	
Roll number	61	
Gender composition	Girls	40
	Boys	21
Ethnic composition	New Zealand European/Pākehā	46
	Māori	5

	Chinese	2
	Other European	2
	Turkish	2
	Indian	1
	Iraqi	1
	Malaysian	1
	Sri Lankan	1
Review team on site	September 2008	
Date of this report	13 November 2008	
Previous ERO reports	Education Review	July 2005
	Accountability Review	January 2000
	Assurance Audit	May 1994
	Assurance Audit	November 1992

## 2. The Education Review Office (ERO) Evaluation

Mana Montessori Preschool is a purpose-built centre situated adjacent to Endeavour Park, in the Porirua suburb of Whitby. Preschool children aged between two and a half and six years attend half-day or extended sessions in either of the two mixed-age classes. These areas have similar organisation and resources for learning and each has access to an outdoor space for free play. A committee of elected parents manages the preschool on behalf of a parent cooperative.

This review evaluates the quality of education and care provided by Mana Montessori Preschool. ERO comments on the programme, learning environment and interactions between adults and children. In addition, the effectiveness of self-review practices is evaluated. Areas of compliance with requirements, particularly about matters affecting the safety of children, were also investigated. Some issues were raised with the centre about administration of medication, providing parents with supervision ratios for excursions and ensuring complaints policies are displayed appropriately. Since the onsite stage of the review these concerns have been addressed.

The 2005 ERO review found well-established routines and well-planned learning programmes operated and teachers reinforced and encouraged development of children's confidence and independence. Areas for improvement focused mainly on teachers' planning, monitoring and assessment practices and identified the need for strengthened feedback from staff appraisal. The review identified the need for the committee to make better links between strategic objectives and the management plan. In 2008, the appraisal process does not yet provide staff with strong professional goals and good quality feedback on their progress. The committee is finalising details to engage a consultant to assist them in this development.

Management and teachers work collegially. Good staff retention is a feature of the preschool. Externally facilitated professional development guides staff in planning, teaching and

assessment. The committee, in consultation with staff and the parents, has developed a draft management plan and associated vision. A review of the management structure, including roles and responsibilities, is ongoing. The draft management plan, while comprehensive, is still being developed to provide clear direction for staff and the committee in implementing and improving outcomes for children.

Parents are kept up to date with events and activities through the preschool's useful handbook, regular newsletters, noticeboards, website and information evenings held each term. Profiles of children's work are always accessible and parents are encouraged to read and contribute to these to provide staff with each family's perspective on their child's interests, needs and strengths. Parent satisfaction surveys are undertaken. Social events are organised and parents are keen to participate and support teachers with trips and excursions. A supportive fundraising sub-committee operates. The addition of new shade sails, decking and safety matting enhance the facilities.

Classrooms are calm and settled. Children are eager to explore the environment and its resources. Equipment is well organised and accessible. Teachers present and model learning activities and encourage and foster growing independence in the classrooms. Routines and expectations for learning and behaviour are clearly stated by teachers. They wish individuals to grow as competent and confident learners. Parents and teachers appreciate the respectful relationships that children develop and the support they show toward peers.

#### Future Action

ERO is confident that the service is being managed in the interests of the children. Therefore ERO is likely to review the service again as part of the regular review cycle.

## **3. Review Priorities**

#### The Focus of the Review

Before the review, the management of Mana Montessori Preschool Inc was invited to consider its priorities for review using guidelines and resources provided by ERO. ERO also used documentation provided by the centre to contribute to the scope of the review.

The detailed priorities for review were then determined following a discussion between the ERO review team and the management and staff. This discussion focused on existing information held by the centre (including self-review information) and the extent to which potential issues for review contributed to positive outcomes for children at Mana Montessori Preschool Inc.

All ERO education reviews in early childhood focus on the quality of education. For ERO this includes the quality of:

- the programme provided for children;

- the learning environment; and
- the interactions between children and adults.

ERO's findings in these areas are set out below.

The Quality of Education

## **Background**

Mana Montessori Preschool is a community owned, parent-run preschool. The members of the management committee are elected annually and attend regular meetings, run school social and fundraising events and strongly support the teaching staff. In 2008, a new chairperson/licensee has been appointed. As at the time of the 2005 ERO review, the committee undertakes parent surveys twice a year.

All teaching staff have been with the preschool for over three and a half years. Four of the six teachers are both fully early childhood and Montessori trained and qualified. The ratio of teachers to children is 1:8.3, which is above Ministry of Education requirements.

School-wide professional development, in conjunction with an external facilitator, featured assessment as a key theme for 2006 workshops and for in-depth support in 2008. Externally facilitated workshops and seminars are also attended on a range of themes including one by an internationally renowned speaker, in celebration of a century of Montessori schooling.

Teachers use Ministry of Education publications, such as *Kei Tua o te Pae/ Assessment for Learning: Early Childhood Exemplars*, and ERO's national reports and early childhood monograph series as a basis for reflecting on practice. They visit other Montessori schools and seek feedback from experts in the field. Regular staff meetings enable teachers of the two classes to reflect together on plans and expectations.

## **Areas of good performance**

- The classroom environments are well prepared and organised to provide children with easy access to the Montessori equipment. Teachers promote a calm, respectful atmosphere and model and encourage respect for each other and the environment. Allowing individuals to work in an uninterrupted manner is a key feature of classroom practice.
- Teachers provide a well-planned, individual and sequential learning programme. Literacy and numeracy skills and concepts are embedded. Teachers present and model learning activities and encourage and foster growing independence in the classrooms. Ongoing assessments identify when children are ready to be presented with the next piece of apparatus.
- Children's progress and achievement in the Montessori programme are clearly visible in the profiles. Information shows individual development and achievements using the equipment

and teachers identify how this supports future learning. Some of the documentation is beginning to highlight learning characteristics such as perseverance. Teachers have received some external training to improve their assessment practices, to better support children's learning.

- Routines and expectations for learning and behaviour are clearly stated by teachers and well understood by children. They provide opportunities to support development of self-help and social skills. Parents and teachers appreciate the respectful relationships that develop and the support shown toward peers. Teachers wish children to develop as competent and confident learners.
- Teachers use good interactions when working one to one with children. During these times ERO observed teachers consistently:
  - using open-ended questions to promote deeper thought and problem solving;
  - including descriptive language and extending vocabulary;
  - building on what children know and making links to home experiences through conversation; and
  - modelling the appropriate use of equipment.
- Teachers and the committee use a range of communication strategies to keep parents informed. Regular newsletters provide an overview of the programme, excursions and future plans. Teachers encourage parents to contribute to their child's assessment information in profiles.

### **Areas for improvement**

- Teachers have not yet meaningfully integrated Montessori principles with those of *Te Whāriki* the early childhood curriculum. While the principles, strands and goals of the curriculum are evident in documentation, these are not sufficiently interwoven into the daily programme and teaching practices. In addition, the programme could be improved to support children to develop knowledge and understanding of the bicultural heritage of Aotearoa/New Zealand.
- Opportunities for children to develop creative and imaginative skills could be enhanced. Outdoor play equipment is adequate, but teachers do not sufficiently interact with children to promote greater interest and engagement in these experiences. The two classrooms differ in their routines for accessing the outside space, the size of the areas and the types and variety of activities available. In particular, equipment that may enhance gross motor skills and active exploration is lacking in one area.
- The emergent curriculum is not a strong feature. The programme, resources and interactions are not responsive enough to effectively support developing interests or extend learning.

While communication was a school-wide topic during the review, it was not clearly evident as a feature in the children's activities and learning. When teachers bring the class together to revisit the current topic before the end of the session, conversations are teacher directed and adults are not as responsive to children's ideas and suggestions as they could be.

- Teachers are not effectively noticing, recognising and responding to children as a group. While working with them one to one they miss opportunities to give others feedback on their learning, extend conversations and encourage them to explore. ERO observed several children wandering for extended periods not engaged in purposeful activities.
- The existing appraisal process for staff is not robust and is heavily based on teachers self reflection about their own performance. Staff are not provided with strong professional goals nor given high quality feedback on their teaching practice to support continuing progress. This area for improvement was indicated in the 2005 ERO report. The committee is finalising details to engage a consultant to assist them in this development.
- Teachers do not sufficiently evaluate learning programmes to identify how they can improve teaching and learning practices. There is broad reflection on the success of trips, activities, resources and topics. However, pertinent information is not available to guide ongoing improvement. Decision making, direction setting and forward planning are not evidence based, well considered or timely.

## **4. Areas of National Interest**

### Overview

ERO provides information about the education system as a whole through its national reports. This information will be used as the basis for long term and systemic educational improvement.

### Progress with Self Review

As part of this review ERO evaluated the extent to which self review is understood and used in this service to improve practice and outcomes for children.

Self review in Mana Montessori Preschool Inc is focused on implementing change and improvement at the centre.

### **Areas of good performance**

- Teachers reflect upon the experiences that the centre provides for children using informal discussion, staff meetings and planned professional development. They also seek feedback from parents and outside agencies. As a result, staff make changes and enhance aspects of the organisational and administrative framework, the environment and programme.

### **Areas for improvement**

- Since the 2005 ERO review, a planned approach to curriculum self review has not been implemented. While teachers have a vision for ongoing improvement, they do not have a long-term view of what this looks like or use a process that might enable them to achieve their objectives. The lack of a planned approach to evidence-based self review may impact upon decision making about resourcing, equipment, environment, property, appraisal and related professional development.
- While the committee has formulated a comprehensive draft management plan with goals and objectives, a clear focus on outcomes for children is not apparent. Workplace satisfaction for teachers, business sustainability and community participation are the overriding messages. There is a need to review this document to ensure that the committee's aim of providing quality education is clarified and planned for strategically.

## 5. Management Assurance on Compliance Areas

### Overview

Before the review, the licensee and staff of Mana Montessori Preschool Inc completed an ERO *Centre Management Assurance Statement* and *Self-Audit Checklist*. In these documents they have attested that they had taken all reasonable steps to meet their legislative obligations related to:

- administration;
- health, safety and welfare;
- personnel management;
- financial and property management.

During the review, ERO checked the following items because they have a potentially high impact on outcomes for children:

- emotional safety (including behaviour management, prevention of bullying and abuse);
- physical safety (including behaviour management, sleeping and supervision practices; accidents and medication; hygiene and routines; travel and excursion policies and procedures);
- staff qualifications and organisation; and
- evacuation procedures and practices for fire and earthquake.

During the course of the review ERO identified areas of non-compliance. In order to address these the centre management must ensure that:

5.1 Parents sign their consent for their child's attendance at trips and outings against a stated ratio for adult-to-child supervision to indicate their written approval of the ratio to be used.

[R27 (3c) Education (ECC) Regulations 1998]

5.2 The non-compliance with complaints policy is displayed, to assist parents in following the correct procedures should an issue arise.

[R9 (c) Education (Early Childhood Centres) Regulations, 1998]

5.3 The records of medication administered to children are kept in a detailed manner that consistently documents sufficient information.

[R35 (g) Education (Early Childhood Centres) Regulations, 1998]

5.4 Personnel policies are implemented that promote quality practices, including appraisal for both management and educators.

[12 Revised Statement of Desirable Objectives and Practices, 1996]

In order to improve current practice the management should review and develop procedures for record keeping in the following areas:

- children with severe allergies and associated action plans;
- police vetting; and
- identifying, isolating, minimising and eliminating hazards in the environment.

It should also review and reconsider, in consultation with parents, whether it is necessary to lock the classroom doors during session times.

## **6. Recommendations**

ERO and the centre management agreed that:

6.1 Self review will be undertaken at teaching, management and governance levels to better inform strategic planning with a clearer focus on improving outcomes for children.

6.2 Teachers will regularly evaluate the quality and effectiveness of the programme, with particular emphasis on how *Te Whāriki* is meaningfully integrated into practice.

6.3 The principal, assisted by the parent committee, will introduce sound appraisal and performance management structures and processes with a focus on enhancing teaching and learning.

## 7. Future Action

ERO is confident that the service is being managed in the interests of the children. Therefore ERO is likely to review the service again as part of the regular review cycle.

Lennane Kent

Area Manager

for Chief Review Officer

13 November 2008

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13 November 2008

To the Parents and Community of Mana Montessori Preschool Inc

These are the findings of the Education Review Office's latest report on **Mana Montessori Preschool Inc.**

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review identified the need for the committee to make better links between strategic objectives and the management plan. In 2008, the appraisal process does not yet provide staff with strong professional goals and good quality feedback on their progress. The committee is finalising details to engage a consultant to assist them in this development.

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#### Future Action

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When ERO has reviewed an early childhood centre we encourage management to inform their community of any follow up action they plan to take. You should talk to the management or licensee if you have any questions about this evaluation, the full ERO report or their future intentions.

If you would like a copy of the full report, please contact the centre or see the ERO website, <http://www.ero.govt.nz>.

Lennane Kent

Area Manager

for Chief Review Officer

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## GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT REVIEWS

### About ERO

ERO is an independent, external evaluation agency that undertakes reviews of schools and early childhood services throughout New Zealand.

### About ERO Reviews

ERO follows a set of standard procedures to conduct reviews. The purpose of each review is to:

- improve quality of education for children in early childhood centres; and
- provide information to parents, communities and the Government.

Reviews are intended to focus on outcomes for children and build on each centre's self review.

### Review Focus

ERO's framework for reviewing and reporting is based on four review strands.

- **Quality of Education** – including the quality of the programme provided for children, the quality of the learning environment and the quality of the interactions between staff and children and how these impact on outcomes for children.
- **Additional Review Priorities** – other aspects of the operation of a centre, may be included in the review. ERO will not include this strand in all reviews.
- **Areas of National Interest** – information about how Government policies are working in early childhood centres.
- **Compliance with Legal Requirements** – assurance that this centre has taken all reasonable steps to meet legal requirements.

### Review Coverage

ERO reviews do not cover every aspect of centre performance and each ERO report may cover different issues. The aim is to provide information on aspects that are central to positive outcomes for children and useful to this centre.

### Review Recommendations

Most ERO reports include recommendations for improvement. A recommendation on a particular issue does not necessarily mean that a centre is performing poorly in relation to that issue. There is no direct link between the number of recommendations in this report and the overall performance of this centre.