1. Rationale

Catholic schools play a vital part in the life of the Church in Western Australia by contributing to the holistic development of our young through education. Early Childhood Education and Care are integral in laying the foundational blocks on which children ‘develop a Gospel vision of themselves and society’ (Mandate paragraph 6).¹

All human learning is valued as a gift of God. The Catholic education system provides a genuine education and care choice for parents and families. Catholic schools recognise parents as children's first and most influential educators. Each child ‘experiences school as an extension of their own homes, the climate being a humanly and spiritually enriching one’ (Mandate paragraph 36).²

2. Definitions

Early Childhood Education and Care at Our Lady of Mount Carmel refers to the education and care of children aged 0 to 8 years and all children attending outside school hours care services at the school.

3. Scope

This policy applies to all Primary and Composite Catholic Schools in Western Australia and to Early Childhood Education and Care facilities licensed under the auspices of the CECWA Trustees.

4. Principles

4.1 Our Lady of Mount Carmel School recognises parents as children’s first and most influential educators.

4.2 Each child has individual needs and potential that shall be recognised, valued and responded to within a safe, caring and positive Catholic learning environment that fosters a sense of community.

4.3 Early Childhood Education and Care promotes learning as a lifelong process.

4.4 The learning environment, curriculum and pedagogy offered shall be inclusive of all children and be developmentally and culturally appropriate.

4.5 Early Childhood Education and Care at OLMC shall be aligned to current research on development, learning and teaching as it applies to children 0-8 years old.

4.6 Early Childhood Education and Care at Our Lady of Mount Carmel shall recognise the influence of relevant system, state and national documents.

4.7 All children enrolled in Early Childhood Education and Care in Our Lady of Mount Carmel shall be the responsibility of the principal and designated staff.
5. Procedures

5.1 Procedures for enrolment shall be in accord with the Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia (CECWA) and Government policy statements.

5.2 Period of attendance:

5.2.1 Our Lady of Mount Carmel will continue to canvas the need to offer a three year old program before the start of second semester and at the end of each year with sessions to be based on local need.

5.2.2 Our Lady of Mount Carmel shall provide Kindergarten children with a program of a minimum of fifteen hours per week implemented in accordance with the Federal Government’s Universal Access program.

5.2.3 Our Lady of Mount Carmel shall provide Pre-Primary children with five full day sessions from the commencement of the school year.

5.2.4 Our Lady of Mount Carmel will canvas the need for providing Long Day Care and if deemed necessary, shall operate a minimum of eight hours per day for forty eight weeks per year.

5.2.5 Our Lady of Mount Carmel will canvas the need for providing Outside School Hour Care and if deemed necessary shall:
- operate Before or/and After School Care on each day of the school year
- operate Vacation Care for a minimum of eight hours per day and seven weeks of the school holidays per year

5.3 Early Childhood Education and Care programs at OLMC shall be appropriately staffed according to the:
- Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia Policy 2-C6 ‘Appointment of Staff in Catholic Schools’
- Current early learning and care legislation relevant for Western Australia

5.4 All educators providing a learning program for the pre-compulsory years shall hold an Early Childhood qualification in accordance with current regulations. It is highly desirable for teachers of Years 1-3 to hold an Early Childhood Education qualification.

5.5 All educators in the early years and principal of Our Lady of Mount Carmel shall implement evidence based early childhood pedagogy and be engaged in appropriate ongoing professional development.

5.6 Early Childhood Care and Education services, in conjunction with Catholic Education Office of Western Australia, shall develop and periodically review written policies and procedures as outlined in current legislation relevant for Western Australia.

6. References

¹Bishops Mandate for the Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia 2009 – 2015

Due for Review in 2013