



PRESCHOOL CONTEXT STATEMENT

Updated: August 2014

Preschool number: 1417

Preschool name: The Briars Special Early Learning Centre

Preschool Profile:

The Briars Special Early Learning Centre is a state-wide service dedicated to the care and education of preschool children with disabilities, and/or significant developmental delay and complex communication needs.

The Briars has a preschool which is a centre of expertise from which the staff support the Inclusive Preschool Programs, provide an Early Intervention Consultancy Service supporting mainstream sites, and a Peer Mentoring program aimed at supporting individual early childhood educators.

1. General information

- Preschool Director: Judith Candy
- Year of opening: 2000
- Postal Address: 5 Briar Road Felixstow SA 5070
- Location Address: 5 Briar Road Felixstow SA 5070
- DECD Partnership: Campbell
- Geographical location: 6km from GPO
- Telephone number: 08 8365 9808
- Fax Number: 08 8365 9818
- Preschool website: www.thebriarsselc.sa.edu.au
- Preschool e-mail: the.briars299@schools.sa.edu.au
- Enrolment: 70 & 80 per annum

Same Day Start has impacted on number of enrolments in first semester 2013/2014. Our numbers have increased throughout the year with transfers and early entry children. We expect this trend will continue for several years until all agencies and referring bodies are familiarised with the Same Day Start policy and its implications for The Briars.

2a. Programs operating in the Preschool

- **Specialised Preschool Program**

Children are entitled to 15 hours of preschool education in the year prior to starting school. At The Briars children attend in their eligible preschool year for 2 days x 6 hours in Terms 1 & 2, and 3 days x 6 hours in Terms 3 & 4.
- **Outdoor Education Program**

This program offers children a whole day outside preschool program with learning experiences from nature. The program runs concurrently with the Specialised Preschool program and is aimed at operating 2 days per week in Term 4.
- **Early Entry**

Children with disabilities are eligible for Early Entry. The Briars offers Early Entry for one day x 6 hours per week during Term 3 and Term 4. Aboriginal and children under the Guardianship of the Minister who are aged between 3-6 are eligible for Early Entry, consisting of 2 days x 6 hours.
- **Link Program**

The Link Program is in association with a nearby preschool. It provides an opportunity for selected children to attend a mainstream preschool for one session per week in a highly supported manner.
- **Early Intervention Foundation Group**

The EI Foundation Group was specifically designed to support those children whose birthdays are after 30th April and who will be unable to attend preschool until the following year. Children attend with a parent or career onsite and are immersed in the main preschool program for one session per week for duration of 2.5 hours per session.

2b. Professional Development Programs

- The Briars has a well respected reputation and staff present professional learning workshops at both national and international conferences as well as to DECD staff, other agencies and families.
- An Early Intervention Consultancy Program provides consultancy and support to DECD early years colleagues across the state to improve provision for children with complex learning needs in local preschools. Sites are referred to The Briars via the Support Services Preschool Support Program.
- Inclusive Preschool Project (IPP) – This is the provision of a specialised program within a local preschool for 4-6 children in outer metropolitan and country locations. The Briars staff provide peer support and mentoring to the preschool teams delivering these programs across the State.
- A Peer Mentoring program allows Early Childhood Educators across sectors to attend The Briars to work alongside The Briars staff in the preschool. This is negotiated with the site.
- Networks are developed with other preschools and schools as part of developing appropriate transitions for children between programs, and some children have a negotiated dual enrolment with their local mainstream preschool.

3. Key Centre Policies

Site Improvement Plan – 3 Strategic Priorities

- Higher standards of learning achievement
- Improve health and wellbeing
- Engage children, families and community

Vision

A centre that supports the learning of children with disabilities through the provision of a rich curriculum, delivered in an environment that celebrates diversity and that belongs to the children and their community.

Philosophy

The Briars is a vibrant, safe and nurturing learning community for children with disabilities.

We believe that:

- all children are learners and can be empowered to be actively involved in their world
- children learn best when they are happy and confident in an environment that provides a sense of belonging
- this occurs when we create fun and motivating learning opportunities that celebrate children's individuality in a supportive community.

Five basic Principles

1. all children can learn
2. know the children
3. value the children
4. trust the children
5. high expectations

4. Curriculum

The preschool uses the DECD Early Years Learning Framework document to plan learning experiences and to report to families as required by all DECD preschool sites. Whole-site planning and reporting ensure staff develop a range of experiences which maximise learning opportunities and can be refined at regular team meetings. Parents and families are continuously informed about the program through term overviews and fortnightly program information sent home. Information about current learning experiences is also available on our website.

- Special curriculum features:

Staff work within a multi-disciplinary team based approach. Many children attending The Briars have a range of therapists who provide information from which a coherent learning plan is devised and agreed upon. Staff recognise that the parents and family are the primary educators of their children and are committed to forming a partnership with them. It is this partnership that forms the basis of the NEP process.

- Teaching methodology:

As many of the children at The Briars do not know how to play, we have a play based curriculum that is a balance of child initiated and structured play opportunities. The learning program includes opportunities for children to be involved in independent exploration and experimentation, experiences including sensory, which build social and emotional wellbeing. The site is engineered for communication with the development of communication skills embedded into the curriculum and documented in the childrens Individual Learning Plans. Every planned learning opportunity is supported by AAC and inclusive technology.

- Assessment procedures and reporting

At The Briars all educators are committed to continuous improvement. All staff participate in the collaborative planning, reflection and evaluation of the program to facilitate improved learning outcomes. Educators from the centre attend professional learning conferences, seminars and workshops to ensure they are aware of current best practice and innovations in technology.

6. Centre Based Staff

- Staff profile

 - Director (PSD Band A-2)

 - AST2 teacher 1.0 x 1

 - AST1 teacher 1.0 x 2

 - Contract teacher 1.0 x 1

 - Contract teacher 0.6 x 1

 - 5 x fulltime ECWs (4 x ECW2s, 1 x ECW1)

 - 6 x part-time ECWs (1 x ECW2, 5 x ECW1s)

- Staff support systems

The Briars works closely with a range of therapists including physiotherapists, speech therapists, occupational therapists and family workers from a range of agencies such as Disability Services, Autism SA, Novita, Families SA, Down Syndrome Society, Inclusive Directions and Women's and Children's Health Network (WCHN) through the Access Assistant Program.

Being a consultancy, The Briars has a responsibility to continually seek new knowledge and understandings about teaching and learning for children with disabilities. This is reflected in the Professional Development budget which allocates monies for staff to attend conferences, workshop and the purchase of relevant journal and periodicals.

- Performance Management

Performance management processes are ongoing, including regular informal feedback and individual performance planning and reviews.

8. Centre Facilities

- Buildings and grounds

The Briars Special Early Learning Centre is a purpose-built centre designed to provide a preschool educational setting for young children with a disability or significant developmental delay. The Briars was opened in May 2000 and won a prestigious worldwide Design Share Award in 2002 for excellence in design. Features Include:

- A vibrant indoor and outdoor learning environment for children with complex communication, physical and/or behavioural needs
- A sensory room to assist in the provision of a relaxation program
- Support beams with suspension points for specialised equipment and swings
- A range of accessible toileting and bathing facilities
- Appropriate colours which promote a calm, alert environment
- Undercover taxi access and automatic opening door
- Observation windows to enable families or professionals to view the program in practice
- Building design which maximises natural light and improves acoustics
- Soundfield system to assist those children with hearing impairment
- Interactive whiteboard in main play area
- Interactive Plasma screen in smaller learning space
- Three outdoor learning areas

- Specialist facilities and equipment

A natural outdoor learning environment where staff deliver an outdoor curriculum consisting of outdoor classroom (tent from South Africa), dry creek, quarry, chicken coop, citrus grove and fruit trees.

A community garden is currently being developed for the families of the children and the local community.

- Facilities allow access and participation for children with varied and complex special needs including autism, sensory impairment, medical conditions resulting in fragile health that may require frequent intervention and treatment and degenerative syndromes that require increasing health care.
- The Centre has an automatic door, disabled toilet and bathroom facilities to provide access for staff, families and support personnel who may require them.

10. Preschool Operations

- Decision making structures
 - Governing Council
 - Committees:
 - Finance
 - Outdoor / Playground
 - Outdoor Learning Program
 - Professional Development
 - Curriculum
 - Work Health Safety (WHS)
 - Personnel Advisory
 - Policy and Planning

- Regular publications
 - Social media
 - Daily postings on Facebook
 - Fortnightly uploading of learning program on website
 - Bulletin – weekly
 - Newsletter – one per term
 - Information Handbook for Families
 - Induction Handbook for staff
 - Information brochures
 - Annual Report

- Other communication
 - Childrens communication diaries
 - Daybook
 - Committee meetings
 - Staff meetings
 - Teachers meetings
 - ECW meetings
 - www.thebriarselc.sa.edu.au
 - The.briars299@schools.sa.edu.au

11. Local Community

- General characteristics

The Briars families travel from across the metropolitan area and whilst are part of the centre community are rarely involved in the local area.

- Parent involvement

All parents are invited to be part of the preschool Governing Council and are encouraged to participate in their child's learning through the NEP process and through opportunities to be involved in the preschool program.

- Feeder or destination schools

As our catchment area is across the metropolitan and lower hills area children from The Briars transition to Special Schools, Special Units, Special Classes and at times to mainstream classes near their homes.

- Commercial/industrial and shopping facilities

The Briars is located between The Marden Shopping Centre and the Glynde Court Plaza at the junction of Lower North East Rd and Payneham Rd.

- Other local facilities

Council Library, football oval, O-bahn and Fogular Furlan Italian Centre are within walking distance to The Briars.

- Local Government body

The Briars is situated in the City of St Peters, Norwood and Payneham Council.