



Michael Park Kindergarten
Cherishing Childhood

Philosophy Statement

October 2023

What is special about our place
and what we stand for



Michael Park Kindergarten is a licensed early childhood centre in Ellerslie, offering Steiner/Waldorf early childhood education. It rose out of a community vision and opened on its present site in 1979.

At its heart is a spiritual and human-centred world view, which recognises every child as a unique individual of body, soul and spirit. This is reflected in a holistic curriculum based on Rudolf Steiner's educational ideas, relevant for Aotearoa and guided by Te Whāriki, the early childhood curriculum for Aotearoa (New Zealand).

Aroha: loving interest in and acceptance of tamariki (children) and whānau (family) is at the centre of our practice. We honour the need for connectedness and belonging, offering a kindergarten where **childhood is protected and celebrated**. We strive to create a harmonious and warm environment where tamariki flourish. In our everyday life we express our love for tamariki and whānau through joy, humour and happiness.



We recognise and value the interconnectedness of:

Te Taha Tinana - the active physical and physiological aspects, which in Steiner education recognises the involvement of life forces (etheric) in vitality and learning.

Te Taha Whakamānawa – heart and emotions, which in Steiner education is enriched through the arts and creativity.

Te Taha Hinengaro - the mind or consciousness, which in Steiner education is stimulated by open-ended opportunity to bring ideas to life in play.

Te Taha Wairua - the spiritual core, which in Steiner education is at the centre of identity and self-organisation, influenced by human relationships.

Michael Park Kindergarten is committed to an equitable learning environment, free of discrimination, that acknowledges the role of Te Tiriti O Waitangi. We value integrity, inclusivity and respect.

The spontaneous, **self-directed play of tamariki** is seen as a childhood right and valued as an essential activity. We believe play supports both discovery and expression. Playing alongside and with others allows tamariki to build foundations of resilience, perseverance and self-management, as well as the joy of cooperation, contribution and belonging. Learning together and from each other, tamariki experience a true childhood when they are active participants.

The importance of nourishment, movement, warmth, rhythm, imitation and relationships are **pillars of our practice**. These protect tamariki mauri (life energy), provide security, continuity, a sense of the wellbeing and wholeness of life. We strongly discourage learning from screens at kindergarten and at home.



At Michael Park we believe in learning with **hands, heart and head**. Practical mahi (work) such as cooking, gardening, craft and caring for the environment is woven into daily life. Storytelling, waiata (singing), drawing and painting, rhythmic games, modelling and craft foster the healthy development of creativity and communication. We celebrate birthdays, seasonal, cultural and Christian festivals which are underpinned by impulses of gratitude, reverence and wonder.





A wooden shelving unit filled with various toys and objects. The shelves are made of light-colored wood. On the top shelf, there is a large, dark, textured object (possibly a log or a piece of bark), a small white and black patterned bottle, and some small wooden toys. The middle shelf features a wooden spinning wheel, a small wooden house, a rainbow toy, a green dinosaur, and a small woven basket. The bottom shelf has a wooden rocking chair, a basket of pinecones, a box of alphabet blocks, and a small wooden toy. The background is a plain wall.

Tamariki are encouraged to be physically skilled, active and healthy, with plenty of time for adventure and discovery in the garden, exploring life cycles, the elements and seasons.



We promote **positive social interactions**, offer limits and structure, while providing a place where creativity and inquisitiveness are given space and time, and where tamariki can meet challenges safely.



Michael Park Kindergarten endeavours to create conscious, collaborative communities around tamariki, as such, we are committed to partnering with parents and whānau. Whanaungatanga, a feeling of belonging through shared experience and working together, is a valued part of creating community. Whānau are encouraged and expected to contribute to community and tamariki learning, throughout their journey at Michael Park.



At Michael Park Kindergarten we acknowledge and respect the stages of childhood and provide gentle transitions as tamariki grow through their years with us. Each room has mixed-age groups.

The kindergarten and school aim to maintain a coherent and distinct curriculum. The stepping-stones between kindergarten and Class 1 are aligned. Tamariki transition to school together at the beginning of each year, at 6 + years of age.



Priorities for Learning

Tamariki develop holistically, becoming active, healthy, physically skilled and increasingly able to manage themselves.

Tamariki grow into socially and emotionally secure individuals.

Tamariki develop a robust sense of self, valuing their languages, cultures and unique identities.

Tamariki have plenty of opportunity to play with depth and purpose, able to pursue their own ideas.

Tamariki experience successful transitions and are ready to meet the challenges of school.