

CURRICULUM

The curriculum focuses on the development of the whole child; their academic, intellectual, social and emotional development by supporting them to be independent, curious, confident, reflective and caring learners.

By listening to, observing and documenting individual and group involvement, educators design learning environments that foster rich opportunities to deepen exploration and learning. Education is an ongoing process of learning, building on the child's current skills, knowledge and interests.

Children and families are supported and encouraged to be involved in the decision making process for their child's learning in partnership with educators and other professionals involved with the child.

The preschool uses a planning cycle for learning that involves educators collaboratively discussing observations and samples of children's learning. Educators then plan experiences that are relevant and meaningful to that child. By following children's interests and ideas, educators are able to maximise opportunities for children to develop their knowledge, dispositions, skills and abilities. This information along with family and child goals informs the next step of the learning program. The weekly program is displayed on the whiteboard in the parent area. The first newsletter of each term provides an overview of the terms learning.

The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia is the document used to inform our planning. It is a framework that allows us to support, stimulate, and structure children's learning in order to bring about a progression of development appropriate to individual children's needs and abilities. The framework is designed to promote key areas of learning for an integrated approach.

The Learning Outcomes include:

- Children have a strong sense of identity.
- Children are connected with and contribute to their world.
- Children have a strong sense of wellbeing.
- Children are confident and involved learners.
- Children are effective communicators.

INQUIRY

Children are continually learning about their world through exploring, testing and evaluating experiences, objects and interactions with living things and people. Inquiry develops children's sense of agency, enabling them to make choices and decisions that influence events and to have an impact on one's world (EYLF p.45).

Inquiry is a process of discovery driven by curiosity and enthusiasm. At Vale Park Preschool, the curriculum is scaffolded around inquiry questions that are co-constructed by educators listening and responding to children's voice. Unique opportunities for children to work together and inquire into specific concepts is provided during small and large group experiences. Specific small group projects are also facilitated during free play.

Children attending Vale Park Preschool engage in meaningful inquiry learning through hands-on experiences that support and develop reflection, problem solving and critical thinking skills daily.

STEM

Children are naturally curious about the world around them and therefore we use this curiosity to focus more deeply on science, technology, engineering, and maths (STEM) and to strengthen the dispositions and habits for learning.

By using a STEM lens educators capitalise on the science, technology, engineering and maths learning in what is already happening – with focus on asking insightful questions/wonderings to engage and motivate the children to investigate and learn more. Educators carefully select resources that enable children to explore STEM concepts through active participation in authentic experiences.

There is an increased focus on developing the children's communication and thinking skills (through them sharing their ideas and thoughts), their reasoning, critical thinking and problem solving with other children and adults.

Children and educators learn from and with each other. Children are also supported to use technology as a tool to extend their learning and as a way of expressing their thoughts and testing their theories.

A STEM approach to education presents children with real-world projects and challenges, encouraging children to solve problems and present their ideas. These projects and challenges promote the real life application of 21st century skills, such as critical-thinking and reasoning, collaboration, and creativity, necessary for learning now and in the future. STEM also provides opportunities for children to apply their literacy and numeracy skills in meaningful ways. These experiences inspire children's reasoning and learning over a long period of time.

Vale Park Preschool seeks to develop partnerships with families, businesses and the community to extend learning opportunities for children in creative and unique ways. If you are or know of someone who would like to work in a STEM partnership with us, please speak with an educator.

REGGIO EMILIA APPROACH

The Reggio Emilia principles influence our curriculum and we embrace a capable and confident view of the image of the child. The curriculum within this approach is co-constructed between educators, children and families.

Children's voice is central to our image of the child therefore educators listen and respond to the hundred languages of children and use these observations and dialogue to deepen the exploration and learning. From this dialogue, the environment, experiences and inquiry questions are established.

Educators strive to establish and maintain trusting relationships with children, where they encourage children to develop skills in problem solving, hypothesising, questioning, critical reflection and collaboration.

The Reggio Emilia approach values the indoor and outdoor environments as the third teacher. Both environments are therefore setup to enable individual children and groups of children to engage in experiences together. Open-ended experiences enabling children to follow their creative interests and use a wide variety of materials, tools and equipment are always available. Natural items, objects and plants are used in the indoor environment creating a natural link between the indoors and outdoors.

EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABILITY

Our aim is to build on the children's existing skills and knowledge of sustainable practices, through embedding values and behaviours that lead to a sustainable lifestyle. We do this with children by modelling and explicitly teaching sustainable practices such as; re-using materials, purchasing recycled products, using a separated bin system that correlates with the council bins, learning with children about small creatures, plants and the natural environment, using rainwater for sandpit play and plant watering where possible, having worm farms and a composting system for food scraps, and growing fruit, vegetables and locally native plants in the outdoor environment.

Families are encouraged to be involved through the donation of recyclable pieces of wood, plastic, paper, cardboard and other miscellaneous objects. We also encourage families to support our sustainable practices and make links between preschool and home.

KEEPING SAFE: CHILD PROTECTION CURRICULUM

At Vale Park Preschool we implement the Keeping Safe: Child Protection Curriculum. As we are a Department of Education and Child Development preschool, we are under obligation to implement this curriculum as a legal requirement under the Children's Protection Act (1993) and the Child Protection Policy (1998).

The specific aim of the curriculum is to help children learn to recognise abuse and develop ways of protecting themselves from abuse. Its wider focus covers rights, responsibilities, relationships and ethical behaviour. We implement the curriculum that has been designed for The Early Years Band: Ages 3 – 5, by using age appropriate language and resources. We also use intentional teaching approaches combined with teachable moments that may occur during play.

The curriculum has two major themes which form the basis of all teaching and learning in child protection:

Theme 1: We all have a right to be safe

Theme 2: We can help ourselves to be safe by talking to people we trust

The curriculum is broken down into four Focus Areas:

Focus Area 1: The right to be safe

Focus Area 2: Relationships

Focus Area 3: Recognising and reporting abuse

Focus Area 4: Protective strategies

Prior to commencing any Focus Areas throughout the year, we inform families via our newsletters. We communicate information about the Theme and Focus Area and provide ways in which families can support this learning and knowledge at home. If you have concerns or questions about this curriculum at any stage in the preschool year, please don't hesitate to speak with us.