St Philip’s Preschool Kindergarten
Annual Report 2011

St Philip’s accountability philosophy

St Philip’s Preschool Kindergarten, as a part of the Department of Education and Children's Services (DECS), is committed to the continuing improvement to the preschool curriculum and the learning outcomes for the children.

All children and families are welcome at this their local kindergarten. We ensure access and participation of all children with focused planning, supportive teaching styles and regular reviews of progress. The Governing Council joins in the management of the centre through the careful review of curriculum, development of policy and organisation of the budget. It allows us to focus spending on children and areas that may need additional support and resources.

High quality Preschool Education is the core business of the kindergarten and the focal point of our accountability to the families, DECS and the wider community.

We use the annual report to review the site learning plan and share our progress with the community and to use feedback to begin the development of the next site learning plan.

Context

2011 proved to be a year of change and improvement. We were fortunate with the appointment of our wonderful permanent teacher, Jenny McMahon, who joined us in January. Children, parents and staff all acknowledged her gentle, calm and patient manner and outstanding teaching skills as a welcome addition to the team.

Preparation for the National Quality Agenda for Early Childhood Education was one focus during the year. The new team took the opportunity to begin the process of adapting all programming, planning, assessment and recording to incorporate the Early Years Learning Framework. The EYLF is the national mandated curriculum for 0 to 5 year olds in all settings.

The team also joined the Regional ILit action research group to improve the early literacy outcomes for each child.

During Term 3 the Director took long service leave (LSL) and Jenny kindly accepted the acting position. We were again particularly fortunate to have an outstanding, young, contract teacher, Chloe Stephens, join the team. Later the Governing Council noted comments by children, parents and staff and took the opportunity to commend the exceptional skill of this young teacher to DECS.

During Term 3 Jenny and Chloe continued to adapt and develop EYLF
summaries that described the curriculum as it related to each child.

They also used the arrival of the colour photocopier in July to develop eye-catching, engaging and well read EYLF displays for families that highlighted the learning outcomes for children. We have also incorporated colour photographs into our curriculum overviews in the regular newsletters.

**Highlights**

**Curriculum**

There were a range of curriculum areas that we focused on during the year including a dramatic play focus that had hospitals, vet, restaurant, fire fighters, puppet performances and potters.

Book Week led to week long celebration with a family lunch and dress ups during the week. Two published children’s book authors, who also happened to be grandparents, joined the preschool to share their books and stories.

The Physical wellbeing focus saw a trial of the Gross motor assessment following the Occupational Therapy parent groups. Individual programs and small group activities were followed up at home following Individualised Learning Plan meetings with parents.

Although we had only a small group of aboriginal families, we embedded the Aboriginal cultural focus in the curriculum with Reconciliation activities, Harmony celebrations, flag awareness, cultural history, songs, stories and a visiting aboriginal educator.

We also applied the recently introduced Aboriginal Individual Learning Plan for our indigenous families. We found it to be a relatively straight forward document which allowed us to get to know children, parents and families in depth. Once familiar with the process, parents expected the regular reviews and their opportunity to monitor and report on progress at both home and preschool. An added benefit was the increase in attendance for those children.

One example of following children’s voice in their learning led to us expanding on the preschool wide interest in insects. This was instigated by children exploring their environment and sharing their discoveries with others. An entomologist, who also happened to be a grandfather, joined the groups to share his expertise and help with identification of creatures. Later unidentified insects found parents searching the web with their children.
to find the information to share with the preschool community.

![Family lunch with an asian flavour](image)

Diversity was celebrated through family lunches with a focus on recipes from our children’s cultural backgrounds. Parents and grandparents taught us songs and stories from their homelands. The family tree activity allowed us to explore identity for children and staff. Our commitment to an inclusive program also meant that we welcomed children wherever they were on the learning continuum.

**Learning**

Each year staff and Governing Council develop the Site Improvement plan often incorporating recommendations from the previous Annual report. This year we agreed to target three priorities to focus on and budget for.

**Priority 1. Literacy**

Increase the early literacy skills of all children in the ILit group.

* **Performance Indicator**
  Children will increase their skills with
  * Phonological awareness
  * Concepts of print/book knowledge
  * Receptive/expressive language

* **Strategies**

  Staff participated in the I-Lit regional research project and worked with internationally recognised and Australian based Literacy development authority Stephen Graham to widen our understanding of early literacy development. This was a considerable commitment for the preschool with the team’s six training days off site matched by staff completing the equivalent “homework” in their own time. The team collected baseline data in the three areas for children, developing and implementing a range of learning programs and then late in Term 3 reviewing progress.

All children were included in the implemented programs but only the 35 children who were to conclude their eligible year in Term 3 or 4 are represented in the final data.

![Modelling reading for a friend](image)

**Results**

All children progressed in all areas. With 30 of the 35 children (or 85%) scoring 30 or more on the Screen of Phonological Awareness (SPA). The same screening tool is used for Preschoolers to Year 3. Although it is pleasing that a large majority of our children are making significant progress in Phonological Awareness, we have continued to raise our concerns that the deemed regional target - 80% of children to reach 30 and/or above - is an arbitrary one. For us the most important use of
assessment data is the discussions we have about the way we use it to inform our practice to improve outcomes for children. It can give us a Literacy teaching focus that develops children’s oral language, print knowledge and phonological skills.

However, there are sections described in SPA that we would not expect preschoolers to understand and we will continue to concentrate on the areas that are age appropriate and developmentally sound.

The Concepts of Print/book knowledge focus was also an area for focused planning and review with all children made progress. 19 of 35 children scored 20 or more of the 25 areas from Marie Clay’s ‘Concepts of Print’ (COP). Clay describes 5 broad Concepts of Print (Book concepts, Reading Concepts, Directionality Concepts, Concepts of letter and word and Punctuation marks). Almost all Preschool children are at the pre-reading stage and, of course, are not expected to have an understanding of all 25 concepts she describes. As with SPA, COP is an assessment tool that is used from preschool through to junior primary and we would not necessarily expect preschoolers to know or understand later concepts. We will continue to concentrate on the areas that are age appropriate and developmentally sound.

The Recount section of ILit was our opportunity to focus on receptive and expressive language. The key idea for this section included the need to develop solid oral language development skills for literacy success. The foundation that leads into good reading and writing development.

One focus of our oral language program has been to encourage the children’s use of descriptive language. We often asked children to describe their paintings, drawings and creation so that their comments could be scribed onto their work. Children were encouraged to talk about their work from different perspectives including number, colour, shape, size and emotion. Displaying scribed work was a popular focal point for children and families and led to children providing more complete and complex information to be recorded.

**Priority 2. Numeracy**

Increase the early numeracy skills for all children in the Term 3 cohort.

**Performance Indicators**

All children will increase their skills against the EYLF outcomes incorporated into a site based assessment tool.

**Strategies**

The Early intervention proforma was used for all children in beginning the learning portfolio. Portfolios were reviewed and changed to a more efficient process with the EYLF descriptors used to record children’s progress.
All children made progress with the EYLF outcomes. Areas for further support or extension were included in the Individualised Learning Plan that were developed for each child and shared with their families. Games and activities were supplied to parents to support and challenge children in a fun way at home.

Although the staff were unable to access explicit numeracy training due to clashes with the ILit commitments this will be a focus in 2012

**Priority 3. Wellbeing**

Children will increase their involvement in the curriculum, deepen relationships and enhance their wellbeing during their eligible year.

**Performance Indicators**

Teaching staff will use the ‘Respect, Reflect, Relate’ (RRR) scales to assess children’s engagement with the program

**Strategies**

The permanent staff began familiarising themselves with the RRR scales however the LSL interruption has delayed the team. This will be the major focus of 2012. Instead, we continued to assess wellbeing through observations and conversations with children and parents.

Through interviews, children shared their opinions of highlights for the kindergarten. Consistently children indicated appreciation for the new computers and improvements to the garden and outside learning environment. Children reported that the new games, the sandpit, and the visiting animals as focal points. They also identified more challenging puzzles, excursions to ‘Mr McGee and the Biting Flea’ and families members visiting the site to share their expertise as important collective activities.

Parents indicated, in letters, cards, and conversations that the thoroughness and diversity of the program. Individualised learning plan interviews also gave staff an opportunity to check parent’s perception of their child’s engagement in the program.

We were successful in winning a “Parents in Education” grant from DECS. We used the funds to run well attended Physical wellbeing and Speech and Language development groups led by Occupational therapists and Speech Pathologists. These groups led to positive comments and feedback from parents on the valuable information they received on ways to help their children. We have applied for the 2012 grant and will pursue further groups.
Following on from the mandating of the DECS Child Protection Curriculum, the staff team began the implementation of the program in Term 3. A successful parent group was also held to explain and introduce the program to parents and address any concerns or questions parents had in relation to this mandated program.

Through discussions with parents and reminders in the newsletters, we continued to stress the benefits of regular attendance for engagement in the program, friendships and consolidation of learning. Our attendance percentage is slightly above the state average but we will work towards increasing it in 2012.

![Enrolment vs Attendances 2009 -2011](image)

Enrolment & attendances 2009 – 2011

Each year we review the Site Behaviour Code. The new team was able to examine, discuss and affirm behavioural limits for all members of the kindergarten community. This ensures the best possible learning environment for all children. It was then considered and approved by the 2011 Governing Council. Our code allows staff to intervene and support children to access the centre in physical, emotional and psychological safety with the approval and understanding of the community.

Parents joined us throughout the year and shared their expertise. We had uniformed nurses and Police officers, babies bathed, insects captured and identified, breakfast served and family lunches celebrated. All were opportunities to meet and welcome the extended family to the centre.

![Chase had a bath at group time](image)

**Parent Opinion Survey & feedback**

During term 3 the staff and Governing Council sought feedback from the community through the DECS survey.

Of the 34 families who responded the feedback was overwhelmingly positive. However, one family raised a number of concerns. Unfortunately, as the responses are anonymous we were unable to talk with the parent personally and so, following discussion at a Council meeting, we attempted to address any issues raised through the newsletter and displays on the entranceway.

Further, staff and Governing Council have developed plans to incorporate some comments in the improvement plans for 2012.

![Family and friends joined us for Night kindy](image)
During Term 2 we learned that we would be offering the Universal Access / 15 hours of Preschool initiative as of Term 1, 2012. Staff and the Governing Council discussed the options for offering sessions for children. A letter outlining the possibilities was sent to families affected and those on the waiting list. Community comments and questions were then forwarded to the governing Council for discussion. Of the 200 letters sent out, only one family raised concerns which were discussed at the next council meeting before staff approached the parent to offer clarifications. A personal letter on behalf of the council followed. We then ‘tweaked’ the sessions to accommodate the suggestions. The first year will be a trial period and the 2012 Governing Council will join staff is reviewing the provision of services and adjusting the program if required.

Governing Council Report

The New Governing Council, elected early in February from the parent body, quickly met to consider and eventually endorse amended policies and procedures of the preschool and the Site Improvement Plan.

Some purchases - table & connector blocks

The council developed a sub committee to develop the budget and monitor the income and expenditure.

The April meeting approved their plans and fundraising began in earnest to meet the shortfall in likely income.

Your Council worked with purpose and has completed a most successful fundraising year. Funds were raised by, amongst other activities, running the Quiz Night, a Kindy breakfast, family lunches, raffles and the Art Show. Over $10,000 was raised by a small but hard working group who then spent the money on your children and their preschool. Council subsidised theatre excursions to ‘Mr McGee and the Biting Flea’ and community visitors. It also paid for the parent education sessions with Occupational Therapists and Speech Pathologists and the linked creche.

Council subsidised ‘Labs on Legs’

The Governing Council installed solar panels in an effort to address the increasing power bills. It also purchased a very welcome colour photocopier which has added to the eye catching curriculum displays and children’s portfolios. A long planned, but often delayed, upgrade to the office area has increased storage and work space for staff as well as increasing the withdrawal area for
children working in small groups. The upgrade of the lawn area and amphitheatre garden were also planned.

Children’s computers and replacement of old and shabby resources has been a focus this year and proved to be popular with children.

Financial Report

Although we requested a February audit, the financial records were not examined until June. They were accepted with only two minor areas identified for improvement in the following year.

As always, your Governing Council has been responsible for the wise and equitable management of the centre. The staff team has always matched expenditure to the funds allocated by council but the steady creep of inflation has made improvements difficult. Council has managed a challenging process with integrity and purpose. After a number of years without increase, the governing council reluctantly had to raise the fees as of Term 4 and as we move into Universal Preschool/15 hours of preschool in 2012 the fees will reflect the increase in sessions for each child. However, Governing Council continues in their commitment to not excluding anyone on the basis of cost and has given staff permission to offer payment plans.

The outgoing Governing Council has left the centre in a good financial state and we thank them for their careful management. The Financial Statement of the preschool will be tabled at the Annual General meeting on Monday 20th February, 2012.

Finally, we would like to take this opportunity to thank all of our families for their continued support of the centre. Together we can support the learning outcomes for all children.