



Learning and Development Policy (including school readiness)

Children's Services Policy No 3.1

Original Development Date: April 2015

Replaces issue: Programming Policy for Long Day Care and School Readiness Program Policy

Date Implemented: 10 November 2015

Date Revised: September 2019; and September 2020

Aim:

- To ensure that children's learning, development and safety are the primary consideration in the provision of programs.
- To provide a supported learning environment, rich with opportunities and experiences.
- To provide programs that are based on the latest research and trends in early childhood education.
- To foster a love of learning through the programs, interactions and environment.
- To provide an appropriate school readiness program within the daily curriculum to enhance the learning and development of skills for children transitioning to school.

Background Information:

Long Day Care

Children are natural learners from birth; they learn through their families, experiences, and environment and from staff.. Based on contemporary theories and practices on how children learn and develop, the programs will provide a solid grounding for learning, knowledge and discovery. The purposeful actions of staff will foster the building of connections for learning and to enhance existing knowledge.

Lifelong learning begins in early childhood and continues throughout school; as such, preparing children for the transition to school is a big step in the child's life as well as the family's life.

Throughout the service's daily curriculum, the early childhood teachers and educators plan for specific experiences and activities in order to foster the children's developing skills in preparation for beginning school.

Relevant Legislation:

- Education and Care Services National Regulations (Amendment 2018)
- Children (Education and Care Services National Law Application) Act 2010
- Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998

Resources:

- *My Time, Our Place* – Framework for School Age Care in Australia.
- *Belonging, Being and Becoming* – The Early Years Learning Framework.
- Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth publications @ www.aracy.org.au/publications-resources:
 - *The Nest* – A national plan for child and youth wellbeing;

- *Good Beginnings: Getting it right in the early years*; Emerson, L., Fox, S. and Smith, C. (2015); and
- *The delivery of a Child and Family Wellbeing Project using The Common Approach – Final Report*; Goodhue, R. (2015).
- Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority. (2018). *The Role of the Educational Leader* @ https://www.acecqa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2018-05/QA7_TheRoleOfTheEducationalLeader.pdf.
- Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority. (2019). *The Educational Leader Resources* @ https://www.acecqa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2019-04/ACECQA_Educational_Leader_Manual_WEB.pdf.
- Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (2012). *Starting Strong III. Toolbox for Early Childhood Education and Care* @ <http://www.oecd.org/edu/school/startingstrongiiiqualitytoolboxforearlychildhoodeducationandcare.htm>.
- *Early Childhood Matters. Evidence from the Effective Pre-School and Primary Education Project*. Sylva, K. Melhuish, E. Sammons, P, Siraj-Blatchford, I. & Taggart, B. (Eds.) (2010).
- National Quality Standards – Quality Area 1 – Standard 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3 – all elements; and Quality Area 7 Standard 7.2, Element 7.2.2.

Note: In this policy “staff” and “educators” refers to staff employed by Willoughby City Council.

Practices:

Each service is varied and diverse, as is the way that each program is developed and implemented. The underlining connection within our Children’s Services is providing programs that are:

- High quality
- Child centred
- Leisure and play based
- Achieving educational outcomes

The holistic approach to the program includes all aspects of the service:

- Daily routines including mealtimes
- Interactions and partnerships
- Physical environment, materials and equipment
- Experiences and activities

The programs will reflect the Principles, Practices and Learning Outcomes of the *My Time, Our Place – Framework for School Age Care in Australia* and *Belonging, Being and Becoming – The Early Years Learning Framework*; and will acknowledge and take into account:

- The individual and group needs of the children attending the service.
- The age and developmental stage of the children.
- Diversity of families and cultures within the local community.
- The environment.
- Directions and expectations from government/agencies regarding learning and education.

The programs will:

- Support each child’s needs, including formal and informal observations by staff.
- Reflect the philosophy and goals of the service.
- Promote the dignity and rights of the child.

- Promote cultural diversity and social justice.
- Have flexibility.
- Document children’s learning and development; and be evaluated.
- Be balanced in providing children’s interest based experiences and intentional teaching opportunities.
- Comply with regulatory standards and quality assurance principles.
- Be based on contemporary research and early childhood theories.

Children will be provided with opportunities to:

- Play and explore both indoors and outdoors.
- Have freedom, choice and flexibility of experiences where appropriate.
- Pursue interests and develop a sense of wonder.
- Practice their growing autonomy, agency and independence.
- Learn appropriate social interactions and communication skills.
- Practice positive and responsible behaviours.

Staff will:

- Be provided with professional development training opportunities and support.
- Be skilled and/or suitably qualified.
- Keep up to date with current research and practices – in-service courses, early childhood journals etc.
- Be supported by their Nominated Supervisor and Community Life Management team.
- Be provided with suitable and appropriate equipment and provisions to implement the programs.
- Regularly review the programs with adaptations to be made where required.

Role of the Educational Leader

The role of the Educational Leader involves the development and delivery of the educational program. Mentoring by Educational Leaders has become a critical element of professional development and quality assurance.

The role of the Educational Leader is primarily to:

- Collaborate with staff and provide curriculum direction and guidance;
- Support staff to effectively implement the cycle of planning to enhance programs and practices;
- Lead the development and implementation of an effective educational program in the service; and
- Ensure that children’s learning and development are guided by the learning outcomes of the approved learning frameworks (ACECQA, 2018).

The role of an Educational Leader is significant in mentoring staff for leading and delivering quality programming and education programs for children and families.

School Readiness:

Long Day Care

It is important to remember that preparation for school or school readiness is not about learning to read or write; however, it is about supporting and preparing the children for learning and encouraging a love of learning. This is fostered throughout our daily programs.

Effective programs are flexible and responsive. Our early childhood educators will facilitate appropriate programs for the individual group and will be responsive to the changing needs

of the group, their interests and their needs. The programs are based on school preparation learning outcomes for the children and evaluated with changes made where required.

Some of the key elements of the school readiness programs are:

1. Incorporation of school based activities in our daily programs including providing the children with opportunities to develop important self-help skills such as using lunch boxes, drink bottles etc.
2. Developing and building specific skills and competencies including:
 - Recognition and development of literacy and numeracy skills
 - Group participation/respect
 - Social skills, resilience, confidence and self-esteem
 - Task processes and problem solving
 - Creative/expressive skills and appreciation
 - Music awareness- tone/pitch/rhythm/beat/tempo
 - Physical development - fine/gross
 - Development of positive attitudes towards self and others
 - Listening, speaking and following directions
3. Information exchange with parents/carers: (Long Day Care specific).
 - Staff will be available to talk with parents/guardians regarding each individual child's readiness to attend school.
 - The service will implement School Readiness Programs that are separate to the room programs. The programs will provide parents with information on the skills the children will be working on.
 - Information night for families will be held in each year for all families.
4. School Visits:
 - Where possible, staff will arrange to visit the local school with small groups of children. This will allow the children the opportunity to gain an insight into the school environment.

** Parents/carers are to note that should a service organise these visits, parents and children are still required to attend the formal Orientation Visits that are organised by the child's school, as these provide families with information for the individual school.

Parent/carers involvement in School Readiness:

Parents/carers play a vital role in preparing children for school and parental/carer support is important for children to gain confidence and develop the necessary skills to make school and learning successful. Parents/carers can help their child by exposing the child to many aspects of school life.

Tips on Building Confidence:

- Talk with your child about your positive school experiences.
- Go past the school regularly and talk with your child about the school.
- Take your child to the school orientation visit. This allows your child to see the classrooms, toilets, playground, and meet other children.
- Practice opening lunch boxes, popper drinks and drink bottles.
- Encourage your child to become self-sufficient at putting on and taking off his/her jumper, tying shoelaces etc.
- Help your child to take responsibility for their belongings.
- Talk openly with your child about any concern they may have. Many children and parents/carers are anxious about starting school.

- Show your child you are confident in them starting school, as this may also help your child.

Learning:

- Learning begins before formal school starts. Whilst children are exposed to learning at the child care services, parents/carers play a vital role in supporting and guiding their child's learning.
- Read to your child every day - let your child "read" their favourite book to you from memory.
- Talk with your child about the stories, the pictures, what they liked best in the story.
- Read familiar books often, as well as introducing new books to your child.
- Demonstrate to your child that you also enjoy reading.
- Use a range of writing materials, paints, textas, and pencils, draw pictures and write names, words, or symbols.
- Developing maths skills is easy at home. Tasks such as baking - ask your child to help make cakes - measure the ingredients, talk about size, shape colour, difference, patterns and sequence events.
- Allow your child to experience the joy of learning in a fun, relaxing and interesting way.
- Engage with the School Readiness program in the classroom.

A successful transition program is flexible and encompasses the child, parents/carers, staff, the community and the school.

Talk with your child care service if you have any concerns or questions regarding the transition to school program.

Procedure

Each service will develop a programming procedure. This procedure will be reflective of the Learning and Development Policy and the service's Philosophy. It will outline the practices of the development and evaluation of the program including input from children and families. The procedure will summarise the process of how individual observations of the children are recorded and kept and the relationship to the program.

Research in Council's Education and Care Services

Should individuals want to conduct research projects in Council's Education and Care Services, these individuals will need to seek permission in writing from Council's Community Life Manager.

Parents/carers will be informed in writing of any project before commencement. This will involve the research brief as well as the impact on the Education and Care Service. Researchers will be required to gain permission from parents/carers before recording any observations of children, including the use of photos. Parents/carers will be given access to any recorded observations taken by a researcher if they so desire.