



observe  
play  
understand  
develop potential

# EARLY CHILDHOOD

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INFORMATION GUIDE

## Introduction

This booklet has been produced to introduce The Correspondence School (TCS) to the families of new students and contains useful tips and guidance for the parents of existing TCS early childhood students. In early childhood we teach children aged 3–5 years, including those with special education needs.

### Want to contact us?



Check out our website: [www.correspondence.school.nz/ech](http://www.correspondence.school.nz/ech)



Email: [contact@correspondence.school.nz](mailto:contact@correspondence.school.nz)

Email your teacher: [firstname.surname@correspondence.school.nz](mailto:firstname.surname@correspondence.school.nz)

Email the library: [library@correspondence.school.nz](mailto:library@correspondence.school.nz)



Phone: 04 473 6841 or freephone 0800 65 99 88



Write to us:

The Correspondence School

Private Bag 39992

Wellington Mail Centre

Lower Hutt 5045

Returning postings? Use the above address,

or use our freepost service:

FREEPOST No.10010

Your teacher's name here

The Correspondence School

(remaining address as above)

Want to contact TCS library? Just add *Attention: Library* when you address your envelope.

### **What do we teach?**

At early childhood level, we follow the national early childhood curriculum framework, *Te Whāriki*. Our curriculum includes experiences, activities and events that help children to learn.

### **How do our students learn?**

Early Childhood at TCS recognises that quality distance education for children is best achieved through parent/whānau education and support. We use a mix of print, audio CDs, DVDs, CD-ROMs, puzzles, games and other resources to support our programme.

### **What support is available?**

We teach from a distance and our teachers recognise the importance of having a good relationship with the parents of their students. We encourage parents to discuss their child's learning needs directly with their teacher. All TCS teachers can be contacted by letter, phone, email or fax. TCS library has resources available to parents of full-time students. There are resources to help with parenting and to help support your child's education. TCS holds camps and events during the school year. We include information about these in our newsletters and also on our website ([www.correspondence.school.nz](http://www.correspondence.school.nz)).

### **How much does it cost to study with TCS?**

If a student meets the enrolment criteria of the Ministry of Education, [www.minedu.govt.nz](http://www.minedu.govt.nz), there are no fees. However, we ask parents of full-time students to make a voluntary donation of \$50 per school year for each student or \$70 for a family where more than one student is enrolled. The donation is tax deductible.

## Distance learning – how is it different?

You will receive and return TCS postings in the mail, or by fax or email. When you enrol your child at early childhood level at TCS we send you the learning materials they will need, including posting bags and address cards.

### Keeping in touch with your child's teacher

Every posting has a letter or recorded message from the teacher, who will want to hear back from you in turn. Your letters, phone calls and emails make children 'come alive' for their teachers.

Let your child's teacher know if your home address, phone number, fax number or email address changes.



### The *Comments sheet*

Every posting will include a *Comments sheet* for your feedback. As you work through the ideas in the postings, watch and listen to your child. Try to jot down a few notes every now and then while thoughts are fresh in your mind, then it won't seem such a big job when it's time to send the posting back.

If you prefer, you can give your feedback by email or phone.

Think about your child's interests, important happenings in their everyday life and any challenging situations they are facing. You'll find plenty of things to share with your teacher to help them understand your child's progress and plan for the next step in their programme.

Give your child's teacher feedback about:

- the learning goal (comment on your child's progress and/or challenges). For more information on *Learning goals* see page 8.
- the learning materials and how they were used (which books did your child enjoy and why; was the puzzle/game easy or challenging?)
- the parent resources (how helpful were they and how did your child respond?)
- happenings and events in your child's life (their current interests; family or community events; what they have been doing recently with their friends).

### Your first posting

In the first posting, as well as this information booklet, you will find:



two letters from your teacher – one for you and one for your child



a range of learning materials, which may include books, puzzles, games, audio CDs, DVDs.

What you need to do:

- 1 Read the teacher's letters.
- 2 Read the books to your child often.
- 3 Encourage and support your child when they use the learning materials.
- 4 Listen to any recorded parent message.
- 5 Read the *Help us get to know your child* resource sheet. Fill it out with information about your child so their teacher can get to know them.

## Establishing routines

Over the next weeks, find one-to-one time to share with your child. Use this time to:

- read stories
- listen to audio CDs
- watch and encourage your child to draw, paint or work on a puzzle.

Your child's programme of learning is designed to involve the family. Make some family time to:

- play a game
- read stories
- explore your home environment – the kitchen, the garden.

Your child will also benefit from having time and support to use the learning materials independently, for example, looking at books or doing a puzzle. They will still need you to notice and encourage them in what they are doing.

## Storage

Provide a storage place for learning materials. Make sure your child has access to items such as:

- art materials like paper, pencils and crayons
- blocks and other building equipment
- dress-up clothes for pretend play
- puzzles and games
- books.

Shelves, cartons or shopping bags are useful for storing or stacking large items. Use smaller boxes and plastic containers to hold crayons, pencils, games, collage materials and so on.

## **Encourage responsibility**

Help your child – and others – learn to use and handle the materials responsibly. Check that:

- hands are clean
- food has been cleared away
- materials are stored in a particular place that's accessible to your child.

With your support and involvement, children develop independence and responsibility when they're encouraged to:

- choose what to do
- help themselves to learning materials
- tidy away and clean up.

Because children learn through practice and repetition, learning materials should be available for them to use regularly.

## **Wear and tear**

This can be kept to a minimum if you are clear about how you expect your child to care for equipment.

Increasingly, we are keen for parents to retain most of the resources we send out, so as to support the ongoing development of their child. If we do want something returned, we'll make sure you know.

## Your child's programme of learning

Your teacher will work with you to plan a programme of learning that suits your child. With your help, the teacher will set a learning goal that takes account of your child's interests and abilities, as well as your family's situation and lifestyle. While your teacher is a trained, registered early childhood professional, you know your child best. We can be most effective when we work together.

If your child has identified special needs, their programme will be developed in consultation with you and others who are involved in supporting your child's development and well-being.

### **Te Whāriki**

Your teacher will use *Te Whāriki*, the New Zealand curriculum framework for early childhood, to help plan your child's programme of learning.

*Te Whāriki* has four guiding principles:

Empowerment – Whakamana

Relationships – Ngā Hononga

Family and Community – Whānau Tangata

Holistic Development – Kotahitanga

These principles are interwoven with strands and goals. The strands describe different areas of learning and development. The goals describe the direction for programmes of learning.

You can read more about *Te Whāriki* on the Ministry of Education's website at: [www.minedu.govt.nz/Early childhood curriculum](http://www.minedu.govt.nz/Early%20childhood%20curriculum) or ask your child's teacher.

## Learning goals

In every posting, the teacher will set a learning goal for your child. The goal may expand on your child's current interests, or stimulate a new area of learning. Your feedback about what your child says and does, their challenges and progress, will help your teacher choose learning goals and materials to send in future postings.

## Returning your postings

It is good to establish a regular routine of returning materials, so try and return all postings by their due date. Postings will be sent for your child to use for up to four weeks.

The first posting must be received back at TCS before a second one can be sent. In the meantime, you can continue to use the ideas and activities suggested in the *Establishing routines* section on page 5.

## Returning the first posting

Before you return your first posting, check that:

- any equipment to be returned is clean and intact
- you have completed any feedback sheets sent or have had a conversation with your teacher.

Now you're ready to pack the posting bag:

- 1 Secure any items to be returned in plastic bags before putting them in the posting bag. Weather and the post can be tough on our equipment so it is necessary to pack postings well.
- 2 Include any feedback sheets.
- 3 Use the address card provided, making sure the freepost address details for TCS are clearly visible. Close the posting bag securely.

## Future postings

These will contain a range of parent resources for you and learning materials for your child.

### Learning materials

These may include books, puzzles, games, construction sets, audio CDs and CD-ROMs, posters and equipment. We will make it clear which materials are for you to keep, and which to return.

### Parent resources

These are part of every posting and may include leaflets, posters, audio CDs and DVDs.

Parent resources include information about:

- child development
- parenting issues
- ideas for play activities and learning experiences for your child.

Young children need lots of practice and repetition, so use these ideas again and again. You will notice differences between the way your child approaches an activity at 3 ½ years, and when they do it again at 4 years.

### Returning future postings

- Return any learning materials listed as being on loan only.
- Return the completed *Comments sheet*.
- Send in photos of your child and samples of their artwork occasionally to help your teacher get to know your child better.

## Moving on

If you no longer require your child to be enrolled with TCS, please let the teacher know as soon as possible.

### **When your child turns 5**

Although most children start primary school at age 5, it is not compulsory until they are 6 years old.



Let your teacher know:

- if you choose to keep your child on TCS's Early Childhood programme after their fifth birthday.
- if you wish to enrol your child at a primary school other than TCS.



If you wish to enrol your child in the Primary programme at TCS:

- you will need to complete an enrolment form. The form gives details of any other documentation you need to provide. Your child's teacher can arrange to have the form sent to you or you can access it on our website: [www.correspondence.school.nz](http://www.correspondence.school.nz)
- enrolment forms should be filled out and returned to the Registry at TCS at least one month before your child is due to start school.

Once you've reached the date for your child to leave TCS Early Childhood, you will need to:

- return the final early childhood posting(s) in the usual way
- include feedback on the last posting(s) if your child is moving on to Primary schooling with TCS, so the information can be shared with their primary teacher.

### **Preparing for TCS Primary schooling**

You may find it useful to start establishing a routine in preparation for your child's primary schoolwork. Set a time each day when you work together for 10–15 minutes, using the ideas from the parent resources. Most children are more alert and able to concentrate in the morning. This will help you and your child become used to regular schoolwork time together.

### **Next steps**

During their early childhood programme, your child has had opportunities to develop essential attitudes and skills for learning. You too have gained many skills for supporting your child's learning and have provided your teacher with feedback about your child's abilities, interests and progress. As you move on to the primary school years, we hope you continue to get satisfaction from your involvement in your child's education.



#### **Useful websites**

- Ministry of Education for information about the curriculum, setting up playgroups, enrolling at a New Zealand primary school and more: [www.minedu.govt.nz](http://www.minedu.govt.nz)
- Ministry of Health for information about immunisation and other health-related issues: [www.moh.govt.nz](http://www.moh.govt.nz)
- New Zealand Public Libraries for information about local libraries: [www.nzlibraries.com](http://www.nzlibraries.com)

