

INCLUSION AND EQUITY POLICY

Best Practice – Quality Area 1 (and 6)

PURPOSE

This policy will provide guidelines to:

- ensure all adults and children at Alfred Nuttall Memorial 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
- promote inclusive practices and ensure the successful participation of all children at Alfred Nuttall Memorial Kindergarten

POLICY STATEMENT

1. VALUES

Alfred Nuttall Memorial Kindergarten 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
- 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 or blood-borne virus (BBV – refer to *Definitions*)
- upholding the values and principles of Early Childhood Australia (ECA) and Early Childhood Intervention Australia's (ECIA) *Position Statement on the Inclusion of Children with a Disability in Early Childhood Education and Care* (refer to *Sources*)
- 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*.

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to the Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, Persons in day-to-day Charge, educators, staff, students on placement, volunteers, parents/guardians, children and others attending the programs and activities of Alfred Nuttall Memorial Kindergarten.

3. BACKGROUND AND LEGISLATION

Background

It is intended that all Victorian children have access to a year of kindergarten before school. The Victorian Government requires funded organisations to ensure that their policies and procedures promote equality of opportunity for all children. Criteria for access and inclusion are outlined in the current edition of the Department of Education and Training's (DET) *The Kindergarten Funding Guide* (refer to *Sources*) and include the requirement that funded organisations comply with existing legislation.

State and Commonwealth laws prohibit discrimination based on personal characteristics, including race, age, gender, religious belief, disability or illness and parental status. Underpinning the development of this policy are the requirements of the *Equal Opportunity Act 2010*, *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*, *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005*, *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*, *Disability Act 2006*, *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010* and *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011*.

"An inclusive kindergarten fosters the development of a sense of belonging and respects individuality and diversity, in order to promote learning, development and well-being in a child's early years. Services must ensure their application and enrolment policies:

- promote fair and equitable access to kindergarten programs
- support all eligible children to access a kindergarten program, including those who face barriers to participation
- do not inadvertently present barriers to participation." (*The Kindergarten Funding Guide*).

"Inclusion involves taking into account all children's social, cultural and linguistic diversity (including learning styles, abilities, disabilities, gender, family circumstances and geographic location) in curriculum decision-making processes" (*Guide to the National Quality Standard*, Element 1.1.5 – refer to *Sources*). Services need to consider individual circumstances when engaging with parents and supporting children and ensure a coordinated, confidential and sensitive approach is taken and strengthens the capacity of the family unit.

Practice Guide Four: Equity and Diversity is one of a series of *Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework Practice Guides* (refer to *Sources*), and includes examples of best practice from a range of early childhood professionals across diverse settings.

In addition to developing and implementing an inclusion and equity policy, values of inclusion and equity should also be incorporated into a service's philosophy statement.

Developing professional knowledge and skills, and using family-centred practice (refer to *Definitions*) to work in partnership with children, families, communities, and other services and agencies, will assist services to identify, include and support children with additional needs and their families.

Early childhood services are obligated by law, service agreements and licensing requirements to comply with the Education and Care Services National Law and National Regulations, and privacy and health records legislation in relation to collecting and storing personal and health information about individuals (refer to *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy*).

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)
- *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* (Vic)
- *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005* (Vic)

- *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)
- *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)
- *Privacy and Data Protection 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)

The most current amendments to listed legislation can be found at:

- Victorian Legislation – Victorian Law Today: <http://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/>
- Commonwealth Legislation – ComLaw: <http://www.comlaw.gov.au/>

4. DEFINITIONS

The terms defined in this section relate specifically to this policy. For commonly used terms e.g. Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, Regulatory Authority etc. refer to the *General Definitions* section of this manual.

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.

Best Start: A prevention and early intervention project to improve the health, development, learning and wellbeing of all Victorian children from conception through to transition to school. It aims to strengthen the capacity of parents, families, communities and early years services to better provide for the needs of all young children and their families. There are 30 Best Start sites, six of which are Aboriginal Best Start sites. Further information is available in *The Kindergarten Funding Guide* (refer to *Sources*)

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:

- a) is attributable to a mental or physical impairment, or a combination of mental and physical impairments, and
- b) is manifested before the child attains the age of 6 years, and
- c) results in substantial functional limitations in one or more of the following areas of major life activity:
 - i) self-care
 - ii) receptive and expressive language
 - iii) cognitive development
 - iv) motor development, and
- d) 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:

- e) a sensory, physical or neurological impairment or acquired brain injury, or any combination thereof, that:
 - i) is, or is likely to be, permanent, and
 - ii) causes a substantially reduced capacity in at least one of the areas of self-care, self-management, mobility or communication, and
 - iii) requires significant ongoing or long-term episodic support, and
 - iv) is not related to ageing, or
- f) an intellectual disability, or
- g) 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 Childhood Intervention Services (ECIS): These services support families and children experiencing a disability or developmental delay (refer to *Definitions*) from birth to school age. ECIS are funded through the Department of Education and Training (DET) and provided by Specialist Children's Services teams and Early Childhood Intervention agencies.

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. Details are available at: <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/parents/kindergarten/Pages/earlystart.aspx>

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

Family-centred practice: Children learn in the context of their families, and families are the primary influence on children's learning and development. Professionals also play a role in advancing children's learning and development and can engage in family-centred practice by respecting the pivotal role of families in children's lives. Early childhood professionals should:

- use families' understanding of their children to support shared decision-making about each child's learning and development
- create a welcoming and culturally-inclusive environment, where all families are encouraged to participate in and contribute to children's learning and development
- actively engage families and children in planning children's learning and development

- provide 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 (*Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework*, p10).

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

Inclusion support agencies: Funded by the Commonwealth Government to work at a local level with early childhood education and care services. ISAs provide practical advice on inclusive practices and support child care services to build their capacity and to access training. The ISA may also recommend that services access resources, bi-cultural support and specialist equipment, administered by the Professional Support Coordinators (PSCs), to better facilitate a child's inclusion in a service. Further information and eligibility requirements are available at: <http://education.gov.au/inclusion-and-professional-support-program>

Inclusion support subsidy (ISS): Assists eligible child care services to improve their capacity to include children with ongoing high support needs, including those with disability, so they can be cared for appropriately within a service. Further details are available at: <http://education.gov.au/inclusion-and-professional-support-program>

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.

Indigenous Professional Support Unit (IPSU): Funded by the Commonwealth to provide professional development and support to services with a high proportion of indigenous children. The Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Inc. (VAEAI) is the IPSU in Victoria. VAEAI can also provide support to mainstream education and care services to raise their cultural competency. More information is available at: www.vaeai.org.au

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 in *The Kindergarten Funding Guide* (refer to Sources).

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*). Details are available in *The Kindergarten Funding Guide* (refer to Sources).

Kindergarten Inclusion Support Packages: Supplementary assistance to build the capacity of funded kindergarten programs to support the access and participation of children with a disability and high support needs and/or with complex medical needs. Details are available at: <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/providers/needs/Pages/kindersupportpackages.aspx>

Koorie Early Childhood Education Program: Supports Aboriginal children and their families to access and participate in kindergarten programs. The program consists of three components:

- a state-wide co-ordinator who provides support, information and assistance to regional Koorie Engagement Support Officers – Early Childhood Development
- Koorie Engagement Support Officers – Early Childhood Development (refer to *Definitions*)
- the Koorie Preschool Assistants program (refer to *Definitions*).

Koorie Engagement Support Officers (KESOs): Employed by the Department of Education and Training (DET) to assist families in accessing the broad range of services and support needed to ensure the best start in life for Aboriginal children from birth through to completion of school. KESOs provide advice and practical support to services that offer funded kindergarten places to ensure the delivery of programs that are respectful of the cultural beliefs and practices of Aboriginal children. Details are available in *The Kindergarten Funding Guide* (refer to Sources).

Koorie Preschool Assistants (KPSA) program: Implemented by the Department of Education and Training (DET) in partnership with local Aboriginal communities that employ KPSAs and administer the program. KPSAs work in kindergartens to assist teachers to develop and deliver culturally-inclusive and responsive programs for Aboriginal children. Details are available in *The Kindergarten Funding Guide* (refer to *Sources*).

Out-of-Home Care: Is the term used in Victoria when a child or young person is placed in care away from their parents. It includes placement in kinship care, home-based care such as foster care and residential care. For these children, the State of Victoria is legal their parent, and with this comes the responsibilities of a parent to care for and protect them, and to ensure that they have access to all the services they need for their immediate and longer term benefit (from: *Early Childhood Agreement on Out-of-Home Care* – refer to *Sources*).

Preschool Field Officers (PSFOs): Employed by local government authorities or other agencies to assist children with additional needs to access and participate in funded kindergarten programs. The PSFO service is part of the Kindergarten Inclusion Support Services (refer to *Definitions*) program.

Preschool Field Officer Program: An early intervention, outreach service that is universally available within state-funded preschools for any child with developmental concerns. The primary role of the Preschool Field Officer Program is to assist children with additional needs to access and participate in funded kindergarten programs. Further details are available at:

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/providers/needs/Pages/kinderinclusionsupport.aspx>

5. SOURCES AND RELATED POLICIES

Sources

- Association for Children with a Disability – a Victorian organisation that provides information, support and advocacy for children with a disability and their families. They also provide Kindergarten Inclusion Tip Sheets in English, Arabic, Chinese and Vietnamese: www.acd.org.au
- Building better partnerships – Working with Aboriginal communities and organisations: a communication guide for the Department of Health and Human Services: <http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/plans,-programs-and-projects/plans-and-strategies/children,-youth-and-family-services/building-better-partnerships-communications-guide-2006>
- *Dardee Boorai: the Victorian Charter of Safety and Wellbeing for Aboriginal Children and Young People*: <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/aboriginal/Pages/aboriginaldb.aspx>
- *Early Childhood Agreement for Children in Out-of-Home Care* (March 2014). Signed by the Department of Education and Training, the Department of Health and Human Services, Municipal Association of Victoria and Early Learning Association Australia, this agreement aims to ensure children in Out-of-Home Care (refer to *Definitions*) have access to high quality early childhood education and care experiences. Available from: www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/providers/edcare/Pages/default.aspx
- Early Childhood Australia (ECA) and Early Childhood Intervention Australia's (ECIA) *Position Statement on the Inclusion of Children with a Disability in Early Childhood Education and Care* – available at: www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au and www.ecia.org.au
- Early Childhood Intervention Australia Victorian Chapter (ECIA VC) – the peak body for early childhood intervention services in Victoria: www.eciavic.org.au
- *fka* Children's Services – provides services including bicultural support, language services and training to children's services workers in Victoria. *fka* also provides culturally-diverse resources and materials in both English and various community languages. Visit: www.fka.com.au
- *Guide to the National Quality Standard*: www.acecqa.gov.au
- *The Kindergarten Funding Guide* (Department of Education and Training) is available under *early childhood / service providers on the DET website*: www.education.vic.gov.au

Koorie Kindergarten Inclusion Kit:

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/providers/needs/pages/kooriekinderkit.aspx>

- Language services – organisations offering funded programs are eligible to obtain language services. Two types of language services are available for kindergarten providers: telephone interpreting and on-site interpreting (both spoken languages and Auslan sign language). The provider for language services is Victorian Interpreting and Translating Services (VITS): www.vits.com.au or phone 9280 1941.
- *Using Interpreting Services: Victorian Government Policy and Procedures* (2010): www.multicultural.vic.gov.au/images/stories/pdf/2383%20vmc%20interpreter%20manual%20web.pdf
- *Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework Practice Guides* – provide practical advice for early childhood professionals about each of the Practice Principles in the *Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework*. Each guide includes examples of best practice from a range of early childhood professionals across diverse settings. *Practice Guide Four: Equity and Diversity* is available at: <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/providers/edcare/pages/profresource.aspx>

Service policies

- *Anaphylaxis Policy*
- *Asthma Policy*
- *Child Safe Policy*
- *Code of Conduct Policy*
- *Complaints and Grievances Policy*
- *Curriculum Development Policy*
- *Dealing with Infectious Diseases Policy*
- *Dealing with Medical Conditions Policy*
- *Diabetes Policy*
- *Enrolment and Orientation Policy*
- *Epilepsy Policy*
- *Excursions and Service Events Policy*
- *Fees Policy*
- *Interactions with Children Policy*
- *Nutrition and Active Play Policy*
- *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy*
- *Staffing Policy*

PROCEDURES

The Approved Provider is 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
- providing families with information about the role of inclusive practice in achieving positive outcomes for all children, the key values underpinning inclusive practice and the support options available for children attending Alfred Nuttall Memorial Kindergarten
- liaising with educators 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* – refer to *Sources*)
- liaising with council to ensure 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*)
- considering barriers to participation in service programs and activities, and developing strategies to overcome these
- considering options to provide appropriate physical infrastructure, staffing and resources to facilitate the inclusion of all children at the service
- 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 (refer to *Staffing Policy*)
- ensuring that the Nominated Supervisor, educators 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 Alfred Nuttall Memorial 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, considering the employment of a multilingual worker/s to meet the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) families (e.g. *aka* Children's Services Casual Bilingual Program – refer to *Sources*)
- working with the Nominated Supervisor and educators to ensure appropriate program planning and resourcing for children with additional needs (refer to *Definitions*)
- accessing Kindergarten Inclusion Support Services (refer to *Definitions*) and Kindergarten Inclusion Support Packages (refer to *Definitions*) 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
- working with specialised services and professionals (e.g. Early Childhood Intervention Services and inclusion support agencies – refer to *Definitions* and *Sources*) to provide support and services for families and children experiencing severe disabilities, complex medical needs and/or developmental concerns
- 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*)
- accessing support from DET's Koorie Engagement Support Officers (refer to *Definitions*), the Koorie Preschool Assistants program (refer to *Definitions*) and the Indigenous Professional Support Unit (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 (refer to *Child Safe Policy*)
- ensuring that service programs are inclusive of children with medical conditions, including anaphylaxis, asthma, diabetes and epilepsy (refer to *Dealing with Medical Conditions Policy*, *Anaphylaxis Policy*, *Asthma Policy*, *Diabetes Policy* and *Epilepsy Policy*)
- 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 (BBV – refer to *Definitions*), 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 all policies of Alfred Nuttall Memorial Kindergarten, including the *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy*, are adhered to at all times.

The Nominated Supervisor is responsible for:

- 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*)
- identifying children who may be disadvantaged, have additional needs, or be at risk of discrimination/exclusion, and being aware of the support/resources required to ensure that these children are included in service programs
- consulting with families and liaising with the Approved Provider to access support/resources for individual children, where required
- organising appropriate, accredited professional development for staff to enable all children to be included at the service
- 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 (e.g. the Preschool Field Officer Program and Kindergarten Inclusion Support Packages – refer to *Definitions*)
- developing 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* – refer to *Sources*)
- 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
- working with the Approved Provider and educators to ensure appropriate program planning and resourcing for children with additional needs (refer to *Definitions*)
- 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, where required
- responding to the needs and concerns of parents/guardians, and providing support and guidance, where appropriate
- providing information to families about the support available to assist children, including:
 - Kindergarten Fee Subsidy
 - Early Start Kindergarten
 - Koorie Early Childhood Education Program
 - Kindergarten Inclusion Support Services
 - language services
- providing support and guidance to educators/staff, where required
- ensuring that service programs are inclusive of children with medical conditions, including anaphylaxis, asthma, diabetes and epilepsy (refer to *Dealing with Medical Conditions Policy*, *Anaphylaxis Policy*, *Asthma Policy*, *Diabetes Policy* and *Epilepsy Policy*)
- 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 opportunities for families to contribute to the program
- notifying the Approved Provider of any behaviour or circumstances that may constitute discrimination or prejudice
- advising the Approved Provider if they become aware of discrimination against anyone at the service on the basis of having or being suspected of having an infectious disease, blood-borne virus (BBV – refer to *Definitions*), illness or medical condition
- adhering to the policies of Alfred Nuttall Memorial Kindergarten, including the *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy*, at all times.

Persons in day-to-day Charge, educators and other staff are responsible for:

- 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 fairness, equity, diversity and inclusion (*Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework Practice Guide Four: Equity and Diversity* – refer to *Sources*)
- undertaking appropriate, accredited professional development enable the inclusion of all children at the service
- using language services (refer to *Sources*) 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, including:
 - Kindergarten Fee Subsidy
 - Early Start Kindergarten
 - Koorie Early Childhood Education Program
 - Kindergarten Inclusion Support Services
 - language services
- 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
- advising the Nominated Supervisor or Approved Provider if they become aware of discrimination against anyone at the service on the basis of having or being suspected of having an infectious disease, blood-borne virus (BBV – refer to *Definitions*), illness or medical condition
- adhering to the policies of Alfred Nuttall Memorial Kindergarten, including the *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy*, at all times.

Parents/guardians are responsible for:

- adhering to the policies of Alfred Nuttall Memorial Kindergarten, including this *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.

Volunteers and students, while at the service, are responsible for following this policy and its procedures.

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.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment One : Procedures and Considerations Specific to Alfred Nuttall Kindergarten

Attachment Two : Strategies for an Inclusive Program

Attachment One

Procedures and Considerations Specific to Alfred Nuttall Kindergarten

The Kindergarten's philosophy and the learning frameworks share a commitment to the principles of inclusion and equity. Cultural, social and developmental diversity is embraced and inclusive practices promoting cultural awareness and respect for equity and diversity are embraced. All children are valued as members of the kindergarten community and have the right to equal access to experiences, resources and participation. By working in partnership with children and families, educators strive to provide opportunities for optimum growth and learning for all children.

Philosophy and Strategies

ANMK's philosophy states:

The kindergarten is committed to offering children, families and staff a safe and trusting environment where they are able to enjoy and contribute to the kindergarten's programmes and community. While developing their sense of individual identity, the children also form a strong sense of belonging to their group and to the Kindergarten community

The kindergarten community welcomes all children and families and celebrates and respects our diverse community. We share a commitment to equity and all children's right to a quality education. Opportunities are created to learn about similarities and difference and how we can learn together. Educators create an environment and curriculum which promotes inclusion and the participation and learning of all children.

The Kindergarten's philosophy and code of conduct highlight the importance of equity and inclusion for all children

- Each child as unique with individual qualities and needs
- Cultural, social and developmental diversity is embraced
- Inclusive practice promoting cultural awareness and respect for equity and diversity
- Open ended experiences and play spaces which support different learning styles
- Ensure inclusivity and equal opportunity for all children (valuing the diversity of gender, developmental abilities, cultural and social background and language)

In this philosophy statement it lists amongst its values:

- Children's right to high quality early childhood education
- Each child as unique with individual qualities and needs
- The importance of respect for one's self and others
- Cultural, social and developmental diversity is embraced
- Cooperation, sharing and respectful interactions
- A learning environment that is safe, welcoming, stimulating and nurturing
- Respect for our natural and physical environment
- Meaningful and collaborative relationships with children and families
- Indigenous culture and our Kindergarten as part of the community

The kindergarten and the programme recognise the individuality of each child and welcomes children from all backgrounds. The kindergarten encourages equal opportunities and access for all children and is sensitive to individual needs regarding culture, development and family background.

ANMK educators achieve this through

- fostering an environment that reflects the lives of their children and the community, for example this includes supporting such activities as family celebrations and ensuring resources and experiences are reflective of the children and families
- gather information from families, other support services working with children, community members and cultural groups to extend knowledge and understanding of the diversity of the children and their families' lives and perspectives
- ANMK educators support the use of children's home language, i.e. becoming familiar with common terms, use of bilingual literature, membership of FKA, supporting families in the maintenance of their home language.
- Act as role models in developing children's sense of understanding and acceptance of similarity and difference and to foster positive, respectful and inclusive relationships and interactions between children

Educators develop positive relationships with all children and build knowledge of children's individual strengths and capabilities. All children are supported to access all learning experiences and are acknowledged as confident learners. Experiences and interactions have the aim of encouraging children's success which will positively reinforce participation. Expectations, experiences and interactions are responsive to the individual needs of the child.

Educators actively promote the principles of acceptance and inclusion and act as role models for children and families. Observations of inclusion/exclusion, fair/unfair behaviours are not tolerated and educators actively challenged perceptions contrary to the kindergarten's philosophy.

Programme aspects which are planned to foster a sense of inclusion and support all children's participation include :

- Use of appropriate communication tools e.g visual cues, translations
- Availability of adapted equipment such as scissors, sensory toys
- Children sharing achievements with each other
- Resources which reflect the children's community
- Open ended experiences which offer children the opportunity to participate in activities at many levels

Environment

ANMK creates facilities and environments that allow flexible use in response to the interests and abilities of each child. Equipment, facilities and activities are established which ensure all children and families can access the environment and programme. The Kindergarten philosophy ensures the inclusion of all children families and equal opportunities for all.

Experiences are designed to allow equal participation by all, and include flexible arrangements such as individual or small group play, self-directed learning, and children being supported to create their own games & experiences.

Educators are responsible for supporting and encouraging children to participate in experiences and activities. Educators are responsible for continually adapting the environment to cater for diversity of interests, needs, abilities, ages, and individual, small and large group participation. As required, specialised materials are provided to enhance children's access to and successful participation in experiences, for example, sensory toys, adapted scissors

Inclusion Support

If a child is approved to receive funding for inclusion support at Kindergarten, the Kindergarten teacher will liaise with the child's parents, the Management Committee and the agency responsible for managing the funds to facilitate the child's inclusion in the programme and the work of the additional staff member who is employed by the agency. ANMK staff work collaboratively with family members/ specialists and / or resource agencies to plan for the inclusion of children with additional needs.

If a child is not eligible for funding for inclusion support at Kindergarten, families have the option to self-fund an additional support person. This person is to be employed by the Kindergarten and must adhere to all Kindergarten policies and procedures. The Kindergarten teacher will liaise with the Committee of Management and the child's parents regarding budgets, appointments and invoicing.

Attachment Two

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
- 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 daily
- 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:
 - Participating in discussions with families, and if needed
 - Accessing interpreter services through the DET, local council or community service
 - Accessing family support for orientation and language assistance through FKA Multicultural Resource Centre
- Provide information to families regarding their child's progress and development in the family's first language
- 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:
 - Ensuring equipment and interactions do not promote bias in family structure/culture and allow for various acceptance of various family models
 - Ensuring the visual environment welcomes all families through posters and notices
 - 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:
 - Organising the room and furniture to promote exploration in a variety of areas; broadening children's interests and preferences, such as home corner next to block areas, fabrics and natural materials in block areas, cars and trucks at the drawing table
 - Talking about what they see in posters and stories
 - 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 firefighter, police office, 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 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, such as artefacts, clothing and dolls that reflect various abilities and cultures
 - Including centre events and excursions that reflect meaningful understanding of culture and community.

Strategies to support families in linking with the wider community

Staff can assist children and their families to access information and services by providing:

- Providing regular information and links to local community networks, resources and services
- A range of methods of communicating the program, resources and networks to families with limited such as photos, newsletters, media, conversations and meetings/discussions
- 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 or second year of funded kindergarten
- Organize regular support group meetings with families and relevant specialists to discuss the child's participation and progress at kindergarten and to develop future plans.

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
- 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.