



Parent information

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“The first five years have so much to do with how the next 80 turn out.”

– Bill Gates

Welcome

Stepping Stones Preschool is a small, quality early learning centre in Whangarei which specialises in providing outstanding education and care services for children from two to five years of age. Due in part to our low numbers (we are licensed for a maximum of 26 children daily) we have been able to create a friendly and relaxed “home away from home” feeling for our preschool community and visitors alike to enjoy, while providing a quality learning environment for children from our passionate, qualified teaching staff.

Children play a central role in helping to initiate activities and make decisions at Stepping Stones, which allows them to construct their own knowledge through active learning. We also strongly believe that it’s important for children to be able to participate in both the planning and review of their own learning journeys.

We understand that parents and whanau play a critical role in every child’s learning and development. As a result, we see effective communication and the building of sound, trusting relationships with our children’s families to be one of our most important tasks as educators. When relevant, the centre will seek consultation and feedback from our families whenever undertaking internal evaluation to ensure that a robust system is in place. You’ll find that we are always available for a chat, and love the chance to share a cup of tea or coffee with whanau.

We are excited about the increasingly diverse nature of our local community here in Whangarei (and, as a result, of our own preschool community), and of the opportunities for richer learning and differing perspectives that this affords. Finally, we acknowledge Te Tiriti o Waitangi as the founding document of our nation, therefore we see helping children to develop a knowledge and understanding of our bi-cultural heritage as an important part of the work we do.



Our Teachers



Joanne Gregory



Kia ora! My name is Joanne, but everyone calls me Jo or Jojo. I have a Diploma of Teaching and a Bachelor of Education.

I have been in early childhood since 1991. I am passionate about teaching and assisting preschool children to reach their full potential. I am enthusiastic and enjoy working with and alongside your tamariki, building up their abilities, strengths and curiosity. I believe in building strong relationships with teachers, tamariki, and whānau, supporting your aspirations and commitment to your children. I have a desire to discover, learn and play alongside your children as I contribute to their learning, exploring, experimenting, and just having fun.

I am thrilled to be able to contribute to your child's education and look forward to meeting you all. No reira, Tena koutou, Tena koutou, Tena koutou, katoa

Hi! My name is Bevan, and I'm a primary-trained teacher who switched over to ECE (completing my Graduate Diploma in ECE in March 2014).

Born and raised in Whangarei, I now live in Waikaraka with my partner Ann and our three school-aged children (Noelle, Fiona and Tom). As a family, we enjoy exploring Northland's wonderful coastline, hiking up the occasional mountain (some of us more than others), or heading off on holiday adventures to other places in the country. I'm a cricket and golf fanatic in summer, and a long-suffering Northland rugby fan in winter. Art is my other passion... I was a freelance illustrator/cartoonist for many years before getting back into teaching.

I've been teaching at this centre since 2013, and it's fair to say I love my job. Learning to build relationships is such a key thing for children at this level, and it's such a privilege to be involved in their growth.

Bevan Fidler



Kia ora! I'm Hannah and I am so excited about being a part of the fantastic team here at Stepping Stones Preschool. I am the second eldest of 8 tamariki and I love being a part of a large whanau. My happy place is chilling with my whanau outdoors on a warm sunny day, while sharing kai and having a korero or reading and learning something new.

I trained as a primary school teacher and worked in the primary sector for several years, before discovering the magic of working alongside young children. My passion and love for teaching and caring for our youngest members of our community has grown more and more over the years and I am proud to be an early childhood kaiako. I love seeing the wonder, excitement, and pride overflow as the tamariki learn new things. I am so passionate about providing an environment where our tamariki have everything they need to grow, learn, and develop over this crucial time in their lives. I am also very excited to work alongside whanau, as we partner together to help our tamariki reach their full potential.

Hannah Waters



Our Philosophy

At Stepping Stones Preschool, we have developed a philosophy based around a visual metaphor of our own wonderful puriri tree, which dominates the back yard of our centre in Bank Street, Whangarei. We have called this our *Child Development Model* (see page at right).

Just like our puriri tree, this tree has eight main branches, which signify the eight key *dispositions* (or inherent qualities of mind and character) that we wish for our children to strengthen and develop as they progress through their time with us at Stepping Stones Preschool. These dispositions, once established in childhood, form an underlying structure that a child can utilise throughout the rest of their lives as they grow into confident, competent members of society.

Important *learning outcomes* (areas of knowledge, skills and attitudes shown in red on our tree model) are seen as “fruit” which will grow out of these eight dispositions. Without the support and strength provided by the underlying dispositions, too much focus on a particular learning outcome can be detrimental to a young child’s overall development, in the same way that a seedling’s branch laden with heavy fruit will likely break.

So, what within the surrounding environment is important in order that a young tree might flourish? To begin with, it will need warmth and light from the sun (symbolising the *aroha* or love, affection and care that other people can provide in our children’s lives) along with shade and rain from the clouds (interpreted as sufficient rest and a healthy diet or nutrition in our model). We also know that a tree needs carbon dioxide from the air, and in our model *play* is the atmosphere in which our children can grow and flourish. Of course, a young tree also takes up key minerals and trace elements from the soil through its roots. In our model, this rich soil symbolises our *whakapapa* (honouring our connection to the land, and to the roots of our history, heritage and ancestry). “Ko wai au?” (Who am I?) and “No wai au?” (From whom do I come?) These questions are the ground of our existence, the foundations upon which we stand, and without this knowledge we are vulnerable - like a tree without deep roots.

You will also know that a young tree needs stakes in the ground as support to help it grow straight and true. We liken these to three key scaffolds in your child’s early years - their *home*, their *centre* (or place of learning), and their wider *community*. Your child does the growing, but we are all there to guide.

Finally, you will notice that the ground upon which our tree grows has on its surface a woven mat (whāriki), through which our seedling has emerged. This symbolises *Te Whāriki*, the Early Childhood Curriculum of Aotearoa/New Zealand, the key document from which the central vision and content for this philosophy was developed.

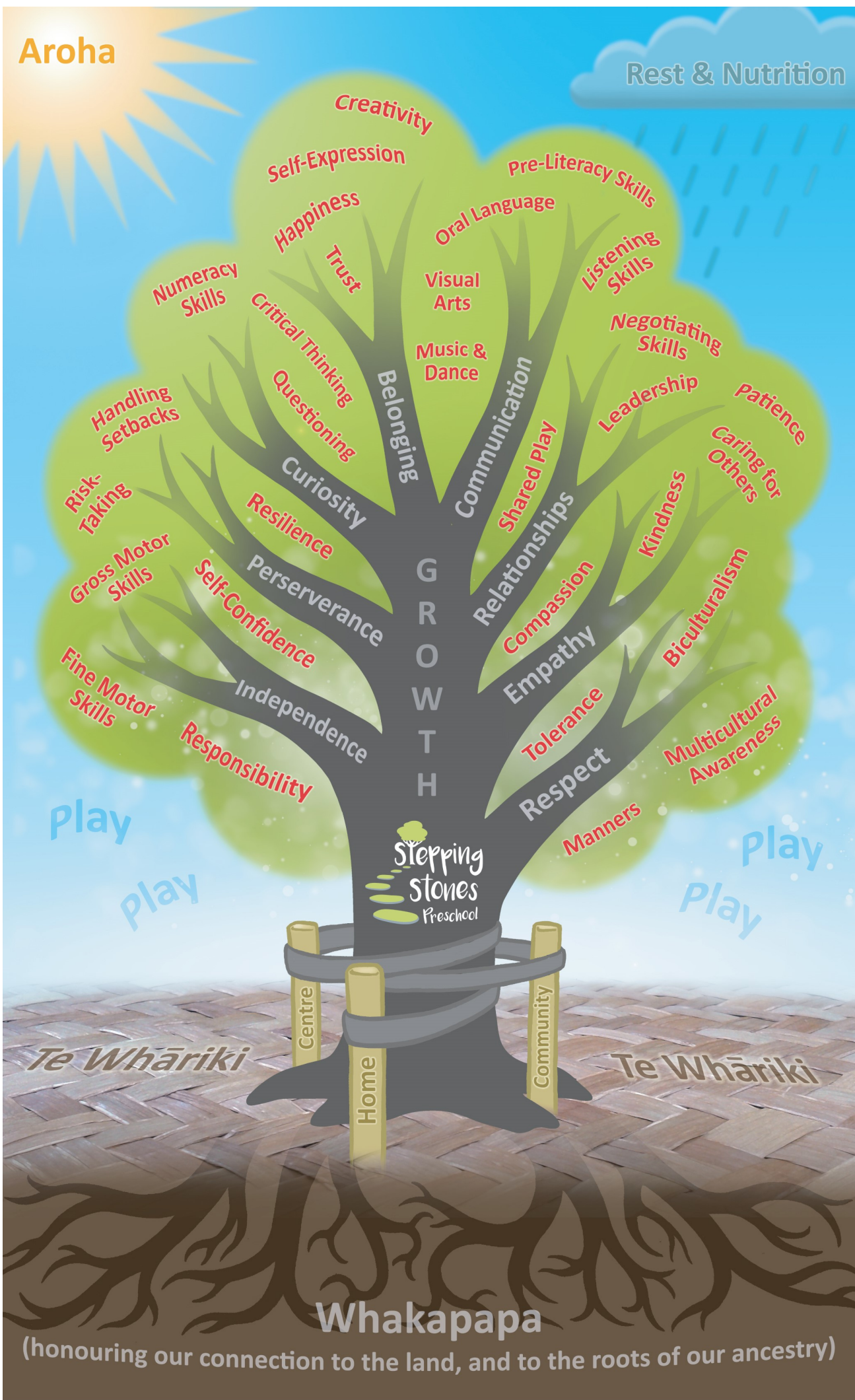
**Na reira, nga mihi aroha ki a koe, ki a koutou katoa,
ki ou koutou tipuna hoki!**

Nga mihi, nga mihi, nga mihi ki a tatou katoa!

Therefore, greetings of love to you, to you all, to your ancestors also! Greetings, greetings, greetings to us all!

Aroha

Rest & Nutrition



Stepping Stones Preschool Child Development Model

A Day in the Life...

7.45am – Children begin arriving

Quiet activities are set up ready for the children to explore and help in settling them ready for the day.

10.00 am -- Tidy up inside/ Whakapai i te Whare

All children are encouraged to help tidy up. The teacher's role model good habits, and how it's important to look after our environment.

10.15 am - Mat time

Mat times provide learning through music, movement, stories as well as practising sitting still ready for school. This mat time is our biggest as the morning is when the children aren't as tired and are able to concentrate and participate better.

10.35am – Morning tea/Kai time

We all sit together at tables, with the teachers role modelling in helping children to learn table manners and healthy eating. Karakia is said before eating.

11.00am – Free play

Activities are set up based on children's interests or set up to inspire them in new ways. During this time, they are also working on social skills, turn taking and communicating with others. This is a great opportunity for teachers to engage in more one-on-one activities, or smaller groups.



12.15pm – Tidy up inside/ Whakapai i te Whare

12.30pm – Mat time

During this mat time, some of our older children may join one of the teachers for a specialised mat time as part of our senior programme (refer General Information).



12.45pm – Lunch / Kai time

1.00pm – Free play

2.30pm – Big tidy up, inside and out/

Whakapai i te Whare

We look to get everyone involved in helping tidy up everything ready for the next day. This is our big tidy up where most things will be returned to their rightful place within the centre.

2.45pm – Mat time

This mat time is a nice small one to finish the day. We tend to do sharing or reading, and parents begin to pick up children.

3.00pm – Afternoon tea / Kai time

3.20pm – Quiet play

Puzzles, books and quiet games with the teachers is a nice way to wind down at the end of a busy day.

5.15pm – Closing time



Settling in

To help your child feel safe and comfortable at Stepping Stones we ask that you visit with your child and spend time getting to know the teachers, children and routine at the centre. This will give your child the opportunity to discover what happens at the centre and what to expect when they start. Our friendly teachers will guide you through this process and will help you decide how many visits your child will need.

During your first visit we ask that you stay with your child, after your first visit depending on the comfort of your child we may send you away for short periods of time so your child is able to adjust to your absence.

Sign in sheets

Please ensure you sign your child in and out each day they attend, as this is a Ministry of Education requirement.



Sickness

If your child is unwell or ill they should stay at home. Please notify the centre as early as possible if you are keeping your child at home. If your child is unwell or if your child becomes ill during the day we will contact you so you can collect your child.

Accidents

Accidents do happen and we are prepared. At all times there is a certified First Aider at the centre and we are equipped with First Aid equipment. All accidents are recorded in our accident book and parents will be advised of all accidents and incidents.

Our partnership with family

members and whanau

Our teachers make it a priority to build responsive, reciprocal, and respectful relationships with the families/whanau of our Stepping Stones children, and teachers will look to gain a thorough understanding of the aspirations these family members have for their children's individual learning. When appropriate, teachers will also include family members and whanau in internal reviews via newsletters, notice boards and individual notice pockets in the front foyer.



Medication

When your child is under medication from a doctor, details will be written in the Medication register and signed by the caregiver. The medication must be handed to a staff member and not be left in the child's bag.

Excursions

At Stepping Stones we feel it is important for children to experience the local community and the wider world around the centre, therefore we regularly take our children out on excursions. When a planned excursion is coming up you will receive a newsletter with all the information you need to know on it and a permission form. We also take spontaneous walks around our local community.

Sun safety

In summer (Term 4 and Term 1) it is our policy to wear a sun hat when outdoors. Please ensure that your child has a named hat in their bag. Sun block will be supplied by Stepping Stones and applied regularly throughout the day. If your child requires specific sunblock you will need to supply this.

Meal times

Children are very active so really look forward to meal times. Please send along a packed morning and afternoon tea and lunch in a named lunch box and a named drink bottle. We provide fresh drinking water throughout the day. We encourage healthy lunches consisting of sandwiches or rolls, fresh or dried fruit, yoghurt, boiled eggs, cheese and crackers etc.

Clothing

Your child is going to be very busy painting, dancing, doing indoor activities, eating and playing outdoors; for these reasons we encourage that children wear suitable clothes for the appropriate weather conditions. Please also include a change of clothes in their bag. We also like to encourage that they wear shoes that they can get on and off on their own. Please make sure that everything is named, including accessories; e.g. shoes, hats, etc

Online portfolios

Each child in the centre has a portfolio which documents their learning achievements and ensures their individual needs are met. The file will contain written observations, photos of the child, notes on child's interests, examples of artwork, interesting discussions held with the child and anecdotal accounts of events in their lives. We use an online portfolio system called Educa which allows our families easier access to their child's learning from anywhere at any time. The biggest advantage is that it helps in connecting the centre and home for each child as parents can comment, write their own stories, and keep better informed on daily activities.



**"Enter into
children's
play and you will
find the place
where their minds,
hearts, and souls
meet."**

— Virginia Axline





NEW FEE STRUCTURE – to come into effect 25th February 2019

Hours of operation

The centre is open 5 days per week (including school holidays), but is not open on public holidays. Our opening hours are from 7.45am to 5.15pm. Attendance must match enrolment details.

We are closed over the Christmas break for 2 to 3 weeks. Parents will be notified of exact dates closer to the end of the year.

“School Day” (6 hours ECE funding) Hours: 8.30am - 2.30pm or 9.00am - 3.00pm

	1 Day	2 Days	3 Days	4 Days	5 Days
3-6 year olds (ECE—20 hours free)	FREE	FREE	FREE	\$30.00	\$75.00
2 year olds	\$30.00	\$60.00	\$90.00	\$120.00	\$150.00

\$7.50 per hour after 6 hours free.

Full Day Attendance Hours: 7.45am - 5.15pm (Late fee applies)

	1 Day	2 Days	3 Days	4 Days	5 Days
3-6 year olds	\$18.00	\$36.00	\$54.00	\$90.00	\$135.00
2 year olds	\$40.00	\$80.00	\$120.00	\$160.00	\$200.00

Minimum attendance

Each child is required to attend a minimum of two days per week.

Absences

You are entitled to 3 weeks holiday per year at 50% of your normal weekly fees. You need to advise us one week in advance. All other absences will be charged at the usual rate.

Payments

Fees are to be paid weekly in advance. The first payment is due on the first day of attendance.

Our account number is **12-3093-0251629-00**

Notice period

We require 2 weeks notice of a child withdrawing from the centre.

Changes to enrolment

If you wish to change your child's session/days you must give one week's notice in writing (please ask a staff member for a form).