



# Chickens at the Preschool

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<b>Education and care services regulation/s</b>	<a href="#">Regulation 168</a> Education and care service must have policies and procedures <a href="#">Regulation 77</a> Health, hygiene and safe food practices <a href="#">Division 2</a> Incidents, injury, trauma and illness <a href="#">Regulation 73</a> Educational Program
<b>NSW Legislation</b>	<a href="#">State Environmental Planning Policy 2008</a> <a href="#">Local Government Regulation 2005</a>
<b>NSW Department of Education policy, procedure or guidelines</b>	<a href="#">Student health in NSW schools: A summary and consolidation of policy</a> <a href="#">Nutrition in schools</a> <a href="#">Student Discipline in Government Schools</a>
<b>National Quality Standard(s)</b>	<b>Quality Area 1</b> – Educational program and practice <b>Quality Area 2</b> – Children’s health and safety <b>Quality Area 3</b> - Physical environment <b>Quality Area 5</b> - Relationships with children <b>Quality Area 6</b> - Collaborative partnerships with families and communities
<b>Leading and operating department preschool guidelines</b>	<a href="#">Leading and operating department preschool guidelines</a>
<b>School policy or procedure</b>	
<b>Key Documents</b>	Leading and operating department preschool guidelines Early Years Learning Framework Guide to the National Quality Framework School Excellence Framework NSW Legislations

## Introduction

“Children’s connectedness and different ways of *belonging* with people, country and communities helps them to learn ways of *being* which reflect the values, traditions and practices of their families and communities.” (p.25, EYLF) Oak Flats Public School Preschool has introduced chickens into their program in order to embed in the children who attend, a strong sense of belonging to the environment and community and connection to the natural world.

## Aim

Through having chickens at the preschool, we aim to teach the children sustainable ways of living, caring for our land and animals, and being part of a community. We also aim for the chickens to be an outlet for children to self-regulate.

## Implementation

**Sustainability** is the idea that humans must interact with the environment in a way that ensures there will be enough resources left for future generations.

## **Sustainable Practices in the Preschool**

### **Caring for animals**

- The children are involved in all aspects of caring for the chickens. This includes cleaning and looking after the coop, providing the chickens with food and water, and locking them in at the end of the day.
- By caring for the chickens, the children learn responsibility and collaboration. They learn about basic needs and the importance of being nurturing and kind.
- The children and the educators together establish rules and expectations regarding the chickens. Educators display the rules and remind the children as necessary. It is hoped that the children take shared responsibility for ensuring that the rules are followed.
- The children and educators learn how to correctly hold the chickens so that they are not injured.

### **Learning where food comes from**

- By providing fresh eggs we are reducing the distance taken from the chicken to the plate which has many environmental benefits.
- The children learn about the benefits of growing their own food and take pride in this.
- When children understand what exactly they are eating and how it got on their plate in the first place, they'll ask questions about food supply, the farmers, the animals, and other people's eating habits.
- By teaching kids where their food is coming from and encouraging good eating habits early on in life, the children will understand the importance of nutrition and nourishing their body.

### **Reducing food waste**

- A container is used to collect the food scraps from the children's and staff's lunches. The container is labelled with scraps that the chickens can eat.
- The children learn that if food waste is put in the rubbish bin, it is dumped in landfill. By recycling your food waste you prevent it going to landfill, which helps reduce greenhouse gas emissions, odours, and saves space for things that need to be put in landfill.
- The children and educators give the scraps to the chickens and also remove any scraps left over at the end of the day in order to discourage vermin from entering the chicken coop.
- By providing the chickens with food scraps, the amount of pellets that need to be purchased is reduced.

### **Gardening**

- The straw and chicken poo is placed on the garden beds and used for fertiliser.
- The children help to plant fruit, vegetables, flowers, herbs and other plants, some of which are then eaten by the children and chickens. The children learn about gardening as a means of sustainability.

## **Community engagement**

### **Eggs for the community**

- Eggs are sold to the preschool families and community. Egg cartons are recycled and reused whenever possible.
- Eggs are given to the canteen. This helps cut down costs.
- We are providing nutritionally dense eggs from free range chickens.

### **Fundraising**

- Money raised from the sale of the eggs is used to gift chickens to villagers overseas through World Vision. \$10 purchases 2 chickens for a family. “Two chickens can provide a family with up to 1,000 eggs per year, a protein source, strong muscles, and income opportunities to help create brighter futures for the next generation. They provide:
  - a nest egg that contributes nutrition, 1,000 eggs and an income stream;
  - easy breeding, so your gift grows and multiplies; and
  - access to education, health and food for children, families and whole communities.” (From <https://www.worldvision.com.au/gifts/product?name=chickens-and-eggs>)

### **School involvement**

- Whilst the chickens are housed in the preschool the whole school is encouraged to be involved in their care.
- Children from the school visit the chickens as a reward or to help with self-regulation.
- Teachers use the eggs for experiences in their classrooms.
- A gardening club is to be established within the school and they will work with the preschool children to plant and maintain the gardens in the preschool. The chicken poo acts as fertiliser for the gardens.

### **Health and Safety**

#### **Wellness**

- The chickens are handled as often as possible to get them used to human contact.
- Spending time with the chickens can be beneficial for children who are not coping at school. “Chickens might not seem like a conventional therapy animal but they are proving a powerful therapeutic tool for those suffering from anxiety, depression, isolation, loneliness and dementia.” (Taken from <https://oska.uk.com/journal/chickens-improve-your-psychological-wellbeing>)
- Children are encouraged to visit the chickens and spend time with them in order to improve their mood.

#### **Hygiene**

- All children and staff must wash their hands after handling the chickens and cleaning the coop.
- Where possible gloves or dustpans and brushes are used when cleaning to minimise the touching of the dirty straw and chicken poo.
- Tongs are used when handling the food scraps.
- Containers and tongs are washed after use.

#### **Risk Assessment**

- Oak Flats Public School Preschool in compliance with the Education and Care Services Regulations is required to have risk assessments in place.
- A risk assessment for keeping the chickens is in place and reviewed annually.

#### **Evaluation**

- Staff at Oak Flats Public School Preschool monitor and review the effectiveness of the chicken program regularly.
- The children's agency is recorded in order to evaluate their point of view of the effectiveness of maintaining chickens at the preschool.

## References

The Early Years Learning Framework

World Vision - <https://www.worldvision.com.au/gifts/product?name=chickens-and-eggs>

OSKA - <https://oska.uk.com/journal/chickens-improve-your-psychological-wellbeing>

The Book Book Book: Chickens in Early Childhood Settings by Gabby Millgate

