

Uniting Church Child Care Centre Gympie



Uniting Education

Parent Handbook

(August 2021)

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Welcome

Welcome to Uniting Church Child Care Centre Gympie.

The Uniting Church Queensland Synod is pleased to welcome you to Uniting Education Early Learning. The Uniting Church in Queensland has been serving families through childcare services, run by congregations and other church organisations such as Wesley Mission Queensland and UnitingCare since the opening of our first service, the Toowong Kindergarten and Child Care Centre, in 1964. From September 2021, all early learning services operated by the Uniting Church Queensland are consolidated within the Uniting Education Early Learning (UEEL) portfolio. UEEL embodies the Christian principles of love, forgiveness, respecting and serving others. We utilise a play-based learning programme and are committed to the values of equity, inclusiveness and care for the environment.

This Parent Handbook contains important information about Service activities. You will find explanations for how our Service functions, our approach to young children's learning, our beliefs about education, and practical information to explain why we include specific routines and practices in our daily practices.

We suggest that you keep a copy handy for reference during your time with us. The services Policies and Procedures Folder is also available for you to read at any time. Of course, you are always welcome to ask questions, and we will be happy to provide explanations or assist you.

We look forward to sharing many learning and growing experiences with you and your child during your time at Uniting Church Child Care Centre Gympie.

Contact Details

Uniting Church Child Care Centre Gympie.

Phone: 07 54822186

Email: admin@ucchildcare.org.au

Our Aims, Values and Philosophy

Centre Philosophy

Uniting Church Child Care Centre Gympie aims to provide a high-quality Child Care Service that promotes an environment that encourages and supports security, peace and harmony for children, families and staff. We believe Early Childhood forms a foundation for the development of skills needed for life. As such, Educators aim to provide every child with the best possible stimulation, education, development and care, complying fully with the National Quality Standard committing to and implementing the Early Years Learning Framework.

Our philosophy focuses on respecting and valuing each child as an individual. We aim to foster their feelings of self-esteem, health and well-being. We do this by providing challenging and developmentally appropriate programming experiences whilst implanting an indoor/outdoor, which continually allows them to make their own choices. We value each child with sensitivity and acceptance. We respect children as explorers, full of curiosity about themselves, others and their world. We believe open, honest and positive communication promotes a harmonious environment that fosters active partnerships between children, parents, management and staff. We pride ourselves in a very homely atmosphere with the child and the family holding equal importance.

Centre Aims/Practice

- A. Each child is unique with unique needs, interests and strengths. All children go through accepted stages of development. However, not every child will reach each developmental stage at the same age; therefore, each child will be catered for as an individual respecting their rights as detailed in the United Nations Convention on the Child's Rights.

- B. Each child comes to the centre with a different set of experiences that are acknowledged and respected. It is essential to maintain continuity between the home and the centre, so parental involvement is encouraged, and parents/guardians are recognised as partners in the educative process. They are ensuring that we support them in the care of their children through a homelike environment.
- C. We embrace culture and religious diversity. We have great respect for Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, acknowledging the Traditional Ownership of the land, and honouring the Elders past and present by displaying an active and continuing recognition of Australia's first people by engaging in culturally appropriate and non-discriminatory practices.
- D. Young children learn through doing, experimenting, experiencing, predicting and achieving. Play is an essential part of this learning process, and staff will aim to continually make learning FUN encouraging each child to develop the desire to learn.
- E. Educators recognise that it is essential to enhance each child's feelings of self-worth, to promote confidence and belief in their abilities. Healthy self-esteem is the basis of positive intellectual, social and emotional growth.
- F. Educators demonstrate respect for all children equally without bias. Each child will also be encouraged to respect the needs, feelings and property of others.
- G. Each child requires a nutritional, well-balanced diet. Mealtimes are an integral part of the child's learning experience. This is where the staff encourage healthy eating and positive social skills.
- H. Each child requires consistent limits and positive guidelines appropriate to their age/stage of development. The centre aims to foster a warm, positive approach to behaviour management to foster self-control, developing the child socially and emotionally.
- I. Our planning and evaluation practices combine various theories, which reflect values about how children play, learn and develop with indoor/outdoor activities/spaces provided for the whole day. This includes an emergent planning approach that builds upon children's questions, investigations, interests, life experiences, and cultural heritage, not limiting their exploration. It includes analysis of the environment, special occasions, events and current affairs (both locally and globally); what is essential is that children's questions be acknowledged and responded to provide them with the key to understanding the world they live in.
- J. Educators guide children's involvement in projects, extending children's ideas, responding to their questions, engaging them in conversation, challenging their thinking, and encouraging choices with set limits.
- K. We define 'planning' as planned and spontaneous events that emphasise individual and small group experiences that include all aspects of the children's experiences at the centre. The program reflects the interests and competencies of the Educators, the families and above all, the children. It also reflects the transitions throughout the day supporting the centre's policies, program and philosophy availability and use of materials, equipment and other resources, interactions among children and adults, and routine procedures.
- L. All Educators respect individual differences and interests, styles and rates of learning. We encourage children's independence and initiative and aim to increase their awareness and understanding of the world around them.
- M. The Centre staff aim to consider, respond to and plan for the children's:
 - a. interests, strengths, ideas and opinions.
 - b. imagination, creativity, problem-solving
 - c. relationships and interactions with their peers,
 - d. families, staff and the wider community.
 - i. Ability to acknowledge and confidently express their emotions.
 - ii. Need to investigate, negotiate, problem solve and think critically.
 - iii. The perspective of diversity, inclusion, social justice and equity.
 - iv. Sense of identity and self-worth, and their relationship with the world.
 - v. Physical, social, cognitive and linguistic development and learning needs.



- N. The staff will ensure the program includes:
 - i. active and quiet activities
 - ii. Indoor and outdoor activities
 - iii. Individual, small group and large group activities
 - iv. Structured and unstructured activities,
 - v. intentional and spontaneous learning experiences
 - vi. Activities designed to develop each child's social, emotional, cognitive, fine and gross motor skills, as well as their creativity and self-help skills.
 - vii. An inclusive approach, giving all children access to all activities
 - viii. A multicultural perspective valuing diversity
 - ix. Healthy eating practice
 - x. Flexibility
 - xi. Opportunities for children to make their own choices and take on new challenges
 - xii. Encouraging a partnership with parents
- O. We respect the environment we live in, strongly support the need for inter-generational equity, and work diligently towards a sustainable future for our children.
- P. Educators will continually develop their abilities with the support from the management committee through training, attendance at staff meetings and resourcing through current childcare books, journals and publications. Educators will implement their abilities and knowledge within the program, continually monitor and evaluate the program, and reflect upon their practice, reflecting an anti-bias approach to develop positive gender, racial, cultural, class, and individual identities.
- Q. In our warm, welcoming, safe environment, Educator's work closely as a team that facilitates children's learning and development and supports the service's policies and programmes. They develop their abilities through training and implement their skills and knowledge within the program. Using the Early Childhood Australia Code of Ethics as a guideline, staff are consistently positive role models with professional and personal practice. Provision of higher than expected educator/child ratios is implemented to ensure an exceeding standard of care can be provided.
- R. By embracing the principles, practice and outcomes from the Early Years Learning Framework educators understand and plan for the children's lives which are characterised by "Being", "Belonging" and "Becoming" (Early Years Framework for Australia 2009 and the Queensland Kindergarten Learning Guidelines) providing opportunities for the children to express and discover their spiritual well-being.
- S. We ensure that our policies, procedures and administrative systems are practical and straightforward and that they remain relevant through regular research and review involving staff, families, the community and management, ensuring that our human, physical and financial resources are managed efficiently.

Source – Management Committee, Educators and Parents, Resources and Resource Persons
Updated: January 2018

Operating Hours

Uniting Church Child Care Centre Gympie operates 6.15am to 6.15 pm Monday to Friday 52 weeks a year. It is closed on all gazetted Public Holidays.

Groups

Each day, Uniting Church Child Care Centre Gympie provides care and education for up to 55 children aged 6 weeks to school age. Children are placed in age-appropriate groups with educators and children familiar to them. These placements take into consideration the children's ages and developmental stages. The groups are:

Room Name	Age group	
Possums Room	Infants	6 weeks – 14 months
Wombat Room	Toddlers	12 months – 2 years
Koala Room	Pre-Kindy	2 years – 3.5 years
Kookaburra Room	Junior	3 – 4 years

Staffing

Educators are the key to high quality care and education. Uniting Church Child Care Centre Gympie employs suitably qualified and experienced educators to nurture and support young children.

All team members maintain their knowledge of the regulations, codes and standards, and of current best practice. We maintain appropriate Educator to child ratios enabling the best care and education.

Absent educators are replaced from our regular relief pool. This minimises disruptions and any concern or upset in the children. A notice is displayed in your child's room whenever a relief educator replaces a regular staff member.

Quality Assurance

Uniting Church Child Care Centre Gympie participates in the Australian Government's National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care. To be accredited, the service must adhere to the requirements of the seven quality areas of the National Quality Standard. These are:

Quality Area 1 – Educational program and practice

Quality Area 2 – Children's health and safety

Quality Area 3 – Physical environment

Quality Area 4 – Staffing arrangements

Quality Area 5 – Relationships with children

Quality Area 6 – Collaborative partnerships with families and communities

Quality Area 7 – Governance and leadership

Priority of Access

When allocating places in the Service, Uniting Church Child Care Centre Gympie follows the priority of access guidelines set down by the Australian Government.

Priority 1	A child at risk of serious abuse or neglect
Priority 2	A child of a single parent who satisfies, or of parents who both satisfy, the work/training/study test under Section 14 of the of the 'A New Tax System (Family Assistance) Act 1999'. Proof that you satisfy these requirements is needed.
Priority 3	Any other child

Uniting Church Child Care Centre Gympie is committed to non-discriminatory access.

Enrolment

The Director or Approved Provider interview all parents and meet all children before commencement at the service. Parents have the opportunity to go on a tour of the service, be introduced to the educators, ask questions, complete the enrolment paperwork and provide the service with any pertinent information.

In brief, parents need to:

- Complete the enrolment forms

- Provide children's birth certificates, immunisation records, and any court orders affecting the child so that these documents can be photocopied for Service records.
- Communicate information necessary to ensure your child's health, education and care needs are met.
- Receive a Parent Handbook detailing how the service operates, and its practices.
- Have certain policies and procedures explained to them and be given the opportunity to ask questions about these and any other Service policies and procedures.
- Be shown where the Service Policies and Procedure Folder is located
- Have explained the importance of maintaining up to date information about emergency contact and other details
- Be provided with information about fees, how to pay them and agree to a payment schedule
- Provide the documentation required to attract FAO payments, and be reminded of the need to inform Centrelink of any change to these arrangements
- Pay the appropriate administration and enrolment fees
- Agree to a day and date for commencement

The decision to enrol a child with any additional needs is made after discussion between:

- Director
- Child's Parents
- Relevant professional and medical personnel.

Consideration is also given to the current knowledge and expertise of the educators, the physical environment, access to additional support staff, current staffing levels and the needs of all children in our care.

Fees

Please speak to our Director regarding our current fee schedule. Full fees will be charged until Servicelink (Family Assistance Office – FAO) advises Uniting Church Child Care Centre Gympie of your Childcare Benefit (CCB) and/or Childcare Rebate (CCR) entitlements. FAO can be contacted on 13 61 50. We recommend you elect to have the Childcare Rebate paid directly to the service; this will ensure we can apply your entitlement to your weekly statement as reduced fees.

- Fees must always be paid in full at the end of the current week. An archiving Fee of \$15.00 is charged to your account as all information is kept for 25 years..
- We require a full two weeks' notice in writing (not verbal) if you intend to withdraw your child from the service or to decrease/increase the number of days required. The two weeks' notice starts from the close of business of the day you inform the service in writing. Forms are available in the office for this purpose.
- Normal fees apply when your child is sick and for public holidays if your child would normally have attended the service on that day.
- Families (including parents, foster parents, guardians, grandparents or any other eligible person who is liable for paying childcare fees) are responsible for registering your child to receive FAO payments. This must be done prior to commencing care to ensure that all details are received by the service and payments can be applied accordingly.
- Child Care Benefit will only be paid for days where child care attendance records (both arrival and departure) are accurately completed and signed by the parent/guardian or other nominated adult collecting the child.
- Fees are payable on your child's first day of care each week, and are paid Dir/dep, Eftpos, Cash or Chq.
- Outstanding fees are managed according to the Service's Fee Policy.

- The service closes at 6.15pm each night. A late fee of \$5.00 per minute by the Service clock applies for children collected after 6.15pm. Please note that late fees do not attract CCB. Refer to the Service's Fee Policy. You will be asked to sign a Late Fee Notice when you arrive to collect your child/ren.

Orientation

After enrolment, and prior to your child commencing at the service, you and your child will be invited to attend for an orientation visit. At this time, you will be:

- Taken on a tour of service
- Shown information boards, brochures
- Shown how to sign your child in and out of the service
- Shown where to store your child's belongings
- Introduced to the educators in your child's room, and spend some time in that room
- Given an explanation of the educational program in your child's room
- Offered an opportunity to ask questions or clarify any issues you might like

Settling Your Child into our Service

We understand how difficult it can be for you to leave your child in care for the first time.

Some children settle quickly, some take longer. We are sensitive to and aware of the anxiety that children and parents can feel. We make this transition as smooth as possible for you and your child through our orientation. As part of the orientation process, you visit the service with your child for short periods before their commencement date.

Other ways you can help your child to settle in on the first day are:

- Prepare your child by talking about what will occur in the service, and about the activities (e.g. painting, drawing, craft, music, games). If you are positive, your child is likely to be positive as well.
- When it is time for you to leave, do so quickly. Wherever possible, settle your child into an activity, say goodbye and go. Even when a child understands that you will be coming back, the moment of parting can still be sad
- Be certain to say goodbye. Use set phrases such as 'I'm going now' and 'I will be back after rest time'. Smile. Children take their social cues from their parents. If a parent appears happy and confident in the Service environment, the child will be too. Saying goodbye develops a secure and trusting relationship between you and your child.
- Arrive with time to spare. Your child is more likely to settle readily if unhurried.
- Bring your child in, without their siblings, for their first few visits. It can make it more difficult for your child to settle when everyone else in the family leaves them behind. Siblings are more than welcome once your child has settled.
- If your child becomes inconsolable during the day, rest assured we will contact you. A plan to gradually introduce your child to the new environment will be developed to help them settle in and reduce your stress.
- Try to arrive at the end of the day with time to play in our environment. If your child sees you are happy in our space and with our team, they will feel more confident too. Children take their emotional cues from you.

Should you have further concerns about settling your child into our service, please talk to our educators. We encourage parents to ring a couple of times throughout the day to find out about their children's day.

WHAT PARENTS NEED TO BRING EACH DAY – ALL ITEMS SHOULD BE CLEARLY NAMED.

- A back pack or bag with your child's articles in it.
- A water bottle – named

- Lunch box – named - with morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea
- 2-3 changes of seasonally appropriate clothing – all named
- Comfort items such as a pacifier, soft toy or blanket for rest time – also named
- A suitable supply of nappies for your toddler or pre-kindergarten child (Babies' nappies are supplied)

If your child is in the Infant room, please bring along their bottles (made up), other drinks, and any first foods you would like them to eat during the day. Label all the parts of your child's bottle so we can be sure to place all the right pieces back together after cleaning. Remember, we provide nappies for your baby.

Every item is to be clearly labelled with your child's name. We do not take responsibility for any items not named. Remember, many children have the same items, so naming them is essential.

What The Service Provides Each Day

- Hats (your child receives a hat on enrolment and others may be purchased if your hat is lost)
- Sheets for rest time for Infant room (babies room only)
- Sunscreen (If you require a special type for medical reasons – bring that along)

Children's Toys

Toys and items of value should be left at home. While many children would like to bring their own toys to the service, sharing these can be difficult for young children, and can cause distress. It is difficult for staff to monitor personal toys and to ensure the toys will not be damaged. Our staff are unable to spend time searching for personal toys if lost as they must supervise children at all times.

Security items (e.g. dummy, rug, sleep teddy) are exceptions. However, these items are to be clearly labelled with each child's name.

Lost Property

Un-named lost property is placed in a labelled basket in the room in which it was found. Unclaimed items are donated to a local charity or placed in our spare supplies at the end of each month. Please regularly check the lost property basket in your child's room so your items are not given away.

Birthdays

We enjoy celebrating children's birthdays and special events at Uniting Church Child Care Centre Gympie.

If your child is having a birthday you are welcome to send along a cake and we will make your child's day special. Plain vanilla cupcakes with simple icing work very well for these occasions. Please see staff for the current number of children in your child's room. Check with educators beforehand to ensure that the cake does not contain any ingredients to which other children are known to be allergic, especially nuts and nut products.

You are welcome to join us for the birthday - when we blow out the candles. Please advise staff if you intend to come along - otherwise we may have eaten all the cake before you arrive! If you are unable to attend on the day, we are happy to take photographs for you.

Arrival and Departure

Arrival

For your child's safety, we require that you (or another Nominated adult over 18 years of age) accompany them into the service.

- Sign your child in - a legal requirement
- Inform an educator if
 - Your child has been given medication at home within the past 24 hours
 - Your direct contact number will be different for that day in case of any emergency
 - Someone other than yourself is collecting your child
 - Your child is unwell, has been sick or is teething
 - Your child requires medication throughout the day
 - Anything has happened/or is planned that we should know about to ensure we meet your child's needs
- Assist your child to place their bag in their locker
- Apply sunscreen to your child's face and exposed parts of their body if you haven't already done so at home, and sign the form provided to confirm that you have done so
- Wash your child's hands
- Change your child's nappy if it is soiled
- Encourage your child to greet educators and children
- Use the communication book in your child's room if you need to share any important information with the room team

Before you leave, inform an educator of your child's arrival.

Departure

For your child's safety, we require that you (or another nominated adult over 18 years of age) collect your child from the service.

- Take a minute or two to read the information we provide about the experiences your child enjoyed so you can chat to your child about their day
- Check the notice board for important information
- Check that all belongings, including medications are collected
- Encourage your child to say goodbye to educators and children
- Inform an educator of your child's departure
- Sign your child out - a legal requirement

Persons Authorised to Collect Children

At the time of enrolment, parents provide the service with the names and contact details, including telephone numbers, of any authorized persons to collect their children. Parents must notify the service of any changes to these arrangements. If someone other than an authorised person (as indicated on the child's file) is to collect your child, the service must be notified in writing.

Children will be released to authorised persons only. Photo ID must be shown before a child will be permitted to leave the service with a person unknown to staff. All authorised persons collecting children must be eighteen (18) years or older.

Parents who have court orders must provide us with a copy for our records. If no legal documentation exists, the child will be released to either parent, until the service is advised otherwise in writing. Refer to the *Service's Arrival and Departure of Children Policy*.

In the case of a non-custodial parent arriving to collect a child, the Director/Responsible Person will explain the service's legal obligation not to release the child to them. Should that person persist with their claim, the police will be contacted.

Reminder: Custody or court orders should be brought to the attention of the Director upon enrolment or as they are granted. In the event of a non-custodial parent gaining access to a child, the custodial parent will be notified as soon as practicable.

Late Collection

It is stressful for children and staff when parents arrive late to collect their children. The service closes at 6.15pm each night. Parents need to arrive with sufficient time to collect the child, sign-off, gather any personal belongings, and perhaps have a brief chat with educators.

If you are not able to collect your child before closing time, please organise for someone else to collect them and inform the service.

A late fee of \$5.00 per minute (by the Service clock) applies for children collected after 6.15pm. Parents will be given a Late Fee Notice to sign upon arrival at the service. Payment of any late fee is due the following week. Refer to the Service's *Fee Policy*.

We understand that emergencies do occur. In such an event, parents are asked to advise us well before closing time. Please be mindful that our staff have families and other commitments too.

If your child is still at the service at 6.15pm and we have not heard from you, we will take the following steps:

1. Attempt to contact you.
2. Call the people listed on your child's Enrolment Form as 'Emergency Contacts' and nominated to collect your child
3. Call the Police Department or Crisis Care to advise them of the situation and consult on what action to take
4. Inform the area/regional office of Early Childhood Education and Care – OECEC.

Sharing The Learning Journey

Children learn best when educators work in partnership with families. Effective communication and exchange of information about children's wellbeing, growth and learning are integral to these partnerships. Parent participation in the service also results in better outcomes. It is important that educators and parents develop trust and respect.

Parents can participate in the Uniting Church Child Care Centre Gympie activities by:

- Chatting to educators about your child's day
- Discussing your child's needs and interests with educators
- Offering ideas and suggestions
- Reading to the children
- Sharing skills, talents and cultural aspects of family life with your child's group
- Contributing resource materials (e.g. wool, egg cartons)
- Assisting with excursions
- Attending social and parent functions
- Sharing special occasions and events (e.g. birthday celebrations) with your child
- Being involved in an advisory manner
- Being involved in the review of the service's philosophy, policies and procedures, and the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP)
- Assisting in any of the service's daily routines

Some of the many ways Uniting Church Child Care Centre Gympie communicates with parents include:

- Newsletters

- Information meetings
- Notice boards
- Emails
- Displayed information about your child's day
- Communication Books
- Making available details of your child's food and drink intake, rest/sleep times, nappy changes
- Speaking with you informally when you collect your child or through phone calls

Providing a comprehensive parent resource library, leaflets on topics related to young children, and the services of support organisations and agencies within the community.

Please let us know your preferred means of receiving information.

Parents can contribute to and provide feedback to the educational program at Uniting Church Child Care Centre Gympie by:

- Informing educators about your child's special talents, interests and hobbies away from the service
- Immediately communicating any concerns that you may have about your child's learning
- Conversations with your child's teacher or the Director
- Writing comments on the displayed program
- Placing written comments in the room communication book
- Attending parent/ teacher events
- Attending parent-educator interviews to discuss the program and your child's response to it
- Completing surveys about the program, routines, policies and overall operation of the service
- Sharing your skills and interests with your child's group. Children are delighted when parents contribute to their activities. Grandparents are also welcomed
- Viewing your child's individual portfolio regularly, asking questions about it, and adding your comments
- Contribute recycling items.

Parent Concerns

Our mission is to walk alongside people in need, offering care and compassion and promoting choice, independence and community well-being. In this spirit, we are committed to working with you to resolve any issues.

If your concern is with an individual staff member, please speak with them first. Staff are here to support you and your child and will be open to discussing any feedback or concerns that you have. You may feel more comfortable speaking with the Director of the service, who will make a time to discuss your feedback or concerns.

If you are still not satisfied with the response you can speak to the service's Area Manager, who can be contacted through the Director. Alternatively, you can call Yolanda Borucki, who is the Manager-Early Learning Operations, on 0455886358. Yolanda can also be reached by letter at 60 Bayliss Street Auchenflower QLD 4066 OR Email: Early.Learning@ucaqld.com.au

An external agent such as the Queensland government's Department of Education, Early Childhood Education and Care can be reached on these details:

PO Box 15033

CITY EAST QLD 4002

Email: ecec@ged.qld.gov.au

Phone: 13 QGOV (13 74 68)

Accurate Information

Please inform the service if:

- Your child is sick or going on holidays
- Custody/access arrangements have changed
- Your child's immunisation has been updated
- Your home telephone number/address has changed
- Your work telephone number/workplace has changed
- The name of your child's doctor, telephone number or address has changed
- The names of persons authorised to collect your child or their telephone numbers have changed
- Any other information pertinent to the education and care of your child has changed

The Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) In our Service

At Uniting Church Child Care Centre Gympie, we facilitate learning programs that build on your children's interests and abilities, and will communicate with you about their learning. Educators support each child to achieve the EYLF's five learning outcomes using a variety of strategies throughout each day.

The 5 Learning Outcomes are:

1. Children have a strong sense of identity
2. Children are connected with and contribute to their world
3. Children have a strong sense of wellbeing
4. Children are confident and involved learners
5. Children are effective communicators

The EYLF emphasises learning through play and recognises that play is an ideal vehicle for learning. The EYLF has been designed to provide young children with learning opportunities to maximise their potential and develop a strong foundation for future success.

At Uniting Church Child Care Centre Gympie, we devise programs to ensure that play is central to early learning and development. Play is spontaneous, meaningful and non-threatening. Through play young children explore and learn to understand the world around them as they communicate, discover, imagine and create. When children play they test out their ideas, challenge each other's thinking and build new understandings.

Each child will learn at their own pace. Educators guide play by carefully designing environments, and interacting with the children. The EYLF identifies three important elements in children's early years, Belonging, Being and Becoming.

- **Belonging** is the basis for living a fulfilling life. Children feel they belong when they are able to form secure relationships within their family, community and connect with their culture and physical environments
- **Being** is about recognizing that children live in the here and now. Childhood is special, and children need time to just 'be'- time to play, try new things, make friends and develop meaningful relationships and just have fun.
- **Becoming** is about the many kinds of learning that young children experience. Children form their sense of identity from an early age, and this shapes the kind of adult they will become. We all have a role to play in ensuring that the early years are a positive time for young children.

The EYLF focuses on how children learn and our educators work with each child to achieve positive learning outcomes. Building strong relationships with families and children is an important step.

Our Program – The Shared Learning Journey

Uniting Church Child Care Centre Gympie provides a quality education and care program for children based on best practice. We promote each child's social, emotional, physical, language and intellectual development. We encourage exploration, experimentation and investigation and facilitate this through individual, small or large group experiences.

Physical Activity And Sustainability

Parents are children's first educators. Our service is an extension of the home environment. In order to maximise the benefits of our program, we work with families to share the learning journey with children.

We promote learning by balancing our growing knowledge of each child, ongoing interactions with children, and planning. We encourage, extend and value children's spontaneous learning. Children are the focus of the curriculum. They are individuals with similarities and differences from their peers and have interesting ideas to share with us and their friends. Curriculum opportunities are provided for all children to use and develop their particular interests and abilities.

We facilitate learning by extending, applying and introducing new experiences that stimulate each individual's interest and learning. We allow interests to extend over time so that each child may achieve needed outcomes. Learning needs to be ongoing and sustained to enable adequate depth and breadth of investigations.

Excursions and incursions

Excursions

Occasionally our children will go out and about on an excursion. This is usually cause for much fun and excitement, but this kind of experience also has a serious side. Before we leave our premises for any reason parents will be asked to sign a permission form for the event for their child. This is a legal requirement. If we do not have a signed permission form, your child will be unable to attend the activity.

Parents are encouraged to attend these events as it is a requirement that we have a high ratio of adults to children for safety reasons.

Incursions

We also invite performers to visit our service to entertain and educate the children in a variety of ways (e.g. puppet shows, singing groups, dance troupes, story tellers, and the baby animal farm).

Parents receive advance notification about these activities along with the cost involved for each child to attend. The service's regular newsletter is a good source of information about these events so it is important to read these. Notices will also be displayed in the foyer about these exciting events.

We also invite community organisations and individuals such as the local gardening club, artists, sculptors, potters, dancers and musicians to the service. These visitors provide opportunities for children to learn more about the culture of their community, and to develop new skills and understanding.

The Kindergarten Program

The Kindergarten Program at Uniting Church Child Care Centre Gympie follows the Kindergarten Guidelines which align with the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF). Both are part of The National Quality Framework under which all approved early learning programs operate. Our Kindergarten Program is taught every day by a degree qualified Early Childhood Teacher (ECT).

The Kindergarten Program aims to specifically enrich children's learning in the year preceding Prep. Throughout the kindergarten year children's right to experience the joy of childhood is fundamental and learning is promoted through play, emergent and planned learning experiences and interactions.

Children attend the Kindergarten Program for a minimum of two days per week up to five days a week.

Families requiring more information about the Kindergarten program may ask our Kindergarten Teacher or Director and they will be happy to assist.

School Readiness

"School readiness" is a term used frequently in the Kindergarten setting. It means that a child is ready to enter a social and educationally based environment. The role of our Kindergarten Program is to foster learning in a fun setting. We focus on play as a vehicle for learning and work to prepare children to take on the challenges of more formal schooling.

Uniting Church Child Care Centre Gympie recognises that children's readiness for school is much more than a completed checklist of skills that the child can perform, such as putting on shoes, recognising colours or numbers, or being able to write their name.

Readiness is about the child making connections between what is familiar and what is new and also involves the child being able to:

- Effectively develop relationships with other children and significant adults.
- Feel confidence in themselves
- Adapt to different learning contexts.

The following elements provide a useful summary of the skills and competencies that can assist children to become capable learners and transition smoothly to school.

Communication skills

- Completing tasks
- Group participation
- Problem solving
- Independence
- Able to initiate own play
- Listening to and following direction
- Literacy and numeracy
- Physical gross motor skills
- Social/emotional skill

Guiding Children's Behaviour

At Uniting Church Child Care Centre Gympie, we take a respectful, positive and proactive approach to guiding children's behaviour. From time to time, children make 'mistakes' because they are young and inexperienced, and their brains are still developing.

Educators view these 'mistakes' as opportunities to encourage children to make different behaviour choices. They believe guiding behaviour is integral to their role. The wide range of strategies used to achieve this are outlined in the *Interactions with Children Policy* in the Service's Policies and Procedures Folder.

Toilet training

Educators commence toileting when parents and educators agree that the child is developmentally and emotionally ready. This will ensure a consistent approach.

Health and Safety Issues

Please find information about how we manage these issues below.

Accidents and injuries

Educators Uniting Church Child Care Centre Gympie take every precaution to minimise the likelihood of any accident occurring. They supervise children closely and do so knowing when accidents are most likely to occur. They hold current First-aid and CPR certificates and are attentive and quick to respond to any injuries.

If children have an accident at the service, staff will:

- Follow the DRSABCD Action Plan
- Complete the Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Form
- Complete the Hospital Transfer Form (if necessary)
- Enter the details in the Service's Incident/Injury Register
- Advise the regional ACECQA Regulatory Authority
- Ensure the parent/emergency contact signs the Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Form.

In the event that a parent notifies the service of any incident, injury or illness to their child believed to have occurred during the course of the child's day at the service, and the service has no record of the incident, then details must be documented by the staff member receiving the call. Any such incident must also be reported to the Director or Responsible Person present at the service immediately.

Medication

Children requiring medication are best kept at home. If the child attends the service after being given medication at home, we should be informed of its purpose and possible side effects.

When medication is administered at the service, the following procedures will apply:

Parents have completed the Service's Medication Permission Form

Prescribed medication is only administered to a child when in its original container, bearing the original chemist's label with full details of:

- Child's name
- Name of medication
- Dosage
- Frequency
- How to be administered
- Date of dispensing
- Expiry date

Three (3) doses of a prescribed medication must have been given or applied to the child by the parent at home or 24 hours passed since the first dose before it will be administered by staff. This is to ensure the child will not have an unexpected reaction to the medication

Ongoing prescribed medications are accompanied by a Medical Action Plan or an authority letter from the child's doctor and staff are fully trained to all requirements contained within the Plan. When implementing an Asthma Management Plan, the staff member(s) attending the child must be trained specifically in asthma first-aid management

Medication requiring administration other than orally or external application will only be administered by senior staff with a current First Aid Certificate who have been given specific instruction from a health care professional and who feel confident with the procedure.

Medication is to be handed directly to an educator, and not left in the child's bag or locker.

All medication is stored in a cupboard/box secured with a childproof lock and, if required, refrigerated. However, Epi-pens are stored readily accessible to staff (but still inaccessible to children).

Important: Medication must NEVER be put into a baby's bottle or drinking cup. Refer to the Service's *Medication Policy*.

Car park safety

To ensure the safety of our children in our car park, we ask that parents:

Drive slowly and with care into and out of our car park
Hold their child's hand when walking through the car park

For the safety of all children, the Uniting Church Child Care Centre Gympie carpark is not a play space for bikes, scooters, skateboards or the like at any time. This area is under constant video surveillance. Damage to property or gardens will be treated as vandalism and reported to the police.

Child protection

Staff must adhere to mandatory reporting laws. Any suspected instances of child abuse and/or neglect will be managed according to the Service's *Child Protection Policy*.

Cleanliness

The service maintains a safe, clean, tidy and hygienic environment. Staff routinely clean spillages as they occur.

Confidentiality and Privacy

Uniting Church Child Care Centre Gympie records personal, sometimes sensitive information about families and children in order to meet regulatory requirements. Confidentiality is maintained at all times, and all information is handled according to the Australian Privacy Principles (APPs) contained in the *Privacy Act 1988*.

We are legally required to provide pertinent information to government organisations and agencies, and to certain community service organisations, on request. Wherever possible, we will ask you first.

Food and Nutrition

The service does not provide morning tea, lunch, dessert and afternoon tea. All meals are supplied by you the parents. We recommend that you supply healthy, and seasonally fruit for your child. All Babies' bottles, formula and first foods are supplied by parents.

Water is offered to the children regularly throughout the day and children may also access water independently.

At enrolment, specific instructions or requests regarding your child's dietary requirements, particularly allergies are discussed.

Mealtimes are pleasant occasions. Educators sit with small groups of children during meals, talk with them and encourage conversation between children.

Children are encouraged to taste or try different food, but never coerced to eat. Toddlers and pre-schoolers are encouraged to feed themselves.

Babies are held in a warm and affectionate manner while being bottle fed. Babies are introduced to food in consultation with parents.

(Refer to the *Nutrition Policy* in the Service's Policies and Procedures Folders.)

Immunisation

The service is required to maintain an Immunisation Register of all children enrolled. Parents need to provide approved documentation of the immunisation status of their children, and to notify the service of any subsequent updates. If no evidence of immunisation is shown, the child is considered to be not immunised against any of the vaccine-preventable diseases. These include measles, pertussis (whooping cough), Mumps, Rubella (German Measles), Diphtheria, Tetanus, Polio.

If an outbreak of a vaccine-preventable disease occurs, we will seek advice from our local Public Health Unit. For their own protection, un-immunised children may be excluded from the service at this time. The decision to exclude a child from the service is made in consultation with the local Public Health Unit. Normal childcare fees apply during the child's absence from the service.

All families, staff and visitors to the service will be informed in writing that an outbreak of the particular infectious disease has occurred. The Director has the right to send a sick child or staff member home if they are believed to be unwell and possibly contagious.

Infectious Diseases

Young children are still developing, and the nature of their play makes them more susceptible to the risk of cross-infection, especially in their first year of group care.

In addition to staff and children maintaining healthy and hygienic practices, the service excludes children and staff according to the National Health and Medical Research Council Guidelines.

Children and staff with an infectious disease may only return to the service with a medical clearance certificate, which confirms that they are no longer contagious and are well enough to return. However, the Director has the ultimate responsibility for deciding if a child is well enough to return to the service. If a difference of opinion exists between the parents/doctor and the Director, we will contact the local Public Health Unit for advice.

Note: A child who has had vomiting or diarrhoea may only return to the Service **24 hours** after their last loose bowel motion or episode of vomiting.

The service is required by legislation to inform their local Public Health Unit whenever:

- Children or staff contract a vaccine-preventable disease
- An outbreak, that is two or more cases of other infectious diseases, occurs in a Service
- Staff or children contract a notifiable disease.

The local Public Health Unit guides and assists the service to manage any such outbreaks (e.g. immediately treat staff and children with medication or vaccination in the case of meningococcal), and provides the service and families with accurate information.

The service is also required, by the Early Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011, to inform all families:

- That an instance(s) of the disease has been identified in the service
- Of the symptoms of the condition
- Of the exclusion time from the service for any infectious persons
- If a medical clearance is required before returning to the service

- In a way that maintains the confidentiality of individual persons or families.

To minimise the risk of spreading the disease, parents are asked to inform the service immediately if their child or a member of their immediate family has contracted an infectious disease.

Management of Unwell Children

We understand it is difficult to balance children's illness and your work commitments, but sick or ill children cannot remain at the service. We suggest that you establish a back-up plan so you will not be inconvenienced if your child becomes ill unexpectedly. Check with family, friends or trusted neighbours and obtain their agreement to be your back-up carer(s), and inform the service of this arrangement.

To safeguard the health of other children and staff members, a child with any of the following symptoms will not be admitted to the service:

- Ear, eye or discoloured nasal discharge
- An undiagnosed rash
- High temperature
- Infectious sores or diseases (children need a Doctor's clearance before re-admittance)
- Vomiting and/or abnormally loose bowel actions for that child (exclude for 24 hours after last bout)
- Any obvious signs of ill health (e.g. obvious difficulty breathing, barking cough)

If a child becomes ill at the service, a staff member holding a first-aid certificate is to assess the child's condition as per the steps below:

- Take the child's temperature. If a child has a temperature higher than 38 °C
- Inform the Director of the child's condition
- Find a quiet area where the child can rest comfortably and be observed by an adult for any escalating or further symptoms
- Inform the parents and ask them to collect the child from care as soon as possible
- Call an ambulance, if necessary.

Parents are required to sign the Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Form when they collect their child.

Sleep and Rest Time

The Australian Medical Association recommends that children who are in care for more than 4 hours need to rest for a period of time.

All children are encouraged to rest during the day but are not compelled to sleep. The length of time children rest is dependent upon their individual needs.

Quiet activities are available for children who do not sleep. The length of time your child sleeps will be recorded daily. (Refer to the 'Sleep and Rest Policy' in the Service's Policies and Procedures Folders.)

We ask all families to respect this practice. It helps children to understand that the needs of others may differ from their own, an important life skill.

Smoking

Uniting Church Child Care Centre Gympie is a non-smoking area. This includes all indoor and outdoor play areas and anywhere that is within sight or smell of the children.

Sun Protection

We ask that you support this by applying sunscreen at home before arrival. This reflects the Australian Cancer Council recommendations that sunscreen be applied 15 minutes prior to sun exposure. Uniting Church Child Care Centre Gympie Childcare follows the Sun Smart guidelines. This means:

- Children and educators wear broad brim hats outside
- The service provides all children with a hat upon enrolment
- Children without hats play indoors or in the shade
- When outdoors, all children and educators wear clothing that covers as much of the skin as possible, especially the shoulders, back, and stomach
- All children and educators apply a SPF 30+ broad-spectrum water-resistant sunscreen 15 minutes before going outdoors

Uniting Church Child Care Centre Gympie meets regulatory requirements for shade in the playground:

- Babies under 12 months are always kept in the shade
- Sun protection is prioritised when excursions are planned
- Sun protection awareness activities (both planned and spontaneous) are included in the service's program
- Sun protection information is promoted to staff, families and visitors.

Safety Procedures

The service has an emergency and evacuation plan, displayed in each room, for a range of possible incidents and threats, including fire. Fire extinguishers are installed, and regularly maintained, throughout the service. Educators are trained in their use.

Safety drills involving educators and children are rehearsed every two months. They are called without warning at different times of the day and on different days of the week.

Evaluations are conducted after every drill. If an evaluation reveals any problem, appropriate modifications are made. Fire Safety Officers inspect the premises annually and oversee a fire rehearsal.

Teething

Parents are asked to inform their child's educators when their child is teething. When a child who is teething becomes unwell and displays symptoms such as a high temperature, flushed cheeks or drooling, the service will contact the parent.

Visitors

Visitors, other than parents or guardians of children enrolled in the service need to be admitted to the service by the Director. Visitors will be asked to provide appropriate photo ID, and to sign the Visitors' Book on arrival and departure. Visitors will be accompanied by a staff member at all times while in the service.

We trust you have found this information helpful. Please see our Director if you have any further questions.