



College

CASA

Tweetalig Montessori College

Vision Casa College
January 2026

INTRODUCTION

There is a global call for education that better suits the development of young people and the ever-faster changing world. The current system often offers too little room for curiosity, creativity and ownership. More and more young people are losing their motivation, experiencing stress or dropping out. Teachers struggle with work pressure and a lack of autonomy.

Casa College offers a solution to this growing gap between the needs of adolescents and the current education system that guides them into adulthood. We offer a learning environment that does justice to the natural developmental needs of young people, in which autonomy, engagement and real responsibility go hand in hand. This approach is based on the Montessori philosophy and insights from contemporary developmental research. This shows that the brains of young people in the 12-18 age group are in full development, particularly in the areas of self-regulation, identity formation and moral judgement. During this phase, they learn best in meaningful, realistic contexts in which they bear responsibility, can experiment and are allowed to make mistakes. Cooperation, freedom of choice, movement and experiencing the usefulness and value of their work are crucial for motivation and well-being.

Montessori's principle of allowing adolescents to learn in "adult-like" situations with real tasks, economic activity and guidance from adults in a coaching role is demonstrably in line with these developmental needs and supports autonomy, resilience, ownership and intrinsic motivation.





Casa College does not see adolescents as people who need to be prepared for “real life”, but as people who are already in the midst of it. The school is a training ground for adulthood and social engagement: a community in which young people are given the opportunity to discover who they are, where they belong and how they can be of importance.

To understand who you are and how you can contribute, you also need to understand who we are as human beings and how the world works. Dr Montessori called this cosmic education: showing that everything in the universe is connected and that every human being has their own role to play in it.

In practical terms, this means that subjects are as integrated as possible, rather than isolated. For example, the subject of migration is not only part of geography, but also touches on history, mathematics, philosophy and art. Only when you know how the world works can you find your own position in it and learn how to make meaningful contributions, making meaning a matter of course.

Like Maria Montessori, we attach great importance to contemporary scientific research. The green columns next to the text provide continuous references to relevant research that guides our educational design.

MISSION

Casa College provides education in accordance with the international guidelines of the **Association Montessori Internationale (AMI)**.

‘Through young people to a better world – Guidance for life’

The school guides young people in their development into independent, conscious and responsible global citizens. They learn to relate to themselves, to others and to society, and experience that their contribution matters.

Casa College is a community in which learning, working and living together form a whole. Young people not only learn about the world, but also understand their role in it and actively shape it.

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VISION

A rich, clear and versatile environment in which they can learn, explore and create freely and purposefully. We offer education that meets the natural developmental needs of adolescents.

Through interaction with an adult-like environment, young people discover what the world needs and how they can contribute to it. Through their contributions, they discover that they belong.

- **the search for identity | Who am I?**
- **the need for community | Where do I belong?**
- **and the desire to be meaningful | How do I contribute?**

Our education is cosmic in nature: young people discover the coherence in the world and their own role in the bigger picture. In this way, they develop responsibility and commitment to people and the earth.

Casa College prepares young people for a meaningful life by offering education that:

- is based on the natural developmental needs of adolescents;
- provides space for autonomy, initiative and cooperation;
- connects learning with real projects and responsibilities;
- gives supervisors the role of coach, inspirer and instructor;
- brings the world in through cosmic education, research and social engagement.

AMBITION

- Young people are engaged global citizens who are aware of their role within the community and actively contribute to society.
- Young people are self-directed and develop self-knowledge, ownership and responsibility for their own learning and actions.
- Young people learn through experience and reflection and make choices based on intrinsic motivation in a changing world.
- Young people recognise and create value in themselves, others and the world, and learn to apply basic skills in meaningful contexts.
- Young people follow their passion, think creatively and critically, and act with knowledge, compassion and decisiveness to create a sustainable and just world.



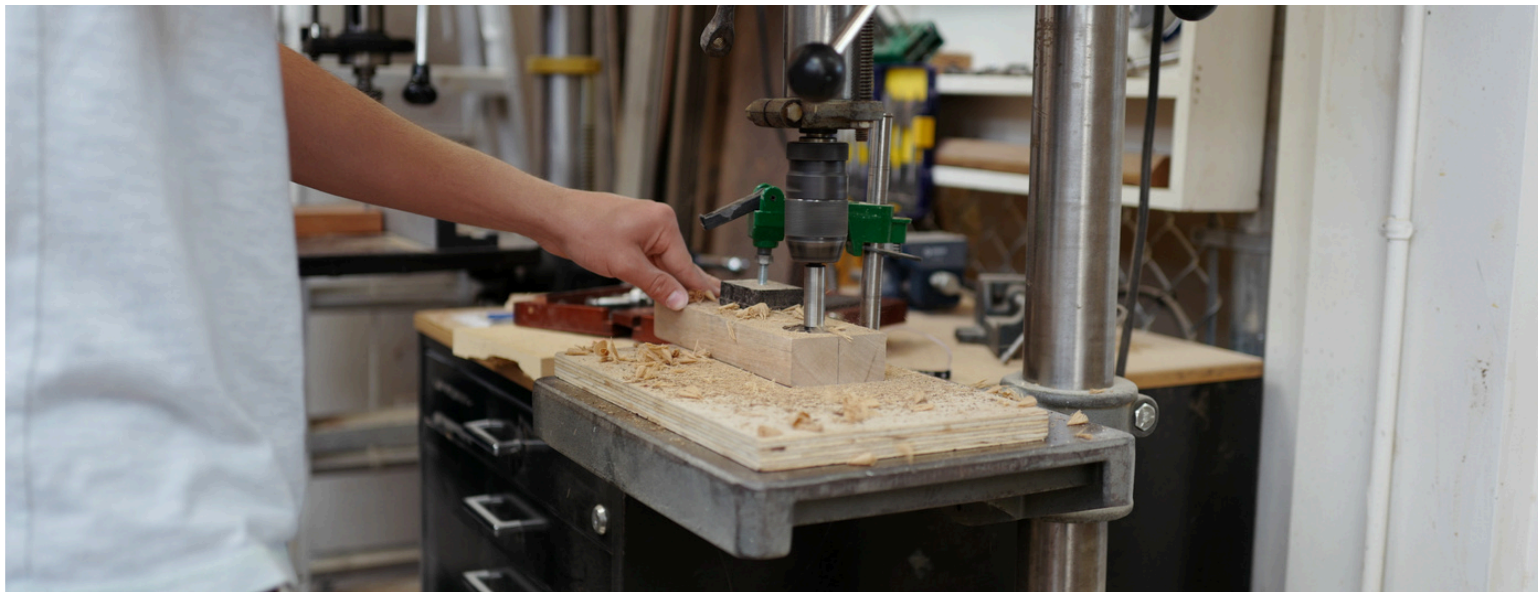
THE 8 PILLARS

In line with educational theorist David Kolb (1984), Casa College creates realistic and meaningful situations in which young people act as young adults.

“Learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience.”

1. “Adult-like” reality in a safe environment

Casa College creates realistic, meaningful situations in which young people can act as young adults. Students work on real issues, take responsibility and make choices within a carefully prepared environment in which safety, guidance and reflection are self-evident. Making mistakes is part of the process.



2. Economically active and entrepreneurial learning

Students are truly economically active. They design products or services, collaborate with external clients, earn money (not for their own gain, but for the community) and learn to deal with income, costs, value creation and ethics. Economics is not a subject, but a lived experience.

At Casa College, valorisation is encouraged: the process of converting knowledge, research and technology into concrete economic and/or social value, such as new products, services, processes or activities, in order to stimulate innovation, growth and progress, often by bridging the gap between science and practice.

This can range from setting up a business, bringing new products and concepts to market (e.g. through a local shop, restaurant or public performances) to improving road safety through behavioural science research or making energy consumption more sustainable through innovative solutions.

John Dewey (1859–1952), philosopher and psychologist, argued that learning is most meaningful when it arises from life itself and is deepened through intentional reflection.

“Education is not preparation for life; education is life itself.”

This way of working aligns with the Self-Determination Theory of Edward Deci and Richard Ryan (1985), which shows that intrinsic motivation grows when *autonomy, competence, and relatedness* are fulfilled.

John Hattie (1950), educational researcher and professor, shows in his meta-analyses that project-based learning (PBL) is particularly effective when students work on meaningful, complex problems in an authentic context, with clear goals, room for ownership, and continuous feedback and reflection (2009).

Barry Zimmerman (1949), educational psychologist, demonstrates in his research on self-regulated learning that students develop ownership and confidence when mentors support them in setting goals, monitoring their learning process, and reflecting on choices, without taking over the learning itself (2002).

3. Personal learning path & conscious learning choices

Each pupil develops a personal learning path. They choose how they learn: through online lessons, instructions, study groups, self-study, practical experience or coaching. Pupils learn their own learning style, plan their time and take ownership of their development.

4. Working across age groups, levels and subjects

Learning is not divided into separate subjects or year groups. Pupils of different ages and levels work together on projects in which subject content is integrated. This creates natural learning, peer learning and tailor-made in-depth learning.

5. Project-based learning with social impact

Projects are at the heart of education. Pupils research, design, build and improve the world around them – at school and beyond. Projects always have a real context and contribute to people, communities or the environment.

6. Art, design, movement and culture as vehicles for learning

Creativity is not a side issue, but a core skill. Through art, design, movement and culture, pupils process knowledge, give meaning to experiences and develop imagination, expression and critical thinking. This is essential for personal and social growth.

7. Adults (Guides) as coaches and role models

Adults guide young people in a coaching role. They ask questions, reflect, provide structure and monitor the learning process without taking it over. In this way, pupils learn to take responsibility, make conscious choices and develop confidence in their own abilities.

8. Bilingual community & global citizenship

Casa College is a bilingual community (Dutch–English). Pupils learn, work and communicate in both languages, enabling them to develop naturally into self-aware global citizens who can express themselves clearly and authentically in different contexts.



FRAMEWORKS

- Clear routine (e.g. daily start in core group, daily restaurant, working in the vegetable garden and with animals, inspirational lessons and fixed coaching moments)
- Core groups of 50 pupils, spanning different levels and ages
- No (or hardly any) homework
- Freedom of movement
- No standard curriculum
- No assessment based on standard tests. Pupils will take exams to meet the national requirements for the final exam.
- Insight into their own development
- Insight into the curriculum and final exam requirements for their VMBO-T/HAVO/VWO diploma, with freedom of choice within the PTA (Programme of Testing and Completion).

PEDAGOGICAL BASIS

Casa College employs a pedagogical approach rooted in the Montessori tradition and enriched with contemporary insights from psychology and neuroscience. The school relies on the idea that young people develop through **experience, relationships and responsibility**. The role of the adult is to guide that development, not to control it.

Positive Discipline is a pedagogical approach in which adults raise and guide with kindness and firmness, so that young people can develop competence, responsibility, and a sense of belonging, without punishment or rewards.

Guides act on the basis of **equality, respect and trust**. They provide clear frameworks while also allowing room for autonomy and initiative. Mistakes are seen as a natural part of learning: an opportunity to recover, reflect and grow.

This approach is supported by the philosophy of **Positive Discipline**, which focuses on relationships. The core of this approach is that young people learn better when they feel connected and experience that they matter. The guide is not a controlling authority, but a coach: friendly and determined, inviting cooperation rather than obedience.

Developmental research shows that young people develop self-regulation through co-regulation: by first being supported by available, attuned adults, they gradually learn to independently regulate their emotions, behavior, and choices (Siegel, 2012).

Casa College guides young people step by step from **co-regulation to self-regulation**. From reflecting on behaviour together to acting independently based on inner motivation. This creates a pedagogical climate in which safety, connectedness and responsibility form the basis for learning and living.





COSMIC EDUCATION

Cosmic education is at the heart of the Casa College curriculum. It is based on the idea that everything in the universe is connected – nature, people, culture and history – and that each individual plays a unique role in it.

Cosmic education helps young people understand their place in the bigger picture. It invites wonder, exploration and responsibility. Young people discover that order and coherence lie behind the complexity of life: from the origins of the universe to the functioning of societies and ecosystems.

In practice, this means that cosmic education is not a separate subject area, but an **integrative way of learning** in which different fields of knowledge intersect. History, biology, physics, language, art and technology are not taught in isolation, but are linked by a common research question or project.

By experiencing this coherence, young people develop not only knowledge, but also respect and responsibility for life on Earth. They learn that their own actions are part of a larger system and that their contribution matters.

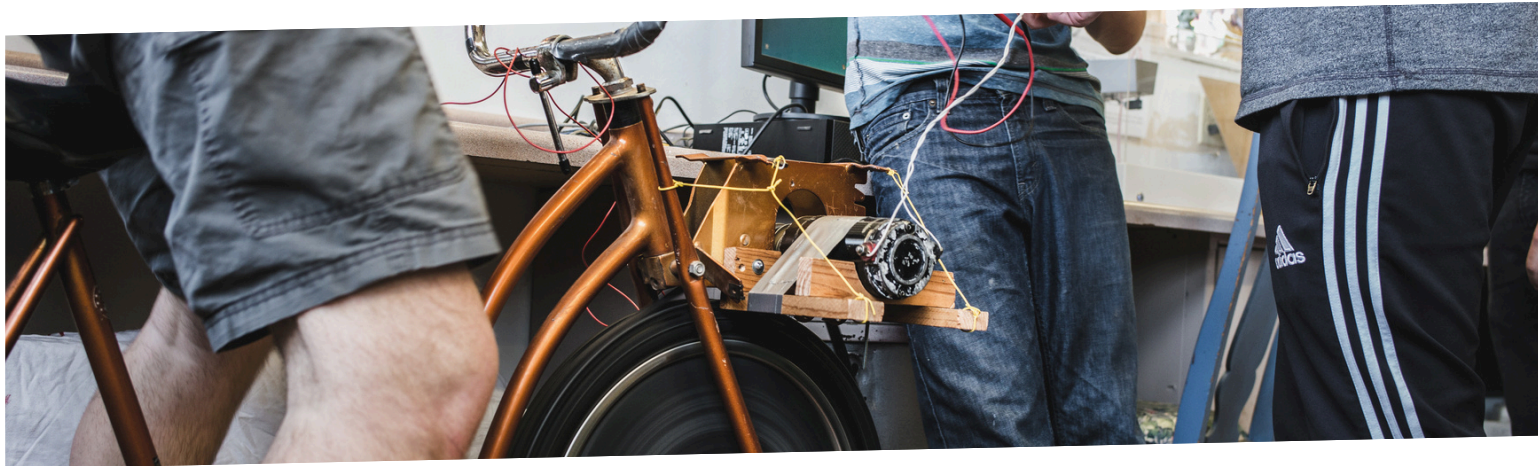
Cosmic education thus offers both intellectual depth and moral direction. It nurtures an attitude of gratitude, curiosity and care – qualities that are essential to being human and to the future of our society.

LEARNING BY DOING

Casa College offers young people **adult-like situations** – real contexts in which they bear responsibility and experience that their work matters. Examples include running a school restaurant, maintaining the school garden or collaborating with local entrepreneurs and social organisations.

By actively contributing to the community, young people learn not only practical skills but also social responsibility. Projects connect theory with practice. Mathematics, language and natural sciences take on meaning in the design of a solar panel, the creation of an exhibition or the organisation of a neighbourhood project.

This way of learning increases motivation and strengthens the understanding of the connection between knowledge and reality.



PERSONALISED LEARNING PATHWAYS

Students work with their coach to put together their own learning pathway. They choose from different forms of instruction – classroom, digital or independent – that suit their learning style, pace and stage of development. Together, they determine which learning pathway will ultimately be completed: VMBO-T, HAVO or VWO.

The coach plays a central role in this. He or she closely monitors the student's development, **explicitly taking into account the growth and results of project-based work**. The coach encourages reflection and provides support in setting achievable and ambitious goals. At the same time, the coach monitors the subject-specific and legal requirements to ensure that the chosen learning pathway is realistic and leads to a suitable qualification.

MONITORING DEVELOPMENT

At Casa College, we do not use tests. We monitor pupils' progress through **formative evaluations and rubrics**, based on observations and monitoring the process and the products they create. Feedback is substantive and focused on learning and development, not on grades. Pupils receive concrete instructions about what is going well and what requires further attention, and are actively involved in reflecting on their own learning process.

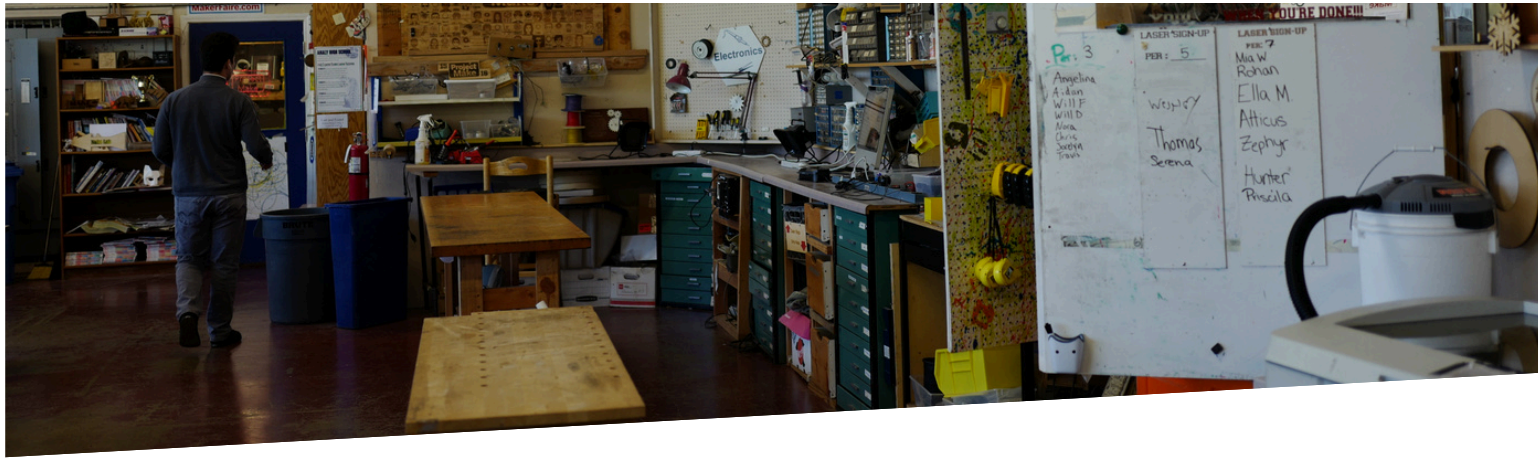
Foundation years

In the lower school, the focus is on getting to know **yourself and the world**. Together with their coach, pupils choose a learning pathway that suits their learning goals. This can be a combination of project work, subject-specific instruction, independent research and practical activities. Learning goals can be both subject-specific and personal. Because education is tailor-made, there are no fixed tests for all pupils. For each learning goal, it is agreed what performance demonstrates that the goal has been achieved, such as a presentation, product, activity or, if appropriate, a test.

Specialisation Years

In the upper school, pupils make their own choices within the framework of the **Programme of Testing and Completion (PTA)**. They work at their own pace and based on their own motivation, with guidance from a coach or subject instructor. The route to the diploma can differ for each pupil: subjects can be completed early, PTA components can be completed in any order and test forms can vary. For example, a pupil can choose to complete a component with a research project or other meaningful end product, as long as the exam requirements are met.





THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

The physical and social learning environment at Casa College is designed as a living laboratory for learning, collaborating and discovering. The interior is industrial, open and inviting, an environment that supports freedom and responsibility.

Important spaces within the school are:

- **The lab** – for research and experiments.
- **The garden and farm** – where young people learn about ecology, food production and sustainability.
- **The lecture hall** – for lectures and presentations.
- **The kitchen and restaurant** – as a place for community building, entrepreneurship and care.
- **Creative workshops** – Studios and design studios that invite young people to create, explore and design.

The environment encourages valorisation – experiencing that what you do has meaning for others. This makes the school a training ground for citizenship, where young people learn to take responsibility for their environment and each other.

A DAY AT CASA COLLEGE

Students start in their core group with a check-in or class meeting, where plans are made, responsibilities are assigned and successes are shared. The day consists of a mix of project work, subject-specific instruction, independent research and practical activities. In between, there are moments for reflection, sport, rest and socialising.

The day often ends with everyone together, looking back or presenting what they have learned and experienced. In this way, every day becomes an exercise in balancing freedom and responsibility – the core of Montessori's vision of adolescent education.

At Casa College, we value **healthy eating and exercise**. Cooking and nutrition are part of the curriculum. Casa College has its own kitchen where students prepare a hot lunch. There is plenty of space and time for various forms of exercise such as team sports, wall climbing, dance, yoga and meditation. Healthy nutrition and exercise support the major physical and psychological changes that young adults undergo.

In the coming period, we will be working with a team of professionals to carefully and thoughtfully develop the entire curriculum and daily schedule, down to the last detail.



THE COMMUNITY

Casa College is more than a school; it is a living community in which young people and adults learn, work and build trust together. Within the school, core groups of about fifty pupils, supervised by two adults, form the beating heart of this community. These groups provide space for consultation, reflection and decision-making.

The core group offers young people a safe base, a place where they feel seen and heard. Here they learn to take responsibility – for their work, for each other and for their environment. The class meeting is an important tool in this process: young people learn to listen, argue, decide and make amends. In this way, the community becomes a training ground for democracy, justice and care.

Interactions within Casa College are based on the values of **respect, trust and equality**. Guides are nearby, but give space.

During adolescence, the role of parents gradually shifts. Whereas they were intensively involved in earlier years, they now consciously take a step back. **This gives young people the space to take responsibility for their own choices, learning process and social relationships.**

Parents remain indispensable as a source of support and stability, but no longer completely in charge. At Casa College, this transition is carefully guided, in close consultation between parents, young people and coaches.

We actively contribute to an inclusive community that embraces differences in gender, age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, cultural background, disability, neurodiversity and religion.

COOPERATION AND PARTNERSHIP

Casa College builds on the rich tradition of Casa primary school in Pijnacker. Together, they form a continuous learning pathway from 0 to 18 years of age, in which children grow step by step in autonomy and responsibility.

The values and principles of Montessori remain recognisable from toddler to adolescent: freedom within boundaries, learning by doing, and respect for people and the environment. In addition, Casa College actively seeks cooperation with the local community.

Local entrepreneurs, social organisations, artists and scientists are involved in projects and research questions. This creates a dynamic connection between school and society, in which young people experience that their work has real meaning.

International cooperation is a natural part of the programme. Through bilingual education and the Montessori networks within the Association Montessori Internationale (AMI) and Erasmus+, Casa College participates in exchanges and joint research projects with schools worldwide.

These collaborations broaden the students' perspectives and strengthen their awareness of global responsibility.

TEAM DEVELOPMENT AND PROFESSIONALISATION

Casa College is a **learning organisation**. The guides are constantly developing, both individually and as a team. Team development focuses on observation, reflection and collaboration – exactly as is required of the pupils.

The school encourages staff to follow AMI courses and training in Positive Discipline, Project-Based Learning and neurodiversity (dyslexia, dyscalculia, ADHD, autism (ASD) and giftedness). Training in pedagogical coaching is also provided, as coaching will be a large part of their role. This common language and shared vision creates a close-knit, professional community of supervisors who support and inspire each other.

We work with clearly defined roles: **coach, instructor and inspirer**. We are looking for professionals who not only have professional qualities, but also excel in coaching, motivating and inspiring. In practice, they approach every young person as a unique individual, with an eye for their qualities, talents and learning needs.

EVALUATION AND QUALITY DEVELOPMENT

Quality assurance at Casa College is cyclical and transparent. The school continuously observes, evaluates and improves the educational process. The emphasis is on meaningful feedback, not control. Students, parents and supervisors are actively involved in reflecting on the education and development of the school.

The quality cycle is based on Montessori's original idea of scientific pedagogy: the continuous exploration of the relationship between environment, guidance and development. In this way, Casa College continues to grow as a community that learns from experience, rather than simply complying with external frameworks.



IN CONCLUSION

Inspiring Dutch examples

Agora Onderwijs

www.agora-onderwijs.nl

School aan de Singel

www.schoolaandesingel.nl

inspiring examples from abroad

*da Vinci Montessoriskole
(Norway)*

www.dvms.no

*Montessori Centre for Work and
Study (Sweden)*

www.montessoricws.org

High Tech High (US)

www.hightechhigh.org

Based on the many examples we have seen at home and abroad, in research and in practice, we are convinced that Casa College has a right to exist. The vision outlined here is not an ideal, but a realistic and supported response to what adolescents need today to develop into balanced, engaged and responsible adults.

We sincerely believe that Casa College will come into being. With confidence, dedication and courage, we are taking on the great challenge of meeting the legal requirements and gathering the necessary support and signatures. Not because it is easy, but because we believe that this school is of value to young people, parents and society.

Casa College wants to be a place where young people learn to live, learn to choose and learn to contribute. A school that is future-oriented, rooted in trust and built on the conviction that education can really make a difference.