

## Policy Statement

The educational program has a strong emphasis on play based learning and is based on the knowledge, ideas, culture, abilities, and interests of each child as communicated to educators by their parents, observed by educators, and contributed to by the children. The program is documented by educators, and this documentation evidences parents' and children's contributions. Educators assess individual children's learning as part of an ongoing cycle of planning, documenting and evaluation. All documentation relating to the program is readily available to parents.

## Strategies and Practices

- The *Educational Program and Practice Policy* is available to families upon enrolment and staff upon induction.
- The Service's educational program is guided by the principles, practices and learning outcomes of the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF), the services philosophy, the National Quality Framework (NQF), the UN Conventions on the Rights of the Child and the Early Childhood Australia Code of Ethics.
- The principles are:
  - Secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships
  - Partnerships
  - High expectations and equity
  - Respect for diversity
  - Ongoing learning and reflective practices
- The practices are:
  - Holistic approaches
  - Responsiveness to children
  - Learning through play
  - Intentional teaching
  - Learning environments
  - Cultural competence
  - Continuity of learning and transitions
  - Assessment for learning
- The learning outcomes are:
  - Children have a strong sense of identity
  - Children are connected with and contribute to their world
  - Children have a strong sense of wellbeing
  - Children are confident and involved learners
  - Children are effective communicators

- The services Philosophy is the basis on which the service operates. In relation to the educational program, the philosophy identifies the core practices that we believe in and those that are reflected in our program and practice. Some of the core practices of the philosophy are:
  - Children are viewed as capable and competent and educators support the development of children's independence and sense of agency.
  - Educators provide children with opportunities to engage in sustained uninterrupted periods of play and use intentional teaching strategies and spontaneous experiences as opportunities for learning.
  - Educators implement a program where children's knowledge, ideas, culture, abilities and interests, are at the centre of the curriculum being guided by educators who are there to facilitate and support their learning.
- Quality Area 1 of the NQF, 'Educational Program and Practice' has three standards that focus on the educational program, educational practice, and assessment and planning for each child's learning and development. The Guide to the National Quality Standard (NQS) states that 'These standards are crucial to delivering quality outcomes for children under the NQF because:
  - An educational program that is based on an approved learning framework, is child-centred and maximises learning opportunities, strongly contributes to children's development as competent and engaged learners.
  - Intentional teaching in early childhood settings (and intentionality in school age settings) is a recognised approach to facilitate each child's learning and development.
  - Responsive teaching values, scaffolds and extends each child's strengths, skills, knowledge, interests and ideas, and child directed learning promotes children's agency.
  - Critical reflection informs the assessment and planning cycle and drives improvement in program and practice, resulting in continuous enhancements to children's learning.
  - Families who are informed about the program and their child's progress are better equipped to engage with the service and collaboratively make decisions that strengthen their child's learning, development and wellbeing.
- The Service's designated Educational Leader oversees the program and facilitates collaboration between all educators. The educational program is discussed in team meetings, and educators are provided with professional development opportunities as well as individual educator feedback.
- The Educational Leader monitors the services documentation to ensure that all children are observed as a part of an ongoing cycle of planning. In addition, mentoring is provided to educators to further develop their skills, challenge them within their role, support goal development and source relevant professional development opportunities.
- The Educational Leader observes educator practice and provides individual feedback on their practice.
- Families verbal and written input is integral to the program and is actively sought by educators.
- Each room has its own program which is made available to families detailing such items as child-initiated and educator-initiated experiences, intentional teaching, parent input, children's voices and reflective practices.
- Each child's knowledge, ideas, culture, abilities and interests are the foundation of the program.
- Our curriculum incorporates an indoor/outdoor program where the children from the three older rooms have the freedom and flexibility to move between both the indoor and outdoor spaces. This flexibility fosters choice and independence as well as teaching opportunities that support individual children's learning styles.

- The indoor and outdoor learning environments are arranged and well-resourced with materials which are age, developmentally and culturally appropriate and meet the children's interests. The service encourages the use of resources that are open ended, natural and sustainable.
- Educators respond to children's ideas and use intentional teaching to scaffold and extend each child's learning particularly on topics such as sun protection, sustainability, fire safety, water safety, handwashing and general hygiene.
- Indoor and outdoor learning environments reflect natural elements and include quiet soothing places where children can have time on their own, as well as places where they can engage in creative experiences.
- Each educator at the service is expected to contribute to the development of the curriculum, program decisions, and reflective practices. Educators reflect – individually and as part of the team – on every aspect of the educational program. All educators are provided with non-contact time to fulfil this expectation.
- The program is organised to maximise opportunities for each child's learning.
- Educators observe each child's responses to the program both as an individual and as part of a group, assess the child's progress towards the outcomes of the EYLF, document the observation, analyse the learning, and future planning ideas. The documentation is available to parents through a portfolio that is readily accessible for children and families. These are taken home at the end of each year.

## References

- *Education and Care Services National Law*
- *Education and Care Services National Regulations*
- *Guide to the National Quality Framework*
- *Early Childhood Australia Code of Ethics*
- *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child*
- Dr Brenda Abbey (Childcare by Design)

## Policy Review

The Service encourages staff and parents to be actively involved in the review of each of its policies and procedures. In addition, the Service will accommodate any new legislative changes as they occur and any issues identified as part the Service's commitment to quality improvement. The Service consults with relevant recognised authorities, where necessary, as part of the review to ensure the policy contents are consistent with current research and contemporary views on best practice.