Melton Montessori Early Learning Centre



Parent Handbook

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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 Standard and 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's room 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 Service is passionate about sustainability. We support children to appreciate and care for the environment by embedding sustainable practice into our daily operation, infrastructure and teaching, and we explore concepts of social justice, fairness, sharing, democracy and citizenship.

We engage children in discussion about sustainable practice, encourage them to participate in a recycling program, reduce energy use and conserve water, and give them the skills and knowledge to take an active role in caring for the environment.



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

Melton Montessori Early Learning Centre is operated by BasicNeeds Australia Inc (Approved Provider) and is licensed under the Education and Care Services National Law 2010 and must comply with the Law and National Regulations 2011, including requirements relating to activities, experiences, 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?

We remind families that there are some compliance areas that the Service has no influence over, such as the Child Care Subsidy (CCS) and the timing of payments to the Service and your account. When you enrol your child, it is your responsibility to provide the required information to receive CCS, including the correct Customer Reference Number (CRN) and date of birth of the child and of the parent/guardian claiming CCS.

Child Care Subsidy offers assistance to families with the cost of childcare for children aged 0-13 years. Your CCS depends on:

• Combined annual family income

• Recognised participation – the hours of work, study or other recognised activity you report to Services Australia. All CCS-eligible families can get at least 72 hours a fortnight; reporting more than 48 hours can increase this to 100 hours

• Service type – the type of childcare Service and whether the child attends school

3-day guarantee: All CCS-eligible families are guaranteed at least 72 hours of subsidised childcare per fortnight (3 days per week/6 days per fortnight), regardless of activity levels.

Families can get 100 hours of subsidised childcare each fortnight for each child if they:

• are caring for an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander child

• have more than 48 hours each fortnight of recognised participation (work, study, or volunteering)

• have an exemption or experience exceptional circumstances, or

• receive Additional Child Care Subsidy (ACCS) child wellbeing, temporary financial hardship or grandparent payments.

Families who wish to receive CCS as reduced fees must make a CCS claim with Services Australia through their myGov account. Families who want more than 72 hours report their recognised participation to Services Australia. CCS is paid directly to our Service and passed on to families as a fee reduction. Families pay the difference between the fee charged by our Service and the subsidy amount received; this is called the 'gap fee'.

Families are required to advise Centrelink of any changes to circumstances within 14 days to avoid a debt. Under CCS, families are allowed 42 absence days per child each financial year; full fees are payable for absences after the initial 42 days. Should you wish to raise concerns regarding the management of CCS, please speak to the nominated supervisor as soon as possible.

Payment of fees

Our daily fee is $150 per day before Child Care Subsidy (CCS) has been applied.

Each week we will send you a statement via the OWNA app before your weekly debit. Please check these statements to ensure all details are correct and accurate. If there is any discrepancy, please contact the nominated supervisor as soon as possible.

Parents/guardians are required to complete a Direct Debit form upon enrolment. Fees will be deducted weekly and must be paid via Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT). No bonds are required.

Our Service and program close at 6:30pm. A late collection fee of $2 per minute for the first 10 minutes, and $4 per minute thereafter, applies when children are collected after closing time. This

fee is not covered by Centrelink. Two staff members are required to remain at the Service until all children are collected.

We require 2 weeks written notice to withdraw and/or reduce enrolment days from any permanent booking. CCS cannot be claimed for any days after the last day your child physically attends our Service, except in some circumstances with an approved reason.

Signing in and out of the centre

Each day, you must sign your child in upon arrival and sign out upon departure, and note the date and times. We are required by legislation to maintain our attendance record at all times. This record may be used in the event of an emergency situation at the Service.

Our staff have a duty of care to your child and will only release your child into the care of a parent, guardian or an authorised nominee as listed on your child's enrolment record. If your child needs to be collected by another person, an authority to collect form must be provided in writing to the nominated supervisor. Our staff may ask to view photo identification of the adult collecting your child.

If we are unable to contact either the parent or a person nominated on the enrolment form to arrange collection of the child within an hour of the Service closing, we may need to contact the Police or other authorities to take responsibility for your child.

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, interests 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 are recorded. Programs engage children in all areas of the curriculum and follow the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF) integrating the plan into Montessori Curriculum and Victorian 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

Our Service complies with the Australian Government's National Quality Framework (NQF), which consists of the Education and Care Services National Law, the Education and Care Services National Regulations, the National Quality Standard (NQS) and a rigorous assessment and rating system. Our educational program and curriculum are based on the Australian Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) V2.0 and the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF).

We regularly self-assess our practices against the NQS and strive for continuous improvement through our Quality Improvement Plan (QIP). The QIP helps us identify the quality aspects of care we already provide and develop future goals for improvement. Families are welcome to provide feedback and suggestions for improvement.

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

www.acecqa.gov.au

Educator to child ratios

We comply with the National Regulations and Victorian requirements for educator to child ratios to ensure adequate supervision is provided for all children. Ratios are calculated across the whole Service (not by individual rooms), which gives us flexibility to respond to children's interests and needs at different times of the day.

• Birth to 24 months: 1 educator to 4 children (1:4)

• Over 24 months and under 36 months: 1:4

• 36 months up to and including preschool age: 1:11

Ratios are always maintained across the Service as required by the Education and Care Services National Regulations.

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 next 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.



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

We aim to minimise the risk of accidents and injury as much as possible; however, through play, exploration and adventure, children sometimes have accidents. We always have an educator with a first aid, emergency asthma, anaphylaxis management and CPR qualification on shift at all times we provide education and care to children. First aid kits are located throughout the Service.

Parents or authorised nominees will be notified of all incidents, injuries, trauma or illnesses, and asked to acknowledge and sign an Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Record within 24 hours. If your child injures their head, even if it is a small bump, you will be contacted by phone. If an injury is serious and urgent medical attention is required, the nominated supervisor/responsible person will contact an ambulance immediately and attempt to contact a parent/guardian or authorised nominee. If you cannot meet the ambulance, an educator will accompany your child. Please note that the cost of ambulance cover is the responsibility of each family.

Our Service is required to notify the regulatory authority in the event of any serious incident or injury.

EMERGENCY EVACUATION

Our Service conducts risk assessments regularly and develops emergency management plans for a range of possible hazards. Emergency and evacuation rehearsals, simulating situations such as fire (bushfire), lock down or flood, are carried out every three months and may occur at any time of the day or week. Parent/guardian authorisation will be obtained for rehearsals that require children to leave the premises for our secondary evacuation point.

Educators are trained to use the fire safety equipment located within the Service. An emergency evacuation plan and lock down procedure are displayed in every room and exit locations are clearly indicated.

IMMUNISATION

The Public Health Act 2010 requires all families to provide an Immunisation History Statement from the Australian Immunisation Register (AIR) prior to enrolment. The statement must show that your child is up to date with immunisations for their age under the National Immunisation Program (NIP), or is on a recognised catch-up schedule, or has a medical condition preventing full vaccination.

In the case of an outbreak of a vaccine preventable disease, management will contact families as soon as possible. If your child is not fully immunised and an outbreak occurs, your child will not be able to attend the Service. We are legally required to notify the Public Health Unit of any cases of vaccine preventable diseases at our Service.

MEDICATION

If your child requires medication whilst at our Service, you must complete an Administration of Medication Record to give consent for an educator to administer prescribed medication. Medication must be given directly to an educator for safe storage. Educators can only administer medication that is:

• prescribed by a registered medical practitioner (with instructions attached or in written form from the practitioner)

• in its original packaging with the original label clearly showing your child's name

• before the expiry/use by date.

Prescribed medication such as asthma inhalers, adrenaline auto injectors (EpiPen®) or insulin must be with the child each day and remain at the Service. Upon collection, you or an authorised person will be asked to sign the Administration of Medication Form.

HEALTH AND HYGIENE

Our Service has effective risk management systems in place to identify hazards in our learning environment. All staff practise and model personal hygiene such as hand washing, cough and sneeze etiquette and disposal of tissues. We request that all children and visitors wash their hands or use the alcohol-based hand sanitiser upon arrival.

Please monitor your child's health and do not bring your child to the Service if they have an infectious disease/illness or are generally unwell. We implement the recommendations of the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC), Staying healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services, 6th Edition. Our Dealing with Infectious Diseases policy is available for all families to view.

If your child becomes ill whilst at the Service, we will contact you or an authorised nominee to collect your child within a 30-minute time frame where possible. You will be asked to sign an Injury, Incident, Trauma and Illness Record. Children on antibiotics are to be kept away from the Service for the first 24 hours. Children with diarrhoea and/or vomiting will be excluded until there has been

none for at least 24 hours. For certain illnesses, a medical clearance certificate may be required before your child returns.

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 of and respect for diversity. This can be achieved through providing and offering a range of books, music, cooking, activities, singing, clothing, play equipment and more.

SUN PROTECTION

We work with the National SunSmart Early Childhood Program. We use a combination of sun protection measures whenever the UV Index is predicted to reach 3 or above, monitor the UV index daily and schedule outdoor activities when levels are safe. Our outdoor environment provides shade, and we complete daily playground surface temperature checks during summer or extreme hot weather.

Children and educators must wear hats and appropriate clothing, including footwear, when outside. Children are encouraged to wear suitable sunscreen (SPF50+ broad-spectrum water resistant), reapplied according to the manufacturer's recommendations. We ask that children arrive with sunscreen already applied so they can join outdoor play immediately. Consent to apply sunscreen is included in our enrolment form.

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

CONFIDENTIALITY OF CENTRE RECORDS

We are committed to protecting the privacy and confidentiality of children, individuals and families. Personal information will not be disclosed to any individual without prior written permission, except where required by law. Our Privacy and Confidentiality Policy sets out how we act in accordance with the Australian Privacy Principles and the Privacy Act 1988, and how we meet the Notifiable Data Breaches (NDB) scheme. You can look at the information in your child's file at any time or request a copy.

Families must not share data or personal information of other families, children or staff, and must not use or share images obtained from the Service on social media or in any other format. Records are stored securely and kept for the prescribed periods as required under the NQF and Family Assistance Law.

CLOTHING

It is helpful if your child is dressed in non-restrictive, serviceable and easy to wash clothes so that they feel free to join in all activities and develop independence. Shoes need to allow children to run, climb, hop and jump and be easy to take off and put on. Joggers and sandals are appropriate shoes. Thongs, slippers and gumboots are not suitable and we prefer that these are NOT worn to the Service.

Clothing such as long dresses, overalls, braces, belts and stiff buttons can prove a problem for children who need to go to the toilet. We require all t-shirts to have sleeves (no midriff tops) and

broad-brimmed hats are essential for effective sun safety. Please name all clothing and footwear, and include a complete change of clothes in your child's bag every day.

PRIORITY OF ACCESS

When there are more applications than places, our Service follows the Victorian Department of Education's Priority of Access (PoA) criteria for funded kindergarten programs. PoA is applied in two tiers, before any locally determined enrolment criteria:

• Tier 1: children who will benefit most from improved access and participation in a kindergarten program.

• Tier 2: children currently attending the service, applied after all Tier 1 children are placed.

Tier 1: children at risk of abuse or neglect (including children in out-of-home care); Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children; asylum seeker and refugee children; children and/or families holding concession cards; children from families with multiple births (triplets or more); children and/or families with additional needs who require additional assistance to participate; and children accessing an additional year of 3- or 4-Year-Old Kinder.

Tier 2: children currently attending the service in the 3-Year-Old Kinder program and seeking to access 4-Year-Old Kinder at the same service for continuity of learning.

Where a service offers more hours of 4-Year-Old Kinder, children who live in the local government area where the service is located are then prioritised. Families may be asked to provide evidence to verify that a child meets a Tier 1 criterion.

Casual waiting list: positions are allocated in order of application while adhering to Priority of Access. Permanent waiting list: if you wish to increase your child's permanent sessions and there are no vacancies, your child will be placed on a waiting list and positions allocated in order of application.