

TRANSITION TO SCHOOL POLICY

Starting school is a significant milestone in the life of any child and family. Our service supports continuity of learning and transitions for each child by sharing relevant information, clarifying responsibilities and by developing strategies that support a positive transition to school (National Quality Standard 6.3). Furthermore, we are committed to engage children, families, professionals, educators, and community members in the transition to school process to ensure the implementation of this policy is meaningful, supportive and reflective of best practice. Transition is viewed as a collaborative and dynamic process occurring over time ensuring a sense of belonging in all environments (Transition to School: Position Statement, 2011).

**Ready families + Ready early childhood services
+ Ready communities + Ready schools = Ready children**

NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD (NQS)

QUALITY AREA 6: COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS		
6.1	Supportive relationships with families	Respectful relationships with families are developed and maintained and families are supported in their parenting role.
6.1.1	Engagement with the service	Families are supported from enrolment to be involved in their service and contribute to service decisions.
6.1.2	Parent views are respected	The expertise, culture, values and beliefs of families are respected and families share in decision-making about their child’s learning and wellbeing.
6.1.3	Families are supported	Current information is available to families about the service and relevant community services and resources to support parenting and family wellbeing.
6.2	Collaborative partnerships	Collaborative partnerships enhance children’s inclusion, learning and wellbeing.

PURPOSE

Effective transition practices have as their base, a commitment to building secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships. One outcome of such relationships is that all participants regard themselves, and other participants, as valued members of the school community. (Dockett & Perry, 2001)

Our service aims to liaise with local schools to develop a smooth and comprehensive transition to school for all children. We will support children and families by strengthening the development and delivery of transition programs and provide a shared understanding between our service and local primary schools about what is important for children and their families during the transition to school process.

We believe it is vital to enhance children's social and emotional development to ensure a successful transition to school. By developing these skills and abilities and promoting their creativity and individuality, we promote children's ability to become confident and successful learners.

SCOPE

This policy applies to staff, management and visitors of the service.

IMPLEMENTATION

Children are challenged with several transitional changes during early childhood. This includes orienting children into early childhood, transitioning between routines and rooms, and then transitioning into primary school. Children respond in different ways to transitions - some with confidence and others with hesitation. Children's confidence will be enhanced when changes happen gradually and when time is prioritised to support these transitions with sensitivity, planning, and preparation.

This first experience children have of school has a great impact on their progress and future schooling (Margetts, 2007). Transition to school should therefore be prepared for in an understanding, calm, organized, and knowledgeable manner. We acknowledge the critical role we as Educators have in providing an educational environment that supports children's wellbeing, promotes equity and celebrates diversity. Our transition to school program is developed in collaboration with all stakeholders and ensures children are active participants in their transition to school.

For children attending school the following year, our 'Transition to School Program' provides additional activities and experiences to help prepare them for a smooth transition to a primary school environment. This program refers to daily-programmed activities and experiences that are implemented throughout the year, encouraging the developmental skills that are optimal for children to retain before commencing school.

TRANSITION TO SCHOOL PROGRAM:

As Early Childhood Educators who are instrumental in influencing children's learning patterns for later life, it is our responsibility to set them on a course that will inspire investigation, exploration, problem solving, questioning, discovery, and challenges.

To ensure the transition to school is a positive experience for children and families, we will implement a range of activities and experiences that may include, but is not limited to:

- Visits by children to local primary school setting
- Family information sessions
- Visits from Primary school teachers and/or Principals
- Exchanging information about a child's individual strengths and needs
- Networking with educators, primary school teachers and principals
- Developing children's talking and listening skills
- Alphabet and number awareness
- Shapes and colour recognition
- Social and emotional enhancement
- Pre-writing development
- Name writing and recognition
- Concentrating on the task at hand
- Determination when faced with complications
- Responding positively to new situations
- Taking responsibility for their own behaviour
- Developing the communication skills necessary for group or individual play
- Developing positive feelings about themselves and others
- Experiencing a sense of self-satisfaction resulting from achievement
- Experiencing eating from lunch boxes, as we educate children about different foods eaten at recess and lunch and how to open different packaged foods.

PREPARING CHILDREN AS THEY TRANSITION TO SCHOOL:

There are many unique differences in the school environment which children should become familiar with as they prepare to transition to school. This includes:

- Having one teacher for the majority of the day
- Toileting without supervision
- Wearing uniforms
- Transport
- Sitting at a desk
- Responsibility for own belongings
- Listening to instructions
- Specific focused lessons
- A school bell or siren indicating set breaks
- Negotiating a large playground
- Homework
- The canteen or tuck shop
- Before and After School Care

MANAGEMENT WILL:

- Establish strategies across our service to ensure there is continuity of learning when children transition to school.
- Advocate for 'Ready' by ensuring schools are ready for our children to transition into their environment.
- Discuss expectations with families for their child as they prepare to transition to school.
- Work in partnership with families to ensure children's transition to school is positive, informed, and enhances individual development.
- Be aware of critical cut off dates with various Education Departments to accommodate children with a disability or developmental delay into new educational settings and share this information with families.
- Support and advocate for enhanced transition programs for children with a disability or developmental delay with feeder primary schools.
- Be flexible and ensure transition programs are tailored to the specific needs of all children in our service.

EDUCATORS WILL:

- Incorporate transition to school into the daily program by encouraging children to think and talk about school by exploring various elements of primary school (This may include uniforms, eating packed lunches, talking about school and how a school environment is different).
- Talk with children about starting school, respecting any concerns and communicating these to families.
- Ensure children are active participants in their transition to school.
- Communicate with families to ensure we meet the requirements of the individual strengths and needs of all children and families.
- Consider family priorities and any concerns about the transition process. Each family's cultural and linguistic needs will be respected, along with family diversity.
- Develop a program to ensure a smooth transition for children from the education and care environment to the school environment. The program requires both parent and educator support for the child. This cooperation will ensure the best possible environment for children's transition.
- Contemplate the individual rest or sleep needs of children in the months leading up to the transitioning to school and whether a reduction in sleep time may prepare some children for the longer school day routine. Children will continue to have rest periods with quiet activities during the day. Beds will be available for any child who requires rest or sleep.
- Discuss children's development, strengths, and competencies for transition to school with families.
- Support each family's decision about when to send children to school, acknowledging the NSW Department of Education and Training's policy that "children must turn five by July 31 in the year they start Kindergarten. All children in NSW must start school by their 6th birthday". In Victoria, children must turn 5 before 30th April to attend school that year. See below for other state specifications.
- Develop an information package for families about transition to school. This will include information on how to support their child/children and what to expect with the transition process. This package will be reviewed annually to meet the needs of the families and to integrate current information from local schools.
- Be supported to access and attend professional development opportunities to ensure current knowledge and practice regarding transition to school.

- Facilitate relationships and networking with local schools to support children and families with the transition process and to open lines of communication. The importance of school preparation through school visits, orientation days and meeting the Kindergarten teachers will be promoted.
- Facilitate each child's development as a capable learner through open ended learning experiences.
- Effectively evaluate our service's transition program.
- Be flexible and responsive to the needs of children and families.
- Take into account contextual aspects of community, and of individual families and children within that community.

(Adapted from Dockett & Perry, 2007.)

TRANSITION TO SCHOOL STATEMENT: NSW DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION (DoE)

The NSW Transition to School Statement (Department of Education) is a practical and simple tool designed to enable information to be shared between families, early childhood services and schools.

The Statement is completed by the child's early childhood educator in cooperation with the family. All information is provided voluntarily. The Statement is communicated to the child's intended school where it provides the school and teachers with information they can use in planning and preparing for the child's arrival and transition into the new learning environment.

Use of the statement is optional. Our Service, in collaboration with the family will make the decision about whether to prepare a statement, and the family will choose whether to make it available to the child's intended school and teacher.

TRANSITION LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT STATEMENT: VICTORIA STATE GOVERNMENT EDUCATION AND TRAINING

This Learning and Development Statement summarises children's abilities as they start school. The statement assists teachers to get to know the children beginning school and their individual learning styles. Completing this statement is a kindergarten-funding requirement. The statement is prepared by early childhood educators and families and includes outcome descriptors describing children's learning and development against the five outcomes of the VEYLDF. Parents have an option to share this statement with the child's future school or 'opt out'. The transition statement is completed electronically and can be downloaded to share with families and early childhood services.

**CONTINUATION OF LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT: QUEENSLAND KINDERGARTEN
LEARNING OUTCOMES COMPANION**

This resource helps teachers assess, reflect and make evidence-based judgments about children’s learning progress. The plan is used to promote continuity of learning. Families contribute to the transition statement, which provides a snapshot of each child’s learning. To enable this information to be shared with feeder primary schools, parents must complete a Transition Statement consent form.

WHEN A CHILD IS NOT READY TO TRANSITION TO SCHOOL

We understand that all children are unique and achieve milestones in their own time. Families have expectations about what they think their child should be able to do. They may ask educators their opinion on specific skills such as pre-writing skills, numbers, social and emotional development etc.

We believe that Early Childhood Educators have professional insight to assist families in making the decision about a child’s transition to school as they have developed trusting and supportive relationships over time. However, prior to speaking with families about their personal views, educators will discuss their thoughts with management about the child’s individual strengths and needs and any recommendation about beginning school will be communicated with families during a scheduled meeting. Our staff will adhere to confidentiality at all times.

STATE-BY-STATE SPECIFICATIONS

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY (ACT)

- Children must have turned 5 by 30th April to begin the school year. It is compulsory for children to start school from six years of age.
- ACT Government
- https://www.education.act.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/1028543/20172701-Starting-School-Guide-For-Parents-2017-Web.pdf
- http://www.education.act.gov.au/school_education/enrolling_in_an_act_public_school/about_our_schools

NORTHERN TERRITORY (NT)

- Children can start Transition (non-compulsory) at the start of the school year if they turn 5 by 30th June that year. To enter Year 1 (compulsory) children must turn 6 before 30th June that year.
- Northern Territory Government
- <http://www.austliansouthernterritory.com.au/Living/education/Pages/primary-secondary.aspx>

NEW SOUTH WALES (NSW)

- Children can begin compulsory Kindergarten at the beginning of the school year if they turn 5 on or before 31st July in that year. All children must be enrolled in school by the time they turn 6.
- Transition to School
- NSW Public Schools –
- <https://education.nsw.gov.au/going-to-a-public-school/our-public-schools/primary-schools/starting-school>
- <https://education.nsw.gov.au/preschool/starting-school>
- <http://www.dec.nsw.gov.au/what-we-offer/regulation-and-accreditation/early-childhood-education-care/funding/funding-projects/transition-to-school>

QUEENSLAND (QLD)

- From 2017 it is compulsory for all children to undertake Prep full time. Children must turn 5 by 30 June the year they start Prep.
- Queensland Government – Department of Education and Training
- <http://www.deta.qld.gov.au/earlychildhood/about/successful-transitions/index.html>
- <https://www.qld.gov.au/education/schools/find/enrolment/pages/age.html>
- Continua of learning and development: Queensland kindergarten learning guideline companion
- https://www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/downloads/p_10/qklg_companion.pdf

TASMANIA (TAS)

- Children may commence Kindergarten (non-Compulsory) if they turn 4 on or before 1st January of the year they start. Children must turn 5 by 1st January to start Prep, the first year of formal school.
- NB: Proposed changes to the Education Act may apply for children starting school in 2021. Children who will be 4 years and 6 months at the beginning of the school year must be enrolled in Prep or registered in home education.
- <https://documentcentre.education.tas.gov.au/Documents/Starting-Age-Factsheet.pdf>
- Starting Kindergarten in Tasmanian Government Schools
- <https://www.education.tas.gov.au/documentcentre/Documents/Infosheet-EarlyYears-Starting-Kindergarten.pdf>
- https://www.education.tas.gov.au/About_us/publications/school-brochures/Pages/Starting-leaving-ages.aspx

VICTORIA (VIC)

- Children must turn 5 by 30th April to attend school that year.
- Victoria State Government Education and Training
- <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/professionals/learning/Pages/transition.aspx>
- <http://www.liveinvictoria.vic.gov.au/living-in-victoria/education-and-childcare/primary-schools#.V8gSQ5h97IV>
- Transition Learning and Development Statement
- <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/professionals/learning/Pages/transitionstat.aspx#link70>

WESTERN AUSTRALIA (WA)

- Children can start Kindergarten if they are 4 years old by 30th June of that particular year. Pre-Primary is compulsory and children must start school if they turn 5 before the 30th June in the current school year.
- Department of Education
- <http://www.det.wa.edu.au/curriculum-support/earlychildhood/detcms/portal/>
- <http://www.education.wa.edu.au/home/detcms/navigation/education/our-schools/enrolling-in-school/>

SOUTH AUSTRALIA (SA)

- Children may start Reception in primary school if they turn 5 before 1st May. Children must be enrolled in primary school by 6 years old.
- South Australia Government
- <https://www.sa.gov.au/topics/education-skills-and-learning/schools/school-life/starting-primary-school>

SOURCES:

A Policy Brief about Rethinking School Readiness- The Royal Children’s Hospital Melbourne

Australian Children’s Education & Care Quality Authority

Australian Research Alliance for Children & Youth: School Readiness: Various school readiness papers available from <https://www.aracy.org.au>

Connections: *A resource for early childhood educators about children’s wellbeing.*

Continuity of Learning: *A resource to support effective transition to school and school age care.*

Research Institute for Professional Practice, Learning and Education Charles Sturt University. (2011)

Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. (n.d.). *Developmental milestones and the Early Years Learning Framework and the National Quality Standards.*

Docket, S., & Perry, B. (2001). Starting school: Effective transitions. *Early Childhood Research & Practice*, 3(2). Retrieved from <http://ecrp.uiuc.edu/v3n2/dockett.html>

Docket, S., & Perry, B. (2007). *Transitions to school: Perceptions, expectations and experiences.* Sydney, Australia: UNSW Press.

ECA Code of Ethics

Guide to the Education and Care Services National Law and the Education and Care Services National Regulations. (2015).

Guide to the National Quality Standard

Kagan, S. L., & Rigby, D. E. (2003). *Improving the readiness of children for school: Recommendations for state policy*. Washington, DC: Centre for the Study of Social Policy.

Margetts, K. (2007). Understanding and supporting children: Shaping transition practices, *Informing Transitions in the Early Years*, 1, pp. 107 – 119

Mielekamp, R. (2008). *Sharing our journey: School Readiness*. Australia: Rachel Mielekamp

National Quality Standard Professional Learning Program Newsletter No.70 – *Transitions: Moving in, moving up and moving on*

NSW Education Standards Authority

<http://educationstandards.nsw.edu.au/wps/portal/nesa/parents/parentguide/transitioning-to-school>

NSW Government – Department of Education and Community Services

<http://www.dec.nsw.gov.au/what-we-offer/regulation-and-accreditation/early-childhood-education-care/funding/funding-projects/transition-to-school>

Transition to School Resource:

<http://www.transitiontoschoolresource.org.au/tts-content/considering-when-to-start-school>

Transition to School: Position Statement (Educational Transitions and Change (ETC) Research Group, 2011).

Revised National Quality Standard

REVIEW

POLICY REVIEWED	OCTOBER 2018	NEXT REVIEW DATE	OCTOBER 2019
MODIFICATIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> References corrected, added &/or updated. Sources/references alphabetised. Current best practice added. 		
POLICY REVIEWED	PREVIOUS MODIFICATIONS	NEXT REVIEW DATE	
AUGUST 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Major changes made to policy, identifying varying aspects of transitioning children to school and discussing with families if a child is not ready to start formal schooling. 	AUGUST 2018	
OCTOBER 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Updated references to comply with the revised National Quality Standard 	OCTOBER 2018	