POLICY NO. 34: INCLUSION AND EQUITY

Best Practice – Quality Area 1 (and 6)

PURPOSE

This policy will provide guidelines to:

- ensure all adults and children at Pines Learning Childcare 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 Pines Learning Childcare.

1. VALUES

Pines Learning Childcare 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 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

2. SCOPE
This policy applies to the Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, Certified Supervisor, educators, staff, students on placement, parents/guardians, children and others attending the programs and activities of Pines Learning Childcare.

3. BACKGROUND AND LEGISLATION

Background

“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)
• 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)

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

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.

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 Early Childhood Development (DEECD) and provided by Specialist Children's Services teams and Early Childhood Intervention agencies.

**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](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](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

Koorie Engagement Support Officers (KESOs): Employed by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) 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.

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).

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


- Early Childhood Agreement for Children in Out-of-Home Care (March 2014). Signed by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, the Department of 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 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


- 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.

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Service policies
• Anaphylaxis Policy
• Asthma Policy
• Child Safe Environment 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

6. POLICY PROCEDURES

6.1 The Approved Provider is responsible for:

i. ensuring that service programs are available and accessible to families from a variety of backgrounds (refer to Curriculum Development Policy)

ii. encouraging collaborative, family-centred practice (refer to Definitions) at the service

iii. 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 Pines Learning Childcare

iv. 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

v. 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)

vi. ensuring that the enrolment process is fair and equitable, and facilitates access for all children (refer to Enrolment and Orientation Policy)

vii. tailoring the orientation process to meet the individual needs of children and families (refer to Enrolment and Orientation Policy)

viii. considering barriers to participation in service programs and activities, and developing strategies to overcome these

ix. considering options to provide appropriate physical infrastructure, staffing and resources to facilitate the inclusion of all children at the service
x. 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)

xi. 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)

xii. providing service information in various community languages wherever possible

xiii. 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. fka Children’s Services Casual Bilingual Program – refer to Sources)

xiv. working with the Nominated Supervisor and educators to ensure appropriate program planning and resourcing for children with additional needs (refer to Definitions)

xv. where practicable, accessing resources, support and professional development to facilitate inclusion of children with additional needs who are ineligible for specific support packages

xvi. 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

xvii. accessing support from DEECD’s Koorie Engagement Support Officers and the Indigenous Professional Support Unit (refer to Definitions), where required

xviii. 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 Environment Policy)

xix. 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)

xx. ensuring that no employee, prospective employee, parent/guardian, child 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

xxi. 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)

xxii. ensuring that all policies of Pines Learning Childcare, including the Privacy and Confidentiality Policy, are adhered to at all times.

6.2 The Nominated Supervisor is responsible for:

i. 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)

ii. 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

iii. consulting with families and liaising with the Approved Provider to access support/resources for individual children, where required

iv. organising appropriate, accredited professional development for staff to enable all children to be included at the service

v. 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.

vi. 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
vi. ensuring that the program provides opportunities for all children to participate and interact with one another
vii. using language services (refer to Sources) to assist with communication, where required
viii. working with the Approved Provider and educators to ensure appropriate program planning and resourcing for children with additional needs (refer to Definitions)
ix. 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
x. responding to the needs and concerns of parents/guardians, and providing support and guidance, where appropriate
xi. providing information to families about the support available to assist children.
xii. providing support and guidance to educators/staff, where required
xiv. 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)
xv. ensuring that individualised programs incorporate opportunities for regular review and evaluation, in consultation with all people involved in the child’s education and care
xvi. providing opportunities for families to contribute to the program
xvii. notifying the Approved Provider of any behaviour or circumstances that may constitute discrimination or prejudice
xviii. 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
xix. adhering to the policies of Pines Learning Childcare, including the Privacy and Confidentiality Policy, at all times.

6.3 Certified Supervisors, educators and other staff are responsible for:

i. 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)

ii. 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

iii. 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)

iv. undertaking appropriate, accredited professional development enable the inclusion of all children at the service

v. using language services (refer to Sources) to assist with communication, where required

vi. understanding and respecting different cultural child-rearing and social practices

vii. working with the Approved Provider and Nominated Supervisor to ensure appropriate program planning and resourcing for children with additional needs (refer to Definitions)

viii. 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)

ix. providing information to families about the support available to assist children.

x. discussing any concerns regarding individual children with the Nominated Supervisor and parents/guardians
xi. responding to the needs and concerns of parents/guardians, and providing support and
guidance, where appropriate
xii. reviewing and evaluating individualised support programs in consultation with all people
involved in the child’s education and care
xiii. 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
xiv. notifying the Nominated Supervisor or Approved Provider of any behaviour or circumstances
that may constitute discrimination or prejudice
xv. 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
xvi. adhering to the policies of Pines Learning Childcare, including the Privacy and Confidentiality
Policy, at all times.

6.4 Parents/guardians are responsible for:

i. adhering to the policies of Pines Learning Childcare, including this Inclusion and Equity Policy and
the Privacy and Confidentiality Policy, at all times
ii. communicating with the service to ensure awareness of their child’s specific needs
iii. raising any issues or concerns regarding their child’s participation in the program
iv. being involved in, keeping fully informed about, and providing written consent for any individualised
intervention or support proposed/provided for their child
v. responding to requests from educators for written permission to arrange for an assessment or collect
reports on their child.

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

6.5 Evaluation

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

i. regularly seek feedback from everyone affected by the policy regarding its effectiveness
ii. monitor the implementation, compliance, complaints and incidents in relation to this policy
iii. keep the policy up to date with current legislation, research, policy and best practice
iv. revise the policy and procedures as part of the service’s policy review cycle, or as required
v. notify parents/guardians at least 14 days before making any changes to this policy or its procedures.

6.6 Attachments

Nil