



*THY KINGDOM COME*

# **OUR LADY OF GOOD COUNSEL SCHOOL**

## **EARLY CHILDHOOD CHARTER**



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## RATIONALE

At Our Lady of Good Counsel School we believe that each child is a precious and sacred gift from God created as an individual with their own unique talents and abilities. We cherish each child as a special miracle and strive to create an environment which enables them to experience the joy and wonder of our world.

Educators recognise that families are children's first and most influential educators. They create a welcoming environment where all children and families are respected and actively encouraged to contribute. Partnerships are based on foundations of understanding each others' expectations and attitudes and they build on the strengths of each others' knowledge.

Educators believe in all children's capacities to succeed and hold high expectations for their achievement in learning.

Through observation of children's skills and abilities, dispositions, background knowledge and culture, children are enabled to be confident and involved life-long learners by developing their imaginations, curiosity, sense of wonder, creativity, commitment and persistence.

Educators are actively present and engaged in providing an holistic program that includes relevant and meaningful play, hands-on, individual, small-group and whole group experiences in a rich learning environment. Communication and language skills are planned for, integrated into and implemented in all learning experiences throughout the day.

Educators move flexibly in and out of different roles and draw on different strategies as the context changes allowing time for children to develop, play, talk and build knowledge.

Working with the Early Years Learning Framework, The Kindy Curriculum Guidelines, the Australian Curriculum, the Western Australian Curriculum and the Nationally Quality Standard, and responding to evidence-based research and practice, educators continue to review this charter and their practice ensuring that this remains a viable document guiding practice and supporting the early learning team.

For more information:

Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, 2009, [\*Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia\*](#), Council of Australian Governments: Canberra

Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia, 2009, [\*Mandate of Catholic Education Commission of WA 2009-2015\*](#)

Western Australian Curriculum, 2014

<http://k10outline.scsa.wa.edu.au/home/p-10-curriculum/curriculum-browser>

## **IMPLEMENTING THIS CHARTER**

The early childhood team at OLGC consists of teachers, education assistants and the leadership team.

The early childhood team share responsibility for implementing this Charter. They:

- Actively develop the collegiality of the early childhood professional learning community – participating in meetings and discussions, visiting other classrooms, communicating about issues
- Reflect on their practice
- Mentor each other
- Make both informal and scheduled visits to other classrooms
- Challenge each other's thinking and practice.

Professional learning events include education assistants, supporting and developing shared understanding of our philosophy, pedagogy and practice.

Ways of sharing early childhood practice with the educators in older grades are found and supported, emphasising that the learning in early childhood is essential to the foundation of learning.

The role of the Principal is key to maintaining the vitality and integrity of this charter:

- enabling educators of the Three Year Old Program to Year 2 to meet regularly together
- participating in these meetings at least once a semester
- involving the expertise of external consultants
- enabling the early learning community (Three Year Old Program to Year 2) to have specific, targeted early childhood professional learning at least once a term
- ensuring the early learning community is an honoured part of the whole school team
- engaging with the early learning community in reflective conversations with models of effective practice (key teachers).

Members of the early childhood team are accountable to one another to advocate for this charter. A cyclical review process involving the whole early learning community ensures that this document includes new research, current curriculum directions and school foci.

## **FAMILIES**

Families are essential in supporting children to be, belong and become. They promote reflective discussion about family values and model Christian living.

Families regularly and willingly provide information to teachers about their family and cultural dimensions, living circumstances and changes in their children's physical, emotional and mental well being.

Family and community life provides a context for the learning. In everyday family life children see treasured adults using their capabilities in literacy, numeracy, creative and critical thinking, personal and social relationships, Information and communication technology, ethical behaviour and intercultural understanding.

Relationships between the school and families are important and are built every day. Time is available for families to speak with teachers and teachers take opportunities to speak with families through phone, email and face-to-face contacts at points of celebration or concern.

Families are supported to understand the pedagogy of early childhood at OLGC through:

- Parent meetings
- Individual conversations with teachers
- Participation in the classroom
- Participation in excursions.

<b>At OLGC, you will see:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Teachers work with families to communicate through regular conversations about children's development and learning.</li><li>● Educators seek to understand the family's goals and expectations for the student.</li><li>● Educators respect family and cultural differences.</li><li>● Teachers work with families to make decisions about how best to handle difficulties.</li></ul>

## WHAT DOES AN EDUCATOR LOOK LIKE AT OLGC?

An educator at OLGC might be

- A teacher (holding an appropriate, current, early childhood, university qualification) who: develops and directs learning programs, plans learning experiences, guides student behaviour, ensures access to the curriculum and the learning experiences for all students, evaluates student progress and reports on all students' learning.
- An education assistant, who works under the direction of the classroom teacher to facilitate the access, participation, engagement and learning outcomes of all students in the learning program
- A relief teacher, who is a university trained teacher who (for preference) complements the OLGC early childhood philosophy, is familiar with the children and honours the current program and practices.
- A Key Teacher, who is a university trained, practising classroom teacher within OLGC, who provides a model of effective practice, offering a real life example of how knowledge is translated into practice and is supported to welcome colleagues into their classroom for discussion, observation and critique.
- An Assistant Principal, who is a university trained teacher, who values the OLGC early childhood philosophy, the children and families and maintains reciprocal communication with the early childhood team in order to have current knowledge of the program and practices.
- A Principal, who is a university trained teacher, who leads the learning in the school. The principal values the OLGC early childhood philosophy, promotes the development of professionals in the early childhood team, and seeks opportunities to be familiarised with and engaged in early learning in the school.

***The term 'educator' is used in this document where it is applicable to any of the people in these roles.***

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<sup>1</sup> Please note: education assistants are called 'education assistants' at OLGC because their role is to support the education of the children.

## WHAT DOES A LEARNER LOOK LIKE AT OLGC?

Learners at OLGC are enthusiastic and curious. We consider learners to be students, educators and families.

Confident enough to test, change and express their theories, learners become engrossed in their learning. As partners in the learning process, they learn from each other and respect each other's ways of learning. Learners can make decisions, know when to persevere and when to move on.

Learners take ownership for their learning. They are engaged in learning that is negotiated with the educator and classmates. Learners listen to others, share knowledge, include other people's ideas and express their knowledge, understandings and skills in different ways.

Learners demonstrate independence and responsibility as they explore, investigate, see possibilities, engage in conversations and use a wide range of tools and materials.

Learners wonder, theorise, ask and pose questions, talk about what they have done and reflect on their learning. They see other points of view and analyse the learning of others.

Learners and educators form a respectful, caring, interconnected community in which everyone is helped to feel and be comfortable and safe.

Learners feel free to move, explore, share and think.

***In this document, the word 'learner' is used when students, educators and families are learning. The term 'students' refers to children in the school context. The term 'child' refers to children in the context of their whole life.***

### **At OLGC, you will see:**

- Personal spaces are provided for learners' belongings.
- Small, individual spaces are available for learners needing quiet and alone times.
- Learners work in a variety of small groups for most of the time.
- Whole group times are used to build community and shared purpose through reading, storytelling, problem solving as a group.
- Democratic processes such as class meetings are used for decision making.
- Each student's home culture and language are known and linked with school experiences.
- Contributions of each child's family and culture are recognised and valued.
- Students are encouraged to respect and appreciate similarities and differences among people.

## STUDENTS (PLANNING AND ASSESSMENT)

Deep, rich information about each student is gathered and informs curriculum, assessment and reporting. Involvement is sought from families about their child and their child's learning.

Observations, checklists, photographs, on entry assessments, transitional assessments and/or common assessment tasks provide assessment *for* learning.

Scope and sequence charts from the Australian Curriculum, Progress Maps from the Curriculum Framework and First Steps Continua enable assessment *of levels of achievement*.

Assessment *as part of the learning process* is achieved through community circles, peer teaching of newly learned skills and student's reflections.

Displays of student work in progress, culminating events, parent talks, learning journals, learning journeys and reports are some of the many ways in which learning is shared, reported and celebrated with children and families.

Three year old program: information is shared with families in informal conversations throughout the year. A Profile of the child is presented to families in a cyclical process throughout the year. The Profile describes children's 'being, belonging and becoming' and includes photographs and written observations.

Kindergarten and Pre-primary: Learning journals are shared with families twice a year and include:

- Project work that shows the process of the individual child's learning
- Photographs
- Assessment checklists.

Year One and Two: Formal reports are sent to families twice a year. Families are involved in a three way interview and learning journeys.

Educators provide information about individual student's interests, intelligences, strengths and needs to educators in the following year level, supporting students' transitions from year to year.

Data collected over time through national and state testing, school based assessments, standardised assessments, observation surveys, mathematics assessment interview and teacher based formative assessments across the school inform school priorities in planning for learning in early childhood.

Assessments for, of and about students' learning informs educators' pedagogy and planning for play, learning environments, content and learning outcomes.

<b>At OLG, you will see:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Teachers use observational assessment of student's progress, look at work samples, and document their development in order to plan and adapt the curriculum to meet individual needs.</li><li>● Systematic observations of student's progress are done.</li><li>● Systematic follow up of students who are experiencing difficulties</li><li>● Assessments are based on multiple sources and kinds of information.</li><li>● The program accommodates every student.</li></ul>

## **PEDAGOGY**

Pedagogy is guided by the Early Years Learning Framework which focuses on the child's sense of agency (being), relationships with others (belonging) and personal excellence (becoming). Educators model and guide the choices children make about their learning and support their understandings of the consequences of these decisions.

Educators create and evolve a rich learning environment which includes a variety of learning spaces and provides equitable opportunities and choices in response to challenges, inspirations and provocations.

Child focused curriculum acknowledges the development of the whole child with expectations appropriate to the age within a life-long learning framework. Educators observe and listen to students, taking them from their point of need and scaffolding their learning in individual and small group experiences.

There is time for learning and reflection facilitated by whole-part-whole lesson structures. Differentiated learning experiences use a variety of process, products and content to target particular students.

Negotiated curriculum enables educators to respond to the emerging needs and interests of children. Learning is recorded and documented building children's memories, encouraging reflection and making the learning visible to the children, educators and families.

Integrated learning projects include rich inquiry processes. A gradual release model (modelled → guided → shared → independent) is used to support student's independent learning.

A variety of assessment tools is used to assess student's learning or to seek additional support for the educators, student or families.

### **At OLGC, you will see:**

- Students and educators talking together meaningfully in small and large groups.
- Students engaged in conversations about real experiences, projects and current events.
- Adults responding attentively to student's language.
- Many experiences which encourage listening, including listening to a peer and being able to ask questions of them.
- Adults interacting with the children individually, in small groups and in large groups in ways that enable them to find out as much as possible about the children and to support the children's learning.
- Structured opportunities to reflect on learning enabling children to refine their own concepts and understanding and help the adults learn more about what the children know and are able to do.
- Students working collaboratively with other students to develop social skills such as cooperating, helping, negotiating and solving problems.
- Adults modelling, coaching and assisting problem solving skills.
- Students' curiosity and desire to make sense of the world being used to encourage their learning.
- Modeling and encouraging expected behaviour, setting clear limits, redirecting children to more acceptable activities, and intervening to enforce consequences for unacceptable behaviour are used as positive guidance techniques.
- Integrated curriculum incorporating oral language, literacy, numeracy and thinking skills throughout the day.
- Individualised learning opportunities developing literacy and numeracy skills that meet the student's needs.

## **PLAY**

Play is a natural learning context for learners that captures their interests, absorbs their attention, allows for the expression of personality and uniqueness, stimulates a sense of well-being and enhances dispositions such as curiosity and creativity. Play enables learners to make connections between prior experiences and new learning, assists learners to develop relationships and concepts and encourages language, literacy and numeracy.

For more information about types of play please refer to the Early Year Learning Framework.

<b>At OLG, you will see:</b>
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Educators promoting students' interests and developing concepts, skills and values.</li><li>● Materials including, multisensory, recycled, natural to promote open ended rich learning experiences</li><li>● Opportunities provided for students to plan and select their own activities from a variety of learning areas and projects.</li><li>● Learning experiences provided which build on and extend students' interests.</li><li>● When engaged in play experiences, educators supporting the play by posing problems, asking questions and making suggestions without taking over the students' play or the direction of it.</li></ul> |
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## THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Clean, safe, attractive and spacious indoor and outdoor learning spaces cater for individual, group and large group work.

Outdoor and indoor spaces are planned carefully in order to support early childhood pedagogy and students' learning.

Clear pathways enable students to move freely. Visible and connected spaces allow students to see and move from one space to another. A wide variety of furniture and spaces facilitates different kinds of learning, for different purposes and meeting specific learning needs.

Somato-sensory materials and resources that are age appropriate are ordered, accessible (easy to reach, easy to see) and can be moved freely. Resources provide provocations and help students to see from different perspectives (e.g. discovery tables, overhead projectors, light tables). Sustainable materials (e.g. natural, reusable, recycled materials such as carpet rolls, tubes, stones and shells) invite exploration, construction, creativity and thinking and make possible a wide variety of experiments, products and solutions.

Educators are engaged with the students, sitting with individuals and small groups, listening, wondering, talking, investigating, laughing, leading learning and being led.

Displays of individual student's work in progress, conversations and projects are photographed, recorded and made visible. This helps educators and families to celebrate and understand the process of the learning. Displays show traces of learning over time.

Children's thinking is made visible through routines and displays that document the ongoing process of thinking and learning.

### At OLGC, you will see:

- Indoor and outdoor environments being used as learning areas.
- Designated outdoor play areas.
- Flexible equipment both indoors and outdoors.
- Age appropriate, safe, ordered and accessible equipment and spaces.
- Planned learning experiences indoors and outdoors.
- Students of different ages sharing indoor and outdoor spaces.
- Clear pathways.
- Visible and connected spaces.
- Wide variety of furniture and spaces.
- Sustainable materials.
- Spaces for individual students, pairs, small and large groups.
- Displays that include conversations, photographs of students working and samples of students' work.

## CONTENT

In keeping with the *Mandate of the Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia 2009-2015*, for educators and students at Our Lady of Good Counsel, “human knowledge is always ‘a truth to be discovered’.” In all Learning Areas, students are encouraged to be as concerned to seek answers to questions that arise as they are to learn course content.

Students are encouraged too “to search for deeper understanding and meaning in whatever they study. This is particularly important in relation to issues of life and death, what it means to be human, moral right and wrong, the relationship between faith and science, and the origin, purpose and ultimate destiny of human life.

The desire to search in this fashion is a characteristic both of deepening human maturity and growing spiritual awareness. It can lead towards God, the ultimate Truth and Creator.

Content is negotiated (as appropriate) to students needs and meets the requirement of the Western Australian Curriculum , The Kindergarten Curriculum Guidelines and the Early Years Learning Framework. The Early Years Learning Framework provides the framework for the teaching and learning program for early childhood. All staff are conversant with the levels of the Western Australian Curriculum, which gives guidance to the content of the curriculum. The General Capabilities support focuses for curriculum development.

### At OLGC, you will see:

- Curriculum goals addressing all areas: the domains of learning, values, “subjects” (or learning areas).
- Content being integrated through units of work, projects, play and other experiences so that students develop understanding of concepts and develop skills, making connections across the disciplines.
- Educators are aware of and familiar with the ways in which students develop skills, concepts and values and design experiences which encourage this development.
- Curriculum developed from students’ interests and accommodates their individual needs.
- Students’ home and cultural backgrounds incorporated into the curriculum.
- Language and literacy developed through such experiences as: listening to and reading stories; seeing classroom charts and other print in use; participating in dramatic play and other experiences requiring communication; talking informally with others; experimenting with writing by drawing, copying and using their own invented spelling.
- Adults reading to students every day in various contexts, such as: lap reading; guided reading to small groups; and occasional large group story time.
- Students developing print awareness, sense of story, appreciation for literature and use of the written word while learning letter and sound names and recognising words that are meaningful to them.
- Math, science, social studies and health concepts developed through meaningful activities which, for example, enable students to seek solutions to problems; observe and record changes; classify objects for a purpose; use art media, music and movement to represent what they see, understand and feel.
- Students enjoying and experimenting with various forms of art, music, dance and dramatic play in order to represent ideas and feelings and for creative expression.
- Many opportunities throughout the day for free movement, balancing, running, jumping and other vigorous movements.
- Play activities such as pegboards, beads, construction sets, puzzles, drawing, painting, clay sculpting, cutting and dressing themselves develop fine motor skills.
- Students practising and developing self-help skills.

## LITERACY

Literacy encompasses the knowledge and skills students need to access, understand, analyse and evaluate information, make meaning, express thoughts and emotions, present ideas and opinions, interact with others and participate in activities at school and in their lives beyond school.

Becoming literate is not simply about knowledge and skills. Certain behaviours and dispositions assist students to become effective learners who are confident and motivated to use their literacy skills broadly. Many of these behaviours and dispositions are also identified and supported in other general capabilities. They include students managing their own learning to be self-sufficient; working harmoniously with others; being open to ideas, opinions and texts from and about diverse cultures; returning to tasks to improve and enhance their work; and being prepared to question the meanings and assumptions in texts.

This means that, as educators, we:

- Embed literacy concepts in routines (e.g. listening for rhyming words in poems and songs)
- Use literacy terms in everyday conversation
- Build a broad and rich vocabulary
- Display uses of literacy concepts in the classroom
- Link language and literacy concepts incidentally throughout experiences every day (e.g. drawing attention to environmental print, shared storytelling, letters, newsletters, transitions, listening and responding to instructions)
- Provide literacy tools in play and intentional teaching experiences
- Intentionally teach literacy knowledge, skills, behaviours and dispositions individually and in small groups – at students individual levels of proficiency
- Incorporate literacy in play experiences
- Draw out opportunities for developing literacy knowledge, skills, behaviours and dispositions in other subject areas (e.g. music)
- Incorporate intention, audience and purpose to meet the conventions of language
- Support children to make links between the familiar and known and the unfamiliar and unknown.

## NUMERACY

Numeracy encompasses the knowledge, skills, behaviours and dispositions that students need to use mathematics in a wide range of situations. The Numeracy learning continuum identifies the related mathematical knowledge and skills, and contextualises these through learning area examples.

When teachers identify numeracy demands across the curriculum, students have opportunities to transfer their mathematical knowledge and skills to contexts outside the mathematics classroom. These opportunities assist students to recognise the interconnected nature of mathematical knowledge, learning areas and the wider world, and encourage them to use their mathematical skills broadly.

This means that, as educators, we:

- Embed mathematical concepts in routines (e.g. counting how many children are away)
- Use mathematical terms in everyday conversation
- Build mathematical vocabulary
- Display uses of mathematical concepts in the classroom
- Link mathematical concepts incidentally throughout experiences every day (e.g. sitting in a circle, 'that wasn't the right shape')
- Provide mathematical tools in play and intentional teaching experiences
- Intentionally teach mathematical knowledge, skills, behaviours and dispositions individually and in small groups – at students individual levels of proficiency
- Incorporate mathematics in play experiences
- Draw out opportunities for developing mathematical knowledge, skills, behaviours and dispositions in other subject areas (e.g. music)
- Support children to make links between the familiar and known and the unfamiliar and unknown

## **CRITICAL AND CREATIVE THINKING**

Being a general capability of the Australian Curriculum, critical and creative thinking will permeate all learning areas. In recognising this, at OLGC our focus is to develop staff knowledge and skills with the intention of enabling students to make their thinking visible.

Students develop capability in critical and creative thinking as they learn to generate and evaluate knowledge, clarify concepts and ideas, seek possibilities, consider alternatives and solve problems. Critical and creative thinking are integral to activities that require students to think broadly and deeply using skills, behaviours and dispositions such as reason, logic, resourcefulness, imagination and innovation in all learning areas at school and in lives beyond school.

Critical thinking is at the core of most intellectual activity that involves students in learning to recognise or develop an argument, use evidence in support of that argument, draw reasoned conclusions, and use information to solve problems. Examples of thinking skills are interpreting, analysing, evaluating, explaining, sequencing, reasoning, comparing, questioning, inferring, hypothesising, appraising, testing and generalising.

Creative thinking involves students in learning to generate and apply new ideas in specific contexts, seeing existing situations in a new way, identifying alternative explanations, and seeing or making new links that generate new or differing outcome. This includes combining parts to form something original, sifting and refining ideas to discover possibilities, constructing theories and objects, and acting on intuition. The products of creative endeavour can involve complex representations and images, investigations and performances, digital and computer-generated output, or occur as virtual reality.

Concept formation is the mental activity that helps us compare, contrast and classify ideas, objects, and events. Concept learning can be concrete or abstract and is closely allied with metacognition. What has been learned can be applied to future examples. It underpins the elements outlined below. Dispositions such as inquisitiveness, reasonableness, intellectual flexibility, open- and fair-mindedness, a readiness to try new ways of doing things and consider alternatives, and persistence both promote and are enhanced by critical and creative thinking.

This means that as educators, we:

- Provide activities that integrate reason, logic, imagination and innovation – for example, focusing on a topic in a logical, analytical way for some time, sorting out conflicting claims, weighing evidence, thinking through possible solutions, and then, following reflection and perhaps a burst of creative energy, coming up with innovative and considered responses.
- Encourage students to talk about their thinking using visible thinking routines
- Encourage students to share the ways in which they arrive at ideas or solutions
- Support students to give and receive effective feedback, learning to value the diversity of learning and communication styles.