



Education

# Department preschools leadership and operational guidelines

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## Contents

<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>6</b>
Purpose and use of these guidelines	6
Acronyms	7
NSW Department of Education preschools	8
History of the department's preschool provision	8
Who is responsible for what?	9
National Quality Framework	10
Exceeding the National Quality Standard	12
Contacts	13
 <b>QUALITY AREA 1- EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM AND PRACTICE</b>	 <b>14</b>
Introduction	14
 <b>Program - Standard 1.1</b>	 <b>14</b>
The educational program enhances each child's learning and development.	14
Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF)	14
Learning outcomes	15
Curriculum decision-making	16
Program documentation	17
Program and documentation procedure	18
 <b>Practice - Standard 1.2</b>	 <b>19</b>
Educators facilitate and extend each child's learning and development.	19
Children with a disability	19
 <b>Assessment and planning – Standard 1.3</b>	 <b>22</b>
Educators and coordinators take a planned and reflective approach to implementing the program for each child.	22
Assessment and planning cycle	22
Documentation of learning	23
Information for families	25
Recommended resources and further reading	26
 <b>QUALITY AREA 2 – CHILDREN'S HEALTH AND SAFETY</b>	 <b>28</b>
Introduction	28
 <b>Health - Standard 2.1</b>	 <b>28</b>
Each child's health and physical activity is supported and promoted.	28
Sleep and rest guidelines	28
Children with a medical condition	30
Emergency medication	31
Administering medication	31
Children wearing nappies or pull-ups	33
Supporting children to toilet train	35
Incident, injury, trauma or illness	35
Sick children at preschool	36
First aid kit	36
Immunisation requirements	36
Managing the outbreak of an infectious disease	37
Infection control	38

Standard precautions	39
Cleaning furniture and equipment	39
Nutrition, food, beverages and dietary requirements	40
Physical activity	42
<b>Safety – Standard 2.2</b>	<b>42</b>
Each child is protected.	42
Reasonable precautions to protect children from harm and hazards	42
Materials Safety Data Sheet (MSDS)	43
Risk assessments	43
Water safety	44
Sun safety	44
Arrival and departure procedures	45
Releasing children into the care of an authorised person	46
Bus travel	47
Adequate supervision	48
Indoor / outdoor play	50
Excursions	50
Incursions	51
Regular outings	51
Visits into the school	51
Incident and emergency management	51
Child protection	53
Recommended resources and further reading	54
<b>QUALITY AREA 3 - PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT</b>	<b>56</b>
Introduction	56
<b>Design – Standard 3.1</b>	<b>56</b>
The design of the facilities is appropriate for the operation of a service.	56
Playground surfacing and impact areas	57
Sandpits	57
Digging patches and mud kitchens	58
Shade	58
<b>Use - Standard 3.2</b>	<b>59</b>
The service environment is inclusive, promotes competence and supports exploration and play-based learning.	59
Inclusive environment	59
Resources support play based learning	59
Environmentally responsible	60
Recommended resources and further reading	60
<b>QUALITY AREA 4 -STAFFING ARRANGEMENTS</b>	<b>62</b>
Introduction	62
<b>Staffing arrangements. Standard 4.1</b>	<b>62</b>
Staffing arrangements enhance children’s learning and development	62
Preschool Teacher	62
School Learning Support Officer Preschool (SLSO) and Aboriginal Education Officer (AEO)	63
Covering preschool teacher/s breaks, release and absence	63
Covering SLSO or AEO breaks and absence	64
Continuity of educators	64

Record of staff working directly with children	65
First aid qualifications	65
Staff folder	66
Ratios	67
Primary school children in the preschool	67
Administration support	68
Professionalism – Standard 4.2	68
Management, educators and staff are collaborative, respectful and ethical.	68
Recommended resources and further reading	69
<b>QUALITY AREA 5 - RELATIONSHIPS WITH CHILDREN</b>	<b>70</b>
Introduction	70
<b>Relationships between educators and children – Standard 5.1</b>	<b>70</b>
Respectful and equitable relationships are maintained with each child	70
Interactions with children	70
Fostering a sense of security	71
A commitment to the wellbeing of all children	71
Dignity and Rights of the child	72
<b>Relationships between children – Standard 5.2</b>	<b>73</b>
Each child is supported to build and maintain sensitive and responsive relationships.	73
Supporting children to build and maintain sensitive and responsive relationships	73
Positive Behaviour for Learning (PBL)	73
Connections between the Early Years Learning Framework and PBL	74
Recommended resources and further reading	75
<b>QUALITY AREA 6 – COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS WITH FAMILIES &amp; COMMUNITIES</b>	<b>76</b>
Introduction	76
<b>Supportive relationships with families – Standard 6.1</b>	<b>76</b>
Respectful relationships with families are developed and maintained and families are supported in their parenting role.	76
Supporting families and community members to meaningfully engage in the preschool	76
Resources to support families	77
<b>Collaborative partnerships – Standards 6.2</b>	<b>78</b>
Collaborative partnerships enhance children’s inclusion, learning and wellbeing.	78
Continuity of learning and transitions	78
School orientation sessions	79
<b>QUALITY AREA 7: GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP</b>	<b>80</b>
Introduction	80
<b>Governance – Standard 7.1</b>	<b>80</b>
Governance supports the operation of a quality service.	80
Philosophy	80
Roles and responsibilities of the principal in relation to the preschool	81
Service approval	82
Insurance	83
Policies and procedures	83

Notification of a serious incident, complaint or preschool closure	85
List of notifications	87
Summary of items to be displayed in the preschool	88
Summary of items to be available in the preschool	89
Universal access	90
Preschool hours	91
Preschool closure	91
Enrolment	92
Suspension	94
Obtaining authorisation and consent	95
Fees	95
Volunteers and education students	96
Management of records	96
Casual folder	97
Staff induction into the preschool	98
<b>Leadership- Standard 7.2</b>	<b>99</b>
Effective leadership builds and promotes a positive organisational culture and professional learning community.	99
The Quality Improvement Plan (QIP)	99
Assessment and rating	100
Monitoring visits	103
External validation and the preschool	103
Performance and development	104
Recommended resources and further reading	104
External providers of professional learning	104
Social media	104
Electronic subscriptions	105
<b>References</b>	<b>106</b>

# Introduction

## Purpose and use of these guidelines

These guidelines are a resource to support the leadership, management and operations of department preschools. In addition to department policies, procedures and guidelines, department preschools must implement the law and regulations relevant to the entire early childhood education and care sector, being the [Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010](#) and the [Education and Care Services National Regulations](#).

The purpose of these guidelines are to:

- clarify the requirements of the National Quality Framework (NQF), including
  - legislation
  - quality standards
  - the assessment and rating process
  - implementation of the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF).
- provide guidance in the interpretation of the NQF in the context of department preschools
- provide advice for preschools to meet the requirements of the NQF
- scaffold preschool teams to review and update their local procedures, ensuring they are an accurate reflection of current practice and meet NQF requirements
- detail how preschools and schools work with School Services, Early Learning (as part of Learning and Teaching Directorate) and Early Childhood Education Directorate (ECE).

In situations where department policy and the regulations differ, department preschools always meet the higher expectation, for example, preschools conduct more emergency procedure rehearsals than the rest of the school, as the regulations require more rehearsals than department policy.

These guidelines are organised into the seven quality areas of the [National Quality Standard \(NQS\)](#). It is available on the department's website, within Early Learning. Staff are instructed to refer to this site regularly as updates will be posted here.

## Acronyms

A&R -	Assessment and Rating
ACECQA -	Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority
AEO -	Aboriginal Education Officer
ECE -	Early Childhood Education Directorate
ECT -	Early Childhood Teacher
EL -	Early Learning (within Teaching and Learning)
EYLF -	Belonging, Being & Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia
NQF -	National Quality Framework
NQS -	National Quality Standard
QA -	Quality Area
QIP -	Quality Improvement Plan
RFF -	Release from face to face teaching
SEF-	School Excellence Framework
SLSO -	School Learning Support Officer

## NSW Department of Education preschools

The department operates 100 preschools with 133 classes across NSW. Sixty-one preschools are located in the Sydney metropolitan area and thirty-nine are located in regional and rural areas. The total provision of preschools includes distance education preschool classes in Dubbo School of Distance Education and Broken Hill School of the Air.

It is the department's intent that department preschools provide for the most disadvantaged children in the local community. They provide universal access to high quality early childhood education in the year prior to school.

Department preschools provide secure, positive and stimulating learning environments to ensure 'all children make a strong start in life and learning and make a successful transition to school' (DoE Strategic Plan 2018-2022). Educators in department preschools implement high-quality play-based educational programs. These respond to the abilities and interests of each child and provide a balance of child initiated and adult initiated learning experiences to promote wellbeing and development.

### History of the department's preschool provision

The department's preschools were established in four phases:

1. In the early 1940s eight preschools were established in inner-city areas to support women working in wartime factories.
2. In the mid-to-late 1970s 60 preschools were established with commonwealth funding.
3. From 1993-2004 11 preschools were established in Aboriginal communities, designated specifically for Aboriginal children. These preschools were established under the Aboriginal Preschool Education Program as part of the department's strategy for improving educational outcomes for Aboriginal children. This was done in accordance with the goals of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy and the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. The program was designed to increase the number of Aboriginal children accessing preschool and provide equality of educational opportunity and outcomes for Aboriginal children. Local Aboriginal children have priority of access to the designated preschools.



4. In 2005 21 new preschools were established in areas of need bringing the total to 100. 13 of these were established in schools that service an Aboriginal community or in schools where there is a significantly high number of Aboriginal children enrolled.

Who is responsible for what?

### **Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA)**

ACECQA is a government funded national body who work with state and territory governments to provide guidance, resources and services to support the sector to improve outcomes for children. ACECQA guides the implementation of the National Quality Framework and works with regulatory authorities. The [ACECQA website](#) is the primary reference for the sector.

### **NSW DoE, Early Childhood Education Directorate (ECE)**

In NSW, the department is the regulatory authority for children's education and care services under the NQF. The function of the regulatory authority is held by ECE. The functions and powers of ECE are separate from the general responsibilities of the department. It administers the NQF and is responsible for:

- granting provider and service approvals
- monitoring regulatory compliance
- assessing and rating services against the National Quality Standard
- working with ACECQA to promote continuous quality improvement

### **NSW DoE, Learning & Teaching Directorate, Early Learning & Primary Education**

The department's Learning and Teaching Directorate is the approved provider of department preschools, with Early Learning managing the responsibilities of ensuring department preschools meet legislative and quality standards. Early Learning works with School Services to monitor quality and compliance and support continuous improvement.

### **Department preschools**

Department preschools sit within P-2 or P-6 schools, the exception being one stand-alone preschool. The Guide to the NQF uses the terms 'approved service', 'prior to school service' or 'education and care service' to refer to preschools such as the department's.

### **School principals**

Principals (including relieving and acting principals) with a department preschool onsite, have overriding responsibility for the supervision of the preschool. The principal automatically assumes the role and responsibilities of:

- Nominated supervisor
- Educational leader
- Responsible person in charge.

Principals must ensure the preschool is compliant with the regulations and quality standards at all times. As the nominated supervisor, they are accountable for any breach of legislation. However, the supervision of the preschool education program may be delegated to an executive staff member. The principal's role in relation to the preschool is further explained in [quality area seven](#) of these guidelines.

## National Quality Framework

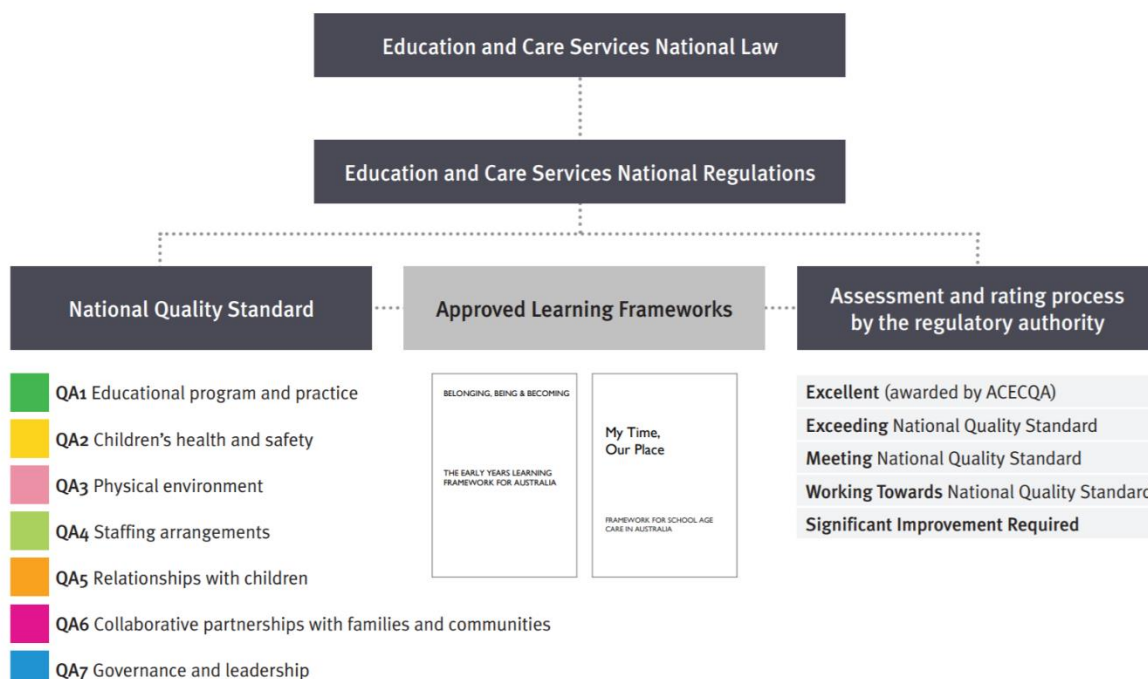
[The National Quality Framework](#) (NQF) supports the delivery of education and care for children. It provides a national approach to regulation, assessment and quality improvement for early childhood education and care services. The NQF is similar to the School Excellence Framework in that it identifies quality practice and supports continual improvement.

Most relevant to department preschools are the first three objectives of the NQF:

- ensure the safety, health and wellbeing of attending children
- improve the educational and developmental outcomes for attending children
- promote continuous improvement in the provision of quality education and care

The diagram sourced from the Guide to the NQF shows the components of the NQF.

## The National Quality Framework



### Components of the NQF

#### [Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010](#)

This applied law system sets a national standard for children's education and care across Australia.

#### [Education and Care Services National Regulations](#)

The national regulations support the national law by providing detail on a range of operational requirements for an education and care service. Department preschools are required to comply with this legislation.

#### [National Quality Standard \(NQS\)](#)

The NQS sets a national benchmark for the quality of education and care services and includes seven quality areas that are important to outcomes for children. These areas are made up of standards and elements. Please refer to the introduction of section 3 of the [Guide to the NQF](#) for an overview of the quality areas, standards and elements of the NQS.

#### [Approved learning frameworks](#)

For children 0-5 the approved framework is 'Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia', (commonly known as the 'Early Years Learning Framework' or 'EYLF').

#### [Assessment and rating process](#)

Education and care services are assessed and rated by their regulatory authority against the seven quality areas of the NQS.

### Exceeding the National Quality Standard

Three exceeding themes of practice are identified in the [Guide to the NQF](#) (October 2018):

- Theme 1: Practice is embedded in service operations
- Theme 2: Practice is informed by critical reflection
- Theme 3: Practice is shaped by meaningful engagement with families and/or the community

Section 3 of the [Guide to the NQF](#) includes an overview of these themes. In addition, following the guidance to meet each standard, are specific indicators describing how the standard may be exceeded. The indicators relate to practice, programs, environments or policy. Preschool teams should refer to this guidance during self-assessment processes, reflecting on how each theme is evidenced in each of the standards within their setting.

## Contacts

### Early Learning

Email: [earlylearning@det.nsw.edu.au](mailto:earlylearning@det.nsw.edu.au)

Webpage: [education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/curriculum/preschool](http://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/curriculum/preschool)

Phone: Early Learning Coordinator - 9266 8165

Preschool Advisor - 9266 8198

Early Learning Advisor - 9266 8110

Transition Advisor - 9244 5235

### P-2 Initiatives Officers, School Services Directorate

Adamstown Ph: 4904 3943

Arncliffe Ph: 9582 2835, 9582 2861

Broken Hill Ph: 08 8082 5707

Coffs Harbour Ph: 6656 6625

Dubbo Ph: 6883 6398

Glenfield Ph: 9203 9915, 9203 9974

Tuggerah Ph: 43575321

Lismore Ph: 6623 5952

Maitland Ph: 49313545

Moree Ph: 6757 3016

Nirimba Ph: 9208 7681, 9208 7676, 9208 7658, 9208 7710

Riverwood Ph: 9408 8929, 94088907

Warilla Ph: 4267 6171, 4267 6109

Wagga Wagga Ph: 6051 4326

# Quality Area 1- Educational program and practice

## Introduction

Quality Area 1 focuses on ensuring that the educational program and practice of educators maximises opportunities for enhancing and extending each child's learning and development. The **child centred** approach to preschool curriculum contrasts to the **content centred** curriculum of the primary years. Preschool curriculum is delivered through play-based pedagogy and driven by the knowledge, culture and interests of individuals and groups. Given that department preschools are located within schools it is crucial that 'push down' curriculum doesn't become common practice, instead schools should consider ways that early childhood approaches could inform the rest of the school, in particular the K-2 space.

High quality early childhood education programs:

- Reflect the preschool's philosophy
- Are underpinned by the [Early Years Learning Framework \(EYLF\)](#)
- Feature age-appropriate pedagogy.

## Program - Standard 1.1

The educational program enhances each child's learning and development.

### Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF)

The EYLF was developed to ensure all children in early childhood education settings experience quality teaching and learning. It describes the principles, practices and outcomes essential to support and enhance young children's learning from birth to five. Fundamental to the framework is a view of children's lives as characterised by 'belonging', 'being' and becoming'. (Australian Government DEEWR, 2009).

The EYLF:

- is mandated nationally to underpin all early childhood educational programs
- is based on international evidence of how young child learn and develop best
- has a strong emphasis on play-based learning, recognising this as the most age-appropriate pedagogy and the best way to stimulate brain development

- recognises the importance of communication and language (including early literacy and numeracy) and social and emotional development (Australian Government DEEWR, 2009, p. 5.)
- is recognised by NSW syllabus documents as establishing the foundations for effective learning in school and providing an articulated pathway of learning from prior-to-school settings into school
- supports goal two of the Melbourne Declaration on Education Goals for Young Australians; All young Australians become
  - successful learners
  - confident and creative individuals
  - active and informed citizens.

It is critical that all preschool educators know and understand the components of the EYLF to inform all aspects of the preschool's program and practices. The EYLF and its' associated resources can be downloaded from the [Australian Government Department of Education and Training](#) website.

The EYLF notes and describes five principles of early childhood pedagogy that reflect contemporary theories and research evidence and contribute to learning and development:

1. Secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships
2. Partnerships
3. High expectations and equity
4. Respect for diversity
5. Ongoing learning and reflective practice

The [Early Childhood Resource Hub](#) site has within the 'approved frameworks' tab, downloadable curriculum factsheets to support, promote and share Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. Each factsheet addresses one of the learning outcomes of the EYLF.

## Learning outcomes

The EYLF learning outcomes reflect contemporary theories and research evidence about children's learning. The outcomes are:

1. Children have a strong sense of identity.
2. Children are connected with and contribute to their world.

3. Children have a strong sense of wellbeing.
4. Children are confident and involved learners.
5. Children are effective communicators.

These outcomes differ from the NSW syllabus outcomes in that they are ongoing, life-long outcomes. As well as describing each outcome, the EYLF lists observable evidence or short term goals and examples of what educators can do to promote learning. Preschool teams are encouraged to add to these with appropriate, specific examples of evidence and practice that are culturally and contextually appropriate to their own setting (Australian Government DEEWR, 2009, p.22).

The EYLF learning outcomes acknowledge that:

- learning is integrated and complex
- children learn in a variety of ways
- children vary in their capabilities and pace of learning
- each child will progress towards the outcomes in different and equally meaningful ways
- learning is not always predictable and linear.

## Curriculum decision-making

Educators use their professional judgment to make curriculum decisions to ensure all children engage in a range of experiences in ways that optimise their learning. Standard 1.1 of the [National Quality Standard \(NQS\)](#) and [regulation 73](#) require the EYLF learning outcomes be used to guide planning and to assist all children to make progress and maximise learning opportunities. Preschool curriculum decision making is also influenced and guided by:

- The overarching themes or concepts of EYLF
- The principles and practices of EYLF
- Critical reflection
- Knowledge of individual children related to strengths and capabilities, developmental needs, interests and experiences. Educators develop this knowledge of children through
  - Observation and reflection
  - educator child interactions
  - discussions with colleagues
  - information provided by families
  - collaborations with other professionals
  - individual and team critical reflection
- Preferences of, and suggestions from, the children (known as the 'children's voices')



- The value of effective transitions and routines.
- Locally based decisions as to what is relevant to each child and their community.

## Program documentation

Preschool teams need to reflect and decide on the most effective methods, tools and techniques they will use to document their educational program. There is no mandated template or prescribed way of demonstrating the educational program and practice, and generally the methods used by a preschool team will be dynamic and evolve over time. Aspects of the program may focus on an individual child, a small group or the whole group. Collectively the documentation must clearly show assessment and planning cycles and meet the requirements of [regulations 73-76](#).

In considering documentation methods, consideration should be given to:

- an emphasis on quality, not quantity
- selectively choosing what to document
- documenting the learning, not what the child was doing
- the audience of the documentation
- using documentation to inform future planning
- linking the documentation to EYLF.

Documentation should show a balance of learning experiences:

- indoors and outdoors
- planned and spontaneous
- teacher and child/group initiated.

In addition, to meet the requirements of the NQS, program documentation should show evidence of:

- a group analysis summarising individual
  - developmental needs
  - confirmed disabilities
  - strengths and interests
  - home language and cultural background
- intentional teaching and spontaneous reinforcement of health and hygiene practices, for example, nose blowing, hand washing, choosing healthy foods
- embedded sustainability practices, for example, the children sorting their lunch rubbish, using recycled materials, the children caring for a vegetable patch

- a daily routine/timetable featuring opportunities for long periods of unhurried play and minimal periods when the children are all expected to do the same thing at the same time or sit and wait for others
- opportunities for children to exert their agency by making decisions about things which affect them, for example, where they play and with whom, if they have their shoes on or off, choosing when they eat their morning tea
- opportunities to explore and experience the natural environment, both indoors and outdoors
- strategies to manage behaviour positively
- inclusion for all children to participate through learning adjustments and/or modifications, as required.
- when required to support individual children, individual learning goals developed by educators and the child's family.

Time-poor educators sometimes fall into the trap of documenting an equipment roster, rather than focusing on the intended learning. For example, rather than noting 'large balls', documentation should focus on the intended learning, for example, 'to throw and catch with a partner' or 'to bounce a ball using one or two hands'. There is no need to plan for specific equipment if a wide range is always available for children to use in a variety of ways to enrich and extend their play.

Documentation can be addressed in two parts-

1. **Ongoing learning experiences** available to the children over a period, for example, a craft table where children can self-select from a wide range of resources and equipment to initiate and direct their own learning.
2. **Planned experiences** focusing on a specific child or group and learning goal, for example, the intended learning may be folding and cutting skills. These may be addressed at the craft table using coloured square paper and scissors with an adult demonstrating and helping children to create 'snow flakes'.

Program and documentation procedure

It is recommended preschool teams, led by their principal or supervisor, develop a local procedure detailing how programming and documentation will occur in their setting. This is important so educators are aware of expectations and the principal (or preschool supervisor), as educational leader is able to effectively supervise and support the educational program. In the development of the procedure, reference should be made to:

- [regulations 73-76](#),
- the [Guide to the NQF](#), sections 3 and 4
- school expectations around curriculum decision making and program documentation.

## Practice - Standard 1.2

Educators facilitate and extend each child's learning and development.

The EYLF identifies and describes eight high-quality practices. These practices are supported by research as contributing to outcomes for children. Please refer to the EYLF and standard 1.2 for a description of each and how it relates to early childhood education. The practices are:

- holistic approaches
- responsiveness to children
- learning through play
- intentional teaching
- learning environments
- cultural competence
- continuity of learning and transitions
- assessment for learning.

### Children with a disability

Under the Disability Standards for Education (2005) all principals and teachers have legal obligations to ensure that every student is able to participate in the curriculum on the same basis as their peers. The department's Disability Strategy (2019) states the department's commitment to providing children with a disability and their families with an education system that meets their needs.

### *Children with a diagnosis*

Children enrolling in preschool may already have a disability diagnosis. In this situation, the child's teacher will need to:

- Meet with child's family before the child commences to
  - gather as much information as possible about the child, i.e. their needs, details of their diagnosis, what early intervention support the child is already receiving
  - seek copies of any assessments the child has had
  - determine if a risk assessment will need to be developed
  - develop a plan to support the child's transition into preschool. This may include

- a series of 'stay and play' sessions where the child visits and joins with the support of a parent, carer or their therapist
  - A partial enrolment through reduced hours, increasing as the child settles
- seek consent to contact any prior education and care service to seek information on effective strategies to support the child
- discuss potential learning goals.
- Meet with the school learning and wellbeing team to:
  - discuss how the child will be supported within the preschool
  - consider any required adjustments (equipment, environment, routine, partial enrolment etc.)
  - develop a personalised learning plan identifying one or two goals and implementation strategies
  - discuss the child's eligibility for integration support funding (see below for details of this).

### *Working with other professionals*

If a child has a diagnosis, they will likely have a National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) package and already be accessing services, such as speech or occupational therapy. If this is the case, a preschool teacher may seek the families consent to make contact with the therapist to seek information regarding their learning plan for the child to support a continuity of learning.

Under the NDIS, an external provider is able to deliver individual therapy to a child within the preschool or school setting. However, this is with the family and principal's approval and requirements must be met before service delivery commences. These are explained on the department's [Externally funded service provider's](#) webpage. NDIS funds cannot be used to employ an additional School Learning Support Officer.

### *Children without a diagnosis*

If it becomes apparent that a preschool child without a diagnosis requires additional support and personalised adjustments to participate in the program, their preschool year may present many complex opportunities and challenges for the child, educators and the family.

The preschool team may be the first adults outside the home to work with the child and/or the child's needs may not be known or acknowledged by the family. Thus, an open, trusting relationship between the preschool educators and the family needs to be prioritised to ensure the best outcomes for the child and their successful transition into school. The following steps provide a rough guide for the preschool teacher:

1. Observe the child and make notes on areas of concern. If necessary, consult the [‘Developmental milestones and the Early Years Learning Framework and the National Quality Standard’](#) booklet, accessible on the ACECQA website.
2. Discuss and share observations and reflections with your SLSO or AEO and raise them at a team meeting with the preschool supervisor and/or principal. Identify and prioritise the child’s immediate needs and strategies to support the child.
3. Seek advice and support from your school learning and wellbeing team.
4. Develop a trusting, open relationship with the child’s family, initiating regular informal verbal contact to talk about the child’s participation in the program. Seek information on any relevant history and/or how the child plays and interacts at home. Discuss the provision of personalised adjustments. If appropriate, seek the families input into an individualised plan addressing specific learning and support needs of the child.
5. Initiate a meeting with the family to raise your concerns. You may do this in collaboration with your supervisor and/or school counsellor. If appropriate you may need to book a translator to attend. Ask the family if the child has been previously assessed by a medical practitioner and/or if they have any concerns. Keep in mind, what the family views as important to the child’s development may differ from generally recognised priorities, and you may need to approach the matter with sensitivity.
6. If and when appropriate
  - provide the family with contact information for support services, such as
    - local child and family medical service
    - local Aboriginal medical service
    - the [NSW Autism Advisor Program](#) (phone: 1300 978 611)
    - an NDIS NSW Early Childhood Partner (refer to office locations on the NDIS website)
  - Suggest the child have a paediatric assessment (you may need to help the family locate a bulk-billing service)
  - Speak with the family about their wishes and placement options for their child in kindergarten.

### *Integration funding support*

Preschool children with additional learning and support needs and a department disability confirmation may be eligible for a small amount of funding to support personalised learning and support. These funds are distributed by School Services. The process for accessing them varies between the education offices and so the relevant wellbeing officer should be contacted for details. Funds allocated vary depending on a child’s level of need and may

enable a school to employ an additional school learning support officer to work within the preschool, above the 1 to 10 ratio.

In addition, preschool enrolments are used in the calculation of base allocations for both the specialist teacher and flexible funding components of the low-level adjustment for disability. While there is no specific reference to preschool students in the supporting materials for low level adjustment for disability, there is nothing to exclude them. In fact the terminology simply refers to all students.

### *Supporting the child's transition into kindergarten*

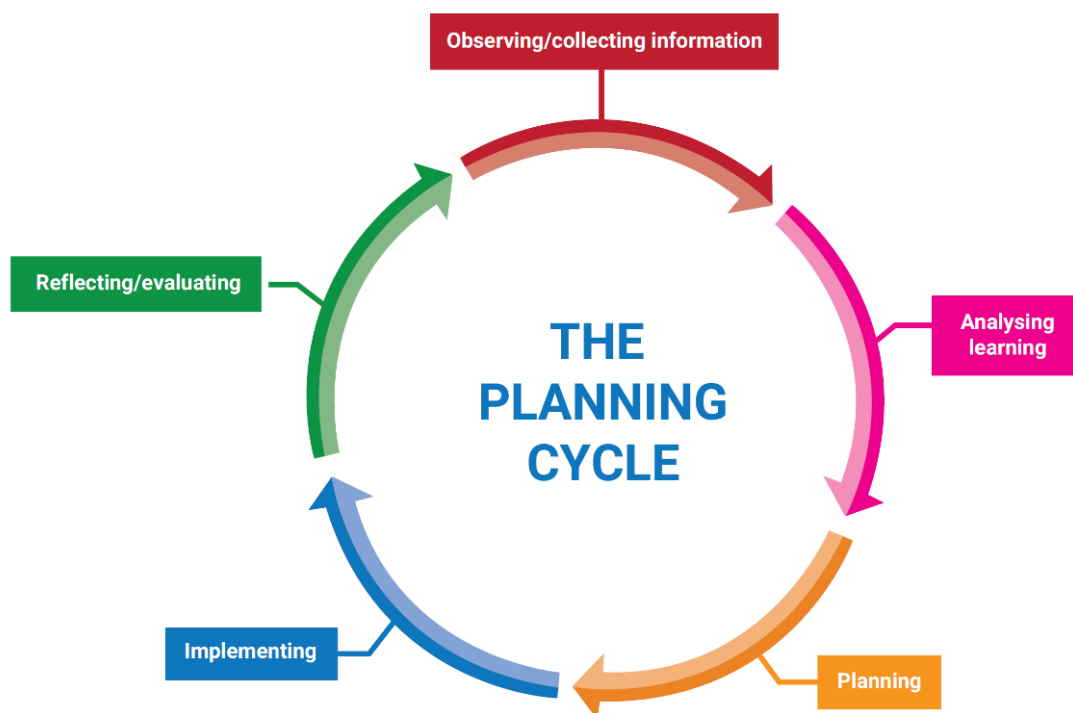
It is well known that some children require additional support to transition into school successfully. This support may take the form of planned individual transition activities, in addition to whole group activities. Children with a diagnosis may be able to access support from one of the department's early intervention itinerant support teachers. The school learning and wellbeing team, along with the preschool teacher, will need to determine the appropriateness of submitting an access request for the child to enrol in a specialist kindergarten class or to access integration support funding.

### Assessment and planning – Standard 1.3

Educators and coordinators take a planned and reflective approach to implementing the program for each child.

#### Assessment and planning cycle

As for all parts of the school, preschool teachers are expected to document and implement assessment and planning cycles (also referred to as 'teaching learning cycles'), informed by critical reflection. An entire cycle may not be evident in a single piece of documentation, but evident in the documentation collectively. Educators use various methods to show cycle links across their documentation. The stages of the planning cycle in the early childhood context are summarised in this image;



The planning cycle

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It is important documentation makes reference to why a particular learning experience was planned. For example, to:

- extend an individual or group interest
- address an identified area of need or learning goal
- continue an ongoing project
- participate in a current community event, for example, whole school NAIDOC celebrations
- address a principal or practice of the EYLF.

Documentation of learning

*'Documentation of children's experiences and their responses to the environment makes learning visible to children, educators and families and promotes shared learning and collaboration. It promotes relationships between children, educators and families and*

*demonstrates professionalism. It also enables the assessment and planning cycle to be visible to educators and families.'*

(Guide to the NQF, 2018, Section 3, Quality Area 1)

[Regulation 74](#) requires documentation of each child's learning to include:

- assessments of the child's developmental needs, interests, experiences and participation in the educational program
- assessments of the child's progress against the outcomes of the educational program.

As they are broad and lifelong goals, it is not possible to definitively state that an EYLF learning outcome has been achieved by a child. Documentation should describe development towards an outcome in terms of an indicator or short term goal, rather than the entire outcome. As for K-6 students, assessment statements should be meaningful and support future planning, describing what a preschool child:

- can do,
- has learnt to do,
- is learning to do, and/or
- needs support with.

The methods and techniques used to document and reflect on learning are a local decision. It is recommended the expectations of these be articulated in a locally developed program and documentation procedure. Key considerations are:

- documentation will generally be formative and ongoing to
  - make learning and development visible
  - inform future planning
- the quantity of documentation needs to reflect the number of days the child attends
- documentation must be easily understandable to educators and the child's family.

Examples of documentation educators use:

- learning stories
- captioned photos
- reflective journals
- floor books
- wall displays
- program folder
- individual portfolios



- observations in the form of a jotting or anecdotal note
- posts to an online application
- summative assessment statements
- transition statements.

Information for families

### *General program*

[Regulation 75](#) states that information about the contents and operation of the program must be displayed in a place easily accessible to families. Each preschool needs to consider the most appropriate and meaningful method of doing this in the context of their community. Gauging families' preferences will avoid time spent needlessly producing documentation which is not accessed.

Information provided can be a combination of upcoming planned experiences and retrospective information. The format it takes is a local decision and it might be a single piece of information, or a combination of the following:

- one-page outline of the daily routine (not sufficient if this is the only piece of information)
- summary of planned significant experiences for the day displayed in the preschool entrance
- information about an upcoming special event in a handout or newsletter article, for example, Harmony Day celebrations
- excerpts from the education program
- wall documentation of an ongoing focus or project
- digital media, i.e. the posting or emailing of planned experiences for the upcoming week. As not all families will access electronic media, consider printing a single copy of any posts and having them available in the preschool entrance.

Key considerations are, this information should:

- maintain the privacy of each child
- be meaningful and accessible to families
- not create excessive paper work or 'doubling-up' (consider how documentation can service the purpose of providing information for families, and also be part of the program documentation)
- be achievable and realistic for educators to complete (focus on brief, high quality information).

## *Individual children*

[Regulation 76](#) refers to the information families must be given in relation to their own child's learning and participation, including:

- assessments of the child's developmental needs, interests, experiences and participation in the educational program and
- assessments of the child's progress against the outcomes of the educational program.

Strategies to address these requirements may include:

- informal family teacher conversations
- formal family teacher interviews held in line with the rest of the school
- summative statements addressing each of the five EYLF learning outcomes (eg. an end of semester or year report or transition to school statement)
- learning stories highlighting an assessment planning cycle
- an individual learning plan.

## *Documentation making group learning visible*

Educators often document group participation in experiences, and where appropriate, group learning with the intended audience of the children, educators and families. One method used for this is wall documentation. Such documentation often evolves organically, focusing on an ongoing group focus or project. Wall displays can feature a combination of photos, children's works, quotes from the children, and educator notes. When appropriate, assessment planning cycles can be highlighted.

Another popular method is a written recount of a special event or outing, accompanied by photos. This may include statements related to intended learning outcomes and be displayed in the preschool entrance, posted in a newsletter, placed in individual learning portfolios, emailed to all families or posted on an app.

## *Recommended resources and further reading*

- Early Childhood Research Hub: Documenting children's learning – [ecrh.edu.au/topics/documenting-children's-learning](http://ecrh.edu.au/topics/documenting-children's-learning)

- Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia and The Educators Guide to the EYLF- [education.gov.au/early-years-learning-framework-0](https://education.gov.au/early-years-learning-framework-0)
- Be You- Supporting Early Childhood mental health - [beyou.edu.au](https://beyou.edu.au)

## Quality Area 2 – Children’s health and safety

### Introduction

Quality Area 2 reinforces children’s right to experience quality education and care in an environment that provides for their health and safety. The school principal and preschool educators have responsibility for supporting and promoting the health, protection, safety and wellbeing of the preschool children. Preschools must be able to demonstrate how they take reasonable care to protect children from foreseeable risk of harm, injury and infection.

(Guide to the NQF, 2018, Section 3)

### Health - Standard 2.1

Each child’s health and physical activity is supported and promoted.

#### Sleep and rest guidelines

All children have individual sleep and rest requirements. The preschool must ensure that all children have appropriate opportunities to sleep, rest and relax in accordance with their individual needs and as advised by the child's family. In doing this, children must not be forced to lie down or sleep.

#### *Advice to inform the development and review of the sleep and rest procedure*

Educators will:

- Take reasonable steps to ensure that the needs for sleep and rest of children being educated and cared for by the service are met, having regard to the ages, development stages and individual needs of the children ([regulation 81](#)).
- Consult with families about children's sleep and rest requirements. Educators will be sensitive to each child's needs so that sleep and rest times are a positive experience.
- Respect family preferences regarding sleep and rest and consider these daily while ensuring children feel safe and secure in the environment. Conversations with families may be necessary to remind families that children will neither be forced to sleep nor prevented from sleeping.
- Use a range of practices to manage sleep, rest and relaxation needs. Children sleep, rest and relax in a range of different ways. Some children may prefer to quietly rest and read; some may enjoy relaxation activities like guided meditation or yoga; some may need to be more active in order to then sleep and/or relax.
- Ensure that children who do not require sleep or rest have opportunities to

engage in appropriate quiet play experiences, such as drawing, listening to a story, or completing a puzzle.

- Assess each child's circumstances and current health to determine whether higher supervision levels and checks may be required whilst they are sleeping e.g. Children who are unwell will need to be monitored constantly whilst sleeping especially if they have a high temperature, vomited or received minor trauma to their head. In addition children who are taking medication or have recently received a vaccine may experience increased drowsiness (or restlessness) and this will also need to be taken into consideration.
- Ensure that areas for sleep and rest are well ventilated and have natural lighting. Rooms that are very dark and have music playing may not provide adequate supervision for sleeping children.
- Ensure that if beds/mattresses are used, they are clean and in good repair. Bed linen is for use by an individual child only and will be washed before use by another child. Light bedding is encouraged, as opposed to doonas and heavy blankets. If beds are used, ensure they are low to the ground to prevent falls.
- All children will be encouraged to lie on their backs before they fall asleep. A child may then turn over whilst the resting/sleeping to find a comfortable position.
- Ensure children sleep and rest with their face uncovered. If a child's face becomes covered, by the bed linen whilst they are resting/sleeping, the staff/carer will immediately uncover the child's face. In addition, children should be asked to remove jumpers with hoods and cords and scarves whilst resting and/or sleeping, to reduce the risk of choking or strangulation.
- Maintain adequate and direct supervision and educator to child ratios throughout the rest/sleep period.
- Closely monitor sleeping and resting children and the sleep and rest environments. This involves checking/inspecting sleeping children at regular intervals, and ensuring they are always within sight and hearing distance of sleeping and resting children so that they can assess a child's breathing and the colour of their skin.

*In planning provisions for sleep and rest consider:*

- How to meet the needs of children who require sleep, based on discussions with the child's family.
- How to meet the needs of children who no longer require sleep, yet require a period of rest/relaxation.
- How to respond to changes in children's sleep, rest and relaxation needs.
- How to include children in decision making about sleep, rest and relaxation.
- When sleep, rest and relaxation opportunities are provided throughout the day.
- How to meet the needs of children who require sleep at different times of the day, such as also providing a quiet, restful area outdoors.
- How the environment might best be used to provide children who need to sleep a quiet space without distraction.

- How the environment might best be used to provide children who do not sleep a space and opportunity to do alternate activities.
- Keep in mind, it is not mandatory for a preschool to have a set of beds or stretchers.

### *Linen, pillows and cushions*

Most preschools request families supply linen and a pillow for their child, if required, as well as take responsibility for washing them. If a child uses preschool linen, it must be washed before it can be used by another child. It can't be stored in contact with other linen until after it has been washed.

Cushions should have removable covers or be covered by a sheet so they can be washed if a child lays their head on it or an unwell child uses it. Some preschools provide a stretcher style bed for children who wish to lay down. If covered with linen, these do not require cleaning between uses, unless soiled or visibly dirty.

### Children with a medical condition

Department policy states that where a child has been diagnosed with a condition that may require an emergency response the principal will co-ordinate the development of an emergency response plan as part of the Individual health care plan for the child. In addition, preschools must develop and implement a dealing with medical conditions in children procedure. At a minimum, the information below need to be included in this procedure.

If a family indicates on the enrolment form that their child has a medical condition, the principal and/or teacher should seek a meeting with them as soon as possible. This is to complete the necessary planning and documentation to ensure their safety whilst at preschool. The [Guide to the NQF](#) defines a medical condition as a condition that has been diagnosed by a registered medical practitioner (Section 3, 2.8). This may include, but is not exclusive to, the following conditions:

- anaphylaxis
- asthma
- epilepsy
- diabetes
- food allergy.

The following steps must be taken **before** the child commences preschool:

- The family must provide a medical management or action plan for the child, developed and signed by a medical practitioner. If the child is at risk of anaphylaxis, this is the [ASCIA Action Plans for Anaphylaxis \(personal\) for use with EpiPen](#).
- A risk minimisation plan must be developed in consultation with the child's family. The parent or carer's signature should be included on the plan as verification that they were consulted.
- A communications plan must be developed documenting
  - procedures for ensuring all staff and volunteers can identify the child and locate their management plan and medication
  - how a child's family will inform the preschool of any changes in the child's management or risk assessment
- The family must be given a copy of the department's Student Health in NSW Schools policy, [accessible in the department's policy library](#).

## Emergency medication

These points relate to emergency medication:

- A child who has been prescribed emergency medication **cannot attend preschool** if it has not been supplied by the family to the preschool.
- The department supplies each preschool with an EpiPen Junior auto injector for general use in an emergency situation.
- The preschool's EpiPen must be stored with the [ASCIA Action Plan for Anaphylaxis \(general\) for use with EpiPen](#).
- Schools provide the preschool with a general emergency-use Ventolin inhaler (available from pharmacies without a prescription).
- In an emergency situation, Ventolin or an EpiPen may be administered to any child requiring them, without parental consent. In such a situation, the family and emergency services must be contacted as soon as practical, and a notification made to Early Learning ([Regulation 94](#)).

## Administering medication

Educators must assist with administering prescribed medication during the preschool day, if a child's family cannot reasonably do so ([regulation 93](#)). Non-prescription medication (such as Panadol, Zyrtec, Claratyne) cannot be administered to a child, unless prescribed by a medical practitioner, verified in a written letter from them. Some schools require staff who will be administering medication complete the E-Administration of prescribed medication at school (e-APMAS) online course, available in the student wellbeing section of the [department's website](#).

Medication should only be administered with parent or carer written authorisation, as recorded in a medication record (the exception being an emergency asthma or anaphylactic situation). Most school medication records don't collect the detail required in [regulation 92](#), so it is suggested preschools use the ACECQA or Early Learning-developed medication record.

If a child is taking medication on an ongoing, long-term basis (e.g. anti-seizure medication), or they have been prescribed medication for a medical condition (e.g. Ventolin, EpiPen), families are able to complete a long-term administration of medication authorisation record. Early Learning has developed a template for this. It collects the same information as the regular medication record, as required in [regulation 92](#), but only requires a single authorisation from the family for a prescribed period. This authorisation can be withdrawn by the family at any point, either verbally or in writing.

The following procedures apply to giving medication and should be included in the preschool dealing with medical conditions procedure:

- On arrival, the parent or carer hands the child's medication to a staff member for safe storage.
- Medication can only be given to a child if it is in its original packaging with a pharmacy label stating
  - the child's name
  - dosage instructions
  - a non-expired use-by date.
- The parent or carer must complete the first section of the medication record, authorising the medication to be administered to their child.
- All non-emergency medication is to be stored in a locked cupboard, or locked container in the refrigerator, out of reach of children.
- Emergency medication (EpiPen, Ventolin) must be inaccessible to children, but not locked away.
- Individual emergency medication must be stored with a copy of the child's emergency management plan.
- The preschool's EpiPen must be stored with the general ASCIA action plan.
- The preschool's Ventolin must be stored with a generic emergency management plan, for example, the Asthma Action Plan available on the [National Asthma Council Australia](#) website.

When a staff member administers medication to a child, they record the details on the medication record, and another member of staff verifies that the medication was administered as prescribed. The record must include the name of the medication, the date, time and dosage given and the names and signatures of staff members who gave and



checked the medication. This is to be made available to the family for verification when they collect their child.

Children wearing nappies or pull-ups

A non-toilet trained child cannot be excluded from enrolling in a department preschool. If a child enrolls who is not toilet trained, it is suggested the preschool educators develop or review the existing nappy changing procedure, addressing things such as:

- Where will the child be changed?
- How will the child's dignity and privacy be prioritised?
- Who will change the child?
- What will the changing procedure be?
- How will adequate supervision of the other children be maintained while the child is being changed?
- If the child is required to climb onto a changing table, how will this be done safely?
- How will hygiene be maintained?
- How will nappies be disposed of in a way that prevents children having access to them?

If required, these resources will also support the development of a nappy changing procedure:

- [Staying Healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services](#)
- [ACECQA information sheet: Toileting and nappy changing principles and practices](#)

*Equipment required*

**Nappies or pull-ups, disposable wet wipes, plastic bags**

Request the family supply these.

**Sink for washing hands**

The changing area needs to be located close to a sink (that is not used for food preparation), soap and paper towels. The adult changing the child should wash their hands:

- before changing the child
- after changing the child
- after cleaning the change surface

The child should be supported to wash their hands after they have been changed.

### **Disposable gloves and paper towels**

These must be stored within easy reach of the change area and disposed of immediately after use.

### **Foot operated bin**

The bin should be lined by a plastic bag and tied-off at the end of the day, ready for disposal by the contract cleaner. A preschool may prefer to pay for a nappy disposal service. In this case consideration needs to be given to how regularly the bin will be removed.

### **Change table**

Preschool teams need to consider the most appropriate type of change table or surface for their setting. [Regulation 112](#) notes that children over the age of three do not have to be changed on a standard table. In some situations, if the child is wearing a pull-up rather than a nappy, changing them as they stand may be more convenient.

Some preschools purchase an inexpensive vinyl covered foam change mat and place it on a low table or a fold-out bench attached to the wall. If there is a large amount of space available, a hydraulic-lifting bed designed for a child with a disability may be suitable. Contact your School Services Wellbeing team to seek their advice on accessing such a table. To minimise germs on the change surface, preschools may opt to cover the change surface with paper (such as butcher's paper or paper towel) which is disposed of after each child is changed ([Staying Healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services](#)).

If the child is not changed within the preschool premises, for example, in the school's support unit or a disabled toilet, their family needs to be informed this will occur. Also, an additional staff member will be required to ensure the ratio in the preschool is maintained at 1 to 10 while the child is changed.

### **Changing procedure on display**

It is helpful to display nappy changing instructions in the changing area to ensure staff follow the same procedure and maintain good hygiene.

## **Spare plastic bags**

Soiled clothing needs to be placed in a sealed bag.

## **Detergent and water**

After each child is changed, the changing surface will need to be thoroughly cleaned with a detergent and water mixture, then dried with paper towel.

## **Supporting children to toilet train**

It is important educators develop a positive relationship with the child's family to support the child with a consistent toilet training routine at home and preschool. It is suggested that a toilet training goal be identified collaboratively, and this be a focus of the child's learning at preschool in Term 1. Children who have regular accidents will need to bring a number of changes of clothes to preschool each day. Consider storing these in a location that the child can access easily themselves. Soiled clothes should be placed in a sealed plastic bag in out of reach of the child.

## **Incident, injury, trauma or illness**

The locally developed preschool incident, injury, trauma and illness procedure must document the steps that will be taken in the event a child:

- is injured,
- becomes ill, or
- suffers trauma.

For each event, an incident, injury, trauma or illness record must be completed. This applies to all first aid administered, and there is no requirement or need to keep a separate log of injuries or illnesses, or categorise them as minor or major. Preschools should use the ACECQA or Early Learning developed template, as it captures the information required in [regulation 87](#). The child's family must be notified within 24 hours of the event and sign the acknowledgment of notification on the record ([regulation 86](#)).

As part of their incident, injury, trauma and illness procedure, preschools find it useful to document the situations in which a child's family will be called immediately, for example, serious injury, head injury or a bite.

## Sick children at preschool

The following general guidelines apply if a child becomes sick whilst at preschool:

- The child should be separated from the other children and made comfortable, whilst kept under supervision, for example, lying comfortably on a cushion in a quiet corner.
- If the child is not well enough to participate in activities, their family should be contacted and asked to collect them or arrange for their nominated emergency contact to do so.
- In some schools, it is the usual practice that the school office or principal are consulted before the family is contacted.
- If a child appears very unwell or has a serious injury that needs urgent medical attention, an ambulance must be called (and a notification subsequently made to Early Learning).
- If it is a serious illness and the child needs to attend hospital, a notification also needs to be made to Early Learning.
- If a child is taken home early from preschool, the details need to be documented in the incident, injury, trauma or illness record.
- It is suggested that preschool teams discuss and document the action that will be taken in the situation that a child vomits, has diarrhoea or a fever.
- The use of a thermometer is a local decision.

## First aid kit

[Regulation 89](#) requires a suitably equipped, easily accessible first aid kit. The contents of the kit is not stipulated, so consideration needs to be given to what is needed based on the inherent risks within the preschool or on an excursion. While on the school site, preschools are also able to access the school office first aid kit which will be more extensive and includes contents prescribed by the department. There is no regulatory requirement for a preschool to have a defibrillator. Preschools need to consider:

- A second mini-kit located outside for easy access when all children and educators are outside
- Who will carry the kit in the case of evacuation or an excursion?
- A process for keeping track of the expiry dates of the kit's contents

## Immunisation requirements

All education and care services must comply with the Public Health Act 2010, which states it is an offence to enrol children who are unimmunised due to their family's conscientious objection. For their enrolment to be accepted, a child's Australian Childhood Immunisation Register (ACIR) Immunisation history statement or form must be provided. A copy of this must be stored with the preschool enrolment form. This documentation will show the child is

- fully immunised for their age,
- has a medical reason not to be immunised, or
- is on a recognised catch-up schedule.

Excluding conscientious objectors, there is a 12-week temporary exemption for supply of the history statement or form for a:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child
- a child evacuated during a state of emergency
- a child in out of home care.

In these situations, staff must diligently follow up with the child's family to ensure the child's immunisation documentation is provided by the end of this period. Preschools must maintain an immunisation register that records the immunisation status of all enrolled children. This register must be produced for inspection by a government health official or the regulator (Early Childhood Education).

After a child turns four whilst enrolled at preschool, there is an obligation for preschools to remind the family to supply the updated history statement or form. However, the child can't be excluded if the family does not provide the documentation, unless there is an outbreak of an immunisation preventable disease. Staff should refer to the [Immunisation Enrolment Toolkit: For Early Childhood Education and Care Services'](#) (2017) to clarify immunisation requirements.

## Managing the outbreak of an infectious disease

The preschool dealing with infectious diseases procedure should outline the steps that will be taken to reduce the spread of infectious diseases within the preschool. If a preschool child becomes unwell and it is suspected they are suffering an infectious disease, they should be separated from the other children to stop the spread of the disease. This should be done with consideration of the child's emotional wellbeing and maintaining adequate supervision. The child's family should be contacted and asked to collect the child.

After confirmation that a preschool child is suffering from an infectious disease, and as soon as practical, the family of each child in the group must be notified of the occurrence, whilst maintaining the privacy of the ill child ([regulation 88](#)). Some preschools do this by posting a note in the entrance and/or via electronic message. It is helpful to also provide families with a factsheet related to the disease.

It is suggested that the recommended minimum exclusion periods for a child suffering an infectious disease be included in the preschool orientation information or family handbook. These can be found in [Staying Healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services](#), as well as on the [NSW Health website](#). The regulations do not state a child should be given a doctor's clearance to return to preschool.

For educator's information, [The Immunisation Enrolment Toolkit](#) includes a table listing the vaccine preventable diseases for which a notification must be made to the local public health unit in the event of an outbreak (phone: 1300 066 055). Educators should follow the directions given regarding the exclusion of children and the provision of information for families. In addition, an outbreak of a serious illness poses a risk to the health of the preschool children and is considered a serious incident and as such a notification needs to be made to Early Learning.

## Infection control

[Regulation 77](#) requires preschools to implement adequate health and hygiene practices. To do this Early Learning recommends preschool teams refer to part one of [Staying Healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services](#). This details strategies to prevent many infectious diseases and control their spread. A key concept explained is the chain of infection, which explains how germs can spread in education and care services. To stop infections spreading, you can break the chain of infection at any point through:

- effective hand hygiene
- exclusion of ill children, educators and other staff
- immunisation
- cough and sneeze etiquette
- appropriate use of gloves
- effective environmental cleaning.

Health and hygiene practices need to be explicitly taught to the children and regularly reinforced. Handwashing and nose blowing can be embedded into the daily routine.

## Standard precautions

Standard precautions for infection control should be used by all staff, children, visitors and volunteers to reduce the risk of transmission of infectious diseases during care procedures. These precautions involves the use of safe work practices and protective barriers (such as disposable gloves) for the control of the spread of infection from both recognised and unrecognised sources of infection.

It is not possible to reliably identify sources of infections or communicable diseases, therefore it is necessary to presume that blood (including dried blood) and body substances of all persons be considered as potential sources of infection independent of diagnosis or perceived risk.

There is a potential risk of infection when exposed to:

- blood, including dried blood
- all other body fluids, secretions and excretions, including saliva and mucous but excluding sweat
- broken skin
- mucous membranes, for example, the mouth or nose

## Cleaning furniture and equipment

As per the whole site, a contractor completes general preschool cleaning and rubbish disposal daily. In addition to this, furniture and equipment must be cleaned regularly to minimise the number of germs that survive on surfaces. General cleaning of equipment and furniture are best achieved with warm water and detergent. It is suggested preschools develop a schedule for such cleaning, and record completed cleaning in a format that suits their needs.

Disinfectants are only necessary if a surface is known to be contaminated with potentially infectious material. Surfaces must be cleaned with water and soap prior to the use of disinfectant. To kill germs disinfectant must:

- have enough time in contact with the surface (as per the manufacturer's instructions),
- be used at the right concentration, and
- be applied to a clean, dry surface.

Bleach is stronger than other disinfectants and can inactivate blood borne viruses. It should only be used for cleaning up small to large blood spills. For guidelines on cleaning in the preschool refer to section three of [Staying Healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services](#).

## Nutrition, food, beverages and dietary requirements

The following information related to eating and drinking at preschool should inform the development and review of the preschool nutrition, food, beverages and dietary requirements procedure.

### *Access to safe drinking water*

Children must have access to safe drinking water at all times ([regulation 78](#)). Preschools do this by requesting each family provide their child with a full bottle of water each day. Often these are stored together in a trolley or sports caddy which can be flexibly moved indoors or outdoors, depending on where the children are. Water bottles should have lid covers or be stored in a manner which eliminates cross contamination. Unless otherwise requested by their family, it is safe to refill a child's water from a kitchen tap.

### *Children eating during the preschool day*

In department preschools each family provides their child with food to consume during the day, generally this is morning tea and a packed lunch. The preschool daily routine must include regular times the children are able to consume the food they have brought from home. To meet children's range of requirements some strategies preschools use are:

- a designated space for hungry children to eat on arrival (for those who have had an early or no breakfast)
- a time period for morning and/or afternoon tea so children can choose to eat when they are hungry
- a designated lunch time when the group sit together to eat
- an option for hungry children to return to any uneaten lunch in the afternoon or consume afternoon tea.

Eating routines should be regularly reflected on, to ensure individual needs are being met. There should be no onus on the preschool children to eat at the same time as the K-6



children. Meal times are an opportunity for educators to model, implement and reinforce healthy eating practices. They also provide opportunity for the children to develop their independence and self-help skills to support a successful transition to school.

### *Children with food allergies or at risk of anaphylaxis*

In developing the individual risk assessment for these children, consider:

- Where will the child be seated to eat?
- How will other children be taught not to share food?
- Will the lunches of other children be monitored for trigger foods?
- Will the supervision plan need to be modified at meal times?

### *Storing children's food safely*

[Regulation 77](#) requires the safe storage of food. This can be done by storing perishable foods below 5°C. Preschools are able to do this using the method most suitable to their context, for example:

- all food placed in a fridge on arrival (note, if the fridge doesn't have a digital display, a non-mercury thermometer will need to be placed in the fridge to ensure it is below 5°C)
- perishable foods only placed in the fridge on arrival
- families asked to place an ice brick in their child's lunch (in this case, educators will need a strategy to ensure families have done this each day)

For additional information, the Guide to the NQF directs preschools to the guidelines in [Staying Healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services](#).

### *Reheating children's food safely*

Some preschools reheat children's lunch in a microwave. In this case, advice from Staying Healthy in Childcare should be followed:

- food needs to be heated to above 70°C (as measured with a thermometer),
- food will need to have cooled sufficiently before being served to the child, and

- all left-overs should be disposed of and not returned to the family.

### *Preschool cooking experiences and special events*

In preparing for a group cooking experience, educators should familiarise themselves with the food safety guidelines in part 3.5 of [Staying Healthy in Childcare](#).

Department policy states that peanuts, tree nuts or any nut produce cannot be used in curriculum or extra curricula activities (this does not include foods labelled as 'may contain traces of nuts'). Additionally, avoid using any ingredient for which a child has a known allergy, intolerance or is at risk of anaphylaxis. During enrolment and orientation, educators should collect information related to foods a child cannot eat for religious or cultural reasons. Before special events where food will be shared, it is recommended the preschool teacher liaise with families of the children in the situations above, to ensure their child's health and wellbeing needs are met.

### Physical activity

The preschool daily routine/timetable should provide a balance of opportunities for:

- inside and outside play
- passive and active experiences
- spontaneous and planned physical activity

[Munch and Move](#) is a free, comprehensive government program providing NESA registered professional learning and resources to support preschools to support healthy eating and physical activity.

## Safety – Standard 2.2

Each child is protected.

Reasonable precautions to protect children from harm and hazards

As for the whole school, reasonable precautions must be taken at all times to protect the preschool children from harm and hazards likely to cause injury. In the preschool, this must be done whilst considering the benefits of providing children with a stimulating play

environment. Specific details of the precautions implemented in each preschool should be documented in the providing a child safe environment procedure. The Guide to the NQF (section 3, 2.2) provides examples of the types of precautions which can be taken to meet this requirement:

- adequate supervision
- daily safety checks of the environment and equipment
- a process for reporting required maintenance to the general assistant, or principal if urgent
- the removal of broken or hazardous equipment from areas accessible to the children
- secure, labelled storage of hazardous products including chemicals
- doors and gates secured to prevent children entering areas unsupervised, e.g. storerooms, staff toilet
- implementation by all staff of current preschool procedures related to health and safety
- hot water taps inaccessible to children
- the intentional teaching and positive reinforcement of safe play and the safe use of equipment
- electrical outlets covered with safety fittings
- adult-size equipment or tools only accessible to the children under direct supervision, e.g. large scissors, fruit cutting knives
- heavy objects or furniture positioned in a way that children can't pull them down
- climbing equipment more than 50cm tall placed over cushioning or soft fall
- clear exit routes, not blocked by furniture
- any equipment or furniture being purchased meets the relevant Australian Standard
- whole school tree inspections include the preschool
- hazardous garbage inaccessible to children, e.g. used nappies, broken glass
- development of risk assessments

## Materials Safety Data Sheet (MSDS)

The school MSDS should include the contents of the preschool. A copy does not need to be stored in the preschool, but accessible in the school office or on the school server.

## Risk assessments

Preschools are required to maintain current risk minimisation plans identifying potential hazards and harm, and the steps taken to reduce these. Annually updated plans are required for:

- the general preschool environment (indoors and outdoors)

- visits into the school
- evacuation from the preschool
- potential emergency situations
- excursions and regular outings
- individual children with a medical condition

The relevant risk assessment should be amended if a new hazard becomes apparent. Some preschools find it also necessary to develop risk assessments for individual children or particular activities, such as bush school, handling preschool pets or tree climbing. Support and templates are available on the department's health and safety website. School Services P-2 Initiatives Officers can be contacted to assist in the development and update of plans.

## Water safety

The preschool water safety procedure should make reference to the following items:

- supervision considerations when children are playing with water, including children's access to taps
- the inclusion of any water features in the general environment risk assessment
- ponds must be securely covered with wire mesh or a metal grid sitting slightly below the water's surface
- if an excursion destination features a body of water, this will need to be carefully considered and documented in the excursion risk assessment.
- emptying pooled water after rain
- adults not carrying and consuming hot drinks when children are present
- children not being able to access hot water
- the children having access to clean drinking water throughout the day
- any other factors relevant to a specific preschool's context

## Sun safety

The preschool sun protection procedure should make reference to the following items:

- Will sun screen be supplied or will children bring their own?
- How will the expiry date of sun screen/s be monitored?
- During the day will staff apply sunscreen, or support children to do it themselves?
- All sun protection measures (recommended outdoor times, shade, hat, clothing and sunscreen) should be considered when planning excursions and outdoor activities.

- Families should be asked to apply sunscreen to their child before or on arrival at the preschool. All staff and children should apply SPF30+ broad-spectrum, water-resistant sunscreen 20 minutes before going outdoors and reapply every two hours.
- Outdoor activities should be planned to occur in shaded areas as much as possible.
- Staff and children should wear sun-safe hats that protect their face, neck and ears, for example, a legionnaire or bucket hat
- Staff should act as role models and show sun-safe behaviour by wearing a sun-safe hat and clothing, applying sunscreen and using and promoting the use of shaded areas for play.
- Sun protection information such as on the Cancer Council website should be promoted to staff, families and visitors.
- Any other factors relevant to a specific preschool's context

Go to Quality Area 3 of these guidelines for information on providing [shade](#).

### *Application of sun screen*

The preschool enrolment form does not collect consent for an adult to apply sun screen to a child. Some preschools develop a separate information and authorisation letter, consistent with whole school procedures, if educators intend to apply sun screen to the children. This is not necessary if the family supplies their child's own product and the child applies it themselves with adult support.

### Arrival and departure procedures

Arrival and departure times are an important part of the daily preschool routine, particularly for ensuring children's safety and the opportunity for educators and families to develop relationships. The specific procedures each preschool implements will vary depending on the physical layout of the preschool. They should be documented in the delivery and collection of children procedure, and a summary communicated in a meaningful way to families. These suggestions can be adapted to suit a preschool's context:

#### *Arrival*

- The arrival and departure register should be completed on arrival, including the date and time of each child's arrival and signed by the person accompanying the child.
- Families who arrive early should stay with their child until the preschool starting time, when educators will then assume care of the child.
- Children must not be left in the building or the playground without an educator being made aware of their arrival.
- When the preschool opens, each child is greeted by an educator.

- At a pre-specified time, one educator will perform a head count and check this corresponds with the number of children who have been signed in. If a child has inadvertently not been signed in, the educator will sign them in (signing their own name) so the record is accurate.
- Families are asked to inform staff of any changes regarding the collection of their child that day. These changes should be noted on the arrival and departure register for that day.

### *Departure*

- The arrival and departure register is to be completed with the time of the child's departure from the preschool and must be signed by the person collecting the child.
- Families are requested to inform an educator of the child's departure.
- If a family is unexpectedly late in collecting their child, they are asked to notify the preschool by telephone.
- Families who have not arrived by a specific time to collect their child (preschools each determine an appropriate time) will be contacted by the school. If they are not available, the emergency contact will be telephoned.
- An un-collected child must stay in the care of the preschool or school until their family, emergency contact or authorised person collects them.
- Preschool educators will not allow an unauthorised person to collect a child.
- When collecting their own child, families are asked to ensure the safety of other children by making sure the front door or gate is closed behind them.

### *Additional considerations may include:*

- An invitation for families to stay for a short while on arrival and prior to departure, to share some of their child's learning experiences.
- The need for specific arrival and departure routines for individual children, particularly those suffering separation anxiety.
- The provision of a space for families to gather before or after they have delivered their child.

### Releasing children into the care of an authorised person

The Guide to the NQF operational requirements explains that only a parent or carer (unless prohibited by a court order) or authorised nominee can take a child from the preschool. Exception is made in an emergency, or if their family has given authorisation for the child to be taken on an excursion. (regulations 99 and 161).

The preschool enrolment form requires a child's family to document details of persons authorised to collect their child from the preschool. This page should be copied and stored

in the preschool (or collated into a list) for quick referral in the situation that a person other than their family arrives to collect a child. As circumstances change, a family may want to modify who they have authorised to collect their child and they should be asked to put this in writing. If an authorised collector is not already known to preschool educators, they must produce photo identification to confirm their identity.

If a parent or carer calls during the day to notify that a person other than an authorised collector will be collecting their child that day, the staff member who takes the call should make a note of the verbal instruction in the comments section of the arrival and departure register.

### *Collection by an older sibling*

A situation may arise whereby a family requests a person under 18 years of age collect their preschool child at the end of the day. As the regulations do not state a minimum age for an authorised collector, in such a situation the family should be directed to the principal. It is at the principal's discretion to approve or not approve collection by a person under 18, on an individual basis, after interviewing the family. If approved, the collector would need to be recorded by the family in the enrolment form as an authorised collector and sign the arrival and departure register as per usual.

### *Bus travel*

If preschool children travel to or from preschool via bus, a bus travel procedure must be developed and implemented. The contents of this will vary depending if the travel is part of the education and care service provided or not. A useful resource to understand the requirements of bus travel is [ECE Spotlight on Quality](#): Issue 4 – Unpacking the key elements of transportation.

### *Transport that is not part of the service provided*

Examples of transport that are **not part** of an education and care service include:

- private transport provided by families and carers
- transport provided, managed, or paid for by an entity other than the preschool, for example a school bus, charter bus
- when a disability service picks up children and transports them to or from preschool

When transport is not part of the service, the preschool's bus travel procedure must make reference to:

- the roles and responsibilities of parents, the preschool and educators

- procedures for ensuring children are safely delivered to and collected from the transportation provided, including accounting for each child and recording children's arrival and departure at the service ([regulation 158](#))
- communication protocols between the parents and the preschool in the case that a child does not arrive at the preschool or at home at the expected time, or where a child does not use the transport as expected on a particular day
- arrangements for children being transported for the first time

### *Transport that is part of the service provided*

Transportation is sometimes provided as part of a preschool's service and requires a range of considerations to ensure compliance with the law and regulations. Examples of transport considered part of a preschool's service include:

- transporting children from the service premises to another location for an excursion
- collecting or dropping-off children whilst they are under the care of the preschool
- accompanying children in transit where they are recorded as in attendance at the preschool and under the care of the service

A procedure is not required for bus travel for an excursion as the excursion's risk assessment plan will make reference to the bus travel. In all other situations that transport is provided as part of an education and care service, a preschool bus travel procedure must be in place, making reference to:

- maintaining accurate attendance records which show the time that the child arrives or departs the education and care service, signed by the nominated supervisor, an educator or the person delivering or collecting the child (regulation 158)
- collecting a parent or authorised nominee's written authorisation to allow the child to leave the preschool (regulations 99, 102, 160 and 161)
- ensuring children are protected from harms and hazards (section 167)
- conducting risk assessments (regulations 100 and 101)
- adhering to maximum numbers of children according to the service approval (section 51(4)(a))
- ensuring adequate supervision (s165)
- maintaining educator to child ratio requirements (regulations 123, 271 and 388)
- suitable staffing arrangements (regulation 151)
- preparations for responding to a first aid incident (regulation 136)
- following other legal requirements and best practice standards e.g. ensuring suitable drivers licenses, using seat belts, and child seats

### Adequate supervision

Supervision in the preschool should be a part of the whole school supervision plan in line with the department's 'Memorandum to Principals: Care and Supervision of Children 97/165 S.156'. The National Law section 165 states it is an offence to inadequately supervise



children and that responsibility for ensuring the preschool children are adequately supervised at all times rests with the nominated supervisor (school principal). Considering this, it is imperative the principal is aware of the preschool's supervision plans and monitors them to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all children.

It is particularly important that casual, relieving and RFF staff are aware of the requirements to adequately supervise preschool children and how this may differ from the expectation of doing a playground duty in the rest of the school. Supervision of preschool aged children requires an understanding that preschool children need closer supervision than school-aged children and that an active approach should be taken.

Adequate supervision cannot be achieved through educator to child ratios alone. In order to ensure children are adequately supervised at all times educators must:

- ensure they can respond to children immediately, particularly if a child is distressed or in an unsafe situation
- know where all children are at all times by actively and diligently monitoring their activities
- balance supervision and engagement by drawing on a range of skills such as positioning, using peripheral vision and monitoring changes in noise and stress levels
- have an awareness of potential hazards in the environment and proactively take steps to predict and intervene in situations where children's health and safety may be compromised
- use flexible positioning and strong communication between educators to ensure all children are supervised
- inform another educator if they are going into a storeroom or bathroom

Each preschool's supervision plan should be documented in their providing a child safe environment procedure. It should include details on how adequate supervision is maintained during different parts of the day, particularly arrival, departure and pack-away times. Supervision plans will vary greatly between preschools and will be influenced by things such as:

- the layout of the premises in relation to visibility and accessibility
- risks in the environment and experiences provided to children
- abilities and individual needs of children
- number and positioning of educators.

## Indoor / outdoor play

After consideration and reflection on the layout of the premises, a preschool team may make the decision to enable the children to move freely between the indoor and outdoor environments, choosing where they play. In this situation, it is important the educators position themselves strategically to ensure all children are adequately supervised. In a single unit preschool, this would mean one educator inside, while the other is outside. Maintaining flexibility and communication may mean that if the majority of the children move into the one area, the rest of the children and other educator move within sight of this area.

## Excursions

The department's excursion implementation procedures are consistent with the regulations, and make specific reference to taking preschool children on an excursion. In planning an excursion or [regular outing](#) a risk assessment must be conducted, documenting specific information as outlined in [regulation 101](#). The assessment must identify and assess risks the excursion may pose to the safety, health or wellbeing of any child being taken on the excursion, and detail strategies for minimising these. As part of this process, consideration needs to be given to the behaviour or developmental needs of individual children. In addition, the risk assessment must clearly state if there is or isn't any water hazards at the excursion location.

Before an excursion, a family information letter and authorisation form must be prepared. [Regulation 102](#) lists the details which must be included in this. The parent or carer (or a person noted in the enrolment form as being authorised to give consent) must give their written consent for the child to be taken on the excursion before the child is taken out of the preschool premises.

There is no specified adult to child ratio required for excursions, though after the risk assessment has been conducted, a decision needs to be made about the required number of adults to ensure the children's safety and adequate supervision. Additional adults beyond the 1 to 10 ratio, don't necessarily need to hold an approved qualification, eg. If it is determined five adults are required to adequately supervise the children, the teacher, SLSO/AEO and three parents will suffice.

Appropriate first aid equipment must be taken on all preschool excursions (including the preschool's EpiPen, Ventolin and general action plans for their use). At least one attending staff member must hold the ACECQA approved first aid qualifications. Additionally, the

department requires all attending staff have completed the current mandatory anaphylaxis training.

## Incursions

The regulations don't specify, but it is good practice to seek family consent for a child to take part in an incursion.

## Regular outings

Some school policies require parental consent for each separate occasion the children leave the school grounds, and no longer collect 'local walks' consent covering a 12 month period. Preschools within such schools must comply with this requirement.

The preschool regulations consider a walking excursion which is repeated within a 12-month period, such as a walk to a local park or library, as a 'regular outing'. They state that written authorisation only needs to be given once in a specified 12-month period for a regular outing ([regulation 102, point 5](#)). The information consent form does not need to specify specific dates, however, families should be notified of an upcoming planned outing through the usual communication method a preschool uses, for example, via an online notification, a note in the preschool entrance or verbally.

## Visits into the school

A visit into the school is not considered an excursion. However, an annual risk assessment needs to be developed and it is good practice to inform families of such visits in advance, such as with a notice in the preschool entrance. If a road needs to be crossed to visit the school, the visit is considered an excursion or regular outing, and written authorisation for each child will be required.

## Incident and emergency management

Each preschool must conduct a risk assessment to identify potential emergencies that are relevant to their site. This assessment will inform the development and review of local emergency procedures relevant to the preschool. The plan will identify risks relevant to the preschool, such as:

- flood
- bomb
- bush or kitchen fire
- intruder
- falling branch
- sun safety
- vehicle or plane crash into the premises
- snakes.

### *Emergency procedure and exit displays*

The preschool emergency and evacuation procedure supports the implementation of the school Emergency Management Plan within the preschool. It includes instructions for action to be taken in an emergency situation or evacuation and should be developed and reviewed in consultation with the school Health and Safety Committee. The instructions must be displayed prominently at all preschool exits for staff and volunteers to follow if necessary, and not be obscured by blinds, curtains or furniture. They should include evacuation, and depending on the school plan, lock-down and / or lock-out instructions ([regulation 97](#)).

Accompanying these, must be a preschool evacuation floor plan, showing:

- the evacuation route/s out of the preschool building
- assembly points
- location of fire extinguishers
- location of the fire blanket
- a 'you are here' indicator.

It is advisable to store a copy of the school Emergency Management Plan with the preschool procedures, as it contains information related to the consultation with relevant emergency authorities in its development. In addition, some preschools choose to contact their local fire station and seek specific advice regarding their preschool premises.

### *Emergency procedure rehearsals*

Each emergency procedure must be rehearsed every three months by each group (that is the 3 day and the 2 day). To meet this requirement, rehearsals need to be planned to take place twice a term. All staff, children, volunteers, visitors and the principal (as responsible person in charge) present on the day must take part in the rehearsal. It is suggested that if a preschool has more than one evacuation route, rehearsals alternate which route is taken. When the whole school site is involved in a rehearsal, the preschool staff and children should take part in this rehearsal.

Similar to the school, documentation of each rehearsal with evaluative comments and required adjustments must be kept. It is suggested that in addition to the In Case of Emergency (ICE) data base, and considering the extra rehearsals required, the preschool teacher maintain a record of the rehearsals completed by the preschool. This could be in hard or electronic copy, but must be produced for inspection on request by an authorised officer.

### *Preschool telephone for use in an emergency*

Beside each telephone handset, emergency contact numbers should be displayed for quick reference ([regulation 98](#)), for example:

- Emergency services- 000
- Poisons information- 131126
- Local police station
- Closest hospital
- Preschool address, phone number and closest cross streets.

If an emergency service is called to attend the preschool a notification must be made to Early Learning within 24 hours.

### Child protection

[Regulation 84](#) requires the principal, as Nominated Supervisor, and the preschool educators be:

- aware of current child protection law,
- understand their obligations as mandatory reporters, and
- be able to identify and respond to every child at risk of abuse or neglect.

Educators may be required to discuss the above with an authorised officer, as well as the department's policy of reporting any concerns of risk or harm to the school principal. The preschool procedures folder should contain a hardcopy of the department's [Child Protection Policy: Responding to and reporting students at risk of harm](#). In addition, the locally developed providing a child safe environment procedure must include statements related to child protection and make reference to:

- how the department's child protection policy is implemented in the preschool
- the mandatory child protection awareness training completed by all newly appointed DoE staff
- the annual mandatory child protection training all staff complete

- how and when staff are given the opportunity to discuss or raise any concerns regarding child protection

### *Notification of abuse within the preschool*

Notification of a serious incident must be made to Early Learning, this includes when:

- a staff member reasonably believes that physical or sexual abuse of a child has or is occurring at the preschool.
- an allegation or complaint is made that physical or sexual abuse of a child has or is occurring at the preschool.

If the complaint relates to the abuse of a child within the service by a staff member or volunteer, a notification needs to also be made to the NSW Ombudsman (reportable conduct scheme, ph. 9286 1021).

### *Evidence of completion of child protection training and WWCC verification*

After completing the mandatory department training annually, preschool educators need to print their certificate and place it in the preschool staff folder. Also, in this folder, should be each regular preschool staff member's:

- working with children check notice letter
- department verification of WWCC clearance in the form of either
  - a screen shot from ESS (still accessible via the portal)
  - EcPC print-out (must be generated by the principal)

### Recommended resources and further reading

- Guide to the National Quality Framework - [cecq.gov.au/nqf/about/guide](https://www.cecq.gov.au/nqf/about/guide)
- Early Childhood Research Hub – [ecrh.edu.au](https://ecrh.edu.au)
- Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority – [cecq.gov.au](https://www.cecq.gov.au)
- NSW food authority - [foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/](https://www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/)
- Healthy kids - [healthykids.nsw.gov.au](https://www.healthykids.nsw.gov.au)
- Get up and grow resources - [health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/phd-early-childhood-nutrition-resources](https://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/phd-early-childhood-nutrition-resources)
- Kidsafe NSW – [kidsafensw.org](https://www.kidsafensw.org)
- Kids' health: The children's hospital at Westmead [kidshealth.schn.health.nsw.gov.au](https://www.kidshealth.schn.health.nsw.gov.au)

- Staying Healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services - [nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/staying-healthy-preventing-infectious-diseases-early-childhood-education-and-care-services](https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/staying-healthy-preventing-infectious-diseases-early-childhood-education-and-care-services)

## Quality Area 3 - Physical Environment

### Introduction

Quality Area 3 focuses on the preschool's physical environment, both indoors and out. The environment plays a crucial role in contributing to children's learning, development and wellbeing. The environment should offer both built and natural features and be organised in a manner which includes learning areas defined to assist children to function autonomously. The provision of purposeful and well organised physical and social learning environments has a positive impact on children's learning and enables educators to spend valuable time interacting with the children. This enriches the lives and identities of children and their families.

Department preschools must ensure the provision of a physical environment which is safe and inclusive, promotes competence and supports exploration and play based learning both indoor and outdoor. Learning environments must offer children the opportunity to:

- explore and investigate
- hypothesise and experiment
- discover and imagine
- develop curiosity, cooperation and confidence
- learn about the world around them and develop environmental awareness
- challenge each other's thinking and
- ask questions to build new understandings.

### Design – Standard 3.1

The design of the facilities is appropriate for the operation of a service.

The physical environment should be inviting and comfortable and should:

- Encourage a free flow of activity throughout the day
- Facilitate positive interactions between children, educators and families
- Provide adaptive equipment to facilitate the inclusion of all children
- Foster children's capacity to understand and respect the natural environment
- Offer opportunities for appropriate risk taking and risky play and
- Provide a balance between child initiated and educator supported experiences.

Educators, with the support of principals should consider how the addition of resources or changes made to the environment may provoke curiosity, sustained shared thinking,



collaborative learning and reflect the cultures of the children accessing the preschool. This may be achieved by:

- Including photos of the children and their families
- Providing written text, books, artefacts and pictures which reflect the families' cultures
- Including a range of open-ended materials to support children's interests and abilities
- Providing areas for individual play, as well as small and large group interactions
- Setting up spaces for children to rest, both inside and outside if they choose to
- Using wall displays as part of documentation to allow children and their families to revisit the learning. For example, add text to artworks and photos, explaining the learning process
- Include activities generally considered to be outdoor activities, inside
- Include activities generally considered to be indoor activities, outdoors.

## Playground surfacing and impact areas

Preschool playground safety and maintenance is everyone's business. Surfaces under or around play equipment should comply with relevant [Australian Safety Standards](#) relating to playground surfacing specifications.

There is no single ideal impact absorbing surface so principals should consider environmental conditions, cost, aesthetics and maintenance when selecting material for surfacing and be sure to obtain a compliance certificate from the supplier. Key points to consider when setting up the outdoor learning environment:

- A minimum impact area of 1500mm is required surrounding movable equipment items measuring 600mm or more above the playing surface.
- An impact area of 1500mm is required between each piece of equipment that is not linked.
- For moveable equipment with a climbing height 600mm or more above ground level the equipment must be set up on certified playground surfacing (impact absorbing material).
- Portable mats must comply with relevant Australian Safety Standards.

([Kidsafe NSW](#))

## Sandpits

Sandpits provide a great opportunity for learning and are an integral part of the preschool program, but are also a potential source of infection. To minimise this risk, sandpits must be well maintained and kept clean.

There are several ways to do this:

- Securely cover when not in use to prevent contamination such as animal faeces, broken glass and other objects
- Inspect daily, removing any contaminated sand or hazards
- Rake-over as required
- Turn over the sand monthly to aerate, ensuring the sand is exposed to fresh air and sunshine as this is the most effective way of sanitising sand.

Sand should always be within 100 mm of the top edge of the sandpit edging and renewed as necessary. Sand should be completely replaced if extensive contamination has occurred. 'Washed beach' or 'river' sand is recommended.

Digging patches and mud kitchens

- Kidsafe recommends a 50% sand and 50% soil mix
- Garden soil needs to meet Australian Standard AS4419:2018
- Potting mix should comply with AS3743
- Keep hygienic, as you do your sandpit

Please refer to the [January 2018 Kidsafe newsletter](#) for more information on digging patches.

Shade

Shade may be provided by both natural and manufactured structures. The use of natural shade provided by trees can be one of the most effective and aesthetically appealing ways of providing shade. Adequate shade will minimise unnecessary exposure to UV radiation. The location and availability of shade should be considered when planning all outdoor activities and children should be encouraged to use available areas of shade when outside. If needed, the [Sun Smart website](#) features an interactive shade comparison tool. Please refer to Quality Area 2 within these guidelines for information related to the [sun safety procedure](#).

Kidsafe NSW has many playground safety information sheets to support you to make informed decisions on surfacing, impact areas, natural and constructed shade options and sandpit safety and design.

## Use - Standard 3.2

The service environment is inclusive, promotes competence and supports exploration and play-based learning.

### Inclusive environment

Preschool environments must support each child's access and participation, welcoming all children and families equally. Information and resources should respectfully reflect the context, diversity and multicultural nature of communities.

The learning environments should be warm, calm and homelike, and adapted to include the needs and interests of all children and not resemble a structured school classroom. Educators must be flexible and provide children with the opportunity to be involved in planning, setting up and modifying the environment. This supports children to initiate and become actively involved in learning experiences.

Strategies to support inclusion include:

- Educator responsiveness to children's diverse interests, preferences and learning styles
- Use of adaptive equipment
- Environmental adaptations and modifications
- Home languages and cultures heard and seen in the environment

### Resources support play based learning

Play based learning is recognised as the most appropriate pedagogy in early childhood settings, with the benefits well established. Strategies to support play based learning include:

- Use of a wide range of open-ended resources and equipment, which can be used flexibly and cater to a range of developmental needs
- Equipment well organised and stored in a manner that the children are able to self-select from
- A layout which includes learning areas or zones, catering for independent and group play, as well as active and passive play
- Opportunities for managed risky play
- Opportunities for messy play
- Play with natural materials, both inside and outside

## Environmentally responsible

The day to day routine and educational program should promote children's understanding about their responsibility to care for the environment and foster children's capacity to respect and value the world around them. Educators should model environmentally responsible practices and plan experiences to build on children's understanding about their responsibility to care for the environment. Opportunities should be provided for children to be actively engaged in experiences which promote children's development of life skills contributing to a sustainable future. These may include:

- Growing, harvesting and preparing food
- Reusing materials to minimise waste
- Encouraging recycling as part of an everyday practice
- Reducing and recycling waste production
- Repurposing resource, furniture and equipment
- Promoting energy and water conservation and
- Installation of water saving taps.

Educational programs must embed opportunities to foster children's capacity to understand and respect the interdependence between people, plants, animals and the land.

An environmental/sustainability procedure will help educators identify strategies which the children, families and staff may implement to support all members of the school community to engage in sustainable practices and become environmentally responsible. This should also be reflected in the preschool philosophy.

Educators must demonstrate their commitment to caring for the natural environment by being deliberate, thoughtful and intentional in their actions. Open ended conversations with children will foster environmental awareness and responsibility.

[The Australian Association for Environmental Education NSW chapter \(AAEE NSW\)](#) can support educators to take a whole school approach to sustainability through their sustainable schools NSW resource hub.

## Recommended resources and further reading

- Guide to the National Quality Framework - <https://www.acecqa.gov.au/nqf/about/guide>
- Early Childhood Research Hub – [ecrh.edu.au](http://ecrh.edu.au)
- Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority – [acecqa.gov.au](http://acecqa.gov.au)
- Kidsafe NSW Inc - [kidsafensw.org/](http://kidsafensw.org/)
- Standards Australia – [standards.org.au](http://standards.org.au)

- NSW Early Childhood Environmental Education Network - [eceedn.org.au/](http://eceedn.org.au/)
- The Australian Association for Environmental Education - [aaeensw.org.au/](http://aaeensw.org.au/)

# Quality Area 4 -Staffing Arrangements

## Introduction

Quality Area 4 focuses on the provision of qualified, consistent educators who develop warm, respectful relationships with the preschool children and their families and their colleagues. It is critical for preschool educators to understand their role and impact to provide high quality learning experiences, resulting in improved learning outcomes for all children.

(Guide to the NQF, 2018, Section 3)

## Staffing arrangements. Standard 4.1

Staffing arrangements enhance children's learning and development

Each department preschool class is staffed by an early childhood teacher and School Learning Support Officer (Preschool) or Aboriginal Education Officer (AEO). Most preschools employ a preschool SLSO, however in designated Aboriginal preschools a preschool AEO may be employed rather than an SLSO as the second staff member. Collaboration between these educators plays an important part in the day to day operation of the preschool. Together, the preschool teacher and SLSO or AEO implement the educational program and provide a healthy, safe and welcoming learning environment.

## Preschool Teacher

Each preschool class is staffed by a preschool teacher who has duty of care of the children. As for all classes, the department requires a teacher always be present when the children are in attendance (this exceeds the education and care regulatory requirements). Teachers employed to work in a department preschool are required to have an ACECQA approved early childhood qualification and [NSW Education Standards Authority \(NESA\)](#) accreditation to teach in NSW. If confirmation of an educator's qualification is required, refer to the [ACECQA online qualification checker](#).

Preschool teachers are covered by the same industrial awards and agreements as all school teachers and should be included in whole school rosters for breaks, planning days and RFF periods. Generally, preschool teachers complete their allocation of duties within the preschool and the duty roster should reflect this. Local decisions regarding staff allocation across the whole school are made by the principal. For some teachers, this may

mean they work across the school, depending on their qualifications and the needs of the school.

School Learning Support Officer Preschool (SLSO) and Aboriginal Education Officer (AEO)

Each preschool class is also staffed with a preschool SLSO or AEO, employed and paid to work for 6 hours and fifteen minutes each day (this does not include their half hour unpaid lunchbreak). An SLSO or AEO's role is at the discretion of the principal and may include:

- interacting and engaging with children
- supporting the positive behaviour and learning of children
- attending to the personal care and needs of children, for example, toileting and health care
- working in partnership with the teacher to provide adequate supervision
- organising and setting up learning experiences, based on the educational program
- reflecting on preschool practices and procedures
- reflecting on children's development
- cleaning and maintaining safety checks of equipment
- after negotiation, contribution to the program and learning documentation.

To be included towards the required ratio of 1 educator to 10 children, the minimum qualification requirement for an SLSO or AEO is to hold, or be actively working towards, an ACECQA approved Certificate III level qualification, for example:

- Certificate III in Children's Services
- Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care
- Certificate III in Education Support
- Certificate III in Education (Teacher Aide/Assistant).

[Regulation 10](#) gives a definition of *actively working towards*, whilst the [ACECQA qualification checker](#) can be used to determine if a qualification is approved.

Covering preschool teacher/s breaks, release and absence

When a preschool teacher is absent due to professional learning, illness or leave every effort should be made to replace them with an early childhood qualified teacher. If this is not possible, [regulation 135](#) allows a primary trained teacher to relieve in the preschool for a combined total of no more than 60 days in any 12-month period. This limit applies to a combined total of days, therefore, in the case of a preschool with two classes, the total

number of days a primary trained teacher can work in the preschool remains at 60 days, not 120.

As members of the school staff, preschool teachers are entitled to the same number and duration of breaks as other teaching staff, as documented in the whole staff duty roster. Generally, preschool teacher/s are rostered to perform their allocated number of 'playground' duties within the preschool. It is preferable to have an early childhood teacher relieve for preschool teachers when they have their breaks, however, as mentioned earlier, a primary trained teacher can be used. This applies also to allocating a teacher to cover a preschool teacher's release from face to face teaching.

Preschool teachers are able to take a short unplanned break, such as to use the bathroom, answer a phone call or retrieve a resource from a storeroom without being back-filled, however strong educator communication is required at these times to ensure adequate supervision is maintained.

#### Covering SLSO or AEO breaks and absence

Preschool SLSOs and AEOs commence half an hour before the children arrive and are entitled to a 10-minute paid break and a 30-minute unpaid break each day. At these times, they must be backfilled by another staff member holding at a minimum, a Certificate III qualification, as listed earlier. An untrained educator cannot cover breaks, as this breaches the law and regulations. If no other SLSO within the school holds a relevant Certificate III, a teacher is able to relieve for them. Information on the conditions of employment of the SLSO can be found in the Non-Teaching Staff in Schools handbook.

#### Continuity of educators

The National Quality Standard (element 4.1.2) refers to the value of children experiencing continuity of educators. Continuity helps to provide children with a sense of stability and security and assists educators to build supportive relationships with children. Educators who work closely with children on a day-to-day basis, understand each child's strengths, interests, and areas where support may be needed to extend children's learning.

Every effort should be made to ensure consistent educators are employed to work face-to-face with the children. This may be influenced by the unique cultural and community context and the needs of the children enrolled annually. Casual and relief staff and duty rosters should reflect the importance of educator continuity on a day-to-day basis.



## Record of staff working directly with children

Preschools must maintain documentation of when each staff member (regular, casual, relieving and RFF) worked with the children to demonstrate educator to child ratios are being met ([regulation 151](#)).

This should be done through a staff sign-in book in which staff record the times they are working directly with the children. For example, at the commencement of a planned break a staff member needs to record the time they left the 'floor', and then the time they returned to work with the children. To save time, such a record can be pre-filled with regular staff names, requiring only a signature and times on and off the floor to be added. If a member of the school executive or principal visits the preschool they do not need to sign in and out, unless working directly with the children.

Previously some preschools used a staff roster to indicate who was due to work in the preschool and when. Unfortunately, this method alone is not sufficient as it does not accurately record staff changes such as casuals doing preschool duties, or staff members arriving late or leaving early.

The staff sign-in book can also include pre-entered information indicating who on staff holds the ACECQA approved first aid qualification/s and the name of the principal. For example, across the bottom of a document could be,

- Approved first aiders:
  - Monday & Tuesday- Jo Brown
  - Wednesday to Friday- Bill Black
- Nominated Supervisor, Educational Leader and Responsible person in charge:
  - Monday to Friday- Jane Smith

## First aid qualifications

As for all school staff, preschool educators complete the mandatory department health and safety qualifications. In addition, [regulation 136](#) states that whenever preschool children are in attendance, there must be someone readily available on the school site holding the ACECQA approved first-aid, anaphylaxis and asthma qualifications. A staff member may hold one or more of these qualifications, including a school administration officer, however the practicalities and proximity of the school office to the preschool need to be considered. Also, there must be a staff member on any preschool excursion holding each of the qualifications. The ACECQA website has a [qualification checker](#) to determine if a qualification is approved, in summary:

### First-aid

*Provide First Aid HLTAID003*, mandatory for all department nominated first aid officers, meets this requirement. However, *e-Emergency Care* and *Provide CPR* are not ACECQA approved qualifications.

### **Anaphylaxis**

The mandatory department course *Anaphylaxis e-learning (APTSS)* is ACECQA approved.

### **Asthma**

The department course is not approved, however courses with the following codes are: 30646QLD, 21886VIC, 10392NAT, 22024VIC, 22282VIC

It is advised educators complete *First Aid in Education and Care Setting HLTAID004*, as it comprises all three qualifications (First-aid, anaphylaxis and asthma) and is approved by ACECQA. If only one educator holds the ACECQA qualifications, consideration needs to be given to how the preschool will meet the first-aid qualification requirements in this person's absence.

### **Staff folder**

Educator qualifications must be kept on the preschool premises. This does not include the principal whose qualifications are held centrally. Records maintained within the preschool are in addition to any records maintained within the school for all staff members. Preschools may also be asked by an authorised officer to provide evidence of qualifications for school staff who cover planned breaks ([regulations 145-148](#)). It is suggested this requirement be met through a hard copy staff folder in the preschool containing:

#### *Preschool Teacher/s*

- Early childhood teaching qualification
- NSW Teaching Education Standards Authority (NESA) registration number and expiry date

#### *Preschool SLSO/s or AEO*

- An ACECQA approved Cert 111 Certificate (at a minimum)
- Evidence of actively working towards an ACECQA approved qualification

#### *Nominated First Aider/s*

- ACECQA approved first aid, asthma and anaphylaxis qualifications

### *All Educators*

- Working with children check clearance (WWCC) number and expiry date
- Proof of department verification of WWCC clearance. This can be evidenced with a print out from EcPC or a screen-shot from ESS.
- A print out of current certificates for:
  - Annual child protection update
  - Annual Code of Conduct training
  - Mandatory first aid qualifications

### *Relieving, RFF and Casual staff*

If these staff are working regularly in the preschool, it is suggested their qualifications also be kept in the preschool staff folder. If they are not working regularly in the preschool, records kept within the school office will suffice.

### Ratios

Preschool educator to child ratios differ to that of other classes in the school and are strictly regulated. The regulations state that for children between 3 and 6 years of age, a ratio of one educator to ten children must always be maintained, regardless of the activity the children are engaged in or the time of day ([regulation 271](#)). To be included in the ratio, a staff member must be qualified and be working directly with the children.

### Primary school children in the preschool

Primary school aged children visiting the preschool accompanied by their teacher to engage in planned activities with the preschool children (such as buddy reading, gardening, leading a game) can lead to reciprocal benefits such as developing leadership skills and supporting transition. However, a ratio of 1 to 10 must always be maintained if the primary children are not accompanied by a school staff member. For example, if there are 16 preschool children in attendance, up to four K-6 children can be in the preschool under the care of the preschool teacher.

Class splitting (children sent to the preschool in the absence of their regular teacher) should only occur in an extreme situation and after the following have been addressed:

- The 1 to 10 ratio is maintained
- The safety, wellbeing and education of all children is prioritised

- A common-sense approach to which children from K-6 are selected to spend time in the preschool is taken
- A local procedure has been developed addressing duty of care.

### Administration support

Each preschool (whether one classes or two) receives a weekly administration support allocation of 0.2 (equivalent to one day a week). At the principal's direction, the administration officer providing this support will complete tasks such as:

- Maintaining the enrolment waiting list
- Processing preschool enrolment applications and entering details into ERN
- Establishing and maintaining group lists
- Communicating with families regarding enrolment patterns and term dates
- Communicating information collected on enrolment to the preschool educators, for example, any non-authorisations, home languages and each child's authorised collectors
- Generating fee invoices and receiving fees
- Maintaining the preschool immunisation register and seeking updated immunisation records after a child has turned four
- Supporting the development of health care plans.

### Professionalism – Standard 4.2

Management, educators and staff are collaborative, respectful and ethical.

Professional collaboration is imperative to operating a high quality education and care service. Educators and executive need to work cooperatively towards common goals in an open, supportive manner. Professional collaboration is achieved when all team members maintain relationships based on mutual respect, equity and fairness. Professional collaboration in the early childhood context is further detailed in section 3 of the [Guide to the NQF](#).

It is suggested preschool teams view themselves as a professional learning community to draw on the unique perspectives, knowledge and skills of all team members and provide the opportunity to critically reflect on practice, share and learn from each other and develop professionally. The success of a learning community relies on members valuing each other's strengths, challenging each other and becoming aware of personal values and beliefs which may impact on their work.

As for the whole school site, interactions between team members and daily practice should be guided by professional standards and ethical principles as documented in the department's [Code of Conduct](#). The code establishes a common understanding of the standards of behaviour expected of all employees of the department. The code's values of fairness, respect, integrity and responsibility must be demonstrated in the daily work of all staff. In addition, [Early Childhood Australia's Code of Ethics](#) are pertinent to the entire early childhood sector and preschool educators should be familiar with this document, as well as use it as a resource when reviewing their service philosophy.

#### Recommended resources and further reading

- Guide to the National Quality Framework - <https://www.acecqa.gov.au/nqf/about/guide>
- Early Childhood Research Hub – [ecrh.edu.au](http://ecrh.edu.au)
- Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority – [acecqa.gov.au](http://acecqa.gov.au)
- Early Childhood Australia's Code of Ethics - [earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/](http://earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/)

## Quality Area 5 - Relationships with children

### Introduction

Quality Area 5 aligns closely with the department goal to ensure every student is known, valued and cared for. Relationships is one of the wellbeing for learning themes addressed under this goal and is referred to as: “Relationships embody all connections within the school community that increase the opportunity for students to be known, valued and cared for. As such it includes relationships within schools between students, teachers, support staff and parents and, within the broader community. Young people who develop positive relationships whilst at school are better equipped to experience success in life beyond school” ([Relationships - DoE](#))

The first principle in the Early Years Learning Framework recognises that secure, respectful and reciprocal relations are fundamental to our work with children and their families. Relationships are built over time and are fostered by educators who support children to explore their reciprocal rights, participate actively and positively with their peers, provide experiences that foster agency and recognise children as competent and capable learners.

This quality area has two key concepts for reflection:

1. How can educators develop and maintain respectful and equitable relationships with each child?
2. How can educators support children to build and maintain sensitive and responsive relationships with other children?

### Relationships between educators and children – Standard 5.1

Respectful and equitable relationships are maintained with each child

#### Interactions with children

Relationships with children that are responsive and respectful will promote children’s sense of security and wellbeing. Relationships of this kind free children to explore the environment and engage in play and learning. [Regulation 155](#) requires staff to:

- Maintain the dignity and rights of each child when interacting with them
- Support each child to develop warm, trusting, respectful relationships with other children and with adults
- Encourage each child to express themselves and their opinions, engaging them in sustained conversations about things that interest them
- Respond to each child’s strengths, abilities, interests and play, to support

curriculum decision making.

Routines will:

- Provide regular opportunities for children to engage in meaningful play experiences
- Provide guidance for every child to manage their own behaviour and to respect individual differences
- Have regard for each family's cultural values.

Fostering a sense of security

Quality Area 5 in the National Quality Standard refers to relationships “being responsive and respectful and promoting children’s sense of security and belonging”. Educators who are meaningful, thoughtful and deliberate in their interactions with children understand that strong relationships support children to develop their sense of identity, security and belonging. Attachment theory developed by John Bowlby supports educators to understand the nature and quality of those relationships. Bowlby found that children who have a strong attachment to the adults in their world have a sense of security and are more willing to take risks and engage in new learning experiences.

Educators who understand attachment are equitable, empathetic and judgement free in their decisions about behaviour and recognise the emotional needs of young child. They adapt their approach to reach children who are difficult to connect with and are intuitive in their understanding of when to move in and out of play situations with children.

In department preschools educators can support children to build trusting relationships by:

- Supporting children to initiate their own play experiences and join in group experiences
- Provide flexible environments, programs and routines that allow children the time and resources needed for positive interactions with their peers
- Plan for and facilitate the development of a range of social skills such as negotiation and group entry skills
- Acknowledge children’s feelings and what might be happening in their world
- Ensure equity in their interactions with all children
- Interact with children at their level in a warm and respectful manner
- Not expecting all children to do the same thing at the same time.

A commitment to the wellbeing of all children

The department is committed to the wellbeing of all children to ensure each individual child can connect, succeed and thrive at each stage of their development. [The Wellbeing](#)

[Framework for Schools](#) recognises the importance of positive relationships which foster connectedness and feelings of belonging by experiencing “a sense of connection, inclusion, respect for individuality and difference, resilience, empowerment, capacity to contribute to their school and wider community, and confidence to positively shape their own futures” (The Wellbeing Framework for Schools, NSW Department of Education and Communities 2015, p9)

## The Wellbeing Framework for schools



(The Wellbeing Framework for Schools, NSW Department of Education and Communities 2015, p5)

### Dignity and Rights of the child

“The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child is a universally agreed set of non-negotiable standards and obligations founded on respect for the dignity and worth of each child, regardless of race, colour, gender, language, religion, opinions, origins, wealth, birth status or ability” (appendix to the NQF, 2018, p233). Article 19 of the convention states that anyone who looks after children must ensure they are well cared for and protected from any form of neglect or abuse. Australia has agreed to undertake these obligations and the department’s code of conduct affirms these obligations as it states that all employees are



expected to behave in a manner which ensures the safety, welfare and wellbeing of all children. Furthermore, the Wellbeing Framework for Schools states “children and young people in public education in NSW will experience a sense of connection, inclusion, respect for individuality and difference, resilience, empowerment, capacity to contribute to their school and wider community, and confidence to positively shape their own futures” (p 9). The advocacy of children’s dignity and their rights is the responsibility of all educators. This may be observed in the preschool setting through some of the examples listed below.

Educators:

- Providing children with play and relaxation opportunities and experiences based on individual strengths, interests and needs
- Valuing and supporting the importance of a child’s culture, race, religion, and language to support belonging and identity
- Respecting and promoting children’s choices and agency and fostering individuality
- Discussing issues with children and caregivers in a confidential manner
- Ensuring the dignity and rights of each child during personal care such as toileting, choice of clothing and dietary requirements
- Supporting children to interact with each other respectfully and handling conflict and behaviour management in a manner which maintains the dignity of all involved
- Supporting families to make informed choices and access support from local agencies and organisations
- Celebrating children’s cultural and religious values and upholding their beliefs and values.

## Relationships between children – Standard 5.2

Each child is supported to build and maintain sensitive and responsive relationships.

Supporting children to build and maintain sensitive and responsive relationships

Educators need to consider how they enable children to form and maintain positive relationships with each other. They need to be aware that children with additional needs or challenging behaviours, may need extra support to regulate their behaviour and interact with others.

Positive Behaviour for Learning (PBL)

Positive Behaviour for Learning (PBL) is a whole school approach for creating a positive, safe and supportive school climate in which students can learn and develop. It is implemented to improve the learning and wellbeing of all students in all school settings.

“PBL in preschools is aligned with the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) and supports the guidelines of the National Quality Standard to address key features of preschool learning environments. Preschool and school teams work together to develop a shared knowledge and understanding of Positive Behaviour for Learning and provide continued support for children from preschool through to school.

Outcomes of PBL in early childhood settings revolve around three key areas:

- Supporting children to have positive social behaviour experiences
  - Supporting staff capacity and knowledge about behaviour guidance
  - Building connections between the school and preschool that support positive learning environments.
  - Developing shared understandings of behaviour expectations
- (NSW DoE preschool PBL factsheet)

Connections between the Early Years Learning Framework and PBL

Positive behaviour for learning	Early Years Learning Framework
Teach behavioural expectations -teach children to be successful socially and academically	Intentional teaching: providing children with strategies to make informed choices about their behaviours
Support appropriate behaviour – visual cues, prompting, positive verbal feedback	Responding to children’s learning dispositions by giving acknowledgement, encouragement and additional ideas
Corrective consequences – prompt, redirect, re-teach, misbehaviour = learning error.	Plan for a time and place where children can reflect on their learning and behaviour
Considers students’ learning needs – social/emotional maturity, communication	Talking to children about their emotions - emotional regulation and self control
Emphasis placed on the teaching environment to support students’ learning needs	Provide opportunities and support for children to engage in meaningful and engaging learning

By learning positive social behaviour, children develop the skills to regulate their actions independently and engage in positive interactions with their peers. Department preschools should ensure they use a common language to PBL aligned with the school setting. This will ensure there is a consistent approach to supporting children to develop the skills, dispositions and understandings they need to interact sensitively and empathetically with others. For more information please visit the [PBL webpage](#) on the department’s website or email [pbl@det.nsw.edu.au](mailto:pbl@det.nsw.edu.au).

## Recommended resources and further reading

- Guide to the National Quality Framework - <https://www.acecqa.gov.au/nqf/about/guide>
- Early Childhood Research Hub – [ecrh.edu.au](http://ecrh.edu.au)
- Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority – [acecqa.gov.au](http://www.acecqa.gov.au)
- Be You- [beyou.edu.au/](http://beyou.edu.au/)

## Quality Area 6 – Collaborative partnerships with families & communities

### Introduction

Quality Area 6 recognises the significance of families as the first and most influential educators of their children. As such, collaborative partnerships with families and the community are fundamental to achieving quality outcomes for all children. The department is guided by a number of documents which support partnerships with families and communities, including:

- Partnership Agreement with the NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group outlined in “Together we are, Together we can, Together we will” (NSW government 2010-2020).
- School Excellence Framework
- The Wellbeing Framework for Schools.

The significance of this quality area is recognised across the National Quality Standard (NQS) in exceeding theme 3: Practice is shaped by meaningful engagement with families and/or the community.

### Supportive relationships with families – Standard 6.1

Respectful relationships with families are developed and maintained and families are supported in their parenting role.

Supporting families and community members to meaningfully engage in the preschool

Educators in department preschools support families in their parenting role and recognise the importance of developing respectful relationships to enhance inclusion, learning and wellbeing of all children. This may be achieved in a number of ways:

- Consistent communication and streamlined processes between home and preschool can help establish trust. This may include a variety of communication forms such as:
  - school newsletters
  - school website
  - online apps
  - family information sessions
  - family morning/afternoon tea
  - parent committee meetings.

- Contacting families regularly to celebrate children's learning and collaborate on future goals can ensure families share in decision making about their children's learning and wellbeing. This may be through informal and formal interactions between educators and family members such as:
  - incidental conversation
  - family teacher meetings
  - via phone call or email
  - through the use of online platforms
  
- Building partnerships with services and organisations in your community can facilitate access, inclusion and participation for children. This supports children to develop a strong sense of identity within the community they reside in. Schools may utilise the support of their Community Liaison Officer, Schools as Community Centre (SaCC) facilitator, School Counsellor or Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer to partner with relevant services and organisations locally. Partnerships of significance will vary based on the school community but may include connections with:
  - Learning and Support team within the school
  - School Services Learning and Wellbeing team
  - NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group
  - Mission Australia
  - Early Intervention Services
  - Early Childhood Intervention Association
  - Local prior to School Services
  - Be You-Early Childhood Australia
  - NAPCAN
  - Raising Children Network
  - Kidspot.

#### Resources to support families

- Starting Blocks - [startingblocks.gov.au](http://startingblocks.gov.au)
- Raising Children Network – [raisingchildren.net.au](http://raisingchildren.net.au)
- Learning Potential – [learningpotential.gov.au](http://learningpotential.gov.au)
- Healthy Kids – [healthykids.nsw.gov.au](http://healthykids.nsw.gov.au)
- Prevent child abuse and neglect - [napcan.org.au/napcan-brochures/](http://napcan.org.au/napcan-brochures/)
- Parenting advice – [kidspot.com.au](http://kidspot.com.au)

## Collaborative partnerships – Standards 6.2

Collaborative partnerships enhance children's inclusion, learning and wellbeing.

### Continuity of learning and transitions

Department preschools support children by promoting continuity of learning and facilitating a smooth and positive transition to preschool and school. Respect and acknowledgement of prior learning can be achieved through collaborative partnerships with relevant stakeholders' and in turn support successful transitions for children and their families.

Many people are involved in a child's education and transition to preschool and school. It is important to build relationships with key stakeholders and ensure the contribution of each is valued. Practices which support this may include:

- Connecting with children, families, early childhood educators and community services who work with individual children
- Planning time to meet with families to discuss their goals for their children and to communicate what they know about their children
- Organising education and information sessions for families of preschool aged children
- Using the NSW Transition to school statement to support continuity of learning and smooth transitions for each child starting school
- Allocating time and resources to plan and implement transition programs.

Continuity of learning supports successful transitions and is important across the areas of relationships, pedagogy, curriculum and support. Good transition programs balance what and how children learn in their homes and in early childhood education with what and how they learn in primary school. Strategies which may support this include:

- Regular visits into the school to take part in special events and spend time in a kindergarten classroom.
- Using picture books related to starting school to stimulate discussion about starting school.
- Opportunities for the children to ask questions and express their feelings related to starting school.
- Buddy programs with the senior children in the school, enabling the preschool children to gain a connection with students already in the school.
- Using social stories about starting school, including photos of the school the children will attend (teachers, school routines, uniforms, special spaces in the school etc).
- Orientation sessions focussed on learning about the school for children and their families.

## School orientation sessions

Most schools provide end of year orientation sessions which the preschool children attend without a parent or carer. Preschools must be conscious that if a child has been signed into the preschool they remain in the care of the preschool until collected by the family. In practice, this means that if the children arrive at the preschool, and are then taken to the school to participate in the orientation session, preschool regulations apply in relation to ratios.

If a family delivers their child directly to the school, they are not in the care of preschool and preschool regulations do not apply. In this situation though, the schools would need written authorisation to deliver the child to the preschool at the conclusion of the orientation session.

# Quality Area 7: Governance and Leadership

## Introduction

Quality Area 7 focuses on the effective leadership and governance of the preschool to establish and maintain quality environments for children's learning and development, with a direct influence on all other areas of the National Quality Standard (NQS). Governance refers to the systems in place to support effective management and operation of the service, consistent with the service's statement of philosophy. Effective leadership establishes shared values for the service that reflect the service context and professionalism and set clear direction for the service's continuous improvement.

(Guide to the NQF, 2018, Section 3)

## Governance – Standard 7.1

Governance supports the operation of a quality service.

## Philosophy

Each preschool develops and maintains their own, unique philosophy. The philosophy is a statement of the values and intent of a preschool community. [The ACECQA Information sheet: Reviewing your service philosophy notes](#) that, "A statement of philosophy guides all aspects of a service's operations". An effective philosophy:

- is consistently reflected in preschool operations and the practices of all educators (this also relates to exceeding theme one).
- includes the children's voices.
- supports the school vision statement.
- seeks input from preschool families, any community groups the preschool has a relationship with, and the rest of school through methods accessible to them.
- is easily understandable and accessible to all families and the school staff
- reflects the uniqueness of the preschool.
- makes reference to the theoretical influences that inform practice, when appropriate.
- Is reviewed collaboratively (no time-frame is specified in the regulations, so this should be done as needed)
- reflects the guiding principles of the NQS, being
  - the rights of the child are paramount.
  - children are successful, competent and capable learners.
  - equity, inclusion and diversity underpin the program and operations.



- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are valued.
- the role of the family is respected and supported.
- best practice is expected in the provision of education and care services.

P-2 Initiatives Officers are available to support preschool teams in the process of reviewing their philosophy. The NQS tab of the [Early Childhood Resource Hub](#) site has many helpful resources to support the review process, including reflective questions.

## Roles and responsibilities of the principal in relation to the preschool

The school principal occupies the pivotal position in the school (including the preschool) and is accountable for leadership and management consistent with State legislation and the policies and priorities of the NSW Government (Leading and Managing the School policy, DoE, 2016). In schools with a department preschool onsite, the principal also has a legal responsibility to ensure the preschool's compliance with the Education and Care Services National Law and Regulations.

The [Guide to the National Quality Framework](#) (NQF) emphasises the importance of leadership and governance to ensure that the preschool is operating in accordance with all aspects of the framework, including the EYLF and legislative and quality standards. The NQF identifies three supervisory roles (outlined below) to exist within the preschool. These are:

- nominated supervisor
- educational leader
- person in day-to-day charge.

By agreement with the regulatory authority, Early Childhood Education (ECE), and as a prescribed class of person, a principal with a department preschool on site is designated these three roles. When the principal is not on the school site or absent, the next person in charge or whoever is relieving in the principal role automatically assumes these three positions. It is important that this executive member is aware of this and their responsibilities, particularly in relation to [adequate supervision](#) and [notifications](#).

Information listing the three roles, the principal's name and photo must be displayed in the preschool entrance on the department's Approved Provider template. This should only be changed to show the relieving principal if the principal is on extended leave.

### *Nominated supervisor*

As with all other parts of the school, the principal has overriding responsibility for the supervision of the preschool. When communicating with the preschool, authorised officers

from the regulatory authority may refer to the principal as the nominated supervisor, rather than the principal. To effectively fulfil this role, the principal requires:

- an understanding of how young children learn through play and the difference between preschool and school programs.
- a working knowledge of the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF).
- an awareness of the NQF, including the NQS and relevant legislation that applies to the preschool.

### *Educational leader*

[Regulation 118](#) states that each preschool must have an educational leader to lead the development and implementation of the educational program. Educational leadership relates to standard 7.2 of the NQS. The principal may delegate responsibility for pedagogical leadership to a preschool supervisor, however the principal still holds the legal responsibilities of the role. The educational leader should view their role as one of building the capacity of the preschool educators, this may involve:

- collaborating with educators to provide curriculum direction and guidance.
- supporting educators to effectively implement the cycle of planning
- ensuring that children's learning and development are guided by the learning outcomes of the EYLF
- ensuring the educational program and documentation meet the requirements of the relevant regulations, the Quality Area 1 standards and school expectations
- assisting educators to understand and implement reflective practice
- leading critical reflection.

ACECQA has developed [resources and an information sheet](#) to support the educational leader.

### *Responsible person in charge*

The purpose of this role is to ensure there is always a responsible person on the school premises who is in charge of the preschool.

### *Service approval*

Each department preschool is an approved early childhood education and care service licenced to operate during specified hours, caring for a specified number of children. The service approval (or licence) is supplied by ECE and should be displayed in the preschool entrance. In the situation of an additional, unenrolled child visiting the preschool (eg. for

orientation or a special activity) they must be in the care of a their family and are not counted towards the total number of children in attendance.

## Insurance

[Regulation 29](#) requires a service to hold public liability insurance. This regulation is met through the department's insurance through the NSW Treasury Managed Fund (TMF) which provides cover for assets and liability exposures faced by the department.

## Policies and procedures

[Regulations 168](#) states that education and care services must have policies and procedures in place in relation to:

- (a) health and safety, including matters relating to -
  - (i) nutrition, food and beverages, dietary requirements; and
  - (ii) sun protection; and
  - (iii) water safety, including safety during any water-based activities; and
  - (iv) the administration of first aid; and
  - (v) sleep and rest for children;
- (b) incident, injury, trauma and illness procedures complying with regulation 85;
- (c) dealing with infectious diseases, including procedures complying with regulation 88;
- (d) dealing with medical conditions in children, including the matters set out in regulation 90;
- (e) emergency and evacuation, including the matters set out in regulation 97;
- (f) delivery of children to, and collection of children from, education and care service premises, including procedures complying with regulation 99;
- (g) excursions, including procedures complying with regulations 100 to 102;
- (h) providing a child safe environment;
- (i) staffing, including—
  - (i) a code of conduct for staff members; and
  - (ii) determining the responsible person present at the service; and
  - (iii) the participation of volunteers and students on practicum placements;

- (j) interactions with children, including the matters set out in regulations 155 and 156;
- (k) enrolment and orientation;
- (l) governance and management of the service, including confidentiality of records;
- (m) the acceptance and refusal of authorisations;
- (n) payment of fees and provision of a statement of fees charged by the education and care service;
- (o) dealing with complaints.

The department's policies, procedures and guidelines relate to both the school and the preschool and meet regulation 168. However, preschools need to develop local procedures to support the practical implementation of these in their setting. Each procedure must also refer to the current operations and practices which address the relevant regulation/s and NQS within the preschool.

The format of the procedures is a local decision, however scaffolds have been developed by Early Learning to support preschools. In addition, department's [Early Learning website](#) lists each of the required procedures, with links to the corresponding regulation/s and department policy or guideline. Early Learning (acting on behalf of the department as the provider) and school principals (as the nominated supervisor) must take reasonable steps to ensure all staff and volunteers follow the preschool procedures ([regulation 170](#)).

It is advised that all preschool procedures are reviewed annually following a schedule, ensuring they are current and match the preschool's operations and practices. Evidence of review (including the date and who was involved) is required, however the format of this evidence is a local decision. Procedures may also require review in response to particular situations:

- to rectify a recurring problem
- an incident or injury
- to address a complaint
- as directed by an authorised officer from ECE.

It is recommended that, where appropriate, the children's families be consulted in the review of procedures. [Regulation 172](#) notes that all families of enrolled children must be notified in advance of significant changes to procedures. Procedures must be made available for inspection by the families of children enrolled and the regulatory authority upon request ([regulation 171](#)). Preschools can address this requirement by storing a hardcopy set of their procedures in the preschool entrance or foyer and/or uploading them to the

school's website. Some preschools also summarise pertinent procedures in their family orientation or information handbook.

Some preschools may also find it necessary to develop additional procedures, for example:

- programming and documentation
- physical activity
- swimming lessons
- screen time
- sustainability
- nature play / Bush school
- nappy changing
- primary school children visiting the preschool
- bus travel
- continuous improvement.

Notification of a serious incident, complaint or preschool closure

In addition to the department's required processes, notifications need to be made to the regulator for events in relation to the preschool. After phone or email notification from a principal or their delegate, Early Learning submits notifications on behalf of preschools.

Regulations require this be done within [specified timeframes](#):

- serious incidents- within 24 hours of the incident
- complaints of a serious incident or Law being contravened- within 24 hours of the complaint being received
- preschool closure due to an incident- within 24 hours of the incident
- proposed changes to the premises- at least 7 days prior to commencement of changes

Under the legislative requirements of the approved provider if the notification is of a serious incident, closure or complaint, the notification must be lodged in the portal within 24 hours, if related to a .

### *Serious incident*

In the case of an incident that has occurred to a child, preschools must complete the relevant parts of the [Incident, injury, trauma and illness record](#). This record contains most of the information that Early Learning will need to make a notification. Additional information required includes; the phone number of a parent or carer, a description of the child's condition (if known) and any follow up strategies taken in response to the incident, injury, illness or trauma in the additional notes section. It is helpful to include the child's expected return to preschool.

## *Complaint*

The school is required to make a notification if a formal complaint has been made alleging that the Law has been contravened or that a serious incident has occurred or is occurring. After receiving such a complaint, the principal must call Early Learning to inform advisors about the complaint so that it can be assessed if the complaint is notifiable. When the complaint is notifiable, the principal will be asked to provide documentation including:

- the complainant name and contact details
- the name of the child/children, gender and date of birth to whom complaint relates
- details including the date complaint was received, a copy of the written complaint (or summary) and any other relevant documentation including correspondence, photos or statements
- steps taken by the preschool/school in response to the complaint.

## *Notification of change of information about an approved service*

If planned renovations or changes to the physical environment will impact on the health and safety of the children, the preschool must contact the Early Learning at least seven days prior to the work commencing. If the work requires a notification, the principal will be asked to provide information including:

- a description of the proposed changes
- a description of the impact the work or changes will have on the operation of the service (if any)
- a description of the proposed commencement and finishing dates
- a floor plan or map highlighting where the changes are taking place.
- risk assessments (if required)
- in some situations, a photo of the completed work may also be required.

## *Temporary relocation of preschool premises*

If temporary changes to the location of the preschool within the school need to be made, preschools must contact Early Learning as soon as possible after the incident has occurred and prior to any works taking place e.g. the preschool must operate out of the school hall for a period of time due to renovations or weather damage to the preschool premises.

The principal will be asked to provide information, including:

- a detailed description of the issue/changes and the premises where the preschool will temporarily operate within the school
- a description of proposed commencement and finishing dates

- a school site map with the location of the temporary premises and toilet facilities and identified
- risk assessments.

### *Preschool closure*

In an extreme situation, a principal may find it necessary to close the preschool on a school-day, rather than [temporarily relocate](#) it. In such a situation, the relevant Director Educational Leadership and Early Learning should be contacted to notify of the situation. Information related to the following should be provided to Early Learning:

- detailed description of the incident including nature, time and cause
- detailed description of impact on operation of the service including dates and times closed
- involvement of emergency services or other authorities (if relevant)
- action taken by the preschool/school to manage the incident
- any other relevant information.

Commencing in 2020, Early Learning no longer supports closing the preschool for a cleaning day, please refer to the [Universal Access](#) section of these guidelines for additional information.

### *List of notifications*

The following information is a list and description of the most common incidents that require a [notification](#). If a situation arises that does not seem to fit into any of these categories, contact the [Early Learning](#) unit for advice.

### *Notifications of a serious incident or preschool closure*

Notifications must be made to the regulatory authority about:

- Any incident involving serious injury or trauma to a child which a reasonably person would consider required urgent medical attention for a registered medical practitioner or attended or ought reasonably to have attended a hospital
- An incident involving the serious illness for which the child attended hospital
- A circumstance where a child appears to be missing or cannot be accounted for
- A circumstance where a child appears to have been taken or removed from the service premises in a manner that contravenes the National Regulations
- A circumstance where a child is mistakenly locked in or locked out of the services premises or any part of the premises
- The death of a child

- An emergency for which emergency services attended
- An incident that requires the approved provider to close or reduce the number of children attending the service for a period
- A circumstance arising at the service that poses a risk to the health, safety or wellbeing of a child or children has occurred or is occurring at the service
- The attendance at the service of any additional child or children being educated and cared for in an emergency in the circumstances set out in regulations 123(5)
- An incident where the approved provider reasonably believes that physical abuse or sexual abuse of a child or children has occurred or is occurring at the services
- Allegations that physical or sexual abuse of a child or children has occurred or is occurring at the service (other than an allegation raised as a formal complaint).

#### *Notification of change of information about an approved service*

Notifications must be made to the regulatory authority about:

- A change to the hours and days of operation of your service
- Any proposed changes to the service's premises.

#### *Notification of complaints*

Notifications must be made to the regulatory authority about:

- Any complaints alleging that a serious incident has occurred or is occurring while a child was or is being educated and cared for the approved education and care service
- Any complaints alleging that the Law has been contravened.

Summary of items to be displayed in the preschool

### **Templates**

- ☐ [Approved Provider notice includes principal's photo \(use the department template\)](#)
- ☐ [Service Approval](#) notice includes preschool details (use the department template)
- ☐ Service Approval (issued by the Early Childhood Education Directorate)
- ☐ Notice of final ratings (issued by the Early Childhood Education Directorate)

### **Other items**

- ☐ Emergency contact numbers (include 000, poisons information centre, local hospital, local police street address, telephone number of preschool, nearest crossroad to preschool)



- ☐ Emergency and evacuation procedures and floor plan indicating evacuation routes and the location of fire extinguishers and the fire blanket
- ☐ Notice informing the occurrence of an infectious disease
- ☐ Notice stating a child is enrolled who is at risk of anaphylaxis
- ☐ Staff roster
- ☐ Information about the preschool program for families

Summary of items to be available in the preschool

### **Educational program, policies and practice**

- ☐ Policies and localised procedures as required under regulation 168
- ☐ Preschool leadership and operational guidelines (this document)
- ☐ Preschool philosophy
- ☐ Preschool program and planning documents
- ☐ Quality improvement plan
- ☐ Records about each child's learning, development and participation in the program

### **Enrolment records**

- ☐ Attendance records for each group
- ☐ Details of each child's authorised collectors
- ☐ Family and emergency contact details

### **Children's health and safety**

- ☐ Administration of medication records
- ☐ Arrivals and departures register for delivery and collection of children
- ☐ Emergency management plan
- ☐ [First aid procedures](#) including first aid kit
- ☐ [Incident, injury, trauma and illness record](#)
- ☐ [Risk minimisation, communications plan](#) and [emergency action plan](#) for children who are at risk of [anaphylaxis](#), [asthma](#) and other serious medical conditions or who have specific dietary requirements
- ☐ Record of risk assessments completed for any excursions and incursions
- ☐ Record of evacuation and lock down rehearsals
- ☐ [Risk minimisation plans](#) for identified safety risks
- ☐ Safety checks for fire extinguishers, outdoor play area and furniture

### **Service management**

- ☐ Copy of the current [National Regulations](#), the [National Law](#) and the [Guide to the National Quality Framework](#)

- ☐ Information about the Early Years Learning Framework and the Quality Improvement Plan for families
- ☐ Visitors book for signing in/out when visiting preschool

## **Staff**

- ☐ Staff sign in/out book to record when working directly with children
- ☐ Annual child protection training records
- ☐ First aid, asthma management and anaphylaxis qualifications of staff
- ☐ Staff qualifications including casuals and staff regularly covering breaks or release from face to face teaching time (RFF)
- ☐ Working with Children Check records

## Universal access

All states and territories have signed up to the [National Partnership Agreement on Universal Access to Early Childhood Education](#). Department preschools are required to comply with mandatory universal access when establishing enrolment and attendance patterns.

### *What is universal access?*

Universal Access to early childhood education ensures that a quality, early childhood education program is available for all children in the year before full-time school. Programs are to be delivered by a qualified early childhood teacher for 15 hours per week or 600 hours a year, with a focus on participation by Aboriginal, vulnerable or disadvantaged children.

### *Link to the National Quality Framework*

The Australian Government's universal access commitment is also supported by the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care. This framework includes a National Quality Standard which underpins policies and practices in the areas that impact on a child's development and help families make informed choices about which service is best for their child.

### *Flexibility in the delivery of 15 hours per week*

The commitment to 15 hours a week, 40 weeks per year can be interpreted as a requirement for a minimum of 600 program hours in total over the year.

Options for attendance patterns may include:

1. A five day fortnight program, with three days one week and two days in the alternate week for two separate groups of children (12 hours one week and 18 hours the next).
2. A part-time program offering two and a half days to two separate groups of children each week.
3. A half-day sessional program for five mornings or five afternoons catering for two separate groups of children.
4. Alternate semesters or terms, with children attending two days a week in one term or semester and three days in the alternate term or semester.

*Can children attend for more than 15 hours per week?*

Preschool classes are required to offer two attendance patterns across the week. In exceptional circumstances preschools may offer flexible enrolment patterns to cater for the needs of individual children, for example, a child who is at risk may be offered enrolment five days a week.

#### Preschool hours

The hours of operation of the preschool must mirror the school. If the K-6 school day is less than six hours, to meet Universal Access the preschool will need to consider how the six hours will be met. For example, if the school operates 9:15 to 3:00, the preschool might choose to operate 9:00 to 3:00 or 9:15 to 3:15.

#### Preschool closure

To meet the requirements of Universal Access, department preschools must be open to children on each of the days NSW public schools are (with Western division preschools opening at the start of the year in line with the whole school). If a preschool needs to be closed due to an incident, the relevant Director Educational Leadership and Early Learning should be [notified](#).

Commencing in 2020, closing the preschool for a cleaning day is no longer supported by Early Learning. This is to fulfil requirements of universal access which mandate children are offered 600 hours of quality education and care in the year before commencing school. It is acknowledged that this policy change will require preschools to reconsider how preschool educators are supported to complete necessary tasks and duties to maintain regulatory compliance. Strategies may include:

- Ensuring preschool teachers are allocated any additional release, as per other teachers in the school (for example, planning days).

- Preschool educators be supported to complete additional preschool tasks such as updating local procedures and maintaining the Quality Improvement Plan
- Releasing SLSOs periodically to complete cleaning and maintenance tasks.

## Enrolment

There are a number of procedures and requirements for enrolment in a department preschool. These should form part of the preschool enrolment and orientation procedure.

### *General guidelines*

- Department preschools enrol children for one year only, the year before they start school.
- Children can enrol from the beginning of the school year if they turn four years of age on or before 31 July that year.
- Priority is given to
  - Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders
  - children living in low socio-economic circumstances
  - children who are unable to access other early childhood services due to disadvantage or financial hardship
- The principal will offer enrolment in the following order, with priority given to Aboriginal children and those who are disadvantaged
  1. to children living within the school's enrolment catchment area
  2. to children living outside the school's catchment area and who have siblings enrolled in the school
  3. to children living outside the school's enrolment catchment area
- The [application to enrol in a NSW Government preschool](#) must be completed and submitted.
- Documentation regarding immunisation must be supplied, unless the child fits the criteria for a 12 week exemption. Please refer to [immunisation](#) for additional details.
- Schools accept enrolment applications from the beginning of Term 2 the year before the child starts preschool.
- When the number of applications exceeds availability, children's names will be placed on a waiting list. The school's placement panel will consider and prioritise these applications.
- In exceptional circumstances, children may attend preschool for an additional year. This can only occur with the approval of the principal following consultation with the child's family and preschool teacher. If it is decided a child would benefit from a second year in preschool, they are considered a new application and prioritised in the same way as all new applicants.

### *Birth certificates*

When enrolling their child, a family must provide documentation as evidence of the child's identity and date of birth. However, if no birth certificate is available, this can be shown through a secondary document ([Legal Issues Bulletin 43- Enrolment of children in government schools](#)). Similarly, [regulation 160](#) notes that only confirmation of a date of birth is required.

To establish a child's date of birth, a range of secondary documents such as a passport, a 'Blue Book', a hospital birth card, baptism, christening, name giving or similar records can be used. If none such documents exist, a statutory declaration should be obtained from the parents as to the date of birth of the student and the reasons why such documents are not available.

### *Preschools designated for Aboriginal children*

- Eleven designated preschools cater specifically for Aboriginal children.
- When vacancies occur every effort is made to ensure places are filled by Aboriginal children. If there are insufficient Aboriginal enrolments, places may be offered to non-Aboriginal children, although a buffer of two places must be maintained for future Aboriginal enrolments.
- When prioritising applications, preschools in communities with significant numbers of Aboriginal children should liaise with the local Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (AECG).

### *Distance education preschool programs*

- A limited number of preschools offer programs through distance education for geographically isolated children, unable to access any other children's services.
- Designation of sites that provide preschool programs via distance education is determined on a needs basis every three years.
- Find more information on the [Rural and distance education](#) site.

### *Temporary visa holders in preschools*

- Preschool children who are temporary visa holders may enrol in departmental preschools under the same conditions as Australian citizens. However, some short-term visa holders are ineligible.
- Temporary residents who hold visitor/tourist visas are not eligible for enrolment.
- [The schedule of visa subclasses](#) and enrolment conditions provides eligibility information on the temporary visa subclasses.
- Temporary visa holders are required to pay preschool class fees, but are not liable for the temporary resident's fee.

### *Early intervention classes*

Enrolment in early intervention classes is through an access request application process. School Service's learning and wellbeing officers can be contacted for information. The

department allows a child to be enrolled in both a department early intervention class, and a preschool class.

### *Dual enrolments*

In some cases, a family may seek to enrol their child at two different department preschools (both mainstream). If a preschool becomes aware of this, they should contact the other preschool to discuss the matter and determine if one or both preschools will offer the child a place. Approval for dual enrolments are at the principals' discretion. Considerations to support the decision making are:

- What is in the best interests of the child?
- Is the child at risk?
- Which school will the child attend for kindergarten?
- Would the child be better off offered a full time place in their local preschool, rather than attending two separate preschools?
- Does one or both of the preschools have a waiting list? The child should not be offered a second preschool placement ahead of other children on a waiting list.

If the two principals agree to offer dual enrolment to a child, one school needs to be the 'lead' school in ERN. If required, EdConnect can offer advice on setting up the child's enrolment.

### *Suspension*

The department's [Suspension and Exclusion of Students Procedures](#) apply to all schools, but explicitly exclude preschool children. Situations where an individual child is a risk to the safety and wellbeing of other children and staff are particularly traumatic and need to be handled carefully. The principal should meet seek to meet with the family to sensitively raise and discuss concerns relating to the child, with a focus on outcomes for the child. If required, the family should be offered a translation service for this meeting or to bring a support person along. Where a risk exists, a partial enrolment may be negotiated with a child's family at a meeting, while behavior or other concerns are addressed through actions such as:

- development of an individual behavior management plan
- a pediatric assessment of the child's needs
- development of a risk assessment for the child

The family should feel confident that as concerns are addressed over time, there is the flexibility to increase the child's attendance hours.

In some situations, it may be necessary for a child to commence preschool on a partial enrolment to support a smooth transition. This would be applicable for a child with a

diagnosed disability with high support needs. This should be done with the intention that the child's hours would gradually be increased as the child settled and adjustments were put in place.

## Obtaining authorisation and consent

The application to enrol in a NSW government preschool (preschool enrolment form) seeks authorisation and consent from families and authorised nominees for the circumstances set out below:

- Illness, accident and emergency treatment
- Authorisations for collection from the preschool and for excursions
- Permission to publish
- Permission to use online services (the internet)
- Consent to seek information from other organisations or governments departments about the child based on information provided in Section A of the enrolment form related to:
  - learning and support needs
  - special needs
  - health conditions
  - required risk assessments
  - needs noted within the application from other prior to school services, organisations or NSW government departments

It is imperative that as well as being contained within the enrolment form, any refusals of authorisation are communicated to the preschool educators, for example, on a class list. Documentation relating to authorisations, such as to take a child on an excursion, must contain the child's name, date and signature of the child's parent, carer or nominated contact person as noted on the enrolment form. The school principal can exercise the right of refusal if written or verbal authorisations do not comply.

Please note, the enrolment form does not seek authorisation to apply **sun cream** or **insect repellent** to a child and these must be obtained separately, if relevant. Please refer to the [application of sunscreen](#) for more details.

## Fees

The [preschool fee schedule](#) is based on the [Preschool Class Fees in Government Schools policy](#) and outlines the daily fees that schools should charge for attendance at the preschool, based on the relative Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) value of the school. The schedule allows for reductions for commonwealth health care card holders and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.



In the situation that a family cannot afford preschool fees, and as a result the child may not access preschool education, it is at a principal's discretion to reduce a child's fees- either short or long term. A Director Education Leadership (DEL) is able to grant full fee exemption in exceptional circumstances, in line with the [Delegations of Authority under the Public Finance and Audit Act 1983](#). Child care rebates and subsidies are not available to families, as department preschools do not meet the government's criteria to be considered an approved service.

Granted fee reductions or exemptions must be recorded on the preschool fee relief record. Schools should also retain records and information at the school in relation to fee relief, for example, a copy of a child's current health care card.

The application to enrol in a government preschool clearly states that preschool fees are charged. In the event that fees are unpaid and no relief or exemption was given, principals need to follow the steps outlined in section 13.2.4 of the [Finance in Schools Handbook](#) to recover the fees.

Sometimes a family taking an extended overseas trip or holiday will request their child's position be held by the preschool. This is at the principal's discretion depending on the circumstances of the family. However, it is advised the child's place not be held if other children are on a waiting list. If the child's position is held, the preschool should request the fees for the period be paid in advance.

## Volunteers and education students

Parents and close relatives volunteering in the preschool don't require a WWCC clearance, but must provide 100 points of proof of identity and complete [Appendix 5: Declaration for volunteers and non-child related contractors](#). The exception to this is if they are providing personal care to a child or are part of a formal mentoring program. Principals must use this information provided by a volunteer to confirm that the person is not on the department's Not to Be Employed (NTBE) database via EcPC. It is suggested that a copy of the completed declaration be kept in the preschool staff folder to meet the requirement of collecting any volunteer's full name, date of birth and address.

Early childhood or teacher education students completing practical training or undertaking an internship within a preschool must have a WWCC clearance and provide 100 points of proof of identity. Any volunteer under the age of 18 does not need to obtain a WWCC clearance. As for all visitors to the preschool, visitors and practicum students must record the details of their visit in the preschool visitor's sign in book.

## Management of records



The preschool must keep detailed and current records for each individual child attending the preschool. Much of this information is obtained from the Application to enrol in a NSW Government Preschool. It is the responsibility of the principal and preschool teacher to ensure that this information is accurate, confidential and used appropriately. Families from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds should be offered the translated enrolment application and/or interpreter assistance in obtaining this information, if required. Records which contain personal information about a child are to be considered confidential and accessible to the child's family on request, unless prevented by a court order.

The [Guide to the NQF](#) operational requirements include a table of the type of record and the required storage period. [Regulation 183](#) requires records be stored confidentially, safely and securely. In summary, all records must be kept for three years from when they were made, except:

- the incident, illness, injury or trauma record which must be kept until the child is aged 25 years
- any record relating to the death of a child while being educated and cared for, or as a result of an incident while being educated and cared for, until the end of 7 years after the death

[Regulation 180](#) requires insurance documents be kept on the preschool premises, however the department maintains these centrally.

## Casual folder

A casual folder needs to be maintained for the preschool to support casual staff to maintain the safety and wellbeing of the children. It is suggested that this cover information which will be needed by both a relieving SLSO/AEO and relieving teacher. In a double unit, one folder will suffice, so long as it includes relevant information for each class, for example, class lists. Schools often prescribe the contents of casual folders, it is suggested the preschool casual folder contain the following at a minimum:

- Daily routine
- Group list/s
- Names and roles of all regular preschool educators
- Current school staff duty roster
- Name of principal and/or preschool supervisor and their contact numbers
- School office contact number
- Copy of emergency management/action plans for any children with a medical condition
- Copy of any court orders relating to a child
- A group list noting any children:
  - with a disability

- who wear nappies or are toilet training
  - who speak a language other than English as home
  - have an individual risk minimisation plan in place (also put a copy of the plan in the folder)
  - with non-authorisations, for example, to apply sunscreen or be published
- Copy of family information booklet (as this generally will contain a summary of preschool procedures such as arrival and departure)
- Information on the location and use of the:
  - incident, injury, trauma and illness record
  - medication record
  - list of children's authorised collectors
  - preschool procedures
- Copy of emergency management procedures and floor plan- as is displayed at each exit

## Staff induction into the preschool

To compliment whole school processes, preschools need a documented process for inducing regular preschool educators into the preschool. The induction, should be site specific, however should address matters such as:

- Familiarisation and access to key documents and websites:
  - Early Years Learning Framework
  - Guide to the NQF
  - National Law and National Regulations
  - Preschool leadership and operational guidelines (this document)
  - Department of Education Early Learning website
  - ACECQA website
- Explanation and examination of the preschool's:
  - Philosophy
  - Locally developed procedures
- Location of the arrivals and departure register and information related to group lists and attendance patterns
- School expectations regarding documentation of the educational program and children's learning
- School processes for communication with families
- Family orientation or information booklet
- Location and familiarisation with health and safety documentation and procedures:
  - Risk assessment plans
  - Procedures for emergencies and evacuation
  - First aid equipment
  - Emergency medication
  - Emergency contacts list

- The medication record
- The Incident, injury, trauma and illness record
- Discussion of individual child needs
  - Information related to any child with an additional need
  - Health care plans
  - Individual education plans, where appropriate
- Discussion of staff roles, responsibilities and roster
- Information related to preschool notifications- situations requiring a notification and the process
- Review of responsibilities as a mandatory reporter

### *Whole school induction*

In addition to access to the casual folder, schools need a procedure for inducting duty, RFF and regular casuals into the preschool. To do this, it is suggested preschool staff and executive collaborate to deliver an annual, whole staff induction session addressing the matters noted above, plus preschool expectations related to adequate supervision and interactions with children.

## Leadership- Standard 7.2

Effective leadership builds and promotes a positive organisational culture and professional learning community.

### The Quality Improvement Plan (QIP)

All education and care services are required to have a QIP. Similar to the school plan, the preschool QIP documents the outcomes of self-assessment processes and quality improvement planning. The preschool QIP addressed the department's third strategic goal (2018-2022) of every student, every teacher, every leader and every school improving every year.

The QIP outlines strategies for achieving a preschool's goals and helps staff focus on improvements that will lead to better outcomes for children and families. Where appropriate, strategic goals of the school plan can also be included as QIP improvement goals. The QIP should be a dynamic, evolving document developed collaboratively by preschool teams with input from children, families and other interested parties.

Responsibility for the QIP lies with the principal, however leading the self-assessment and review process can be delegated to a deputy or assistant principal. [Regulations 31, 55 and 56](#) relate to the preschool QIP, stating that the QIP must be:

- kept available on the preschool premises for families and inspection by ECE.
- submitted to ECE on request (such as for the assessment and rating process).
- include the preschool's philosophy.
- include a self-assessment of practices against the National Law and Regulations and the NQS.
- identify areas requiring improvement.
- reviewed and revised at least annually, or as directed by ECE.

To support the QIP process, the department has developed guidelines for developing and implementing the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) and a tailored QIP template, featuring the required sections, as specified in [regulation 55](#). These are both available on the [Early Learning website](#).

## Assessment and rating

The assessment and rating process is conducted by ECE and ratings are published publicly on the ACECQA website. It is hard to predict when a preschool will be assessed, however the Guide to the NQF notes:

- assessment and rating is responsive and risk based.
- any previous breaches of regulations and the time since the last assessment will influence when a preschool is assessed.
- preschools with a lower quality rating will be assessed more regularly.

## *Notification of assessment and rating*

Schools are notified by email of the commencement of the assessment and rating process. This notice will state the date the QIP and service context sheet must be submitted by (at least two weeks' notice is given). It is important to note in the context form that the preschool is closed and staff are uncontactable during school holidays. The notification will also specify a four week period during which the assessment and rating visit will occur. The first date of this period being at least 4 weeks from the notice.

The authorised officer will contact the school after the QIP has been submitted, giving at least five days' notice of the specific visit date. At this time the officer will discuss logistics of the visit with the principal. The visit will last an entire day, and possibly up to 2 for a double unit preschool.

As potentially there may only be 4 weeks between notification and the assessment and rating visit, preschools need to ensure they always maintain regulatory compliance and documentation is kept current.

*What to do after receiving an assessment and rating notice:*

- Organise a visit from your P-2 Initiatives Officer to address any outstanding issues
- Inform the relevant Director of Educational Leadership (DEL)
- Liaise with Early Learning
- Update QIP progress notes
- Submit the QIP and service context form

*What to expect during the assessment and rating visit:*

The authorised officer will interview the principal regarding their roles of nominated supervisor and educational leader. Historically, these interviews have ranged from 45 minutes to three hours. If appropriate, a supervising assistant principal or preschool teacher may be part of this interview. Prior to this interview, an Early Learning Advisor will contact the principal to offer interview preparation support.

The authorised officer will also spend time in the preschool in discussion with educators, sighting documentation and observing operations and practice, to:

- confirm the preschool is compliant with the National Law and Regulations
- confirm evidence of the strengths noted in the QIP
- collect evidence of the service's practices against the NQS elements

In some cases, an officer will request a preschool teacher be released to discuss Quality Areas 1, 2, 3, 5 and 6. The officer will have access to the preschool's compliance history and seek to confirm any previous non-compliance or breaches have been addressed. They may also seek evidence that advice given in previous assessment and rating reports has been followed.

*Minor adjustments*

During the assessment and rating visit, an authorised officer has the discretion to offer minor adjustments. These are modifications which can quickly and easily rectify minor

issues which don't pose an unacceptable risk to the safety, health or wellbeing of children. The officer will give a time frame for the adjustments to be made, and may require evidence they have been completed, for example, a photo of the modifications emailed within a week.

#### *After the visit:*

The school will be emailed the following documents 3-5 weeks after your assessment visit:

- draft evidence summary
- draft rating outcomes summary
- feedback form

The feedback form provides an opportunity to respond if a preschool believes the evidence summary contains factual inaccuracies. The response must be supported with evidence of practice that was in place on the day of the assessment visit, but has not been included in the evidence summary. The feedback provided, if accepted, may result in the rating for a relevant element moving from unmet to met, or a standard's rating improving to exceeding.

After receiving the feedback form, consider:

- Does the evidence summary accurately include all evidence in place at the time of the assessment visit?
- Would it be advantageous to submit feedback?
- Does the team have the time and energy to collate evidence and prepare feedback by the due date?
- Discussing the pros and cons of submitting the form with Early Learning
- Seeking assistance from your P-2 Officer to complete the form

The preschool will be emailed a draft evidence statement and a draft ratings summary and given the opportunity for feedback on a specified form. Preschools are encouraged to submit the feedback form if there are factual inaccuracies in the evidence statement. This will need to be proven by providing additional evidence that was in place on the day of the assessment and rating visit, but isn't noted in the evidence summary.

Please refer to the [ACECQA](#) website for additional information related to assessment and rating. The diagram below shows the seven quality areas of the NQS and the continuum of ratings.



Image source: ACECQA (2019). NQF Snapshot Q4 2018. [https://www.acecqa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2019-02/NQFSnapshot\\_Q42018.pdf](https://www.acecqa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2019-02/NQFSnapshot_Q42018.pdf) accessed April, 2019

## Monitoring visits

An authorised officer may visit a department preschool at any time, with or without notice. These visits are a proactive way of influencing compliance with the National Law and Regulations and improving the quality of education and care provided. The length of time spent on each visit depends on the nature of the compliance issues or breaches that the officer may identify. A visit may be prompted by:

- a complaint to the regulator
- notification of a serious incident
- changes to a preschool's premises
- a targeted campaign (monitoring for a specific compliance matter)

Authorised officers always wear photo identification whilst on the school site and are subject to the same visitor protocols as all visitors to the preschool, such as signing in at the school office **and** within the preschool. After the officer has presented at the school office, it is important office staff contact the principal (or their replacement if off-site or absent) to notify them of the officer's arrival. It is then good practice for the officer to be accompanied to the preschool and introduced to the educators.

## External validation and the preschool

A P-2 or P-6 school should include the preschool in external validation, particularly if the preschool features in one or more of the school plan's strategic directions.

## Performance and development

In line with department policy, the NQS requires each educator be part of a system of regular performance review and to have individual performance and development plans in place. The regulations do not specify any particular system or template, so principals should use the same performance review and performance and development plan templates as for the rest of the school.

## Recommended resources and further reading

- Guide to the National Quality Framework - <https://www.acecqa.gov.au/nqf/about/guide>
- Early Childhood Research Hub – [ecrh.edu.au](http://ecrh.edu.au)
- Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority – [acecqa.gov.au](http://acecqa.gov.au)
- The department's Early Learning homepage - [education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/curriculum/preschool](http://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/curriculum/preschool)

## External providers of professional learning

- Kindergarten Union - [ku.com.au/professional-development](http://ku.com.au/professional-development)
- Be You- Supporting Early Childhood mental health - [beyou.edu.au](http://beyou.edu.au)
- Early Childhood Resource Hub professional learning - <https://learn.ecrh.edu.au/>
- Early Childhood Australia Learning Hub - [learninghub.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/](http://learninghub.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/)
- Gowrie NSW - [gowriensw.com.au](http://gowriensw.com.au)
- Munch and Move - <https://www.healthykids.nsw.gov.au/campaigns-programs.aspx>
- Community Early Learning Australia - [cela.org.au](http://cela.org.au)
- Semann and Slattery - [semannslattery.com](http://semannslattery.com)
- Early Childhood Support Service - [rare.support/](http://rare.support/)

## Social media

- NSW DoE Preschools and Early Intervention Classes (an open Yammer group administered by Early Learning)



## Electronic subscriptions

- [Amplify! Newsletter](#)
- [Early Childhood Australia WebWatch](#)
- [Early Childhood Australia – The Spoke blog](#)
- [ECRH Newsletter](#)
- [ACECQA Newsletters](#)
- [KU Quarterly Newsletter](#)
- [NSW DoE Early Childhood Education Directorate:](#)
  - [EC Extra newsletter](#)
  - [Spotlight on quality](#)

## References

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