



# The Willows Children's Centre

## 2020 annual report to the community

The Willows Children's Centre Number: 4675

Partnership: Heysen

### Signature

Preschool director:

Ms Susan Jackson

Governing council chair:

Lauren Gilleard

Date of endorsement:

17 March 2021



Government  
of South Australia  
Department for Education

## Context and highlights

The Willows is a stand-alone, Department for Education, Children's Centre for Early Childhood Development and Parenting, a member of the Heysen Partnership and Mt Barker Portfolio of schools and kindergartens. The Willows incorporates kindergarten, inclusive preschool, occasional care, visiting professionals, family services and programs to support families with children birth to 8 years in a purpose-built facility. The expansive well-designed building offers interesting spaces for families and children to come together, learn and form lifelong friendships. The Willows continues to have a strong and supportive Governing Council (GC). Together with the staff team, GC members and the parent community review The Willows policies & practices as well as actively contribute ideas to our family and children's program(s). Thanks to chairperson Lauren Gilleard for her passion, commitment and knowledge to lead a deeper understanding of inclusion.

The facility can accommodate 76 children per day but enrolments are capped at 44 per day for preschool and 8 children per morning for the 3 hour occasional care sessions offered on Wednesday and Thursdays. There are a maximum of 6 places per week in the Inclusive Preschool Program that provides a 1:3 staff child ratio for children with multiple additional needs, all programs were at staffing capacity in 2019 & 2020.

We have an embedded commitment to deliver a collaborative integrated approach; offering programs that value children as capable and competent to influence and extend their own learning. This is guided by the philosophy and vision of The Willows being a place to belong, where children's strengths and interests are valued, and learning is delivered utilising play and inquiry methodology to engage children's interest. The 2020 Parent feedback survey affirmed that families feel a sense of belonging at The Willows; this is an ongoing focus as we work collaboratively with families to encourage a lifelong love of learning and meaningful learning outcomes for each child throughout the kindergarten year.

In 2020 we had a focus goal to further develop our knowledge and skills related to cultural inclusion. Members from the Aboriginal community and non-Aboriginal Community along with the staff team commenced our Reconciliation Action plan, this will continue in 2021.

2020 offered some interesting challenges with many changes due to Covid-19 a number of programs were suspended. The Willows succeeded in progressing in all quality improvement goals. The Willows was assessed by the ACECQA in January 2020 and achieved the highest assessment visit rating of exceeding for all quality areas and an overall exceeding rating.

## Governing council report

2020 proved to be a rather challenging year for everyone personally and professionally with the global impact of COVID -19 as we all adjusted to a 'new' normal - unfortunately the Governing council was unable to organise traditional events and projects such as meet and greet night due to the COVID restrictions, however despite the odds we conquered on and made remarkable achievements and set incredible goals for 2020 to continue on to 2021.

One of the most notable achievements for 2020 was The Willows was awarded rating 'exceeding' from the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) this award is a reflection of the hard work, determination, effort and dedication by the team. It is a privilege to have such a passionate team working with and for our children, families and community.

Governing council achievements and ongoing projects include;

Building relationships with local political members with the aim to showcase The Willows and the successful and valuable services provided to the community. Governing council was fortunate to have Dan Cregan attend a meeting and tour the centre.

Inclusive and cultural input - continuing to evolve our inclusive spaces and understanding the needs of additional needs children and families at The Willows. We were honoured to have Aboriginal Artist David Booth extend cultural learning to the children during 2020 - David and his sons performed for the children on the last day of term 4 for 2020 during graduation. A Reconciliation action plan has been commenced by governing council, staff, parents and students representatives in 2021, a representative from this group will have a dedicated place within the Governing Council.

The Willows 2020 secretary Deborah Breslauer's father Alan was kind enough to volunteer his time to build a mud kitchen for the children to enjoy. The landscaping of the outdoor play area was commenced in 2020 and will continue in 2021.

Committee members and staff, researched suitable improvements for the IPP sensory Room involving site consultation, visiting other sites and support from department personnel. This project is one close to my heart and I look forward to seeing the progress and fruition of the completed improvements.

Best of luck to the new Governing council for 2021, I look forward to getting to know new members as I step down into a General member role to continue advocacy for additional needs as a second year parent in IPP.

Lauren Gilleard  
Chairperson

# Improvement planning - review and evaluate

In 2020 we started the year early with work through the school holidays to finalise preparation for the ACECQA assessment of The Willows against the National Quality Standards. As you will be aware the ongoing commitment and dedication of the whole team is outstanding. We have consistently been supported by dedicated Governing Council members who have an equal dedication to The Willows. The end result was a rating of "Exceeding" in the standards of all seven quality areas. The team were able to provide evidence of consultation with families and the community, embedded and reflective practice for each quality area. Congratulations to all involved, including the 2019 team for this wonderful achievement.

Each year we plan priorities for improvements. In 2020 we had 3 Goals:

Goal 1: To increase children's literacy by focusing on their use of language to effectively communicate:

All children made progress and increased their use of language to effectively communicate. Educators engaged children in play with words and sounds to extend children's ability to listen and respond to sounds and patterns in speech, stories and rhymes. All educators completed Marte Meo practitioner qualifications and utilised the strategies to progress children's learning in this area. Children's progress was documented in statements of learning at the end of the year and by parent's formal and informal feedback. 90.48% of families reported increases related to this goal.

Goal 2: Increase children's understanding and use of numeracy with a focus on number sense:

Children made progress early in the year counting by rote and progressing to the majority of the children understanding number concepts and recognising numerals. Educators offered a variety of play based learning opportunities to stimulate children's interest enthusiasm and involvement in playing with number concepts to learn. 95.% of families reported their child's understanding of number increased over the year.

Goal 3: Increase children's understandings of cultural inclusion and diversity

Many of our plans for this area were slowed due to Covid-19 but strong progress was made in the second half of 2020. We initiated a Reconciliation Action Group with Governing Council, Parent, staff, and student representatives and in 2021 we will have as specific Governing Council representative from this group. David Booth, an outstanding Aboriginal Artist worked with the children to provide valuable learning experiences and created two magnificent pieces of artwork with the children that included their handprints. To finish the year on a strong and positive note, David and his sons provided a wonderful performance for the children on the last day of the year. The team utilised professional development and resources to continue a meaningful learning journey. 45% of family responses said their child developed some sense of cultural diversity and 55% said their child developed a strong sense of cultural diversity.

We have an embedded commitment to deliver a collaborative integrated approach; offering programs that value children as capable and competent to influence and extend their own learning. This is guided by the philosophy and vision of The Willows being a place to belong, where children's strengths and interests are valued and learning is delivered utilising play and inquiry to engage children's interest. 100% of 2020 Parent feedback survey responses affirmed their child had a sense of belonging. This is enhanced by the range of family programs being offered, 100% of parent responses indicating value for the family programs being offered through The Willows.

I am looking forward to working together with our amazing staff team and continuing and new families and children in 2021

Susan Jackson  
Director

# Enrolment

Year	Enrolment by Term			
	Term 1	Term 2	Term 3	Term 4
2017	73	70	72	69
2018	69	71	72	72
2019	79	81	80	79
2020	87	88	87	86

NOTE: The data is based on person counts in the two week reference period each term. Excludes pre-entry.  
Data Source: Preschool Data Collection, Data Reporting and Analytics directorate.  
Term 2 2020 data may not be available for all preschools.

## Enrolment comment

Preschool enrolment data is based on person counts in the two week reference period each term. Excludes pre-entry.  
Data Source: Preschool Data Collection, Data Reporting and Analytics directorate.

### Enrolment by Term

Year	Term 1	Term 2	Term 3	Term 4
2017	73	70	72	69
2018	69	71	72	72
2019	79	81	80	79
2020	87	88	87	86

Enrolments were high in 2020 with some changes due to children moving in and other children moving out of the local area.

Mt Barker is a growing area with a number of transient families. It is expected there will be a steady increase of enrolments over the coming years but due to a population trend of less 4 year old children in 2021, it is uncertain if the upward trend will be maintained during 2021.

# Attendance

	Term 1	Term 2	Term 3	Term 4
2017 centre	94.2%	90.9%	90.6%	82.5%
2018 centre	95.2%	89.0%	85.5%	88.2%
2019 centre	90.8%	86.1%	88.9%	91.6%
2020 centre	93.3%	77.3%	85.8%	76.8%
2017 state	90.5%	88.2%	85.9%	87.2%
2018 state	90.7%	88.3%	87.0%	87.2%
2019 state	90.3%	87.4%	85.8%	86.4%
2020 state	89.3%	82.0%	84.8%	85.9%

Based on attendances recorded in the two week reference period each term. Data for eligible enrolments as described in the department's Enrolment policy.

Attendance rates may differ to previous reporting with the transfer from calculations based on deemed attendance to actual attendance using booked hours divided by attended hours.

\*Note: Term 2 2020 data may not be available for all preschools.

## Attendance comment

The Willows Attendance				
	Term 1	Term 2	Term 3	Term 4
2017	94.2%	90.9%	90.6%	82.5%
2018	95.2%	89.0%	85.5%	88.2%
2019	90.8%	86.1%	88.9%	91.6%
2020	93.3%	77.3%	85.8%	76.84%
South Australian Attendance				
2017	90.5%	88.2%	85.9%	87.2%
2018	90.7%	88.3%	87.0%	87.2%
2019	90.3%	87.4%	85.8%	86.4%
2020	89.4%	82.0%	84.7%	

Term 2 attendance figures for The Willows were impacted by Covid-19. A number of families chose to keep children at home until they were more certain of the risk factors. These families were supported by educators providing at home work during Term 2. Educators corresponded with families via phone and email. Generally The Willows attendance figures are slightly above SA averages but this was not the case in Term 2 due to Covid-19. Families were surveyed in 2020 and based on feedback, a decision was made to offer 9 full Fridays per year instead of fortnightly 3 hour sessions in 2021. We will be monitoring the impact of this decision on attendance in 2021.

## Destination schools

Feeder Schools (Site number - Name)	2017	2018	2019	2020
1539 - Mount Barker South Primary School	21.0%	32.0%	50.9%	62.1%
9046 - St Francis de Sales College	17.0%	14.0%	11.9%	7.6%
8420 - St Mark's Lutheran Primary School	39.0%	50.0%	25.4%	25.8%

NOTE: The data is collected in Term 3. It does not reflect actual schools enrolled in by exiting preschool children. Only schools that are a destination for 3% or more of students are shown.

Data Source: Site Performance Reporting System (SPER), Term 3 2020 collection.

## Destination schools comment

### Feeder Schools

Site number - Name	2017	2018	2019	2020
1539 - Mount Barker South Primary School	21.0%	32.0%	50.9%	62.1%
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The percentages of children attending Mt Barker South Primary School have steadily increased since The Willows was relocated beside the school. 2020 saw a further increase when Out of School Hours Care became available for our kindergarten children. The number of children attending St Marks Lutheran Primary school have remained high, children attending St Francis de Sales remain significant. Transitions are planned with the schools and supported by The Willows resources and staff team. Parenting programs were offered to assist families to plan for transition to school. Increased continuity of learning and transition arrangements are planned for 2021.

## Client opinion summary

30 percent of families responded to the parent opinion survey.

Some survey responses are shown in the improved outcomes funding section of the report. From the respondents:

\* 68% of families rated the quality of written communication about children's learning at The Willows as excellent and the remaining 32%

rated it as good. No families rated it as average

\* 68% of families said the majority of planning for learning follows children's interests, 27% said most planning is designed around children's

interests, 5% said some planning reflects children's interests and no families said that there were small amounts or no amounts of planning to reflect children's interests

\* 95% of families rated the physical environment as excellent and 5% rated the physical environment as good, no families rated it as average

\* 86% of families said their child feels a strong sense of belonging at The Willows, 14% reported some sense of belonging and no families

said their child had no sense of belonging

\* 100% of families said they feel their child is very safe at The Willows, no families reported any concerns about their child's safety

\* 55% of families said they were very satisfied with the opportunities to be involved with their child's kindergarten journey 36% said their were

adequate opportunities and 9% said they didn't feel there were any opportunities to be involved.

\* 77% of families said they were well informed and welcomed to share their opinions at The Willows, 23% of families said opportunities to

receive information and share opinions was okay and no families said they were not informed or welcomed at The Willows.

\* 91% of families are very likely & 9% are somewhat likely to recommend The Willows

\* 100% of families said they value the option of family programs being offered at The Willows

## Relevant history screening

Relevant screening history checks are obtained according to Department for Education Guidelines. The screening checks are systematically monitored by the department and by The Willows. All educators and contractors are required to obtain and provide a current working with children criminal history clearance. Copies are sighted and retained at The Willows and on electronic department management systems.

## Financial statement

Funding Source	Amount
Grants: State	\$0
Grants: Commonwealth	\$0
Parent Contributions	\$47,745
Other	\$0

## 2020 Preschool annual report: Improved outcomes funding

Improved outcomes category (where applicable to the site)	Briefly describe how the 2020 funding was used to improve the relevant department's standard of educational achievement outcomes (where applicable):*	Outcomes achieved or progress towards these outcomes:
Improved outcomes for numeracy and literacy	Funding of \$8,667.76 contributed to all educators obtaining Practitioner Certification in Marte Meo techniques. This included video analysis of teaching practice. The technique enhanced strategies for sustained shared thinking without putting undue pressure on children.	Significant progress was made against the Indicators Preschool Numeracy and Literacy (IPNL) and Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF)
Improved ECD and parenting outcomes (children's centres only)	Marte Meo provided a a whole site professional to focus on supporting children's progress guided by Indicators of Preschool Numeracy and Literacy (IPNL) and Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) principles practices and outcomes. Filming and analysing informed reflective practice of teachers pedagogy.	Children's confidence to communicate and use of oral language increased. All children made progress against the EYLF and IPNL.
Inclusive Education Support Program	100% of the funding was utilised to provide small group and individual child functional support to participate in the educational programs. Thanks to our chairperson Lauren Gilleard who led increased understanding of inclusion with committed dedication, passion and knowledge.	Progress was planned, monitored, achieved and documented in consultation with allied health professionals.
Improved outcomes for non-English speaking children who received bilingual support	No bilingual support funding was received in 2020	N/A

\* The department's standard of educational achievement is defined as children and young people progressing and achieving at or above their appropriate year level.