

Ratings Review Decision Notice

Panel members

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Panel date

[REDACTED] 2022

Applicant

[REDACTED] on behalf of [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Regulatory Authority WA Department of Communities

Decision: The Ratings Review Panel (the panel) decided by consensus to confirm the ratings under review as follows:

- Quality Area 1, Standard 1.1 (Exceeding themes 2 and 3 were not identified)
- Quality Area 1, Standard 1.2 (Exceeding themes 1, 2 and 3 were not identified)
- Quality Area 1, Standard 1.3 (Exceeding themes 1, 2 and 3 were not identified)
- Quality Area 3, Standard 3.2 (Exceeding themes 1, 2 and 3 were not identified)
- Quality Area 4, Standard 4.1 (Exceeding themes 2 and 3 were not identified)
- Quality Area 4, Standard 4.2 (Exceeding themes 1, 2 and 3 were not identified)
- Quality Area 5, Standard 5.1 (Exceeding themes 2 and 3 were not identified)
- Quality Area 5, Standard 5.2 (Exceeding themes 1, 2 and 3 were not identified)
- Quality Area 6, Standard 6.1 (Exceeding themes 1, 2 and 3 were not identified)
- Quality Area 6, Standard 6.2 (Exceeding themes 1, 2 and 3 were not identified)
- Quality Area 7, Standard 7.1 (Exceeding themes 2 and 3 were not identified)
- Quality Area 7, Standard 7.2 (Exceeding themes 1, 2 and 3 were not identified)

The service's overall rating remains as Meeting NQS.

Issues

1. The approved provider (the provider) sought a review of the ratings for the above standards on the grounds the regulatory authority:
 - (a) did not appropriately apply the prescribed process for determining a rating level; and
 - (b) failed to take into account or give sufficient weight to special circumstances or facts existing at the time of the assessment and rating.

Overview

2. After initial assessment, the draft assessment and rating report recorded the service's overall rating as Meeting NQS. A small number of Exceeding themes were identified across the standards, however all standards were rated Meeting NQS.
3. After considering the service's feedback on the draft assessment and rating report, the final assessment and rating report recorded the amendment of Standard 3.1 to Exceeding and an additional Exceeding theme identified in Standard 5.1. The service's overall rating remained as Meeting NQS.
4. The provider sought a first tier review for Standards 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 3.2, 4.1, 4.2, 5.1, 5.2, 6.1, 6.2, 7.1 and 7.2. The regulatory authority considered the submissions provided, however no changes were made to service's rating.
5. At second tier review, the provider sought a review of a total of 32 Exceeding themes across 12 standards, as set out on page 1.

Evidence before the panel

6. The panel considered all the available evidence submitted by the provider and the regulatory authority. This included:
 - the application for second tier review and its attachments
 - the assessment and rating instruments and the final assessment and rating report
 - the service's feedback to the draft report
 - the application for first tier review and its attachments
 - the regulatory authority's findings at first tier review
 - the regulatory authority's submission to second tier review.
7. The panel also considered Exceeding theme guidance from the *Guide to the National Quality Framework*. This included Exceeding guidance specific to the standards under review, as well as questions used by authorised officers to establish Exceeding NQS practice.

The law

8. Section 151(1) of the *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2020* (the National Law) states:

'Following a review, the Ratings Review Panel may:

- a) confirm the rating levels determined by the Regulatory Authority; or
- b) amend the rating levels'

The facts

1. [REDACTED] is a long day care service with [REDACTED] approved places. The service is located [REDACTED] in [REDACTED] Western Australia.
2. This is the service's first assessment and rating. The service was approved on [REDACTED] 2018.
3. The service's assessment and rating [REDACTED] took place from [REDACTED] 2021 to [REDACTED] 2021 by [REDACTED] authorised officers.
4. The draft assessment and rating report was sent to the provider on [REDACTED] 2021, with feedback submitted to the regulatory authority on [REDACTED] 2022 (additional time to submit feedback was granted by the regulatory authority).
5. The final assessment and rating report was sent to the provider on [REDACTED] 2022. The service's overall rating was Meeting NQS.
6. The provider applied for first tier review by the regulatory authority on [REDACTED] 2022 (additional time to apply for first tier review was granted by the regulatory authority).
7. The provider received the decision notice on [REDACTED] 2022 (The decision timeframe was extended by agreement between the regulatory authority and the provider). Following first tier review, the service's overall rating remained as Meeting NQS.
8. The provider applied for second tier review on [REDACTED] 2022, seeking to have 12 standards amended to Exceeding NQS.
9. By agreement between the provider and the panel Chair, the 60 day decision timeframe was extended due to the scope and size of the review, and to ensure adequate time for the panel to prepare.

Review of ratings

Standard 1.1

10. Standard 1.1 is:

The educational program enhances each child's learning and development

11. Exceeding theme 2 is:

Practice is informed by critical reflection

12. Exceeding theme 3 is:

Practice is shaped by meaningful engagement with families and/or the community

Standard 1.1: Second tier review

13. At second tier review, the provider sought a review of the ratings for Standard 1.1, specifically Exceeding themes 2 and 3.

Panel deliberations

14. In deliberating on whether the service demonstrated Exceeding themes 2 and 3 for Standard 1.1, the panel commented that, in their view, the available evidence did not demonstrate the exceeding themes, and is therefore more consistent with requirements for Meeting NQS for this standard.
15. The panel took note of evidence shared from the assessment and rating process and first tier review, especially the entries from the [REDACTED] platform. They were, however, unable to see examples of how each child's learning and development is critically reflected upon by educators using the planning cycle, in a deep and collaborative manner.
16. The panel recognised the service's engagement with the Early Years Learning Framework throughout their program documentation, which supported their achievement of Exceeding theme 1. However, they were unable to see clear and relevant evidence of how educators critically reflect on how the approved learning framework, including the principles and practice, informs curriculum decision making to enhance each child's learning and development.
17. The panel discussed the service's strong engagement and understanding of the principles of preschools and infant-toddler centres of the municipality of Reggio Emilia. However, the panel were unable to determine, in the evidence provided, how educators engaged in critical reflection to inform their decision making around adopting this approach in their unique service context to maximise opportunities for each child's learning.
18. Specific to Exceeding theme 2, the panel considered how the service's [REDACTED] [REDACTED] e provided, how the service team critically reflect on opportunities to cultivate respect for, and knowledge of the cultural diversity of the local community. For example, the panel commented on the service's celebration of [REDACTED], however, were unable to ascertain how each child's culture is reflected upon in the program, beyond initial engagement, from the available evidence.
19. Drawing on another example, the panel noted the inclusion of [REDACTED] into the [REDACTED] [REDACTED] after an educator attended a cultural competence workshop. The panel were unable to ascertain, in the evidence provided, how the decision to introduce [REDACTED] was critically reflected on by educators in relation to providing opportunities to cultivate deep

respect for, and knowledge of, individual children and their families' culture or the cultural diversity of the broader community in the educational program.

20. The panel noted the service's inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander knowledge and culture in the educational program and practice, for example, the [REDACTED] project. They noted that while this reflects a commitment to supporting the children's knowledge and respect of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language, histories and culture, they were unable to see clear or substantive evidence of how this project had been informed by critical reflection or meaningful engagement with families and/or communities.
21. In considering how the service utilises opportunities for maximising each child's learning, the panel acknowledged the changes made to the arrival routine, mealtime locations and sleep locations, however they were unable to determine how these changes in practice had been informed by critical reflection. The panel noted that while critical reflection may be occurring, and these changes may be an outcome of critical reflection, they were unable to ascertain this from the evidence provided. The panel noted the spreadsheet containing the team meeting minutes, however were unable to determine its effectiveness in showcasing robust debate and discussion which may be occurring during team meetings.
22. The panel agreed the [REDACTED] was well thought out and created a sense of cohesion across the service and the other [REDACTED] services, as well having a significant impact on how practice is embedded in service operations, which reinforces the achievement of Exceeding Theme 1. The panel noted, however, that they were unable to ascertain how critical reflection or meaningful engagement with families and/or community had informed the evolution of the [REDACTED] over time, and how it had been adapted to suit the unique service context, including the priorities, strengths and needs of the children, families and educators at [REDACTED]
23. The panel considered evidence submitted specific to Exceeding theme 3, however they were unable to ascertain how families and/or the community were involved in the curriculum decision making of the educational program. The panel acknowledged the various services under the [REDACTED] network exploring and investigating [REDACTED] of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander calendar. The panel were unable to identify, in the evidence provided how this practice evolved through meaningful engagement including, how the service actively sought and considered feedback from families and/or community, and how they were integral to the decision making specific to this project.
24. The panel concluded that there was insufficient evidence to determine that Exceeding themes 2 and 3 should be amended to Yes to support an overall higher rating for Standard 1.1.

Panel decision

25. The panel decided, by consensus, to confirm the rating for Standard 1.1 as Meeting NQS.

Standard 1.2

26. Standard 1.2 is:

Educators facilitate and extend each child's learning and development

27. Exceeding theme 1 is:

Practice is embedded in service operations

28. Exceeding theme 2 is:

Practice is informed by critical reflection

29. Exceeding theme 3 is:

Practice is shaped by meaningful engagement with families and/or the community

Standard 1.2: Second tier review

30. At second tier review, the provider sought a review of the ratings for Standard 1.2, and all Exceeding themes.

Panel deliberations

31. The panel deliberated on whether the service demonstrated Exceeding themes 1, 2 and 3 for Standard 1.2. The panel noted that, in their view, the available evidence did not demonstrate the Exceeding themes and therefore aligned more strongly with the requirements for Meeting NQS for this standard.
32. The panel deliberated on the Exceeding Guidance for Standard 1.2, Exceeding theme 1, and how educators consistently considered and promoted the agency of each child and supported each child to make a range of decisions to influence events and their world. For example, the panel considered how children choose their morning activity and were then able to move to other areas after completing that activity. They were unable to see clear and relevant evidence demonstrating the intentionality of educators' practice specific to the provision of experiences and opportunities made available to children to extend their learning across the service.
33. The panel acknowledged the work undertaken in the [REDACTED] room, which in their view was consistent with high quality practice. They were, however, unable to find substantive evidence of similar practice occurring in all rooms across the service. They were, therefore, unable to see evidence that demonstrated this high quality practice specific to educational program and practice occurring consistently across the service, regardless of the staffing arrangements or situation on any given day.
34. The panel concluded that there was insufficient evidence to determine that Exceeding theme 1 should be amended to Yes for Standard 1.2.
35. In deliberating on whether the service demonstrated Exceeding theme 2 for Standard 1.2, the panel were unable to identify critical reflection in the evidence provided at the level required to warrant a higher rating. The panel considered the [REDACTED] tool, which was submitted as evidence. This tool, in their view, did not demonstrate evidence of

critical reflection, including evidence of robust debate and discussion on the service's approach to facilitating and extending each child's learning and development.

36. The panel commended the service for their work in the creation and implementation of the [REDACTED] where extension of learning is planned for and consistent, and noted it is clearly a space where children's thinking is evolving. The panel noted children come in and out of the space and were unable to identify whether the service was critically reflecting on this practice, in the evidence provided. In particular, critical reflection on the intentionality behind how children use the [REDACTED] (for example, small groups at one time), was not evident. The panel acknowledged that the service considers space and educator numbers when determining how many children use the [REDACTED] at one time, as these factors impact the amount of choice children have in accessing the space on their own.
37. The panel again considered how work undertaken by children and educators in the [REDACTED] was reflective of the principles of practice undertaken by preschools and infant-toddler centres of the municipality of Reggio Emilia. The panel again noted that they were unable to see evidence in the submissions provided, of how educators, individually and together, regularly reflect on and understand this approach and how it has influenced their pedagogical practice over time.
38. The panel concluded that there was insufficient evidence to determine that Exceeding theme 2 should be amended to Yes for Standard 1.2.
39. In deliberating on whether the service demonstrated Exceeding theme 3 for Standard 1.2, the panel considered how meaningful engagement with families and/or the community is integral to the decision-making processes to inform how the service's educational practice approach supports and extends children's learning and development.
40. The panel was unable to see clear, relevant and substantive evidence of how families or the community are involved in problem solving and decision making, to influence or shape practice. They added that, in their view, the evidence submitted described feedback being received by families and/or the community and was actioned without clear examples of collaboration. The panel noted, while this may be occurring, it was not demonstrated in the evidence submitted. For example, the panel discussed email communication with families, and in particular a child making use of a [REDACTED], as a clear way of receiving the views of a family. However, they were unable to identify meaningful engagement and collaborative conversations and decision making that took place with regard to this example, resulting in practice that is responsive and tailored to the needs of this child.
41. The panel again considered the evidence presented on how children and educators engaged with the [REDACTED] for an extended period of time. They were, however, unable to ascertain from the evidence provided how meaningful engagement with families and/or the community shaped practice specific to this example.
42. The panel concluded that there was insufficient evidence to determine that Exceeding theme 3 should be amended to Yes for Standard 1.2.

Panel decision

43. The panel decided, by consensus, to confirm the rating for Standard 1.2 as Meeting NQS.

Standard 1.3

44. Standard 1.3 is:

Educators and co-ordinators take a planned and reflective approach to implementing the program for each child

45. Exceeding theme 1 is:

Practice is embedded in service operations

46. Exceeding theme 2 is:

Practice is informed by critical reflection

47. Exceeding theme 3 is:

Practice is shaped by meaningful engagement with families and/or the community

Standard 1.3: Second tier review

48. At second tier review, the provider sought a review of the ratings for Standard 1.3, and all Exceeding themes.

Panel deliberations

49. The panel deliberated on the evidence provided, to consider whether it demonstrated Exceeding themes 1, 2 and 3 for Standard 1.3. The panel agreed there was evidence that showcased sound practice and met the high standards required to achieve Meeting NQS. They added, however, that this evidence did not demonstrate exceeding practice at the level required for this standard.

50. When considering Exceeding theme 1, the panel acknowledged several examples of sound practice reflecting Meeting NQS practice. This included emails from the educational leader to the educators, the [REDACTED] tool, entries on the [REDACTED] platform, program plans and yearly reviews. The panel noted, however, that they were unable to see clear and relevant evidence to demonstrate how a planned and critically reflective approach on the individual child, drives program planning and implementation. They added that the evidence provided, including the individual child profiles, was, in their view, more evidence of evaluation of the program rather than reflective in nature and therefore did not represent evidence that met the requirements for Exceeding theme 1 for this standard.

51. When considering Exceeding theme 2, the panel noted the evidence provided did not adequately showcase robust debate and discussion occurring on the service's approach to assessment and planning. The panel commented that evidence submitted for this standard was, in their view, more an evaluation at an operational level, rather than of critical reflection, which requires a deeper level of thinking, analysis and questioning of practice, for example, engaging in questions such as 'what are our reasons for doing this this way?',

‘who is advantaged or disadvantaged by this choice?’, ‘what would happen if we changed something?’.

52. The panel discussed the evidence provided about the service’s practices to support a bilingual child, learning to speak English and [REDACTED]. While this evidence was provided under Standard 1.1, Exceeding theme 3, the panel also considered its relevance to Standard 1.3, Exceeding theme 2 in relation to the planned and reflective approach to implementing the program for each child. The panel also commented on the use of [REDACTED] to support the child’s language skills when implementing the program. They were unable to ascertain from the evidence provided the rationale underpinning this decision, as an example of critical reflection, including what current research or information specific to bilingual language development was sourced to inform this decision. The panel questioned if this might have been an opportunity to critically reflect on how to support this child from a strength-based approach and support their cultural and linguistic rights.
53. The panel commented on team meeting minutes from the [REDACTED] room, described as critical reflection of grouping intentions. The panel commented that, in their view, this evidence was more evaluative in nature, without the deeper level of analysis and thinking required to demonstrate exceeding level practice for this theme. For example, the evidence did not demonstrate robust discussion or debate from multiple perspectives, reference to information from outside of the service, highlight the rationale underpinning practice, or demonstrate links to any changes in practice. The panel commented that critical reflection may be occurring, however, it is not demonstrated in the evidence provided.
54. In deliberating on whether the service demonstrated Exceeding theme 3 for Standard 1.3, the panel could not identify clear, relevant and substantive evidence to support this theme. For example, the panel was unable to determine, from the evidence provided, how the service’s approach to assessment and planning reflects the unique geographical, cultural and community context of the service, as well as how they welcome and draw on the families’ goals for their children’s learning, priorities and strengths of the children and families at the service.
55. The panel commented on the service’s end of [REDACTED] designed with children. They acknowledged that this supports their cultivation of deep respect of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, knowledges, and culture. They added, however, that they were unable to ascertain, from the evidence provided, what critical reflection and/or meaningful engagement with families and/or the community had occurred as part of this project.
56. The panel concluded that there was insufficient evidence to determine that Exceeding themes 1, 2 and 3 should be amended to Yes to support an overall higher rating for Standard 1.3.

Panel decision

57. The panel decided, by consensus, to confirm the rating for Standard 1.3 as Meeting NQS.

Standard 3.2

58. Standard 3.2 is:

The service environment is inclusive, promotes competence and supports exploration and play-based learning

59. Exceeding theme 1 is:

Practice is embedded in service operations

60. Exceeding theme 2 is:

Practice is informed by critical reflection

61. Exceeding theme 3 is:

Practice is shaped by meaningful engagement with families and/or the community

Standard 3.2: Second tier review

62. At second tier review, the provider sought a review of the rating for Standard 3.2, and all Exceeding themes.

Panel deliberations

63. In deliberating on whether the service demonstrated Exceeding themes 1, 2 and 3 for Standard 3.2, the panel remarked on the well thought out use of available space, equipment and resources, noting the [REDACTED] space as an example. They added, however, that they were unable to see clear, relevant and sufficient evidence to warrant amending the rating of Standard 3.2 to Exceeding NQS.
64. The panel noted that this standard relates to the use of both the indoor and outdoor environment. They added that there was, in their view, a lack of evidence of how the service uses the outdoor environment to promote competence and support children's exploration and play-based learning.
65. When discussing Exceeding theme 1, the panel reflected on the Exceeding guidance on Standard 3.2, and specifically 'How are children actively engaged in child-directed learning experiences that demonstrate environmental awareness and/or responsibility?' The panel noted it was evident the service cares for the environment, noting that the educators were clearly doing a lot to demonstrate their commitment to the environment. Some of the examples the panel discussed included the service's chefs using more [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] produce, buying longer lasting resources across the service and the promotion of recycling and using less cans and bottles. In the panel's view, these examples did not demonstrate children becoming more environmentally responsible. The panel were also unable to ascertain the service's processes for seeking children's ideas, perspectives and priorities and how this informed the service's approach to the organisation and use of the physical environment to support safe and inclusive access for all children in child directed learning opportunities, specific to environmental awareness and/or responsibility, and how this was consistently offered across the age groups of children across the service.

66. When considering Exceeding theme 2, the panel acknowledged the service team's discussions of their approaches to sustainability and the move away from recycling to reusing, however, noted no evidence of critical reflection of supporting children's environmental awareness and responsibility or how engagement with children's ideas shaped the practice. The panel noted this may be occurring, however it was not evident in the evidence submitted.
67. The panel discussed the evidence described as critical reflection on rearranging the furniture in the [REDACTED] room. They noted that, in their view, the evidence provided was more indicative of a review and evaluation of the room arrangement, rather than evidence of critical reflection. For example, there was no evidence of robust debate and discussion with multiple perspectives amongst the room educators on their approach to designing an inclusive and play based learning environment.
68. The panel discussed the evidence provided on the use of [REDACTED] to transport children to [REDACTED] of the service, noting this was provided by the provider under Standard 7.1. Examples included [REDACTED] agreements and entries on the [REDACTED] platform on experiences for children to explore the [REDACTED]. The panel noted there was no evidence of critical reflection on supporting every child's participation and further enhance learning and development through the creative and flexible use of space, equipment and resources.
69. The panel acknowledged the limitations of the predominately indoor, [REDACTED] space in supporting each child's participation and engagement in quality experiences in both built and natural environments. They added, however, that this presented the service with an opportunity to engage in critical reflection on their approach to an inclusive, play based learning environment and to support environmental responsibility with consideration to their available indoor and outdoor spaces. However, the panel could not determine from the evidence provided that the service was critically reflecting on these opportunities.
70. In deliberating on whether the service demonstrated Exceeding theme 3 for Standard 3.2, the panel commented on the service's emails with a family about purchasing a [REDACTED] for the service to support their child's gross motor development. The panel commented on the value of emails to exchange information with families, noting that in this example the service responded positively to the family's views and perspectives. The panel added, however, that this email exchange does not demonstrate meaningful engagement with the family at the level required for this Exceeding theme and standard. In their view, the evidence provided did not identify the consistent and ongoing nature of the service's engagement with the family and how they continued to engage with the family in shared problem solving and decision making in the provision of resources and equipment to support the child's active participation in the program. The panel noted, as highlighted previously, while this level of meaningful engagement may be occurring, it was not reflected in the evidence provided.
71. The panel concluded that there was insufficient evidence to determine that Exceeding themes 1, 2 and 3 should be amended to Yes to support an overall higher rating for Standard 3.2.

Panel decision

72. The panel decided, by consensus, to confirm the rating for Standard 3.2 as Meeting NQS.

Standard 4.1

73. Standard 4.1 is:

Staffing arrangements enhance children's learning and development

74. Exceeding theme 2 is:

Practice is informed by critical reflection

75. Exceeding theme 3 is:

Practice is shaped by meaningful engagement with families and/or the community

Standard 4.1: Second tier review

76. At second tier review, the provider sought a review of the rating for Standard 4.1 and specifically Exceeding themes 2 and 3.

Panel deliberation

77. In deliberating on whether the service demonstrated Exceeding themes 2 and 3 for Standard 4.1, the panel remarked that they were unable to see clear, relevant and substantive evidence to warrant a higher rating. The panel commented on the sound structures and systems in place, which aligned with Exceeding theme 1, which had already been identified. Examples noted included the wide range of [REDACTED] staff supporting [REDACTED]. However, the panel were unable to see evidence of how decisions made specifically about the composition and use of staff were informed by critical reflection or meaningful engagement with families and/or the community to inform processes and practices specific to staffing arrangements.
78. Specific to Exceeding theme 2, the panel considered the service's submissions specific to the role of male educators in education and care, [REDACTED]. They added that, in their view, this did not demonstrate evidence of practice specific to staffing arrangements decisions being informed by critical reflection.
79. The panel noted, as demonstrated by the video evidence, the process of staff recruitment was predominately undertaken by management staff. The panel commented that there were opportunities for the service to critically reflect on the incoming staff's allocations to particular rooms according to their strengths, expertise and preferences, as well as the children and families currently attending. The panel noted that while this may be occurring, it was not clear in the evidence provided.
80. The panel also noted the service's fortnightly team meetings and leadership meetings, however they were unable to identify critical reflection on the organisation of staff across the service to enhance children's wellbeing, learning and development occurring during these meetings. The panel commented on the movement of staff as an opportunity to critically reflect on possible changes to the organisation of educators or improvement in

staff continuity. The panel noted the occurrence of meetings alone is not adequate to demonstrate critical reflection is occurring and shaping practice at the level required to warrant a higher rating.

81. The panel acknowledged the commitment to professional learning and the number of staff undertaking professional development opportunities. They added, however, they were unable to identify, in the evidence provided, how the service team critically reflects on the knowledge and enhanced understandings acquired through professional learning to hypothesise, test and evaluate new or different approaches to shape practice specific to the organisation of staff to support children's learning and development.
82. In considering whether the service demonstrated Exceeding theme 3 for Standard 4.1, the panel noted an example of sound practice, the ongoing network between the services under the [REDACTED] approved provider as a reciprocal partnership with the community. However, they were unable to ascertain from the evidence provided, how the conversations and discussions with this network contributed to decisions and resulted in shifts in thinking and changes in practice, specific to the organisation and continuity of educators.
83. The panel noted opportunities to engage in open dialogue with families about educators' room allocations and the impact on continuity for children transferring between rooms. They were unable to see clear and substantive examples, from the evidence provided, of how the service actively seeks, considers and values family and/or community feedback specific to staffing arrangements, and how this engagement results in shared problem solving and decision making.
84. The panel also considered evidence submitted about the service's engagement with the [REDACTED]. While noting the value of forming collaborative partnerships with community organisations and engaging with them in shared decision making specific to service operations, the panel was unable to ascertain, from the evidence provided, how this collaboration informed the service's approach to staffing arrangements. The panel concluded that there was insufficient evidence to determine that Exceeding themes 2 and 3 should be amended to Yes to support an overall higher rating for Standard 4.1.

Panel decision

85. The panel decided, by consensus, to confirm the rating for Standard 4.1 as Meeting NQS.

Standard 4.2

86. Standard 4.2 is:

Management, educators and staff are collaborative, respectful and ethical

87. Exceeding theme 1 is:

Practice is embedded in service operations

88. Exceeding theme 2 is:

Practice is informed by critical reflection

89. Exceeding theme 3 is:

Practice is shaped by meaningful engagement with families and/or the community

Standard 4.2: Second tier review

90. At second tier review, the provider sought a review of all Exceeding themes and the overall rating for Standard 4.2.

Panel deliberation

91. In deliberating on whether the service demonstrated Exceeding theme 1 for Standard 4.2, the panel remarked that the service has sound systems and structures in place, highlighting the service's orientation procedures for new educators as one example, and noting the service's orientation manual as evidence of the service paying deep attention to the importance of inducting new staff to their role. They also noted the service's practice of holding regular team meetings and networking meetings. The panel noted that, in their view, these examples and the available evidence did not demonstrate Exceeding level practice.
92. The panel again noted the service's [REDACTED] tool in relation to the professionalism of staff. They commented that the impetus for the development of this tool appeared to stem from staff undertaking practice that did not align with the service's expectations. In this regard, the panel questioned the extent to which this decision and its implementation reflected mutual respect and collaboration, which is a focus of this standard.
93. The panel also discussed the example of the role of male staff members in education and care settings, in relation to this standard. The panel noted concerns about decisions being made to not allow male staff members to change nappies or assist children with toileting in some instances, based on family feedback and preferences. They questioned how these conclusions reflected ethical and respectful decision making under this standard.
94. The panel questioned the extent to which professional collaboration was occurring with all members of the service team, to ensure all educators were involved in the change process across all aspects of service operations. The panel noted collaboration occurring at the leadership and management level, where decisions were made and communicated to the educators, for example through email collaboration from pedagogical leaders. They were unable to determine, from the available evidence, how the leadership team are actively seeking the views and perspectives of all staff to promote a high level of collaboration across the service and how these are taken into consideration in decision making.
95. In deliberating on whether the service demonstrated Exceeding theme 2 for Standard 4.2, the panel remarked that they were unable to see clear and relevant evidence demonstrating that critical reflection was occurring and that this critical reflection had shaped practice. The panel noted several opportunities for the service team to engage in robust debate or discussion from the evidence provided. For example, reflecting on the supervision of children in a complex environment, the evolution of the [REDACTED] and

educators' engagement with the service's philosophy. They added that, in their view, evidence of critical reflection specific to these examples at the level required to warrant a higher rating, were not apparent.

96. In deliberating on whether the service demonstrated Exceeding theme 3 for Standard 4.2, the panel was encouraged by the network meetings which are held across all [REDACTED] [REDACTED] services. The panel added that evidence provided specific to this example did not demonstrate how these discussions demonstrated shared decision making with a reflection on the relevancy to the [REDACTED] context at the level required for this Exceeding theme.
97. The panel discussed other examples noted by the provider specific to this standard, for example, their engagement with the [REDACTED], [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] and visits to other services. The panel commented that these examples were more closely aligned with Meeting NQS practice and did not demonstrate meaningful engagement at the level required for this Exceeding theme and standard.
98. The panel noted [REDACTED] the service's Acknowledgement of Country and map of the service for families, which was included as evidence for this standard. However, the panel was unable to see clear and relevant evidence demonstrating how the service meaningfully engaged with families and the community in this project to demonstrate a shared decision making, as well as evidence of staff collaborating on this process. The panel concluded there was insufficient evidence to demonstrate that the service was achieving Exceeding theme 3 for this standard.
99. The panel considered how staff were actively consulted and included in decision making around staffing changes during COVID-19. They noted, for example, the provider's comments that educators were happy to [REDACTED] [REDACTED]. The panel was unable to see clear and relevant evidence supporting this submission to demonstrate how collaborations specific to this issue were respectful and ethical, including the implications of this decision for continuity of staff.
100. The panel concluded that there was insufficient evidence to determine that Exceeding themes 1, 2 and 3 should be amended to Yes to support an overall higher rating for Standard 4.2.

Panel decision

101. The panel decided, by consensus, to confirm the rating for Standard 4.2 as Meeting NQS.

Standard 5.1

102. Standard 5.1 is:

Respectful and equitable relationships are maintained with each child

103. Exceeding theme 2 is:

Practice is informed by critical reflection

104. Exceeding theme 3 is:

Practice is shaped by meaningful engagement with families and/or the community

Standard 5.1: Second tier review

105. At second tier review, the provider sought a review of the rating for Standard 5.1, looking specifically at Exceeding themes 2 and 3.

Panel deliberation

106. In deliberating on whether the service demonstrated Exceeding themes 2 and 3 for Standard 5.1, the panel concluded that, in their view, there was a lack of clear, relevant and substantive evidence to support an amendment of the rating specific to relationships with children.

107. In considering Exceeding theme 2, the panel noted the evidence provided, such as entries into the [REDACTED] platform, are better described as evaluations of what had occurred rather than of critical reflection, which requires a deeper level of thinking, examination, and analysis. Further, the panel noted that Exceeding theme 2 not only requires critical reflection to have occurred, but that it had resulted in shifts in thinking and changes in practice.

108. The panel noted educators' reflection regarding slowing down practice in the babies' room, as well as a discussion around exploration for exploration's sake (rather than focusing on an end product) in the toddlers' room. The panel were unable to see clear and relevant evidence specific to these examples demonstrating how these ideas were progressed through robust discussion and debate with multiple educators and perspectives, and how critical reflection had shaped or changed practice. For Exceeding level practice, the panel noted robust discussion and debate includes educators asking 'why' and 'how' questions of themselves and each other, such as 'why do we do this?', 'why do we do it in this way?' and 'how does this practice contribute to improved outcomes for all children and families?'

109. The panel identified sections of the provider's first tier review submission which states '*Our service's approach to relationships between educators and children is reflective of robust debate, discussion, and opportunities for input by all educators, and informed by critical reflection and past incidents*'. They were, however, unable to see evidence to demonstrate this in the evidence provided.

110. Then panel noted reflections on grouping intentions in the [REDACTED] room, and the action plan to implement [REDACTED] and intentions to build connections with children. The panel noted the discussion may have been informed by the principles of practice undertaken by preschools and infant-toddler centres of the municipality of Reggio Emilia and the Early Years Learning Framework. The panel was, however, unable to see evidence of how educators have engaged in critical reflection, where robust debate and discussion with multiple perspectives draws on these sources to inform their approach to building and maintaining respectful relationships with children.

111. The panel considered Exceeding theme 3, noting that there was evidence of the service engaging with families. They added, however, that Exceeding theme 3 requires this engagement to be meaningful and to result in changes to practice that are responsive to and relevant to the needs of families and community. The panel commented that, in their view, there was a lack of clear and relevant evidence of how the service actively engages families and/or the community in problem solving and decision making in relation to building and maintaining respectful and equitable relationships with each child. The panel noted the community celebration in [REDACTED]. However, they were unable to ascertain how this engagement influenced practice specific to this standard.
112. The panel also commented on the service sharing information with families about the current progress of their children and relevant child development information. They added, however, the evidence provided did not demonstrate the service actively seeking and carefully considering feedback from families in relation to this information, or how it may have resulted in problem solving and shared decision making specific to educators' relationships with children. The panel concluded that there was insufficient evidence to determine that Exceeding themes 2 and 3 should be amended to Yes to support an overall higher rating for Standard 5.1.

Panel decision

113. The panel decided, by consensus, to confirm the rating for Standard 5.1 as Meeting NQS.

Standard 5.2

114. Standard 5.2 is:

Each child is supported to build and maintain sensitive and responsive relationships

115. Exceeding theme 1 is:

Practice is embedded in service operations

116. Exceeding theme 2 is:

Practice is informed by critical reflection

117. Exceeding theme 3 is:

Practice is shaped by meaningful engagement with families and/or the community

Standard 5.2: Second tier review

118. At second tier review, the provider sought a review of the rating for Standard 5.2 and all Exceeding themes.

Panel deliberation

119. In deliberating on whether the service demonstrated Exceeding themes 1, 2 and 3 for Standard 5.2, the panel commented, that in their view, the available evidence did not support an amendment to the rating for relationships between educators and children.

120. In considering Exceeding theme 1, the panel discussed how all educators, the educational leader and the co-ordinator demonstrate a deep understanding of the requirements of the standard, concepts and the component elements, and a commitment to high quality practice at all times. The panel noted the evidence submitted was largely from the [REDACTED] room, and therefore was unable to ascertain high quality practice was occurring consistently across the service.
121. The panel discussed the importance of children being able to raise a complaint with educators, as highlighted in the service's statement of philosophy and [REDACTED] document. They commented, however, that the evidence provided, in their view, did not show how this policy was enacted in practice by educators to consistently support each child to maintain sensitive and responsive relationships, and in particular to regulate their own behaviour, respond appropriately to the behaviour of others and communicate effectively to resolve conflicts. to demonstrate embedded practice specific to this example.
122. The panel concluded there was insufficient evidence to determine Exceeding theme 1 should be amended to Yes to support an amendment to the rating for Standard 5.2.
123. In deliberating on whether the service demonstrated Exceeding theme 2 for Standard 5.2, the panel highlighted several examples including the [REDACTED] discussions, the [REDACTED] curriculum, and agreements for the four-year-old children, along with discussions about [REDACTED] behaviours, highlighting some children's challenges regulating their emotions. The panel noted that while these were examples of sound practice, there was no evidence of educators questioning, analysing and deep examining their practice to make informed decisions when implementing practice to support children to build and maintain sensitive and responsive relationships.
124. The panel were also unable to see critically reflective discussions alongside the identification of opportunities to strengthen practice that led to the offering of the PowerPoint presentation [REDACTED]. The panel was unable to identify evidence of robust debate and discussion on the service's approach to supporting children to build and maintain sensitive and responsive relationships, in the evidence provided.
125. The panel concluded there was insufficient evidence to determine Exceeding theme 2 should be amended to Yes to support an amendment to the rating for Standard 5.2.
126. When considering Exceeding theme 3 for Standard 5.2, the panel took note of the email correspondence with families and advice received from their Inclusion Agency. In both examples, the panel questioned the extent to which this was meaningful engagement with families and/or the community, and whether the evidence demonstrated collaborative problem solving and shared decision making. They were also unable to see clear and relevant evidence demonstrating how educators are tailoring their approaches to supporting children to build and maintain sensitive and responsive relationships in response to input from families and/or the community. While the evidence details the input received, the panel was unable to ascertain how the service's practice was shaped by this engagement.

127. The panel discussed the PowerPoint presentation on [REDACTED] provided for families. They were, however, unable to ascertain from the evidence provided, how families were actively engaged in meaningful engagement in the development of the resource. This includes how families were involved in the decision-making process leading to the actions taken by the service in response to family concerns about children's behaviour. The panel considered that a meaningful and reflective discussion may have taken place when the PowerPoint was presented to families, however, evidence of such engagement was not provided, nor was there evidence of any changes in practice that had occurred as a consequence of this presentation.
128. The panel concluded there was insufficient evidence to determine Exceeding theme 2 should be amended to Yes to support an amendment to the rating for Standard 5.2.

Panel decision

129. The panel decided by consensus to confirm the rating for Standard 5.2 as Meeting NQS.

Standard 6.1

130. Standard 6.1 is:

Respectful relationships with families are developed and maintained and families are supported in their parenting role

131. Exceeding theme 1 is:

Practice is embedded in service operations

132. Exceeding theme 2 is:

Practice is informed by critical reflection

133. Exceeding theme 3 is:

Practice is shaped by meaningful engagement with families and/or the community

Standard 6.1: Second tier review

134. At second tier review, the provider sought a review of the rating for Standard 6.1 and all Exceeding themes.

Panel deliberation

135. In deliberating on whether the service demonstrated Exceeding themes 1, 2 and 3 for Standard 6.1, the panel noted that, in their view, the available evidence did not demonstrate high level practice required to amend the rating for supportive relationships with families.
136. In considering Exceeding theme 1, the panel noted the detailed and well thought out settling sessions for babies. They also noted the inclusion of [REDACTED] food for a child [REDACTED]. They added, however, that this is consistent with how

families are supported from enrolment, and that the culture, values and beliefs of families are respected, which are not sufficient to warrant an Exceeding NQS rating.

137. In considering how families are supported by the service, the panel was unable to identify evidence of information about relevant community services and resources to support parenting and family wellbeing at an Exceeding level for this standard. The panel noted that while this may exist, it was not evident in their review of the available evidence.
138. The panel concluded there was insufficient evidence to support the demonstration of Exceeding theme 1 to support an amendment to the rating for Standard 6.1
139. In considering Exceeding theme 2, the panel noted the statements made by the provider at first tier review on the debate and critical reflection occurring in manager and senior manager meetings around diversity in families, and the celebration of the traditionally perceived mother's and father's days. The provider commented that after critical reflection, the terminology was changed to [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. While noting these submissions, the panel was unable to see clear and relevant evidence of critical reflection occurring to substantiate them. This included, for example, evidence of robust debate, discussion, opportunities for input by all educators, and reference to information from outside the service to inform ongoing discussions, was not available. Similarly, there was no evidence of the ongoing consideration and discussion of social justice and equity implications of their approach to engaging with and supporting each family's participation in the service, although the provider noted this was occurring.
140. The panel noted the provider's submission about the [REDACTED] [REDACTED] is part of the [REDACTED] and a culture that has evolved over many years, noting the many factors influencing this, including an increasingly diverse and multicultural Australia. They added, however, that they were unable to see clear and relevant evidence of how the service critically reflected on, responded to and celebrated, the diverse cultures, values, and beliefs of families specific to their unique service context.
141. The panel concluded there was insufficient evidence to support the demonstration of Exceeding theme 2 under Standard 6.1.
142. In considering Exceeding theme 3, the panel discussed the service's sound effort at engaging families to build and maintain relationships, for example through [REDACTED] celebrating special occasions and presentations of children's learning, however they were unable to identify evidence about the voice of families and/or the community in shaping these decisions about practice.
143. In relation to Standard 6.1, the panel discussed the [REDACTED] guide, developed by the service in response to the change of [REDACTED] language [REDACTED] [REDACTED] to assist families to shift their thinking from a training model to a child led learning journey. The panel acknowledged the service's considerable effort in developing this resource. The panel was, however, unable to ascertain, from the evidence provided, if and how families and/or the community were engaged in meaningful ways in the development of the guide, including opportunities to develop or respond to the draft, and how their diverse views, values and beliefs were considered and acted upon, although the provider noted this was occurring.

144. Similarly, the panel discussed the [REDACTED] in relation to Exceeding theme 3. They noted that, in their view, it was unclear from the evidence provided, how the families and/or the community were given opportunities to share their views and perspectives, or become actively involved in the decision-making process in relation to this decision.
145. The panel concluded there was insufficient evidence to support the amendment of Exceeding theme 3 to Yes under Standard 6.1.

Panel decision

146. The panel decided by consensus to confirm the rating for Standard 6.1 as Meeting NQS.

Standard 6.2

147. Standard 6.2 is:

Collaborative relationships enhance children's inclusion, learning and wellbeing

148. Exceeding theme 1 is:

Practice is embedded in service operations

149. Exceeding theme 2 is:

Practice is informed by critical reflection

150. Exceeding theme 3 is:

Practice is shaped by meaningful engagement with families and/or the community

Standard 6.2: Second tier review

151. At second tier review, the provider sought a review of the rating for Standard 6.2 and all Exceeding themes.

Panel deliberation

152. In deliberating on whether the service demonstrated Exceeding themes 1, 2 and 3 for Standard 6.2, the panel concluded that, in their view, there was a lack of clear, relevant and substantive evidence to amend the rating to Exceeding NQS.
153. The panel conferred with the Guide to the NQF, to consider how educators, co-ordinators and the educational leader demonstrate a deep understanding of how collaborative partnerships enhance children's inclusion, learning and wellbeing, and a commitment to high quality practice at all times. The panel noted there was insufficient available evidence demonstrating the connections between children, families, service and communities in enhancing all children's inclusion, learning, development and wellbeing, at the level required for Exceeding theme 1.
154. In considering Exceeding theme 2, the panel noted the impact of COVID on the service's practice, resulting in a pause on service excursions into the community, including the [REDACTED]. The panel saw this as a further opportunity for the service to critically

reflect on how this impacted their relationships, collaborative partnerships, and ongoing community engagement. The panel noted that, while this level of critical reflection may have been occurring, it was not evident in the evidence provided.

155. The panel commented on the service's significant commitment to Reconciliation and the cultivation of deep respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures in the engagement with [REDACTED] people and culture across the service. Some examples include the use of relevant [REDACTED] language, stories and songs with children. The provider also noted a range of strategies and actions implemented as a result of conversations with representatives of the [REDACTED] community. However, the panel was unable to ascertain from the evidence available, how critical reflection in relation to the context to their service, had informed decision making, and the rationale behind the introduction of changes. The panel noted this may be occurring, however it was not evident in the available evidence.
156. The panel concluded there was insufficient evidence to support the demonstration of Exceeding theme 2 to support an amendment to the rating for Standard 6.2
157. In their deliberations on Exceeding theme 3, the panel noted the authorised officer's notes on children in the [REDACTED] room writing [REDACTED] to local businesses to learning about the local community, which led to the children and educators discussing their favourite and most visited parts of the community. The panel commented on this being a starting point for meaningfully engaging and building partnerships, with an opportunity for the service to continue to engage with and reflect on how this mapping of the local community, through the voices and priorities of the children and families, can contribute to the service's collaborative and reciprocal partnerships, in a way that is unique to the geographical, cultural and community context of the service. However, the panel noted that the evidence did not demonstrate that this had been undertaken.
158. The panel concluded there was insufficient evidence to support the demonstration of Exceeding theme 3 to support an amendment to the rating for Standard 6.2

Panel decision

159. The panel decided by consensus to confirm the rating for Standard 6.2 as Meeting NQS.

Standard 7.1

160. Standard 7.1 is:

Governance supports the operation of a quality service

161. Exceeding theme 2 is:

Practice is informed by critical reflection

162. Exceeding theme 3 is:

Practice is shaped by meaningful engagement with families and/or the community

Standard 7.1: Second tier review

163. At second tier review, the provider sought a review of the rating for Standard 7.1 and specifically Exceeding themes 2 and 3.

Panel deliberation

164. The panel considered all evidence in relation to Exceeding themes 2 and 3 for Standard 7.1. They were, however, unable to see clear and adequate evidence to warrant a higher rating.

165. In considering Exceeding theme 2, the panel noted the provider's submission that educators, co-ordinators and those with management responsibilities critically reflected on the statement of philosophy. They were, however, unable to see evidence to support this. For example, they were unable to see evidence of all staff critically reflecting on the service's statement of philosophy, individually or together, including staff engaging in robust discussion and debate about the relevance of the current philosophy statement and its alignment with the values, beliefs, and priorities of all stakeholders. Further, the panel noted that the evidence before them demonstrated that the statement of philosophy had been last reviewed in 2016, which was two years prior to the approval of [REDACTED]. They were unable to determine how the philosophy had been reflected upon and evolved to reflect the service's current practice and their unique context.

166. The panel also noted that service operations are continually guided by the [REDACTED] which was evident in the identification of Exceeding theme 1. However, they were unable to ascertain from the evidence provided, how educators and families have been involved in the development of the [REDACTED] and engage in the regular review and of management systems and the service's decision-making processes to support the operation of [REDACTED] specifically. The panel commented this may be occurring, however it was not clear in the evidence provided.

167. The panel noted the orientation manual for new educators as an example of sound practice, however they were unable to determine how the manual had evolved and catered for the needs of the educators in the evidence provided, and what role critical reflection played in shaping this document.

168. In deliberating on the evidence for Exceeding theme 3, the panel considered the documentation on the feedback received from one family regarding introducing a [REDACTED] policy. The panel saw opportunities for the service, following this feedback from the family, to critically reflect on educators' confidence in raising matters of concern regarding child protection, and the current policies and procedures in place to support a child safe organisational culture. The panel noted the service started to question if the family properly understood the roles and responsibilities of staff, however subsequent evidence did not illuminate how and whether conversations were expanded upon or explored to demonstrate how the service actively supports families and the community to understand the roles and responsibilities of the members of the service team.

169. Drawing on the same example, the panel also considered Exceeding theme 3. The panel discussed the Exceeding theme guidance available in the Guide to the NQF, to determine if the evidence provided demonstrated how families are integral in the decision-making process and how meaningful engagement resulted in shared problem solving, which is a requirement for this Exceeding theme. The panel noted that it was not clear from the evidence provided, how practice is informed and shaped by meaningful engagement with families, including how the service engaged with this family in an ongoing way and how they actively sought and carefully considered their feedback.
170. The panel determined there was insufficient evidence to demonstrate high quality practice in relation to Exceeding themes 2 and 3 for Standard 7.1.

Panel decision

171. The panel decided by consensus to confirm the rating for Standard 7.1 as Meeting NQS.

Standard 7.2

172. Standard 7.2 is:

Effective leadership builds and promotes a positive organisational culture and professional learning community

173. Exceeding theme 1 is:

Practice is embedded in service operations

174. Exceeding theme 2 is:

Practice is informed by critical reflection

175. Exceeding theme 3 is:

Practice is shaped by meaningful engagement with families and/or the community

Standard 7.2: Second tier review

176. At second tier review, the provider sought a review of the rating for Standard 7.2 and all Exceeding themes.

Panel deliberation

177. The panel considered all the Exceeding themes in relation to Standard 7.2 with the available evidence, and with no evidence demonstrating how all staff members can communicate and raise issues openly and participate in respectful debate to contribute to each other's professional learning, the panel concluded the available evidence did not warrant an amendment of the current rating to Exceeding NQS.
178. In relation to Exceeding theme 1, the panel discussed the Quality Improvement Plan and were unable to determine how a wide range of staff beyond the leadership team or families are engaged in the process of self-assessment and the development of goals. The panel were unable to determine if all staff can discuss and demonstrate their active

participation in the ongoing quality improvement process. The panel questioned how the theoretical perspectives and approaches which inspire the service, such as the [REDACTED], principles of the infant and toddler preschools of Reggio Emilia and anti-bias work of [REDACTED] are drivers in the continuous improvement process, as this was not clear in the evidence provided.

179. The panel acknowledged the availability of the [REDACTED] team to provide professional support and guidance to the educational leader and the educators within the service. However, in the panel's view, they were unable to identify examples available to demonstrate how this support has specifically promoted a positive organisational culture and a professional learning community at the [REDACTED]. The panel concluded there was insufficient evidence to support the amendment of Exceeding theme 1 to Yes.
180. In consideration of Exceeding theme 2, the panel again reflected on the Quality Improvement Plan and was unable to determine critical reflection through robust debate and discussion with all educators on service performance in relation to the National Quality Standard, as well as focus areas and goals identified in the Quality Improvement Plan. The panel noted that the evidence did not clearly identify how the service enables all members of the service team to provide feedback on quality improvement processes and how this feedback is respectfully considered. The panel found there was insufficient evidence of critical reflection in determining areas for improvement and the strategies to address them, with the involvement of all staff at the service.
181. The panel acknowledged the evidence provided on managers, senior managers and directors coming together to discuss the [REDACTED] was a sound example that can enhance practice. They were, however, unable to determine how this information was critically reflected upon by all educators or how the organisational practice, specifically related to [REDACTED], is shaped by critical reflection. The panel concluded the available evidence did not warrant an amendment of Exceeding theme 2 to Yes.
182. In considering Exceeding theme 2, the panel noted a reference to anti-bias principles in the educational leader meetings, however, the panel noted there was a lack of clear and relevant evidence to support how these principles were reflected in their approach to collaborative partnerships.
183. In relation to Exceeding theme 3, the panel considered the Network Meetings across the [REDACTED] (including representatives from other services operated by the provider), which the panel considered sound practice demonstrating engagement and building reciprocal relationships with their community. However, the panel was unable to ascertain how the learnings from these meetings shaped practice at [REDACTED] and was therefore unable to conclude that the service had achieved Exceeding theme 3.

Panel decision

184. The panel decided, by consensus, to confirm the rating for Standard 7.2 as Meeting NQS.

General Comments

185. The panel acknowledged the service for their commitment to providing quality education and care for children and families within the [REDACTED] [REDACTED] community and congratulated them for meeting the high standards set out in achieving a rating of Meeting NQS.
186. The panel encouraged the service to review feedback received from the rating review processes, including at first and second tier review, as an opportunity to increase their understanding of the Exceeding themes and their capacity to demonstrate Exceeding NQS practice as it relates to specific quality standards.
187. To assist the service to deepen their knowledge, understanding and application of the Exceeding themes, the panel wished to highlight the [Exceeding guidance](#) available in the Guide to the NQF. The panel also encouraged the service to review Exceeding guidance specific to each standard also available in the Guide. In relation to Exceeding theme 2, the panel wished to emphasise that while simply reviewing or documenting an event or experience is certainly reflective, the essential element of critical interrogation and robust discussion and debate was often absent in the evidence submitted. The panel noted that much of the evidence submitted was descriptive in nature and answered questions such as “what is working well”, “what is not working” and “what to action”. The panel encouraged the service to complement their current structure with questions such as “why do we do that?” “how does this practice contribute to improved outcomes for all children and families?” “does this practice advantage some children and families and disadvantage others?”
188. Additionally, the panel noted that much of the evidence explained an end result, for example a decision made, or a document developed, without providing clear and substantive evidence of the deeper level of questioning, analysis and examination by all educators, individually and together, to demonstrate the thinking underpinning the final outcome. While the provider made statements about the service team ‘critically reflecting’ on practice, the panel were unable to see clear, relevant, and substantive evidence to support their submissions specific to the standards under review to support a higher rating.
189. In relation to Exceeding theme 3, the panel wishes to emphasise the importance of opportunities being regularly provided for families and/or the community partners to meaningfully participate in service decisions and solve problems. The panel noted much of the evidence provided demonstrated the service gathering information or seeking feedback from families and/or community. They were, however, unable to see clear, relevant and substantive evidence of the next step, such as when and how the information was acted upon and how the service re-engaged with the family or community to involve them in problem solving and decision making, to ultimately shape practice.

190. The panel wished to note the importance of examining the Exceeding themes in their entirety and paying attention to all aspects of the Exceeding theme to support a higher rating. For example, although a service may establish meaningful relationships with families, to achieve Exceeding theme 3 for a standard it must be clear how practice decisions are shaped by that engagement. The same is true for Exceeding theme 2, where critical reflection must have occurred and also have informed ongoing practice.