



Mana Tohu Mātauranga o Aotearoa  
New Zealand Qualifications Authority

# External Evaluation and Review Report

Maria Montessori Education  
Foundation

Date of report: 18 December 2023

# About Maria Montessori Education Foundation

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*Maria Montessori Education Foundation (MMEF) is the official New Zealand teacher training centre of the Association Montessori Internationale (AMI), the international steward of the Montessori educational approach. MMEF has AMI accreditation and approval to deliver an internationally recognised AMI Montessori qualification in early childhood education teaching.*

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Type of organisation:	Private training establishment (PTE)
Location:	49 Howe St, Freemans Bay, Auckland
Eligible to enrol intl students:	Yes
Number of students:	Current enrolments: seven domestic and two international students. At the time of the EER, the number of learners with disabilities was not recorded.
Number of staff:	One full-time, one part-time
TEO profile:	<a href="#">Maria Montessori Education</a>
Last EER outcome:	In 2019, NZQA was Highly Confident in MMEF's educational performance and capability in self-assessment.
Scope of evaluation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• AMI 3-6 Diploma in Montessori Education (Level 7) [ID: 121961-1] (Ref: 3745-1). This 18-month programme delivers the Maria Montessori early childhood education pedagogy. Graduates are recognised as Montessori teachers and able to work in Montessori centres internationally.</li><li>• International Student Support and Wellbeing</li></ul>
MoE number:	7871
NZQA reference:	C54504
Dates of EER virtual enquiry:	19 and 20 September 2023

# Summary of results

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*MMEF is effectively using consistently high quality self-assessment to understand its educational performance and to make improvements. The educational outcomes achieved by MMEF represent significant quality and value for learners and the wider Montessori community in New Zealand.*

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## **Highly Confident in educational performance**

- Learner achievement is excellent. MMEF monitors student progress and the quality of achievement, supported by comprehensive and robust processes and review.
- Graduates of the diploma are recognised as AMI-qualified teachers who are employable in Montessori centres internationally. MMEF supports the growing body of knowledge in the wider Montessori community in New Zealand. These outcomes are of significant value to stakeholders.

## **Highly Confident in capability in self-assessment**

- Rigorous academic processes and coherent design and delivery underpin the internationally recognised programme. MMEF has matched the diploma to the needs of learners and the wider Montessori community.
- MMEF provides individualised support to meet learners' wellbeing and academic needs through effective and systematic self-assessment.
- MMEF's governance and management directs and effectively manages strong educational achievement.
- MMEF has a clear understanding of its compliance accountabilities and manages these proactively and effectively to ensure obligations are met.

# Key evaluation question findings<sup>1</sup>

## 1.1 How well do students achieve?

Performance:	<b>Excellent</b>
Self-assessment:	<b>Excellent</b>
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Learner achievement in the Diploma in Montessori Education is excellent.<sup>2</sup> The previous two cohorts have high rates of achievement, and all nine current learners on the programme are on track to successfully complete. Graduates are recognised internationally as having early childhood education (ECE) skills and knowledge specifically aligned to the Maria Montessori education approach. The criteria to gain this recognition are stringent and are moderated by MMEF and the international steward, AMI.</p> <p>A detailed tracking system provides achievement data which is shared with learners and monitored by the director of training and AMI. They use data on the progress of individuals and cohorts, and assignment extensions to focus support, review the programme and assessments, and guide teaching. AMI uses the data as a basis to confirm consistency with the international qualification and to determine whether MMEF will gain AMI approval to deliver the programme to another cohort.</p> <p>Students' results are underpinned by robust assessment and moderation practices. These include systematic internal moderation and external moderation by an AMI external examiner.</p>
Conclusion:	Learner achievement is excellent. Comprehensive processes and review support the monitoring of progress and confirmation of achievement (see Table 1, Appendix 1).

<sup>1</sup> The findings in this report are derived using a standard process and are based on a targeted sample of the organisation's activities.

<sup>2</sup> Refer Table 1, Appendix 1.

## 1.2 What is the value of the outcomes for key stakeholders, including students?

Performance:	<b>Excellent</b>
Self-assessment:	<b>Excellent</b>
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Montessori early childhood centres have a shortage of trained teachers with the AMI diploma. Until recently, off-shore AMI trainers were required to deliver the diploma in New Zealand. Historically also, learners were having to travel overseas to study for the AMI Diploma. Now MMEF is producing graduates, home-grown teachers, to work in Montessori centres.</p> <p>All MMEF graduates of the diploma are either continuing in further education or employed in ECE Montessori environments in teaching or management roles.<sup>3</sup></p> <p>MMEF supports Montessori ECE centres to maintain AMI standards. For example, MMEF rigorously screens Montessori centres prior to learner placements to determine their suitability, reiterating the standards and principles of the Maria Montessori educational approach. Equally, the ongoing input and presence of MMEF AMI-approved trainers at the centre provides an opportunity for staff to have input from a recognised practitioner in the pedagogy.</p> <p>MMEF contributes to the wider Maria Montessori family in New Zealand and has a mutually beneficial relationship, engaging and formally consulting with Montessori Aotearoa New Zealand (MANZ) which represents 80 per cent of Montessorians in New Zealand.</p> <p>Overall, MMEF is contributing significantly to the understanding and advancement of Maria Montessori philosophy and principles within New Zealand ECE environments and communities.</p>
Conclusion:	MMEF delivers outcomes of significant quality and value in the provision of AMI-qualified teachers, and supports the

<sup>3</sup> See Table 1, Appendix 1.

	growing body of knowledge in the wider Montessori community in New Zealand.
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### 1.3 How well do programme design and delivery, including learning and assessment activities, match the needs of students and other relevant stakeholders?

Performance:	<b>Excellent</b>
Self-assessment:	<b>Excellent</b>
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>MMEF displays academic rigour in the design and delivery of the programme, which has high relevance for stakeholders.</p> <p>AMI has extensive and robust training requirements leading to recognition as an AMI trainer, mentor and external examiner. MMEF staff and educators meet these requirements.</p> <p>MMEF has effective internal moderation and review processes to maintain academic standards. There is a commitment to understanding and reflecting the New Zealand context through the use of an advisory group (including cultural advisors) and with collaborative engagement with the wider Montessori community (MANZ and Montessori centres).</p> <p>AMI applies systematic external oversight, monitoring the authenticity of programme content, delivery and the learner experience. The PTE also evaluates the quality of teaching, moderation and course reviews. These standards must be maintained for MMEF to retain AMI accreditation to deliver the internationally recognised Diploma in Montessori Education.</p>
Conclusion:	The MMEF Diploma in Montessori Education is authentically matched to the needs of learners and the wider Maria Montessori community. Rigorous academic processes and coherent design and delivery underpin the internationally recognised programme.

## 1.4 How effectively are students supported and involved in their learning?

Performance:	<b>Excellent</b>
Self-assessment:	<b>Excellent</b>
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>AMI's humanistic approach to education is mirrored in MMEF's provision of support and in its response to learner needs and wellbeing throughout the 18-month programme.</p> <p>Most learners have a number of competing life priorities to manage as they study. MMEF has effective processes for monitoring learner engagement, progress and wellbeing. Together with a thorough review of the Code<sup>4</sup>, MMEF has a solid understanding of the factors that impact achievement and works to mitigate the challenges associated with the commitment to study. Individualised support is provided to learners with a disability.</p> <p>MMEF provides a well-planned and structured learning environment. Teaching and learning strategies are planned and matched to learner strengths as well as areas for improvement, promoting positive and meaningful learning experiences.</p> <p>Learners apply their knowledge and skills in ECE centres that are carefully selected to ensure each learner gains an authentic experience that reflects the Maria Montessori pedagogy. Centres are screened to ensure there are sufficient resources, trained staff and a diverse range of children to effectively support the learner's development and understanding of the Montessori educational approach.</p>
Conclusion:	Effective and systematic activities, alongside individualised support for learners' wellbeing and academic needs, results in credible and worthwhile outcomes for learners.

<sup>4</sup> Education (Pastoral Care of Tertiary and International Learners) Code of Practice 2021

## 1.5 How effective are governance and management in supporting educational achievement?

Performance:	<b>Excellent</b>
Self-assessment:	<b>Excellent</b>
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Trustees and management make decisions informed by the academic committee. A stakeholder advisory group meets regularly, has relevant expertise and provides useful advice.</p> <p>The purpose, direction and values of the PTE are coherent and aligned with AMI. Following regular scrutiny by AMI, MMEF retains recognition as an AMI training centre with approval to deliver the internationally recognised Diploma in Montessori Education.</p> <p>The ongoing engagement and relationship with AMI keeps MMEF authentically embedded in Maria Montessori pedagogy and current with internationally recognised best practice and initiatives. MMEF attends international trainer meetings, responds to the AMI pedagogy committee, and presents at international conferences. The MMEF director of training is also recognised as an AMI external examiner. This exposure to AMI programmes internationally develops MMEF staff and benefits the PTE and the Montessori community in New Zealand.</p> <p>Self-assessment is consistently of a high quality and coverage. Systems and processes are well embedded and maintained. Regardless of staff changes within the small PTE, self-assessment has continued to be effective in guiding and informing performance.</p>
Conclusion:	MMEF governance and management drives strong educational achievement.



## 1.6 How effectively are important compliance accountabilities managed?

Performance:	<b>Excellent</b>
Self-assessment:	<b>Excellent</b>
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>MMEF maintains compliance with NZQA requirements and AMI obligations. These are well monitored at governance and management level. There is sound record-keeping of these actions.</p> <p>Indications of strong compliance management include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formal agreements and arrangements with ECE centres who host learners in placement.</li> <li>• Processes for tracking compliance requirements.</li> <li>• NZQA attestations and returns submitted within required timeframes.</li> <li>• Programme delivered consistent with NZQA approvals, including the implementation of an effective internal moderation system.</li> <li>• Thorough annual reviews of the Education (Pastoral Care of Tertiary and International Learners) Code of Practice 2021.</li> <li>• Police vetting of learners prior to confirming enrolment in the programme.</li> <li>• No anomalies found in a review of international student files by NZQA.</li> <li>• Consistently meeting AMI quality standards.</li> </ul>
Conclusion:	MMEF has a clear understanding of its compliance accountabilities and manages these proactively and effectively to ensure obligations are met.

## Focus areas

*This section reports significant findings in each focus area, not already covered in Part 1.*

### 2.1 AMI 3-6 Diploma in Montessori Education (Level 7)

Performance:	<b>Excellent</b>
Self-assessment:	<b>Excellent</b>

### 2.2 International Student Support and Wellbeing

Performance:	<b>Excellent</b>
Self-assessment:	<b>Excellent</b>

## Recommendations

*Recommendations are not compulsory but their implementation may improve the quality and effectiveness of the training and education provided by the tertiary education organisation (TEO). They may be referred to in subsequent external evaluation and reviews (EERs) to gauge the effectiveness of the TEO's quality improvements over time.*

There are no recommendations arising from the external evaluation and review.

## Requirements

*Requirements relate to the TEO's statutory obligations under legislation that governs their operation. This include NZQA Rules and relevant regulations promulgated by other agencies.*

There are no requirements arising from the external evaluation and review.

# Appendix 1

**Table 1. Course completion, qualification attainment and MMEF Alumni Employment Status<sup>5</sup>**

Diploma dates	Course completion	MMEF Alumni Work Status <sup>6</sup>
July 2018-Jan 2020 9 enrolments	9 learners	7 (employed in Montessori ECE) 2 (continuing study Graduate Diploma ECE).
Sep 2020-April 2022 10 enrolments	7 learners (1 learner extension will complete in Nov 2023) (2 international learners withdrew <sup>7</sup> )	6 (employed in Montessori ECE) 1 (continuing study in Graduate Diploma ECE)
April 2023-August 2024 9 enrolments	All on track to successfully complete. Includes 2 international learners	1 (the owner of two Montessori centres) 4 (employed in Montessori ECE) 2 (focusing on MMEF study and not currently employed)

<sup>5</sup> Table 1 represents data and information provided by MMEF September 2023.

<sup>6</sup> Graduates must also attain a New Zealand Graduate Diploma in Early Childhood Education or Bachelor of Education to gain employment as a registered ECE teacher.

<sup>7</sup> Unable to enter New Zealand borders due to COVID-19 restrictions.

# Appendix 2

## Conduct of external evaluation and review

*All external evaluation and reviews are conducted in accordance with NZQA's published rules. The methodology used is described in the web document <https://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/external-evaluation-and-review/>. The TEO has an opportunity to comment on the accuracy of this report, and any submissions received are fully considered by NZQA before finalising the report.*

## Disclaimer

*The findings in this report have been reached by means of a standard evaluative process. They are based on a representative selection of focus areas, and a sample of supporting information provided by the TEO under review or independently accessed by NZQA. As such, the report's findings offer a guide to the relative quality of the TEO at the time of the EER, in the light of the known evidence, and the likelihood that this level of quality will continue.*

*For the same reason, these findings are always limited in scope. They are derived from selections and samples evaluated at a point in time. The supporting methodology is not designed to:*

- *Identify organisational fraud<sup>8</sup>*
- *Provide comprehensive coverage of all programmes within a TEO, or of all relevant evidence sources*
- *Predict the outcome of other reviews of the same TEO which, by posing different questions or examining different information, could reasonably arrive at different conclusions.*

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<sup>8</sup> NZQA and the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) comprehensively monitor risk in the tertiary education sector through a range of other mechanisms. When fraud, or any other serious risk factor, has been confirmed, corrective action is taken as a matter of urgency.

## Regulatory basis for external evaluation and review

*External evaluation and review is conducted under the Quality Assurance (including External Evaluation and Review (EER)) Rules 2021, which are made by NZQA under section 452(1)(t) of the Education and Training Act 2020 and approved by the NZQA Board and the Minister of Education.*

*Self-assessment and participation and cooperation in external evaluation and review are requirements for:*

- *maintaining accreditation to provide an approved programme for all TEOs other than universities, and*
- *maintaining consent to assess against standards on the Directory of Assessment Standards for all TEOs including ITOs but excluding universities, and*
- *maintaining training scheme approval for all TEOs other than universities.*

*The requirements for participation and cooperation are set through the Programme Approval and Accreditation Rules 2021, the Consent to Assess Against Standards Rules 2021 and the Training Scheme Rules 2021 respectively.*

*In addition, the Private Training Establishment Registration Rules 2021 require registered private training establishments to undertake self-assessment and participate in external evaluation and review as a condition of maintaining registration.*

*NZQA is responsible for ensuring non-university TEOs continue to comply with the rules after the initial granting of approval and accreditation of programmes, training schemes and consents to assess and registration. The New Zealand Vice-Chancellors' Committee (NZVCC) has statutory responsibility for compliance by universities.*

*This report reflects the findings and conclusions of the external evaluation and review process, conducted according to the Quality Assurance (including External Evaluation and Review (EER)) Rules 2021. The report identifies strengths and areas for improvement in terms of the organisation's educational performance and capability in self-assessment.*

*External evaluation and review reports are one contributing piece of information in determining future funding decisions where the organisation is a funded TEO subject to an investment plan agreed with the Tertiary Education Commission.*

*External evaluation and review reports are public information and are available from the NZQA website ([www.nzqa.govt.nz](http://www.nzqa.govt.nz)). All rules cited above are available at <https://www.nzqa.govt.nz/about-us/our-role/legislation/nzqa-rules/>, while information about the conduct and methodology for external evaluation and review can be found at <https://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/external-evaluation-and-review/>.*

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