

2026

Quality Improvement Plan for McKay Children's Centre

Site number:

6525



McKay Children's Centre Penola

Service name

McKay Children's Centre - Preschool

Service address

7 Scott St, Penola, South Australia

Service approval number

SE-00010785

Acknowledgment of Country

We acknowledge the **Paintjunga** people as the traditional custodians of the lands and waters where our centre is located and recognise their continuing connection to country. We pay our respects to Elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal peoples.

Centre Acknowledgement – “We touch the ground of the Paintjunga lands. We reach for the sky of the Paintjunga lands. We touch our heart for the care of the Paintjunga lands”.

Service context

McKay Children's Centre is a Department for Education Integrated Service which offers Long Day Care, sessional 4 year old Kindergarten and an Out of School Hours Care program OSHC. Established in 1995 McKay has approx 20 plus employees across its services including the Governing Council Employed Childcare/OSHC educators and DFE employed teachers, ancillary staff and the Director. Currently McKay provides care and educational services for approx 100 families in the Penola, Coonawarra and surrounding rural areas. McKay achieved a rating of Exceeding NQS in June 2018. In 2022, our improvement planning goal was centred around improving children's literacy through high impact teaching strategies related to phonological awareness. In doing this, we maintained a particular focus on syllables, rhyme and music. Engaging with the Music Education Strategy and The Song Room, allowed us to build educator practice in relation to the teaching of music education for children aged from birth to primary years. We look forward to 'staying the course' with our music focus in 2023 to embed our new learning whilst implementing a new goal to support children's emotional regulation across the centre.

Statement of Philosophy

Our Place - McKay Children's Centre is an integrated centre that serves as a community hub, offering early learning, kindergarten, and outside school programs for children from six weeks to 12 years of age. We play a vital role in providing children with a nurturing and caring environment to support a strong sense of belonging for connection and learning.

Our Values - Our values involve being kind, supportive, nurturing, respectful and collaborative.

Our Beliefs - We believe that children are competent and capable learners with unique and individual needs. Children learn best when they feel safe, secure, connected, and contributing. They have endless potential to grow as resilient, curious, and diverse learners.

We believe that educators and families working together, advocating for children and sharing different and complementary knowledge supports children's growth and learning. All families contribute to the richness and diversity of the centre in their own ways.

We believe that positive relationships are formed by developing trusting, supportive, caring, and nurturing connections. Our educators strive to develop strong relationships with children and families for healthy growth, wellbeing and a sense of belonging.

We believe an effective team works from an agreed philosophy, and values and utilises the skills and strengths of each member. When all services within the hub work collaboratively, communicate effectively and respect each other, we can provide the best care and education for all of our children.

We believe our community is a valuable part of our learning experiences. It provides us with many different resources, experiences, and enriches our connections to families.

We believe our environment should be stimulating, inviting, imaginative and aesthetically pleasing for all ages. We prioritize open-ended and natural materials that can be changed and molded to provide children and educators with opportunities to challenge themselves, build a sense of curiosity, and provoke creativity, problem solving and communication.

Our Commitments and Practices - We provide learning and care environments that support every child's dispositions, ideas, connections and wellbeing

and through the Governing Council.

ve educator practice.



Summary of Self-assessment

In 2025, McKay Children's Centre undertook a comprehensive self-assessment process to reflect on our practices across the **seven Quality Areas of the National Quality Standard**. To make this process both meaningful and efficient, we adapted the **ESB self-assessment framework**, enhancing it with the use of **AI technology** to create a more succinct, engaging, and reflective tool for educators. The survey was completed online by all staff, enabling us to easily **collect, analyse, and interpret the data** to identify trends and areas for growth.

During our **Term 4 whole-site pupil-free day**, educators worked collaboratively in mixed program groups to analyse the results, engage in discussion, and **co-identify key areas for improvement** for the year ahead. This collaborative approach ensured that every educator's perspective contributed to shaping our shared vision for continuous quality improvement.

As a result of this reflection and analysis, our collective priorities for 2026 include strengthening:

- Supervision, engagement, and overall site culture
- The assessment and planning cycle across all programs
- Educators' knowledge and skills in supporting emotional regulation and trauma-informed practice (embedding **Berry Street Education Model**)
- Our connections and partnerships with the wider community
- Family involvement in children's learning
- The quality and breadth of our **Outside School Hours Care (OSHC)** program, including extended vacation care opportunities
- Opportunities for all educators to contribute meaningfully to the planning cycle
- Mentoring processes and professional development across the centre
- Embedding **Berry Street Education Model (BSEM)** practices consistently across programs
- Leadership capacity across all roles, building shared accountability and responsibility
- Clarity and consistency in communication, expectations, and professional culture
- Our ongoing focus on **curiosity and inquiry-based learning** in connection with our community

This process reaffirmed our commitment to a **collaborative, reflective, and evidence-informed approach** to continuous improvement. The 2025 self-assessment not only celebrated our achievements but also helped us define a clear and purposeful direction for 2026, ensuring that our practice continues to grow in depth, quality, and connection.

Overarching Goal:

To create an inclusive, connected community where engagement is central to learning for families, children and educators.

Challenge of Practice:

If we utilise the engagement continuum as a lens for critical reflection, we will create a strong and cohesive culture of learning.

(see supporting document)

Strengths

Quality Area 1: Educational Program and Practice

At McKay Children's Centre, our educational program is deeply grounded in **inquiry-based learning**, guided by curiosity, collaboration, and authentic connections to community and culture. Educators consistently follow children's interests, coming alongside them as **co-learners**, and intentionally scaffolding learning experiences that promote exploration, problem-solving, and agency. Our learning environments are thoughtfully designed to act as the **"third teacher"** – stimulating curiosity, encouraging autonomy, and promoting hands-on, meaningful engagement. Across all age groups, environments are flexible, inviting, and responsive to children's evolving ideas and inquiries.

A key strength of our practice is our **commitment to embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives** in authentic and respectful ways. We continue to learn in partnership with local Boandik Elders, incorporating language, stories, and knowledge of Country into our daily practices. Cultural events such as our **Cultural Day with Penola Primary School during NAIDOC Week** highlight this commitment, strengthening both children's cultural understanding and our community relationships.

Community engagement is also a cornerstone of our program. Children regularly visit **Pinchunga Aged Care Home**, attend local **playgroups**, and participate in **local walks and excursions** that deepen their sense of belonging and connection to place. A variety of **incursions** further enrich children's learning and curiosity about the world around them. Educators engage in **ongoing critical reflection**—both individually and collaboratively—to strengthen practice and inform planning. Reflection is an integral part of our team culture, ensuring that learning experiences are purposeful, responsive, and grounded in the **EYLF principles and practices**. All educators across the service actively contribute to planning and documenting learning, ensuring a cohesive and shared approach to each child's development and wellbeing. Our **formative assessment and strength-based reflection processes** enable educators to extend learning meaningfully and intentionally. **Family engagement** is a highly valued and embedded component of the planning cycle. Families share insights and perspectives through **daily conversations** and through our digital platform, **OWNA**, which was introduced in response to family feedback seeking improved communication. This tool enables educators to share learning stories, goals, and programs, while inviting family input into the planning process.

Our ongoing **Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP)**, now nearing publication after two years of genuine consultation and collaboration, demonstrates our deep commitment to reconciliation and community learning. Similarly, our **review of the Behaviour Policy in 2025**, guided by **Berry Street Education Model** training, has strengthened our capacity to provide a **trauma-informed, safe, and supportive environment** for all children.

A highlight of 2025 was the **Wattle Tree Inquiry Project**, collaboratively undertaken by the Kindy and Turanggal rooms. This long-term investigation into seasonal change and local ecology exemplified our slow, deep approach to learning. Through regular visits to the wattle tree, children observed its transformation across the seasons. With the guidance of **Uncle Ken**, a local Elder, children learned to harvest wattle seeds and use them to make damper on a campfire — a beautiful example of cultural learning, sustainability, and community connection woven together through inquiry and curiosity. This integrated, reflective, and community-connected approach reflects our ongoing commitment to **NQS Quality Area 1** — ensuring every child experiences engaging, meaningful, and culturally rich learning that supports them to become capable, confident, and connected learners.

Key improvements sought for Quality Area 1

Improvement Plan

Standard/ element	Focus Area identified during self-assessment	What outcome or goal do we seek?	How will we get this outcome? (Steps)	Success measure	By when?	Progress notes
	Strengthen meaningful links between community and curriculum.	Community engagement is embedded consistently into centre practice to enhance learning opportunities.	Implementation of an inquiry project with the Penola Heritage Trust to engage regularly at the Penola Community Herb Garden as a space for connection, exploration and learning. This inquiry will include connections to local Aboriginal Elders, residents at Pinchunga and local schools. The inquiry will be centred around the disposition of curiosity. Local walks and excursions will be a regular part of the learning program – including visits to AC Care Playgroup, Pinchunga Aged Care home and local businesses and services. Planning will incorporate a range of centre celebrations and events to encourage and support family involvement. Parent and educator professional learning sessions to learn alongside each other. (positive toileting, sensory kids, sleep training etc)	Children and families will develop a connection with the historic Penola Community Herb Garden. Children will develop understandings of sustainable practices and the importance of caring from the environment. They will also grow understandings of where food comes from, gardening and shared responsibility. Children and educators are often present in the local community as part of the learning program. Families will attend centre events and feel strongly connected to the centre.	Creation of implementation plan by end of term 1.	

Educator engagement can be inconsistent – impacting on children’s engagement in the learning program.	Children and educators are deeply engaged in the learning program across the day.	Utilising the engagement continuum to bring awareness our the levels of engagement for both children and educators. A focus on understanding and utilising intentional teaching practices, such as sustained shared thinking and open ended questioning to improve educator/child interactions.	Educators and children show greater levels of engagement.		
Educators would like to improve their skills and knowledge at supporting children’s emotional regulation and in trauma informed practice.	Educators are confident and consistent in how they support and respond to children’s behaviour.	Educators will embed the learning from Berry St training into centre practices consistently. Deepen our learning of Kimochi’s and CPC – create an implementation plan. Offer Kimochi training for new educators. Regular staff meetings across the year and training and development to be designed to consolidate our learning from Berry st.	Educators are more confident in managing challenging behaviours. Data demonstrates a reduction in escalated incidents of behaviour.		
Educators have identified a need to focus strongly on improving our OSHC	Our OSHC and vacation care programs provide a high quality learning environment and	Leadership team to offer greater support to OSHC educators and mentor staff. A strong focus on embedding	Children enjoy coming to OSHC an families report improvements in communication, program and practices. Educators feel more		



	and vacation care service.	program where children feel engaged, connected and supported.	berry st principles (predictable routines), enhancing the planning cycle and communication with families will significantly strengthen the program.	supported in their roles in our OSHC Program.		
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Strengths

Quality Area 2: Children’s Health and Safety

At McKay Children’s Centre, the health, safety, and wellbeing of all children are foundational to our philosophy and daily practice. Educators demonstrate a strong commitment to maintaining safe, predictable, and nurturing environments where children feel secure, cared for, and supported to learn and grow.

In 2025, we engaged in a **slow and deep review of our Behaviour Guidance Policy** to ensure alignment with our ongoing learning from the **Berry Street Education Model**. This reflective process allowed us to embed trauma-informed practices more consistently across programs and strengthen our collective understanding of emotional regulation and relational safety.

Throughout the year, we also conducted **regular audits** of key health and safety policies and practices, including **safe sleep procedures, handwashing routines, and supervision strategies**. These reviews supported consistency across programs and reinforced a shared sense of accountability among educators.

Through reflection on our outdoor environment, educators identified that **babies needed a safer and more defined outdoor play space**. As a result, **event fencing was purchased** to create a secure and engaging area for our youngest children to explore the outdoors safely. Additionally, we installed a **new privacy wall at the centre entrance** to enhance both security and confidentiality for children and families.

We have continued to implement a **consistent approach to managing illness**, ensuring that children who are unwell are cared for appropriately and sent home in line with our policies and infection control procedures. Our robust infection control measures, which are regularly reviewed and updated, continue to support the health and wellbeing of children, families, and staff.

In 2025, we underwent a **successful unannounced spot check** which affirmed the strength of our existing practices. The process also identified an area for improvement—installing **finger guards on doors** to further reduce risk—which has since been actioned through Ventia.

Ongoing **critical reflection** has highlighted some challenges associated with our **shared multi-age outdoor space**. In response, we have initiated planning for a **feasibility study in 2026** to explore a significant outdoor redevelopment. This will ensure that our environments continue to promote safe, active, and engaging play for all age groups.

Through continuous reflection, collaboration, and action, our educators remain dedicated to upholding the highest standards of health and safety, ensuring every child at McKay’s feels safe, valued, and supported each day.

Key improvements sought for Quality Area 2

Improvement Plan

Standard/element	Issue identified during self-assessment	What outcome or goal do we seek?	Priority (L/M/H)	How will we get this outcome? (Steps)	Success measure	By when?	Progress notes
	Inconsistent supervision practices across the centre.	Educators prioritise strong supervision and engagement with children to ensure a safe learning environment.	H	Specific training around supervision and engagement. Utilising the engagement continuum as a reflective tool for our practice.	Supervision practices will be stronger – leading to reduced incidents and accidents, particularly outdoors.	Staff meeting in term 1 – Professional learning session on supervision	

			A collaborative review of our supervision policy in term 1. Update handbooks for new educators to be clear about important practices at our centre – including supervision and engagement. Embed calm transition strategies from Berry St model. All educators work together to improve communication and have clear practices in place for hand overs when moving from one space to the next. Leadership team to communicate clear expectations. Team Leaders to ensure that all room staff are communicating with other educators when they move from one area to another. Regular leadership meetings will include a check in on supervision practices.	Hand over processes are in place and running smoothly. Educators report improvements in communication across the centre.	and engagement.

Strengths

Quality Area 3: Physical Environment

McKay Children's Centre is a **purpose-built learning environment** designed to enhance children's learning, wellbeing, and sense of belonging. The service's layout, design, and natural surroundings promote both **indoor and outdoor exploration**, ensuring all children have access to rich, engaging spaces that inspire curiosity, creativity, and connection with nature.

Educators make thoughtful and flexible use of available spaces. **Quiet, reflective areas** are always available both indoors and outdoors, supporting children's need for calm and self-regulation. The **daily routine includes collaborative "reset" times** where educators and children work together to adapt learning spaces in response to children's interests, inquiries, and emerging ideas.

Our **outdoor environment** is a highlight of the service and reflects our strong commitment to inquiry learning, sustainability, and connection to Country. It includes a **dry creek bed, vine huts, indigenous plants, natural bark areas, swings, a treehouse, a log scramble, paved paths, a large sandpit, and a vegetable garden**. Shaded areas meet all **Cancer Council and SunSmart guidelines**, allowing for safe outdoor play year-round.

Children are empowered to **resource their own learning** through access to a wide range of materials, such as loose parts for construction, bookmaking and art materials, small world play props, and a dedicated **"making room"** equipped with low-melt glue guns. This fosters creativity, agency, and problem-solving as children design, create, and explore.

The **indoor spaces** are equally well-considered. The under-two room can be adapted to meet the evolving developmental needs of babies and toddlers, with a **soothing, purpose-designed sleep space** and a **light-filled, well-ventilated nappy change area** that promotes both safety and independence. Across all rooms, there is a balance of **natural and artificial light**, good ventilation, and access to outdoor spaces throughout the day to promote wellbeing and connection with the natural world.

The **staff room and consultation areas** serve multiple functions, including professional collaboration, meetings with families, and visits from allied health professionals such as CAFHS and preschool health checks.

Children are grouped across programs to **support safety, inclusion, and learning alongside peers of varying ages**. Fencing and gates are regularly maintained to ensure secure boundaries, and educators carefully assess and adjust the environment to promote both safety and challenge.

Our approach to the environment reflects the belief that **the environment is the third teacher**. Natural elements are woven into all spaces, and educators intentionally create continuity across programs through consistently available experiences such as mark-making, story tables, and small world play. Children develop independence as they learn to access their own belongings, care for their environment, and take increasing responsibility for daily routines.

Looking ahead, McKay's is preparing for an **exciting building upgrade in 2026** in readiness for the rollout of **3-year-old preschool**. This redevelopment will further enhance the quality and functionality of our spaces, ensuring they continue to meet the evolving needs of children, educators, and families.

Through intentional design, reflective practice, and a deep respect for the natural world, McKay Children's Centre continues to provide a **safe, inclusive, and inspiring environment** that supports every child's learning, wellbeing, and sense of wonder.

Key improvements sought for Quality Area 3

Improvement Plan

Standard/ element	Issue identified during self-assessment	What outcome or goal do we seek?	Priority (L/M/H)	How will we get this outcome? (Steps)	Success measure	By when?	Progress notes
	Outdoor area is of poor design for our multi-age setting.	An improved outdoor area that increases safety and engagement.	M	Undergoing a feasibility study to redevelop our yard area. This will include a new shade	Outdoor area is more flexible and allows for greater active engagement, improves	End 2025	

				structure, reduction of tripping hazards and the addition of a slide to the treehouse to improve safety for younger children. It also includes a consideration of our soft fall requirements. This process will involve collaboration with all stakeholders in our centre.	supervision and safety for children.		
	Sustainability practices are inconsistent.	Strong sustainability practices and a clear, current policy.		Connecting to our garden inquiry, the learning environment will include a focus on strengthening recycling, composting and gardening initiatives.	Children participate in sustainable routines.		
	Not all educators contributing to the setting up of the learning environment.	All educators contribute to setting up the learning environment to ensure it is always engaging (refer to philosophy).		Team Leaders and Kindy Staff plan for specific areas to be set up and then support educators to get involved and take ownership over areas. Leadership team to support educators to grow understandings of the importance of the learning environment as the third teacher.	All educators setting up and re setting learning areas. The learning environment is always engaging and aesthetically pleasing. All educators see the importance of resetting (as opposed to packing up).		

Strengths

Quality Area 4: Staffing Arrangements
Staffing arrangements at McKay Children’s Centre are designed to enhance children’s learning, safety, and wellbeing while supporting a cohesive, collaborative professional culture. Our staffing structure and practices ensure that educators are well-positioned to engage meaningfully with children, reflect deeply on their practice, and continuously build their professional capacity. In 2023, through critical reflection on practice and staffing models, the Centre transitioned from a two-room structure (0–3 and 3–5 years) to a three-room model with the introduction of distinct Team Leaders for Birth–2 years, 2–3 years, and 3–5 years. This change has had a significant positive impact on the quality of the learning program—particularly for our youngest learners—by allowing for more targeted planning, responsive environments, and stronger relationships. The additional Team Leader role has also created valuable opportunities for mentoring, collaboration, and leadership development across teams. Staffing rosters and routines are carefully structured to ensure that educator-to-child ratios are maintained at all times, with educators informed of and adhering to qualification and ratio requirements. Relief staff are inducted thoroughly, ensuring continuity of care and alignment with our values and practices. All educators, support staff, students, and volunteers operate within their roles and are appropriately supervised by the Director, Assistant Director, or a designated mentor. Educators are supported with generous, regular programming and planning time, which allows for deep reflection, documentation, and forward planning for children’s learning. Cross-team collaboration is a strong feature of practice, with childcare and kindergarten educators working and playing together, particularly in shared outdoor spaces. This practice, introduced in 2023 following reflective discussions, has enhanced cohesion, consistency, and shared ownership of the learning environment. Communication and collaboration are strengths of our staffing culture. Regular team meetings—leadership, childcare, kindergarten, and whole-centre—ensure a consistent focus on professional learning, critical reflection, and the priorities outlined in both the McKay Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) and SECAV Partnership goals. Two whole-site pupil-free days each year provide rich opportunities for professional learning, reflective dialogue, and the strengthening of relationships across all programs. Educators, coordinators, and staff members act with respect, professionalism, and ethical integrity. Families and children remain at the heart of all decision-making processes. Educators work alongside families to support smooth transitions across programs as children grow, ensuring continuity of learning and relationships. The McKay Grievance Policy provides clear, positive processes to resolve conflict respectfully. This policy is accessible on the Centre’s website, through the OWNA App, and on-site. A Governing Council-appointed Grievance Officer offers additional support when required. Confidentiality is always maintained, and sensitive information is handled with care and discretion by the leadership team. Educators working across services bring unique insight into children’s learning and interests, promoting strong continuity across programs. Shared documentation processes and respect for existing relationships ensure children experience a consistent, connected approach to learning and care. Educators take initiative in areas of expertise, modelling best practice and mentoring peers, which has contributed to a culture of trust, respect, and professional growth across the Centre.

Key improvements sought for Quality Area 4

Improvement Plan

Standard/element	Issue identified during self-assessment	What outcome or goal do we seek?	Priority (L/M/H)	How will we get this outcome? (Steps)	Success measure	By when?	Progress notes
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	Strengthen communication and culture	Our workplace is safe, fun and supportive with a positive team culture.	M	Drawing heavily on the engagement continuum to be reflective of behaviour. Regular sharing of culture-related information and staff meetings will be aligned to engagement continuum to support the building of positive team culture. Social events will also be planned each term to support team building.	Educators report improvements in our team culture.	End 2025.	
	Mentoring processes are in need of improvement.	Mentoring opportunities exist for all staff and all educators are supported by other educators at our centre.		Leadership team to develop a mentoring system that aligns with PDP processes.	All educators have a designated mentor in place.		

Strengths

Quality Area 5: Relationships with Children

Respectful, equitable, and responsive relationships are at the heart of practice at McKay Children's Centre. **Listening to children is fundamental**—educators intentionally create time and space for quality conversations throughout the day, whether in play, mealtimes, group times, or spontaneous interactions. These authentic connections form the foundation for children's sense of belonging, wellbeing, and learning.

Educators consistently reflect on their use of language and intentionally model warm, attuned, and emotionally responsive communication. The **language and principles of the Circle of Security** are embedded across the site, following the completion of **Circle of Security for Educators training** by most educators in 2023 and the Director's completion of the **four-day facilitator course**. This shared framework supports consistent, attachment-informed interactions with children and families across all services.

In 2025, the whole team completed **Berry Street Education Model training**, deepening their understanding of trauma-informed practice, emotional regulation, and wellbeing. This learning informed a **slow and reflective review of the Centre's Behaviour Policy**, ensuring alignment with Berry Street principles of unconditional positive regard, safety, and relational repair. The review strengthened consistency across the Centre and further embedded shared language and restorative practices.

Children's voices are deeply valued. They **initiate conversations and inquiries**, and educators are responsive, using these ideas and theories to drive the learning program and promote individual growth. **Non-verbal communication strategies**—including visuals and gestures—are used consistently to support understanding and inclusion. In 2023, critical reflection highlighted the need for stronger, consistent responses to a small group of children requiring additional support. A **behaviour support plan** was collaboratively developed, introducing clear structures, shared visuals, and targeted skill-building strategies. This process demonstrated the team's ability to **work collectively and reflectively** to manage challenges in a positive, supportive, and respectful manner.

Sustained periods of play allow for deep inquiry, reflection, and research, supporting meaningful interactions between children and educators. The **McKay Philosophy and agreed site values**—supportive, nurturing, kind, respectful, and collaborative—are consistently modelled by educators, strengthening sustained, trusting relationships.

Data gathered through **Family-Educator Chats** is used to inform both individual learning programs and the Quality Improvement Plan, ensuring that families' perspectives and aspirations are embedded in our ongoing improvement processes. Educators work closely with families and allied agencies to support children with additional needs, ensuring inclusion and equitable access for all learners. Our 2024 Philosophy Statement reflects our shared belief that **every child is a unique, competent, and capable learner** who develops at their own pace. Educators scaffold children's problem-solving and self-regulation skills, helping them navigate roles, responsibilities, and relationships with empathy and mutual respect.

Children are supported to make decisions and take responsibility—for example, during room resets, taking turns, and negotiating roles in play. Educators remain close and available to support conflict resolution, acknowledging and reinforcing children's own competent strategies for repair and empathy.

Programs such as **Kimochis** further enhance children's emotional literacy, empathy, and self-regulation skills. Educators use explicit strategies such as **"Stop" prompts, "safe hands and feet" visuals**, and other co-regulation tools to create calm, safe, and predictable learning environments.

Cultural inclusivity and family partnerships are visible and valued. Educators actively invite family input through daily conversations, the OWNA App, and the Centre's Facebook page. **"All About Me" posters** celebrate similarities and differences among children and families, strengthening belonging and acceptance. Sharing photos, routines, and stories helps children feel connected, particularly during moments of transition or unease.

The **Managing Children's Behaviour Policy** reflects current, evidence-based practice and incorporates visual supports and shared language across the service. Educators continue to draw on children's and families' interests to shape the learning program, building stronger connections to our broader community in Penola.

Transitions—from childcare to kindergarten, OSHC, and school—are embedded and occur naturally, supported by consistent documentation, shared relationships, and strong communication across programs.

Ongoing **professional development, research engagement, and reflective dialogue** ensure that educators continue to strengthen their skills and deepen their understanding of relationships, regulation, and emotional wellbeing.

Through consistent, relational practice underpinned by Circle of Security and Berry Street principles, McKay Children’s Centre continues to nurture an environment where children feel safe, valued, and empowered to thrive.

Key improvements sought for Quality Area 5

Improvement Plan

Standard/ element	Issue identified during self-assessment	What outcome or goal do we seek?	Priority (L/M/H)	How will we get this outcome? (Steps)	Success measure	By when?	Progress notes
		Embed Berry St Education Model learning from 2025		Staff meeting check in’s and leadership team meetings to ensure we are sticking to BSEM practices. Continue offering learning sessions for educators and families to support challenging behaviour.	Educators feel more confident to manage challenging behaviour.		

Strengths

Quality Area 6: Collaborative Partnerships with Families and Communities

At McKay Children's Centre, respectful, supportive, and reciprocal relationships with families are central to our philosophy and daily practice. Educators value families as the first and most influential teachers of their children and work collaboratively to ensure a shared approach to care, learning, and wellbeing.

In **2023**, feedback from families and critical reflection led to a review of our communication systems. With the support of the **Governing Council**, we implemented the **OWNA App** across the entire centre to strengthen two-way communication. This has been a significant and positive improvement. Families can now view and comment on their child's learning, contribute to the program, and provide timely information to support daily care and planning. Policies, newsletters, and other important resources are also accessible through the App. Family feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, particularly around improved transparency, connection, and accessibility.

Strong partnerships with families begin well before a child's first day. Families are encouraged and supported to visit the centre prior to commencement to build familiarity and connection. Induction processes are flexible, offered either one-on-one or through small pre-entry sessions led by members of the management team. **Comprehensive enrolment packages**, reviewed annually, ensure families receive clear information about the service and its programs. When children transition to preschool, families are invited to participate in **enrolment conversations** with educators to discuss their child's interests, strengths, and aspirations for learning.

Educators take great care to nurture a sense of belonging from the very beginning. Primary caregivers build relationships through daily conversations and consistent communication via the OWNA App. Families are encouraged to share insights about their child's strengths, needs, and home routines through **family questionnaires**, informal conversations, and digital feedback opportunities. Educators also make **settling calls** during the child's first days if needed, ensuring families feel connected and reassured. Information such as sleep, meals, toileting, and medication is communicated clearly through OWNA to support transparency and continuity between home and the centre.

Farewells and transitions are handled sensitively, with educators guiding families to establish consistent goodbye routines that support emotional security and independence. The **administration officer** plays a key role in supporting families with enrolment logistics, such as Centrelink details and Health Care Plans, ensuring a smooth and well-supported transition into care.

McKay educators are deeply respectful of families' **values, beliefs, and parenting approaches**. Information about child development, wellbeing, and learning is regularly shared through OWNA and the Centre's Facebook page, ensuring that families are partners in understanding and supporting their child's growth. Educators engage families in meaningful daily exchanges at arrival and departure times and provide individualised updates that reflect genuine care and connection.

Our service has **strong collaborative partnerships with community organisations and professionals**. We maintain positive working relationships with local allied health providers, including **CAFHS, Country Health Connect, Learning Together, and DECD Support Services**. Educators in both kindergarten and childcare regularly engage in **joint professional learning** with external providers, ensuring alignment and consistency in supporting children's learning and wellbeing.

Kindergarten educators work closely with Penola Primary School and Mary MacKillop Memorial School, engaging in regular conversations and meetings to ensure smooth transitions and continuity of learning. Transition programs are carefully planned, with collaboration between families, educators, and school staff to best support each child's readiness and confidence.

Community connections are a defining feature of McKay Children's Centre. Educators and children engage meaningfully with local organisations and initiatives, building genuine relationships with the **Men's Shed, Penola Library, Greenrise Arboretum, local shops and businesses, neighbours, Petticoat Lane herb garden, and local galleries**. These partnerships enrich children's learning and strengthen their sense of place and belonging in the community.

Over the past 2 years we have been offering parent learning session with professionals free of charge for families and the surrounding community. These are offered both face to face and online and have include learning with education professionals, a paediatric dietician and an paediatric occupational therapist. These sessions are for both educators and families which means that we are learning alongside our families to support continuity and shared understandings for families, educators and children.

Families are regularly invited to participate in the life of the centre. In 2025, a parent-chef joined the children in a cooking experience, and a grandparent shared family recipes in a cultural cooking activity—both examples of how family involvement enhances learning and connection. Families are also invited to respond to **reflective questions** linked to their child's learning statements, ensuring their voice informs planning and goal setting.

McKay educators continue to seek new ways to engage families in our **Quality Improvement and reflective processes**, including plans for online parent workshops to align with our QIP priorities and strengthen continuity between home and the centre.

Through these strong, respectful partnerships and authentic connections with families and the broader community, McKay Children's Centre continues to create a warm, inclusive, and collaborative environment that supports every child's learning, wellbeing, and sense of belonging.

Key improvements sought for Quality Area 6

Improvement Plan

Standard/ element	Issue identified during self-assessment	What outcome or goal do we seek?	Priority (L/M/H)	How will we get this outcome? (Steps)	Success measure	By when?	Progress notes
	We have been working over the last couple of years to increase community engagement and want to continue strengthening this.	Families are informed about the learning program and we work together in partnership to ensure growth for every child. We also want to support family connections to the centre.	M	Friday bulletin – weekly. To include information about the learning program. Online workshops to be made available for families related to our areas of focus. Focus on sharing information about learning on FB and OWNA for families to learn alongside us. Planning events each term for celebrating our community and inviting families into the centre (eg grandparents day). Educators will intentionally plan for a special community event or celebration each term. Eg. A twilight session to celebrate fathers day, a story reading evening, a biggest morning tea etc	Family feedback indicates that they are feeling more involved and connected at the centre. Family voice is more evident across our centre documentation. Families attend the special events and report feeling more involved in the centre.	By the end of 2026	



Strengths

Quality Area 7: Governance and Leadership

At McKay Children's Centre, leadership and governance systems are strong, transparent, and designed to support the effective management and continuous improvement of a high-quality early childhood service. Our leadership team and Governing Council work collaboratively to ensure decisions are ethical, evidence-informed, and always in the best interests of children, families, and staff. Our **McKay Philosophy Statement** is clearly displayed throughout the Centre and on our website, reflecting our shared vision and values. These values—supportive, nurturing, kind, respectful, and collaborative—guide all aspects of practice and decision-making. They are consistently referred to during critical reflection, policy review, and performance discussions, ensuring our philosophy is lived daily in every interaction.

Each year, the philosophy undergoes a **comprehensive review** that includes input from educators, families, and children. This collaborative approach ensures that our philosophy continues to authentically represent the voices of our community. In 2025, we undertook a **thorough self-assessment process** that directly informed the development of our current **Quality Improvement Plan (QIP)**. This process provided clear, evidence-based direction for future improvement and reaffirmed our culture of reflective, data-informed practice.

Governance and management systems at McKay are well-established and ensure compliance, accountability, and quality outcomes for children. Risk management processes are embedded across the service. This supports proactive identification, mitigation, and management of risk. Educators and families share a clear understanding of the importance of **risky play**, outdoor exploration, and nature-based learning. Our approach balances safety with developmental challenge, ensuring children have opportunities to explore safely within well-considered environments. The provision of **rain suits and wet-weather gear** enables children to engage meaningfully with the outdoors in all seasons, reflecting our belief that nature play is valuable every day, not just in fair weather.

Financial sustainability is maintained through careful monitoring by the **Director, Administration team, and Finance Sub-Committee**, ensuring responsible management of resources. Fee collection, budgeting, and grant applications (such as the **Sustainability Grant**) are actively managed to support the long-term viability of the Centre. These measures help to **future-proof the service** amid rising costs and ensure McKay remains a stable and trusted early childhood provider within the Penola community.

McKay's leadership is strengthened through active engagement with **Department for Education (DfE) groups** and **Early Childhood organisations**, ensuring access to current research, policy updates, and professional networks that inform and enhance practice. This commitment to ongoing learning ensures that McKay continues to lead high-quality early childhood education within the region and staff have shared their high-quality practice with colleagues at various professional learning events.

WHS matters are standing items on the **Director's Report** and discussed at each Governing Council meeting, ensuring open communication and accountability.

Leadership roles and responsibilities are clearly defined, understood, and regularly reviewed. The Director has overall responsibility for the service and works closely with the **Assistant Director** to oversee day-to-day operations across childcare and OSHC. The leadership team consults collaboratively on matters such as contracts, reporting, leave, and quality improvement planning. The **Governing Council** receives a comprehensive induction at the start of each term, including information on roles, responsibilities, and compliance requirements. All members complete **RAN-EC training** and hold current screening checks, ensuring a high level of professionalism and accountability.

A **robust self-assessment and quality improvement process** drives ongoing growth across the service. Performance development meetings are conducted annually to support educators' professional growth, explore interests, and align individual goals with centre priorities. Insights from these discussions, along with family voice gathered through annual surveys, daily conversations, floorbooks, and OWNA communications, inform ongoing improvement and decision-making.

Whole-centre meetings each term provide opportunities for collaboration, professional learning, and shared reflection across teams. These meetings align with the QIP focus areas and the **South East Children's and Families (SECAV) Partnership priorities**, supporting cohesion and a strong sense of shared purpose.

Leadership at McKay is visible, responsive, and relational. The **Director and Assistant Director** maintain a strong presence within programs across all services, providing mentoring, modelling, and on-the-ground support to ensure consistency of practice and alignment with centre values. This hands-on leadership approach fosters trust, empowerment, and a collective sense of responsibility among educators. Through strong governance, shared leadership, and a deeply embedded culture of reflection and collaboration, McKay Children's Centre continues to operate as a high-functioning, future-focused service dedicated to quality, integrity, and continuous improvement.

Key improvements sought for Quality Area 7

Improvement Plan

Standard/ element	Issue identified during self-assessment	What outcome or goal do we seek?	Priority (L/M/H)	How will we get this outcome? (Steps)	Success measure	By when?	Progress notes
	Our PDP processes need to be tightened up.	All educators have a clear PDP plan and are supported to achieve their identified goals.	M	In term 1, the first staff meeting will involve a session on how to write the PD Plan. Then each staff member will meet a leadership team member to develop their PDP plan for the year. This will also connect to our mentoring plan. A structure will be developed for regular check ins and reviews of plans.	Educators are achieving their goals as part of PD planning processes.	End term 4 2026.	
		Build leadership capacity across all roles and strengthen clarity and accountability.		Introduce leadership mentoring and peer reflection processes. Clarify role expectations and utilise engagement continuum to communicate expectations and embed these into performance conversations. Review and communicate expectations linked to culture, engagement and behaviour.	Educators report improvements in communication and site culture.		

Endorsements

Endorsed by director/principal

Name

Click or tap here to enter text.

Date

Click or tap to enter a date.

Signature:

Endorsed by governing council chairperson

Name

Click or tap here to enter text.

Date

Click or tap to enter a date.

Signature:

Endorsed by education director

Name

Click or tap here to enter text.

Date

Click or tap to enter a date.

Signature:



Government of South Australia
Department for Education