



# **PROGRAM FOUNDATIONS**

## **FAMILY HANDBOOK**



# CARING FOR Children CARING FOR Families

**Gowrie NSW is committed to excellence and strives to make a lasting impact on children's lives.**

**For more than 80 years we have provided high quality play-based education and care for children and their families. We are proud to be trusted leaders in early childhood education.**

At Gowrie NSW every child is known, valued and encouraged for their unique strengths and character. We value and encourage these strengths and interests, and our educators work closely with you to ensure there is a strong connection between home and the centre.

We encourage you to work together with us and share information about your child so that our teachers and educators can create a program that is meaningful to your child.

We encourage your child's natural curiosity, exploration and problem solving in our quality early education and care centres. Our educators and staff value and respect your child's ideas, and support them to build positive relationships with others.

We look to global research and best practice in the development of our programs. Our reputation helps us to attract high-quality educators and staff who are committed to creating caring environments to facilitate the best learning experiences for your child.

While each Gowrie NSW centre has its own unique character and community, there are key practices that are consistent across all our centres. These are referred to as our **Program Foundations.**



## PROGRAM FOUNDATIONS

Gowrie NSW has a long tradition of providing education and care that considers the whole child in the context of their family and community. For more than 80 years we have played a pivotal role in shaping the early education sector as you see it today.

Gowrie NSW programs are built on the strong foundations of respectful relationships, intentional play-based teaching, empowerment and practitioner inquiry.

You will see, hear and feel these foundations in practice in our centres every day.





# RESPECTFUL RELATIONSHIPS

We understand the power and importance of relationships for children, and are deeply respectful of each child's individual personality.

Because we know the importance of relationships, we take a primary educator approach. This means that one of our educators will work closely with your child and family to form a secure relationship from their very first day. Through this approach, your child's primary educator will support your child in building strong and respectful relationships with their peers and with other adults. Your child's primary educator will also build strong relationships with your family to foster the connection between your home and the centre.

Our centres are the hub of the community. We are here to care for your children... and we are also here to support you and ensure you get the very best assistance as your family grows.

## Our teachers and educators:

- Create welcoming spaces for all families
- Build strong partnerships with all families
- Build strong partnerships with local services that provide support to families
- Work collaboratively with community organisations and encourage them to participate in and contribute to our programs



## What does respectful relationships mean for...

### MY FAMILY?

#### Gowrie NSW teachers and educators:

- recognise that no one knows your child better than you
- allocate one primary educator to work closely with you so that we can learn more about your child's experiences at home and what is important for you and your child

#### When we know about you and your child, we are able to:

- ensure routines are aligned as closely as possible between home and the centre
- Include foods in our menu that your child is familiar with
- incorporate familiar items from home (such as dress ups or utensils) into our play
- introduce play materials that reflect your child's interests and everyday experiences
- foster language development by including materials such as posters, books and songs in your home language

## What does respectful relationships mean for...

### MY CHILD?

#### Your child will have:

- a sense of security and belonging with educators who want to know more about them as an individual and their experiences with their family
- a primary educator who is highly attuned to their routines, rhythms and unique cues
- educators who build nurturing relationships with them.

#### Your child will experience:

- choices in their play experiences and routines
- routines that are at their own pace and where they can participate in their own way
- educators who listen to them and encourage their ideas
- reassurance to express feelings and show empathy for the feelings of others
- encouragement to interact with other children and develop language and social skills
- opportunities to build respectful relationships



## INTENTIONAL PLAY-BASED TEACHING

Play is described as children's work for good reason. Children learn through play. Play provides opportunities for discovery, curiosity and exploration. Children can unleash their imagination and engage in creativity. Our teachers and educators are highly-skilled at observing play, asking questions and providing feedback to extend children's learning and promote problem solving skills. In our learning spaces, you will find an invitation to play around every corner.

### Play

Enables children to learn through active, 'hands-on' participation in a flexible and stimulating environment

Encourages communication, negotiation and collaboration in social skill development.



## What does intentional play-based teaching mean for...

### MY FAMILY?

#### This means you will see:

- the development of critical skills in language, problem solving, social interactions and building friendships.
- teachers and educators sitting and playing with children, asking questions and making comments that encourage further learning.
- photos and explanations of children's learning displayed in the centre and online.



#### Teachers and educators will share examples of your child's play-based learning with you. This could include how your child is:

- beginning to be able to hold and manipulate objects such as blocks and spades
- able to move their body in space and beginning to understand the meaning of words such as up, over and under when they play on climbing equipment
- starting to persist at a task such as putting on their shoes or completing a puzzle
- learning about shape, size and measurement as they pour, build and weigh with measuring cups, saucepans and scales in the sandpit
- interested in exploring colour, line, pattern and shape when they create using materials such as paints, crayons and clay
- exploring letters, words and numbers when they play with materials such as notebooks, pens, menus and cash registers in a pretend play

## What does intentional play-based teaching mean for...

### MY CHILD?

#### Your child will be inspired to build, pretend, create, climb, investigate, explore and discover. The play experiences that we provide will encourage your child's:

- sense of wonder
- imagination
- problem-solving
- language
- appreciation of stories, songs and rhymes
- early literacy and numeracy
- understandings of maths and science concepts
- appreciation of different cultures
- social skills
- local and global citizenship
- appreciation of the natural world and issues of sustainability

#### Teachers and educators will join in play to support your child to:

- investigate
- communicate
- ask questions
- pose problems
- think critically and imaginatively
- use mathematical and scientific language
- express themselves using a range of creative arts materials
- experiment with symbols and print
- listen respectfully to others
- interact and collaborate with others





# EMPOWERMENT

We recognise the skills and strengths of all children. We acknowledge the family and community of each child and we respect the diversity and difference they represent. We are not your child's first teacher and we acknowledge that your child arrives at our centre already knowing much about the world.

Our educators and staff empower children to be active participants in the local community. We do this through excursions, involvement in community events, encouraging children to use their voice by actively seeking children's views and providing opportunities to explore and problem solve.

## Our teachers and educators:

- Support all children to reach their full potential
- Implement inclusive practices that support all children to participate
- Respect children's rights and promote their participation in decision-making at the centre
- Recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples as the traditional owners of the land by committing to reconciliation and the inclusion of local Aboriginal languages and stories in the centre's program.

## What does empowerment mean for...

### MY FAMILY?

#### Gowrie NSW teachers and educators will:

- respect your family's culture, language, family structure and values
- provide welcoming spaces where you and your child feel a sense of belonging
- translate key documents into your home language
- provide you with information about community groups and agencies that can offer you support and advice
- respect your child's abilities, strengths and needs, learning style and interests
- build community within the centre, e.g. children contributing to daily activities like setting tables for lunch with cutlery and flowers



## What does empowerment mean for...

### MY CHILD?

Gowrie NSW teachers and educators will support your child to:

- express their ideas and make choices
- learn in ways that are respectful of their unique learning style, abilities, interests, strengths and needs
- continue to use their home language while also learning English
- learn some words in languages other than English and respect all languages
- learn about local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and their language, cultures and histories
- develop a positive identity through opportunities to experience books, stories, music, creative arts and play materials that incorporate their family language and culture
- learn to respect diversity through experiences that include diverse languages, cultures, family structures and gender identities
- challenge stereotypes and unfair behaviour



## PRACTITIONER INQUIRY

Our programs are only as strong as the educators who are implementing them. So, we ensure our educators are up to date with the latest professional development and research. They have a strong commitment to their own professional development so they can provide your child with the highest level of education and care.



## Our teachers and educators:

- Are highly qualified and committed to children's learning and the professional practice of teaching
- Use contemporary teaching practices that are well informed by the latest research
- Partner with families to incorporate feedback to ensure the program is relevant to each child and their family
- Participate and partner in research projects conducted by universities and other researchers.



### What does professional inquiry mean for...

## MY FAMILY?

### Gowrie NSW teachers and educators will:

- about your child's program and what informs the decisions we make
- will ask for your feedback about the program
- will inform you about changes that are being made to the program as a result of your feedback
- may ask for your consent for you or your child to be involved in a research study designed to improve their teaching practices

### What does professional inquiry mean for...

## MY CHILD?

### Your child will experience:

- an exciting and interesting play-based program that is designed and implemented by committed, well informed teachers and educators
- a program where they are encouraged to participate, think, play and be researchers in their world
- opportunities to show and suggest ideas for change and areas for review
- We are so excited and privileged to be on this journey with your family. We cherish the moments of delight that we see and experience every day and look forward to sharing these with you as a Gowrie NSW family





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