



Outside of School Hours

Parent Handbook

2012

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WELCOME

The Management and Staff of Footsteps Early Learning Centre OOSH would like to welcome you and your child/ren to our service. We have put together this parent handbook to help you get to know us, and our service a little better.

Footsteps ELC, OOSH provides Before and After School Care for school aged children between 5 and 12 years on a permanent and casual basis at Regina Coeli Catholic School, Beverly Hills. We pride ourselves on providing a high quality of care and a fun learning environment that all children will enjoy.

Footsteps ELC, OOSH follow's the Education and Care National Regulations and comply with all of the relevant industry and workplace regulations

OUR PHILOSOPHY

Footsteps ELC, OOSH is committed to providing a quality service that provides children with a safe, caring and supportive environment where children are free to play, investigate, find adventure and be challenged.

Footsteps ELC, OOSH provides care in a way that:

- Respects the child's dignity and privacy
- Promotes the child's wellbeing
- Provides positive experiences to the child
- Provide meaningful programs, which incorporate elements of play with elements of real-life experiences
- Recognise freedom of choice in experiences, balanced with age-appropriate programming and opportunity to support child-initiated planning
- Children, parents, staff and relevant community members are treated with respect and their views in relation to the operation of Footsteps ELC, OOSH are considered and valued
- Recognises and respects parents as primarily responsible for the upbringing, protection and development of their children. Footsteps aims to support parents in that role, to the greatest extent reasonably possible
- Encourages and welcomes open discussion with all on all issues relevant to the operation of Footsteps ELC, OOSH

OUR AIMS

- To provide a variety of stimulating, fun activities which take into account the children's individual needs, interests, abilities, varied ages and diverse background
 - Focus on children and positive relationships
 - Allow children to explore the world around them, their relationships with others, develop skills and build self-esteem through play
 - Empower children with skills for life such as negotiation, communication and decision making
 - Respect each child as an individual and promote a positive self-image and acceptable behaviour patterns
 - Meet the needs of families who require outside of school hours care in a safe, nurturing, caring and supportive community
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BEFORE AND AFTER SCHOOL CARE

We provide Before and After School Care in the school hall at Regina Coeli Catholic School. Our Before School Services begin at 7.00am and continue until the children are walked into the school grounds just prior to the bell ringing at 8.45am. During the morning session, children are given breakfast consisting of cereal, toast and fresh fruit if requested. During this time, children will be able to eat breakfast and participate in some quiet activities or even complete some homework at our homework station prior to going to school.

Our After School Care Service begins as soon as the school bell rings. Kindergarten children are met at their classrooms while the other children meet one of our other staff members in front of the canteen where the roll is marked. Children are then provided time for some outdoor play activities, a nutritious afternoon tea with fresh fruit and participate in indoor and outdoor activities until they are picked up by their parents. Our closing time is 6pm.

VACATION CARE

The best thing about school holidays is having fun! The availability of Vacation Care is subject to a minimum of 20 students per day and is also under the discretion of Regina Coeli Catholic School to allow vacation Care to be run each school holidays. We strive to provide a fun environment with lots of special guests, fun activities and excursions to keep your children happy and entertained that will leave them wanting more every time. Please look out for our Expression of Interest forms that are sent home during each term regarding vacation care.

THE PROGRAM

Our programs are based on the “My Time, Our Place” National Quality Framework for school aged children. This framework has been designed for use by school aged educators working in partnership with children, their families and their community, including schools. The “My Time, Our Place” Framework is linked to the Early Years Learning Framework which focuses on children from birth to 5 years. The Framework acknowledges the importance of play and leisure in children’s learning and development and that their learning is not limited to any particular time or place. Developing life skills and a sense of enjoyment are emphasised. The Framework recognises the importance of social and emotional development and communication in learning through play and leisure, and it forms the foundation for ensuring that children in all school age care settings engage in quality experiences for rich learning, personal development and citizenship opportunities.

The framework conveys high expectations for all children’s play and leisure activities in school age care settings. It communicates these expectations through the following 5 outcomes:

- Children have a strong sense of identity
- Children are connected with and contribute to their world
- Children have a strong sense of wellbeing
- Children are confident and involved learners
- Children are effective communicators

Our program is flexible and adaptable to meet individual and group interests, talents and abilities. Our program provides a variety of opportunities available for children to pursue their current interests and develop new ones. Our Programs are designed to enhance the development of the Children’s skills, knowledge, and understanding in physical, social, emotional and intellectual areas.

Our Program helps to:

- Encourage interaction and develop social skills across various age groups and cultures
- Allow for small and large group work to enhance learning opportunities and foster healthy dynamics
- Provide exciting and innovative activities that meet each child’s developmental needs
- Encourage a safe, secure and stimulating environment that will promote emotional, social, intellectual and physical growth.

Our Program philosophy is focused on “active and passive” activity as well as skill development and promoting the importance of play. As far as possible, our programs allow children to make their own choices based on individual interests, needs, ages, strengths and energy levels. We keep staff planned activities to a minimum.

Special interest activities such as video’s, television, computers and electronic games are offered within a well-balanced program. The context of such activities and the amount of time allocated for children to participate, is limited to ensure it is appropriate for all children present.

We also offer encouragement and support within our program where children choose to complete homework at our homework station. Please be aware that we are not able to provide tutoring or one on one homework assistance due to the number of children who require supervision and our staff to child ratio’s.

BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT

We believe that children need to be provided with limits within their environment to allow them to develop to their optimum potential. Children need assistance to move within these limits through staff’s positive guidance. We aim to intrinsically motivate children to self-discipline and to develop within each child an understanding of the consequences of both positive and negative behaviours and how their actions affect themselves and those around them.

Staff will at all times model appropriate behaviour with the children including consideration, patience, courtesy, helpfulness and appropriate language.

Staff work with the children to develop rules within our service as part of our program. They have a full understanding of what behaviour is acceptable and that there are consequences for inappropriate behaviour. This may range from redirecting the child to another activity, the child having some quiet time to reflect on their actions to meeting with the parent to develop a behaviour management plan if deemed necessary.

If you would like more information about our Behaviour Management policy please see our co-ordinator.

USING THE SERVICE

There are two different types of bookings/fees:

Permanent Bookings –

A permanent booking is where a child is enrolled for 1 session or more per week on a regular basis. Bookings are continuously rolled over for each term until the end of the school year or until 2 weeks written notice has been received by the OOSH coordinator. At the end of the school year you will need to re-enrol your child for the

following year. You will be given re-enrolment forms by the OOSH coordinator throughout term 4.

Please note: If you wish for your child to finish at the OOSH service prior to the end of term 4 and you do not wish to pay for the remainder of the term you will need to withdraw your child's position and then go onto the waiting list for the following year.

You will not be considered a re-enrolment.

Casual Bookings –

Casual bookings can be made up until the day you require but can only be authorised if there are vacancies in the service on that day. You will need to complete an enrolment form and provide all the relevant paperwork prior to your child attending. If you book a casual day and then do not require the care you must give 24 hours' notice to cancel the booking or you will still be required to pay the fee for this day.

Changing Bookings

If you need to change your permanently booked days you must give at least 1 week's written notice and if you would like to withdraw your child from our Services you must give 2 weeks written notice to the OOSH coordinator. Please see our Co-ordinator for an OSHC Account enquiry and change of Details form or a copy has been provided for you on your 2012 enrolment disk. The appropriate changes will then be made on our systems. If you do not give two weeks written notice, you will be charged for the remaining two weeks at full fees as Centrelink will not cover your Child Care Benefits for this period. Please speak with Kim if you would like more information about this.

Vacation Care must be cancelled 7 days prior to your scheduled session or full fees will be charged. This is because a lot of planning, excursions and special guests are planned and booked during this time and payments are made in advance for these activities.

Changing Days and Withdrawing from our Service

If you wish to change your child's permanently booked days, you must give at least 1 weeks' notice in writing to our co-ordinator. If positions are available you will be advised that the change of days is confirmed.

If you wish to withdraw your child from our service, you must give 2 weeks written notice to our co-ordinator. Please note that if you do not give 2 weeks' notice when leaving the service DEEWR will not pay your Childcare benefits to us. For this reason

you will be charged at full fees for the last 2 weeks. This is something that is checked through regular audits by DEEWR.

If you wish to stop your child attending at any time through the year prior to the school holidays and do not wish to pay for these days, you must withdraw your child's position, you will then be placed back on the waiting list. This includes prior to the Christmas holidays. If you withdraw your position you will not be treated as a re-enrolment for the following year but be placed back into the waiting list with the new enrolments.

Fees will be charged for all days that your child is booked in including public holidays. You will not be charged for pupil free days (unless your child is booked in to attend the Pupil Free day Care) or school holidays unless you are booked in to Vacation Care.

Fees / Payments

Management will set the fees for each session on an annual basis. These fees will be based upon the centre's annual budget and the operational requirements that the centre will incur. Parents will be given 2 weeks written notice of any fee increase or changes to the way that parents will be required to make their payments.

Upon enrolment or re-enrolment at the beginning of each year, two weeks full fees must be paid to secure your position. This payment will then be allocated to your account to cover the first 2 weeks fees. Your Direct Debit payments will then be set up to begin on the Monday of the 3rd week of term 1, you can then elect whether to have your payments deducted every week, fortnight or 4 weekly. The reason this is done is because we do not receive confirmation from Centrelink if you will be receiving CCB and the amount of your benefit until sometime during the second week your child will be attending. We are paid in arrears by Centrelink. This allows us to cover our costs whilst waiting for your information, it allows us to set up your direct debit payment based on the correct out of pocket expense and it ensures that your fees do not fall behind during this time. All accounts are paid via Direct Debit from your nominated bank account or credit card. Should your payment be declined, you will need to pay this amount manually immediately into our bank account. If your account is overdue for more than 2 weeks your child/ren's position may be withdrawn from our service and we will begin recovery action for the outstanding amount. This may include not accepting your re-enrolment for the following year or not allowing enrolment into our Vacation Care program until your account has been brought up to date.

Where a genuine hardship is occurring, we will endeavour to assist you with every possible means. Please contact us immediately so that we can discuss the options that may be available to assist with fees.

For a full copy of our Fees policy please see our Policy and Procedures Folder at our Service.

Declined Payment Transactions

Transaction failures due to insufficient funds require additional administration and yield additional bank costs. Footsteps ELC OOSH is unable to absorb these costs and will therefore pass on an additional fee's that are incurred by the service by the bank. (This is usually charged directly to the customer though by the bank). You may also be notified of the payment failure via email, SMS, letter or phone.

Child Care Benefits (CCB)

A lot of families using childcare will be entitled to Childcare Benefits. This is a payment made directly to us on your behalf by the government. The Family Assistance Office provides you with a percentage based on your family income details that you provide to them. The FAO will calculate your CCB reduction based on the attendance information provided by Footsteps ELC OOSH and the latest family entitlement information recorded on their system (your CCB%). Rules about CCB are made by the Commonwealth Government and cannot be amended by Footsteps ELC OOSH. Footsteps ELC, OOSH does not calculate any fee reductions manually.

In order to claim CCB and CCR, you need to contact Centrelink and register for Childcare benefits. You will receive a Family Reference Number (CRN) for yourself and then a Child Reference Number (CRN) for each child. You will need to provide these numbers on your child's enrolment form along with the dates of birth for yourself and your children in care. Footsteps ELC OOSH is unable to complete this registration process on your behalf. Please note: if you do not provide this information to us you will be charged full fees until this information has been received. Please supply us with a copy of your letter from centrelink approving your CCB.

Once registered for CCB, you may then be eligible for the 50% Childcare Rebate (CCR) (50%of your out of pocket expense back). A CRN is also required in order to receive reimbursement of Child Care expenses through your tax return.

Please be aware that even a person on 104% CCB will still have a "gap" payment between our fee and the amount of CCB paid so there will be some "gap" payment due by every family.

Please contact the Family Assistance Office (FAO) on 13 61 50 for more information.

Frequency of CCB Payments

Payments for CCB fee reductions will be made by the Government to Footsteps ELC OOSH, once the attendance information has been received and processed. This is done on a weekly basis in arrears. Please speak with the FAO regarding payments for the 50% Childcare Rebate.

Is My Family Eligible?

Your family must meet the eligibility criteria in order to receive CCB and/or CCR:

- You and your partner must be an Australian citizen, a permanent resident in Australia or holder of a certain temporary or special category visa.
- Your child must be immunised or exempt from the Government's Immunisation requirements
- You must be responsible for child care costs
- You and your partner must satisfy the work/study/training test

The FAO can assist with any eligibility questions you may have.

Priority of Access

To meet the requirements of Commonwealth Government Policy, Children's Services MUST comply with the Priority of Access below:

- ◇ PRIORITY 1: A child at risk of serious abuse or neglect
- ◇ PRIORITY 2: A child of a single parent who satisfies, or of both parents who both satisfy the work/study/training test under Section 14 of the A New Tax System (Family Assistance) Act 1999
- ◇ PRIORITY 3: Any other child

Within these main categories priority should also be given to the following children:

- ◇ Children in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families
- ◇ Children in families which include a disabled person
- ◇ Children in families which include an individual whose adjusted taxable income does not exceed the lower income threshold or who or whose partner are on income support
- ◇ Children in families from a non-English speaking background

- ◇ Children in socially isolated families
- ◇ Children of single parents

Outside of School Hours Care

Outside School Hours Care is primarily for school children. A service may ask a child not yet in school to leave care if a child who is in school applies for a place.

Please note: the following is quoted directly from the CCMS handbook:

“There are some circumstances in which a child who is already in a child care service may be required to leave the service.

When a service has no vacant places and is providing child care for a child who is a Priority 3 under the Priority of Access Guidelines, the service may require that child to leave the child care service in order for the service to provide a place for a higher priority child, but only if;

- a) The person who is liable to pay childcare fees in respect of the child was notified when the child first occupied the childcare place that the service followed this policy and
- b) The service gives that person at least 14 days’ notice of the requirement for the child to leave the child care service”

All of this information regarding the priority of Access can be reviewed on the DEEWR website.

Signing your Children In and Out and Collection of Children

It is a legal requirement, that all children attending our service must be signed in and out of each session. As this is part of a legal process, your child must be signed out by an authorised adult aged 18 or over. Please be aware that this procedure is a legal requirement of DEEWR and it is linked to your Child Care Benefits.

The safety of your child/ren is a priority of our staff. Your child can only be collected by people who have been nominated on their enrolment form. Any variation to this will need to be provided in writing to the Coordinator at the Service. Please advise the people that you have nominated on your child/ren’s enrolment forms that they will be required to provide identification when collecting your child/ren.

In the instance where a child is not collected from the Service by closing time:

1. Parents/guardians will be contacted.

2. If parents are not contactable, emergency contacts will be phoned.
3. If contact cannot be made within 1 hour of the service time, the local police will be contacted for direction.

A late pick up fee of \$20 for the first 5 minutes and \$1 per minute after will be charged for parents who arrive after the closing time to collect their child/children. This is because we will need to cover the cost of having two staff members stay with your child whilst they wait. If you are going to be late please ring 0405 597 536 to let staff know.

Absences

If your child is going to be absent from Before School Care you do not need to notify us. If your child is going to be absent from After School Care you must notify us by 2pm the day of the absence to avoid confusion and staff searching for your child. Please do not assume that because your child did not attend the Before School session that we will not wait for your child, you still must advise us that your child will not be attending the After School session.

You can contact the Service phone on 0405 597 536 or Kim on 0404 755 948 to advise of any absences.

Fees are charged for all absences for any reason and public holidays unless your child's position is withdrawn from the service. Fees are not charged for Pupil Free Days and School Holidays unless you have enrolled in our Vacation Care Program. These fees are charged separately to your Before and After School Care Fees.

Confidentiality of Records/Information

Footsteps ELC OOSH and its staff respect the privacy of families for whom we provide a service. We ensure that all of our operations follow the guidelines set out in the Information Privacy Act (1988), the Code of Ethics and the Education and Care National Regulations.

Custody Orders

In order to appropriately care for the children in family custody situations, a copy of all court orders in relation to custody must be provided to the service upon enrolment. These documents will be attached to the child's records and treated confidentially. Parents are asked to notify the service of any changes to these documents.

In the event that a parent who does not have lawful authority to collect the child from the service tries to access the child, the parent with custody entitlements will

be contacted immediately, and the police will be contacted. Staff will do everything they can without putting themselves at risk to prevent the parent from leaving with the child.

Communication and Feedback

Your opinion is valued. We understand that for many parents, time is limited and for this reason we aim to provide a variety of ways for parents to participate in our service. Some of the ways that we may communicate with you are by mail, email, telephone, surveys, input into weekly programs and by assisting us in reviewing our policies and procedures. Any ideas, suggestions or feedback is welcomed at any time. You are encouraged to talk to the Coordinator regarding any concerns about the Service. If the concern is not resolved to your satisfaction, please do not hesitate to contact the Managing Director Kim Clifton directly on 0404 755 948 or via email on footstepsadmin@bigpond.com. You can obtain a parent feedback form from the coordinator at the service or from our website. All customer feedback is used to improve the quality of our service.

Grievance Procedure

There are 3 ways that you may wish to make a complaint about our service. Anonymously, verbally and written. Parents and families are encouraged to discuss any complaints or concerns they have about the service or staff as soon as practical with the Coordinator in the first instance or to submit their complaint in writing into our suggestions box. All complaints will be forwarded to management for review. We endeavour to deal with complaints quickly, fairly and privately.

Healthy Eating

When attending our Service, the children receive healthy, nutritious snacks. Breakfast is served daily until 8am and includes a selection of cereals, toast and fresh fruit. Water and milk are available for the children to drink.

Afternoon tea follows the Heart Smart Choices food strategy; this includes a serving of fresh fruit every afternoon. Examples of the food provided may include, a variety of muffins, rice cakes or sandwiches with various toppings. Water is the preferred drink. Cooking activities may be offered as an accompaniment to the snack provided. Our menu can be seen on the noticeboard at our service and is supplied by Kids Gourmet Food daily.

Footsteps ELC, OOSH is a 'NUT FREE ZONE'. If you supply additional food for your child to bring to before and afterschool care please ensure that it is Nut Free.

During Vacation Care food is supplied by parents so please try and pack healthy eating options and enough food for your child for the day.

Sun Smart

Footsteps ELC OOSH maintains a strict sun smart policy. Staff will observe sun protection practices in accordance with relevant Government guidelines to minimise risks to children and themselves.

All year round but especially during Term 1 and Term 4 and corresponding school holiday periods, an appropriate hat must be worn outside by each child and staff member. Sunscreen is also available at the Service for children and staff to self-administer.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT FOOTSTEPS ELC
OOSH YOU CAN VIEW OUR WEBSITE ON
www.footstepsearlylearningcentre.com.au**

OR CONTACT US ON 0404 755 948.

**WE LOOK FORWARD TO MEETING YOU AND YOUR
FAMILY SOON.**