

GENDER EQUITY POLICY

PURPOSE

J.S. Grey Kindergarten recognises that gender inequality has the potential to limit and impact negatively on the safety, education, employment, family lives and opportunities of staff and children, in the immediate and long term. The purpose of this policy is to increase knowledge and understanding about gender equity within our environment by being fair and promoting equal experiences for everyone. Gender equity acknowledges that females and males, boys and girls traditionally have different access to resources, power, responsibilities and life experiences. Through this policy, J.S. Grey Kindergarten aims to create the foundations for a learning environment that is respectful, equitable, and that promotes positive gender norms without the limitations of gender stereotypes.

POLICY STATEMENT

1. VALUES

J.S. Grey Kindergarten recognises that gender inequality is both structural and individual; this means it is not only the result of individual attitudes and actions, but also of biases in structures, systems, policies and processes throughout our community. J.S. Grey Kindergarten recognises that our centre is a vital space in our community to promote gender equality. Every policy, practice and activity has the potential to reinforce or challenge gender stereotypes and gendered inequality.

J.S. Grey Kindergarten is committed to developing the full potential of all children irrespective of gender. It affirms that female, male, bigender, transgender and agender children are treated equitably with regard to ability, personality and behaviour. It further affirms the right of all children to:

- Develop without the limitations of stereotypes based on gender
- Develop a sense of pride in oneself and one's 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 J.S. Grey Kindergarten, persons within management or control, nominated supervisors, persons in day to day charge, educators, staff, students on placement, volunteers, parents/guardians, children and others attending the programs and activities of J.S. Grey Kindergarten.

BACKGROUND AND LEGISLATION

3. BACKGROUND

Children are exposed to many factors which influence their attitudes, behaviours and aspirations. One of these factors is gender. By the age of four children have already formed an understanding of what it means to be a woman or a man in today's society.

Stereotypical ideas about gender provide a limiting and narrow definition of what girls and boys can and should be doing. This policy has been developed because at J.S Grey Kindergarten we are aware of the important role we can play in challenging the constraints and inequities that gender stereotypes place on all children.

Ultimately J.S. Grey Kindergarten aims for gender equity to become part of everyday practice. Using specific gender lens tools or resources will be useful in supporting this process. Applying a gender lens when analysing, planning, and making decisions means carefully and deliberately examining all the implications of our work in terms of gender.

Working with a gender lens can inform actions to address inequalities arising from the different roles of women and men (boys and girls), the unequal power relationships between them, and the consequences of these inequalities on their lives, health and wellbeing. A gender lens is designed to identify:

- hidden assumptions and values which may sustain inequality and contribute to discrimination
- the possible consequences and impacts of initiatives
- service gaps and research in areas which require further work.

A program or service that has used a gender lens is one that considers the different needs and circumstances of people of all genders. (Victorian Government; Women's Health In the North).

4. LEGISLATION

- *Sex Discrimination Act 1984*
- *Equal Opportunity Act 2010*
- *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*
- Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework
- National Quality Framework
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)
- *Early Childhood Australia (ECA) (2005) The Code of Ethics*
- *Children's Services Regulations 1998*
- *Children's Services Act 1996*
- *Information Privacy Act 2000*
- *Education and Care Service National Law Act 2010*
- *Education and Care Services National Regulations*
- Safe and Strong – Victoria's Gender Equality Strategy

5. DEFINITIONS

Agender: Not having a gender or identifying with a gender. May describe themselves as being gender neutral or genderless.

Bigender: A person or child who fluctuates between traditionally "male" and "female"

gender-based behaviours and identities.

Cisgender: A person or child whose gender identity and biological sex assigned at birth are the same. For example a baby born as a male grows to express their identity as male.

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: the process of being fair to women and men while also acknowledging that women and men have different access to resources, power, responsibilities and life experiences. Different strategies are often necessary to address disadvantages and achieve equal outcomes for women and men, boys and girls.

Gender equality: 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 Fluid: A mix of boy and girl. A person or child who is gender fluid may always feel like a combination of the two traditional genders but may feel more male some days and more female other days.

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

Gender roles: 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.

Transgender: A person or child who lives as a member of a gender other than that expected of them based on the sex assigned at birth. ie: a woman who was assigned the sex of male when she was born.

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) and Young Scot (2021) unless otherwise stated.*

6. STRATEGIES

To support the intent of this policy, J.S Grey Kindergarten 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 playing equipment and traditionally gendered 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 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 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.

7. SOURCES AND RELATED

POLICIES 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

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.

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.qlhv.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/>

Young Scot. *Gender Identity Terms 2021*:

<https://young.scot/get-informed/national/gender-identity-terms>

Service 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*
- *Staffing Policy*

PROCEDURES

The Approved Provider 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

Certified Supervisor/s and other educators 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 – including theme days that drive equality across genders and identities.
- 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

9. COMMUNICATIONS

This service is committed to open communication between all relevant parties, staff, parents/carers and children about our gender equity work. In order to reach all parents this documentation will be translated into relevant community languages when required. This centre will endeavour to ensure any changes and updates relating to our gender equity work are widely communicated. This will be achieved using multiple platforms including:

- Standing agenda item for staff meetings
- Articles in the parent/carer newsletter
- Notices on the centre notice boards
- Emails to staff and parent/carers
- Letters/notices for parents/carers

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

In order to assess whether the aims of the policy have been achieved, the management team and relevant committee will:

- Regularly seek feedback from staff affected by the policy regarding its effectiveness;
- Assess whether the strategies and procedures outlined in the gender equity policy were implemented;
- Monitor complaints and incidents regarding the implementation of the policy;
- Review the policy to ensure it reflects current legislation, research, policy and best practice; and
- Revise the policy and procedures as part of the service's policy review cycle.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: The Genderbread person - <https://young.scot/get-informed/national/understanding-gender-identity>

AUTHORISATION

This policy was adopted by the Approved Provider of J.S. Grey Kindergarten on: 4th April 2022

REVIEW DATE: 23/03/2022

NEXT REVIEW DATE: 23/02/2023

ATTACHMENT 1:

The Genderbread Person v2.0

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Gender is one of those things everyone thinks they understand, but most people don't. Like *Inception*. Gender isn't binary. It's not either/or. In many cases it's both/and. A bit of this, a dash of that. This tasty little guide is meant to be an appetizer for understanding. It's okay if you're hungry for more.

