

MANCHESTER PRESCHOOL

GENDER EQUITY POLICY

PURPOSE

Manchester Preschool recognises that gender equity creates equitable and enriching lives for all children. We recognise that research shows the strongest predictor of violence against women is unequal power between men and women and that when we address gender inequality we can prevent violence and improve women's equal participation in all aspects of life. Gender inequality has the potential to impact negatively on the safety, education, employment, family lives and opportunities of all children and adults within our centre.

By the time children enrol at our centre they have already formed an understanding of what it means to be the 'right' girl or the 'right' boy and the 'right' gender roles. Many aspects of their lives are already gender marked and this policy aims to ensure that Manchester Preschool creates a learning environment that challenges the constraints and inequities that gender stereotypes place on all children.

POLICY STATEMENT

1. VALUES

Manchester Preschool recognises that gender inequality is both individual and structural, meaning that it is not only a result of individual perspectives but also the mind-set of systems, policies and processes in the community. We also recognise that by addressing gender inequality we are constructively working towards the prevention and reduction rates of violence against women. We know that if children are constrained by set gender roles they are limited in their beliefs of what they can do and what is available to them in their immediate and future lives.

Manchester Preschool is committed to developing the full potential of all children regardless of their gender. It affirms that female and male children are treated equitably with regard to ability, personality and behaviour and affirms the right of all children to:

- Develop without the limitations of stereotypes based on gender
- Develop a sense of pride in oneself and ones accomplishments, enhancing feelings of positive self-esteem and self-worth
- Develop respect for each other's rights and responsibilities

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to the Approved Provider (the Committee of Management), and all staff members, students on placement, volunteers, visitors, parents/guardians, children and others attending any program or activity at Manchester Preschool.

3. BACKGROUND AND LEGISLATION

By the time children are enrolled at our service they have already been exposed to factors that influence their attitudes and behaviours regarding gender. Influences regarding gender can often be stereotypical and limiting definitions of what boys and girls can and should be doing. This policy has been developed because staff and committee of management are aware of the important role we can perform in challenging the constraints and inequities that gender stereotypes place on all children.

Manchester Preschool aims for gender equity to be a part of everyday practice and aims to educate those not familiar with the impacts. We will use a gender lens when planning, making decisions, analysing and having discussions with all who attend the service. We know that applying a gender lens will enable us to address the inequalities arising from the different roles women and men, the

unequal power relationships between them, and the consequences of these inequalities on their lives, health and wellbeing. A gender lens is used to identify hidden assumptions which may allow inequality to continue and contribute to discrimination. Using a gender lens enables us to consider the different needs and circumstances of people of all genders.

LEGISLATION

- Sex Discrimination Act 1984
- Equal Opportunity Act 2010
- Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework
- National Quality Framework
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989
- Early Childhood Australia 2005 Code of Ethics
- Children's Services Regulations 1998
- Children's Services Act 1996
- Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014
- Education and Care Service National Law Act 2010
- Education and Care Service's National Regulations
- Safe and Strong – Victoria's Gender Equity Strategy

4. DEFINITIONS

Gender - refers to the socially learnt roles, behaviours, activities and attributes that any given society considers appropriate for men and women. Gender defines masculinity and femininity.

Gender equity - is the process of being fair to women and men.

Gender equity - acknowledges that women and men have different access to resources, power, responsibilities and life experiences and different strategies are often necessary to address disadvantages and achieve equal outcomes of women and men, boys and girls.

Gender equality - is the outcome reached through gender equity. It is the equal valuing by the society of the similarities and differences between women and men, and the varying roles that they play.

Gender inequality - is the unequal distribution of power, resources, opportunity, and value afforded to men and women in society due to prevailing gendered norms and structures.

Gender lens – allows for focus on how actions may or may not benefit women and men in different ways and ensures supporting equity between genders. Looking through a gender lens reveals the ways in which content and approaches are gendered, informed, shaped by or biased towards male or female perspectives or experiences.

Gender roles - are the functions and responsibilities expected to be fulfilled by women and men, girls and boys in a given society.

Gendered norms - consist of a set of dominant beliefs and rules of conduct, which are determined by a society or social group in relation to the types of roles, interests, behaviours and contributions expected from boys and girls, men and women.

Gender Sensitive - a gender sensitive approach is one that takes gender into account, acknowledging the different experiences, expectations, pressures, inequalities, and needs of women, men, transgender and intersex people. *Women's Health In the North: Gender Analysis Overview 2016*.

Gender transformative – a gender transformative policy and practice goes further, examining, challenging and ultimately transforming structures, norms and behaviours that reinforce gender

inequality, and strengthens those that support gender equality. *Women's Health In the North: Gender Analysis Overview 2016*.

Sex - refers to biological and physiological differences between females and males.

Stereotype - refers to a widely held but fixed and oversimplified image or idea of a particular type of person or thing.

Sexism - refers to gender discrimination. It is prejudice or discrimination based on a person's sex or gender.

Violence against women - is defined as 'any act of gender based violence that causes or could cause physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of harm or coercion, in public or in private life' (Council of Australian Governments, 2011; United Nations General Assembly, 1993).

Source: *The above definitions are sourced from Our Watch (2015) unless otherwise stated.*

5. STRATEGIES

To support the intent of this policy, Manchester Preschool will endeavour to:

- Ensure that both boys and girls are equally encouraged to participate in all activities with due consideration for individual needs and interests. For example, encourage both girls and boys to use the home corner, outdoor play equipment and toys such as cars and dolls.
- Encourage non-sexist behaviour by children and staff. For example, if a child behaves in a sexist manner, a staff member takes action to educate them about other modes of behaviour.
- Purchase resources and materials for staff use that promote gender equity and counter sexist and violence supportive attitudes, and supply staff development programs focused around issues of gender equity, sexism and education.
- Encourage all children to express emotions and display affection. For example, it is alright for boys to cry or need a hug, or for girls to express emotions in an overtly or physical manner like pounding the playdough when angry.
- Ensure that all language used within the centre, both verbal and written, is gender inclusive.
- Encourage use of materials which portray women and men in roles, situations and jobs which are not stereotyped. For example, borrowing and purchasing children's literature, posters and toys which reflect this.
- Select resources where girls and boys are both seen as initiators and nurturers. For example, borrowing and purchasing children's literature, posters and toys.
- Ensure that both girls and boys equally share staff time, indoor/outdoor playing space and equipment, taking into account individual needs and interests.
- Encourage the employment of both female and male staff and ensure that tasks carried out by staff are not related to gender.
- Encourage educational or information opportunities that further the aims of this policy. For example, hold parent information nights on topics related to gender equity and challenging gender stereotypes.

6. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Management is responsible for:

- The development, implementation and review of and maintenance of the policy within the service
- Providing families with information about the importance of a gender equity approach in achieving positive outcomes for all children
- Providing information about the service's gender equity work in relevant community languages as required
- Considering barriers to participation in service programs and activities, and developing strategies to overcome these
- Ensuring that staff have access to appropriate and accredited professional development activities that promote a positive understanding of gender equity, and develop skills to assist them in implementing this policy

- Providing support and guidance to educators/staff
- Ensuring that educators and all staff are aware of the service's expectations regarding positive, respectful and appropriate behaviour when working with children and families
- Ensuring that any behaviour or circumstances that may constitute discrimination or prejudice are dealt with in an appropriate manner

Staff are responsible for:

- The day-to-day implementation of the gender equity policy
- Being aware of the service's expectations regarding positive, respectful and appropriate behaviour when working with children and families
- Developing and delivering an educational program that is reflective of the service's values, beliefs and philosophy, and embraces the principles of fairness, equity, diversity and inclusion
- Ensuring that the program provides opportunities for all children to participate and interact with one another, irrespective of gender
- Undertaking appropriate professional development on issues about gender equity
- Understanding, respecting and working with how different cultural child-rearing and social practices may view gender roles
- Using family-centred practice and working collaboratively with staff, parents/carers, specialist services and other professionals to implement a gender equity approach at the service.
- Providing opportunities for families to contribute to the gender equity program
- Notifying management or appropriate staff of any behaviour or circumstances that may constitute discrimination or prejudice
- Critically reflecting on practice to ensure that interactions and programs embrace a gender equitable approach in which children and families feel valued and respected, and that their contributions are welcomed
- Incorporating a gender lens across their reflective practice and observations.

7. COMMUNICATIONS

Manchester Preschool is committed to open communication between all relevant parties, staff, committee of management, parents/carers and children about our gender equity work. In order to reach all parents this documentation will be translated into relevant community languages.

Manchester Preschool will endeavour to ensure any changes and updates relating to our gender equity work are widely communicated using multiple platforms which may include:

- Articles in the centre newsletter
- Notices on the centre board
- Emails to staff and parents/carers
- Letters and notices to parents/carers

8. RELATED POLICIES

Child Safe Environment Policy

Code of Conduct Policy

Complaints and Grievances Policy

Curriculum Development Policy

Enrolment and Orientation Policy

Excursions and Service Events Policy

Fees Policy

Interactions with Children Policy

Nutrition and Active Play Policy

Privacy and Confidentiality Policy

9. EVALUATION

In order to assess whether the values and purposes of the policy have been achieved, the Committee of Management will:

- regularly seek feedback from everyone affected by the policy regarding its effectiveness
- monitor the implementation, compliance, complaints and incidents in relation to this policy
- keep the policy up to date with current legislation, research, policy and best practice where applicable
- revise the policy and procedures as part of the service's policy review cycle, or as required
- notify staff and committee members at least 14 days before making any changes to this policy or its procedures.

9. SOURCES

Darebin City Council - Creating Gender Equity in the Early Years project, visit www.darebin.vic.gov.au/geey

City of Monash, Promoting Gender Equality and Challenging Gender Stereotypes Children's Picture Books:

<http://www.monash.vic.gov.au/files/assets/public/our-services/violence-against-women/children-books-promoting-gender-equality-challenging-gender-stereotypes-booklist.pdf>

Council of Australian Governments, 2001, The National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010 – 2022:

<https://www.dss.gov.au/women/programsservices/reducing-violence/the-national-plan-to-reduce-violence-against-women-and-their-children-2010-2022>

Early Childhood Australia, The Early Years Learning Framework Professional Learning Program, Thinking About Practice: working with the early years learning framework:

http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/nqsplp/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/EYLFPLP_Thinking_about_practice_Planner_Screen.pdf

Faragher, J., MacNaughton, G. 1990. Working with young children. Guidelines for good practice. Collingwood: Tafe Publications

Fair's Fair: How to Tackle Bias in Education & Care Services, Lisa Bryant & Red Ruby Scarlet, MultiVerse Publishing Australia

Lisen C. Roberts and Heather T. Hill, Children's Books that Break Gender Role Stereotypes:

http://www.whenigrowupproject.com/teaching_tips/Books4Children.pdf

MacNaughton, G. 2000. Rethinking gender in early childhood education. Sydney: Allen & Unwin.

No Limitations, Breaking Down Gender Stereotypes in the Early Years, Women's Health East, Manningham City Council, 2017

https://whe.org.au/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2017/11/No-limitations-guide_FINAL.pdf

Our Watch, Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS) and VicHealth 2015, Change the story: a shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia, Our Watch, Melbourne, Australia.

Outside School Hours Care Quality Assurance, Equity for Children and Families:

http://ncac.acecqa.gov.au/educator-resources/factsheets/oshcqa_factsheet_8.pdf

Playing fair – gender equity in childcare, Extract from Putting Children First, the magazine of the National Childcare Accreditation Council (NCAC):

<http://www.partnersinprevention.org.au/wp-content/uploads/Playing-fair—genderequity-in-child-care.pdf>

Rainbow Families Council, How children play: challenging myths and stereotypes:

https://www.glhv.org.au/sites/default/files/How_children_play.pdf

Royal Commission into Family Violence 2016, Volume VI: Report and recommendations:

<http://www.rcfv.com.au/MediaLibraries/RCFamilyViolence/Reports/Final/RCFV-VolVI.pdf>

Victorian Government 2016, Gender and Diversity lens for health and human services, Victorian Women’s Health and Wellbeing Strategy, Stage Two: 2006 – 2010

Victorian Government 2016. Respectful Relationships in Early Childhood, Department of Education and Training: <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/health/>

Women’s Health In the North 2016, Gender Analysis Overview: <http://www.whin.org.au/>

10. AUTHORISATION AND REVIEW

This policy was adopted by the Approved Provider of Manchester Preschool on 17/03/2021 and is reviewed annually. Please refer to Policy Review Table for review dates and amendments.