



EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION POLICY VANUATU 2025-2035



Ministry of Education & Training
Government of Vanuatu

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION POLICY VANUATU 2025-2035





This ECE policy was developed by the Ministry of Education and Training in Vanuatu with the Support of the Development Partners in 2025.

Foreword from the Minister of Education and Training



It gives me great pride to present the revised **Early Childhood and Education (ECE) Policy 2025–2035** on behalf of the Government of Vanuatu and the Ministry of Education and Training.

Early childhood is the most formative stage in a person's life. Research has consistently shown that quality ECE lays the foundation for a child's lifelong learning, health, and wellbeing. When delivered well, ECE does more than prepare children for school, it nurtures the development of the whole child, supports families, and strengthens our communities. It is both a social and economic investment that pays dividends for generations.

The revised ECE Policy reflects our national commitment to ensuring that every child in Vanuatu, regardless of gender, language, disability, or geographic location, has access to safe, inclusive, and culturally relevant early learning.

Significant progress has been made since the first ECE Policy in 2010. However, recent data from the Ministry's 2023 ECE Quality Assessment and Subsector Analysis Workshop revealed persistent challenges, including low enrolment rates, limited access in remote areas, and gaps in teacher qualifications, infrastructure, and monitoring systems. These realities demand urgent action.

This policy directly responds to those challenges by strengthening governance structures, introducing national quality standards, improving teacher professional development pathways, and prioritising inclusive access. It also aligns with Vanuatu's National Sustainable Development Plan (NSDP), the Education Act No. 9 of 2014, and the Vanuatu Education and Training Sector Strategic Plan (VETSS) 2020–2030.

Our collective success depends on strong collaboration. The implementation of this policy will require the active participation of parents, teachers, communities, church authorities, development partners, and all levels of government. Therefore, I invite all stakeholders to embrace this vision and work together to ensure that all children in Vanuatu can grow, play, learn, and thrive.

Finally, I am extending my heartfelt gratitude to all stakeholders, NGOs, and Development Partners for the remarkable assistance including UNICEF for their technical support and to PacREF for funding the policy review, the ECCE Quality Assessment Study, and the regional toolkit. Your partnership has been key to this achievement and reflects our shared commitment to giving every child in Vanuatu the best start in life.

Let us commit to giving every child the best possible start in life.



Hon. Simil Kalptu Johnson Youse.
Minister of Education and Training (MOET)

Foreword from the Director General



As Director General of the Ministry of Education and Training, I am pleased to present the **Early Childhood Education Policy 2025–2035**. This revised policy marks an important step in strengthening the foundations of learning and development for all young children in Vanuatu.

Early Childhood Education is one of the most strategic **capital investments** a nation can make. Quality early learning environments, safe and resilient infrastructure, and a well-supported workforce are essential for improving education outcomes and building a strong future workforce. This policy prioritises these areas by guiding investments in classrooms,

WASH facilities, teaching materials, and system strengthening across all levels.

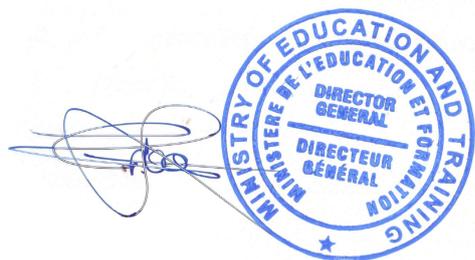
While we acknowledge the progress made over the last decade, gaps remain in accessibility, staffing, financing, and quality assurance. The Ministry's subsector analysis and recent assessments underscore the need for more strategic and sustained capital investment, particularly in remote and underserved communities.

This policy embraces that challenge. It calls for strong leadership at all levels and for collective responsibility in mobilising resources such as government financing, community support, and development partner contributions to build and maintain an ECE system capable of meeting the needs of present and future generations.

On behalf of the Ministry, I extend my appreciation to our teachers, community leaders, church authorities, provincial officers, and development partners for their ongoing commitment. Together, we must ensure that the provisions of this policy are translated into real action on the ground.

Let us move forward with a shared purpose: to build an ECE system that is robust, inclusive, and anchored in long-term investment for the betterment of our children and our nation.

Let us commit to giving every child the best possible start in life.



Cherol Alalana
Director General
Ministry of Education and Training (MOET)

Content

Foreword.....	1
Definitions.....	4
Acronyms and Abbreviations.....	5
Background.....	6
Policy Framework.....	8
Vision.....	8
Policy scope.....	8
Policy priorities.....	8
Underlying considerations.....	9
Supporting policies and frameworks.....	9
ECE Governance Structure	11
Structures.....	11
Roles and responsibilities.....	12
Strategies, Activities and Services.....	13
1. Enrolment and Inclusive Access.....	13
2. Curriculum, Pedagogy, and Learning Environment.....	14
3. Registration and Quality Standards.....	16
4. Class Size and Teacher-Child Ratio.....	17
5. Human Resources and Professional Development.....	18
6. Effective Transition to Primary School.....	20
7. Family and Community Engagement.....	21
8. Monitoring, Data, and Evidence-Based Planning.....	22
9. Financing, Sustainability and Partnership.....	24
10. Emergency Preparedness and Climate Resilience.....	25
11. Other Key Considerations in ECE Settings.....	26
Effective Date and Duration.....	27
Review Date.....	27
Annex.....	28
1. ECE Infrastructure.....	20

Definitions

Attached ECE centre	An attached ECE centre is one that is within the same boundary as the primary school. Attached ECE centres are established by communities, churches, or private organizations, and are managed by an ECE committee and parent-teacher association (PTA).
Early Childhood Education (ECE)	Early Childhood and Education (ECE) as mentioned in National ECCE Policy, 2018, refers to educational programmes for 4- and 5-year-old children before they transition to primary education.
Early Childhood Care and Education (ECE)	The term ECCE used in refers to programmes offered to children from birth to maximum age of 6 years and 6 months of age.
ECE programme	“ECE programme” is the umbrella term used in this policy to describe all educational programmes offering ECE programming to 4- and 5-year-old children. ECE programmes may include attached ECE centres and feeder ECE centres, as well as playgroups and kindergartens that include 4- and 5-year-old children.
Feeder ECE centre	A feeder ECE centre is one that is in the catchment area of the primary school, and children are likely to be transferred to that primary school when enrolled in Year 1. Feeder ECE centres are established by communities, churches, or private organizations, and are managed by an ECE committee and PTA.
Kindergarten	A class or school that prepares children, usually four and five- years old, for the first year of formal education.
Minimum Certified ECE Teacher	A Minimum Certified ECE Teacher refers to a teacher who has obtained a minimum qualification of certificate IV in ECE from a recognized educational institution and is registered and licensed with the Teaching Service Commission (TSC).
Qualified ECE Teacher	A Qualified ECE Teacher refers to a teacher who has obtained a Diploma or higher in Education/Teaching in ECE or related areas from a recognized education institution and is registered and licensed with the TSC.
Playgroup	Home-based programme near where the child lives, usually run by parents in communities who have attended a training organized by the Ministry of Education and Training in collaboration with faith-based groups.

Acronyms and Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Full Term
ABA	Area Branch Association
CPD	Continuous professional development
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
ECCE	Early Childhood Care and Education
ECD	Early Childhood Development
ECE	Early Childhood Education
KT	Key Teacher
EiE	Education in emergencies
MoET	Ministry of Education and Technology
NDMO	National Disaster Management Office
NDSP	National Sustainable Development Plan
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
PacREF	Pacific Regional Education Framework
PEEBA	Provincial ECE Executive Branch Association
PETALS	Pacific Employability, Transferrable, and All-Life Skills Framework
PSP	Parent Support Program
PTA	Parent-teacher association
TSC	Teaching Service Commission
TTI	Teacher training institute
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
VEMIS	Vanuatu Education Management Information System
VETSS	Vanuatu Education and Training Sector Strategic Plan
WASH	Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene
GRT	Government Remuneration Tribunal
CIP	Curriculum Improvement Program

Background

Global evidence consistently shows that quality early childhood education (ECE) is one of the most effective investments for lifelong learning and equity. Early childhood is a critical window for brain development and future outcomes, including health, learning, relationships, and economic productivity. Evidence shows that investments in the early years yield some of the highest returns in human capital development. Children who benefit from quality ECE services are more likely to be ready for school, stay in school longer, and achieve better learning and life outcomes. At least one year of quality ECE is associated with better performance in mathematics, reading, and science at age 15, especially when programmes feature trained teachers, structured environments, stimulating materials, and positive teacher-child interactions. Foundational learning in the early years, including basic literacy, numeracy, and essential life skills, are the building blocks of lifelong learning and development.

Moreover, ECE programmes actively engage parents and caregivers by offering opportunities to build parenting knowledge through daily interactions and family-centred events, thereby reinforcing the essential role families play in early learning.

Every child in Vanuatu deserves access to high-quality, relevant, inclusive, and resilient ECE that builds foundations for success in school and beyond, with the greatest impact on the most vulnerable. Investing in improving foundational learning in the early years not only reduces future learning gaps but also promotes social cohesion, inclusion and gender equity, and climate resilience. Strengthening ECE systems is an investment in both present and future—supporting every child in the Pacific to thrive, gaining learning, skills and resilience for their future.

The Government of Vanuatu recognises the essential role of ECE in achieving equitable and inclusive education. The importance of ECE is embedded in key national frameworks, including the National Sustainable Development Plan (NSDP) 2016–2030, the Vanuatu Education and Training Sector Strategic Plan (VETSS) 2020–2030, and the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) Corporate Plan. The government is committed to ensuring that all children, regardless of gender, disability, language, faith, or location, can learn through play, explore, and thrive in environments that promote curiosity and problem-solving. The right of children to access ECE in their first language is also affirmed.

Evidence shows that investments in the early years yield some of the highest returns in human capital development—children who benefit from quality ECD services are more likely to be ready for school, stay in school longer, and achieve better learning and life outcomes. See Heckman, J. (2011). *The Economics of Inequality: The Value of Early Childhood Education*. *American Educator*, 35(1), 31–35; UNICEF (2021). *A World Ready to Learn: Prioritizing quality early childhood education*. New York: UNICEF; World Bank (2018). *World Development Report 2018: Learning to Realize Education's Promise*. Washington, DC: World Bank.

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Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). (2017). *Starting Strong V: Transitions from Early Childhood Education and Care to Primary Education*. OECD Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264276253-en>
Government of Vanuatu. (2016). *National Sustainable Development Plan 2016–2030*.

Over the past decades, Vanuatu, led by the MoET, has taken substantial steps to improve access to the early years. Key milestones include:

- The ECE Policy in 2010 and its revision in 2018.
- Education Act No. 9 of 2014, which recognises ECE as part of basic education and mandates parental responsibility for ECE attendance.
- Early Learning Development Standards (2010) and the National Kindergarten Curriculum (2012) and its revision in 2025 to guide quality ECE provision.
- ECCE Quality Standards, 2017
- Harmonized Quality Standards, 2020
- Home School Package for ECCE, 2022
- The Curriculum Improvement Program (CIP), 2024.
- Parent Support Program, 2018
- Home Reader Program, 2025

This policy also aligns with the Pacific Regional Education Framework (PacREF) 2018- 2030: Moving Towards Education 2030. One of the three broad-based high-level “achievement” targets set by PacREF includes “establishing upward trends in the percentage of preschool children assessed as school-ready when they enter primary school.” This policy also echoes a commitment made by Pacific Heads of Education Systems at the March 2024 PacREF Regional Early Childhood Education Conference to champion the cause of ECE. The policy also aligns with the Ministerial outcomes of the Pacific 2025 Early Childhood Development (ECD) forum which highlighted the critical role of ECE within multisectoral ECD.

Policy Framework

Vision

In Vanuatu, every child aged 4 and 5, including those in emergency contexts, will learn in safe, inclusive, and culturally grounded environments that foster essential life skills and a strong foundation for future success, empowering our youngest citizens to become confident, resilient, capable, and compassionate members of society.

Policy scope

The 2025 National Early Childhood Education (ECE) Policy replaces the previous 2018 version, which focused on Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE), covering children from four – 6.6 years of age. The 2025 National ECE Policy provides a comprehensive policy framework for all ECE stakeholders. It affirms that all children—including those with disabilities, from disadvantaged backgrounds, living in remote communities, and/or affected by emergencies—have the right to access play-based quality inclusive early learning aligned with the National Kindergarten Syllabus.

This policy applies to all education service providers offering ECE programmes for children aged 4 to 5 years before they enter primary education, including:

- Government and semi-government agencies,
- Faith-based organizations,
- Community-based organizations, and
- Private providers.

Policy priorities

Vanuatu, through the Education Act Number 9, 2014, envisions the importance of the early education of young children. This policy supports that vision through providing two years of quality ECE for 4 and 5-year-old children, prior to entering Year 1.

There are five policy priorities that guide Vanuatu's ECE Policy.

1. An **evidence-based ECE plan** for equitable provision of quality inclusive ECE programming, making efficient use of available financial, human, and physical resources, taking into account issues around child protection as well as special and inclusive education
2. A **well-qualified ECE workforce**, including teachers, administrators, and other related personnel, that has the essential competencies, training, and support to promote children's positive development and learning. The ECE workforce shall also themselves be supported through mentoring and coaching.
3. The **National Kindergarten Syllabus**, promote the use of vernacular, local values and culture, that is effectively and efficiently implemented to foster young children's holistic development and lifelong skills to respond to their individual and cultural characteristics and prepare them to enter primary school.
4. A coherent framework developed and established for monitoring and quality assurance of the ECE subsector. Monitoring of quality will be used to support continuing improvements in both policy and practice.

5. Programmes in the ECE subsector developed to **encourage family and community engagement** to strengthen services, family practices, and children's learning and development, embodying the spirit of Vanuatu and its people.

Underlying considerations

There are several considerations that underline these policy priorities. These include the following:

- **Child health and nutrition:** This current policy shall be aligned with the National School Health Policy, 2024.
- **Child protection:** This current policy shall be aligned with the National Child Safeguarding Policy (2017).
- **Early childhood development:** This current policy shall be aligned with the Vanuatu National Policy for Early Childhood Development (2023-2027).
- **Vanuatu Inclusive Education Policy:** This current policy shall be aligned with the MoET Inclusive Education and Training Policy (2025-2030). In partnership with Ministry of Health, MOET shall ensure all students shall be screened prior to entry into the ECE programme to facilitate early detection and management of special education needs and/or medical issues.
- **Education in emergencies (EiE):** This current policy shall be aligned with the Disaster Risk Reduction & Education in Emergency Policy (2024-2030).
- **Gender responsiveness:** This current policy shall be aligned with the MoET Gender Equity in Education Policy (2018).
- **Mentoring and coaching:** The ECE workforce shall be supported through continuous professional development including mentoring and coaching.
- **Use of vernacular:** Students' mother tongue language shall be used in the classroom, as per the Language Policy (2012).
- **Water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH):** This current policy shall be aligned with the WASH in School Policy (2024).

Supporting policies and frameworks

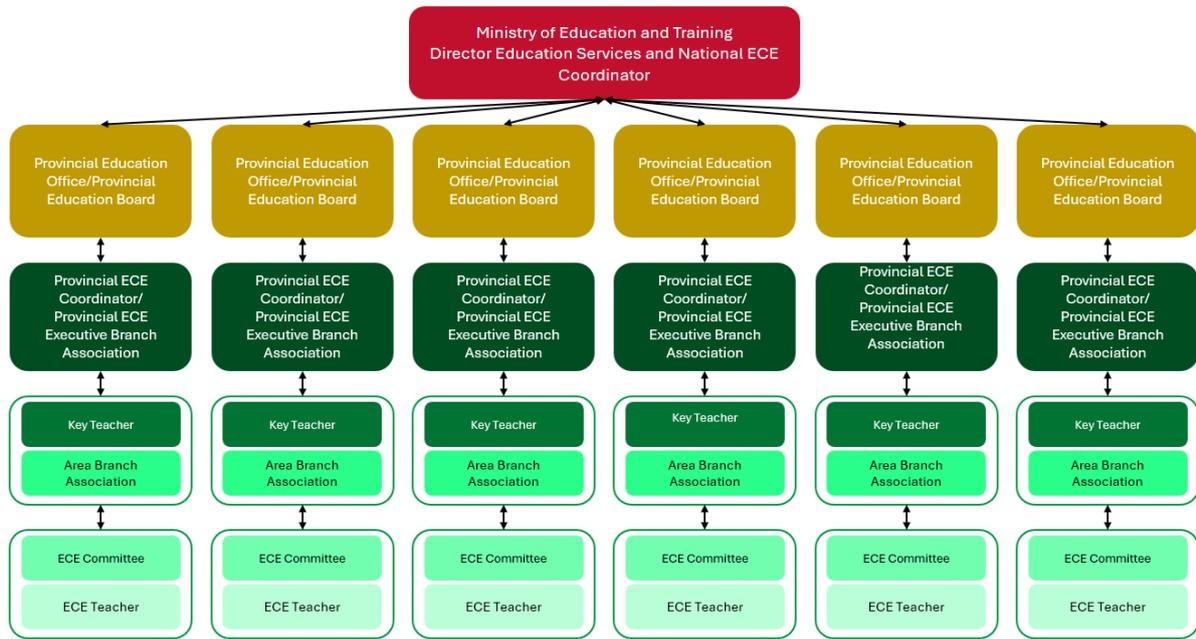
The implementation of the current ECE Policy is guided and supported by the following national policies, legislative frameworks, and international instruments:

- Vanuatu Disaster Risk Reduction and Education in Emergency Policy (2024-2030)
- Early Childhood Care & Education Minimum Quality Standards (2018)
- Early Learning Development Standards (2010)
- Education Act No. 9 of 2014
- Healthy Vanuatu School Food Guidelines (2013)

- National Policy for Early Childhood Development (2023-2027)
- MoET Child Safeguarding Policy, 2017
- MoET Corporate Plan
- MoET Gender Equity in Education Policy (2018)
- MoET Inclusive Education and Training Policy (2025-2030)
- MoET Information & Communication Technology Policy (2025)
- MoET School Financial Management Manual (2022)
- National School Health Policy (2024)
- National Child Safeguarding Policy (2017)
- National Kindergarten Curriculum (2012)
- National Sustainable Development Plan (NDSP) (2016-2030)
- School-Based Disaster Risk Reduction Handbook (2023)
- School Registration Policy (2017)
- Teacher Registration and Licensing Policy (2020)
- Teacher Service Act (2013)
- Teaching Service Staff Rules (2024)
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)
- Vanuatu Education and Training Sector Strategic Plan (VETTS) (2020-2030)
- Vanuatu National Child Protection Policy (2016-2026)
- Vanuatu National Curriculum Statement (2010)
- Vanuatu National Language Policy (2012)
- Vanuatu National Policy and Strategy for Healthy Islands (2024-2030)
- Vanuatu National Policy for Early Childhood Development (2023-2027)
- Vanuatu Schools Grant Code (2021)
- WASH in School Policy (2024)
- Pacific Education Framework (PacRef) 2018-2030: Moving Towards Education 2030
- 2025 Pacific Early Childhood Development Forum Outcomes Document
- Pacific Employability, Transferrable, and All-Life Skills (PETALS) Framework
- Pacific Regional Review of ECE Curricula
- 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent

ECE Governance Structure

ECE services are coordinated through a decentralized and participatory governance structures.



Structures

MoET ECE Unit leads national policy, regulations, and strategic support. The MoET ECE Unit is headed by the ECE National Coordinator.

Provincial Education Offices (PEOs) act as the MoET’s arm in the provinces, supporting the implementation of national policies and managing data submissions through Open VEMIS. Each PEO is headed by a Provincial Education Officer and the ECE Provincial Coordinators is supervised by the PEO Officer.

ECE Provincial Coordinators and **Provincial ECE Executive Branch Associations (PEEBAs)** provide provincial oversight and coordinate ECE activities across the province, ensuring ECE centres are registered, ECE centres are annually monitored, hosting annual ECE conferences, submitting quarterly work and financial reports and ensuring that the ECE policy is adhered to, including managing funds in alignment with MoET standards.

All presidents of Area Branch Associations (ABAs) in the province belong to their respective PEEBA. PEEBAs are comprised of an elected committee (president, treasurer, secretary, and ECE members). The Secretary of the PEEBA also serves as the Provincial ECE Coordinator. The term of the committee is two years. The PEEBA reports to the Provincial Education Office and the MoET ECE Unit.

ECE Area Branch Associations (ABAs) coordinate area-level ECE activities in supporting ECE programmes, including organizing events for ECE programmes (e.g. Kindy Dei celebrations, Children’s

Day and other national events, graduation ceremonies); fundraising to support provincial conferences; and requesting trainings to address needs from the Key Teachers to the Provincial ECE Coordinator. The Key Teacher is the Secretary of the Area Branch Association.

Each ABA is comprised of all ECE teachers in the area. Each ABA has a committee consisting of a president, secretary, treasurer, and members elected by ECE teachers. The committee operates through fundraising and affiliation fees from each ECE as approved by the ABA. The ABA approve funds to support the work of the Key Teacher within its area or zone. The term of the committee is 2 years. The ABA collaborates with the Provincial ECE Coordinator.

ECE Committees are responsible for the administration and management of ECE programmes on behalf of the community. Their responsibilities include ECE programme operations, including liaising with the Provincial ECE Coordinator on matters regarding the establishment, operation, and rationalization of an ECE centre, engaging local communities, and supporting teacher reporting and governance. ECE Committee liaise with the Provincial ECE Coordinator in the PEO's office on matters regarding the establishment, operation, and rationalization of their ECE programme.

ECE Committees are comprised of a chairperson, vice chairperson, secretary, treasurer, and an additional member, all of whom are selected or appointed by the respective community for a term of two years. Committee members must be comprised of representatives of parents, chiefs, pastors, youth, and have a 50/50 gender split. Each ECE programme must have an active committee in place in order to operate. ECE Committees also collaborate with the Provincial ECE Coordinator on ECE programme governance. The secretary shall be the ECE Teacher and in the case of the attached ECE centres, the secretary shall be the school principal of the primary or secondary school.

For attached ECE centres, the ECE Committee shall work hand in hand with the primary school committee and the chairperson of the ECE Committee shall represent the ECE centre on the Primary School Council. For feeder ECE centres, formal mechanisms shall be established to associate the ECE committee and ECE centre with the nearby primary school.

Roles and responsibilities

The **Provincial ECE Coordinator**, who is also the Secretary of the PEEBA, is responsible for overseeing that the ECE Policy is well implemented at the provincial level. The Provincial ECE Coordinator is situated in the PEO's office and reports to the PEO and the ECE National Coordinator.

Key Teachers (KT) are responsible for mentoring and monitoring ECE teachers at least two times per year. Key Teachers fall under the supervision of the PEEBA and report to the Provincial ECE Coordinator.

ECE teachers are responsible for implementing the ECE curriculum; fostering inclusive, gender-responsive, and nurturing learning environments; engaging families and communities; supporting school transitions; monitoring and documenting child development; conducting parents' interviews and workshops on PSP; and submitting termly reports. ECE teachers report to the ECE Committee for feeder centre and to the primary school principals for the attached centres. A copy of the report is shared with the Key Teacher who send to the ECE Provincial Coordinators.

Strategies, Activities and Services

This section contains the strategic areas that the policy will cover. To achieve each strategic priority, a series of activities and/or services have been listed.

1. Enrolment and Inclusive Access

All children aged 4 and 5 years are entitled to enrol in ECE, regardless of background or ability.

1.1 ECE policy purpose and coverage

- 1.1.1 The specific purpose of these ECE years of education prior to Year 1 is to prepare all children aged four and five years for formal schooling.
- 1.1.2 This policy shall be applicable to all children who turn four and five years old, or four and five years old between 31 May in the school year, as per the Education Act (2014).
- 1.1.3 This policy shall apply to all educational service providers offering ECE programming to 4- and 5-year-old children, including attached ECE centres, feeder ECE centres, and playgroups that include 4- and 5-year-old children. This also applies to all providers (government, faith-based, private, community-based).
- 1.1.4 Each educational service providers offering ECE must be registered with MoET.
- 1.1.5 Programmes delivered in ECE centres shall be based on the approved National Kindergarten Curriculum.
- 1.1.6 Programming in ECE centres shall be delivered by a Minimum Certified ECE Teacher or Qualified ECE Teacher, as defined in Items 5.1.1 and 5.1.2.

1.2 ECE Enrolment

- 1.2.1 A child is eligible for admission to the ECE centre if the student is four or five years of age by 31 May of the current school year, regardless of background and ability.
- 1.2.2 The child's birth certificate, National ID and Pikinini Helt Buk shall also be submitted at the time of enrolment. To ensure that all children have access to ECE, children will be enrolled even if these documents are not immediately available. The ECE centre will then provide support to families in obtaining the necessary documents within the first three months school.
- 1.2.3 The teacher in charge of the ECE centre shall arrange for a conversation with each eligible student's parent/guardian/primary caregiver prior to enrolment to gather information about the child's learning and development, particularly if the child has a developmental delay/disability.

- 1.2.4 A mechanism/tools shall be developed for schools to identify a child's learning needs and developmental level upon enrolment to ensure that instruction is targeted to the learning needs of the child.
- 1.3 Ensuring Inclusive Access in ECE programmes
 - 1.3.1 Within the community, if a student with a disability is of ECE age as outlined in Item 1.1.2, that student gets equal enrolment opportunity, as per the MoET Inclusive Education and Training Policy (2025-2030).
 - 1.3.2 All children who are aged 6 years or older may not be enrolled at an ECE centre except where there is an arrangement for a child with severe disabilities, as outlined by the MoET Inclusive Education and Training Policy (2025-2030).
 - 1.3.3 Early detection, referral, and intervention systems shall be integrated into ECE programmes in collaboration with relevant ministries to ensure the timely identification of developmental delays and disabilities and to promote optimal early childhood development.

2. Curriculum, Pedagogy, and Learning Environment

The ECE curriculum is play-based, culturally rooted, and inclusive, supporting the holistic development and preparing the Vanuatu child for school and life. The learning environment is safe, accessible, and conducive for all learners both inside and outside the classroom.

2.1 Curriculum, pedagogy, and learning environment

- 2.1.1 All Government ECE centres shall use the National Kindergarten Curriculum. The National Kindergarten Curriculum is aligned with the Vanuatu National Curriculum Statement, 2010.
- 2.1.2 With reference to the MoET Inclusive Education and Training Policy (2025-2030), ECE teachers shall deliver the curriculum using differentiated approaches and provision of educational adjustments to support the differential learning needs for learners with disabilities
- 2.1.3 Gender responsiveness and equality shall be a high priority in the ECE curriculum to ensure that girls and boys have equal opportunities to learn and that teaching materials and practices do not reinforce gender norms and stereotypes, in line with the MoET Gender Equity in Education Policy (2018).
- 2.1.4 The curriculum shall include a clear goal of promoting children's interaction with their environment, as childhood exposure to nature can lead to an improvement in attitudes towards nature protection and conservation as adults.

- 2.1.5 The curriculum shall also include a digital education component, with the concept of digital well-being and safety being incorporated as a curriculum perspective, aligned with the MoET Information & Communication Technology Policy (2025).
- 2.1.6 A wide range of curriculum topics and associated learning outcomes shall be included with respect to the Pacific Employability, Transferrable, and All-Life Skills (PETALS) Framework, climate education, sustainability, disaster risk reduction, and environmental conservation through a gender responsive and social inclusion lens underpinned by the noble values of Vanuatu.
- 2.1.7 Modern teaching methodologies and culturally relevant practices shall be integrated into the curriculum to engage students meaningfully and holistically.
- 2.1.8 Guidance for ECE teachers on child-friendly and inclusive assessment approaches following the ECE curriculum shall be developed and utilized.
- 2.1.9 A clear implementation plan shall be developed to deliver the ECE curriculum, including dissemination activities, workforce training initiatives, and mechanisms to monitor curriculum delivery. Monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the curriculum shall also take place.

2.2 Use of vernacular and local culture

- 2.2.1 Opportunities shall be identified to integrate indigenous values that are developmentally suitable, cultures, traditional knowledge, beliefs, and skills such as agricultural activities across the ECE curriculum to ensure they are woven through the early learning experience.
- 2.2.2 As per the Vanuatu National Language Policy (2012), the students' mother tongue language shall be considered and used in the ECE classroom to foster children's awareness of linguistic diversity and oral language.
- 2.2.3 Classroom teaching shall incorporate use of vernacular. Storybooks and other teaching and learning materials will be offered in vernacular and focus on indigenous and other cultures and include local resources as relevant.

2.3 Child Friendly Assessment

- 2.3.1 All ECE programmes with support from MOET shall conduct school readiness assessment for young children at three time points:
 - 2.3.1.1 Upon enrolment in ECE at age 4
 - 2.3.1.2 During transition from first year of ECE to second year
 - 2.3.1.3 During transition from second year of ECE to year 1.
- 2.3.2 MOET with support from relevant partners to design tools and processes to conduct school readiness assessment, analyse data at programme level through capacity building at School, Provincial and Central level and ensure communication back to ECE programmes and primary schools with relevant guidance.
- 2.3.3 In addition, all ECE teachers shall be supported by MOET to conduct continuous formative assessments to support child's learning.

3. Registration and Quality Standards

All ECE programmes must meet minimum national standards and be formally registered.

3.1 Minimum requirements for ECE centres

- 3.1.1 Harmonized standards for infrastructure requirements are covered under the Vanuatu's Infrastructure Standards. This covers the physical conditions required for the registration of the school. The premises must be approved by and maintained at all times to the satisfaction of the Registration Board and must comply with minimum infrastructure and building requirements.
- 3.1.2 The length of the ECE day shall be the same length as primary school (7:30am – 4:30pm Monday-Thursday, 7:30am-11:30am Friday), as per the Teaching Service Staff Rules (2024). Within these hours of work, the 5 years old will attend morning class (4 hours) and the 4 years old will attend afternoon class (2 hours).
- 3.1.3 The length of the teacher workday, and compensation, shall total 40 hours on a weekly basis, as per the Teaching Service Staff Rules (2024). The hours of work include preparation of learning environment, teaching-learning contact hours, lesson planning time and playground supervision.
- 3.1.4 All ECE centres shall develop a School Disaster Management Plan, as described in Item 10.1.1.
- 3.1.5 For feeder ECE centres, the school principal of the primary school in the same catchment area shall provide supervision and support for the feeder ECE centre. For attached ECE centres, the school principal of the primary school in the same boundary shall provide supervision and support for the attached ECE centre. School principals responsible for attached and feeder ECE centres shall ensure that these centres are included in their School Strategic Plan (SSP).

3.2 Establishment and Recognition of ECE centres

- 3.2.1 All ECE centres must meet the harmonized standards as outlined in Section 3.1 and be formally registered with the MoET at the local Provincial Education Office, as per the Education Authority and School Registration Policy (2017 and following the guidelines for registration and certification described in the Early Childhood Care & Education (ECCE) Quality Standards (2018).
- 3.2.2 On the intention to establish a new ECE centre, the management of the centre should first submit an application to the provincial education board. Only on approval can the centre be established, as per the Education Authority and School Registration Policy (2017).
- 3.2.3 All procedures and guidelines for establishment and recognition/registration for ECE centres that are specified in the Education Authority and School Registration Policy (2017), must be followed.

3.3 Quality Standards

- 3.3.1 All ECE centres shall comply with ECCE Quality Standards, 2018
- 3.3.2 A Quality Assurance System to monitor ECE service delivery leading to ECE centre improvements shall be developed and implemented by MoET. The system will include relevant support and capacity building for ECE centres for gradual compliance and improvement in ECE centre quality.
- 3.3.3 The quality assurance system shall, at a minimum, cover the following areas: facilities, health, safety, student-teacher ratio, learning environment and resources, family engagement, administration and finance, curriculum, and teaching qualifications.
- 3.3.4 Such quality assurance mechanisms shall be gender-responsive and inclusive.
- 3.3.5 This quality assurance system shall be enforced for all ECE centres receiving the ECE Grant.
- 3.3.6 ECE quality standards through the quality assurance system, shall be tracked by the ECE offices at the provincial and national levels.
- 3.3.7 All ECE centre staff, ECE leaders, and related personnel shall be trained on the quality assurance system.
- 3.3.8 The quality standards shall be revisited and revised, if necessary, every seven years after enactment of the ECE Policy in order to ensure they reflect best practices in the field.

4. Class Size and Teacher-Child Ratio

Adequate staffing ensures that children receive quality learning.

4.1 Teacher-child ratio

- 4.1.1 The student-teacher class ratio shall optimally be 15:1.
- 4.1.2 If the number of students exceeds 20 in a classroom, the ECE centre shall request additional staff from the MoET.
- 4.1.3 In the case that a child with disabilities needs additional support, a designated family carer shall be engaged to support this child.

4.2 Class size

- 4.2.1 The maximum class size shall be 30 students per classroom, but the 4.1.1 ration should be observed

5. Human Resources and Professional Development

A qualified and motivated ECE workforce is essential for delivering quality learning.

5.1 Defining a well-qualified ECE workforce

- 5.1.1 A Minimum Certified ECE Teacher is defined as one who has obtained a qualification of Certificate IV in ECE from a recognized educational institution as per the Teacher Registration and Licensing Policy (2020) and is registered and licensed with the Teaching Service Commission (TSC) as per the Teaching Service Act (2013).
- 5.1.2 A Qualified ECE Teacher is defined as one who has obtained a Diploma or higher in Education/Teaching in ECE or related areas from a recognized institution and is registered and licensed with the TSC.
- 5.1.3 Any person who has obtained a Diploma or higher degree in any subject/field but not in ECE must obtain a minimum of Certificate IV in ECE or the equivalent from a recognized education institution as per the Teacher Registration and Licensing Policy (2020). This person must also be registered and licensed with the TSC.

Current ECE teachers who do not meet the requirements to be a Minimum Certified ECE Teacher or Qualified ECE Teacher, as defined in items 5.1.1 and 5.1.2, shall be offered a two-year grace period to achieve the necessary qualifications to become at least a Minimum Certified ECE Teacher, with the assistance from the MoET.

- 5.1.4 All ECE teachers must meet minimum proficiency standards for teaching in accordance with the Vanuatu Harmonized Teacher Standards (2014).

5.2 ECE programme staffing

- 5.2.1 All teaching staff in ECE programmes must be at least a Minimum Certified ECE Teacher, as described in Item 5.1.1.
- 5.2.2 The person in charge of the ECE centre must be at least a Minimum Certified ECE Teacher, as described in Item 5.1.1.
- 5.2.3 The recruitment of teachers in any ECE centre shall be done in accordance with the MOET process and be appointed through the appointment process of the Teaching Service Commission, as per the Teacher Service Act (2013).

- 5.2.4 Any person without previous experience of teaching at the ECE level and who does not meet the qualification requirements for a Minimum Certified ECE Teacher may only work in ECE centres under the supervision of a Minimum Certified ECE Teacher or Certified ECE Teacher and shall not teach alone.

5.3 Terms of employment and conditions of service for ECE teachers

- 5.3.1 Terms and conditions of employment as per laid out in the Teacher Service Act (2013).
- 5.3.2 The ECE teacher's hours of work shall be for a full day (full contact hours, coordination time, and playground supervision) as described in Items 3.1.2 and 3.1.3 and per conditions stipulated in the Teacher Service Act (2013) on working days are per approved school calendar.
- 5.3.3 ECE teachers shall be remunerated as per the guidelines stipulated in the Government Remuneration Tribunal (2024).

5.4 Pre-service and In-service Professional Development

MoET shall work with Teacher Training Institutes (TTIs) to improve resource allocation in support to the quality of ECE teaching graduates.

- 5.4.1 MoET shall design and implement a comprehensive continuous professional development (CPD) system, including ongoing mentoring and coaching.
- 5.4.2 Teacher training shall include the adoption of gender responsive, inclusive, and climate responsive teaching and learning approaches, including in the areas of learning materials/content, methodologies, language use, classroom set up, classroom interaction/management, and assessment.
- 5.4.3 The capacity of teachers on the implementation of the Vanuatu MOET Child Safeguarding policy (2017) (infrastructure; eliminating corporal punishment; sexual harassment; bullying; and child abuse) shall be built, following the Vanuatu National Child Protection in Schools, 2016 - 2026.
- 5.4.4 All ECE teachers shall be required to complete a minimum of 20 hours of early childhood-specific professional development annually. Such professional development shall be in the form of programs offered by the MoET or will otherwise be quality-assured by the MoET to reflect current best practices in the field.
- 5.4.5 Avenues for online learning and resources for ECE teachers shall be explored by MoET, with support from TTIs, to enhance teachers' delivery and students' learning.
- 5.4.6 All ECE teachers shall be supported to develop their information, communication and technology skills in order to be able to access online learning and resources to enhance teaching and learning.

5.5 Recruitment and retention

- 5.5.1 The appointment of ECE teachers is as per guidelines through the Teaching Service Commission.
- 5.5.2 Options to recruit and retain ECE teaching talent shall be actively explored and advanced as relevant, such as offering scholarships to teachers and/or raising their salaries depending on their qualifications.

5.6 ECE organizational structure

- 5.6.1 An ECE division, drawing upon technical ECE experts, shall be established within the MoET to oversee ECE-related activities, including the implementation of the ECE Policy.
- 5.6.2 The ECE organizational structure shall be reviewed and revised to include additional relevant staff at the national, provincial, and area council levels.

6. Effective Transition to Primary School

ECE centres support smooth, confident, and effective transitions to primary school, ensuring a quality coherent and continuous educational experience.

6.1 Supporting the transition between ECE programming and early primary school

- 6.1.1 ECE and primary curricula and teacher training materials and approaches shall be aligned across ECE programmes and Year 1, ensuring pedagogical continuity across systems and during the transition period.
- 6.1.2 Collaborative practices and exchanges shall be facilitated between ECE teachers and Year 1 teachers, to ensure alignment of expectations and practices for children entering primary school. Pedagogical strategies shall be developed to support children and their families throughout all phases of transition, such as familiarizing children with new spaces, adjusting learning environments to welcome children to new settings, and monitoring children's progress after arrival to the new setting and will be extended to emergency situations
- 6.1.3 Tools shall be developed for monitoring transitions and to facilitate the exchange of information between ECE programmes and primary schools to support the transition to primary school and school retention.

7. Family and Community Engagement

Parents, caregivers, and communities are core partners in ECE access and quality.

7.1 Family and community outreach strategy

- 7.1.1 An outreach strategy shall be developed to continue socializing families and communities about the importance of quality ECE. Community involvement can help identify and address specific barriers to education, ensure cultural relevance, and foster a sense of ownership and support for educational initiatives.
- 7.1.2 Community awareness and support initiatives shall complement the integration of inclusive early detection, referral, and intervention systems as well as the importance of a gender responsive, inclusive, and equitable curriculum, as described in Items 1.3.3, 2.1.2, and 2.1.3.
- 7.1.3 MoET shall explore the opportunity to track parent enrolment and completion of the Parent Support Programme (PSP) through Open Vanuatu Education Management Information System (Open VEMIS) to ensure all parents/guardians/primary caregivers participate in these programmes and gain knowledge of child development and are supported in home learning. This database shall be updated on at least a monthly basis.

7.2 Communication with families

- 7.2.1 ECE teachers shall provide parents/guardians/primary caregivers with ongoing updates regarding their child's progress on a regular basis through newsletters and all available platforms. This shall provide space for open dialogue between teachers and families to ensure both parties are well-informed and involved.
- 7.2.2 Parent-teacher consultations shall be held for children attending ECE programmes at least once per term so that parents/guardians/primary caregivers are informed of their child's development at school.
- 7.2.3 All ECE teachers shall deliver face-to-face parenting workshops for caregivers using the Vanuatu Parent Support Programme (PSP) handbook and materials. Workshops will be scheduled weekly or fortnightly according to local need and centre capacity, with a minimum frequency of one session every two weeks.
- 7.2.4 Teachers are required to record each session (date, attendance, topics, materials used and key outcomes), submit summaries at end of each term to the Key Teachers who will then sent the report to the Provincial ECE coordinator. MOET shall ensure all teacher are provided with in-service training, tools and relevant guidance to support quality implementation.

8. Monitoring, Data, and Evidence-Based Planning

Robust data systems guide equitable ECE planning and service improvement

8.1 Assessing children, including school readiness

- 8.1.1 There shall be provision for all students to be screened prior to entry into the ECE centre to facilitate early detection and management of special education needs and/or medical issues. This information shall also be used to help the child transition into the primary years with the appropriate support provided.
- 8.1.2 Every student shall be assessed on an ongoing basis to identify and action any learning and development talents, and to guide lesson planning and teaching and learning activities to facilitate the student's progression to primary school.
- 8.1.3 The Vanuatu Early Learning and Development Standards (2010) shall be reviewed and revised, as relevant.
- 8.1.4 Training shall be provided to ECE teachers on suitable child-friendly assessment approaches. Assessments shall be used to inform ongoing planning and programming in the classroom.

8.2 Monitoring of ECE Centres and Programmes Outcomes

- 8.2.1 The following records must be kept for each child attending the ECE programme and must be available for inspection at any time. This data shall also be submitted to the school principal or Education Office who shall enter the data into Open VEMIS.
- Child's name, date of birth, home address(es), island affiliations – copy Birth Certificate and ID Card
 - Name and contact information for the child's parent/guardian/primary caregiver
 - Name and contact information for an emergency contact
 - Attendance roll showing dates and times of the child's programme attendance
 - Information about any illness or accident occurring to the child while at the programme and all actions taken by the staff
 - Details of any chronic illness suffered by the child and any medication the child has to take for it
 - Details of any prescribed medicine and dose size given to the child while at the centre

8.2.2 Every ECE centre shall keep a copy of the student's Pikinini Helt Buk to ensure that each student is immunized and to advise parents/guardians/ primary caregivers accordingly. The height and weight for underweight, obese, and malnourished students are to be monitored and parents/guardians/primary caregivers, to be assisted as necessary. If parents/guardians/primary caregivers do not have the appropriate medical documentation for their student, then the ECE teacher/ECE committee shall support the families in how to access the health needs of the student.

8.2.3 The head of the ECE centre shall monitor and evaluate the work of the ECE teacher in the attached and feeder ECE centres.

Reports of ECE centre visits by the respective Key Teacher and Provincial ECE Coordinator shall be submitted to the MoET ECE Unit.

8.2.4 Robust, contextually appropriate and ECE specific monitoring tools shall be developed. Such monitoring tools will focus on ECE policy implementation.

8.2.5 The monitoring tools described in Item 8.2.5 shall be used on a regular basis to monitor and evaluate ECE centres receiving the ECE Grant to ensure compliance with standards and MOET Grant Code.

8.2.6 The evidence from the monitoring tools described in Item 8.2.5 and 8.2.6 shall be used to inform ongoing policy review, planning and decision-making.

8.3 Use of the Open Vanuatu Education Management Information System (Open VEMIS)

Each ECE teacher through the School Principal and/or Open VEMIS Administration Officer must accurately upload all relevant data on student background information and submit via the Open VEMIS t

8.3.1 The student's National ID number shall be used as a unique identifier in Open VEMIS.

8.3.2 Relevant child data shall be recorded in Open VEMIS, including enrolment, attendance, school readiness outcomes and child screening data. This data shall be updated at least once a term, as relevant, by the responsible personnel.

8.3.3 Formative child assessment outcomes (refer to 2.3.2) shall be kept at ECE programme level and to be used to monitor learning progress and contribute to child's transition summary, as described in Item 6.1.2

8.3.4 Information regarding how the Open VEMIS data is being used shall be communicated to teachers and other staff in ECE centres' as well as to parents/guardians/primary caregivers.

9. Financing, Sustainability and Partnership

Adequate and sustainable funding through public investment, community contributions, and development partnerships is crucial for ensuring the sustainable operation of ECE programmes.

9.1 Financing

9.1.1 A minimum of 10% of the education budget to be dedicated to ECE shall be advocated for, in line with suggested global standards.

9.2 School grants

9.2.1 All registered ECE centres shall receive the ECE School Grant for all 4- and 5-year-old children in the ECE centres, as per the MOET Grants Code (2021) and MOET Finance Policy (2025).

For attached and feeder ECE centres, bank accounts shall be separated from the primary schools' bank account.

9.2.2 In line with the MoET Inclusive Education and Training Policy (2025-2030), ECE centres shall also be eligible for the grants via the School Grant Code to ensure equitable access to resources needed by students with disabilities and their schools.

9.2.3 An equitable formula approved by the MoET shall make provisions for ECE centres in remote/ rural/ maritime areas to receive additional funding.

9.3 Compliance with financial legislation

9.3.1 There shall be a compliance system to ensure adherence to financial regulations and procedures as outlined in the MoET Finance Policy (2025), the School Grants Code (2021), and the MoET School Financial Management Manual (2022) for ECE Grant and other related grants which an ECE may receive.

9.3.2 As per the School Grants Code (2021), for attached and feeder ECE centres, an ECE teacher must assist the primary school principal nominated to manage the ECE grant by recording the receipts and payments and providing the ECE centre's financial report to the primary school principal prior to providing it to the Provincial Education Office by the due date.

9.3.3 As per the School Grants Code (2021), the ECE Committee or the Primary/Secondary School Council must approve the school improvement plan, school annual plan, and financial reports, which includes the plans and budget of the ECE centres.

9.4 In accordance with the School Fee Regulation Order, fund-raising activities must be approved through the School Fee Structure application upon the request from the ECE Centre.

10. Emergency Preparedness and Climate Resilience

All ECE programmes shall build emergency preparedness and climate resilience through practical, low-cost approaches to maintain safe learning environments for children.

10.1 Emergency preparedness

All ECE centres shall develop a School Disaster Management Plans, as per the Vanuatu Disaster Risk Reduction and Education in Emergency (DRR & EiE) Policy (2024-2030) and School Disaster Risk Reduction Handbook (2023).

10.1.1 Attached and feeder ECE centres shall be included in their respective primary school's School Disaster Management Plans.

10.1.2 All ECE centres are required to have contact details of children and their caregivers and parents and where possible an online chat group to ensure smooth communication especially during emergencies.

10.1.3 All ECE teachers shall receive training in how to provide psychosocial support for children and their parents/guardians/primary caregivers in emergency situations.

10.1.4 Alternative learning modalities shall be developed, including radio-based and take-home materials, to respond to extended school closures. Supplies (such as ECD Kits) shall also be prepositioned to support education in emergencies, as per the DRR & EiE Policy.

10.2 Climate resilience

10.2.1 Climate-resilient infrastructure shall be developed in accordance with sustainable climate resilience standards and Vanuatu Building code to ensure continuous access during extreme weather events and natural disasters. Long-term infrastructure improvement plans shall be developed in coordination with Area Councils to upgrade ECE programmes with vulnerable facilities.

10.2.2 Climate resilience components shall be integrated into teacher training curricula as well as the National Kindergarten Curriculum.

11. Other Key Considerations in ECE Settings

As a key component of a multisectoral approach to ECD, ECE programming should be integrated with health, nutrition, responsive caregiving, and safety and security services.

11.1 Links with multisectoral ECD

- 11.1.1 The integration of multisectoral ECD services shall be strengthened through ECE programmes, transforming them into inclusive hubs that provide nutritious meals, health and hygiene education, access to child health and development screenings, nutrition support services, and other family support services.
- 11.1.2 The current policy is aligned to the Child Safeguarding Policy, which addresses protection; identification; managing and reporting incidents of child abuse, child labour, trafficking, neglect, and exploitation; to promote the safety, health, and care of all students. The current policy is aligned to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), which includes children’s right to an education; right to use their own language, culture, and religion; and the right to play and take part in cultural and creative activities.
- 11.1.3 All ECE staff and teachers shall be required to familiarize themselves and comply with the standards and guidance outlined in the following documents:
 - 11.1.3.1 Vanuatu Disaster Risk Reduction and Education in Emergency (DRR & EiE) Policy (2024-2030)
 - 11.1.3.2 Vanuatu National Child Protection Policy (2016-2026)
 - 11.1.3.3 Vanuatu National Policy and Strategy for Healthy Islands (2024-2030)
 - 11.1.3.4 Vanuatu National Policy for Early Childhood Development (2023-2027)
 - 11.1.3.5 MoET Child Safeguarding Policy
 - 11.1.3.6 MoET Disaster Risk Reduction & Education in Emergency Policy (2024-2030)
 - 11.1.3.7 MoET Gender Equity in Education Policy (2018)
 - 11.1.3.8 MoET Inclusive Education and Training Policy (2025-2030)
 - 11.1.3.9 National School Health Policy (2024)
 - 11.1.3.10 Healthy Vanuatu School Food Guidelines (2013)
 - 11.1.3.11 School-Based Disaster Risk Reduction Handbook (2023)

Effective Date and Duration

This Early Childhood Care and Education Policy is effective from the date of its official endorsement by the senior management of the Ministry of Education and Training. The policy will guide the planning, implementation, and monitoring of ECE services across Vanuatu for a ten-year period, from **2025 to 2035**.

Review Date

A **midterm review** of the implementation of the **Early Childhood Education (ECE) Policy** shall be conducted by the end of **2030** to assess progress, identify implementation challenges, and recommend any necessary adjustments.

A **final review** of the policy's implementation shall be carried out by the end of **2035**, with the review process initiated no later than **12 months before** the policy's expiry, to inform the next phase of ECE policy development and planning.

Annex

1. ECE Infrastructure

11.1 ECE Indoor and Outdoor Facilities

- 11.1.1 Buildings shall be permanent, semi-permanent, or traditional thatched houses, but must be structurally resilient to withstand natural disasters, well-ventilated with adequate windows, and have two doors for easy evacuation or access in case of emergency.
- 11.1.2 There must be plenty of space both indoors and outdoors. Allow at least 2 square metres per child indoors and 5 square metres per child outdoors. The minimum size for the building should be 10m x 7m, 18m x 7m, or 7m x 7m depending on the environment.
- 11.1.3 Each ECE classroom must have a lockable storage room with shelves for indoor and outdoor play equipment.
- 11.1.4 The flooring must be covered throughout with mats or floor mats. A concrete floor is encouraged where possible.
- 11.1.5 ECE centre may be attached to primary schools but preferably with a separate playground (preferably fenced) and separate toilet from other classes that are safe, child-sized, and not too far from the classroom.
- 11.1.6 It is vital that children have access to a safe water supply for drinking and washing. If there is no tank, drum, or tap water, water should be brought to the school in large containers, clearly marked for DRINKING and WASHING.
- 11.1.7 Buildings, toilets, and water supply must be complying to the registration policy. There must be one toilet for every 15 children, or separate toilets for girls and boys.
- 11.1.8 All ECE Service Providers must take into consideration and accommodate the needs of children with disabilities or special needs in the facilities and services provided (e.g., a ramp for a child who uses a wheelchair).

11.1.9 Outdoor play is integral to the curriculum. Provide at least 5 square metres per child outdoors. The minimum yard size should be 22m x 22m, with a boundary (hedge or fence) and a gate.

- The yard must be free of holes, rubbish heaps, and animals.
- Sandpits must be covered after school hours.

11.1.10 If there is no veranda, a shelter for sand and water play (5m x 4m) must be provided. Outdoor structures may be built with local materials to allow climbing, crawling, digging, jumping, balancing, sliding, pushing, pulling, and other adventure play activities.

11.1.11 The outdoor learning and play areas should provide sufficient shade. If there are no natural shade trees, plant trees or erect shelters.

11.1.12 Outdoor and indoor equipment should allow all children—including girls and children with disabilities—to explore, experiment, manipulate, discover, and problem solve. Materials, games, and equipment must be stimulating, challenging, and interesting.

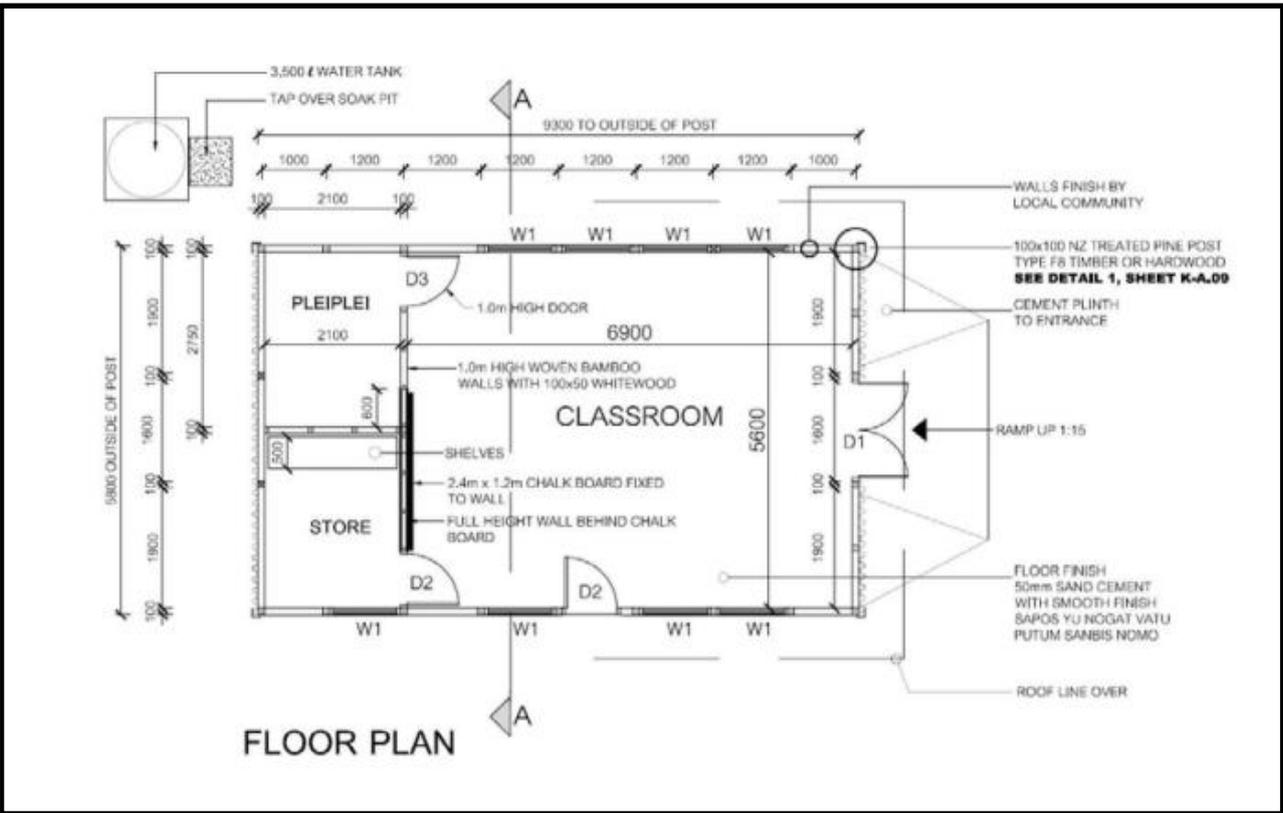
11.1.13 All ECE should have a signboard displayed at the entrance. The signboard must clearly show the kindergarten's name, location, contact information, and any other relevant details.

11.1.14 All furniture and facilities must be appropriately sized for children aged 4 and 5 years.

11.1.15 A wide range of play materials should be provided, which are challenging, stimulating, and interesting. Educational play equipment and materials must be regularly changed to maintain children's interest. Toy making workshop shall be an annual event for ECE Teachers organized by BA.



A model ECCE Centre.



ECCE Centre Hybrid Design, Harbour View, Tanna

