

Children's Services Family Handbook

Contents

About CatholicCare Diocese of Broken Bay	3
CatholicCare Mission, Vision and Values	4
Statement of Philosophy	5
The National Quality Framework	5
Educational programs and curriculum for children	5
Transition to school	6
Children's groups.....	6
Health handbook	6
Policies and procedures.....	6
Sustainability	7
Parent involvement	7
Parent resources.....	8
Enrolment policy	8
Fee policy and payment method	8
Information update.....	8
Orientation to the centre	8
Your child's first day at ELC	9
If your child is going to be absent.....	9
What to bring	9
Recommended clothing.....	10
Treasures from home	10
Pick up and drop off.....	10
Excursions	10
Illness and medication	11
Immunisation	11
Nutrition and food policy.....	11

About CatholicCare Diocese of Broken Bay

CatholicCare Diocese of Broken Bay (CatholicCare) is a not for profit non-government social care organisation that has provided professional services to the people of the Catholic Diocese of Broken Bay since 1987. CatholicCare provide a wide range of programs to assist children, young people, individuals and families through our Children's Services, Family Centres, and Out-of-Home Care programs in Sydney's North and on the NSW Central Coast.

CatholicCare works with and for people in making a positive difference in their lives leading to:

- Improved well-being
- Sustained support networks
- A sense of hope for the future

CatholicCare programs are funded by NSW and Australian Governments through a number of Departments, Financial support for CatholicCare services is also provided by the Catholic Diocese of Broken Bay (via the twice yearly Charitable Works Fund) and the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference. Our relationship with other Churches in addition to private donors provides valued support to enable CatholicCare to reach out widely into our local communities.

CatholicCare is also assisted by the CatholicCare Advisory Council .The purpose of the Council is to help enact the vision of CatholicCare in the Broken Bay Diocese by:

- Discerning for the Bishop broad policies and priorities, recommending their adoption to the Bishop and monitoring their implementation once adopted; and
- Tendering advice to the Bishop regarding issues relevant to CatholicCare in the Diocese.

The CatholicCare Council is essentially pastoral in its outlook and operation. It seeks to initiate, encourage, support and promote activities within the Diocese which further the local Church's mission to provide social services.

CatholicCare Mission, Vision and Values

Our Vision for the Future

In line with principles of Catholic Social Teaching, we strive for a world where people are safe, happy, well and connected with each other in inclusive communities.

We recognise that individual wellbeing is influenced by relationships within families, neighbourhoods and the wider community.

Our Mission

We serve in justice and love.

We live out the Gospel by walking alongside people to find and build solutions to their needs; to deliver evidence-based services; and to do so with commitment, regardless of the difficulties faced.

To this Mission we bring a long history of service and faith, the resources of dedicated staff, volunteers and partners, a willingness to go beyond essential care, and persistence in supporting justice and well-being for all.

Our Values

Respect

We respect the dignity and worth of all people and embrace difference

Hope

We see the strengths in each person and believe that every individual can grow and build a positive future. We respect each person's right to shape their own future.

Commitment

We build relationships with those we serve and stand in solidarity with them through tough times and joyous times. We dedicate ourselves to their rights and interests.

Professionalism

We are ethical and act with integrity in all we do. We are accountable to the communities we serve, to our funders and to each other. We take responsibility for continually learning and improving.

Excellence

We learn from and act on evidence of what works. We maintain high standards and pursue innovative and best practice approaches to effecting change in people's lives.

Social Justice

We take time to care. We strive for equity and opportunity for all. We speak up for and give voice to those who are vulnerable.

Statement of Philosophy

The Philosophy is a statement of values and beliefs that helps to guide our day to day practice. A copy is given to all families in their enrolment pack. It is revised every two (2) years and input is sought from all educators and families. Please take the time to read the Statement of Philosophy. Educators will be happy to answer all of your questions.

The National Quality Framework

The National Quality Framework applies to all pre-schools, Outside School Hours Care centres, Long Day Care centres and Family Day Care services in Australia. Its aim is to raise quality and drive continuous improvement in children's services.

The National Quality Framework includes:

- A national legislative framework that consists of the Education and Care Services National Law and Education and Care Services National Regulations
- National Quality Standard. This Standard sets out the national benchmark for the quality of education and care services. There are 7 Quality Areas.
- An assessment and rating system. Services are assessed and rated against each of the 7 Quality Areas.
- A regulatory authority in each state and territory that have primary responsibility for the approval, monitoring and quality assessment of services. In New South Wales this is the Department of Education and Communities
- A national body that guides the administration of the National Quality Framework to ensure consistent implementation across states and territories. This is the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA).

Up to date information about the National Quality Framework can be accessed on the ACECQA website (www.acecqa.gov.au)

Educational programs and curriculum for children

Curriculum Planning Policy found in the Policy Booklet is guided by Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia. This contains information about the way in which educators go about planning for and keeping documentation of children's learning and development.

During the enrolment interview, the Coordinator will discuss the way in which Educators go about planning for your child's learning and the types of documentation they will be keeping. This documentation will be available for you to view and make contributions on an ongoing basis. Educators will value any feedback, ideas and contributions you have about the curriculum and your child's learning.

Transition to school

Educators will be developing a range of experiences specific to and supporting this transition in the year before children will be attending school. This will include developing skills that will support children as they enter Kindergarten, introducing children to aspects of 'Big School' and working collaboratively with families and the school.

Experience has shown that effective Transition to School programs do not depend on children knowing their school specifically but rather what will be involved such as library, canteen, bubblers and class structure. For this reason, regardless of which school your child will attend, we anticipate being able to provide a thorough program for all children and will work closely with families in an effort to do so.

Please talk to the Educators in your child's group for more information about transition to school.

Children's groups

Children will be grouped according to their days of attendance. Coordinators will discuss this with you at the enrolment interview.

Health handbook

In your enrolment pack you will find a copy of our Health Handbook for Families. It is important that you read this handbook because it contains all of the policies that are related to your child's health. These include:

- Incident, Injury and Trauma
- Clothing
- Dental
- First Aid
- Illness and Infectious Diseases
- Immunisation
- Managing Asthma, Allergies, Anaphylaxis, Diabetes and Other Medical Conditions
- Medication
- Nutrition and Food
- Sun Protection

Policies and procedures

You will find some of the service's policies and procedures in your enrolment pack. However, a complete copy of all the policies and procedures is available to families at the service. Please ask the Coordinator or one of the educators where they are located.

The policies and procedures are regularly reviewed and updated in order that they take account of current research, recommendations and practices. Educators and families are able to be involved in these reviews. However, if at any time you have feedback on any of the policies you can talk to the Coordinator or send your feedback via email to the centre email address.

Sustainability

Our centre is committed to teaching children about environmental stewardship and sustainability. The support of families is very important in reinforcing this message and some initiatives are joint projects between educators and families. Examples of maintaining sustainable practices might include:

- Minimising paper usage by utilising email to send newsletters, daily diaries and other family communication
- Turning lights off whenever possible
- Using automatic lights which switch off after ½ hr without movement
- Using automatic shut-off taps
- Limiting use of the air conditioning system when possible
- Providing paper recycling bins in class rooms
- Encouraging families to bring items from home which can be reused for art projects
- Monitoring water play activities and limiting the replenishment of water
- Establishing a garden which is hardy and needs limited water
- Maintaining and utilising our vegetable garden to reduce the need for purchased foods for cooking experiences.
- Encouraging 'reduced-packaging' lunch boxes e.g. using reusable containers instead of wrapping in Gladwrap.

Parent involvement

Our Early Learning Centres have an "open door" policy. Parents are always welcome to visit and spend time at the centre and to be involved in ways such as:

- Sharing an interest with the children
- Doing experiences with the children such as cooking
- Providing feedback, ideas and input into the curriculum
- Reading stories
- Assisting with excursions

Refer to the *Family Participation and Collaboration Policy* found in the Policy Booklet for more information.

Parent resources

You may find helpful information and resources in our centres. This includes information about

- Children's health such as sleeping, eating, immunisation
- Parenting issues such as guiding children's behaviour
- Family support services in the community

Please see the educators if there is any information you would like to access.

Enrolment policy

An Expression of Interest List is maintained at the centre and is updated annually. Families will be offered places according to the wait list with the majority of places being offered at the end of each year for the next year. Priority will be given to existing children and then to existing families. In the event a position becomes available mid-way through the year, the Expression of Interest list will be consulted and the child next in line for the appropriate age group will be contacted. Once a position at the centre is accepted, a non-refundable holding deposit is required to ensure the position is held. This will go towards your first term's fees. For further details, refer to *Fee Policy*.

Note: There is a separate enrolment process at the school. Enrolment at the Early Learning Centre does not guarantee a position at the Catholic school and families will need to contact the school directly regarding this.

Fee policy and payment method

You must read the attached *Fee Policy* for information about fees for the service. There is also information about how to pay your fees. If you are experiencing difficulty in paying your fees please speak to the Coordinator and a payment plan may be developed on a case by case basis.

Information update

It is essential that we have your most up to date contact information. If any of your details change including address, telephone number and emergency contacts please let the Coordinator know as soon as possible. It is important that emergency contacts are informed of your intention to list them so they too can advise you of changes to their details.

Orientation to the centre

All families will be required to attend an enrolment interview. This provides the opportunity for families to ask questions, see the centre and gather all the information they will need about the way in which the centre operates. Coordinators will also discuss the best way of helping your child to settle into the centre.

Your child's first day at ELC

For all children the first day can be quite daunting and may involve some anxiety for your child. This is one of several normal responses. To assist children with this, you can:

- Ensure your child gets a good night's sleep the night before
- Speak positively about starting at the centre. Focus on how exciting it will be, the friends they will meet and all the new games and experiences they will have.
- Attend an Orientation Play Session which will help build the bridge between home and the unknown. By doing so, the child is able to meet the teachers, see where the toilets are, familiarise themselves with the environment and see other children in the same setting. Speak to the Coordinator about organising such a session.
- For the first couple of weeks, bring in a story or picture from home which may help to create a link. These are to be stored in the child's bag and can be brought out throughout the day for an educator to share with the child.
- Advise educators of any interests and favourite activities your child may have. Educators may be able to incorporate these into the program.
- Be aware that when you arrive in the morning it is important to take your time. Help your child to put their bag away, say hello to the educators, have a look around the room and engage your child in an activity.
- Let your child know when it is time for you to leave, give them a kiss and hug, say goodbye and remind them you will see them in the afternoon. Once you have announced you are leaving it is important to leave straight away so that your child does not get mixed messages. The educators are very experienced in settling children and will give you feedback on how your child settled.

If your child is going to be absent

If your child will be late or absent on their day please contact the centre and inform them as soon as possible to assist educators in the organisation of the day. If you are intending to take holidays, please notify educators ahead of time.

What to bring

You should pack for your child each day:

- A back pack big enough to store a lunch box, water bottle, spare clothes and any art work your child has done through the day. (Remember that it also needs to fit in the locker space)
- Change of clothes as follows
 - 2 spare sets of clothes (appropriate to the season)
 - 2 pairs of underpants (more if toilet raining)
- Sun safe hat (Please refer to the *Sun Protection Policy* found in the Health Handbook.)
- Lunchbox (Please refer to the *Nutrition and Food Policy* found in the Health Handbook) containing enough food for
 - Morning Tea
 - Lunch
 - Drink bottle

- Sheets for rest time (if applicable)
- Enough nappies and wipes, if applicable, for the day

Please ensure that all of your child's items are clearly labelled with their name.

Also remember that earrings and dangling jewellery can be dangerous and we prefer if children refrain from wearing them to the centre. Otherwise, it is preferable to use studs, refer to the *Clothing Policy* found in the Health Handbook for further information.

Recommended clothing

For children to be able to participate fully in the day's activities it is important they are wearing appropriate clothing that is suitable to the season, comfortable, non-restrictive and safe for play (including messy play). Closed in, non-slip shoes are the safest shoes for children to engage in play.

Refer to the *Clothing Policy* found in the Health Handbook for further information.

Note: Clothing should be easy to remove to assist in independent toileting.

Treasures from home

Occasionally children may be invited to bring special items, books or toys to the centre for example for 'Show and Tell'. These are to be kept in their bag until needed and requested by the teacher. Additionally, in the first couple of weeks of settling, children struggling with separating from parents may like to bring in something special from home.

In particular, when items are brought to ELC, regardless of efforts made by educators, there is the risk that these items may be lost, broken or damaged. Therefore, besides the above instances, educators would prefer that items are not brought to the centre.

Pick up and drop off

Refer to the *Children's Arrival and Departure Policy* found in the Policy Booklet for further information. It is important that you read this policy because it contains our procedure for ensuring your child's safety when they arrive and leave the centre.

Excursions

Routine excursions

Early Learning Centre / Early Learning and Care Centre routine excursions are the centre's regular visits to a venue.

A Routine Excursion form will be signed at the time of enrolment and renewed each year. Educators will endeavour to notify families of these outings beforehand.

Non-routine excursions

Educators may organise to take children on an excursion from time to time.

Parents will be notified ahead of time with details of date, time, location, activities involved, any cost and their permission will be sought.

Refer to the *Excursion and Incursion Policy* found in the Policy Booklet for further information.

Illness and medication

The Health Handbook for Families contains an *Illness and Infectious Diseases Policy* and a *Medication Policy*. It is important that you read these policies.

From time to time your child may get sick and it is important that if you notice symptoms which may indicate your child is unwell, you keep them at home. If your child arrives at the centre sick or becomes unwell during the day you will be contacted and asked to collect your child. Your assistance in this matter is greatly appreciated in our efforts to reduce the incidence of illness at the centre.

Immunisation

At the time of enrolment (and before a child can begin attending the service) and when immunisations are updated, families must provide confirmation of their child's immunisation status. Please refer to the *Immunisation Policy* for more information.

Nutrition and food policy

In your enrolment pack you will find a copy of the *Nutrition and Food Policy* (in the Health Handbook for Families). Our aim is to provide children with an environment where they can enjoy and learn about nutritious food. They will be encouraged to eat food from the food groups recommended by Nutrition Australia and to develop good eating habits. These foods will support children's overall health, including dental health.