



## About the Curriculum

### *The Importance of Quality Care and Education in the Early Years*

With 90% of brain development occurring by age 5, the early years are an exciting and crucial time in our lives, particularly for instilling and solidifying positive attitudes, attributes, values and life skills. Children's brains are being shaped in unique ways through their experiences, relationships and opportunities.

The first five years of life are critical in setting patterns for life success. At the Willows, we are committed to giving children the very best start in order for them to live fulfilling and successful lives.

We view children as whole individuals, sharing a precious stage in their lives with us.

We support them towards success at big school and beyond - we provide life-readiness, not just school-readiness. Luckily, current research shows that the very dispositions associated with life success have been identified as predictors of success at school too! (Please see *The Willows School Readiness Document*.)

### *The Willows is a place to:*

- Discover yourself,
- Uncover and hone your emerging talents and passions,
- Develop and test your theories,
- Grow strong in emotional and social intelligence,
- Develop open hearts and minds and
- Master the skills that truly matter for life success such as:
  - i. Creativity, resilience, persistence, flexibility, and facing challenges enthusiastically,
  - ii. Knowing how to nurture relationships,
  - iii. A love of learning, curiosity and sense of awe and wonder for our incredible world,
  - iv. A joy for diversity, humanity and nature, and
  - v. Knowing who we are, how we can be our best selves and how we can look after ourselves.



The Willows offers these opportunities through an unpressured, unhurried, holistic and individualised curriculum based on a deep knowledge of each child and family, current early childhood theories, research and information, and, most importantly, through strong supportive relationships.

### *We believe the best curriculum acknowledges that:*

Children learn best when engaged in hands on, meaningful, authentic experiences based on their strength and interests, when they are given autonomy, and allowed to lead their own learning.

Children need to be given time to engage in deep learning, facilitated by caring and skilled and knowledgeable adults, who recognise when they can value-add and when they should stand back and allow children to discover for themselves,

It is our responsibility to know our children very well, know about play and development, and listen to what children say, acknowledge their thinking, and facilitate their play.

### *Belonging Being and Becoming at the Willows*

## **BECOMING THROUGH BEING. BEING AS A RESULT OF BELONGING.**

At the Willows, first, we foster a sense of belonging (relationships) which leads to us feeling confident and secure enough to be – exploring who we are, our thoughts and theories, our world, our place, our purpose. It is through being that we become; shaping our minds and bodies.

As outlined in our curriculum framework, the Early Years Learning Framework, the Willows works to support the whole child by nurturing their sense of belonging, protecting their right to be, and facilitating the individual they are becoming.



# THE WILLOWS

## PRESCHOOL & EARLY LEARNING CENTRE

### *The Willows Curriculum:*

**Is Holistic.** The Willows Curriculum is holistic because we acknowledge that children's learning is holistic. Children learn simultaneously in all areas: emotional, social, intellectual, moral, spiritual and physical. Our curriculum encompasses ALL THAT WE DO at the Willows, including all environments (not just the classrooms), routines, interactions, experiences and resources.

**Is based on a cycle of planning,** informed by critical reflection and professional knowledge.

**Is Informed by children's interests** and personalised to cater to the individual children in care.

**Is guided by our image of the child** as competent, capable, worthy of respect and with the right to be actively involved in their experiences (agency and autonomy).

**Values Process not product,** this is where the learning and sense of wellbeing develops.

**Honours Play as children's work,** every child has a right to engage in Playwork. As latest neuro-scientific research supports, we believe the very best context for children's learning is PLAY.

**Is Challenging,** introducing risky play, to build confidence and resilience.

**Is Rich,** ever-changing, thoughtful, thought provoking.

**Is Authentic,** with real resources and experiences that are contextually relevant.

**Is Based around open-ended resources, and loose parts** that come to life in the hands of children.

**Encourages Creativity** with ample time to experience deeply

**Instills a sense of responsibility, agency and autonomy** by inviting children to be active community members - taking responsibility for ourselves, our belongings, each other and our world.

**Can be Messy** with mud and goop and slime

**Is Emergent** with spontaneous and planned experiences guided by children and based in reflective practice.

**Focuses on Natural** emphasising nature and our connection to the earth.

**Encompasses sustainability** and protecting our grandchildren's heritage.

**Is Collaborative,** consulting all stakeholders.

**Is constantly evolving,** to suit the needs of all stakeholders and to ensure best practice.



**LEARNING TO LEARN**  
We teach your child HOW to think  
not what to think.