

PARENT INFORMATION HANDBOOK

Zenith Montessori (Pty) Ltd

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1. About Zenith Montessori

Introduction

Zenith Montessori is a private institution providing 100% Montessori orientated education for children aged 18 months-6 years of age. Classes are age integrated (18months-3 year olds & 3-6 year olds) within a safe, fun and nurturing environment where they will be encouraged individually to reach their highest potential through multicultural & stimulating surroundings.

This handbook will help inform and assist all parents in becoming familiar and having a better understanding of the Montessori method & the general requirements of the school itself.

This is by no means a contract and is for informational purposes only, but please pay special attention to our policies and procedures enclosed herein. Content within this booklet is subject to be changed/adjusted as deemed necessary by the school from time to time. We will ensure to keep parents informed/updated of any changes/adjustments made to this handbook.

We believe that each family contributes directly to the success of our school & we value your input. We take pride in having you as a member of our Zenith family.

Our mission

"Aspiring to your highest potential"

To nurture the love of learning & compassion in every child. The challenging & nurturing environment allows each child to develop self-discipline, a positive self-image, a sense of responsibility and a life-long love of work. We create a habit of concentration & routine, allowing the child's inner need for order & curiosity to be directly satisfied.

The meaning behind the word "Zenith"

Zenith is the highest point of the atmosphere which directly corresponds with our school's mission. Each child will be given the opportunity to reach their highest potential through their planes of development and sensitive periods.

2. What is Montessori?

The Montessori approach

Maria Montessori viewed education as an aid to life. She spent multiple years observing children of all ages allowing her to create a **prepared environment**. The Montessori method is based on the child's natural progression through the planes of development, encouraging the child to engage in spontaneous & meaningful work.

"*Play is the work of a child*" – Dr. Maria Montessori

Objectives in a classroom

- To discover the joy of learning;
- Experiencing, exploring and experimenting with the world around them;
- To create & express themselves;
- Becoming aware of special strengths, abilities & uniqueness;
- Be respectful, learn to care for equipment & share with others;
- Be independent thinkers and self-reliant;

Planes of development

Each plane is a span of 6 years with physical & psychological components. Successful work in one plane is essential for success within the developmental planes that follow.

1. The first plane of development: early childhood (0-6 years).

During this plane, the child has an *absorbent mind* and this entire period is characterized by the same type of mind but there are definite changes that are forming subdivisions.

Sub-division A: 0-3 years – The unconscious mind (formative)

- The child has a mind constantly absorbing impressions from their environment. They do this without knowing or willing it;
- Intelligence is being formed;
- It is a period of creation and to achieve this creation, the new born must have a different type of mind than that of an adult;
- Their absorbent minds work rapidly, taking in everything without effort and will;
- The process from the unconscious to the conscious is accomplished through movement. He/she develops themselves by means of his/her hands, using them as instruments of human intelligence;

Sub-division B: 3-6 years – The conscious mind (spontaneous)

- This is a period of construction but a conscious one, the child now takes in their environment consciously by using his/her hands/senses;
- He/she can now think, will & remember;
- The child at this stage does not need direct help as this would impede their growth. The prepared environment allows the child to choose his/her own actions and make his/her own social contacts. Freedom within the boundaries of this prepared environment, teaches the child to live his/her own independent life, learning spontaneously without fatigue;

The child's needs, namely: Physical, Emotional, Intellectual & Spiritual needs are all met within a Montessori environment.

2. The second plane of development: (6-12 years) – A period of uniform growth, the intermediate period.

3. The third plane of development: (12-18 years) – A period of transformation, puberty, adolescents and youth.

4. The fourth plane of development: (18+ years) - Adulthood

The prepared environment

- Classes in Montessori schools consist of mixed age groups and are not graded;
- A Montessori environment allows for a 3-hour work cycle where the child can work undisturbed with their self-chosen activity;
- Rewards and punishment are not used in a Montessori environment;
- A prepared environment is a crucial component of the Montessori philosophy;
- Montessori schools develop routine guidelines which conform to the vision of the child's development and the educational goals set out by Maria Montessori;

Traditional VS Montessori

Traditional	Montessori
Curriculum centered environment	Child centered learning environment
Children grouped chronologically	Multi-age grouping for community atmosphere
Traditional answers are provided by teacher	Children correct themselves through the control of error
Children are dependent on the teacher	Children work independently
Competitive	Non-Competitive
Rewards & Punishment	Self-Motivation
Teacher sets the curriculum	Child sets their own pace
Time periods allocated	No time restrictions
Teacher provides stimuli to learning	Child provides own stimulus to learning
Teacher instructs child	Child has the liberty to discover on their own

Curriculum

- **Practical Life** - provides real life experiences and enhances cognitive order through purposeful activity developing motor skills, coordination, independence, concentration & responsibility;
- **Sensorial** – allows the child to classify and describe sensory impressions such as length, width, temperature, colour, weight etc.
- **Mathematics** – enables the child to internalize concepts of numbers, symbols, operations, sequences & memorization of the basics;
- **Language** – basic skills in writing and reading are developed through various presentations allowing the child to link sounds & letter symbols. Developing language, written expression, reading & the study of grammar;
- **Culture** – exposes the child to basics in geography, art, music, history, science, zoology, botany & various religious beliefs;

3. General Information

Admission & Enrolment procedure

Parents of children interested in enrolment will need to schedule an appointment with the front office for a viewing of the school. This will also give them an opportunity to see the layout of our school, meet the Principal/Teachers and have any questions answered.

Children do **not** have to be potty trained before enrolling at Zenith Montessori. Children that are not yet potty trained will be assisted in this regard in coordination with their parents. Enrolment for all children is subject to space availability; alternatively your child will be placed on our waiting list until such space becomes available. This is all done on a first come first serve basis.

After a successful meeting/interview, a placement fee of R2500.00 is payable on acceptance. The application for enrolment will not be accepted unless all information required is provided, initialled and signed in full. This placement fee is non-refundable except in the event that the reservation is cancelled due to the death or hospitalisation of the person (student) for whose benefit the reservation has been made. The full amount will then be refunded.

You are required to read through and sign the documentation provided and inform the school of your desired starting/enrolment date. Please make sure to familiarise yourself with our rules and policies, collection times and penalties, extra murals, food policies, illness policy, safety policy, attendance policy, drop and go policy and any other policies which may be implemented by the school from time to time. Kindly note that we have strict protocols and procedures that need to be adhered to at all times regarding Covid-19.

Zenith Montessori does not discriminate based on race, gender, religion or sexual orientation during the admission process. Our school does not support any one domination or religion.

"*We accept all religions and favour none*" – Maria Montessori.

Withdrawal procedure

One month's written notice must be given prior to withdrawal. Failure to do so will result in one month's school fees being charged. **PLEASE NOTE THAT NO NOTICE WILL BE ACCEPTED FOR THE MONTHS OF NOVEMBER & DECEMBER. (CHILDREN ARE EXPECTED TO COMPLETE THE YEAR WITH US & PARENTS ARE LIABLE FOR THE FEES THEREOF.)**

IMPORTANT: Parents may be asked to withdraw their child if the school cannot meet the needs of the child, if the behaviour of the child continuously disrupts the class such that the needs of the other students cannot be adequately met or if your child has not been able to settle. A trial period of 3 months in which to work through the situation will be allowed. At the end of this trial period, all parties will then come to a mutual decision for the best interest of the child.

Extra Mural Activities

The extra mural activities that are provided at Zenith Montessori are offered at an additional fee which must be paid directly to the extra mural co-ordinator. A newsletter will be sent out to inform parents of all the information relating to the activities available. Any compulsory extra murals will be added to your school fees account at month end. Further information regarding these activities can be obtained from the front office.

Should you wish to communicate payment or withdrawal, please contact the company directly as Zenith Montessori takes no responsibility in this regard.

Daily schedule & operating hours

Time	Activity
07:00 – 08:30	Drop-off begins
08:15	Preparing class for start of day
08:30	Drop-off ends and Circle time starts **(PLEASE NOTE THAT THE FRONT GATE WILL BE CLOSED AT 08:30 PROMPLY)**
09:40 – 11:00	Snack time begins, each class on their own schedule in 30-40 minute increments (All 5 classes)
10:00 – 12:00	Free play begins, each class on their own time schedule in 20-30 minute increments (All 5 classes)
09:00 – 12:00	Any time outside of snack time and free play will be the classes work cycles
12:00	Story/Music time begins for all 5 classes
12:30	Home time for all half day children
12:30	Lunch time begins for all aftercare children and extra murals commense
13:00 – 15:00	Sleep time for all aftercare children that sleep at school
14:00	Home time for all lunch time children
15:30	Afternoon snack for all aftercare children at school
15:45	Free play/aftercare continues
17:30	End of day – school closes.

Please note that the above table is a guideline/example only of what each day is like as all classes have their own specific daily schedules

- We offer a casual aftercare service at R150 per day until 17:30, and parents are required to let us know when they will be making use of this, it will then be added to your school fees account at month end.
- Friday morning circle time is "show and tell". Only on this day is it appropriate for your child to bring a personal toy from home to show their class. Kindly note that this is for the 3-6 year old classes only and does not include the toddlers.
- Extra mural activities will be scheduled in accordingly from 12:30 onwards and this will be communicated with our parents. Any additional information can be obtained from our front office should you require.

Meals and snacks

Please note that the school does not provide meals/snacks for our children and this is the responsibility of the parents. (The school does however provide a snack in aftercare.)

Kindly familiarise yourself with our Allergies list for all foods that are not allowed at school for the safety of all our children. This list also contains examples of alternatives to assist in this regard.

- Each child needs to bring a fruit daily as well as a healthy snack i.e. raw vegetables, provitas, biltong, rice cakes, cheese etc. (their fruit is normally shared amongst the class during snack time but due to Covid-19, this is not currently viable);
- No foods containing excessive sugar is allowed i.e. chocolate, chips, sweets, fizzy drinks;
- No hot food is provided at the school. Children staying for lunch need to bring a healthy packed meal, please ensure that your children have enough food. Parents need to make sure that their children's lunch boxes, bottles and cutlery are clearly marked with their names to avoid any losses;
- Parents may send to school a water bottle and a juice box if they wish to;
- Should your child suffer from any food allergies, please ensure to state this clearly on their enrolment form;
- A sandwich and fruit will be provided at 15:30 for children staying for aftercare;
- Drinking water is available to the children throughout the day;

Additional

- Parents are to bring 2 boxes of tissues per child at the beginning of each school term; (8x boxes annually)
- Baby wipes, nappies and creams are to be provided by parents if applicable;
- Full day students require a blanket and a pillow for sleep time should this be applicable. Please ensure that these items are clearly marked with your child's name. These items will be sent home every 2nd Friday to be washed and will need to be returned to school the following Monday;

- Children are required to have an extra set of clothing packed in their bags each day, if your child is potty training, please send extra underwear and bottoms;
- Please ensure that your children have their own sunscreen in their bags at all times.

The Rainbow Room

The Rainbow Room consists of a multi level indoor play gym which is used for free play and aftercare. It will also be available on every Saturday in two separate timeslots for kiddie's parties at an additional cost. The gym caters for +/-20 children aged 1 – 7 & can only be occupied for a period of three hours per party subject to availability. Timeslots are 10:00am – 13:00pm & 14:00pm – 17:00pm. For more information kindly contact the front office.

4. Policies and Procedures

Staffing requirements

All teaching staff at Zenith Montessori are trained in the Montessori method & all of our staff members are First Aid certified. It is required by Zenith Montessori to facilitate staff and child relations that are nurturing, responsive, supportive & respectful, encouraging creativity & independence in each student. We strive to employee teachers that possess the above qualities and whom have a passion for their industry. Weekly inhouse training is also done by all teaching staff to maintain consistency and to continue to enhance their knowledge and capabilities in upholding the high standards set by Zenith Montessori.

Drop & Go policy

To avoid congestion in the mornings and as a requirement to operate an ECD facility, staff members will be present to assist children on arrival where they will be escorted to their classroom. This is strictly a DROP & GO area and parents are asked to please refrain from parking for longer than necessary. This will also help to eliminate emotional attachment when saying goodbye to your child as well as maintaining the Covid-19 protocols & procedures of the school.

Although we generally allow parents to walk to their child/ren's classroom to collect them at pick up time, due to the current pandemic that we are experiencing, teaching staff will be bringing each child/ren to their parents/guardians upon collection until further notice. We Thank you for your patience & co-operation in this regard.

Safety Policy

The safety of all our children at Zenith Montessori is our main priority. If your child is to be collected by someone other than their parents/legal guardian/authorized persons as stated on the enrolment form, the child **WILL NOT** be allowed to leave the school premises without prior consent. Please make sure to communicate this with our team/front office beforehand.

We aim to ensure that the physical security of the environment is suitable, should it not be satisfactory, this is the duty of the staff and parents alike to inform the principal/office/staff as soon as possible so that it can be addressed promptly. Routine safety & security checks of the environment will be conducted regularly. Zenith Montessori makes use of armed response services both during and after school hours.

Our school premises are monitored by 24-hour CCTV cameras, both internally & externally. The purpose of this system is to enhance security & safety of the building, staff, pupils and visitors at all times. We also have an integrated biometric system to allow access to authorized persons only. We strive to maintain an environment of respect for others, but should an incident occur, footage will be reviewed by the Principal/Vice Principal and the necessary steps will be taken.

Attendance Policy

The school asks that all children are dropped off by no later than 8:25am as our school day starts promptly at 8:30am. The front gate will be locked at 8:30am sharp and re-opened at 9am for late comers. It is very disrupting to the classroom environment when a child enters late. If your child will be arriving late or leaving early, please notify us beforehand. Additionally, if your child will be absent please make sure to contact the school prior to 8:30am. Regular attendance is strongly encouraged to satisfy the child's natural inner need for order & routine.

Illness Policy

The health of the children at our school is of utmost importance to us, but out of consideration for the other children as well as our staff, please do not send your child/ren to school if they are sick. If your child will be absent, please notify the front office before 8:30am.

Should your child fall ill during the school day, we will immediately notify you to collect your child from school via whatsapp, telephonically or email.

The school is to be informed should your child encounter any contagious illnesses i.e. conjunctivitis, chicken pox, head lice, measles etc, so that we may inform other parents to monitor their child/ren and to avoid an outbreak if possible. Please keep your child/ren out of school until he/she is no longer contagious.

Parents are to check their child/ren's heads often for lice and knits. You will be contacted immediately should we find knits or lice during our weekly body checks.

Birthdays

Birthdays are such a special time in a child's life and in a Montessori environment we have what is known as a "celebration of life". Parents are asked to provide photographs of their children from birth to their current age. The birthday child will have the opportunity to share with their class special events that have

occurred throughout their lives. We would like to make this more of a *child centred* day instead of a *food centred* day so we ask that parents please abide by our food and snack policy as much as possible. Snacks such as popcorn, muffins/cupcakes, fruits & veggies etc. will be allowed on this day **only** and will be sent home with each child.

Please note that the school **will not** hand out any birthday invitations to avoid any of our children feeling excluded.

Suggestions

Parents are more than welcome to contact our front office and to provide us with any feedback, comments, suggestions, ideas etc.

Please do not hesitate to voice your opinion as any improvements on our side will always be welcomed.

Zenith Montessori is going green as much as possible and we will communicate electronically unless indicated otherwise by you. Please ensure that you check your email/spam regularly to stay up to date with us. Our Whatsapp group "Zenith Notice board" will also provide any updates and/or information regularly.

Progress Reports and Parent meetings

The Montessori method encourages each child to compete against themselves and not others, for this reason, we do not grade the children in a traditional way. The Directress will keep a daily report of your child which includes academic, emotional, social and physical development. Reports will be sent home twice a year (after each semester being June & December).

At the end of the 1st & 3rd term, a parent meeting will be arranged to discuss your child's progress; however parents can request a meeting with the Directress or Principal at any time throughout the year.

We welcome your family to Zenith Montessori. We look forward to having you be a part of our school, and we hope that this Parent Information Handbook has answered any questions that you may have. Please feel free to contact the office at any time with questions or comments.

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