

A blue duck (whio) is the central focus of the image, standing in a field of tall, dry grass. The duck is facing left, with its head slightly turned towards the camera. Its feathers are a mix of brown and grey, and its beak is dark. The background is a soft-focus landscape with green trees and a clear sky. The overall tone is natural and serene.

# Whio Room Philosophy

In the Whio Room, we embrace the qualities of the *whio* (blue duck), a bird native to Aotearoa, known for its gentleness, adaptability, and connection to pristine environments. For our youngest tamariki, aged 3 months to 2 years, we provide a nurturing, predictable, and dependable environment where they feel secure and supported as they begin their journey of discovery and development.

Our philosophy aligns with the principles of Te Whāriki and is underpinned by the values of whanaungatanga, manaakitanga, aroha, whakamana, and kotahitanga. These values guide every interaction and relationship we nurture within our space. Additionally, we honour the Treaty of Waitangi, fostering a sense of partnership, protection, and participation. We also acknowledge our role as kaitiaki (guardians) of this Westgate community, ensuring the wellbeing of tamariki, whānau, and the natural environment.

We understand that a child's earliest relationships lay the foundation for their future learning and development. Drawing on the *whio's* calm and nurturing nature, we emphasise trusting attachment relationships between infants, their kaiako, and whānau. A familiar and unhurried kaiako holds primary responsibility for each infant, ensuring they are welcomed and cared for in ways that are predictable and responsive to their individual rhythms and needs.

## A Predictable and Caring Environment

The Whio Room is a haven of security and comfort. Infants thrive when the environment is predictable and dependable, and we ensure that caregiving practices are unhurried and guided by the infant's timing and pace. Consistent routines and familiar kaiako help tamariki build trust and confidence, while our kaiako provide gentle guidance and attentiveness to each child's unique needs.

## Stimulating Play Experiences

In the Whio Room, we provide a rich array of sensory and play experiences that stimulate the mind, body, and senses. Play is purposeful and reflective of tamariki's natural curiosity, offering opportunities for exploration and discovery. Our print- and language-rich environment encourages early literacy, while kaiako draw attention to numbers, shapes, and patterns in authentic and meaningful ways. Concepts such as 'big' and 'small' or 'more' and 'less' are woven into daily interactions, creating engaging learning opportunities.

## Social Interaction and Observation

Infants learn by observing and interacting with others. We provide opportunities for tamariki to play with, and alongside, other children and adults, fostering early social skills and an understanding of relationships. The *whio*, which thrives in small communities, reminds us of the importance of these connections. We value whanaungatanga, ensuring that infants feel part of a supportive and loving community where they can begin to explore the world around them.

## Connection to Te Whāriki and the Treaty of Waitangi

Our approach is deeply rooted in Te Whāriki, reflecting its principles of empowerment, holistic development, family and community, and relationships. We honour the Treaty of Waitangi by fostering bicultural practices and celebrating the rich cultural heritage of Aotearoa. As kaitiaki of this Westgate community, we are committed to ensuring that tamariki develop a sense of belonging and responsibility for their environment, connecting them with the stories and values of this land. In the Whio Room, we celebrate the early years as a time of wonder and growth. Inspired by the gentle and nurturing *whio*, we create a space where tamariki feel safe, supported, and empowered to explore their world, laying the foundation for a lifelong love of learning and connection to their community.