

Mona Vale

Kindergarten



Parent Handbook

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ABOUT OUR KINDERGARTEN

Mona Vale Kindergarten is a private long day care centre, registered and approved by the Federal Government. We are open from 7.00a.m. until 6.00p.m. Monday - Friday, for 50 weeks per year. We offer a program based upon the Australian Government's 'Early Years Learning Framework', an outcomes-based curriculum that is centred upon the key elements of "Belonging, Being and Becoming". This early childhood curriculum focuses on ensuring that each child is supported to feel a strong sense of self worth, of self identity, and of belonging to the community, and to be confident and involved learners.

The Kindergarten is purpose-built for preschool children, with open classrooms and a large outdoor playground. Both the indoor and outdoor areas aim to promote security and comfort for the children, as well as areas of challenge and stimulation. Through supervised play with others of their own age, and through individualised programs implemented by qualified Educators, the children are supported to develop strong personal and interpersonal skills, to explore new interests and ideas, to be curious and involved in their own learning, and to develop the ability to solve problems, think creatively and communicate effectively with a range of people.

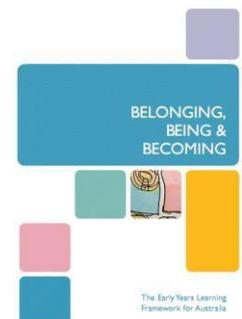
The programs for each class are planned according to the children's interests. A daily photo-newsletter that is emailed to all families each day records and displays the children's activities and learning throughout the day, showing how it links to the EYLF Learning Outcomes, teaching Principles and Practice.

The framework for the curriculum is based upon the following beliefs and understandings:

- That curriculum is what actually happens in an educational environment, not what is planned to happen.
- That everything and anything in our world that interests the children is curriculum for young children.
- That young children learn through play, inventing and organising their own learning all the time.
- That the desire to learn and to try new things comes from being interested in what we are doing.
- That young children are active learners who learn through experience and opportunity.
- That all curriculum planning is tentative and flexible, and modified by the children's response.
- That all curriculum planning relates to identity, connection with the community, personal wellbeing, confidence as a learner and effective communication.

The curriculum goals focus on:

- (a) Fostering positive self-concept and self-esteem.
- (b) Developing social, personal and interpersonal skills.
- (c) Encouraging children to think, reason, question, challenge and experiment.
- (d) Promoting language and communication.
- (e) Enhancing physical skills (fine motor, gross motor, psychomotor skills).
- (f) Encouraging and promoting general life skills such as keeping safe, making healthy lifestyle choices, and becoming part of a community
- (g) Enhancing creative expression and appreciation for the arts.
- (h) Respecting and promoting diversity and difference.



so that the children can become confident, self directing and continuous learners who are well equipped to handle both themselves and society.

Our Centre is managed by an appointed Director, who has a Bachelor of Education in Early Childhood, and a part time Assistant Director (Bachelor of Early Childhood Education). The Director and Assistant Director have autonomy to make decisions pertinent to the operation of the Centre, and together are responsible for the planning and coordination of all aspects of the Centre. Our Staff hold various qualifications in Early Childhood Education, and hence are skilled in planning and implementing programs for young children.

Our Director is Gail Gillard, who set up the Centre in 1990 and has been operating it ever since, and our Assistant Director is Liz Hodgett. Both Gail and Liz have non-teaching roles, so are able to devote their time to the efficient management of the kindergarten, to the overseeing of the children's programs and progress, to the parent's needs and requests, and to the support of the Staff.

The Staff work as an integrated team and are all actively involved in the care of the children. The careful selection of staff is critical to the smooth functioning of the Centre, and to this end we endeavour to have Staff who are experienced and highly qualified, and who relate to children and families in a warm, caring and supportive way. A list of the Staff working in the Centre, and their qualifications and experience, is displayed in the Centre. Photos of all Staff are on our website www.monavalekindergarten.com.au

The Kindergarten fees are currently \$96.00 per day for all ages. This is an all-inclusive fee, covering the full eleven hours of care per day, all meals (morning and afternoon teas, hot lunches with dessert), all educational resource materials that we use, and all shows and entertainment (performers, storytellers, musicians, etc) that we incorporate into our program. Fees are payable each fortnight (or month) in advance, whether or not your child is in attendance, until the booking is cancelled in writing. Hence sick days and holidays (apart from the 2 weeks over Christmas / January each year when we are closed) are still charged. This is because we offer **permanent** bookings, not occasional care. Your child is booked in to attend on regular, set days, hence preventing us from offering those days to other children. Normal fees still apply for Public Holidays, but a substitute day can be taken in lieu.

We are both registered and approved by the Federal Government so we are able to offer families both Childcare Benefit and the 50% Childcare Rebate, to reduce the cost of childcare.

Childcare Benefit is available to all Australian families, and although the amount of subsidy you receive is income based, everyone who meets the work / study requirements (see last four pages of this Handbook) will receive a 50% rebate on all fees. Many families are paying as little as \$21.88 per day for our high quality childcare, and the most you will pay is currently \$48.00.

For further information about these schemes, please read our information sheets entitled 'Fees and Subsidies' at the back of this handbook.

We have written policies on all aspects of the Centre's operation, which we ask you to read. These policies are always under review, and your comments, ideas and suggestions are always welcome. You will find in this handbook sections from some of our policies that are absolutely imperative for you to read and understand to assist the smooth functioning of the Centre. Please note that this information highlights only some of our policies, and your assistance in reading our full Policy Handbook (always available on our website) is requested.

HOURS

We are open from 7.00a.m. - 6.00p.m, Monday - Friday, for 50 weeks each year. We are closed on Public Holidays, and for 2 weeks over Christmas / New Year each year.



OUR PHILOSOPHY

We believe that the Early Childhood years are vital in promoting a young child's development, and in forming the attitudes and skills that will serve them throughout life. With this in mind, in our kindergarten we aim to provide an environment that is not only stimulating and challenging, but also provides a warm and supportive atmosphere in which each individual child can grow and learn. Consistency and continuity are key elements of our centre's philosophy and operation, which we aim to promote through regular, familiar and long term staff, and through opportunities to develop social continuity and ongoing friendships.

We recognise the importance of ensuring that staff and families work together towards common goals, and value parents as an essential partner and important resource. We continually strive to develop and maintain collaborative and open partnerships with families, and invite their participation into all aspects of our programs, policies, procedures and events. We invite parents to help us to meet the changing needs of our kindy community, valuing their feedback and ideas as we strive for continual improvement.

We believe that each child is an individual, whose needs, interests and family values will be respected and developed. Using the "Early Year's Learning Framework" as our guide, we value and respect each child's individuality and aim to develop within each child their sense of self and of community, and their desire to learn. The concepts of "Belonging, Being, Becoming" steer all that we do and say, and we recognize that children's voices are the most important part of our program.

We believe that young children learn through play, and that through both planned and spontaneous activities that are interest based and child led, the children will develop a strong sense of wellbeing, learn new skills, explore new interests and ideas, appreciate the difference and diversity of other people in our world, gain respect for our natural environment, show respect for each other, and develop the ability to solve problems and think creatively.

We hope that by immersing the children in a curriculum based around their needs and interests and planned to develop each child as an individual, we will enable the children to be confident, self directing and continuous learners who are well equipped to handle both themselves and society.

OUR GOALS:

Our priority is to provide quality care and education for the children attending our kindergarten, and to be responsive to the individual needs of their families. We are committed to continually endeavouring to improve our service, our programs, and our facilities, for the children, families, staff and the community.

We aim to provide a warm, respectful and consistent environment in which the children will learn, and in which they will feel a strong sense of belonging. Consistency of staffing is our priority to promote strong, continuous relationships with and between staff, children and families, and consistent class groups facilitates social continuity and ongoing friendships. We aim to help the children acquire and maintain responsible attitudes in their personal and community life, by encouraging concern and empathy for others and for the welfare of the group.

We aim to help the children acquire and maintain an appreciation for difference of ability and opinion, and diversity of culture and belief, in our society.

We respectfully honour and acknowledge the Garigal and Guringai people, the traditional custodians of the land on which we work and play, and provide opportunities for the children to learn from the experiences and knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander societies.

OUR STAFF:

We have 5 University trained Early Childhood Teachers and 10 experienced Childcare Educators (2 full time, 8 permanent part time), all of whom either already have or are studying towards a recognized qualification in childcare. Our Cook also has a Food Handler's Certificate and a Certificate in Menu Planning. Most of our staff have current First Aid qualifications.

Our Staff qualifications and ratios exceed those of the new National licensing standards.

OUR CHILDREN:

We have 3 separate age-grouped classes, each with their own primary caregivers.

Our youngest class (of just 5 two year olds each day) is called the Joeys.

Our middle class (of 3 - 4 year olds) is called the Koalas.

Our preschool class (of 4-5 year olds) is called the Possums.

There are no set attendance patterns, so parents simply nominate the days that best suit their needs. There is no minimum number of days that a child must attend, though 2-3 days is recommended for children's socialisation and self-confidence. When choosing days, parents need to give consideration to their child's needs and personality - consecutive days can be helpful to ensure continuity and regularity for an unsettled child, while split days are often better for children who tire easily and need a break between attendance to gain maximum enjoyment from the program.

OUR DAILY ROUTINE:

The daily routine varies according to the age group of the children, and is of necessity flexible, to cater for the individual needs of children. However, our routine is predictable (the same each day) so that the children feel comfortable and know what will happen next. Our day is planned to take advantage of our 3 separate age-grouped classes, but also to allow siblings to be together at times.

OUR PROGRAMS:

The educational programs for each class are planned according to the children's needs and interests.

Our curriculum, based upon the 'Early Years Learning Framework,' reflects our Centre's philosophy, ideals and goals for the children. The focus of learning is from the child's perspective and is based upon each child's individual interests, needs, knowledge and culture. This information about each child is collected from staff observations, children's communication, interactions and play, and from parent feedback. The concepts of "Belonging. Being. Becoming" steer our planning, with the whole ethos of the kindy supporting each child to feel a strong sense of self worth, of self identity, and of belonging to the community. Ensuring that the children have a strong sense of wellbeing, are confident and involved learners, and are effective communicators, is demonstrated in all processes, practices, activities and environments that are provided and promoted.



To document the children's learning activities, we use an online portfolio software system called Educa, which allows Educators to email detailed daily photo-newsletters to all families, showing all of the different activities in which the children have been involved throughout the day, with links to the EYLF learning outcomes. Each child also has their own online portfolio which documents all the activities that have been planned especially for them or in which they have been involved. Families are able to provide feedback on activities directly onto Educa, and are also encouraged to contribute their own photos and learning stories to their child's portfolio, ensuring a shared planning and learning process. Educa has proven to be a very valuable way of achieving strong family input into each child's learning and participation at kindy, and in guiding future learning experiences for individual children and whole classes. Observations and participation is analysed in terms of the learning outcomes, to assess each child's learning and development in relation to their identity, connection with the community, wellbeing, confidence as learners and effectiveness as communicators. Follow up activities, based on each child's observed interests and needs, are used to further a child's learning and development, and this in turn often leads to extended areas of interest and group study (projects).

Our curriculum is based upon the following beliefs and understandings:

- That curriculum is what actually happens in an educational environment, not what is planned to happen.
- That everything and anything in our world that interests the children is curriculum for young children
- That young children learn through play, inventing and organising their own learning all the time.
- That the desire to learn and to try new things comes from being interested and motivated in what we are doing.
- That young children are active learners who learn through experience and opportunity..
- That all curriculum planning is tentative and flexible, and modified by the children's response and involvement.



SPECIALISTS, REFERRALS AND SUPPORT SERVICES

Where appropriate, and with parent permission, we encourage the involvement of specialists (such as Speech Pathologists and Occupational Therapists) in our programs, to assess and assist children for whom there is an identified need. Parents are always invited to request the involvement of support services if they have any concerns about their child's development, and we have access to a range of excellent Early Childhood professionals.

EXCURSIONS AND SHOWS

We like to supplement our programs with both excursions and regular shows and performances. Excursions are usually local, and always have an educational purpose. We encourage as many parents as possible to join us on our outings, and of course parent permission is always sought for any trip outside the kindy gate.

Additionally, we plan educational and cultural shows for the children on a regular basis, using well-known children's performers (such as Mic Conway, Aunty Wendy's Mob, Carol & Gary Crees, Tell Tales Entertainment, Peter Wood, Sue Kersey, Bob Turner the Reptile Man, etc). These activities are paid for by the Centre.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT AND DAILY COMMUNICATION

We recognise that parents have many and varied talents to offer, and encourage your ideas and suggestions. We welcome your skills and knowledge (about your job, your country of birth, your travels, musical skills, cooking skills, etc) and would enjoy incorporating them into our programs. Please feel free to chat to the Staff about your ideas or jot them down on our Parent Evaluation and Program Comment forms.

Parents are welcome in our Centre at all times. We have a very open system of communication, and encourage parents to chat informally with us each day.

We aim to have a very warm, friendly and responsive environment, and hope that you feel comfortable to stay and chat, look at the activities your child has been involved in throughout the day, ask us about any concerns or queries, and to get to know other families as well. To this end we plan both formal events (Parent Nights, Parent Education programs, etc) and informal events (family beach picnics, Mother's Day Breakfasts, Father's Morning, Carols Night, etc) throughout the year.



OUR POLICIES:

We have written policies on all aspects of the kindy, which parents are encouraged to read.

Copies of policies are always available on our website as well as at the sign in desk. Our policies are under continual review and we welcome your feedback at all times.

AGREEMENTS / AUTHORISATIONS

It is imperative that you read and sign our Agreements/Authorisations form prior to commencement at the Centre. The Agreements are either required by law, or are essential to our day to day operation. Any exclusions to the Agreements need to be highlighted, for our records.

FEES:

Fees are payable in advance, either fortnightly or monthly, whether or not your child is actually in attendance. Hence sick days and holidays (apart from the two weeks per year when we are closed) are still charged. This is because we offer permanent positions (not casual or occasional ones), so if your child is booked in to attend on set days we cannot offer places to other children.

Substitute days are only available in the event of a Public Holiday.

Our Centre is both registered and approved by the Federal Government, so we are able to provide Childcare Benefit and the 50% Childcare Rebate to all eligible families. Information about Childcare Benefit is included in the 'Fees and Subsidies' section of this handbook.

Childcare Benefit is available to all Australian residents, and although the amount of subsidy you receive is income based, everyone who meets the work or study requirements (working or studying in any capacity, paid or unpaid, at any time of the week and for any amount of time, even less than an hour qualifies) will receive a 50% rebate on all fees. This means that whatever our daily fee may be, you will be reimbursed for half of it, every fortnight, by the Family Assistance Office.

Applications must be made prior to commencement, through Centrelink.

TERMINATION OF BOOKING:

Termination of a booking can be made by the parents at any time, providing that four week's notice is given to the Director, and that all outstanding fees are met. Bookings cancelled in November or December will incur fees up until the closing date of the centre for the year and require an 8 week notice period.

Termination of a booking can be made by the Director under the following circumstances:

When a child has an unexplained absence of more than two weeks;

#When a child maintains a low level of attendance (see Government regulations regarding Childcare Benefit);

For failure to pay the required fees;

#For not abiding by Centre policies / Conditions of Enrolment;

When a child is collected after 6.00pm on more than one occasion;

#When the Director (or other qualified person) makes the judgment that the placement is not in the child's best interest.

LATE FEES of \$2.00 per minute apply for collection after 6.00pm. Please consider your child, and the Centre's Staff, and ensure that you make alternate arrangements in the event of a delay. We are not licensed to operate after 6.00pm, and our Staff have their own families and commitments to consider.

IMMUNISATION:

The Public Health (Amendment) Act 1992 requires parents to provide documented evidence of their child's immunisation status on enrolment in schools, preschools and childcare centres.

It is essential that Immunisation records (Blue Book or Immunisation Certificate) be sighted and recorded, prior to enrolment at the Centre. This is not compulsory immunisation, and parents will always have the right of choice. However, in the event of an outbreak of a vaccine-preventable disease, unimmunised children will be required to remain at home for the duration of the outbreak. New laws effective January 2014 require that additional supporting documentation is required prior to an unimmunised child being accepted into the kindy.

ILLNESS:

It is vital that the kindergarten be informed of any child contracting a contagious disease so that other children (and their families) can be protected. Information regarding common illnesses and incubation periods are on permanent display, and copies are available to all parents at any time.

We ask for your cooperation in ensuring that children who are ill are kept at home, in their own interests as well as the interests of other children. A list entitled "When Is Your Child Too Sick To Attend Kindy" is on permanent display, and copies are always available on our website.

MEDICINE:

Medicine can be administered to children only when a written order has been made by a parent, onto a Medicine Authority Form, for every day that medicine is required. The parent must specify the type, amount and times that the medicine is to be administered, and must sign the entry. The medicine must be in the correct container, clearly labelled with the child's name and dosage, and stored either inside, or on top of, the fridge, in our locked medicine boxes.

Medicine must never be left in a child's bag.

ASTHMA:

It is very important that we are informed of any child who may suffer an asthma attack.

For this reason, all children who have ever been diagnosed with asthma must have an Asthma Record Card completed for them by their parent in conjunction with their Doctor, detailing their triggers, symptoms, usual treatment, and emergency treatment.

The Staff are trained in the use of asthmatic devices such as nebulisers, spacers, and puffers. Treatment for asthma can be administered on a daily basis through the Medicine Book, or on a long-term basis as authorised by their parents.

SAFETY AND EMERGENCY PROCEDURES:

As part of our program, we teach and practise Fire Drills and Emergency Evacuations with the children. Safety and Emergency Procedures are clearly documented in each room.

If you hear the whistle blown three times, please exit from the nearest door and follow Staff directions.

SUN PROTECTION:

All children are required to wear a hat which protects their face, neck and ears, from the beginning of August until the end of May each year. Children are requested to bring their own hats to kindy, but spare hats are provided by the Centre to ensure a hat for every child. Children who choose not to wear a hat will be required to play only in shaded areas.

Sunscreen (minimum 30+, broad spectrum, water resistant) is provided by the Centre at all times. Parents are requested to apply sunscreen to their child upon arrival each day. Supplies are kept on the top of the fridge, at the Sign-In desk, and on the outdoor First Aid cupboard. Staff will reapply sunscreen as needed throughout the day.

Whenever possible, outdoor activities will be programmed to make use of shaded areas, and scheduled for early morning and late afternoon.

CLOTHING:

It is requested that children be dressed appropriately for play & activities at kindy. Please give consideration to dressing your child in clothes and shoes that fit, are appropriate for the weather (sunhats and skin-protective clothing for summer, jumpers for winter), and that allow the child to be fully involved in all kindy activities (ie. are able to get messy and provide freedom of movement). It is also important that clothes worn to kindy encourage independence and development of the child's self-help skills, ie. that are easily removed and put on. Overalls, small buttons, braces, etc are not recommended for young children, particularly those who are being toilet trained. It is suggested that children wear clothes and shoes that they can substantially manage by themselves (eg. pull up pants, dresses, velcro or slip on shoes).

The Staff will endeavour to ensure that children are clothed appropriately throughout the day, for changes in weather, with hats and suncream, with aprons, and for rest time. We have a selection of spare kindy clothes for emergencies, and request that these be returned to kindy promptly for future use.

LOST PROPERTY:

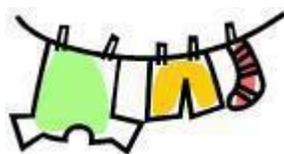
It is expected that all clothing and belongings sent to kindy will be clearly named to prevent loss. We recommend the use of inexpensive and easy to use iron-on name labels, details of which are always available at the Sign In desk.

All unclaimed property is collected at the end of the day, and stored in the Lost Property box on the veranda.

Please check the Lost Property box regularly for any missing items. Every three months, unnamed and unclaimed Lost Property will be donated to the Smith Family or Salvation Army.

Please encourage your child to pack his/her own bag in order to develop a sense of responsibility for their own belongings. If your child inadvertently brings home toys, pieces of puzzles, books or clothes that do not belong to you, please return them promptly. This is very common practice with young children!

Please do not send along any toys from home - it causes such a problem with sharing, and there are always traumas when the toys are lost or broken.



FOOD AND NUTRITION:

The Centre provides all food and drinks for the children each day. There is no need to send along any extra food or drinks unless it is for a special purpose (eg. birthday cake).

The main emphasis of our menu is to provide a total nutritious plan that will promote the health, strength and well-being of growing, energetic children. To this end, we follow the guidelines set down by the NSW Department of Health in their 'Caring for Kids' publication, and "Get Up and Grow".

Daily lunch menus are clearly displayed, along with records of how much each child has actually eaten.

Our menus are planned to provide a balance between red meat, white meat and vegetarian meals, with a combination of fibre, protein, carbohydrate, fat, green and yellow vegetables in each menu plan. Dessert is also provided, and children are encouraged to rinse their mouths (with water) after eating.

Morning and afternoon teas consist of a variety of fresh fruit and a grain-based snack.

Late afternoon tea is usually dried fruit and a high energy food and varies each day.

We endeavour to cater for children who require special meals because of allergies, religion or medical problems. Suggested meals may be supplied by the parents, and the Cook will then endeavour to provide a meal as close as possible to that provided for the rest of the children.

Meal times are used to reinforce suitable nutrition habits, manners, socialisation and self-help skills, and provide learning experiences in themselves. The Staff eat with the children and encourage good manners and appropriate social interactions.

We have to be very careful with food at kindy to ensure a peanut-free environment (no peanut butter, peanut oil, many brands of biscuits/cakes, muesli bars and chocolate). Increasing numbers of children have potentially life-threatening anaphylactic reactions to peanuts (and some other foods too, like eggs and strawberries) so it is essential that children DO NOT BRING FOOD TO KINDY (other than a birthday cake, which we keep in the kitchen where we can monitor its distribution, and for which a safe substitute is available for anaphylactic children).

QUIET LISTENING / REST AND RELAXATION TIME:

A quiet time is offered each day, for all children.

The atmosphere for quiet time is restful and calming, and the Staff endeavour to ensure that quiet time is a pleasant, relaxing time for the children, during which they are encouraged to take the rest appropriate to their individual needs. The purpose of quiet time is reinforced with the children, emphasising the need to have some time in their busy day, away from the noise and stimulation of activities and interactions.

After an initial half hour of quiet time (listening to classical music or relaxation tapes), alternate activities are offered to children who choose not to sleep and to children as they wake.

Children's need for rest or sleep will always be respected, and children who choose not to sleep, or to sleep early, or who need longer sleeps, will be able to do so. Records of sleepers and non-sleepers are maintained each day, for parent information.

BED SHEETS:

All children must bring to kindy each day their own bed sheet and blanket. The sheet should measure 65 cm x 130cm and should be stored in a soft bag or a pillowcase (no drawstrings).

A fitted cot sheet is perfect. For hygiene reasons, sheets and other bedding must be brought to kindy and taken home each day. It is important that they are clearly named.

NAPPY CHANGING:

Please provide an adequate supply of nappies for the day, any special creams or wipes that are to be used, and your own vinyl nappy change pad (for use exclusively when your child is changed).

Children should be brought to kindy in a clean nappy, or changed upon arrival by their parent.

ADDITIONAL NEEDS:

Our Centre is open to all children and families without discrimination. Where appropriate, and with parent permission, we encourage the involvement of specialists (such as Speech Pathologists and Occupational Therapists) in our programs, to assess and assist with children for whom there is an identified need. Where the additional needs or disability of a child are so profound that their integration or participation in our Centre requires one to one supervision or additional staffing, our ability to accept the child would be based around the provision of funding for a separate additional needs teacher. Consideration must also be given to the needs and interests of the other children and families using our Centre, to the Staff, and to the Centre as a whole.

Our programs in all areas reflect an anti-bias perspective, in which additional needs, disabilities and differences between people are actively taught in a positive manner. Our Staff treat all children equally and are conscious in all that they say, do, imply, assume and expect that all children are treated without bias, and that they promote positive, accepting role models for the children.

GUIDANCE AND DISCIPLINE:

We emphasise positive behaviour management and incorporate positive reinforcement techniques as disciplinary measures, thus encouraging the children to cooperate, enhancing their self-esteem, and encouraging their ability to interact with others.

Discipline needs to help the children know what to do rather than what not to do. When a child is redirected, stopped or reprimanded, we explain why. This helps the children make judgments about what they can and cannot do (limits) and facilitates the development of self-control.

Such self-discipline can only be achieved if the children are aware of consistent limits within the Centre, so these limits are consistently reinforced by all of the Staff.

We actively teach conflict resolution skills and encourage the children to 'use their words' instead of actions to deal with conflict. We use stories, discussion, role plays and role modelling to promote these important skills, and to help build an understanding of other people's needs, rights and feelings.

CHILD PROTECTION:

All teachers and childcare workers are mandated by law to report any concern about the safety, welfare or wellbeing of a child, or any suspicion that a child is at risk of harm, to the DoCS Mandatory Reporters Hotline. If you, as a parent, have concerns about a child's safety, welfare or well being, you are able to make a report to the DoCS Helpline on 132 111. Detailed information about our child protection policies and procedures are provided in our Policy Handbook, which is always available at the front desk.

CENTRE MANAGEMENT:

The Centre is managed by an appointed Director, who holds a degree in Early Childhood Education, and an Assistant Director, who also has a Bachelor of Early Childhood Education degree. The Director and Assistant Director have autonomy to make decisions pertinent to the operation of the Centre, and are responsible for the planning and coordination of all aspects of the centre.

The Staff are appointed by, and responsible to, the Director. All Staff serve a probationary period of six months, during which time their skills and suitability for the position are assessed, prior to the offer of permanent appointment. Names and photos of all Staff are on our website.

PARENT GRIEVANCE AND COMPLAINTS:

Concerns and grievances should be aired and resolved. This can happen either informally, if the issue is minor and can easily be resolved by discussing the matter with the Director (and other teachers, if necessary), on either a personal basis or via the telephone.

We are a Centre that prides itself on the quality of its close, interactive relationships with families, and we are always seeking your ideas and suggestions. Equally, we need to know if you have any concerns or complaints. The Director will always listen carefully to any such issue and endeavour to clarify and resolve your concerns. Minor grievances will be recorded in the Staff Message Book, to ensure that all staff are aware of your concerns, and also in the 'Informal Complaint Register'.

However, in the instance of a more formal verbal or written complaint, the details will be recorded in the "Formal Complaints Register" and an investigation of the matter will be formally instigated and reported by the Director. This is a permanent record that will be sent to NSW Early Childhood Education and Care Directorate, Department of Education and Communities within 7 days of notification.

If parents are not satisfied with the result of such investigation, a further formal complaint can be addressed to: NSW Early Childhood Education and Care Directorate, Department of Education and Communities

Address: Locked Bag 5107, Parramatta NSW 2124

Phone: 1800 619 113 (toll free)

Fax: (02) 8633 1810

Email: ececd@det.nsw.edu.au

It is our hope and expectation that there will never be a situation in which a parent feels that any issue warrants the mediation of an outside agent or office. This is your kindy, and we always listen to your suggestions and welcome your comments. Your feedback at all times is essential to our commitment to providing quality care.

PRIVACY:

In order to provide you with the highest standard of service, and to ensure the safety and well being of your child, we are required by law to collect personal information about you and your child. This information includes basic details such as your name, address and phone contacts, but also information about your child's health, likes and dislikes, routines, needs and interests. Information regarding your entitlement to Childcare Benefit is also provided to us. All of this information is vital in assisting us to provide the best possible individual care for your child, and for processing payments. Some of the information we collect is to satisfy our legal obligations under our licensing legislation. Privacy of your personal information is important to us, and our staff are committed to respecting confidentiality.

VALUES AND RELIGION:

Our Centre is not affiliated with any Church, and aims to meet the needs of all families in the community, irrespective of religious beliefs. Religion is not taught in any part of the curriculum, and no religious beliefs are imposed on the children, families or staff of the Centre. Instead, all children will be encouraged to develop respect for themselves, for their friends and families, and to appreciate the difference and diversity of other people in our world. We aim to help the children acquire and maintain sound habits and responsible attitudes in their personal and community life, by encouraging concern and empathy for others, and for the welfare of the group.

STARTING OUT AT KINDY / HOW TO ENROL

You can enrol your child at our kindy by first filling out a very quick Waiting List form. The details on this form provide us with the information needed to contact you when a vacancy arises, or when we begin offering placements for the following year, (whichever is your requirement). Waiting list details can be provided through our website, or taken over the phone or by email, but we do recommend that you visit our Centre at some stage to see our programs in action, and to meet the Staff. Wherever possible, it is recommended that you make a time to meet with Liz (our Assistant Director), so that she can spend time with you and show you around. Mornings between 10 and 11 are preferable for this purpose, as Liz's time is more freely available at this time.

Placing a child's name on the Waiting List does not guarantee availability or placement. Each application is dated, and offers of enrolment are made in chronological order. Availability of places is also determined by the provisions set out in the Childcare Benefit regulations, and priority is given to siblings.

Offers of enrolment for the following calendar year begin in July each year, when first round offers are sent out by email. Parents will have three weeks in which to reply if they wish to confirm a place, nominating days of attendance and a starting date. When you confirm a booking, a deposit of \$75.00 and a holding fee equivalent to two week's fees is requested to secure your required days, and hence preclude us from offering these days to another child.

Further letters of offer will be sent to subsequent wait-listed children, if vacancies remain. It is very important that you let us know if your contact details change at any time, so that you will receive our letter of offer.

Whilst the Centre tries at all times to be flexible, changes in the confirmed days of attendance can only occur if a vacancy on those days exist.

WHEN YOU START

WHAT YOU NEED TO BRING

- * a kindy bag containing spare clothes (this is especially important in summer when we have lots of water play, and for children who are toilet-training), and a broad brimmed sunhat.
- * a soft bag or pillowcase containing a small bed sheet (a fitted cot sheet is perfect) or a light sleeping bag, and a security item (soft toy, blanket, etc) if required.
- * a photo for your child's locker. (This is not only helpful for identification of lockers by other children, but also provides some security from home).
- * a drink bottle (easily identifiable by your child, and clearly named).
- * an adequate supply of disposable nappies (or pull-ups) if required, plus a vinyl change mat and any special creams or wipes you would like us to use.

All items brought to kindy must be clearly named to prevent loss.

THE FIRST FEW WEEKS:

Most children take between 6 and 8 weeks to settle in at kindy. Some children who are used to separating from their parents or who have existing friends within the centre may settle more quickly; others (particularly children who have never been left with non-family members, or who only attend one day a week) may take longer to adjust. Even the children who appear to settle in immediately may experience some instability a few weeks or months later. Getting to know the other children and making a friend is the catalyst to success, so the more frequently and regularly a child comes to kindy, the quicker it is to settle. Be assured that most children settle within minutes of mum or dad leaving, and it is usually the parent who is upset all day.

There are some things that parents can do to make the transition to kindy easier. Firstly, always be positive about starting kindy. Stress that it will be a fun and enjoyable experience, lots of children to play with and lots of exciting things to do. Give your child a purpose in coming to kindy, a focus for the day, e.g. making a painting to hang up in your office, bringing an item for 'News', or a book to read to the children. Tell your child exactly what will happen, e.g. I'm going to work (or shopping, etc) but I'll be back to pick you up at playtime. Use the child's time markers (like lunchtime, rest time, afternoon tea) to reassure them, and always stick to your promises. Sending along something familiar from home (a photo, keys, a handkerchief) can also be comforting in the early days.

ALWAYS SAY GOODBYE (or better yet **'SEE YOU THIS AFTERNOON'**), no matter how tempting it seems to sneak away when your child is occupied or distracted. This experience could break your child's sense of trust and security and make them clingy, feeling that if they move away from you or become involved in play that they'll be left. Our Staff can help your child face the leaving and cope with it constructively, so please let us know when you are ready to go. However, it is also important to be decisive when saying goodbye. Lingering can be further distressing, so when you are ready to go say 'I'll see you this afternoon' (saying 'goodbye' sometimes sends the wrong message!) and leave quickly. Try to be loving, but firm. And **ring us as often as you wish** to check how your child is settling, even if that is every ten minutes...We will always ring you if your child doesn't settle.

Our staff are experienced, compassionate and very honest and will always tell you truthfully how well your child is coping, give advice or suggestions of different ways to approach the early days, and work with you to make sure kindy is a happy, positive and fun experience.

DAILY PROCEDURES:

*Please let us know when you arrive at kindy. We do like to greet the children, so if we are not close by encourage your child to find his/her teacher.

*It is very important (for our licensing regulations) to ensure that children are signed in each day when they arrive, and signed out upon departure.

*Remember to check your Message folder each day for messages (birthday invitations, etc).

*A daily photo-newsletter is emailed to all families every day for your information, which highlights the day's activities and learning. Please ensure you accept your emailed 'invitation' to join Educa, in order to receive these daily newsletters.

*All medication requirements must be written onto a Medication Authority Form for each day that it is required, stating the type, amount and frequency of medication to be administered.

All medicine must be stored either on or in the refrigerator at all times, in the interest of child safety. If you require ongoing medication, please ask for our special long term medication form.

*Please check that you take home all of your belongings every day, and check for any lost property. Please also check your child's Message Folder each day for their art work.

*Please inform Staff if someone different is picking up your child, if your child is sick or going on holidays, if your address or contact phone numbers have changed or any of your enrolment details have changed (eg. Doctor, allergies, custody, authorisations), if your child has any current special needs (physical, emotional, cognitive, social) or if you have any concerns or queries.

FEES AND SUBSIDIES

Our kindy fees are currently \$96.00 per day, but Government subsidies in the form of Childcare Benefit and the 50% Childcare Rebate are available to all eligible families, which means that the actual fee range is between \$21.88 and \$48.00 per day. This is an all-inclusive fee that covers up to 11 hours care per day, all meals, all educational materials, all shows and entertainment, etc.

Since fees are our ONLY source of income, it is very important that they are paid regularly, either fortnightly or monthly IN ADVANCE, so that we are able to meet our ongoing and very substantial costs for staff wages, rent of the premises, insurance, equipment, etc, and of course food and necessities for the day to day running of the kindergarten.

Since we only offer permanent bookings (not casual or occasional care) fees are charged each week, whether or not your child is actually in attendance. Hence sick days and holidays are still charged, apart from the 2 weeks over Christmas when we are closed.

Any other holidays taken throughout the year are subject to fees.

Normal fees still apply for Public Holidays, but a substitute day may be taken in lieu. Due to our restricted numbers, this is the only situation in which we can give make-up days, and you will need to check availability for the day that you choose.

We have received the highest possible level of accreditation under the new National Quality Standards and have been rated as “exceeding regulations” in all 7 quality areas, so we are able to offer all parents using our service **CHILDCARE BENEFIT** and the 50% **CHILDCARE REBATE**, to reduce the cost of childcare.

All Australian residents are eligible for these benefits, and all families using our service should at least register for a Customer Reference Number through Centrelink. This will allow you to receive your subsidy at a later time, if you choose not to do so immediately. If you have other children using other approved childcare services, such as Family Day Care and Out of School Hours Care (OOSH) you will be eligible for the multiple rate of Childcare Benefit, which significantly increases your subsidy at each of the services. A part time loading of 10% applies to all children attending our Centre for 1, 2 or 3 days per week, which further reduces your fees.

Additionally, all families who are registered for Childcare Benefit and who work or study at any time of the week, paid or unpaid, and for any amount of time (an hour or even less is fine) are also entitled to a **50% REBATE** on their gap kindy fees. This means that **50% of your childcare costs will be refunded to you**, directly into your bank account every 3 months, or paid directly to the kindy if you chooses so that your fortnightly fees are halved. To be eligible for this rebate, both parents need to either work or study in some way, at some time of the week and for any amount of time (an hour or even less). This is completely different from the 15 hour work/study test detailed below, which purely determines the number of hours on which your Childcare Benefit is calculated. Even families who do not meet the 15 hour work test to receive more than 24 hours of CCB per week will still be eligible for the 50% rebate, providing that they work or study *in some way* and at some time each week. This includes voluntary and unpaid work, and distance education.

Receiving Childcare Benefit is conditional upon you complying with the published “Allowable Absences” (copy attached). Each and every absence from kindergarten must be notified by you and documented by us, in our computerised records. A running tally of your child’s absences will be kept by us and by the Family Assistance office.

It is important that you apply for Childcare Benefit as early as possible, before your child starts at kindy, and that you provide us with both the Customer Reference Numbers (CRNs) that link you and your child to Centrelink. If you already have CRNs issued by Centrelink please provide that to us BUT ALSO ring Centrelink on 136150 to ensure that your details are activated on their system.

When you initially apply for Childcare Benefit, Centrelink will probably ask for copies of your child's Birth Certificate and Immunisation Statement. They will also need to verify your work status to determine whether you are eligible to receive the minimum 24 hours of CCB or the maximum 50 hours of CCB. Being eligible for 24 hours of CCB means that your subsidy will be limited to 24 hours, regardless of the number of days that you are actually booked to attend. Centrelink will also need to (separately) record your work or study status (this may be just one hour or less each week) to allow you to claim the fortnightly 50% childcare rebate.

You are eligible for the 50% Childcare Rebate if you and your partner:

are working in either paid or unpaid work or are self-employed, either full-time, part-time, or casual, AT ANY TIME DURING THE WEEK AND FOR ANY AMOUNT OF TIME, or are on paid leave or maternity leave or unpaid sick leave, or are in the process of starting up a business which is yet to start operating;

are studying, or training to improve work skills or employment prospects, or undertaking voluntary or unpaid work to improve work skills & job prospects, AT ANY TIME OF THE WEEK AND FOR ANY AMOUNT OF TIME;

are actively looking for work AT ANY TIME OF THE WEEK AND FOR ANY AMOUNT OF TIME,

you are disabled or undertaking constant care of another person who is disabled.

you are a JET programme customer.

You are eligible for more than 24 hours CCB per week if you and your partner:

are working in paid work or self-employed, either full-time, part-time, or casual, for 15 or more hours per week, or are on paid leave or maternity leave or unpaid sick leave, or are in the process of starting up a business which is yet to start operating;

are studying, or training to improve work skills or employment prospects, or undertaking voluntary or unpaid work to improve work skills & job prospects, for 15 or more hours per week;

are actively looking for work (you may need to prove this),

you are disabled or undertaking constant care of another person who is disabled.

you are a JET programme customer.

Childcare used by any parent does not have to coincide with time actually at work.

Please remember when filling in all FAO Application forms that it is OUR OPERATING HOURS, NOT YOUR ACTUAL HOURS OF USAGE that Childcare Benefit is based upon. The longer we are open, the more subsidy you can claim. We are open for 11 hours per day, so if your child attends for 2 days per week you are claiming for 22 hours, not the 16 or 17 or whatever that your child is actually in care. This is important to receive the full CCB to which you are entitled.

PROCEDURES FOR PAYMENT OF KINDY FEES

We use Ezi-debit, in conjunction with our software provider QikKids, to provide a direct debit payment facility for our kindy families. The direct debit form is available under downloads on our website. Ezidebit and QikKids are very reliable providers for childcare and make recording and reporting all CCB and CCMS information easy. Statements and other reports are provided on an ongoing basis.

ABSENCE FROM KINDERGARTEN

GOVERNMENT REGULATIONS REQUIRE THAT ALL ABSENCES FROM KINDERGARTEN BE REPORTED TO THE CENTRE as early as is practical to do so.

We are required to record on our Sign-In Sheets and into our Hubworks software, any absence, and the reason for absence. You **MUST** notify us when your child is absent, and let us know why.

There is a limit to the number of days that a child can be absent from kindergarten and still be eligible to receive their Childcare Benefit subsidy. The parameters are quite broad, and cater well for normal absenteeism.

Childcare Benefit will still be paid for absences:

up to a total of 42 separate days per financial year, for holidays, outings, sick days that are not certified by a Medical Certificate, public holidays, or for any other reason. (So, if your child attends kindy 2 days per week, they are entitled to 21 week's absence per year; if they attend 3 days per week, they are entitled to 14 week's absence per year, etc).

without limit, if due to illness (of either the child, their parent, or a sibling) as long as a Medical Certificate is produced.

#due to non-immunisation of the child, for the period of time that the child is excluded due to an outbreak of a vaccine-preventable infectious disease. (Medical Certificate req'd).

#without limit, due to a parent taking a rostered day off or working a rotating shift, provided that the parent provides a statement verifying this as a reason.

#without limit, due to a sibling's pupil free day from school or due to the temporary closure of the school (this needs to be recorded as the reason for absence on the form).

#without limit, due to a period of local emergency (as determined by the FAO).

#without limit, due to a Court Order.

Parents **MUST** notify all absences or intended absence, and the reasons for absence.

A register of all absences for each child is maintained by the kindergarten and notified to the Family Assistance Office on a weekly basis. Absences are also recorded on all Invoices/Statements and Receipts, or a tally can be provided for parents at any time.