



Early Education and Care

Montessori Inspired Learning Centre

Parent Handbook

Our Commitment.....	3
Settling into care	4
The importance of early learning.....	6
Sustainable practices.....	7
Helping your child on their journey	8
Management.....	8
Am I entitled to government assistance?	9
Payment of fees.....	10
Signing in and out of the centre	11
Montessori.....	12
Early Years Learning Framework.....	13
Childcare policies and procedures	17
ACCIDENTS AND INCIDENTS	17
EMERGENCY EVACUATION	17
IMMUNISATION	18
MEDICATION.....	18
HEALTH AND HYGIENE	19
NUTRITION.....	20
CULTURAL DIVERSITY	20
SUN PROTECTION	20
CONFIDENTIALITY OF CENTRE RECORDS	21
CLOTHING	21
PRIORITY OF ACCESS	21

Our Commitment

There is more to early learning than simply care - the early years are fundamental to a child's emotional, cognitive, and social development. Research suggests that a quality early childhood education sets a child up for success throughout their school years and even later in life. That is why we are focused on providing our families with quality programs to support children's learning and development from birth right through to school age.

Our children and our families are at the heart of our service. Our commitment to you and your child is that we take the time to invest in our centres and our people, so that they can best support your child, nurture them, empower them and help them to grow. We know that doing this goes a long way to ensuring that the children in our care can flourish.

Settling into care

Ensuring your child feels safe and secure is one of our top priorities. Starting at a new early learning centre can be full of emotions for both families and children. To support you in this transition, we can arrange some 'stay and play' days prior to your child beginning care which will encourage them to form attachments and bonds with their educators.

Building a strong relationship with your family is especially important to us and makes a real difference to the early learning outcomes for your child. It is best for us to know your child's interests, likes, dislikes and any special needs they may have. This will become integral as our team incorporates your child's interests into our educational programs, so please take the time to share information about your child with their educators regularly.

On your child's first day in care, educators will make immediate connections with your child to make the transition process run more smoothly. We want to establish an environment in which meaningful and lasting relationships can develop between educators and children as well as between educators and families. You are encouraged to call at any point of the day to discuss your child's learning and activities with their primary educator.

Communication is fundamental in helping all parties adjust.

The settling in process is a unique journey for each individual child and although we would like to say the process only takes two weeks, it could be shorter than this – or longer. We will reach that destination when your child arrives at the care environment feeling confident and ready to learn. That is when we will know we have made strong, lasting connections.

Our centre has several policies and procedures pertaining to the care of your child to ensure they are in the absolute best of hands.



The importance of early learning

Our services are guided by the National Quality Standards, the Early Years Learning Framework, these frameworks guide and shape the curriculum for all education and care services for children under the age of 12, across Australia. Children's neurological pathways multiply and develop faster in the first five years than at any other time in their life.

The architecture of a child's brain is shaped by high quality interactions with trusted adults and peers. The foundation of a strong relationship with educators is fundamental for future success. Our educators understand the impact relationships have on a child's learning journey and are committed to ongoing professional development to stay current in their knowledge of how-to best program and plan for every child's developing mind. For a child, playing and learning are interrelated and our team of educational professionals embrace this.

Each day, our teams provide interactive learning experiences for children to engage and explore concepts of literacy and numeracy, consistently using their interests as a vehicle to learn. A holistic approach to your child's development is prioritised through our focus on social and emotional well-being. Concepts such as confidence, resilience, getting along and self-care are embedded throughout the day and explored in small and large groups, as well as during spontaneous conversations with educators.

Information about the daily program, observations and stories about your child and their involvement in learning projects will all be available to you in your child/rens' rooms via our smartphone app. This helps to keep you connected to your child's learning journey and share in their wonder and joy as they explore and discover.

We invite parents and family members to schedule meeting times with their child's educators to discuss specific details about their child's development.

Sustainable practices

Our educators and children work together to learn about and promote the sustainable use of resources and to ensure we continue to develop and implement sustainable practices. Our centre has an environmental strategy including recycling, use of recycled resources, energy efficiency, water conservation and more. Find out how you can be involved by asking your centre manager or your child's educators.



Helping your child on their journey

As the adage goes, it takes a village to raise a child. That is why it is so important for us to work together right from the start. We want to ensure our centre becomes an extension of your home life and that the relationships, cultures and activities that are important to your child are recognised. This creates an environment where they feel safe, secure, and ready to learn. By building a strong relationship with us and your child's primary educator, we can support you to build on your child's learning and development at home.

We encourage you to do this by asking questions, getting involved and continuing the learning activities at home. Working together, engaging in your child's interests, and learning and discovering with them is the best way to ensure a high-quality education for your child. It also helps to build the foundations for their success not only in the centre but throughout their school years.

Management

Early Education and Care is operated by Early Education Montessori Centre (Approved Provider) and is licensed under the Education and Care Services National Law 2010 and must comply with the Law and National Regulation 2011, including requirements relating to activities, experience, programs, staff members' qualifications, number of staff members and children, children's health and safety, physical environment, relationship with families, community, leadership and management.

The Approved Provider oversees the Supervisor, handles all administration duties, financial and legal concerns and works closely with the supervisor regarding the general concerns of the Centre, families, and staff. The approved provider will ultimately finalise all major decisions/concerns relating directly to the Centre and its wellbeing. The responsibility of the day to day running of the Centre is vested in the nominated supervisor. The nominated supervisor manages all other staff and offers unlimited support and knowledge to all staff members.

Please feel free to pass any issues or queries through the supervisor which will then be passed on to the approved provider (refer to Governance Policy).

Am I entitled to government assistance?

The Child Care Subsidy (CCS) is a payment made by the Australian Government to help families with the cost of quality childcare and early education. This is paid directly to the service to reduce your weekly fees. Three things will determine a family's level of Child Care Subsidy:

1. A family's combined income will determine the percentage of subsidy they are eligible to receive.
2. An activity test will determine how many hours of subsidised care families can access, up to a maximum of 100 per fortnight.
3. The type of childcare service will determine the hourly rate cap. Some basic requirements must be satisfied for an individual to be eligible to receive the Child Care Subsidy.

These include:

- The age of the child (must be 13 or under and not attending secondary school)
- The child meeting immunisation requirements
- The individual, or their partner, meeting the residency requirements.

The number of hours of subsidised childcare that families will have access to per fortnight will be determined by a three-step activity test. In two parent families, both parents, unless exempt, must meet the activity test. In the case where both parents meet different steps of the activity test, the parent with the lowest entitlement will determine the hours of subsidised care for the child. Low income families who earn under a government set threshold who do not meet the activity test will be able to access 24 hours of subsidised care per child per fortnight without having to meet the activity test, as part of the Child Care Safety Net. Under the Child Care Subsidy families are allowed 42 absence days per child each financial year. These can be taken for any reason, including public holidays or when children are sick.

Step Hours of activity* Maximum number of hours of subsidy per child*

1 8 hours to 16 hours 36 hours

2 More than 16 hours to 48 hours 72 hours

3 More than 48 hours 100 hours

Payment of fees

It is our policy that a family's weekly/fortnightly fees must be one week in advance and paid by Thursday (this includes the current week plus one). The parent must then continue to pay the weekly/fortnightly fee in advance to maintain a credit balance equivalent to one week of fees.

All payments must be made via EZIDebit and all families must complete an online EZIDebit application form upon enrolment. For other alternative payment methods, please speak to our centre manager. If you are planning a holiday, a Holiday Discount form is available from the office.

This form must be filled out two weeks prior to the holiday absence to receive 50 per cent off your gap fees for up to four weeks (pro-rata to the number of days your child attends) each financial year. All children's booked days, including public holidays and absent days must be paid to retain your child's place.

Late fees are charged if children remain in the centre after closing time \$2 per minute for the first 10mins and then \$4 per minute thereafter.

Two weeks' notice is required if you wish to cancel a booking, failure to do so will require parents to pay two weeks full fees. All accounts must be finalised within seven days and any outstanding accounts will be forwarded to debt collection agencies

Signing in and out of the centre

Each child must be signed in and out of the centre every day they attend. This is a legal requirement and is in the interest of your child's safety.

These records are used in case of emergencies and for the calculation of the Child Care Subsidy (CCS).

If a child is away, ill or on holidays the corresponding days please call us.

On arrival at the centre you are asked to:

- Sign your child into the centre
- Present your child to the educator in charge

When you collect your child, we ask that you:

- Come into the room and greet your child
- Collect your child's belongings
- With your child, say goodbye to the educator in charge of the group
- Sign your child out of the centre

To ensure the safety of all children, no child will be released into the care of any persons not registered as authorised by the parent/guardian in the centre. If team members do not know the person collecting your child by appearance, the person must be able to produce some form of photo identification to prove that they are authorised to collect the child as per authorised information. If a child has not been collected 15 minutes after closing time, the parents/guardians will be contacted on the emergency telephone numbers provided.

If the child has still not been collected 30 minutes after closing time, the staff will follow the Department of Communities Abandoned Child Procedures including contacting the Child Protection and Crisis Centre 24-hour service.

Montessori

Dr. Maria Montessori (1870-1952) observed children throughout the world, watching how they learned through different stages of development and created a method of education based on these observations. Dr Montessori saw education as more than just teaching academics to children but rather a way for children to learn the skills they require for their life's journey. Montessori believed that children learn naturally and in the correct environment become self-motivated and self-disciplined.

The Montessori environment provides a balance of individual and group work, challenges and supports free choice within structure. All programs closely follow the principles and practices of the Montessori philosophy. Montessori trained teachers plan individually for each child based on their knowledge of Montessori philosophy and curriculum and the individual child's needs, interest, and development.

Montessori's prepared environment provides a balance of individual and group work, challenging and supporting free choice and appropriate structure independence and collaboration. It takes the whole child into consideration and assists the child in developing independence and a love of learning. Each child is observed daily and records of your child's work, needs and interests for. Programs engage children in all areas of the curriculum and follow the Victoria Early Years learning framework integrating the plan into Montessori Curriculum and Victoria Kindergarten Guidelines.

***Believe* in children, there is a *faith* in their eyes,
there is a hope in their attitude, there is a *love* in their touch!**

Early Years Learning Framework

The Early Years Learning Framework is a National Early Learning Framework for children from birth to five years old. As the early years are a vital time for children to learn and develop, the framework has been developed to ensure your child receives a quality educational program. Educators will use the framework in partnership with families to develop learning programs responsive to children's ideas, interests, strengths, and abilities and recognise that children learn through play.

The Early Years Learning Framework describes childhood as a time of belonging, being and becoming.

- **Belonging** is the basis for living a fulfilling life. Children feel they belong because of the relationship they have with their family, community, culture, and place
- **Being** is about living here and now. Childhood is a special time in life and children need time to just 'be' – time to play, try new things and have fun

- **Becoming** is about the learning and development that young children experience. Children start to form their sense of identity from an early age, which shapes the type of adult they will become. Through the Framework's five learning goals, educators will assist your child in **developing:**

- A strong sense of their identity
- Connections with their world
- A strong sense of wellbeing
- Confidence and involvement in their learning
- Effective communication skills

Our centre also offers an extensive Kindergarten and School Readiness program based on the Framework. The Framework has a strong emphasis on play-based learning as play is the best vehicle for young children's learning, providing the most appropriate stimulus for brain development. We aim to guide your child in becoming an effective learner through creating an environment that is challenging and stimulating. The overall aim of our programs is to help your child in developing all areas necessary for success now and in later years.

Watching your child's progress using the Early Years Learning Framework

educators will observe your child's learning so they can build on it and plan the next steps. They will do this by listening, watching, and talking to your child. Each child will have their own portfolio or collection of learning. This may contain photos and children's work to show what your child is learning. This learning journey is available for you to view at any time to ensure you are connected to your child's early education. Your child's room will also show ongoing learning through daily journals/books, photographs, project work, learning stories and a program documenting the day's progress.

Helping children and families feel welcome and settle into the centre environment is one of our top priorities.



National Quality Framework

The National Quality Framework is a government initiative which sets a National Quality Standard creating greater consistency for early childhood education and care services across Australia. This initiative aims to improve educator-to-child ratios in services, increased skills and qualifications, national regulations and a quality ratings system which will help you to make informed choices about the education and care you choose for your child.

Our centre's aim is to exceed the National Quality Standard across all areas of our service and each centre has a quality improvement plan in place to show what is happening in our centre to achieve this. This will look at areas such as educational programs and practice, children's health and safety, physical environment, staffing arrangements, relationships with children and collaborative partnerships with families and communities.

For more information about the National Quality Framework, please speak to your centre manager or visit

www.acecqa.gov.au

Environments and routines

Our routines provide for individual play and learning as well as small and large group play and learning activities. Children's language and literacy skills are further developed during these times as children are involved in storytelling, drama, and games. Music also plays a large part during these sessions as children can experiment with dancing, singing, and exercising their bodies.

Spaces are made available for children to engage in rest and quiet experiences. Educators provide a range of active and restful experiences and support children to make appropriate decisions regarding participation. Each of our centre's rooms is individual and unique and tailored to suit the age and development stage of your child, the diversity of the educators, children, families and the wider community and are filled full of laughter, fun and educational resources.

All aspects of children's learning and development are catered for including physical, social, emotional, creative, cognitive and communication. Children's learning is dynamic and complex and the centre's environment is designed for this. As your child grows and develops so will their needs, interests, and abilities.

To cater for this, your child will gradually transition to the new room, where their skills and development can be extended. Our transitioning procedure includes communication with families and involves a careful assessment of your child's records to ensure they are ready for the next step. This process also includes short visits to the new room to build familiarity and ensure a smooth transition.

Music gives a soul to the universe wings to the mind, flights to the imagination and the life to everything

~Plato



Childcare policies and procedures

Our centre has policies and procedures pertaining to the care of your child. Our policies are in the centre foyer and are available to review at any time. For more information on our centre policies please speak with your centre manager.

ACCIDENTS AND INCIDENTS

Our educators take a proactive approach to safety and conduct thorough risk assessments of all play areas so that each child can feel safe and free to explore their environment. A senior first aid qualified staff member is always present as well as nominated asthma and anaphylaxis supervisors.

Should an accident or sudden illness occur, educators will immediately commence first aid and you will be contacted to collect your child. In emergency situations you will be advised of the plan of action regarding further medical treatment.

During an emergency, if you or your authorised nominee cannot be contacted, the nominated supervisor will provide the ambulance officers with information regarding your child and a team member known to the child will accompany them to the hospital and stay until you arrive. Full documentation of the incident will be made available.

EMERGENCY EVACUATION

Emergency evacuations as well as lockdown procedures are regularly practiced, and the centre has individual plans for local emergencies including cyclone, flood, and bushfire. Fire extinguishers are strategically located throughout the centre. As part of our fire safety measures all children in attendance are noted from the electronic sign-in device in the event of a drill or evacuation. Therefore, it is important to ensure that you sign your child 'IN' and 'OUT' of the centre each day.

IMMUNISATION

As part of your enrolment process you will be asked to provide details of your child's immunisation status. In the event of an outbreak of an infectious disease it may be necessary to exclude any children who are not immunised for their health and wellbeing. State specific immunisation requirements are available on request.

MEDICATION

If your child requires medication while in care, a medication record must be filled in and signed by a parent. The medication must be in original packaging and accompanied by a prescription label/doctor's letter which states who the medication is for and the dosage. Medication must be handed to a staff member and will be stored in a locked cupboard. Under no circumstances is any type of medication to be left in children's bags. Please refer to the Medication Policy for further information.



HEALTH AND HYGIENE

Children and educators are actively encouraged to practice good personal hygiene to minimise the instances of illness. We also believe that if your child is ill, the best place for them is to be at home where they can recover faster. If your child presents at the centre with signs of illness, the nominated supervisor may advise that they are not well enough to participate in the day's activities.

You will be asked to make alternative arrangements until they are well, or the exclusion period has ended (you may be asked to provide a medical clearance letter before your child can return). Although this can be inconvenient for parents, it is in the interests of all children and families at the centre to minimise the risk of infection.

Should your child become ill during the day, documentation and first aid will commence and you may be contacted to collect your child from the centre and seek further medical advice (please note that paracetamol is not regarded as a first response and can only be administered in emergency situations and with prior written parental consent).

It is important that you read the centre's medication policy carefully to know when educators can administer medications. A list of common infectious illnesses, their exclusion periods, and policies and procedures related to illness and minimising the spread of infectious diseases are available in the foyer.



NUTRITION

We understand the important role we play in supporting the nutritional needs of children while in care. In the instance where meals are provided, children who attend a full day of long day care will be offered at least 50 per cent of their recommended daily dietary intake while in care. We also have a commitment to assist families who provide their children's meals to develop healthy food attitudes and habits. Guidelines around healthy eating can be found in the foyer or by asking a friendly team member.

CULTURAL DIVERSITY

We recognise that our centre is culturally and linguistically diverse and we want to ensure all families experience a sense of belonging. To achieve this, we provide opportunities for all children to develop an understanding of different cultures and help foster in each child an awareness. This can be achieved through providing and offering a range of books, music, cooking, activities, singing, clothing, play equipment and more.

SUN PROTECTION

Our centres take care to protect children and team members from direct exposure to the sun by all state regulations and the childcare building code regarding the amount of manufactured and natural shade available in the playgrounds.

We recommend that parents pack clothing for children that will protect them from the sun, including a hat, longer sleeved t-shirts and loose clothing which covers all of their body (i.e. no midriffs, singlets or bare backs).

Sunscreen will be applied to those children with prior written permission in accordance with the blanket permission form guidelines relating to the use of foreign substances. Sunscreen will be applied to these children 20 minutes before going outside and is then regularly reapplied. Literature on sun care is available at the centre. For more information on the centre's Sun Protection policy, please ask the centre manager.

Our centre takes care to protect children and team members from direct exposure to the sun.

CONFIDENTIALITY OF CENTRE RECORDS

We value your privacy and have several initiatives in place to ensure the protection of your data. For more information on our Confidentiality of Centre Records policy or ask the Centre Manager for more information.

CLOTHING

Please dress your child in play clothes that wash easily. In choosing what your child should wear to the centre, please consider the following:

- Your child will be working with messy materials such as paint, glue, water and sand so clothing must be able to stand a little wear and tear
- Clothing must provide some protection and be comfortable for both indoor and outdoor experiences
- Children will be climbing, running, jumping, and swinging so they will need clothes that neither restrict their activity nor reduce their safety (e.g. slippery shoes, long skirts)
- Children will need clothes which allow for growing independence i.e. pants that can come off easily for toileting
- Please name all clothing and footwear

PRIORITY OF ACCESS

The Australian Government funds childcare to support working Australian families and ensure all children have access to quality early childhood education and care. However, the demand for childcare sometimes exceeds supply in some areas. When this occurs, it is important for services to allocate places to those families with the greatest need for childcare support. To ensure that the centre adheres to the guidelines issued by the Australian Government, priority of access to childcare will be given according to children falling in the following categories:

Priority 1: A child at risk of abuse or neglect.

Priority 2: A child of a single parent or of parents who both satisfy the work/training/study test under section 14 of the New Tax System (Family Assistance) Act 1999.

Priority 3: Any other child. In relation to priority three, there are some circumstances in which a child who is already in a child care service may be requested to give up their place or change days at the service in order for the service to provide a place for a higher priority child, but only if the parent is notified of this policy upon enrolment AND the service gives parents 14 days' notice of the requirement for their child to give up their place or change days.

Within the main categories, priority is also given to children in:

- Families with low incomes
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families
- Parents or children with disabilities
- Families from non-English speaking backgrounds
- Single parent families
- Socially isolated families

There is more to early learning than simply care - the early years are fundamental to a child's emotional, cognitive, and social development...

That is why we are focused on providing our families with quality programs to support children's learning and development from birth right through to five years of age.