

INCLUSION AND EQUITY PROCEDURE

Best Practice – Quality Areas 1-7

Sandhurst Catholic Early Childhood Education and Care Ltd. (SCECE&C) is an incorporated company constituted by the Bishop of Sandhurst and is a subsidiary company of Catholic Education Sandhurst (CES) Limited, who is its Member, and it is governed by an independent Board of Directors.

SCECE&C Ltd.'s Vision is to create high quality environments which are authentically Catholic, where each child and family is accompanied on their journey of development, supported by the pastoral ministry of our Church as embodied in our Sandhurst communities.

St Mel's Kindergarten is an Early Childhood Education and Care service within the Diocese of Sandhurst which is operated by SCECE&C as the Approved Provider.

PURPOSE

This procedure will provide guidance regarding the Inclusion and Equity Policy and aims to promote inclusion and to ensure that all adults and children of St Mel's Kindergarten are treated equitably and with respect, regardless of their background, ethnicity, culture, language, beliefs, gender, age, socioeconomic status, level of ability, additional needs, family structure or lifestyle.

PROCEDURES

The Approved Provider and Persons with Management or Control are responsible for:

- ensuring that service programs are available and accessible to families from a variety of backgrounds (refer to *Curriculum Development Policy*)
- encouraging collaborative, family-centred practice (refer to *Definitions*) at the service which facilitates the inclusion and active participation of both the child and the family at the service
- providing families with information about the support options available for children attending St Mel's Kindergarten
- ensuring that educational programs are delivered in accordance with an approved learning framework, are based on the developmental needs, interests and experiences of each child, and take into account the individual differences of each child (*Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework Practice Guide Four: Equity and Diversity – refer to Sources*)
- ensuring that the enrolment process is fair and equitable, and facilitates access for all children (refer to *Enrolment and Orientation Policy*)
- tailoring the orientation process to meet the individual needs of children and

families (refer to Enrolment and Orientation Policy)

- identifying the barriers to participation in service programs and activities, and developing strategies to overcome these barriers
- ensuring that facilities are designed or adapted to support access by every child, family, educator and staff member, including adaptive equipment to support the inclusion of all children
- ensuring that staff have access to appropriate and accredited professional development activities that promote a positive understanding of the dignity of the human person, the common good, diversity, inclusion and equity, and mental health and wellbeing, within the context of a Catholic pastoral community and provide skills to assist in implementing this policy (refer to *Staffing Policy*)
- ensuring that the Nominated Supervisor and all staff are aware of the service's expectations regarding positive, respectful and appropriate behaviour when working with children and families (refer to *Code of Conduct Policy* and *Interactions with Children Policy*)
- considering any issues regarding fees that may be a barrier to families enrolling at St Mel's Kindergarten, and removing these barriers wherever possible (refer to *Fees Policy*)
- ensuring that all eligible families are supported to access the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy (refer to *Definitions* and *Fees Policy*), including families with concession cards, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, and refugee and asylum seeker families
- providing service information in various community languages wherever possible
- using language services (refer to *Sources*) to assist with communication where required and considering the employment of a multilingual worker/s to meet the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) families
- working with the Nominated Supervisor and educators to ensure appropriate program planning and resourcing for children with additional needs (refer to *Definitions*)
- where practicable, accessing resources, support and professional development to facilitate inclusion of children with additional needs who are ineligible for specific support packages
- ensuring collaborative relationships with specialised services and professionals to provide support and services for families and children with a disability, complex medical needs and/or developmental delay
- ensuring that all eligible three-year-old Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and children known to Child Protection are supported to access the Early Start Kindergarten program (refer to *Definitions*)
- implementing appropriate programs and practices to support vulnerable children and families, including working co-operatively with relevant services and/or professionals, where required (refer to *Child Safe Environment Policy*)
- ensuring that service programs are inclusive of all children with medical conditions
- ensuring that no employee, prospective employee, parent/guardian, child, volunteer or student at the service is discriminated against
- ensuring that any behaviour or circumstances that may constitute discrimination or prejudice are dealt with in an appropriate manner (refer to *Complaints and*

Grievances Policy)

- ensuring there are clear referral options and pathways for children, staff, educators and families to access support services for mental health and wellbeing
- ensuring that educators and staff are supported to learn about and care for their own mental health and wellbeing
- ensuring that mental health and wellbeing information and policy requirements are included in educator and staff orientation/induction
- ensuring that leadership practices and on-the-ground support enable a work environment that minimizes stress and promotes mental health and wellbeing for educators and staff
- ensuring that all policies of St Mel's Kindergarten, including the *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy*, are adhered to at all times.

The Nominated Supervisor and Persons in Day to Day Charge are responsible for:

- ensuring that the service provides a safe, inclusive and empowering environment which celebrates diversity through positive, respectful and appropriate behaviour when working with children and families (refer to *Code of Conduct Policy* and *Interactions with Children Policy*).
- ensuring the diversity and interests of the children, families, educators and staff are reflected in the physical environment
- ensuring there are quiet and reflective spaces for children, educators and families
- ensuring that cultural values and expectations about health and wellbeing are respected
- providing an educational program that is reflective of the service's values, beliefs and philosophy, and embraces the principles of the dignity of the human person, the common good, fairness, equity, diversity and inclusion (*Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework Practice Guide Four: Equity and Diversity – refer to Sources*)
- identifying children with additional needs
- being aware of support and resources available to ensure that children are included in service programs
- ensuring that service programs are inclusive of all children with medical conditions
- using family-centred practice (refer to *Definitions*) and working collaboratively with staff, parents/guardians, specialist services and other professionals to implement the program at the service and provide individualised support for children
- providing information to families about the support available to assist children
- providing opportunities for families to contribute to the program as key partners
- ensuring that parents/guardians are consulted, kept informed and provide written consent, where individualised programs, action, support or intervention are planned and provided for their child
- responding to the needs and concerns of parents/guardians, and providing support and guidance, where appropriate
- working with educators to ensure appropriate program planning and resourcing for children with additional needs (refer to *Definitions*)

- providing support and guidance to educators/staff
- organising appropriate resources and accredited professional development for educators to enable all children to be included at the service, and to understand when and how to refer children to additional support
- developing links with other services and/or professionals to support mental health and wellbeing, children with additional needs and have referral pathways in place
- ensuring that the program provides opportunities for all children to participate and interact with one another
- using language services (refer to *Sources*) to assist with communication, where required
- ensuring that individualised programs incorporate opportunities for regular review and evaluation, in consultation with all people involved in the child's education and care
- providing information to families about local parenting and family services, mental health and wellbeing and other resources that are available to support the health and wellbeing of children and families
- developing partnerships with other education and care settings and schools to enable children to move successfully from one setting to another
- notifying the Approved Provider of any behaviour or circumstances that may constitute discrimination, bullying, harassment or prejudice
- ensuring that no employee, prospective employee, parent/guardian, child, volunteer or student at the service is discriminated against
- ensuring that any behaviour or circumstances that may constitute discrimination or prejudice are dealt with in an appropriate manner (refer to *Complaints and Grievances Policy*)
- ensuring that all policies of St Mel's Kindergarten, including the *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy*, are adhered to at all times.

Educators and all other staff are responsible for:

- supporting the participation and inclusion of all children in the program at the service
- being aware of the service's expectations regarding positive, respectful and appropriate behaviour when working with children and families (refer to *Code of Conduct Policy* and *Interactions with Children Policy*)
- using family-centred practice (refer to *Definitions*) and working collaboratively with other staff, parents/guardians, specialist services and professionals to implement the program at the service and provide individualised support for children, where required
- delivering an educational program that is reflective of the service's values, beliefs and philosophy, and embraces the principles of the dignity of the human person, the common good, fairness, equity, diversity and inclusion (*Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework Practice Guide Four: Equity and Diversity – refer to Sources*)
- embedding social and emotional learning in the service program and practice, and teaching children to care for their own mental health
- providing a range of opportunities in the outdoor and indoor spaces and the natural

environment, for all children to engage in physical, explorative and creative experiences

- encouraging and supporting other educators, staff and families as role models to demonstrate positive and respectful relationships, and positive mental health and wellbeing
- undertaking appropriate, accredited professional development to support the inclusion of all children at the service
- using language services to assist with communication, where required
- understanding and respecting different cultural child-rearing and social practices
- working with the Approved Provider and Nominated Supervisor to ensure appropriate program planning and resourcing for children with additional needs (refer to *Definitions*)
- meeting any specialised medical and nutritional needs of children on a day-to-day basis (refer to *Dealing with Medical Conditions Policy* and *Nutrition and Active Play Policy*)
- providing information to families about the support available to assist children
- discussing any concerns regarding individual children with the Nominated Supervisor or Approved Provider, and parents/guardians
- responding to the needs and concerns of parents/guardians, and providing support and guidance, where appropriate
- reviewing and evaluating individualised support programs in consultation with all people involved in the child's education and care
- critically reflecting on practice to ensure that interactions and programs embrace an approach in which children and families feel valued and respected, and that their contributions are welcomed
- notifying the Nominated Supervisor or Approved Provider of any behaviour or circumstances that may constitute discrimination or prejudice
- adhering to the policies of St Mel's Kindergarten, including the *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy*, at all times.

Parents/guardians are responsible for:

- adhering to the policies of St Mel's Kindergarten, including the *Inclusion and Equity Policy*, *Code of Conduct* and the *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy*, at all times
- communicating with the service to ensure awareness of their child's specific needs
- raising any issues or concerns regarding their child's participation in the program
- responding to requests from educators for written permission to arrange for an assessment or collect reports on their child from service providers
- being involved in, keeping fully informed about, and providing written consent for any individualised intervention or support proposed/provided for their child.

Volunteers and students, while at the service, are responsible for following this procedure.

EVALUATION

In order to assess whether the values and purposes of the policy have been achieved, the Approved Provider will:

- regularly seek feedback from everyone affected by the policy regarding its effectiveness
- monitor the implementation, compliance, complaints and incidents in relation to this policy
- keep the policy up to date with current legislation, research, policy and best practice
- revise the policy and procedures as part of the service's policy review cycle, or as required
- notify parents/guardians at least 14 days before making any changes to this policy or its procedures unless a lesser period is necessary because of a risk.

ATTACHMENTS

Nil

AUTHORISATION

This procedure was adopted by the Approved Provider of St Mel's Kindergarten on 27 April 2022

REVIEW DATE: March 2025