



Professional Practices Policy

Aim

To ensure that all employees at SPCP are engaged in professional practice at all times, enabled by the support and guidance of those in leadership positions.

To outline and highlight the preschool's commitment to on-going professional learning and the development of a professional learning community by the members of the educating team and staff at SPCP.

To explain the guidelines for the employment and induction of new educators and other staff in alignment with the preschool culture.

To explain the processes under which staff appraisal and performance are managed.

Explanation

As identified by ACECQA, professional practice is important as it contributes towards high quality outcomes for children through providing opportunities to:

- Develop educator's skills and abilities to support children's outcomes in collaborative and meaningful ways
- Provide an effective and passionate team of educators who will value supporting individual children
- Set standards and accountability measured for all employees to adhere to when working in the preschool.
- Develop a positive professional identity for early childhood educators leading to improved skills, knowledge and practice

Implementation

Professional practice

All employees will adhere to the following documents at times during their employment at the preschool:

- National Quality Standard
- Early Years Learning Framework
- Education and Care Services National Regulations
- Education and Care Services National Law
- ECA Code of Ethics
- SPCP Code of Conduct
- SPCP Policies and procedures



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Employment of staff

- The recruitment of new employees to the preschool will be done so in line with our philosophy and involve the input of relevant stakeholders.
- Where possible, within the budget, we will aim to employ highly qualified and experienced educators to support our existing team of educators, bringing new ideas and reflection opportunities to the team.
- Any new employees should align with the current culture of the preschool and candidates should be avoided who may cause conflict or disrupt the high quality outcomes for the children.
- All new employees will be inducted over a period of time following the preschool induction procedure, allowing both the existing team and the new employee time to get to know each other and settle into the new dynamic. A probationary period of 6 months will be set for all new employees to help support their transition and ensure the right fit has been found.
- All new employees will be provided a copy of the Educator Handbook during induction to help them feel welcome and easily access information as they settle in.
- All employees must complete a staff record that will be stored in the filing cabinet to be added to as relevant documents arise.

A Professional Learning Community

1. All educators will be expected, as part of their employment, to engage in professional learning and development to further expand their skills and knowledge.
2. It is an expectation that all educators will be constantly engaged in a cycle of continuous improvement while employed at the preschool.
3. Educators are encouraged to share their summaries of the professional learning they have engaged with to the rest of the team to help build collaborative learning opportunities and reflect on the suitability of the suggestions for our context.
4. The Nominated Supervisor/Educational Leader will support all employees to engage with professional development and role model a positive approach to professional learning at all times.
5. Staff meetings are held once a term during the school holiday break. All educators are expected to attend as this is an opportunity to engage with collaborative professional development and critical reflection around a current area of focus for the preschool.

Required training

Educators are expected to attend regular training to ensure their First Aid including Asthma and Anaphylaxis (3 years), CPR (yearly), and Child Protection (3 years plus refreshers at least every 18 months) qualifications remain up to date and current. The preschool will pay the costs of this training and any other approved training attended by staff.



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The Workplan (including staff appraisal process)

- Each employee will have an individual yearly professional learning & development plan, with a built in appraisal process. This process is designed to ensure high quality practice and empower educators and staff in achieving their goals as professionals. This is known as the Workplan.
- The educator will work with the Director/ Educational Leader to determine suitable goals for the Workplan. Goals will be based on the Educator Job Description and the National Quality Standard.
- Professional goals may arise from critical reflection, self-assessment, service goals, appraisal processes, consultation and feedback, etc. They may also relate to areas of interest to the individual educator, which they wish to learn more about or improve practice in.
- The Workplan provides an opportunity to support educators to reflect on their work, assess their progress over the past year and identify goals to support continual improvement.
- Planning of goals will occur at the commencement of each year and will be followed up with progress meetings once a term throughout the year. One on one meetings between the educator and Director/EL provide an opportunity to discuss progress, celebrate successes, ask for help, problem solve solutions and discuss the need for additional time or resources. This process is designed to empower the educator in achieving their goals by the end of the year.
- A final meeting at the end of the year allows for final signing off of the year's Workplan and commencement of planning of goals for the new year.
- Once a goal has been identified, educators will be supported to achieve this goal through the most appropriate means of professional learning. This may include external training, internal training, research, mentoring, collaborative discussions, articles, formal qualifications, etc.
- The individual learning style of each educator is recognised and educators are encouraged to choose their preferred methods of learning including webinars, reading and attending training.
- While the Director/ EL will offer support and guidance to educators in this process, all educators are encouraged to take ownership over their own professional learning and development, and the achievement of goals. Educators are expected to keep regular progress notes in their Workplan and to be prepared for their progress meetings with the D/EL.
- In addition to this process, feedback will be given to all employees on a regular basis through both formal means (e.g. staff meetings, critical reflection discussions, memos etc.) and informal means (e.g. conversations, social media chats etc.).
- The Workplan/ Appraisal process is not to be used as an opportunity to address unprofessional behaviour. This must be addressed at the time of the incident and is to be undertaken as performance management. Appraisals should be a positive and supportive experience for all staff.



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Performance management

- Employees who have engaged in unprofessional behaviour (acting contrary to any of the documents listed at the start of this policy) will have the incident discussed with them as soon as practicable, without jeopardising the supervision of children or confidentiality.
- In the instance that the behaviour was deemed to have been accidental then the professional development plan for this employee will reflect the steps to be taken to ensure that they have the knowledge and abilities to prevent such an incident from occurring in the future. This will be classed as a verbal warning and a note made in the employee's file.
- In the instance that the behaviour was deemed to have been intentional then the process of performance management will be entered into, in an attempt to support a positive outcome for all involved.

The performance management process involves:

1. A written warning outline the behaviour in question and the outcome of a discussion had with the employee is provided to the employee to sign and a copy placed in their file.
2. Management will work with the employee to support their development of appropriate skills and knowledge to prevent the incident occurring again.
3. Should the incident occur again, or another incident of an unprofessional nature, then a second written warning will be issued.
4. The employee will then enter into a support program with management working closely with the employee to mentor them and provide opportunities for the employee to demonstrate their willingness to change.
5. Should the employee fail to show a willingness to change their behaviour or make no improvements after an agreed upon period of time, no more than 12 months, they will have their position terminated in writing with 2 weeks notice.
6. In the instance where an employee is involved in an instance that knowingly placed the safety of others at risk they may have their position terminated on the spot. This is to be decided at the discretion of the Director/Nominated Supervisor.

Employee wellbeing support

- We understand that balancing work and life can be stressful and therefore aim to support employees to manage stress.
- We aim to provide as much transparency between Preschool operations and employees to allow for the minimisation of stress and anxiety caused by the unknown.
- Where information is required to remain confidential from employees this will be sheltered from employees where possible so that they do not feel any undue stress.
- Any employees feeling stress are invited to talk to the Nominated Supervisor to discuss the issues and come up with a plan on how to feel supported during the stressful situations through support, training, mentoring etc.



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- If appropriate employees may be referred to a relevant mental health professional should the cause of the stress be outside of the scope of the Nominated Supervisor.
- The preschool offers sick leave and mental health days for employees who feel they would not be able to satisfactorily complete their job due to their mental wellbeing.
- SPCP aims to provide a family friendly workplace for its educators and other staff. We understand that staff have spouses, parents, children or other family members who may on occasion require their immediate attention and wherever possible we aim to accommodate these needs. Staff are encouraged to negotiate this directly with the Director as soon as possible to allow the organisation of relief staff or other accommodations as necessary.

Professional relationships

- *With fellow employees –*
 - Employees come to the service with a range of skills and experiences, and are expected to be open to a diverse range of ideas and opinions when working collaboratively
 - We encourage robust professional debate regarding topics; however this should not devolve into personal attacks, aggressive gestures and tones of voice, or dismissing an opinion as invalid simply because it differs from yours.
 - When communicating with co-workers, employees are expected to explain themselves as clearly as possible and ask for further clarification if the message has not been understood.
 - We do not tolerate bullying and harassment in any form and this will result in performance management being entered into.
 - There is an open door policy for management, encouraging employees to bring any issues, feedback or suggestions forwards as soon as practicable.
 - Communication must be made in a timely manner with information shared to all relevant parties as quickly and consistently as possible.
 - Any relationships outside of the workplace are not to interfere with the professional work relationships.
 - Should a conflict arise employees are advised to resolve the conflict themselves and where this fails seek mediation from a third party, such as the Nominated Supervisor.
- *With families –*
 - Employees are expected to maintain professional relationships with families, ensuring they are respected and information is shared in a confidential manner.
 - Employees are not permitted to engage with families for paid work outside of the preschool, such as babysitting, as this may impact the professional relationship within the preschool.
 - While relationships with families outside the preschool cannot be prohibited it is discouraged as this may impact the professional relationship with families inside the service.



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- Employees are discouraged from being social media “friends” with families as this may provide access to information not shared directly between the two parties which can impact the professional opinion. Further information on this area is available in the preschool’s Managing Technology Policy.
- At all times the privacy and confidentiality policy must be adhered to when discussing children’s progress or other private matters with families.
- With the wider community -
 - Employees will engage in professional conversations, representing the preschool in a positive light.
 - Employees will not share information about the preschool with members of the wider community, including their own family and friends, unless they have been given permission to do so.
 - Employees are to bring any instances of negative feedback about the preschool to management as soon as possible and not engage in addressing this themselves.
 - When out in the public representing the preschool, such as in uniform, at events or on excursions, employees are to behave in a professional manner including interactions, appearance and body language.

Source

Guide to the NQF https://www.acecqa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-01/Guide-to-the-NQF_2.pdf

Compliance evidence

Education and Care Services National Regulations (2018) 145, 147, 168, 170

National Quality Standard 4.1, 4.2, 5.1, 6.1, 7.1, 7.2

Compliance evidence

Education and Care Services National Regulations (2023) 77, 81,84A-C, 88, 109, 112,

National Quality Standard 1.1, 2.1, 2.2, 3.1, 4.1, 4.2, 5.1, 7.1

Supports Child Safe Standards: 1, 5, 8, 10. New in the 2024 version.

Review Dates

Date of last review: Sept 2020

Date of current review: Apr 2024

Date of next review: Apr 2026

Approved by: Lisa Collins (Director)/ Barbara Black (Treasurer).