# SECTION 1: CATHOLIC EARLY LEARNING CENTRE (CELC)

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1.0 CENTRE

1.1 PHILOSOPHY

“Our image of the child is that of being competent, intelligent, a co-constructor of knowledge and a researcher actively seeking to make meaning of the world, often in collaboration with others.”


At the Catholic Early Learning Centre (CELC) we believe that each child is a valuable and unique individual created by God. We value each child as an individual who can make choices about their own learning. We believe that children are theory builders and problem solvers, who learn best by making meaning of their world through play, relationships and experiences. We value children as social beings and recognise that they co-construct knowledge with peers, their families and our staff.

We value play as a learning process that enables each child to learn through concrete “hands on” experiences such as doing, creating, experimenting, predicting, imagining, achieving, investigating, and identifying strengths.

Learning through play is how children “organise and make sense of their social worlds” using innovative and creative activities as enriching learning experiences. Children will be encouraged to discover ‘self’ and feel safe to explore within the world around them. We will encourage children to have ownership of their learning, which will empower them and build a passion for knowledge. Children should feel a sense of belonging in their environment; we will nurture their being while celebrating their present and future and what they are becoming.

Our CELC aims to provide young children with opportunities to maximise their potential and develop a foundation for future success in learning. We work collaboratively with families in promoting children's learning by implementing the Early Years Learning Framework and applying best practice as reflective of the National Quality Framework.

We provide an enriching inclusive environment that recognises diversity, including culture and ability. We work in partnership with families, Catholic school leaders and Catholic parishes to promote Gospel values and traditions while respecting the individuality of families and children.

CELC educators work in collaborative partnerships with the school community, intervention services and families. The CELC staff members value all stakeholders’ knowledge and contributions by embedding trust and free communication in a reciprocal relationship that is respectful of one another by sharing insights and perspectives concerning each individual child.

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1 Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (2009), Belonging Being & Becoming, The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia, p. 6.

1.1.1 Document how your individual CELC brings to life CELC Philosophy

CELC Directors to append as part of policy documents.

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1.2 MISSION STATEMENT

In our ministry in Catholic Early Learning Centres, we strive, as a work of love, for the full human development of children, grounded in the teachings of Christ and at the service of society.

All staff members share in the evangelising mission of the Church, as they endeavour to bring culture and faith into harmony in their CELC and their communities. The Parish Priest, parents/carers, children and educators work in partnership to realise this mission.

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1.3 CELC AIMS

1.3.1 Educational Learning Aims

- Welcome all children and families into a learning community that is based on principles of The Early Years Learning Framework, Being, Belonging and Becoming, and the Influences of Reggio Emilia and is inclusive of other contemporary and traditional theories.

- Recognise that in developing secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships, educators will engage in positive interactions during children’s learning experiences and discoveries, supporting children’s development of sense of self and wellbeing.

- Nurture relationships by fostering positive social emotional attitudes and an awareness of the perspective of self and others.

- Establish and value a reciprocal partnership with families regarding educational expectations and attitudes which focus on knowledge of the child, trust of each other, open communication and respect to achieve the best possible learning outcomes for children.

- Encourage CELC educators to work in collaborative partnerships with professionals, including intervention support workers and school community leaders to establish a continuity of learning and effective transitions to formal schooling.

- Ensure that all children have equal access to rich and meaningful learning experiences.

- Encourage CELC educators to engage in professional development programs, work in partnership with colleagues, services, agencies and families to ensure children have the best opportunities to succeed regardless of barriers, inequities and diversity.

- Respect the diversity of families and children and the unique contribution each brings to enrich the learning environment.

- Motivate and inspire children to challenge themselves as individuals and as collaborative learners fostering a sense of competence in learning.

- Provide learning experiences based on the principles of the Early Years Learning Framework that promotes learning through play, and focuses on the following learning outcomes:
  - “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; and
  - Children are effective communicators.”

therefore, providing opportunities to achieve the best learning outcomes for children.

- Provide learning experiences for children to connect with and contribute to their world by becoming socially responsible and showing respect for the environment.

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3 Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (2009), Belonging Being & Becoming, The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia, p. 7
• Implement environmentally sustainable practices within the daily program and experiences for children.
• Value our role as educators by taking part in constant reflection, inquiries and investigations around our knowledge of how children learn in order to deepen our understandings and strengthen CELC practices.
• Engage in continuous reviews of the outcomes and elements of the Early Years Learning Framework, in order to achieve best learning outcomes for children.

1.3.2 Physical Environment Aims

The CELC will promote learning within and about the physical environment by:
• Providing an educational and safe environment.
• Creating learning environments that are dynamic, vibrant and flexible, which respond to the interests and abilities of each child.
• Providing environments that are welcoming, and foster exploration and experimentation through a wide range of materials.
• Providing a hygienic environment that reduces the spread of infectious diseases.
• Having access to outdoor learning spaces that are inclusive of natural elements to aid discovery and connection with nature.

Policy Links:
Section 3 Curriculum – Programming
Section 5 Health and Safety

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1.4 GOALS

CELC goals are based on the principles and practices of the Early Years Learning Framework that places the child at the centre of the learning community.

Educators are supported to achieve these goals through professional development opportunities.

1.4.1 Learning Outcomes

In relation to learning outcomes for children the CELC aims to assist children to:

• Gain ownership of their learning that will empower a passion for knowledge.
• Experience innovative and creative learning opportunities that support exploration, experimentation and discoveries.
• Build and acquire a sense of belonging and safety in the CELC environment.
• Reach their full potential and develop foundations for future success in learning.
• Engage with and celebrate evangelisation and the teachings of Christ.
• Become theory builders and problem solvers who actively contribute to the learning environment.
• Acquire self-help skills that are supported by educators in preparation for the transition to school.

1.4.2 Participation and Collaborative Relationships with Families

Families are seen as the child’s first teacher and are a valuable resource for the development of the child. As valuable partners in education, the CELC will work collaboratively with families to:

• Develop a sense of community where family members feel welcomed to participate in the learning environment.
• Engage in a collaborative relationship with families with regard to the learning outcomes explored.
• Promote family participation as it is seen essential in forming strong family-CELC partnerships.

1.4.3 Learning Environments

The CELC learning environment is influenced by Reggio Emilia philosophy and is inclusive of other contemporary and traditional theories and practices. In our learning space this means that in relation to learning environments:

• Children’s thoughts, ideas and work will be evident through the learning environment.
• The CELC will be kept safe and clean.
• The environment of the CELC will act as the third teacher in providing materials and resources to support learning.6
• The environment is set up with enough provocation to fuel

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the children’s worlds and minds.\(^7\)
- The children will be exposed to natural environments that support and encourage the pursuit of their interests.

### 1.4.4 Teaching practices

CELC educators will:
- Recognise that children come to the CELC with prior knowledge and experiences influenced by connection to family and community.
- Recognise that each child is unique having their own personalities, learning styles and creativities.
- Recognise the role of the educator as a researcher.
- Assist children to recognise the uniqueness of others.
- Respond to and build on the strengths, curiosities and capacities of all children.
- Facilitate, guide and co-construct knowledge with children within a responsive learning environment.
- Implement play based learning and teaching experiences that include opportunities for child initiated exploration and intentional teaching experiences.\(^8\)
- Recognise the children at the CELC as being, belonging and becoming as a person, as a member of their family, and as a member of the community.\(^8\)
- Respect the many cultures represented in the CELC and celebrate this diversity in the learning environment.\(^8\)
- Build foundations and partnerships that prepare children for their transition to school.

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**Policy Link:**

- **Section 3** Curriculum – Programming
- **Section 5** Health and Safety Policies and Procedures

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\(^8\) Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (2009), *Belonging Being & Becoming, The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia*, p. 7
1.5 CODE OF ETHICS

1.5.1 Aim

All children regardless of gender, diversity, religion or ability are treated equally and respectfully. The health and safety of children remains paramount for all staff involved in the education and care of children attending Catholic Early Learning Centres (CELC’s) in the Diocese of Parramatta.

1.5.2 Rationale

The United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (CROC)\(^9\) is an international agreed set of standards and principles regarding how children should be treated and what minimum human rights they should be entitled. Early Childhood Australia (ECA) has used the CROC principles to inform an Australian code of ethical behaviour with regard to children.

1.5.3 Implementation

Educators are required to have a good understanding and work in accordance with the Early Childhood Australia Code of Ethics, which is on display.

Professional reflection helps educators in implementation of the code of ethics.

1.5.4 Early Childhood Australia Code of Ethics

The following is an extract of the Early Childhood Australia Code of Ethics. This framework will guide all aspects of an educator’s behaviour while working with children and families attending the Catholic Early Learning Centre. The Code of Ethics forms an important part of how educators collaborate with all CELC stakeholders in respectful and ethical ways.\(^{10}\)

“This Code is not intended to, and could not possibly provide easy answers, formulae, or prescriptive solutions for the complex issues early childhood professionals face in their work. As an aspirational document it does provide a basis for critical reflection, a guide for professional behaviour, and principles to inform individual and collective decision-making.

The following values and processes are considered central to the Code of Ethics:

- respect
- democracy
- honesty
- integrity
- justice
- courage
- inclusivity
- social and cultural responsiveness
- education

In this Code of Ethics the protection and wellbeing of children is paramount and therefore speaking out or taking action in the presence of unethical practice is an essential professional responsibility.


\(^{10}\) National Quality Standard 4.2
CELC staff will:

1.5.4.1 In relation to children

- Act in the best interests of all children.
- Respect the rights of children as enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1991) and commit to advocating for these rights.
- Recognise children as active citizens participating in different communities such as family, children’s services and schools.
- Work with children to help them understand that they are global citizens with shared responsibilities to the environment and humanity.
- Respect the special relationship between children and their families and incorporate this perspective in all my interactions with children.
- Create and maintain safe, healthy environments, spaces and places which enhance children's learning, development, engagement, initiative, self-worth and dignity and show respect for their contributions.
- Work to ensure children and families with additional needs can exercise their rights.
- Acknowledge the uniqueness and potential of all children, in recognition that enjoying their childhood without undue pressure is important.
- Acknowledge the holistic nature of children’s learning and the significance of children’s cultural and linguistic identities.
- Work to ensure children are not discriminated against on the basis of gender, age, ability, economic status, family structure, lifestyle, ethnicity, religion, language, culture, or national origin.
- Acknowledge children as competent learners, and build active communities of engagement and inquiry.
- Honour children’s right to play, as both a process and context for learning.

1.5.4.2 In relation to families

- Listen to and learn from families, in order to acknowledge and build upon their strengths and competencies, and support them in their role of nurturing children.
- Assist each family to develop a sense of belonging and inclusion.
- Develop positive relationships based on mutual trust and open communication.
- Develop partnerships with families and engage in shared decision making where appropriate.
- Acknowledge the rights of families to make decisions about their children.
- Respect the uniqueness of each family and strive to learn about their culture, structure, lifestyle, customs, language, beliefs and kinship systems.
• Develop shared planning, monitoring and assessment practices for children’s learning and communicate this in ways that families understand.
• Acknowledge that each family is affected by the community contexts in which they engage.
• Be sensitive to the vulnerabilities of children and families and respond in ways that empower and maintain the dignity of all children and families.
• Maintain confidentiality and respect the right of the family privacy.

1.5.4.3 In relation to colleagues

• Encourage my colleagues to adopt and act in accordance with this Code, and take action in the presence of unethical behaviours.
• Build collaborative relationships based on trust, respect and honesty.
• Acknowledge and support the personal strengths, professional experience and diversity which my colleagues bring to their work.
• Make every effort to use constructive methods to manage differences of opinion in the spirit of collegiality.
• Share and build knowledge, experiences and resources with my colleagues.
• Collaborate with my colleagues to generate a culture of continual reflection and renewal of high quality practices in early childhood.

1.5.4.4 In relation to communities

• Learn about the communities that I work within and enact curriculum programs which are responsive to those contexts and community priorities.
• Connect with people, services and agencies within the communities that support children and families.
• Promote shared aspirations amongst communities in order to enhance children’s health and wellbeing.
• Advocate for the development and implementation of laws and policies that promote child-friendly communities and work to change those that work against child and family wellbeing.
• Utilise knowledge and research to advocate for universal access to a range of high-quality early childhood programs for all children.
• Work to promote community understanding of how children learn so that appropriate systems of assessment and reporting are used to benefit children.
1.5.4.5 In relation to trainees / work experience students

- Afford professional opportunities and resources for students to demonstrate their competencies.
- Acknowledge and support the personal strengths, professional knowledge, diversity and experience which students bring to the learning environment.
- Model high-quality professional practices.
- Know the requirements of the students’ individual institutions and communicate openly with the representatives of that institution.
- Provide ongoing constructive feedback and assessment that is fair and equitable.
- Implement strategies that will empower students to make positive contributions to the workplace.
- Maintain confidentiality in relation to students.

1.5.4.6 In relation to my employer

- Support workplace policies, standards and practices that are fair, non-discriminatory and are in the best interest of children and families.
- Promote and support ongoing professional development within my work team.
- Adhere to lawful policies and procedures and when there is conflict, attempt to effect change through constructive action within the organisation or seek change through appropriate procedures.

1.5.4.7 In relation to myself as a professional

- Base my work on contemporary perspectives on research, theory, content knowledge, high quality early childhood practices and my understandings of the children and families with whom I work.
- Regard myself as a learner who undertakes reflection, critical self-study, continuing professional development and engages with contemporary theory and practice.
- Seek and build collaborative professional relationships.
- Acknowledge the power dimensions within professional relationships.
- Act in ways that advance the interests and standing of my profession.
- Work within the limits of my professional role and avoid misrepresentation of my professional competence and qualifications.
- Mentor other early childhood professionals and students.
- Advocate in relation to issues that impact on my profession and on young children and their families.
- Encourage qualities and practices of leadership within the early childhood profession.
1.5.4.8 In relation to the conduct of research

- Recognise that research includes my routine documentation and investigations of children's learning and development, as well as more formal research projects undertaken with and by external bodies.
- Be responsive to children's participation in research, negotiating their involvement and taking account of matters such as safety, fatigue, privacy and their interest.
- Support research to strengthen and expand the knowledge base of early childhood, and where possible, initiate, contribute to, facilitate and disseminate such research.
- Make every effort to understand the purpose and value of proposed research projects and make informed decisions as to the participation of myself, colleagues, children, families and communities.
- Ensure research in which I am involved meets standard ethical procedures including informed consent, opportunity to withdraw and confidentiality.
- Ensure that images of children and other data are only collected with informed consent and are stored and utilised according to legislative and policy requirements.
- Represent the findings of all research accurately.\textsuperscript{11}

1.6 COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN EDUCATORS

The Catholic Early Learning Centres in the Diocese of Parramatta actively encourage and support all staff to work together to ensure the best possible educational outcomes for the children and families using these services.

Staff use the Code Of Ethics from Early Childhood Australia and the pedagogical principles and practices outlined in *Belonging, Being & Becoming, The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia* to inform and guide how they will collaborate, mentor, guide, respect and build strong and supportive professional partnerships.

Educators are supported to build collaborative relationships through team building exercises and professional development. When a breakdown in communication occurs, refer to 6.5 Staff Grievance Policy if extra support is required.

This collaborative approach is essential in creating and embedding trust and free communication in a reciprocal relationship that is respectful of one another by sharing insights and perspectives concerning each individual child.

Links with:

- Section 1 Catholic Early Learning Centre (CELC)
- Section 3 Curriculum – Programming
- Section 5 Health and Safety
- Section 6 Staffing

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1.7 GROUPING OF CHILDREN

1.7.1 Aim

Grouping of children aims to support social and educational relationships that maximises the children’s potential.

1.7.2 Rationale

The *Education and Care Services National Regulation* (2011) requires that children be grouped in ways that provide opportunities to “interact and develop positive relationships with each other, with staff and volunteers”\(^\text{12}\).

No maximum group size has been specified so educators are required to consider the how, when, size and composition of groups to facilitate the best educational outcomes for all children.

The CELCs consider the best interests of the children at all times including arrival and departure, indoor and outdoor activities, individual, small and larger group activities and transitions. The premise of the best interests of the child underpins all educator interactions with children and families.

CELC group sizes are designed to ensure that they contribute to building caring relationships, shared experiences, promotion of learning and development, play-based exploration and discovery and enhance the safety and emotional well-being of the children\(^\text{13}\).

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\(^{12}\) *Education and Care Services National Regulations* (2011) (NSW), Clause 156, p.184  
1.8 QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN

1.8.1 Aim

A clear and transparent Quality Improvement Plan is developed and reviewed annually (or more frequently as required) and identifies the areas the Catholic Early Learning Centre wants to improve and/or enhance as guided by the National Quality Standard (NQS). This process will contribute to the ongoing development and reflection of the CELC and further develop the high quality educational program and service for children and their families.

CELC educators will use reflections and evaluations of the program to assess and rate the CELC against the NQS; this will directly inform the development and review of the Quality Improvement Plan.

Communicate with families about the areas the CELC are working to improve/enhance and seek their contribution.

1.8.2 Rationale

The National Quality Framework (NQF) requires that all children’s services including CELC’s (preschools) assess the quality of the education and care they provide to the children and families using their services. Children’s services will assess and rate themselves against seven NQS areas. The areas the service wants to improve or enhance will form the basis of the CELC’s’ Quality Improvement Plan.

The Quality Improvement Plan is an important document that sets out what the CELCs are doing well, the areas they want to improve and enhance and aspirational goals for the services. The underpinning principles of the Quality Improvement Plan is to reflection on the current practice that drive enhanced high quality education and care outcomes for children and families.

1.8.3 What needs to be included in the Quality Improvement Plan?

Each CELC (preschool) must have a Quality Improvement Plan that:

- includes a self-assessment of the CELC against the NQS;
- identifies the areas of improvement/enhancement that may be required; and
- includes a “statement of the philosophy of the service”.

The Quality Improvement Plan must be reviewed at least annually and provided to the NSW regulatory authority on request. Currently the NSW regulatory authority is NSW Education and Care Directorate – NSW Department of Education and Communities.

1.8.4 Who will be involved and how the Quality Improvement Plan will be developed

All stakeholders involved in the CELC should be consulted to help develop the Quality Improvement Plan. Our stakeholders include:

- Children and their families;
- CELC Director and staff;
- Catholic Education Office Diocese of Parramatta management and professional offices;

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15 Education and Care Services National Regulations (2011) (NSW), Clause 55 (i) (c), p. 45.
We will consult with our stakeholders through:

- meetings;
- newsletters;
- parent survey’s;
- CELC parent/carer Committee (if applicable);
- parent-carer/educator meeting;
- providing draft Quality Improvement Plans for comment and feedback; and
- other forms of regular communication.

1.8.5 What needs to be Covered in the Quality Improvement Plan?

The Quality Improvement Plan needs to cover the following areas:

- The element the children’s service wants to focus on.
- Why the service has selected this element.
- What the outcome will be by focusing on this element.
- What priority will be given to this work – high, medium, low?
- What are the steps to be taken to achieve the desired outcome?
- How will we know if we have achieved the desired outcome?
- What is our timeframe?
- What progress have we made towards achieving this outcome?

The Quality Improvement Plan template provided by Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) will be used by the CELCs.  

Links with:

Section 1 Catholic Early Learning Centre (CELC)
Section 2 Administration and Enrolment
Section 3 Curriculum – Programming
Section 6 Staffing

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1.9 EDUCATIONAL (PEDAGOGICAL) LEADER

1.9.1 Aim

The approved provider appoints an Educational (Pedagogical) Leader for each CELC. The Educational Leader is responsible for leading the development and implementation of educational programs.

1.9.2 Rationale

Regulatory requirements require that the Approved Provider of each children’s service appoint a “suitably qualified and experienced educator to lead the development and implementation of educational programs at the service” 17.

The CELC community strives to achieve excellence in educational programs by employing experienced qualified educators that inspire, motivate and lead CELC staff to implement and apply best pedagogy practice.

1.9.3 Appointing the Educational (Pedagogical) Leader

For the Educational Leader role, the National Authority is yet to specify the ‘qualification for suitably qualified persons’ under Regulation 118. The Regulations prescribe that a “suitably qualified and experienced educator, coordinator or other individual” must be designated in writing “as educational leader at the service to lead the development and implementation of educational programs in the service”. 17

The Catholic Education Office policy is to appoint the CELC Director, holding a university qualification in Early Childhood education, as the Educational Leader at the respective service.

This appointment will be in writing and will be available in the CELC staff records and on the parent/carer and staff notice boards.

The authorised Delegate of the Approved Provider and the Catholic Education Office Diocese of Parramatta management has appointed CELC Curriculum advisors who guide and mentor all the CELC Directors in their planning and reflection of the educational program.

Links with:
Section 1 Catholic Early Learning Centre (CELC)
Section 3 Curriculum – Programming

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17 Education and Care Services National Regulations (2011) (NSW), Clause 118, p. 69.
1.10 DETERMINING THE RESPONSIBLE PERSON

1.10.1 Aim

Each CELC will have a person on the premises who is in charge all hours of service operations.

1.10.2 Rationale

The Regulations require that whenever a children’s service is open there will be one person on the premises at all times who is in charge; this person is referred to as the “responsible person”.

1.10.3 Advising who the Responsible Person is

The approved provider appoints the Director of each CELC as the nominated supervisor.

The Director of the CELC is delegated as the responsible person when they are on the premises and has delegation to nominate a suitably qualified and experienced educator to be the responsible person in their absence.

The name and position of the Responsible Person will be displayed at the CELC.

The staffing records at the CELC will reflect the responsible person on the premises at all times.

Links with:

Section 1 Catholic Early Learning Centres (CELC)
Section 2 Administration and Enrolment
Section 3 Curriculum - Programming
Section 4 Food and Nutrition
Section 5 Health and Safety
Section 6 Staffing
Section 7 Governance and Stewardship

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A ‘responsible person’ is the approved provider, nominated supervisor or certified supervisors. *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010, Clause 162 (1)(a-c)*