



Environment key to learning at Early Impressions

Children lucky enough to attend Early Impressions Learning Centre find themselves in an environment that is a veritable paradise.

The childcare centre is set on two acres of rural land in Stancombe Road, Botany, where the park-like surrounds provide a natural environment for children to play and learn.

The centre can accommodate 50 children and has three distinct areas for three different age groups – 0-18 months, 18 months to three years and three to five years.

The owner, Suzanne Chandler says a lot of parents comment on the large outdoor space and how natural it is. A lot of the equipment can be moved around and the children like to be involved in creating their own play space.

While many day care centres are equipped with artificial grass and shade, at Early Impressions it's the real deal, right down to the buzz of cicadas.

"The children play on real grass, under natural shade, and we've even got a natural water feature," says Suzanne.

Early Impressions Learning Centre's idyllic, natural setting is the perfect environment for children to develop a disposition to learn, research and seek mastery in their specific interests.

Using the environment as a "third teacher" is a key aspect of the Reggio approach to



learning, which Suzanne and the rest of her team use alongside the New Zealand early childhood curriculum, Te Whariki.

The Reggio approach sees the child as already full of understanding and knowledge, and that teachers learn alongside children as partners. Projects originate from a chance experience, event, idea or problem posed by one of the children.

The approach also sees the child's environment as fostering encounters, communication and relationships, and for this reason the envi-

ronment established at Early Impressions is very important.

"We take a lot of time and planning to think about how our rooms are set up – beautiful spaces with elements of surprise," Suzanne says.

"The children have a lot of say in setting up the environment for the day. The teachers follow the interests of the children rather than dictate what the activities will be."

The infant room is greatly inspired by the teachings of Emmi Pikler and Magda Gerber's

RIE approach (resources for infant educators). The core of this philosophy promotes respectful interactions where the child is an active participant.

"We talk with and listen to children in the same way as we would adults," says Suzanne, "and get to know them as unique individuals with different interests and routines."

Each child has their own key teacher to form an attachment with, building up trust and giving the infant a feeling of belonging and consistency. The key teacher is that special person who carries out the day to day care routines and is the first point of contact for the infant's family.

The centre promotes a calm, peaceful environment and the resources in the infant room are open-ended, allowing children to explore the endless possibilities within them and challenging their creativity.

The close-knit team at Early Impressions prides itself on being a home away from home for the children in their care. To find out if their centre is the right fit for your family, contact Suzanne on the details below.

Early Impressions Learning Centre,
Hours: Monday-Friday 7.30am to 5.30pm.
Option for 9am to 3pm for 0-3 year olds.
122 Stancombe Road, Botany.
Phone 272 9070.
www.earlyimpressions.co.nz