

THE ULTIMATE PARENT GUIDE

# How to Choose the Right Early Learning and Childcare



## INTRODUCTION

# Kia ora. I'm Melanie Howard, your early childhood education expert.

I'm the founder of Your Place Childcare. I help parents provide quality care and education for children 5 years old and under, setting a strong foundation for their future success, in a home-like environment that feels like, sounds like, and smells like home.

With years of experience in early childhood development, I'm committed to supporting families. Our tailored programmes and expert guidance ensure your child receives the best care during these crucial years.

Early education is transformative, shaping your child's growth and learning. By understanding quality childcare, you can make informed choices that positively impact your child's life.



I'm excited to share insights on what to look for in the right childcare provider.

Dear Parent, it's time to feel confident in your choice, knowing your child receives the quality care and education they deserve.

Happy Parenting!

- Melanie Howard

## CHAPTER 1

# Understanding Early Learning and Childcare Options

### Step 1: Know Your Options

There are several types of early education programmes to consider. Understanding each option will help you identify what works best for your child:

- **Daycare Centres:** Provide care and basic educational activities in a structured setting.
- **Preschools:** Focus on preparing children for primary schooling with a blend of play-based and academic learning.
- **Montessori Schools:** Emphasise self-directed learning and hands-on activities in a prepared environment.
- **Reggio Emilia Approach:** Encourages exploration and project-based learning in a collaborative setting.
- **Home-Based Care:** Provides small group care in a caregiver's home, offering a family-like environment.



## CHAPTER 1 CONTINUED

# Understanding Early Learning and Childcare Options

### Educational Inspirations

Your Place Childcare is inspired by the principles and practices of Dr. Emmi Pikler, Reggio Emilia, The Virtues Project, and Te Whāriki.

- **Dr. Emmi Pikler:** Focuses on respectful caregiving, autonomy, and the significance of building strong relationships between caregivers and children.
- **The Virtues Project:** Centres on character development and social emotional learning, promoting virtues like respect, responsibility, empathy, and perseverance.
- **Te Whāriki:** A holistic curriculum framework that supports children's learning and development, emphasising empowerment, holistic development, family and community relationships.

By incorporating these principles, we aim to create a nurturing environment that supports each child's unique journey and development in a home-like learning environment.

### Checklist: What to Consider

- **Philosophy:** Does the programme's teaching philosophy align with your parenting style and values?
- **Curriculum:** Is the curriculum play-based, academic, or a blend of both?
- **Teacher Qualifications:** Are the educators certified and experienced in early childhood education?
- **Class Size & Ratios:** Are the class sizes and teacher-child ratios appropriate for your child's age?
- **Safety & Cleanliness:** Is the environment safe, clean, and well-maintained?

CHAPTER 2

# Evaluating Early Childhood Education Programmes



## Step 2: Visit and Observe

Once you've shortlisted a few places you would like to view, it's time to visit and observe them in action.

### Here's how you can make the most of your visit:

1. **Schedule a Tour:** Call ahead and schedule a tour during regular hours to see the programme in action.
2. **Observe Interactions:** Watch how teachers interact with the children. Are they engaged, nurturing, caring and supportive?
3. **Check the Environment:** Look for a stimulating, well-organised, and safe environment. Are there diverse and age-appropriate materials available?



CHAPTER 2 CONTINUED

# Evaluating Early Childhood Education Programmes

## Step 2: Visit and Observe

**4. Ask Questions:** Prepare a list of questions to ask during your visit. For example:

- What does the daily programme offer?
- How many settling visits would you like my child to do?
- Will my child have a primary caregiver/key teacher to build trust and develop a sense of security?
- How do you communicate with parents about their child's progress and developmental achievements?

## Checklist: Questions to Ask

- How does your programme support social and emotional development?
- What is your approach to encouraging language and literacy skills?
- How do you incorporate outdoor play and physical activities?
- How are children's individual needs and learning styles accommodated?



CHAPTER 3

# Making the Final Decision

## Step 3: Reflect and Decide

After your visits, take some time to reflect on your experiences.

### Consider the following points:

- **Your Child’s Needs:** Which environment did you and your child respond to best? How did you feel when there?
- **Your Instincts:** Trust your instincts as a parent. Which programme felt like the right fit for you and your family?
- **Programme Reputation:** What do other parents say about the programme and what it offers families? Do they have a good reputation in the community?



### Action Plan: Making the Choice

- **Compare Your Options:** Use the checklist to compare your top choices based on the factors that matter most to you.
- **Speak with Other Parents:** Reach out to other parents who have experience with the programmes you’re considering.
- **Make a Trial Run:** If possible, try a few trial days or sessions to see how your child adjusts to the new environment.
- **Make the Decision:** Choose the programme that best meets your child’s needs and your family’s values.





## FINAL THOUGHTS

Choosing the right early education and care for your child is a big decision, but with the right information and a clear plan, you can feel confident in your choice.

Remember, the goal is to find a nurturing, supportive environment where your child can grow, learn, and thrive.

Thank you for trusting me to guide you on this journey.

I'm here to support you every step of the way.

Wishing you and your child all the best!

Melanie Howard







Finding the right early education for your child is a crucial decision. By following the insights and tips outlined in this guide, you can feel confident in choosing a programme that nurtures your child's growth, learning, and development.

### **Ready to explore quality childcare options?**

Schedule a tour with Your Place Childcare today to see how we provide the care and education your child deserves.

Remember, children only get one shot at an early childhood so choosing the right centre for them is crucial for laying the most important foundation of their life.

We look forward to welcoming you and your little one to our community!

**SCHEDULE A VISIT**