



**SAINT HELENA'S**  
CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

*Something Beautiful for God*

# **EARLY CHILDHOOD CHARTER**

**Revised 2020**

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## **VISION**

As a community united in faith and trust, St Helena's Catholic Primary School (SHCPS) seeks to provide a nurturing and diverse learning environment where our children contribute to the development of the kind of world envisaged by Jesus by living the ideal of doing Something Beautiful for God.

## **RATIONALE**

At SHCPS, we nurture a Jesus-centered environment where Gospel Values are actively lived and practiced. Our learning environment is shaped to support and strengthen the needs and interests of each child through collaboration, co-operation and problem solving to prepare for an ever-changing future. As educators, we strive to meet the spiritual, intellectual, social and emotional needs of each child whilst working together with families who are the primary educators of their children.

The Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) outlines its beliefs about young children and declares that learning is inherent in the '3 Bs' - Belonging, Being, Becoming. Its values are embodied in the five principles that underpin good practice:

- Respectful relationships
- Partnerships with families
- High expectations and equity
- Respect for diversity
- Reflective practice

The National Quality Standards (NQS) (DEEWR, 2009) philosophy is captured in the six Guiding Principles that apply across all seven Quality Areas:

- The rights of the child are paramount
- Children are successful, competent and capable learners
- Equity, inclusion and diversity
- Valuing Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures
- The role of parents is respected and supported
- High expectations for children, educators and service providers

We, as an early childhood staff at SHCPS, endeavor to embed in our daily teaching practice and teaching and learning programs these principles from the EYLF and NQS.

## **FAMILIES**

Parents and families are the first and most influential educators of children and play an integral part in their child's on-going education. Educators recognise the role that parents play in supporting their child's education. We encourage open communication between home and school and invite and enable parents to be involved through whole school and class events. Committed to cultural inclusion, educators are aware and respectful of the vast range of cultures which make up St Helena's community and take opportunities to form a two-way connection.

Relationships between the school and families are important and are built every day. Educators seek feedback from families regarding each child's development and well-being. Time is available for families to speak with teachers and teachers take opportunities to speak with families through phone, See Saw, email and face-to-face contacts at points of celebration or concern.

## **ENVIRONMENT**

**At SHCPS, educators believe an early years learning environment should be a welcoming, dynamic and interactive space that stimulates, challenges and engages children. At SHCPS, we offer a flexible and open learning environment that is responsive to the interests, abilities and learning needs of our children.**

**Our indoor learning environments invite conversation between children, families and educators and promote opportunities for sustained shared thinking, agency, autonomy and collaborative learning. Our displays are intentional and deliberate, supporting children in their current and future learning as well as documenting past learning. We encourage independence and active participation within our environments, allowing for choice and decision making in play, investigation and resource use.**

**At SHCPS, our outdoor environments aim to develop a sense of connectedness with the natural world. We offer child led engaging spaces for children to play, explore and learn together. Open-ended equipment is selected and arranged by children in the nature playgrounds and purpose-built equipment is accessible. We encourage gross motor development and physical capabilities, support and foster a child's emerging sense of wonder, imagination and creativity, and extend social skills development.**

**Children at SHCPS are provided with opportunities to learn how to manage risks and develop a respect for nature. It is important that children are 'safe', therefore, we set consistent routines and educate all children on boundaries, rules, expectations and limits within both the indoor and outdoor environments. We enable children to develop independence and responsibility by helping to care for our learning environment.**

## PEDAGOGY

SHCPS early years, promotes students' learning in the five areas of the EYLF.

<b>OUTCOME 1: CHILDREN HAVE A STRONG SENSE OF IDENTITY</b>
<p><b>At St Helena's Catholic Primary School, you will see:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>· Children exploring and engaging with the social and physical environment to form positive relationships with adults and other children.</li><li>· Children immersed in learning through play using a range of diverse resources, to express their individuality.</li><li>· Children developing a sense of autonomy, resilience and a sense of agency, whilst increasing their awareness of the needs and rights of others.</li></ul>
<b>OUTCOME 2: CHILDREN ARE CONNECTED WITH AND CONTRIBUTE TO THEIR WORLD</b>
<p><b>At St Helena's Catholic Primary School, you will see:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>· Children showing an awareness of connections, similarities and differences between people.</li><li>· Children developing a sense of belonging to the school community through active community participation.</li><li>· Children being regularly exposed to situations where problem solving and decision making are encouraged to achieve a fair outcome.</li><li>· Children being guided and encouraged to be accountable for their choices.</li></ul>
<b>OUTCOME 3: CHILDREN HAVE A STRONG SENSE OF WELLBEING</b>
<p><b>At St Helena's Catholic Primary School, you will see:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>· Children being encouraged to show an increasing capacity to self-regulate and manage their emotions in ways that reflect the feelings and needs of others, in all learning environments.</li><li>· Children engaging in good practices with regards to exercise, eating, sleeping and hygiene, contributing to good health.</li></ul>

#### **OUTCOME 4: CHILDREN ARE CONFIDENT AND INVOLVED LEARNERS**

**At St Helena's Catholic Primary School, you will see:**

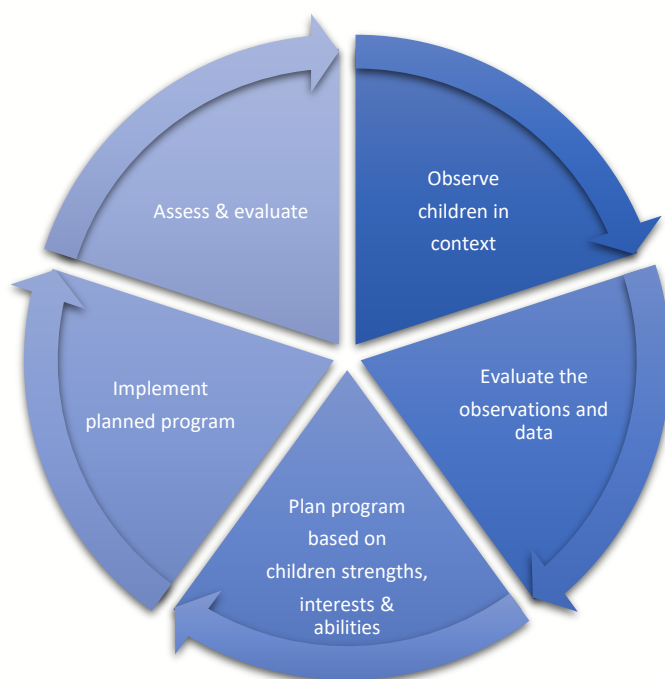
- Children using play to investigate, imagine and explore ideas.
- Children using the processes of play, reflection and investigation to solve problems.
- Children experiencing the benefits and pleasures of shared learning exploration.

#### **OUTCOME 5: CHILDREN ARE EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATORS**

**At St Helena's Catholic Primary School, you will see:**

- Opportunities for students to communicate in different ways for a variety of purposes.
- Opportunities for students to convey and construct messages with purpose and confidence, building on home/family and community literacies.
- Opportunities for students to begin to be aware of the relationships between oral, written and visual representations.

#### **Teaching and Learning Cycle at St Helena's Catholic Primary School**



In teaching within the EYLF, we believe that all learning should be holistic and responsive, providing children with opportunities to be creative and think critically. Learning is integrated and interconnected; therefore, our classroom environments, routines and planning allow the flexibility to follow children's interest. Effective teaching and learning in our early years' classrooms involve intentional teaching, which is deliberate, purposeful and thoughtful in promoting children's learning. Educators at SHCPS promote challenging learning experiences, foster critical thinking skills and are informed by contemporary research to use elements from high quality pedagogies (Inquiry Based Learning, Explicit Instruction, Play- Based Learning, Cooperative Learning) to enhance learning outcomes for all children.

### Play Based Learning

Play is a “context for learning through which children organise and make sense of their social worlds, as they engage actively with people, objects and representations” (EYLF, 2009). It captures children's interests, absorbs their attention, allows for the expression of personality and uniqueness, stimulates a sense of well-being and enhances dispositions such as curiosity and creativity. Play enables learners to make connections between prior experiences and new learning, assists learners to develop relationships and concepts and encourages language, literacy and numeracy.

At SHCPS we see provocation in the indoor and outdoor spaces consisting of:

- Dramatic play
- Construction
- Creative centres
- Fine motor
- Literacy & Mathematics
- Inquiry and Investigation centres
- Obstacle course and gross motor areas
- Nature Play



### **Cooperative Learning**

Cooperative learning involves students working together to accomplish shared goals (Gillies, R., 2007). Learning and playing together is vital for the development of oral language skills and social development. Cooperative learning provides children with opportunities to be independent and take ownership of their learning within a group structure. At SHCPS, cooperative learning is used regularly within our program, both formally and informally, to process thinking of taught content and achieve shared learning goals.

### **Inquiry Based Learning**

At SHCPS, we encourage inquiry-based learning across the curriculum. This technique involves students in the learning process through focusing on open ended questions, problem-solving activities, provocations with learning intention and the use of critical thinking. We believe that children who become actively involved in their learning understand concepts better. Educators support children's thinking and learning by helping them to make connections between prior knowledge and current learning.

### **Intentional Teaching**

At SHCPS, we believe that intentional teaching plays a vital role in children's understanding of the learning objective. Teachers plan purposeful learning environments and tasks to actively promote learning and concept development. In English and Mathematics, concepts are delivered in small achievable steps with a gradual release model and regular checking for understanding to ensure all students achieve success. Many spontaneous teachable moments also occur throughout the learning day and are valued and utilised effectively. Both the indoor and outdoor environments are acknowledged as important; therefore, each is explicitly planned for.

## **CURRICULUM**

### **Planning**

As educators, we use children's data to make decisions and implement actions that respond to their ideas, understanding and skills. All learning experiences are meaningful and continue to build each child's skills and understandings to maximise learning. Our Early Childhood Team plans and creates quality classroom learning programs using the Western Australian Curriculum/Kindergarten Curriculum Guidelines and SHCPS scope and sequence documents, while being guided by their understanding of the EYLF and NQS. We also focus on the curriculum intent and knowledge of the students by having realistic expectations that are challenging and which allow children to reach their full potential.

### **Assessment**

As demonstrated in our Planning Cycle, assessment forms an important part of our teaching and learning process at SHCPS. Formal assessments are completed in the Kindy to Year 2 classrooms. This data is used to guide current classroom teaching and future school planning. Our educators collaborate closely to explore ways they can continually improve practice and the learning opportunities for students. Educator judgments and decisions are made and translated to everyday classroom routines, activities and teaching.

### **General Capabilities**

The General Capabilities encompass the knowledge, skills, behaviours and dispositions that, together with curriculum content in each learning area and the cross-curriculum priorities, will assist students to live and work successfully in the twenty-first century (ACARA, 2020). They complement the key learning outcomes of the EYLF - that children have a strong sense of identity and wellbeing, are connected with and contribute to their world, and are confident and involved learners and effective communicators.

The general capabilities included in the Australian Curriculum are:

- Literacy
- Numeracy
- Information and communication technology capability
- Critical and creative thinking
- Personal and social capability
- Ethical behaviour
- Intercultural understanding.

### Notes

The EYLF, Kindergarten Curriculum Guidelines and Western Australian Curriculum point to the need for intentional learning requiring early years educators to:

- Be vigilant in their assessment of children's capacities and needs; and to systematically record, analyse and use these assessments to inform their planning.
- Be purposeful in the selection of strategies and resources in pursuit of clear learning goals for each child, while ensuring the curriculum is modified to suit the students' ability levels.
- Ensure children have every opportunity to learn through engaging activities, hands-on experiences and in environments where they are required to make decisions and stretch the boundaries of their learning.
- Routinely engage children in the kinds of conversations that will extend their thinking.
- Use a range of group and individual activities.

### **Concluding Statement**

SHCPS acknowledges that God created each child to be unique and special. Our school respects each child as a gift from God and aims to foster and develop each child's relationship with Jesus.

SHCPS Early Years pedagogy is designed around what best suits the children in our care. It is a synthesis of play-based learning (child led and planned), cooperative learning, inquiry-based learning and intentional learning. We believe this combination leads to effective learning in the Early Years.

SHCPS Educators use ongoing student data to design quality classroom learning programs. Educators work collaboratively to continually improve their practice and have high expectations of themselves, their peers and the children in their care.

SHCPS classrooms are welcoming learning environments with interactive spaces that are responsive to the needs of the children in our care. The indoor and outdoor environments are designed as spaces for children to play, explore and learn together.

SHCPS acknowledges parents as the first educators and recognises their role in supporting their child's education. Relationships are considered paramount in establishing connectedness between the teacher and family.

We acknowledge that children all learn differently and at different rates. The goal of our early childhood program is to support each individual child and their family in their education journey at SHCPS.