

SUSTAINABILITY POLICY

Policy Statement:

There is no doubt that climate change is affecting the Earth and there is a desperate need for mankind to change their ways in regards to looking after their environment. It is important that the next generation develops a love for the Earth and a deep understanding of how human practices affect the environment. Looking after Country as the traditional custodians have done so for many years is an excellent example of ways in which contemporary practices could be changed. This policy will provide ways in which educators and children in childcare can embed sustainable practices into the everyday life of St Andrew's Little Saints and After School & Vacation Care.

Aim:

- Our service aims to help children learn about and implement sustainable practices and foster respect and care for the living and non-living environment.
- To embed sustainable practices into the everyday life of the Centre.
- For children to have a good understanding of connecting to Country as the Australians Aboriginals have done for thousands of years.
- Children become socially responsible and show respect for the environment (EYLF LO2).

Rationale:

Children develop positive attitudes and values about sustainable practices by engaging in learning experiences, joining in discussions that explore solutions to environmental issues, and watching adults model sustainable practices. Children learn to live interdependently with the environment. Little Saints has a Sustainability Officer who drives the sustainable practices at the Centre.

Strategies/Practices/Procedures:

Environmental Sustainability and our Curriculum

- Our educators will promote a holistic, open ended curriculum which explores ideas and practices for environmental sustainability and helps children understand the interdependence between people and the environment by:
 - Connecting children to nature through art and play and allowing children to experience the natural environment through natural materials like wood, stone sand and recycled materials, plants including native vegetation, trickle streams or ponds, and gardening including bush tucker gardens.

- Developing education programs for water conservation, energy efficiency and waste reduction.
- Celebrating children’s environmental knowledge and sustainable activities.
- Involving children in nature walks, education about plants and gardening and growing plants and flowers from seed.
- Engaging children in learning about the food cycle by growing, harvesting, and cooking food.
- Using resource kits and information on environmental issues from the Better Business Partnership or resources targeted at early childhood services such as “The Little Green Steps” Resource kits on Water, Waste and Wildlife, Sunshine Coast Regional Council – Sustainable Practices for Childcare Centres Guide.
- Enlisting the help of groups with expertise in environmental issues, for example bush care groups, wildlife rescue groups, Clean Up Australia, to deliver elements of our sustainability program
- Acknowledging and celebrating environmental awareness events like Clean Up Australia Day and Walk to School Day.
- Minimising waste by using a worm farm and composting.
- The Sustainability Officer will be the Little Saints representative for the Sustainability Committee which holds regular meetings at the College.
- Incorporate Indigenous perspectives into the curriculum as a means to teach children about looking after their environment by learning how the traditional custodians did for thousands for years.

The Role of Educators

- Our educators will model sustainable practices by embedding sustainability into all aspects of the daily running of our service operations including:
 - recycling materials for curriculum and learning activities
 - minimising waste and effectively using service resources
 - turning off equipment and lights when not in use
 - using the least hazardous cleaning substance appropriate for the situation, for example, ordinary detergent for cleaning dirt from tables and other surfaces.
 - composting
 - maintaining a worm farm
 - maintaining a no dig vegetable/herb garden
 - incorporating water wise strategies such as and ensuring taps are turned off and leaks fixed.
 - using food that we have grown in cooking experiences with the children
 - implementing environmentally friendly pest management

Partnerships with Families and the Community

Our educators will facilitate collaborative partnerships with local community groups, government agencies and private companies to enhance and support children’s learning about sustainable practices. We will share their brochures and fact sheets on sustainable practices like recycling, saving water and power and green cleaning with our children and their families. Families will be encouraged to participate in decision making and information sharing about environmental sustainability through committee meetings, email and curriculum documentation.

As at May 2012, the NSW Early Childhood Environmental Education Network is developing a tool to assist Early Childhood Services to identify and work towards an Environmentally Sustainable Service with the NQS. The Network's website has links to many organisations and Government agencies that provide information on sustainable practices at <http://www.eceen.org.au/links.htm>

Measuring Tools:

Queensland Government Sustainable Practices for Childcare Centres Guide and checklist.
Sustainability Committee
Small Green Steps Program
STARS Program

Sources & Further Reading:

Sunshine Coast Council
Queensland Government Sustainable Practices for Childcare Centres Guide
National Quality Standard
Early Years Learning Framework
My Time Our Place
Queensland Kindergarten Learning Guideline
Climbing the little green steps 2007: Gosford and Wyong Councils
Qld Early Childhood Sustainability Network
NSW Early Childhood Environmental Education Network

Links to Other Policies:

Cultural Awareness Policy