



Relationships (Children, Families, Educators, Community) Policy

“The single most important element of service quality is the interaction between child and educator, and training and qualifications improve these interactions”

From *Lifting our Game: Report of the review to achieve educational excellence in Australian schools through early childhood interventions, 2018.*

Aim

The aim of this policy is to highlight the important role of relationships in the early childhood setting and how we at this preschool go about building quality relationships between educators, children, families and our community.

Explanation

The National Quality Standard (NQF), Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF), Early Childhood Australia Code of Ethics and the UN Rights of the Child all address the role quality relationships play in a young child’s development.

The EYLF’s concepts of *belonging, being and becoming* rely on the continual development of quality relationships for a child’s successful learning and development. Although quality relationships permeate all areas of the learning program, EYLF Principle 1 specifically relates to *secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships*, while Practise 2 addresses *responsiveness to children*. In the National Quality Standard (NQS), Standard 5 specifically relates to relationships between educators and children (element 5.1) and between children (element 5.2) while Standard 4: Staffing Arrangements addresses the way we organise our staffing in the best interests of the children. Standard 6 is focused on relationships with families and parents in particular.

EYLF Outcome 1 aims to promote a *strong sense of identity* in young children.

Outcome 1 focuses on ways we can promote the development of a strong and confident sense of self for each child, an important first step to future success in life. By creating an environment (beginning at home and continuing into the early childhood setting) that makes each child feel *safe, secure and supported* (outcome 1.1), a strong foundation of positive life experiences is established which the child can continue to build upon through future experiences.

Building on this strong foundation involves planning a learning environment designed for the purposeful development of each child’s *emerging autonomy, inter-dependence, resilience and sense of agency* (outcome 1.2) and *confident self identity* (outcome 1.3). Another important facet to outcome 1 is the promotion of positive relationships *between children (interactions with other children with care, empathy and respect - outcome 1.4)*. Our commitment to quality relationships should be evident in all aspects of our program and through our policies and other documents.



Sutherland Presbyterian Church Preschool

Except from our Pedagogical Learning and Documentation Policy:

“Our learning program is based on our Philosophy, which is grounded in contemporary research and theories of learning for young children, particularly social-cultural and constructivist theories, and the work of Urie Bronfenbrenner and Leo Vygotsky.

Socio-cultural theory teaches us that children come to preschool with a rich background of experiences and learning from the time already spent with family. Each child and family has a unique story to tell us when we meet them and it is our responsibility to work with them to understand and continue building on this foundation. We also recognise that a child (and their family) must begin to develop a strong sense of belonging within the preschool learning environment before they are able to embrace the learning opportunities we offer”.

Implementation

Enrolment & Orientation of New Families

The enrolment and orientation process, from the time of initial contact, is recognised as key to the development of quality relationships between new families and members of the preschool community.

From our Parent Handbook and Enrolment and orientation Policy:

“We believe that a child needs to feel safe and secure in the preschool setting before he or she can really begin their learning journey. This process begins before your child actually starts preschool and continues on through the first few days, weeks and months. An important aspect of a child doing well in the early education setting is for the educating team and parents to work closely together. This is why we encourage families to spend time in our preschool PRIOR to the official start date, when you can begin to become familiar with our preschool family.”

Further information on this beginning time can be found in our Enrolment and Orientation Policy.

Interactions with children

During our interactions with children we believe the following behaviours by educators are important to promoting quality interactions:

- Educators who favour a gentle tone of voice which creates a calm learning environment where a child can feel safe and welcome.
- Educators who get down to a child’s level when speaking with them.
- Educators who encourage child initiated and led conversations, show a genuine interest in the conversation, and purposefully listen and participate with respect throughout the conversation.



Sutherland Presbyterian Church Preschool

- Quality conversation involves purposefully making the time to engage in relaxed, equitable and enjoyable conversations with children.
- Monitoring and limiting the amount of direction focused conversation being used vs free flow conversation or child initiated discussion.
- Allowing children the opportunity to be in the moment (enjoy each part of the day as we experience it) as opposed to always preparing for the next activity in the day.
- Providing time and space to themselves when desired or required and respecting a child's need or desire to be alone.
- Providing an environment where children feel safe to try, fail and try again when learning new skills.
- Encouraging children to express their thoughts, feelings and ideas (outcomes 1.1 & 5.1).
- Purposefully modelling and teaching children the skills they need to express themselves with confidence and in a socially acceptable manner (outcome 1.2).
- Providing a learning environment where it is possible for children to safely leave their half completed work and return to it at a later time (displaying respect for the child's work).

Relationships between children (EYLF outcome 1.4; NQS, Element 5.2)

An important part of the preschool learning experience is learning how to get on with our peers. We aim to provide a setting where difficult social lessons can be experienced, practised and mastered with support from educators. We believe children are able to learn the dispositions and skills they need to manage their own behaviour and their relationships with their peers with patience, guidance and time. Preschool is a good place to practice and learn skills such as turn-taking, sharing, negotiation and cooperation.

Interactions with families

It is a priority of ours to make time to develop relationships with our families, through conversations at drop off and pick up, when parents call on the phone and through email. It is through the development of quality relationships that we are able to work together towards better outcomes for children.

It is important to remember that all families are different and to respect the ways of being of each of our families. It is important for educators to develop the ability to see and understand situations from perspectives other than their own, as this allows us to interact with families with respect, empathy and wisdom.



Sutherland Presbyterian Church Preschool

Behaviour Management (also found in our Parent Handbook)

Children use all sorts of behaviour to express their feelings and needs – some forms of expression are considered “more acceptable”, while others are considered “less acceptable” and are sometimes labelled by people as “naughty”. There is always a reason for behaviour and it is important that we spend time working out what that reason might be. For some children this means that they have not yet learnt what the acceptable behaviour is, so we ask ourselves:

- *Is the child developmentally ready to learn the expected behaviour? Do we need to adapt our expectations? (We expect different compliance from a young 3 year old or perhaps a child with additional needs, to a 5 year who is ready for school). We also tailor our learning experiences to the needs of the children in our group: a day with the older children will look very different from a day with the younger children – different plans, different expectations.*
- *If the child is ready to learn the expected behaviour and there is not an underlying reason the child can't learn, it is merely a case of teaching a child what we expect from them? This involves gentle guidance and positive reinforcement.*
- *Sometimes we need to consider whether there might be another reason that a child cannot comply with behavioural expectations. Some children really do struggle to listen, sit still for more than a minute, or seem to always be hitting other children and knocking down their friends block towers or taking their toys. Why might this be? We might suggest that parents consider consulting with an expert such as an occupational therapist, speech therapist, psychologist, paediatrician or to have hearing or eyesight checked. Our aim is not to seek a label for a child, but rather a reason to explain the difficult behaviours and also some strategies we can use to help a child be a part of the preschool environment.*

We are always keen to work in partnership with families to understand and manage challenging behaviours to a positive outcome for the child, family and preschool.

Grouping of Children

As a one unit setting with ample space both indoors and out, we are in the fortunate position of being able to base the arrangement of children and groups around the needs of each group of children at the time. Our aim is to structure our setting to provide a family-like structure and atmosphere where the day is unrushed and relaxed.

Reflective practice allows us to work together to observe and consider the changing needs of each group according to factors such as age, personality, interest, skill and experience, and to make adaptive changes to grouping and arrangements as required.

We believe that having mixed age grouping with fluid movement for the majority of the day provides benefits to both younger and older children. The younger children love to observe and learn from the older children, while the older children learn to care for, assist and coach the younger children, much like in a family.



Sutherland Presbyterian Church Preschool

For the majority of the day the children are able to choose who they work with and this leads to a fluid style of grouping, self-created by the children themselves. These groups form according to the activities being engaged in at the time and change as interests change. Sometimes they will even organise a game led by the older children, but engaged in by the majority of the group with a high level of enthusiasm and commitment.

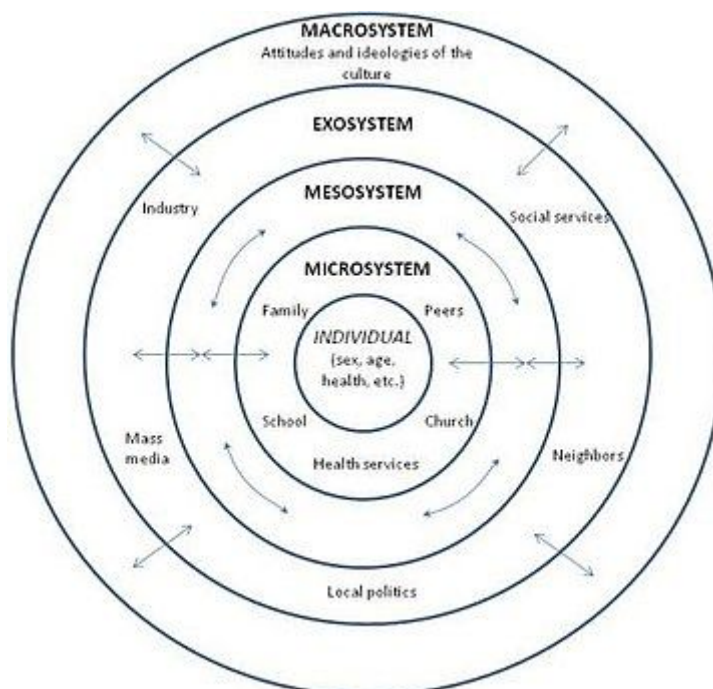
Another factor which we believe assists the high level of cooperative relationships we observe between the children, is our form of grouping on enrolment. We encourage families to enrol their children in a Monday/ Tuesday (Wednesday) or (Wednesday) Thursday, Friday pattern as this assists the children in developing and maintaining relationships with children who they can feel confident will be attending the same days as them.

Smaller, specialised group sessions allow for more targeted teaching and learning opportunities for children according to need or interest.

Our Community

From our Pedagogical Learning and Documentation Policy:

Urie Bronfenbrenner proposed the concept of related ecological systems, the idea that there are many important connections between us and our family, friends, school/ work mates and community. These connections can open up many opportunities for relationship building and learning.



We believe these connections play an important role as children grow and develop their own sense of self. For this reason, involvement in our local community is important to us and we have developed relationships with our local library, aged care centre, regional art gallery, and shopping centre.



Sutherland Presbyterian Church Preschool

We are often greeted by members of our community during our outings and the children are welcomed into community facilities with pleasure.

Reflective Practice and Professional Learning by Educators

Reflective practice and continued professional learning provide educators with important knowledge and tools to improve practice within the preschool setting, and therefore continue to be a priority for our educators.

References:

Early Childhood Australia (2016) Code of Ethics

Pascoe, S. & Brennan, D. (2017) *Lifting our Game: Report of the review to achieve educational excellence in Australian schools through early childhood interventions*. Melbourne: Victorian Government.

UN Rights of the Child

Meeting and discussion notes from the educating team of Sutherland Presbyterian Church Preschool, April, 2020.

Related Policies

Philosophy
Code of Conduct
Enrolment & Orientation Policy
Pedagogical Learning and Documentation Policy
Grievance Policy

UN Rights of the Child
ECA Code of Ethics

Document Control

Date of last review: New policy
Date of current review: August, 2020.
Date of next review: August, 2022.

Approved by: Lisa Collins (Director)/ Barbara Black (Preschool Management Committee).