



Sydney Catholic
early childhood
services

charter

ASPIRATIONS AND
EXPECTATIONS FOR OUR
SCEC SERVICES





rationale



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early childhood
services**

“The family, as the fundamental and essential educating community, is the privileged means for transmitting the religious and cultural values that help a person acquire his or her own identity. Founded on love and open to the gift of life, the family contains in itself the very future of society; its most special task is to contribute effectively to a future of peace”

MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS
ST POPE JOHN PAUL II

*For the XXVII World Day of Peace -
The Family Creates The Peace of the
Human Family
1 January 1994*

The family is the foundational unit of society and an integral part of our Catholic community. The Church acknowledges parents as the first and most significant educators of their children, both in faith and in life. The family is the place where young people first learn what it means to be human.

Changes in modern society have impacted upon the family unit, presenting significant challenges for parents, carers and educators. In our increasingly complex society, the Church is committed to supporting parents in their role, and to helping nurture the faith life of families.

To this end, the Archdiocese of Sydney wishes to partner with parents, and support families with young children, through Sydney Catholic Early Childhood Services. These services will acknowledge our Catholic Tradition and will nurture the social, emotional, intellectual and spiritual development of children (Canon 795). In their engagement with families, these services will promote the relationship with the local parish community.

The importance of early childhood care and education cannot be understated. It is during these early years that young children begin to discern right from wrong, develop their social skills, become aware of their gifts and talents, and demonstrate a curiosity about themselves and their world resulting in a search for knowledge and understanding. Research also indicates that young children have an innate awareness of the presence of God in their lives and in creation and that they reflect on, and grapple with, key existential questions and concerns.

Sydney Catholic Early Childhood Services will create an environment that enables our young children to flourish in all areas of human development, and particularly in nourishing their spiritual lives, as we engage their religious imagination and introduce them to the treasures of the Catholic Tradition.

Sydney Catholic Early Childhood Services will be places where Jesus Christ is known and loved and where families are valued, welcomed and invited into the life of the Catholic faith community.

KEY PRINCIPLES THAT UNDERPIN THIS RATIONALE:

1 supporting parents as the first educators of their children

Parents are the first teachers of their children and many of the most important aspects of learning come from the family. Sydney Catholic early childhood services welcome and involve parents as partners and provide support for them in this important role.

2 nurture spirituality

Young children are by their nature spiritual. Early childhood service providers in Catholic parishes, share in the mission and ministry of the Church; to bring the good news of Jesus Christ to all people. Young children's spirituality is nurtured through the stories, rituals and life of the Catholic community.

3 are places of welcome

Individuals grow and reach their potential in environments which are respectful and affirming. Sydney Catholic early childhood services will be welcoming and hospitable and nurture an environment which is conducive to children's authentic human development. Services shall respect social and cultural differences and recognise that every human being is created in God's image and likeness and therefore is valuable and worthy of respect.





"the family... is the place where one learns to love; it is the natural centre of human life. it is made up of faces, of people who love dialogue, make self-sacrifices for one another and defend life-especially of the most vulnerable and the weakest. one could say without exaggeration, that the family is the driving force of the world and of history."-

POPE FRANCIS,
ADDRESS TO PONTIFICAL COUNCIL
FOR THE FAMILY, 2013

4 offering care

Young children are reliant on nurturing relationships with attentive carers, who respond to their needs and engage in meaningful interactions. Sydney Catholic early childhood services will ensure that all environments safeguard the health, wellbeing and emotional needs of each child.

5 provide quality education

Educational environments nurture a child's love of learning by engaging in inspiring, inquiry based pedagogies. Curriculum is responsive to the interests and abilities of each child. Play is a way of exploring new experiences; a natural way of expanding children's thinking and enhancing their desire to learn in relationship with others.

6 offer early intervention and targeted support

Respectful processes are established to provide families with connections to, and advice from, experts in early intervention services. Families and professionals work together offering case management strategies that provide specialised, individual support for children identified as requiring additional assistance.

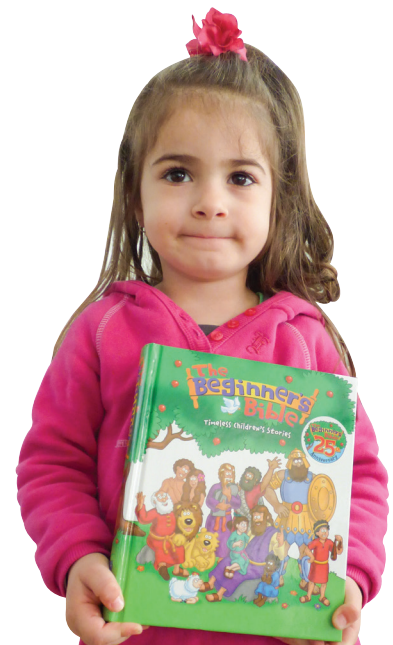
7 build positive relationships

In relationship, children learn to know and value themselves, and others, as created in God's image. Positive relationships between children, families and educators build trust and provide children with a secure foundation for learning, growing and interacting positively with each other.



Vision: As partners in proclaiming the message of Jesus Christ, Sydney Catholic Early Childhood Services promote the pastoral outreach of parish and school communities by supporting the needs of families with young children.

Mission: Catholic Early Childhood Services:	Therefore the early childhood environment:	For example: the early childhood service could:	Professional reflections
support families	<p>Builds an understanding of each child's family and supporting community.</p> <p>Encourages families to work in partnership for the benefit of their child's learning.</p> <p>Connects families to the parish and school community.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • open dialogue about child rearing, what the family values and how this may be respected and supported by the service • send resources home with families to support and promote the learning taking place at the service • run regular Parenting programs, e.g. Parent Education Programs facilitated by CatholicCare • acknowledge the significance of transitions, ensuring children understand the process and have an active role in preparing for these transitions • collaborate with parish primary school in designing and implementing transition to school processes • encourage the parish priest and family educator to regularly visit and engage in the life of the service • invite and encourage families to actively participate in the life of the parish community. 	How do you know about the learning that is valued and expected by the family?



Mission: Catholic Early Childhood Services:	Therefore the early childhood environment:	For example: the early childhood service could:	Professional reflections
<p>nurture spirituality</p> <p>Values the practices and traditions of the Catholic Church, witnessed daily within a faith-filled community</p> <p>Provides opportunities for families and the community to gather in prayer and worship</p> <p>Uses pedagogies that encourage reflection and an appreciation of God's presence in all of Life and creation.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • come together in prayer, e.g. before meals, at start and finish of each day and for special intentions • create prayer spaces for children, staff and families • follow the liturgical calendar, observing and celebrating the different seasons of the Church: Lent, Easter, Ordinary Time, Advent and Christmas • provide opportunities for the children to visit the church with the parish priest/Family Educator • celebrate the Mass with the wider parish community • base Religious Education activities on the <i>Catechesis of the Good Shepherd</i> and <i>Godly Play</i> • provide opportunities for children's close observation of nature, promoting care and respect for the environment and all living creatures. 	<p>What opportunities are provided that invite children to quiet contemplation and spiritual expression?</p> <p>How can I learn from children's innate and natural expressions of their spirituality?</p>



Mission: Catholic Early Childhood Services:	Therefore the early childhood environment:	For example: the early childhood service could:	Professional reflections
are places of welcome	<p>Respects all families and children - where individual identities are valued.</p> <p>Draws on the cultures, languages, interests and experiences of the families and community.</p> <p>Promotes a sense of community and belonging.</p> <p>Responds to issues of equity of access and inclusion.</p> <p>Builds and nurtures relationships.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • get to know the families who use the service by utilising greet and meet times • promote parish events, inviting and encouraging all families to attend • offer family members/carers the opportunity to contribute to cultural celebrations and activities at the service • advocate the importance of children maintaining their first language with families • seek opportunities to encourage first language use with each other through song and play • provide rich and diverse resources that reflect children's social worlds • ensure communication strategies allow for two-way responses that respect and value family contributions • provide time and space for children to collaborate in both individual and collaborative pursuits • actively search out access to funding to support inclusion • Identify and remove barriers to equity and inclusion. 	<p>How does the early childhood setting reflect, value and build on the culture, language, interests and experiences of families?</p> <p>Explore the notion of Community - how does the curriculum promote connection through community?</p> <p>In what ways does the service support children's learning and use the cultural tools of the community to inspire all children's thinking?</p> <p>Are costs to families fair and reasonable? What opportunities does the service offer to families unable to meet costs?</p>



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<p>offer care</p>	<p>Safeguards the dignity and inherent goodness of each child.</p> <p>Expects high quality, professional level of care in a safe, secure and nurturing environment.</p> <p>Fosters wellbeing, resilience and a positive self-image.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure documentation reflects children as strong and capable learners, identifying strengths, abilities and interests • plan opportunities for children to participate in meaningful ways in group discussions and shared decision making about rules and expectations • continually acknowledge and reinforce socially acceptable interactions with children and families • explore staffing arrangements that enhance children's learning and development and ensure their safety and wellbeing • ensure staff to child ratios allow for sustained engagement with each child on a daily basis • hold regular safety and risk analysis checks in line with NQ standards • nurture resilience – motivate and encourage children to succeed when they are faced with challenges – see failure as a path to learning! • collaborate with children to document their achievements and share their successes with families • acknowledge, notice and comment on each child's behaviour and skill development. 	<p>How might a play environment support a child's developing sense of wellbeing?</p>



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<p>provide quality education</p>	<p>Develops a culture that inspires growth of spirit and mind.</p> <p>Builds understanding of Scripture stories and history of the Church.</p> <p>Gives time and space to imagine, innovate and create.</p> <p>Encourages active and discerning citizens who show respect for the moral worth of every person and for the great gift of creation.</p> <p>Designs and facilitates authentic learning experiences.</p> <p>Nurtures the partnership between parents and the parish community, staff.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • offer ongoing professional learning opportunities for staff in Early Childhood Religious Education and the Early Years Learning Framework • share stories from the Bible, allowing children to explore their meaning and build understanding through play, art and performance • base Religious Education activities on the <i>Catechesis of the Good Shepherd and Godly Play</i> • create a culture of staff inquiry enabling reflective practice for improvement • provide opportunities for children and families to investigate ideas, complex concepts and ethical ideas that impact on their lives and their local community • listen carefully to children's ideas and discuss with them how these ideas might be developed • model curiosity and the creation of knowledge through inquiry • place documentation of children's explorations and learning journeys in places that are accessible to children, families and staff - for discussion and reflection • encourage families to share their expertise in a particular area e.g. telling a story in another language. 	<p>How do we demonstrate that we value children's ideas, thinking and interests?</p> <p>Does your environment invite children to explore and ask questions that deepen their understanding of the world?</p> <p>How do your methods of documentation and planning promote collaboration between staff, families and children? How are children and families voices included in the documentation?</p> <p>What lived examples show children reflecting and acting upon their learning in Religious Education?</p>



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provide early intervention and targeted support	Is informed by a trans-disciplinary model with access to services offering advice from experts in health, education and social services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide information on and access to early intervention specialists for e.g. Speech pathologists, Occupational Therapists • facilitate the formation of Case Management Teams for children with additional needs • work collaboratively to share information and plan to ensure holistic approaches to children's learning and development. 	<p>What processes are in place for early identification of children requiring additional support?</p> <p>Which stakeholders are involved in how this information is shared and used?</p>

Mission: Catholic Early Childhood Services:	Therefore the early childhood environment:	For example: the early childhood service could:	Professional reflections
build respectful and reciprocal relationships	<p>Ensures actions and decision making practices are founded on Catholic values</p> <p>Develops respectful and reciprocal relationships that are life-giving</p> <p>Co-constructs knowledge and practice always in relationship with others</p> <p>Connects home, Parish and Early Childhood service.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • engage staff and parish community in exploring how Catholic values will be evident throughout the daily life of the centre • talk with families about their values and their expectations for their child • model positive social interactions, providing children with strategies to make informed decisions about their own behaviour • collaborate with families when deciding what learning programs and opportunities will be offered to children • involve families in the creation and evaluation of service policies and procedures • share children's daily learnings and experiences with families through various technology communication apps and documentation • create short, focused questionnaires/ surveys to gather family and children perspectives. • provide opportunities for families to attend workshops that support their parenting role. 	<p>How do you know that each child feels included and safe? What tells you this?</p> <p>Where are families reflected in your service?</p> <p>How do you actively involve children in planning their own learning?</p> <p>What strategies do you currently use to find out about children's family and community experiences?</p>



