

Why is Fingerprints is a unique, one of a kind, progressive Early Childhood Centre?

WHEN and WHY was Fingerprints created?

Fingerprints was purchased and refurbished in 2008 by Rebekah Harrison and Adam Brown. Fingerprints was created to provide a natural, creative environment where children receive a holistic approach to learning delivered by passionate and nurturing educators.

What is unique about Fingerprints' Philosophy?

Our philosophy is created, reviewed and reflected upon by the team of teachers and educators. This 'team' approach to developing the Centre philosophy, values everyone's contributions. It embraces current research, educational theorists and child developmentalists from the past and present. Rudolf Steiner valued the importance of understanding the unique phase of childhood, i.e. *a child being a child, not a mini adult and the importance of a sanctuary for children to play - away from the busyness of today's world.* Children in their early years thrive on rich language experiences, musical experiences and a teacher who plans with intention.

This element is supported with a Reggio Emilia approach of acknowledging the child as being an active constructor of knowledge, rather than being seen as the target of instruction. The child is beheld as beautiful, powerful, competent, creative, curious, and full of potential and ambitious desires. The environment is designed with the highest quality of handmade, traditional, imaginative, free form, natural, organic, open ended and educational learning resources. It supports the child's individual learning (the third teacher) and aims to provide opportunities for children to create meaning and make sense of their world. Steiner emphasises the importance of FREE PLAY and IMAGINATION, and this is also encompassed into the child's day alongside time of child led inquiry based learning.

'What children learn does not follow as an automatic result from what is taught, rather, it is in large part due to the children's own doing, as a consequence of their activities and our resources.'* - Loris Malaguzzi, *The Hundred Languages of Children

Inquiry based learning is blended into daily practice as children LOVE to ask questions and to make sense of their world. This promotes children's thinking as they exercise their sense of agency and develop valuable and complex problem solving skills. Teachers and educators support this learning through a spirit of investigation that uses children's interests as the starting point for effective learning.

Honouring and nurturing children's instinctive connection to nature through play and planned learning experiences provides a foundation for creative thinking, problem solving and risk taking, improved cognitive ability, social relationships and intrapersonal skills and a healthier lifestyle.

Over the past 9 years, we have evolved in our teaching practices and understand that there is not one philosophical way to educate a child. We embrace the childhood developmental phases, current research on child led learning; an inquiry based method to learning and the wisdom and knowledge of past and present theorist. This integrative approach is the core of the Fingerprints educational experience. It is a child centred approach to learning!

How does Fingerprints work collaboratively with other schools and/or community groups?

Fingerprints aims to build positive connections with Silkwood School and other transitional schools. Current research indicates that supporting children's transitions to school improves their sense of well-being and their positive engagement in learning. Teachers encourage children to be independent and responsible as this skill prepares positive relationships with their educators.

Fingerprints educators also work closely with specialised professionals i.e. recommend speech pathologists, occupational therapists and other relevant services. Educators attend professional development and seminars regularly.

Cultural practises are authentically embedded in our program. Educators attend yarn ups, talking circles, community events and workshops.

What specialised programs/classes/activities does Fingerprints offer?

Program and Learning

'The preschool years, the kindergarten years, (the years before formal schooling) are the most important of all in the education of the child. It is absolutely essential that before we begin to think, before we so much as begin to set our thinking in motion, we experience the condition of wonder.'
...Rudolf Steiner

In partnership with families, the child's 'first and most influential teachers', Fingerprints has developed learning programs responsive to children's ideas, interests, strengths and abilities. We recognise the individuality of each child and family and respect that families may come from a range of cultural, linguistic, economic and social backgrounds possessing diverse ideas, abilities and needs.

Educators recognise that children learn through their play and nurture the innocence, creativity and wonder of the small child by valuing the importance of fantasy and imaginative free play and experiences within the program. Materials for play are naturalistic and earth friendly and we aim to reflect the natural beauty of the environment in our play settings.

A home-like environment has been lovingly and consciously created where children are surrounded with beauty, truth and goodness in every activity of their day. Supporting children in an ebb and flow of consistent rhythm: daily, weekly, seasonal and celebratory; helps the children to move through their day and week in a safe and predictable environment that is so necessary for the healthy development of boundaries, physical skills and ultimately inspires trust in their world.

Educators work in harmony with the turning of the seasons. Our morning circle, painting, seasonal crafts, cooking experiences, gardening, transition activities, stories and celebrations help children connect with and find meaning in the world. These experiences are planned to engage the child and provide a platform for academic learning.

The day is also filled with shared mealtimes, creative imaginative indoor and outdoor free play time, book selection, traditional games, verses, household tasks and rest time. All these activities offer opportunities for social development, personal empowerment, language development, pre-literacy and pre-mathematical skills, building independence, as well as a broad range of basic living skills and self management.

Morning Circle is a time for us to come together and celebrate our place and our group, as well as honouring cultural and seasonal experiences. Rhythmical verse, song and repetitive poetry stanzas are combined with thoughtful movement opportunities to provide a meaningful context for language awareness and development. These also build skills in gross and fine motor development as well as oral language capabilities and learning experiences.

A designated story time later in the day encourages ethical and moral awareness through puppetry and other mediums and features as part of the 'whole language approach'. Children will take these impressions and retell them in play. Children need to experience a wide range of texts in their story and language experiences. This is in our outcomes and once again best practice as early childhood advocates. Stories when shared from books, puppets, yoga stories, props, sand, nature, storyboards, felt boards, etc., demonstrate to children how communication through language works. Be it verbal, non verbal, written, pictured, illustrated, sung, live, recorded, enacted or spoken).

Children's learning is dynamic, complex and holistic. Physical, social, emotional, personal, spiritual, creative, cognitive and linguistic aspects of learning are all intricately interwoven and interrelated into the program.

Our program is guided by the Queensland Kindergarten Learning Guidelines (QKLG) and the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) outcomes. It is designed for children to develop their sense of trust and identity; make positive connections with other children, communities, culture and environments; grow their interpersonal skills, fine motor and pre-writing skills and whole body experiences; engage in a variety of literacy and numeracy activities; and to build a positive disposition towards a love of learning.

Becoming Culturally Diverse

Each day we begin our morning circle with acknowledgement and greeting. We acknowledge the Kombumerri Aboriginal people, and we acknowledge Mother Earth. We embed a connection to these, which paves our way as the future guardians of this land. We greet Mother Earth, we greet the sun and we greet each other. We incorporate the languages and culture of the children present in each group.

It is our aim for this to be a journey of cultural discovery and awareness, for educators, for parents and for children, along the way finding new ways to integrate cultural understandings into everyday experiences and to embed cultural practices into our daily program. We aim to expand our ideas and understandings, enabling us to become stronger in our social and cultural identities, developing a sense of belonging and to respectfully and positively respond to diversity.

Our Commitment to being Green – Sustainability

Our philosophy and practice by its very nature embodies a holistic approach to environment. As we consciously prepare our environment and learning journeys, we focus on:

Being at one with Mother Earth and **being** in tune with her cycles and nature. We utilise her gifts in providing seasonal toys and handwork opportunities for children. We embody the seasons in our songs, stories, crafts and cooking. We immerse ourselves in **being** connected.

When we are connected, we experience a sense of **belonging** to the cosmos. We are all responsible for the health of the planet and when we live with this sense of **belonging**, we want to take responsibility. We acknowledge the original greenkeepers of the land, the Aboriginal people. We look to their culture knowledge in living sustainably and we recognise that it is now our turn to continue this knowledge and way for generations to come. We **belong** to humanity.

Our connection to Mother Earth stimulates our concern for her wellbeing as we **become** aware of the interrelationship between ourselves, the environment and animals. We explore ways to preserve and nurture our environment through reducing our waste, recycling, composting, conserving and gardening. Our use of natural materials and toys lessens our environmental footprint. We seek to actively develop relationships with animals around us, to connect with them in order to care for them. With new knowledge and understandings, we are **becoming** green.

We nourish ourselves as we nourish Mother Earth!

Art Program

Our art program aims to expand our use of materials and mediums for children to explore and create with, offering free natural artistic expression and guided craft techniques and experiences. Where appropriate, these will be an integrated element of our seasonal program and planned wider community/cultural experiences – ‘creative inspiration’ (for example Easter, Christmas, Naidoc week, Environmental events). This program offers a holistic approach to meeting the EYLF and QKLG.

Our Arts Program will include:

Watercolour painting
Drawing (crayon blocks and sticks, pencils, chalk, pastels)
Guided drawing experiences
Painting (water colour, ochre, acrylic on various surfaces and techniques)
Collage (scrap, natural, recycled)
Weaving
Printing
Fabric (dying, sewing)
Wet Felting and dry fleece
Sculpture
Paper (beads, origami, tearing, collage)
Clay
Wood
Handwork
Toy making

How does the program support the multi ages of the children? A multi aged kindergarten provides many valuable experiences.

Multi – age learning and teaching

What are the benefits for teachers and children?

Research has highlighted the benefits for both teachers and children when learning and teaching in a multi-age classroom. Benefits include more holistic, child-responsive curriculum practices that consider the understandings, capabilities and dispositions that children need for future work, e.g. working in diverse environments that seek workers who are multi-skilled, literate, cooperative, creative, adaptable, independent and resourceful. Children and teachers usually have the opportunity to work together for more than one year, which enhances continuity of learning and the forming of positive relationships with teachers and children, and between children. Because of the mixed age group, the younger children benefit from the positive models of older children, often aspiring to their levels of capability. At the same time, the older children rise to the expectations of the younger children and teacher, being very responsible and having opportunities to lend and use their expertise.

Social constructivist and critical perspectives of learning and teaching (upon which the Early Years Curriculum Guidelines is developed), affirm the use of a multi-age classroom approach. Strategies used in this approach include:

- recognising and building on children’s diverse backgrounds, understandings and experiences
- understanding how children learn
- building connectedness between learning experiences
- acknowledging children as unique individuals with diverse and complex identities
- recognising children as active ‘agents’ of their own learning.

Equally, younger children also benefit from their older role models. Children mimic each other and learn most effectively through play. It is well known that within mixed age settings language development is significantly enhanced through the interaction with older children.

An important feature of a successfully grouped program is the understanding that everyday routines, as well as experiences or activities, are not only possible but can be beneficial for children and more interesting for the educators in a family grouped setting. An environment that is responsive to the interests and abilities of each child, and caters for different learning capacities, most effectively supports the way children learn and develop.

For further reading on this topic, please refer to *'The Early Years Curriculum Material – multi-age learning and teaching*

https://www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/downloads/p_10/ey_lt_multi-age.pdf

Please see above link for more information on the learning values of this model. For us at Fingerprints, we LOVE having siblings share their childcare journey together. It builds the sibling bond and also paves the way for younger siblings to transition and feel safe and secure in the environment.

What are the main reasons for parents of existing students enrolling their children at Finger Prints?

From many years of surveys and evaluating our enrolment processes, we have found that families choose a Fingerprints education for their child for these reasons:

1. Bachelor trained Early Childhood Teachers running an Approved Queensland Kindergarten Program
2. Experienced staff, all holding qualifications in Early Childhood education
3. Connection with the Silkwood School community
4. The community of like-minded families who value a more 'natural approach to learning'
5. The rich learning and educational programs and emailed weekly Day Books
6. The reputation of the Centre – Achieving a rating result of 'Overall EXCEEDING National Quality Standards' from the National Quality Authority
7. A ONE room, owner operated Centre with high staff child ratios (more personalised service).
8. The opportunity for siblings to be together in the same program
9. A privately owned centre opposed to a multi corporation
10. Low fees for high quality service
11. The PRO CHOICE views on vaccination

