

Staff Who Are Parents Policy

Our school has a unique make up of staff in that if they are also parents we encourage them to enrol their children at our school. We feel that if staff are committed enough to work at our school educating other people's children with this approach and philosophy then to walk the talk with integrity, they also need to enrol their own child (unless of course there is a specific need that we are unable to provide for or a specific reason that would compromise their family or the child.)

However this also can pose a professional dilemma for staff (and other parents) wearing two hats, that of educator **and** parent. If not approached carefully, patiently and professionally their own child may be compromised in the long term if the parent being a staff member unintentionally prevents their own child forming trusting work relationships with their own educator because as Mum/Dad they are the preferred reference/comfort person rather than the educator.

Their child could also be compromised if the child persists on demanding attention in a child/parent relationship and other children's learning could be compromised if unbalanced time is spent. In the short term (for both the staff/parent and their child) adjustments will need to be made, awareness raised and support and guidelines implemented. These will depend upon the age of the child, their personality, their attachment and other individual family factors.

The staff member wearing the two 'hats' of both educator and parent has certain considerations:

1. That they interact with their own child during this adjustment period compassionately, fairly, within reasonable parameters and expectations that they would expect of other educators when interacting with their own child in a similar situation.
2. That they balance their time interacting with their own child within the group of children; i.e.: that they adapt to their own child as **part** of the children's learning community as well as an individual. Their child needs to have the same reasonable expectations as the rest of the children's community.
3. That they consciously reassure their own child, the other children and other parents that each child deserves fair and equitable time and consideration **within** the group (this does **not** mean a standardised 'one-size-fits-all' approach).
4. That all children in the educational care of the educator/parent are approached through a professional 'lens' (including their own child) with their responsibility as an employed educator over-riding their rights as a parent to emotionally defend their own child.
5. That there potentially could be a certain bias perceived by some parents if their child is involved in unresolved conflict with the educator/staff member's child.

Possible Solutions:

- Make all new and existing staff consciously aware of the different roles they have to do in both capacities of a parent/staff member. The general health, well-being and learning of the **community** of children needs to be balanced with the needs of the individual child (any individual child as reflected in our school objects).

Objects of Child Side School (from our constitution):

3. (1) (a) The objects of the School are to maintain and further the rights of the **child** in society, in particular the right to an education that encourages and facilitates a natural development of each child emotionally, spiritually, socially, creatively, physically and cognitively.

*“To maintain the rights and responsibilities of this child **within** a group of children that makes up the learning community. To help each child to be a constructive contributor to their own learning and personal well-being **within** the well-being of the learning community at our school. We maintain and further the rights and responsibilities of the learning community of children as a group and we see each individual child as PART of this community, not separate to it.” –added April 2008.*

- b) Honestly discuss the potential pitfalls and the professional approach needed to be taken, without compromising their own children.
- c) From prior experience with teaching parents we realise it takes time (at least a term), for some children to be able to see their parent as their own as well as other children’s educator. Each child responds differently and each parent/educator handles things differently, but the awareness and support for both educator and child need to visibly exist.

However structures need to be put in place for the child to develop a healthy working relationship with their parent and to allow other children to have a healthy working relationship with their parent as a shared reference and comfort person as the educator to them all.

If this healthy working relationship does not develop within a certain period of time and it is affecting the child and/or other children too much, a further strategy may need to be looked at. ***The general emotional and intellectual health and well-being of the children’s learning community is always the priority.*** “What is good for children is generally good for the whole community/society”.

- d) If the educator’s own child has long term or significant conflict with other children then they as an educator have a responsibility to share the concerns with other educators (senior educator especially) as a team to try and brainstorm effective ways of restorative justice and of minimizing the conflict in **reasonable** ways.

This educator/parent will need to find ways to step back, ask for help and to re-direct these children (including their own) to another staff member for help with conflict resolution. We realise as human beings that emotions tend to run high and strong when one’s own children are involved.

How each particular parent/educator responds is individual but needs to be done respectfully both on a parent level when discussing these issues at home and as a staff member dealing with both sides of the story in liaison with a third party (senior educator).

- e) If the educator’s own child has long term or significant conflict with other children and the other parents need to be informed, then the particular educator/parent will need to ask a third ‘party’ (another educator, senior educator or a selected person with the

