

How to spot high quality early learning



Not all early learning is equal. Here's how to recognise great practice – and why it matters for your child's development.

Research shows that the first five years of a child's life are critical for their learning and development. Participation in high quality early learning contributes to stronger developmental and social wellbeing outcomes, giving children the best possible start as they transition to school and throughout life.

In Australia, quality early learning is guided by the National Quality Framework (NQF) and the National Quality Standard (NQS).

However, many more factors contribute to the overall quality of a service.

So, what should you look for when searching for a quality early learning service for your child?

The look and feel of the centre

How do you feel when you walk in and through the centre? Does it feel homely, inviting and welcoming?

Child-to-educator ratios

Are there low child-to-educator ratios? Are there several educators interacting with small groups of children?

Safe and secure environment

Look for a clean, well-maintained and organised environment that is safe and age-appropriate for children.

Engaging activities and environments

Are there opportunities for play, exploration and learning through a variety of activities and materials?

Qualified and experienced educators

Educators should be trained in early childhood education and care, provide positive and supportive interactions with children and demonstrate experience and passion for what they do. Educators are the main contributing factor to the quality of education and care offered at a service.

Strong relationships and clear communication

Educators should build warm, respectful, and responsive relationships with children and families and offer open and regular communication between the service and families.

Play-based curriculum

Look for a curriculum that emphasises play as a key method of learning and development, building on each child's interests and fostering a love of learning.

Respect for inclusion and diversity

A quality centre values the diversity of children's backgrounds, cultures and abilities. Inclusive practices and a genuine willingness to welcome every child are essential.

Continuous improvement

The service should demonstrate a commitment to continually evaluating, improving and developing their practices, environments and programs – including offering professional development opportunities for educators.

Quality rating based on the National Quality Standard (NQS)

The NQS rating is a strong indicator of the standard of quality a service provides.

More information

The National Quality Framework (NQF)

The NQF sets the standards for early childhood education and care services in Australia. It includes the National Law, National Regulations, the National Quality Standard (NQS) and assessment and rating process, and national learning frameworks.

The National Quality Standard (NQS)

The NQS outlines seven quality areas that services are assessed against and rated on:

- **Educational Program and Practice**
- **Children's Health and Safety**
- **Physical Environment**
- **Staffing Arrangements**
- **Relationships with Children.**
- **Collaborative Partnerships with Families and Communities**
- **Governance and Leadership.**

Services can be rated as:

- **Excellent** (services rated Exceeding NQS in all quality areas may choose to apply for this rating)
- **Exceeding** National Quality Standard
- **Meeting** National Quality Standard
- **Working Towards** National Quality Standard
- **Significant Improvement Required.**

What drives quality in early childhood education and care (ECEC)?

Quality in ECEC is driven by a combination of factors including educator qualifications and experience, supportive learning environments, strong relationships with children and families, and a focus on continuous improvement.

Quality is not solely determined by the physical setting or program structure – it is shaped by the quality of interactions between educators and children, and the active engagement of children in learning.



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