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SETTLING IN, GROUPING AND TRANSITIONING POLICY

QUALITY AREA 6: COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS WITH FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

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National Quality Standard (NQS)

Quality Area 6: Collaborative partnerships with families and communities

6.1	Supportive relationships with families	Respectful and equitable relationships are maintained with each child
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
6.2	Collaborative partnerships	Collaborative partnerships enhance children's inclusion, learning and wellbeing
6.2.1	Transitions	Continuity of learning and transitions for each child are supported by sharing information and clarifying responsibilities
6.2.2	Access and participation	Effective partnerships support children's access, inclusion and participation in the program

Education and Care Services National Regulations

Children (Education and Care Services) National Law Act

77	Health, hygiene and safe food practices
88	Infectious diseases
90	Medical conditions policy
99	Children leaving the education and care service premises
157	Access for parents
168	Education and care service must have policies and procedures

Introduction

Early Childhood Australia's Code of Ethics states that *"in relations to children I will... act in the best interests of all children... respect the special relationship between children and their families and incorporate this perspective in all my interactions with children"* and *"In relation to families I will... develop partnerships with families and engage in shared decision making where appropriate... acknowledge the rights of families to make decisions about their children."*

Woden Early Childhood Centre (WECC) aims to be a place where all children want to come and where parents can leave their children knowing they will have a positive experience. Educators are aware of the importance of settling in, not only for the children but their families. Educators invest considerable time into children during the settling in period, as we believe a good start is the building block to a positive education and care experience.

At WECC, movement of the children between rooms, is roughly determined by the age of the child. This remains flexible and depends primarily on the individual child's readiness to move into another group and vacancies within WECC. WECC aims to make the transition between rooms as smooth and stress-free as possible for the children and their families.

This policy supports inclusive practices at WECC. Please refer to the *Inclusion, Diversity and Anti-Bias* policy.

Scope

This policy applies to children, families, staff, management and visitors of the Service.

Goals – What are we aiming to do?

- WECC welcomes and facilitates family participation and open communication by encouraging families to engage with their children's education and care. Families are invited to attend Management Committee meetings, assist with projects and attend social gatherings. WECC has an *Open-Door* policy for families
- WECC values the input of families, educators and the wider community to help WECC meet the needs of the children who attend, and provides families, educators and volunteers with information about how best to smoothly transition and group the children
- WECC encourages open communication through the enrolment and orientation process, policy review, feedback forms, the Management Committee, the daily program, documentation, formal and informal meetings, emails and conversations

Strategies – How will it be done?

Settling new children

Parents can assist by presenting WECC to their children not as a place to be while parents are elsewhere, but as somewhere the children can be with their friends and with adults who care about them. While parents work or study, children can do their own job of learning and exploring in a stimulating and secure environment.

Parents and families will be introduced to educators in their child's room who will discuss with them their child's individual needs and how to help the child make a smooth transition into WECC. Educators in other rooms will introduce themselves to new parents and children as appropriate.

WECC encourages parents who have been offered a place to bring their child along for visits at any time. Fees are not charged for children who have not yet taken up a place, but parents must remain on the premises as the child is yet to be formally enrolled at WECC. Children may feel more comfortable visiting WECC at quieter times of the day such as mid-morning and mid-afternoon. Please check with the educators in particular rooms for the best time to visit.

When a child takes up a place at WECC, we are happy for parents or other family members to stay with the child at WECC until the child feels comfortable. Some families are able to start their child at WECC gradually, so that the child starts with a short visit and stays for longer times each day – however each child is individual, and their needs will be considered during the transition from home to WECC.

Different children will respond in different ways to starting at WECC. Our educators are trained and experienced in child development and understand that most children feel some anxiety about being in a new environment and with new people. They are trained to help children overcome this anxiety and to help them settle in. They are aware that while some children settle in easily, others may take some time to feel comfortable about their new environment.

It is normal for young children to experience 'separation anxiety' and these children may need extra help settling until they become used to the Service routines and environment. Parents are encouraged to make contact with educators regarding their children as often as they wish to in these early days.

Sometimes a child becomes unsettled due to a disruption in routine, an illness or a change at home. We ask families to inform educators of events which may unsettle their child. It is vital that this information is passed to educators to ensure the child's needs are fully met.

Parents are welcome to discuss with educators the best way to ease the transition to an education and care setting and are encouraged to trust their own judgement about their readiness to leave their child in WECC's care. Parents are welcome to visit at any time, to bring family members to visit and to participate in WECC activities such as excursions.

Mothers who wish to continue breastfeeding whilst their child is attending WECC are always welcome and supported.

When children are reluctant for a parent to leave

If a child seems reluctant for a parent to leave, educators are happy to discuss with the parent the best way of handling the situation. We recognise the value of parent's judgement about their children's feeling and needs.

Parents are sometimes able to arrange to stay for a while at the beginning of the session to allow their child to become absorbed in play. When a parent needs to leave, educators are available to stay with the child when the parent says goodbye. We do not encourage parents to leave without saying goodbye.

Most parents find that once they have said goodbye, it is best to leave quickly and firmly. While it can be reassuring to the parent to stand outside the door or watch through the window to see the child settle down, if you wish to do this please ensure your child can not see you, as it can add to their distress.

Parents are welcome to ring during the day. Educators will always ring parents if a child is distressed, unwell or not coping.

Grouping children

In approximately September each year families will be asked to notify WECC, in writing, of their care requirements for the following calendar year.

Based on the information received through this process the Nominated Supervisor or Director will place children into one of WECC's four rooms for the following year. The rooms are broken roughly into age groups and children are placed in the group that best reflects their age. The following ages are used as a guide for each room:

Nursery	Birth to 18 months
Toddler Room	18 months to 2.5 years
Introduction to Preschool Room	2.5 years to 3.5 years
Preschool Room	3.5 years to school age

Throughout the year as vacancies occur, the Nominated Supervisor or Director will talk with the Room Leaders about each vacancy and who is the most appropriate child to fill the vacancy. This is usually the oldest child in the lower room but not always. We will not rush children up to the next room. Discussions will then take place with the family to ensure they are comfortable with the move.

When a child is being moved up, wherever possible the educators at WECC will take steps to gradually familiarise the child with the room before the actual move date – for example, by children having visits, meals or sleeps in the room.

Transitioning children

It is important to view transitions for children not as single events but as pathways to later successful outcomes, particularly toward learning. When the Room Leader feels a child is ready to move to the next group, and an equivalent position is or will soon be available, that child's family is approached to ascertain their views on whether they are comfortable with their child moving to the next room. Any concerns the child's family may have will be discussed with the educators.

In keeping with WECC's philosophy, each child will be considered individually. Consideration will be given to the child's social/emotional development, existing friendships, room expectations including routines, and the child's independence skills. Children with additional needs will be placed according to their developmental needs. If necessary, assistance will be sought to make their inclusion in the group the most positive experiences for them, other children in the group and educators. This may require assistance from a support worker for children with a disability or a bilingual support worker for children from a non-English speaking background.

Families are welcome to see and discuss developmental records/portfolios that are kept for their child with the Room Leader at a convenient time, as this may be a useful guide to assist with the decision. When a child moves to the next room, these records are passed on to the educators in that room.

When families and educators are in agreement, a child will move into the next room as soon as a position becomes available, ensuring adherence to licensing guidelines. This may take place almost immediately, as another child may leave WECC unexpectedly, thus creating a vacancy, while at other times it may take longer, which will allow for the child to visit the room they will be moving into during the transition process. Families will be notified of the date their child will be moving to the next room and will be introduced to the educators in their child's new room.

Children are given the opportunity to visit prior to changing rooms to become familiar with its routines and the educators in the room. Children from different rooms will also be together in the playground and in the early mornings and evenings when numbers are low. This helps the children to feel comfortable with educators and

children in the other rooms and smooths the transition between rooms, as well as also giving siblings an opportunity to be together. Where possible, children will be moved up in groups of two or so, so that they can share the experience with their friends.

Families who have any concerns regarding this process are encouraged to discuss their concerns with their child's Room Leader or with the Nominated Supervisor or Director. The wishes of families are respected. For example, if the family is not ready for their child to move up, they will not be rushed. Instead, the places will be offered to another family.

Educators communicate frequently with each other regarding the children's progress. Children also have various opportunities to get to know all educators, and often will spend time in the next room "getting ready" to move in. Once they have moved into the next room, children are welcome to visit their previous room. We often find the transition harder on the family than the child as they are already comfortable with the other educators.

Responsibilities

- the responsibility of grouping the children rests with the Nominated Supervisor or Director who consults with Room Leaders in each room as well as the families in a shared decision process
- when decisions are made about moving a child, the Nominated Supervisor or Director will inform the bookkeepers so that the billing and sign in sheets can be updated
- a Transition Plan will be completed in conjunction with the child's current Room Leader, the child's new room leader and the child's family.

Evaluation

Educators will provide feedback to each other, and to the Nominated Supervisor or Director, regarding the process and any changes that may be appropriate. Family feedback will be sought. Children have various opportunities to get to know all educators and will often spend time in the next room 'getting ready' to move on. Once they have moved into the next room, children are welcome to visit their previous room.

Related policies /documents

- *Complaints and feedback*
- *Enrolment and orientation*
- *Family participation and communication*
- *Inclusion, diversity and anti-bias*

Statutory legislation and considerations

- The Education and Care Services National Law
- The Education and Care Services National Regulations

Sources and references

- Guide to the National Quality Standard
- Guide to the Education and Care Services National Law and the Education and Care Services National Regulations
- EYLF – Belonging, Being and Becoming
- Early Childhood Australia Code of Ethics
- Woden Early Childhood Centre Parent Handbook

Authorisation

Jennifer Hayes
President
2019 WECC Management Committee