



Inclusion & Equity Policy

Purpose

This policy will provide guidelines to ensure:

- All people at St Kevin's Out of Hours School Care (OHSC) Centre are treated equitably and with a level of mutual respect regardless of their background, ability or additional needs, gender, age, socioeconomic status, culture, language, beliefs and family structure or lifestyle
- The promotion of inclusive practices and the successful inclusion of all children.

Refer to Quality Improvement and Accreditation System (QIAS), Quality Practices Guide 2005, Principles 1.3, 1.4, 1.5, 1.6, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.5, 4.6, 6.1, 6.2, 7.3.

Policy statement

1. Values

St Kevin's Out of Hours School Care (OHSC) Centre is committed to:

- Creating a sense of belonging for all children, families and staff where diverse identities, experiences, skills and interests are respected, valued and given opportunities to be expressed and developed
- Creating an environment that supports, reflects and promotes equitable and inclusive behaviours and practices
- Ensuring that programs are reflective of and responsive to the values and cultural beliefs of the families using the centre and those within the local community and broader society
- Working to ensure children are not discriminated against on the basis of gender, age ability, economic status, family structure, lifestyle, ethnicity, religion, spiritual practice, language, culture or national origin
- Providing all children with the opportunity to access centre programs regardless of ability, gender, age, economic status, family structure (including orientation), lifestyle, ethnicity, religion or spiritual practice, language, culture or national origin
- Acknowledging and respecting the rights of all children to participate in a quality children's program
- Recognising that families are different and unique and that all children learn in different ways and at different rates
- Consistently updating and supporting the knowledge, skills and attitudes of staff in regard to contemporary issues and appropriate practice in relation to inclusion and equity.

2. Scope

This policy applies to children, parents/guardians, carers, staff, committee, volunteers, visitors, students and any other persons involved in the care and education of children at St Kevin's Out of Hours School Care (OHSC) Centre

3. Background and legislation

'Every child has the right to be treated with respect. It is vitally important that staff respect and value all children as individuals and that they strive to accommodate children's diverse abilities and their social, linguistic and cultural backgrounds.'

QIAS Quality Practices Guide 2005, 1st edition 2005, page 14

Underpinning the development of this policy and action plan are the requirements of the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cwlth). This Act is about creating a fairer society, with a set of objectives being to:

- Eliminate, as far as possible, discrimination against persons on the ground of disability
- Ensure, as far as practicable, that persons with disabilities have the same rights to equality before the law as the rest of the community
- Promote recognition and acceptance within the community of the principle that persons with disabilities have the same fundamental rights as the rest of the community.

Various state and Commonwealth laws prohibit discrimination based on certain characteristics, including race, age, gender, parental status or religion. Underpinning the development of this policy and action plan are the requirements of the Early Childhood Australia's Code of Ethics, the *Equal Opportunity Act 1995* (Vic.) and the Human Rights Commission Charter.

Language services are critical to ensuring equitable access to services for people with low proficiency in English. Timely and effective interpreting and translation services not only improve access to services, but they are also vital to improving the quality of the service provided. Providing language services is especially important in terms of the potential impact on outcomes for people who are not able to communicate in English.

People of all cultural, religious, racial or linguistic backgrounds have the right to enjoy their culture, declare and practise their religion and use their languages. Aboriginal people have the right to enjoy their identity and culture. They have the right to maintain their language, kinship ties and their distinctive essential relationship with the land, waters and other resources to which they have a connection under traditional laws and customs.

Relevant legislation may include but is not limited to:

- *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004*
- *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* (Vic.)
- *Children's Services Act 1996* (CSA)
- *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005*
- *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005*
- *St Kevin's Out of Hours School Care (OHSC) Centre*
- *Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Act 2005* (Cwlth)
- *Health Records Act 2001*
- *Intellectually Disabled Persons Act 1986*
- *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*
- *Age and Discrimination Act 2004*
- *Equal Opportunity Act 1995* (Vic.)
- *Privacy Act 2000* (Cwlth)
- *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* (Cwlth) (Amended 2004)
- *Racial and Religious Intolerance Act 2001* (Vic.)
- *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* (Cwlth)
- *Workplace Relations Act 1996* (Cwlth).

4. Definitions

Additional needs: A broad term that can include children and families with a disability or developmental delay; emotional needs resulting from trauma, abuse or grief, such as the death of a family member or friend; family displacement due to war or refugee status; domestic violence; family members with a mental illness; or separation and divorce.

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

Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD): A term used to refer to families who come from a complex range of ethnicity, religious affiliation, sexuality, disability, household make-up and socioeconomic backgrounds.

Diversity: (In the context of children's services) the unification of varying gender, race, religion, culture and ethnicity, ability, socioeconomic status, family structure and lifestyle.

Early Childhood Intervention Services (ECIS): ECIS support children with a disability or developmental delay from birth to school entry and their families.

Equity: (In the context of human rights) the behaviour of acting fair and just to others.

Holistic: (In the context of early childhood) refers to the whole child - developmentally, culturally, morally, spiritually.

Inclusion: The incorporation of all children and families into the centre to ensure that they have equal opportunities to achieve their maximum potential.

Inclusion support facilitator: Employed by inclusion support agencies funded by the Commonwealth Government to provide advice on inclusive practices in childcare services. Inclusion support facilitators also help services to access a range of practical supports.

Commonwealth Indigenous Education Program (IEP): Provides assistance for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who attend a kindergarten program. The IEP provides financial assistance through Supplementary Recurrent Assistance to support kindergarten programs, and aims to improve Indigenous literacy and numeracy, as well as educational outcomes for Indigenous students.

Mutual respect: Defined as 'a proper regard for the dignity of person or position'.

Philosophy: A statement held by an individual centre, which lists the values, beliefs, theory and understanding of the care and education of children within that centre.

Program: The session/group in which a child is enrolled and which has specific hours of attendance.

Proprietor: The owner of the centre, primary nominee or any person who manages or controls the centre.

Sociocultural approach: A teaching approach that embraces learning and observing children within a social environment and cultural context.

5. Sources and related centre policies

Sources

- DEECD, *Victorian kindergarten policy, procedures and funding criteria updates*
- DEECD, *Children's Services Guide*
- National Childcare Accreditation Council
- Information and application kit for *Kindergarten Inclusion Support Services* for children with severe disabilities
- Building better partnerships—a guide designed to provide practical communication advice about working with Aboriginal communities and organisations
- *Improving the Use of Translations and Interpreting Services: A Guide to Victorian Government Policy and Procedures*

Centre policies

- Behaviour guidance
- Child protection
- Code of conduct
- Communication
- Complaints and grievances

- Enrolment
- Privacy
- Program participation

Procedures

The committee is responsible for:

- Ensuring the centre is made available to a wide range of families
- Providing clearly defined enrolment procedures in their enrolment policy, which facilitates access for all children
- Developing procedures to ensure that the enrolment and orientation process is equitable and fair
- Ensuring information is provided to parents/guardians and the community about the inclusive practices at St Kevin's Out of Hours School Care (OHSC) Centre
- Where possible, providing information in the 'home' languages of families in the community or assisting in translating
- Tailoring the orientation process to meet the individual needs of children and families
- Providing budget allocations whilst remaining financially viable, to support inclusive practices
- Ensuring that children and parents/guardians do not experience any barriers to participation in centre activities
- Ensuring staff have access to appropriate and accredited professional development that will promote a positive understanding of diversity, inclusion and equity and assist them in gaining skills in implementing this policy
- Regularly reviewing with staff the planning and resourcing provided for children with additional needs participating in the program
- Identifying available support options for children
- Advising families of the support available through the Commonwealth Indigenous Education program (IEP)
- Working with the staff and families to identify and apply for additional resources/support for children with additional needs
- Providing appropriate physical and staffing resources within the budget constraints of the centre
- Consulting with staff, the parents/guardians of the child, and other professionals and/or agencies working with a family to determine additional resources required to assist in the inclusion of the child
- Maintaining professional memberships where applicable; for example, with FKA Multicultural Resource Centre.

The qualified staff are responsible for:

- Being articulate, reflective of practices and open to innovation
- Reflecting the current cultural population of the community in the centre's program
- Discussing with parents/guardians and respecting any requests they may have in relation to the incorporation of their cultural practices, beliefs and language in the daily program even when this may be a request to leave those practices to the home environment
- Developing and ensuring that the daily program is reflective of the centre's philosophy, which embraces diversity and demonstrates a sociocultural approach
- Reviewing enrolment applications to identify resources and assistance that may be required to meet children's needs
- Identifying children at risk of discrimination or exclusion

- Identifying the type of support required, consulting with families and liaising with the committee in order to access support and resources
- Establishing a program support group for children with high-support needs, which may include:
 - Parents or guardians
 - Carer of the child (if applicable)
 - Qualified staff
 - Specialist staff from an intervention service
 - Translators, teaching aid, additional staff, and others as appropriate
- Organising for the child's support group to meet prior to the child's commencement at the centre and at least once per term
- Ensuring that any support or resources available for a child are accessed in consultation with the parents/carers
- Ensuring that the parents/guardians are fully informed about the program planned and provided for their child and that they have given written consent for any action, support or intervention for their child
- Planning and implementing a program that incorporates the individual goals for each child
- Ensuring the program provides opportunities for all children to participate and interact with one another
- Responding to parents'/guardians' needs and providing support and guidance, where appropriate
- Providing support and guidance to other staff
- Encouraging a collaborative family-centred approach in implementing the program at the centre
- Ensuring that, in consultation with persons involved in the care and education of the child, any specialised medical and nutritional needs of the child are catered for in the day-to-day program; for example, halal
- Ensuring that the program incorporates opportunities for regular review and evaluation, in consultation with all persons involved in the child's care and education
- Providing opportunities for families to contribute to the program in a sociocultural context (see [Attachment 1](#), 'Strategies for an inclusive program').

All staff are responsible for:

- Working collaboratively with staff/parents/guardians/other professionals to implement the program developed for the children
- Modelling and promoting inclusiveness
- Researching, understanding and respecting different cultural child-rearing practices and social practices
- Reporting and discussing any concerns regarding a child's behaviour with the qualified staff
- Ensuring the Privacy policy is adhered to at all times
- Critically reflecting on their practices to ensure that their interactions and programs readily embrace an approach in which children and families feel valued, respected and contributions are celebrated
- Responding appropriately to circumstances that may reflect actions of discrimination or prejudice from either children or families
- Implementing the strategies outlined in [Attachment 1](#), 'Strategies for an inclusive program'

The parents/guardians are responsible for:

- Adhering and acting in accordance with the values outlined in this policy
- Sharing information about their child and their child's needs within the centre, while maintaining the right to decide who will receive information about their child
- Retaining information that they do not wish to divulge
- Raising any issues or concerns they have about their child's participation in the program

- Participating in the child support group meetings
- Being involved in, and fully informed about, any intervention or support proposed for their child
- Responding to requests from staff for permission to arrange for an assessment or collect reports on their child

The members of the child's support group are responsible for:

- Attending support group meetings, which will occur at least once a term and possibly once or twice prior to the child's commencement at the centre
- Assisting with facilitating the successful inclusion of the child into the centre
- Planning for the needs and requirements of the child in the centre
- Deciding together whether an application for support is required
- Seeking committee support for any application that would involve the committee in the provision of that support, such as employing staff
- Assisting the qualified staff member to complete any application forms
- Monitoring and evaluating the child's progress and setting appropriate planning objectives in an individual education program plan.

Evaluation

In order to assess whether the policy has achieved the values and purposes, the committee will:

- Take into account feedback from parents/guardians, staff, child support groups and any other persons involved in the care and education of the children
- Assess whether a satisfactory resolution has been achieved in relation to issues covered by this policy
- Monitor complaints and incidents regarding the operation of policy.

Attachments

[Attachment 1](#): Strategies for an inclusive program

Authorisation

This policy was adopted by the St Kevin's Out of Hours School Care (OHSC) Centre committee of management at a committee meeting on **June 2016**.

Review date: June 2018

Attachment 1 - Strategies for an inclusive program

Staff are encouraged and supported to:

- Ensure that all children are respected and regarded as equal
- Provide opportunities for learning that is responsive to individual personalities and learning styles, abilities, culture and lifestyles of children, and encourages children to build a positive sense of self
- Provide opportunities for learning that exposes children to a broader context of the diverse society of Australia, building positive attitudes and perceptions, and 'promote(s) equal opportunities and skills that will help children to live in diverse societies', (Yanez, J. L. 2007, p. 5)
- Reflect an inclusive approach whereby the environment is adapted to ensure that all children develop a sense of belonging and have access to appropriate experiences that build positive skills, knowledge and attitudes towards themselves and others
- Encourage children to feel that their family is viewed in a positive way.

Strategies for inclusive program planning and delivery

Staff will:

- Welcome children and families as they enter, attend and leave the centre
- Communicate with families to ensure adequate and appropriate knowledge and understanding of the child in the context of his/her family, community and lifestyle
- Be aware of and support the needs of children and their families in relation to language and communications with others and provide resources to maintain effective communication by:
 - o Participating in discussions with families, and if needed
 - o Accessing interpreter services through the DEEWR, local council or community service
 - o Accessing family support for orientation and language assistance through FKA Multicultural Resource Centre
- Provide information to families regarding their child's progress and development
- Encourage children's use of first and second languages within their child's life and community
- Incorporate the use of various languages within the daily program, such as through song stories, poetry, role-play, posters and discussions
- Be aware of and support the needs of children and their families in relation to diverse family lifestyles that include single-parent, same-sex, foster and/or extended families by:
 - o Ensuring equipment and interactions do not promote bias in family structure/culture and allow for various acceptance of various family models
 - o Ensuring the visual environment welcomes all families through posters and notices
 - o Ensuring that enrolment and other permission forms do not present bias
- Encourage families, inclusive of a variety of family members, to contribute to the program as appropriate
- Promote gender equity through their program and interactions with other staff, children, families and communities by encouraging all children to participate in all areas of the centre, working with children individually, in small and large groups to promote positive relationships with one another; for example:
 - o Organising the room and furniture to promote exploration in a variety of areas; broadening children's interests and preferences, such as cars and trucks next to the craft table
 - o Talking about what they see in posters and stories
 - o Addressing gender bias in children appropriately, such as when girls attempt to exclude boys in play or boys exclude girls, which may include: encouraging the value and contribution that all children make to play; role-modelling ways to include children in play that promotes gender equity; and using gender neutral language such as children

- Ensure that culture and lifestyle are celebrated and incorporated into the daily program naturally and effectively and do not take a tokenistic approach
- Promote cultural awareness through their program and interactions with other staff, children and families and the community by:
 - Developing an awareness of the cultural backgrounds of families attending St Kevin's OHSC and in the broader community
 - Including songs, stories and celebrations from various cultures within their program, making direct and appropriate links to families who wish to contribute to developing a meaningful understanding of their culture
 - Including in their daily equipment and materials, reflections of culture
 - Including centre events that reflect meaningful understanding of culture.

Strategies to support families in linking with the wider community

Staff can assist children and their families from diverse backgrounds or with additional needs to access information and services by providing:

- Alternative methods of communicating the program to families with limited literacy skills, such as photos, diagrams and meetings/discussions
- Support and links to families who may be experiencing difficulties in transporting their children to and from the centre; for example, through various local, state and federal support services, and charitable organisations
- Links in gaining support service for families in need or in crisis; for example, strengthening families, positive parenting programs, community health services, specialist children's services, assistance for families of refugee or asylum status.

Strategies to assist children of all abilities to be included equally in the program

Staff gain information and knowledge regarding requirements for including children with additional needs, which may include:

- Organising a planning meeting with the family prior to the child attending to discuss strategies to be specifically incorporated for the benefit of the child
- Seeking written permission from the family to liaise with relevant allied health or specialists involved with the child, such as speech pathologist or occupational therapist
- Where necessary, in consultation with the family and supportive services, organising submissions for funding for additional assistance.

Strategies for providing opportunities for families to contribute to the program in a sociocultural context

This will be achieved when staff:

- Develop meaningful relationships with families at **St. Kevin's OHSC**
- Use families as a direct resource to learn about their culture
- Spend time communicating with families, sharing knowledge and understanding
- Welcome families to bring ideas and appropriate resources to the program that are reflective of their culture and lifestyle.