



POLICY STATEMENT

SERVICE ACCESS

POLICY INTENT

1. This policy exists to ensure that all students of St Mary's Primary School Erskineville (St Mary's) have transparent and fair access to the out of hours school service run by SMOOSH. The policy also aims to ensure families, who are identified as coming from a disadvantaged group, are prioritised in their access to the service as we believe this is the right thing to do and aligns to our purpose.

PRINCIPLES

2. We follow these guidelines to manage application requests for the service.
3. We will ensure families who are identified as coming from a disadvantaged group are prioritised in their access to SMOOSH After School Care (ASC). Following that, priority of access will then be given to siblings of children already in care at SMOOSH. Other families of St Mary's will then be allocated places in line with the wait list process.
4. SMOOSH will provide places for children currently enrolled at St Mary's needing care during their time out of school hours. If, after satisfying the needs of children enrolled at St Mary's for care, the management committee is of the view that additional capacity exists, then SMOOSH may offer care to primary school aged children not currently attending St Mary's.
5. SMOOSH will not discriminate against any families needing care, regardless of cultural background, religion, sexual orientation, gender, disability, marital status or income.

CONSIDERATIONS

6. SMOOSH will only be available for children who currently attend primary school.
7. SMOOSH will provide access to children and families with special needs.
8. Children are placed in cohorts depending on their age. This means that children in kindergarten and year 1 will only access certain areas for safety reasons, (e.g., ground floor) and will interact closely with children of a similar age.
9. Where demand for places exceeds availability, a waiting list will be maintained which identifies priority of access eligibility, siblings already in care, date placed on the list, and required days of care. The priority of access definitions are described later in this document.

10. SMOOSH will respond to ASC waiting list numbers by offering a maximum of three afternoons per week to those of priority iv) or lower, as outlined at paragraph 13.
11. Additional days will be offered once the out of school service needs of families that are assessed within the priority categories have been addressed and vacancies remain.
12. Any families wishing to know their place on the waiting list should consult with the Centre Director.

PRIORITY OF ACCESS

13. Where there are more families requiring care than places available, places in the service are allocated in line with the priority of access. Children are considered in the context of three categories when determining priority of access, as outlined in paragraph 13.

Category A:

1. A child at risk of serious abuse or neglect
2. A child of a sole parent who satisfies, or parents who both satisfy, the activity test through paid employment
3. Any other child enrolled at St. Mary's.

Category B:

- Children in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families
- Children in families which include a disabled person
- Children in families on low incomes
- Children with English as an Additional Language/Dialect (EAL/D)
- Children in socially isolated families
- Children of sole / single parents.

Category C: Siblings of children already in care at SMOOSH.

14. ASC places will be offered to families in the following order:

- i) all children in category A1;
- ii) children in category A2, who meet one or more criteria in category B;
- iii) children in category A3, who meet one or more criteria in category B;
- iv) all other children in categories A2 or A3, who meet the criteria in category C;
- v) all other children in category A2;
- vi) all other children in category A3.

15. The following definitions apply for the allocation of priority placements in those categories:

Child at risk of serious abuse or neglect – any child who is identified as being at risk under state or territory child protection law.

EAL/D, children with English as an Additional Language/Dialect - priority will be given to children identified as Beginning English Language Learners and Emerging English Language Learners. A letter from the school will be required to prove that the child falls within this category.

Socially isolated families - where the family has no social contact and limited ability to overcome their barriers to making social contact. Written evidence must be provided to gain priority of access under this category (for example, a supporting letter from a professional agency like Centrelink, a family support service or a mental health provider).

16. The SMOOSH Management Committee will assess all claims for priority under the priority of access and may, at its discretion, require further information to substantiate any claim.
17. The SMOOSH Management Committee will consider applications from parents and guardians who have extraordinary circumstances and may, by majority vote, grant a position to a child ahead of others on the waiting list if satisfied that, on the basis of hardship, it is appropriate to do so.
18. The SMOOSH Management Committee may offer a place to the next child on the waiting list if there is space in a particular cohorted area. For example, where there is space available in the older class areas, this may be offered to the next older child on the waitlist given that younger children do not access that area.

VACATION CARE

19. SMOOSH will offer up to a maximum of 3 days per week to families during Vacation Care. This allows SMOOSH to equitably offer places to families, including those on a waiting list for ASC. Any additional vacancies will be filled on a first come basis.

Adopted: 12 September 2012

Amended: 6 February 2013

Amended: 20 August 2015

Amended: 2 September 2020

Amended: October 2020

Amended: December 2020

Amended: September 2023

Acknowledgement

This policy is based on the guidelines provided by the Network OOSH Policies and reviewed in accordance with the National Quality Framework and Education and Care Services National Regulations, Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment.