

# Quality Improvement Plan for

## MOUNT BARKER KINDERGARTEN

2020

Service name

Mount Barker Kindergarten Incorporated

Service approval number

SE-00010672

Acknowledgment of Country

We acknowledge the Peramangk people as the traditional custodians of the lands and waters where our centre is located and recognise their continuing connection to country. We pay our respects to Elders past and present, and extend that respect to all Aboriginal peoples.



**Play, Learn, Grow**



**Government  
of South Australia**

Department for Education

# Context

## Service Context

Mount Barker Kindergarten operates as a full time stand-alone site, in a picturesque setting with a large outdoor learning environment. It is situated adjacent to Mount Barker Primary school, Dental Clinic. 51 children were enrolled in 2019. In addition to the core staff team of teachers and early childhood workers, the kindergarten employs preschool support staff to ensure children have greater opportunities for 1:1 and/or small group work, based on Individual Learning Programs.

Socio-economic backgrounds are varied, including stay at home parents, self-employed and full to part-time employment and work that necessitates long shifts away from home. Many families commute daily to Adelaide (40 minutes via the freeway). There is a growing increase in families with multicultural backgrounds. Commercial, industrial and mixed farming are the main local economic drivers.

Through strong partnerships with Mount Barker Council and Mount Barker Primary School, the kindergarten (via the Department for Education) owns the land immediately outside our perimeter fence. Ready access to nature enriches our curriculum providing deeper learning opportunities through nature inquiry, STEM, sustainability and indigenous perspectives.

Mount Barker Kindergarten is part of the Department for Education Heysen Partnership network. Each year our children transition to a range of public and private schools across the Adelaide hills including: Mount Barker Primary School (our main feeder school); Mount Barker South Primary School; St Francis De Sales College; and St Mark's Lutheran Primary School.

The children attend two full days per week and two half days per term averaging 15 hours per week including Universal Access. Traditionally we offer a Monday/Tuesday group and a Wednesday/Thursday group, with more flexible options available to meet individual family needs. Some parents choose to enrol their children for two full days only. Sessions are chosen by parents in consultation with staff.

# Context

## Statement of Philosophy

Mt Barker Kindergarten provides a safe, inclusive environment that is vibrant, flexible and responsive to each child's interest, needs and abilities as individuals and in groups. We provide high quality teaching and learning in line with the *National Quality Framework*, based on the Principles, Practices and Outcomes of the *Early Years Learning Framework*.

This philosophy reflects our vision and motto: **Play** - we implement a play-based curriculum, focused on positive social interactions and wellbeing. Play enables children to make independent choices using open-ended resources, enhancing individual development; **Learn** - our emergent curriculum is responsive to children's learning ideas, utilising teachable moments and building upon children's interests and existing understandings. We respect each child's individual learning style in tandem with developmental appropriateness; **Grow** - we provide learning opportunities that challenge and engage children, supporting deeper thinking and problem solving as they understand and make sense of the world around them.

Our educators work in partnership with families, recognising and valuing their place as children's first educators. We acknowledge the Peramangk People as traditional owners of the land and their culture. We increasingly build partnerships with our extended community (including parents, caregivers, children, local businesses, service providers, child care centres and children's groups).

This philosophy defines our **values**, the foundation of quality early childhood education: **Trust** and **Respect** - children gain increasing confidence to further develop their own identity while exploring and taking considered learning risks; **Nurturing** and **Caring** - children learn about empathy and consideration for others. They develop a sense of what is fair, begin to see alternate points of view, and act in respectful and inclusive ways; **Responsibility** and **Empowerment** - children strengthen their ability initiate their own interactions and accept some responsibility for themselves, their actions and their environments.

As educators, we are committed to ongoing critical reflection that improves our everyday practice, thereby continuing to provide quality care and education. Our team values are: open communication; being supportive; shared commitment in working towards common goals; and an overarching positive attitude to work and life-long learning.

# Strengths



5  
Review  
and evaluate

With reference to the three exceeding themes:

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

## Quality Area 1: Educational Program and Practice

The *Early Years Learning Framework for Australia (EYLF)*, *Preschool Indicators of Numeracy and Literacy (PINL)*, *Respect Reflect Relate (RRR)* indicators and the *National Quality Standard* inform all aspects of our practice.

Our emergent program responds to and builds upon each child's current knowledge, strengths, ideas, culture, abilities and interests and learning experiences provide multiple entry and exit points enabling children to work in their own way at their own pace.

Ongoing critical reflections meet the children's diverse and changing needs ensuring daily routines support: long periods of uninterrupted learning through play; small group work aligned to each child's needs and interests; eating routines; and transitions.

Educators actively respond to children's ideas as they occur thus maximising teachable moments. Staff plan and implement targeted intentional teaching through small group work and other learning experiences. Freedom for children to explore, scaffolding, challenging and extending their learning is achieved through flexibility of educators. Restorative practice is a site norm and our educators are committed to continual improvement in this area.

Flexible program delivery responds to spontaneous learning opportunities arising from children's individual/group interests, their engagement with each other and the learning environment. Learning journals, displays, resources/adjuncts and floor-books are used to scaffold and extend each child's learning.

Our Leading Learner initiative provides each child regular opportunities to further develop their sense of autonomy while taking a leadership role in the day's learning while sharing some of their interests, understandings and personal learning preferences with peers.

Our emergent programming reflects the embedded ongoing cycle of planning - associated documentation aligned to EYLF and PINL provides evidence of effective assessment and evaluation for each child's learning and development.

Daily reflections and touching base with parents/carers provide a forum for critically reflecting on group activities, while observation books address the needs of each individual child.

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## Quality Area 2: Children's Health and Safety

Procedures in place are understood by all educators to support children's health needs and staff liaise closely with and support parents. Health and continence care plans, are documented and enacted. All staff aware of each child's medical/health/dietary and other individual requirements - display in office for quick reference and relief staff. All staff are trained in First Aid and fully understand site first aid practices and procedures including documentation.

SunSmart accreditation and our sun culture supports children to wear hats outdoors when the UV rating is 3 or above, and to reapply sunscreen at lunchtime.

Educators observe children's individual health and safety needs, catering for them on 1:1 basis with appropriate resources.

Educators use intentional teaching to actively support children to embed health practices (including hand washing, toilet routine and coughing) with support from parents and where applicable specialist expertise - supported by visuals/photography - evidenced through children's practices/articulation.

Parents are consistent in informing the service of suspected illnesses/outbreaks, and staff action such notification with written displays describing suspected illness and an information sheet from the 'You've got what?' resource. Universal precautions are followed by staff as are the appropriate WHS regulations.

Children are encouraged and supported to rest after lunch and bedding space is created if a child becomes tired or ill during their session - and parent is contacted.

Children are supported to settle and engage with learning environment including: flexible transitions to kindergarten and school; open door policy for parents/carers to support their child; and respect role of a special comfort toy from home for children.

Healthy eating promoted through newsletter items and regular planned cooking experiences (where possible with food grown on site). Safe storage of food - lunches/water are brought inside and stored in dedicated locations; parents are encouraged to pack all foods with an 'ice brick.'

Physical activity is actively promoted within our outdoor learning environment and enhanced by the resources available to children. Gross motor activities, nature walks, dance and movement are featured in our program.

Safe environment is assured through daily playground checks, educator to child ratios of 1 or more adults to each 11 children, and ongoing risk assessments identify, address and manage hazards/risks. Ongoing *Child Protection Curriculum* is implemented by trained staff with each new cohort of children. Staff are vigilant and proactive in regard to their roles and responsibilities to identify and respond to every child at risk of abuse or neglect.

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## Quality Area 3: Physical Environment

Strengths are embedded.

Indoor and Outdoor learning environments are flexible and structured so that they are inviting and facilitate learning outcomes through encouraging exploration, problem solving and creative expression. Children have choice and conversations with educators and peers around their interests. Risk Benefit assessments consider aspects of appropriateness and storage as required.

Keeping the environment (furniture and equipment) safe and well maintained is of high priority to the staff team. Regular cleaning and daily safety inspections are undertaken, and issues discussed at staff meetings. The children are also taught about respect for their learning environment.

Educators spontaneously change the learning environment adapting to meet the needs and interests of each child. Every child is able to explore and move freely between the indoor and outdoor learning environment.

Educators spontaneously change the learning environment adapting to meet the needs and interests of each child. Every child is able to explore and move freely between the indoor and outdoor learning environments. Budget and expenditure reflect ongoing practice ensuring resources, equipment and materials are available in sufficient number and in a timely fashion - this includes meeting planned, replacement and emergent curriculum needs and larger purchases in consultation with staff, children, families and the governing council with yearly fundraising contributing to the expense.

Natural resources (gum nuts, fallen branches, pine cones, leaves) are used to extend sensory, open-ended explorative and inquiry play. Outdoor plantings (particularly in the vegetable garden beds) are seasonally reviewed with the children. A variety of fruit trees complement our sustainable food growing. Sustainable practices embedded into everyday routines include: recycling paper; worm farm; vegetable garden; modelling saving power/water; and composting.

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## Quality Area 4: Staffing Arrangements

Teachers monitor movements of children between environments and actively co-ordinate staff positioning in real-time to maintain appropriate educator to child ratios. Effective strategies are in place to ensure successful teaching practice is maintained and improved. The Code of Conduct, Philosophy Statement and joint team values are regularly visited to ensure values are reflected through practice. This ensures alignment of our philosophy, pedagogy and practice when working with children and their families in all that we do. Ongoing reflection and professional development ensure cycle of reflecting, challenging and improving our practice is embedded and aligned with current research, ensuring best possible learning outcomes for children. Where required, extra staff are employed to operate site-initiated programs such as support programs, playgroup and pre-entry to kindergarten.

Every effort is made to maintain a consistent and reliable staff team, including the use of regular relief staff in order to promote continuity, thereby maintaining secure, positive relationships with children, families and the community

Staff are supportive of each other and work as a team, respecting and utilising individual strengths, training and interests. Respectful interactions are considered core elements of effective educators by the team and this influences their relationships and interactions with each other, children and families. Staff undertake professional training for best practice and then report back to the rest of the team. Staff work collaboratively with other preschools within our own and the neighbouring Partnership - sharing and in turn enhancing teaching practice, and undertaking group training to ensure deeper learning for each child.

Critical reflection on teaching practice and Staff training is aligned to the Teaching Standards. Performance Management plans, based on the National Teacher Standards, are in place for all staff and are reviewed twice each year.

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## Quality Area 5: Relationships with Children

Staff actively foster positive relationships with each child, greeting them by name on arrival, utilising verbal and non-verbal language, listening and attending when interacting with children, giving the children time. Longer, flexible periods of uninterrupted play allow educators ample quality time to interact with individual children thereby gaining deeper understandings of their existing knowledge, likes, skills and interests along with time to further support their interactions with each other and social skills.

A site culture of inclusivity is actively maintained. Educators are responsive to the needs, dignity and rights of every child - using positive and non-judgemental language to support each child to: meet their individual needs; foster a sense of belonging to the kindergarten community; to interact with others; and access the learning environment. One plans are created in partnership with families and service providers to maximise engagement with the learning environment.

Discussions and inquiry in formal and informal groupings facilitate targeted collaborative learning. Intentional teaching supports children to work collaboratively throughout much of their day with various groups of peers as they go about their self-selected learning across the day. Educators foster a community of learners by encourage and support children to share their existing knowledge, expertise and problem solving/thinking to enhance learning.

Embedded practice supports children to self-regulate their emotions and behaviours by responding to their needs, role modelling and involvement in restorative practice. Educators model positive social interactions and language and implement restorative practice to facilitate learning and negotiation of safe, respectful interactions and a sense of fair play. Implementation of the Child Protection Curriculum supports children to identify their feeling, express their needs, and discuss how their behaviour impacts on others. Educators support children to use 'say what you see/feel' strategies to support self-regulation and resolve conflict.



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## Quality Area 6: Collaborative Partnerships with Families and Communities

All staff are involved in the process of orientation with new families, highlighting the kindergarten's emergent program, values and strong focus on partnerships with parents. Families are invited to be part of program, to share interests and expertise (eg cooking, art, culture) with children. Flexibility of kindergarten service times and continuation of pre-entry to kindergarten have increased opportunities for parents to contribute to service decisions.

In line with our philosophy statement- staff work in partnership with families, recognising and valuing their place as children's first educators. We view parents and carers as experts regarding their child. Families are involved in decision making through surveys, Governing Council, ongoing questionnaires related to curriculum decision making including excursions. Daily conversations with parents share their child's learning. Displays, floorbooks and learning journals inform families, making the curriculum visible. Parents feedback is actively sought and acted upon in a timely fashion.

Transition to kindergarten has been extended beyond the traditional orientation visits. Transition to kindergarten is supported by weekly Playgroup sessions each term and Pre-Entry sessions across Term 4. Transitions to school are supported by visits to and from primary school teachers, and professional hand-over conversations. Statements of Learning are provided to parents/carers and with their permission to school. Transition to school is supported across the year by: regular visits to the school library and playground; interacting with Reception/Year 1 students (feature literacy/numeracy activities such as visiting the farm barn created by the school); and our Buddy Class program (fortnightly visits from year 5/6 students who engage and extend learning working with kindergarten children individually and in small groups while sharing their thinking, /problem solving and enthusiasm for learning through play).

Partnerships with families and service providers ensure equitable access and participation for children receiving preschool support - daily information discussions with parents; collaboration with external services providers; review meetings with key stakeholders (eg DECD speech pathologist and special educator).

The site participates in local community events (eg book week events at the Library). Local services visit our site and share their expertise with the children and staff (eg when available - Doctors, CFS and Police). CAYHS screenings are made available for each child. Walking excursions within our bush land and local community enable the children to engage with the expertise of local businesses.

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## Quality Area 7: Governance and Leadership

Our philosophy is at the core of our commitment to continuous improvement, underpinning our cycle of planning and everyday practice. Annually the staff team critically reflects on the Philosophy, shares their thinking with the kindergarten community, actively seeks input reflecting the educational values and expectations of our families, then seeks governing council ratification of the final collaborative draft.

Appropriate systems are in place to ensure the effective running and management of our quality site. Management is supported by an active Governing Council body and parent/carer community. Risk benefit assessments are conducted within Department for Education guidelines and updated as the need arises. Leadership are fully conversant with the Incident Management and Response System and report incidents within the guidelines. Confidentiality is vital, forms are kept in a confidential manner/secured overnight in an alarmed room, and notifications are locked in a cabinet. All policies and procedures are continually being updated and improved. Noticeboards, pigeon holes, emails and SMS messages are used to keep families informed in a timely fashion.

Defined roles and responsibilities are displayed on the staff notice board. These roles are negotiated and refined on a needs basis and through the Performance Development process. Overall staffing needs are reflected upon and discussed during daily reflections and staff meetings. Educators communicate and liaise throughout the day to ensure child to adult ratios are maintained and to maximise quality interactions for each child within the learning environment.

The staff team are committed to continuous improvement aligned to professional, departmental, legal and site priorities. We utilise our Quality Improvement Plan as a dynamic, living document to identify, plan and track progress against key identified site priorities. Critical reflections that inform this process include daily reflections, staff meetings and dedicated closure days. Child and parent voice are incorporated, and the Governing Council ratify plans and are provided with regular updates.

The staff team collaboratively provides an emergent curriculum that ensures the establishment of clear teaching and learning goals based on the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia and the Preschool Indicators of Numeracy and Literacy. The curriculum is reflective of the children's interests and needs, informed by daily reflections, observations, educator discussions and photos.

The Performance Development process is completed by staff twice each year, reflecting the site plan along with individual staff goals. Staff continually strive for improvement through Professional Development and engaging in further professional study. In-house professional development through staff meetings and shared readings is initiated and led by the Director. Professional development is aligned to site priorities and the specific learning needs of each year's cohort.

# Learning Improvement Plan



## Goal 1: Enhance children's oral language/communication skills, improving their capacity to engage with others and the learning environment.

### Challenge of practice:

If we implement a consistent, whole-site approach to giving children an active voice and supporting their communication, then we will improve children's ability to engage/collaborate more deeply with others and the learning environment, increasing individual outcomes across the curriculum.

Actions	NQS links	Timeline	Resources	Responsibility
Model language and encourage children to express themselves in a range of context for a range of purposes to enhance expressive and descriptive language.	1.1.1; 1.1.3; 1.2.1; 1.2.2; 5.1.1	Staff Commence T1 with cohort; Children's workshops T2	Existing staff practice. In-house staff workshops to moderate skills/interactions with children - key phrases/questioning	Director and teachers key driving and planning roles; all staff to be involved at each stage of planning and implementation.
Provide a range of resources that enable children to express meaning using visual arts, dance, drama and music while encouraging them to experiment with images and print to enhance their expression of ideas and meaning making.	1.1.1; 1.1.3; 1.2.1; 1.2.2; 3.2.2	Ongoing throughout the year Commencing T1	Diverse range of multi-media, music and drama resources.	Director and teachers key driving and planning roles; all staff to be involved at each stage of planning and implementation.
Support children to learn and identify elements of executive function to support communication through self-regulation, sequencing steps/process (Impulse control, flexible thinking and working memory).	1.1.1; 1.1.3; 1.2.1; 1.2.2; 5.1.1; 5.2.2	Introduction by T1 W6, begin going deeper T2	Staff training. Visuals (photos/images) created with children to support thinking processes and self-regulation.	Director and teachers key driving and planning roles; all staff to be involved at each stage of planning and implementation.
Promote a sense of community and model expressing ideas, negotiating roles and collaboration to enhance children's social skills language, expressing feelings and needs; sharing/turn-taking and awareness of fair play.	1.1.1; 1.1.3; 1.2.1; 1.2.2; 1.2.3; 5.1.1; 5.1.2; 5.2.2	Commence beginning T1 and continue across year	Child-Protection Curriculum and resources. Intentional teaching skills particularly during free play learning.	Director and teachers key driving and planning roles; all staff to be involved at each stage of planning and implementation.
Success criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Staff observations/data highlighting children's progress across the year.</li> <li>* Observed increase in children's use of descriptive language, sharing thinking/feeling with staff and peers.</li> <li>* Documented growth in children's representation of their ideas across the year.</li> <li>* Enhanced social skills - children collaborating, co-operating, turn-taking, negotiating roles and rules for engagement.</li> <li>* Children becoming more independent, problem solving and seeking help when they feel the need.</li> </ul>			

# Learning Improvement Plan



## Goal 2: Foster deeper learning through nature inquiry to strengthen children's connection with nature, sense of environmental responsibility and understanding of Aboriginal perspectives.

### Challenge of practice:

If we support and extend children's thinking and problem solving through inquiry then we will ensure deeper, meaningful learning through nature supporting respect and care for the environment.

Actions	NQS links	Timeline	Resources	Responsibility
Provide regular opportunities for all children to lead investigation into our bushland habitat then we will deepen their thinking, reasoning, hypothesising, respect for nature.	1.1.3; 1.2.3; 5.2.1	Commence T1 W4 Regular visits across the year	The Re-vegetation Block and Nature Blocks adjacent to the kindergarten, clip boards, pencils etc for children to document and share thinking	Staff team in collaboration with children and families.
When we explore and embed sustainable practices in daily routines with children then we develop their awareness of the impact of human activity on environments and the interdependence of living things.	3.2.3; 4.2.1; 6.1.1; 6.1.2	T1 recycling T2 onwards going deeper with families	Recycling books/resources, sustainable practices of families, collaboration with Mt Barker Council and other kindergartens.	T1 - staff team T2 - Director and staff team
If we enable children to care for our vegetable garden, we will support care for environments and healthy lifestyles including activity and nutrition.	6.1.1; 6.2.3	Ongoing each term aligning with planting/harvesting seasons.	Planting calendar, seeds, seedlings, gardening tools, mulch, family expertise, local nurseries, nutrition professional, books/resources.	Staff team in collaboration with children and families.
If we regularly engage children in connecting with our bushland, then we will increase their understanding of Aboriginal culture and connection to country.	1.1.1; 5.1.2; 6.2.3	Commence by T1 W4	Begin with existing resources, stories and songs (esp Thukeri). Peramangk Elder.	Director and Teachers  Director
Success criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Children demonstrating increasing knowledge, respect and care for natural and build environments.</li> <li>* Documented evidence through learning journals, wall displays, floor-books and daily reflections.</li> <li>* Children demonstrating increasing understandings and skills related to the process of inquiry-based learning.</li> </ul>			

# National Quality Framework responsibilities

NQS links	Task	Steps involved	Timeline	Responsibility	Resourcing	Completed
6.1.1; 6.1.2; 6.2.1; 6.2.2; 6.2.3; 7.1.1; 7.2.2	Increase parent involvement in all aspects of the curriculum and centre management. Provide families with a greater voice.	Parent friendly communication of what the curriculum is and the many ways parents can be involved.	By T1 W3	Director		
		Offer families formal opportunities to discuss their child's learning and needs in addition to the existing information informal chats.	T2 W1-3	Director and Teachers		
		Seek parent voice - ask their perception of involvement in the kindergarten and its curriculum then ask how they would like to be involved.	Ongoing from end T1	Director		
5.1.1; 6.1.1; 6.2.2; 6.2.3; 7.1.1	Promote the kindergarten and lift its profile in the community. Engage kindergarten families past and present along with the broader community in gather anecdotes, photos and other information in preparation for celebrating the kindergarten's 40th anniversary in 2021.	Initially engage current families.	From early-mid T2	Director and staff		
		Promote externally to reach those who have engaged with the kindergarten community in the past.	From early-mid T2	Director, Governing Council and Staff		
		Organise and implement an effective and respectful system of copying, storing (and returning where applicable) and sorting the information gathered.	From early-mid T2	Director and Staff		
3.2.2; 3.1.2; 6.1.1; 6.1.2; 6.2.3; 7.1.2	Following query from two parents - Investigate practical safety of front entrance gate - consider double gate system.	Discussion at Governing Council Meeting..	Raise at first formal GC meeting	Governing Council		
		Consultation with Facilities Manager and seeking quotes.	After first GC meeting	Director		
		If approved, work order to be raised.	When approved	Director		
3.1.1; 3.1.2; 7.1.2	General building inspection and longer term maintenance/repair plan to be completed with the Facilities Manager with particular focus on The external and internal roofing and the bathrooms (in particular flooring and cubicle dividers.	Site visit from Facilities Manager to be booked.	Meeting prior to end T2,	Director		
		Plan to be drawn up and investigated.	By end T3	Director and Facilities Manager		
		Follow up progress until all work completed.	Twice a year until complete	Director		