

Policy Name:	<b>Inclusion and Equity</b>
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Created By:	The Staff and Committee of Management
Authorised By:	Committee of Management
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## **Best Practice – Quality Area 1 (and 6)**

### **Purpose**

This policy will provide guidelines to:

- ensure all adults and children at Sherbourne Preschool 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
- promote inclusive practices and ensure the successful participation of all children at Sherbourne Preschool  
Policy statement

### **Values**

Sherbourne Preschool is committed to:

- acknowledging and respecting the rights of all children to be provided with and participate in a quality early childhood education and care program
- creating an environment that supports, reflects and promotes equitable and inclusive behaviours and practices
- creating a sense of belonging for all children, families and staff, where diverse identities, backgrounds, experiences, skills and interests are respected, valued and given opportunities to be expressed/developed
- ensuring that programs are reflective of, and responsive to, the values and cultural beliefs of families using the service, and of those within the local community and broader society
- working to ensure children are not discriminated against on the basis of background, ethnicity, culture, language, beliefs, gender, age, socioeconomic status, level of ability or additional needs, family structure or lifestyle
- providing all children with the opportunity to access programs at the service, and recognising that all families are unique and that children learn in different ways and at different rates
- consistently updating and supporting the knowledge, skills, practices and attitudes of staff to encourage and ensure inclusion and equity
- complying with current legislation including the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*, *Equal Opportunity Act 2010*, *Disability Act 2006* and *Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001*.

### **Scope**

All children and families have a right to the same opportunities for participation, acceptance and belonging regardless of gender, age, socio-economic status, race, language, beliefs, additional needs and family structure

or lifestyle. This policy outlines the expectations relating to inclusive practices to ensure the successful participation of all children attending Sherbourne Preschool.

### **Application**

All staff, families, volunteers and students attending the programs and activities of Sherbourne Preschool.

### **Definitions**

The terms defined in this section relate specifically to this policy:

**Additional needs:** A broad term that can include families and children experiencing disability, a medical condition, a developmental concern, an emotional need (resulting from trauma, abuse or grief), family displacement (due to war or refugee status), domestic violence, mental illness, family separation or divorce.

**Blood-borne virus (BBV):** A virus that is spread when blood from an infected person enters another person's bloodstream. Examples of blood-borne viruses include human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), hepatitis B, hepatitis C and viral hemorrhagic fevers. Where basic hygiene, safety, infection control and first aid procedures are followed, the risk of contracting a blood-borne virus is negligible.

**Culture:** The values and traditions of groups of people that are passed from one generation to another.

**Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD):** Refers to individuals and groups who are from diverse racial, religious, linguistic and/or ethnic backgrounds.

**Developmental delay:** A delay in the development of a child under the age of 6 years that:

- is attributable to a mental or physical impairment, or a combination of mental and physical impairments, and
- is manifested before the child attains the age of 6 years, and
- results in substantial functional limitations in one or more of the following areas of major life activity:
- self-care
- receptive and expressive language
- cognitive development
- motor development, and
- reflects the child's need for a combination and sequence of special interdisciplinary or generic care, treatment or other services that are of extended duration and are individually planned and co-ordinated (*Disability Act 2006 (Vic)*).

**Disability:** In relation to a person, refers to:

- a) a sensory, physical or neurological impairment or acquired brain injury, or any combination thereof, that:  
is, or is likely to be, permanent, and
  - causes a substantially reduced capacity in at least one of the areas of self-care, self-management, mobility or communication, and
  - requires significant ongoing or long-term episodic support, and
  - is not related to ageing, or
  - an intellectual disability, or
  - a developmental delay (*Disability Act 2006 (Vic)*).

**Diversity:** Refers to all characteristics that make individuals different from one another, including race, religion, language, ethnicity, beliefs, age, gender, sexual orientation, level of ability, additional needs, socioeconomic status, educational attainment, personality, marital and/or parental status, family structure, lifestyle and general life/work experience.

**Early Start Kindergarten:** A funding program that enables three-year-old Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, and children known to Child Protection, to attend a free kindergarten program that is planned and delivered by an early childhood teacher for a specific number of hours.

**Equity:** (In the context of human rights) is the behaviour of acting in a fair and just manner towards others.

**Inclusion:** The incorporation of children and families into the service to ensure that all individuals have an equal opportunity to achieve their maximum potential.

**Inclusive practice:** The provision of a flexible, innovative and responsive program that supports the learning needs and meaningful participation of all children attending the service.

**Family Centred Practice:** Practice which:

- uses families' understanding of their children to support shared decision-making about each child's learning and development
- creates a welcoming and culturally-inclusive environment, where families are encouraged to participate in and contribute to children's learning and development
- actively engages families and children in planning children's learning and development
- provides feedback to families on each child's learning, and provide information about how families can further advance children's learning and development at home and in the community.

**Kindergarten Fee Subsidy (KFS):** A state government subsidy paid directly to the funded service to enable eligible families to attend a funded kindergarten program or funded three-year-old place at no cost (or minimal cost) to promote participation. Details are available at [www.education.vic.gov.au/ecprofessionals/kindergarten/](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/ecprofessionals/kindergarten/)

**Kindergarten Inclusion Support Services (KISS):** A program offering supplementary assistance to early childhood services to support the inclusion of children who have been diagnosed with developmental concerns, a disability or complex medical needs, into a funded kindergarten program. Services include the Preschool Field Officer Program (refer to *Definitions*) and Kindergarten Inclusion Support Packages (refer to *Definitions*). For more information, visit [www.education.vic.gov.au/ecsmanagement/intervention/services/default.htm](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/ecsmanagement/intervention/services/default.htm)

**Kindergarten Inclusion Support Packages:** Supplementary assistance to support children with severe disabilities or complex medical needs to access and participate in an inclusive kindergarten program.

### **Our Responsibilities:**

Sherbourne Preschool is responsible for:

- ensuring that service programs are available and accessible to families from a variety of backgrounds
- 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)
- providing an educational program that is reflective of the service's values, beliefs and philosophy, and embraces the principles of fairness, equity, diversity and inclusion (Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework Practice Guide Four: Equity and Diversity)
- 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
- working with individual families to determine the needs of their child and facilitating the inclusion of both the child and the family into the service
- 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*)
- providing opportunities for families to contribute to the program as key partners

- 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 considering barriers to participation in service programs and activities, and developing strategies to overcome these
- ensuring that facilities are designed or adapted to support access by every child, family, educator and staff member, including adaptive equipment to support inclusion of all children
- ensuring that staff have access to appropriate and accredited professional development activities that promote a positive understanding of diversity, inclusion and equity, and provide skills to assist in implementing this policy
- ensuring that all staff, volunteers, students and the committee of management are aware of the service's expectations regarding positive, respectful and appropriate behaviour when working with children and families
- consider any issues regarding fees that may be a barrier to families enrolling at Sherbourne Preschool, and removing these barriers wherever possible
- ensuring that all eligible families are supported to access the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy 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 to assist with communication where required, considering the employment of a multilingual worker/s to meet the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) families
- working with the all staff to ensure appropriate program planning and resourcing for children with additional needs
- accessing Kindergarten Inclusion Support Services and Kindergarten Inclusion Support Packages for children with disabilities, complex medical needs and/or developmental concerns, where required
- where practicable, accessing resources, support and professional development to facilitate inclusion of children with additional needs who are ineligible for specific support packages
- developing links with other services and/or professionals to support children with additional needs and where required have referral pathways in place
- working with specialised services and professionals to provide support and services for families and children experiencing severe disabilities, complex medical needs and/or developmental concerns
- ensuring that individualised programs incorporate opportunities for regular review and evaluation, in consultation with all people involved in the child's education and care
- 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
- accessing support from DEECD's Koorie Engagement Support Officers the Koorie Preschool Assistants program and the Indigenous Education Program (refer to Definitions), where required
- implementing appropriate programs and practices to support vulnerable children and families, including working co-operatively with relevant services and/or professionals (e.g. Child FIRST), where required
- developing partnerships with other education and care settings and schools to enable children to move successfully from one setting to another
- ensuring that no employee, prospective employee, parent/guardian, child, volunteer or student at the service is discriminated against on the basis of having or being suspected of having an infectious disease, blood-borne virus illness or medical condition
- 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 the program provides opportunities for all children to participate and interact with one another

- ensuring that all policies of Sherbourne Pre-School, including the Privacy and Confidentiality Policy, are adhered to at all times.

### **Family Responsibilities**

Families are responsible for:

- adhering to the policies of, including this Sherbourne Preschool Inclusion and Equity Policy 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
- being involved in, keeping fully informed about, and providing written consent for any individualised intervention or support proposed/provided for their child
- responding to requests from educators for written permission to arrange for an assessment or collect reports on their child.

### **Legislation and standards**

Relevant legislation and standards include but are not limited to:

- Age Discrimination Act 2004
- Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic), as amended 2011
- Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic), as amended 2011
- Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic), as amended 2012
- Dardee Boorai: the Victorian Charter of Safety and Wellbeing for Aboriginal Children and Young People (Vic)
- Disability Act 2006 (Vic)
- Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth), as amended 2011
- Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010
- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011
- Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic)
- Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth)
- Health Records Act 2001 (Vic)
- Information Privacy Act 2000 (Vic)
- National Quality Standard, Quality Area 1: Educational Program and Practice
- Standard 1.1: An approved learning framework informs the development of a curriculum that enhances each child's learning and development
- Element 1.1.5: Every child is supported to participate in the program
- National Quality Standard, Quality Area 6: Collaborative Partnerships with Families and Communities
- Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004
- Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)
- Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001 (Vic)
- Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Cth)
- Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth)