



GENAZZANO  
FCJ COLLEGE

# Early Learning Handbook

Ready to take  
on tomorrow.

In 2021, the Genazzano FCJ College Early Learning Centre was assessed and rated by the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) as 'Exceeding National Quality Standard'. Genazzano FCJ College Early Learning Centre received an outstanding report in regards to all seven areas of the National Quality Standards.



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# Welcome to Genazzano.

Welcome to the Genazzano FCJ College Early Learning Centre (ELC). We are so delighted you have decided to join us and cannot wait to share more about our program and learning environment with you. As you read through this handbook, you will get a sense of who we are at the Genazzano ELC, our vision and values, our learning program and staff – and what makes us unique.



We are a kindergarten program for children aged 3 to 6 years old. Our program offers families the flexibility to choose your child's days of attendance ranging from three to five days, ensuring they are receiving well beyond their 15 hours of kindergarten.

Our ELC sessions run from 8.50am to 3.00pm each day and before and after care sessions are available through Camp Australia. We deliver a personalised approach to learning, offering small class sizes with a maximum of 20 children in each group and only 40 across the whole program.

The ELC is a part of the Genazzano Junior School, which ensures we have a strong school readiness program and can leverage school teaching and learning environments, as well as community resources.

A Genazzano Early Learning Centre education is a wonderful gift and we look forward to providing your child with limitless opportunities to grow as they embark on their journey as a young learner.

**Alison Teece**  
– ELC Director

# Our values and vision.

The Genazzano FCJ College Early Learning Centre is a Catholic ELC that embodies the charism of our founders, the sisters Faithful Companions of Jesus and is inspired by Ignatian spirituality.

The College shares with their community a future-oriented and distinctive learning culture guided by reflection, wisdom, and service and empowers young children to transform the world with faithfulness, courage and confidence.

Each person's dignity is an essential element in how the College lives out its vision and promotes the safety, wellbeing and inclusion of all children and young people.

## Key values and principles of the ELC

- Teachers build secure respectful and reciprocal relationships with the children
- We work in partnership with families
- A commitment to equity and upholding high expectations for all children regardless of circumstance
- Respect for diversity
- Continual engagement in ongoing learning and reflective practice
- Individual learning plans with a focus on children's agency and individual learning style
- A balance of teacher led and play based learning.



# Our ELC Program.

## Program overview

The early learning years are recognised as a critical period of rapid growth and development for young children. The benefit of the Genazzano ELC, is that we can provide a continuity of learning as children move through the ELC and on to Junior School, all in the one setting.

Our program offers a balance of teacher led and child led learning which values early childhood as a unique and special period while preparing for your child's next steps and transition into school.

The ELC works in partnership with you to provide a specialised kindergarten program that caters for both the individual and group learning needs of children aged 3-6 years old.

We value each child as a competent, capable and unique individual; and as collaborators in their own learning.

Three learning conversations are held each year to create individual learning plans based on children's interests, strengths, skills and learning dispositions. These learning plans, progress and reflections are shared with each family to ensure there is transparency and collaboration between families and teachers.



## Getting to know you and your child

Our staff take pride in getting to know every child and family that enrolls in our ELC. We acknowledge families as the children's first teachers and therefore highly value working in partnership together.

The teacher will meet with each family individually to gain an understanding of what each child knows, what they can do and what they understand. This is an opportunity to share your child's interests and strengths and to build a relationship with the teaching team. We will also use this time to gain an understanding of family practices, values and beliefs. ESL (English as a Second Language) support can be arranged if required.

We will communicate with you regularly prior to commencement, throughout transition and during your time in the ELC and guide you through the transition process. Families have the opportunity to attend orientation sessions with their child in the year prior to attendance, in addition to orientation sessions at the commencement of the school year.

Families have access to online platforms that provide daily updates of children's experiences in the program; and individual observations allow each family to view their child's experiences and contribute to the learning process.

## Our learning approach

Genazzano FCJ College is currently undergoing authorisation to become a PYP school.

The PYP focuses on building children's skills and dispositions as internationally minded, creative learners investigating and problem solving through play and guided enquiry; and provides the perfect blend of teacher led and child led learning opportunities. This approach aligns with the aims of the Genazzano ELC – to ensure all ELC children become confident, resilient and focused learners.

In the Genazzano ELC, teachers work alongside children on projects that encourage problem solving, experimentation, innovation and learning from mistakes. Children's independence, confidence, creativity and adaptability is encouraged, as they are inspired by meaningful, deep connections to their learning experiences.

Language, literacy, numeracy and science are key components of the learning program across both ELC3 and ELC4; and are embedded across

play based and structured learning experiences. Some of the specialist experiences we offer include Library, Music, Perceptual Motor Program (PMP), Mandarin and Art.

Children are given opportunities to share stories about their world and learning and a continuity of learning between home and the ELC is fostered.

Children are introduced to group learning expectations and develop an understanding of working as part of a learning community.

The learning environment we create enhances children's physical, cognitive, social wellbeing and emotional skills and focuses on the development of self-regulation, emotional resilience and social skills.

Individual learning goals, along with program plans and assessment are developed for each child, to enhance individual and group learning outcomes; and foster independence, resilience and confidence.



Genazzano FCJ College is a candidate school\* for the PYP. We are pursuing authorisation as an IB World School. IB World Schools share a common philosophy – a commitment to high-quality, challenging, international education – that we believe is important for our students.

\*Only schools authorised by the IB Organization can offer any of its four academic programmes: the Primary Years Programme (PYP), the Middle Years Programme (MYP), the Diploma Programme (DP), or the Career-related Programme (CP). Candidate status gives no guarantee that authorisation will be granted. For further information about the IB and its programmes visit <http://www.ibo.org>.

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## Learning activities

Children are given key responsibilities in the program and provided opportunities to be responsible for daily jobs such as acknowledgement of country, prayer, compost bin, calendar, lights and lunch jobs.

The children engage in a range of open-ended learning experiences designed to maximise learning and stimulate curiosity, wonder and exploration. The outdoor environment provides opportunities for social interactions and mixing of the ELC3 and ELC4 programs.

The teachers and co educators use intentional teaching strategies to support, scaffold and consolidate children developing their knowledge, skills, approaches and abilities.

Activities include imaginative play, arts and craft, construction, loose parts play, sand pit, climbing frames, group games and more.

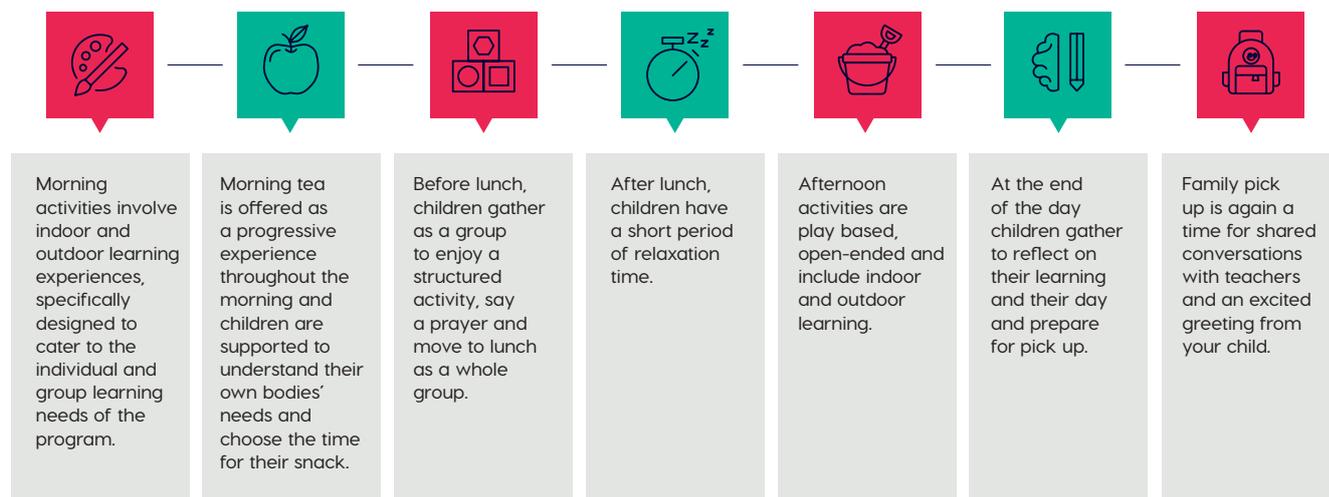
We also provide incursions and excursions to support children's engagement with and capture their understanding about their community. The children engage in a regular out-and-about program that connects them with the College community.



## A typical day

A typical day in the ELC starts with drop off. This is an opportunity for families to share information about your child. Children put their bags in their lockers and organise their snack, lunch and drink.

The day starts with a structured morning meeting in which children and their teachers share information and discuss the day ahead. Specialist subjects are scheduled across the week based on a fortnightly format.



## When to start a 3-year old kindergarten

Each child is different and we recommend carefully considering your child's readiness before commencing in the ELC.

Your child must be 3 years of age on or before 30 April to be eligible to attend 3-year-old kindergarten in that year. If you enrol early, your child's place will be held until they turn 3 years old and fees will only apply once they can start attending.

If your child is born between 1 January and 30 April, your child can begin 3-year-old kindergarten in the year they turn 3 or 4.

## When to start a 4-year old kindergarten

Each child is different and we recommend carefully considering your child's readiness before commencing in the ELC.

When your child attends two years of kindergarten before starting school, this decision will be made before attending their 3-year-old program.

If you choose to only attend one year of kindergarten before starting school, your child must be 4 years of age on or before 30 April to be eligible to attend 4-year-old kindergarten in that year.

If your child is born between 1 January and 30 April, your child can begin 4-year-old kindergarten in the year they turn 4 or 5.

## GOSH

Genazzano's Out of School Houses Program (GOSH) is administered, organised and supervised by Camp Australia, a national provider of quality care, activities and entertainment for children.

The program runs from 7.00am - 8.50am and 3.00pm - 6.00pm each school day. A specialist room within the Grange Hill Building is provided for the ELC children to gather to engage in play based activities.

On days when formal classes conclude prior to 3.00pm, the GOSH Program runs from the finish of lessons until 6.00pm.

# Transitions.

Transition and orientation sessions are designed to provide a smooth and happy beginning to each child's learning journey. Transitions commence in Term Four of the year before a child will attend the program.

These transitions provide opportunities for families to explore the program with their child and encourage family discussions leading into this new experience. In the first three weeks of Term One, orientation sessions involve staggered starts and shortened sessions in ELC3 and for any new ELC4 children as needed. This allows children to begin with a manageable and positive experience as they get to know their new environment and teachers.

Research suggests two years of ELC or kindergarten, is optimal for the forming of neural pathways and social skills. Two years of kinder allows children the time to learn and consolidate the necessary skills to prepare them not just for school but also for life.

Starting in the ELC3 Program provides the opportunity for children to begin their kinder years as a very supported and guided experience. The ELC3 teachers understand the developmental needs of this age group and routines and tasks are broken down to support learning and provide consistency and predictability.

The ELC3 experience provides an opportunity for children to build their social and emotional skills ready for group and individual interactions; and to become comfortable with the learning environment and structure.

Interactions in shared areas provide children with interactions to build relationships with all members of the ELC teaching team and support the community feel of the program.

With the ELC positioned in the Junior School Grange Hill Building, children and families feel part of the school community immediately and become comfortable and more familiar with the broader school setting right from the start. This positioning allows children to begin their transition to school from their first days at the ELC.

As we access the specialist programs in the library and art room, children are learning to navigate the school environment and feel safe and supported. We often engage in learning experiences in the schoolgrounds, accessing the playgrounds, fields and performance facilities.

In addition, the ELC children often engage in fun learning experiences with the Prep children throughout the year. A more formalised transition begins in Term Three, when children celebrate events and engage in structured transition activities with the Prep class and teacher.



# Our community.

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The College benefits from both the Genazzano Mothers' Association and Genazzano Fathers' Association, in recognition of the different but equally important roles played by parents in the upbringing and education of their children.

The associations offer tremendous support to the College and provide parents a ready-made network of friendship, professional connections and shared parental experiences.

At the start of each school year, the Mothers' and Fathers' Associations collaborate with the College for the GenWelcomes event, where hundreds of current parents and community members welcome new families to the College. Celebrating the new school year, this spectacular event is held on Circular

Drive at the entrance of the historic Wardell Building.

The ELC is an important part of our Junior School and all families are invited to share in celebrating special occasions at the College like Mother's Day, Father's Day and more. Keep an eye out for invitations and dates on our intranet, GenConnect.

We also encourage family members to assist in the ELC program and enjoy the morning with their child. Our kinder helper roster usually begins in Term Two so all children have had an opportunity to settle into the program - this may involve a visit to the group to share a special skill or knowledge, for example cooking, a musical instrument or a work skill.

In addition, families are often asked to participate in excursions. Incursions and excursions are usually arranged to extend the children's learning in the program based on current projects and interests and vary year to year.

We do have a regular incursion to cover road safety, body safety and responsible pet ownership; and regular nature play excursions offer children the opportunity to explore the natural world. Here, we utilise the Genazzano FCJ College facilities within the College grounds. The Prep Playground is often used; and encourages children to build a familiarity with the school and feel a part of the community.





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CRICOS Provider  
Number: 03298G