



PARENT HANDBOOK

ST STEPHEN'S CHILDREN'S CENTRE

St Stephen's Children's Centre Parent Handbook

1 Bellevue Park Rd
Bellevue Hill NSW 2023

PO BOX 3196
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Ph: (02) 9389 3235
Email: director@ststephenscc.com.au

Opening times:

8.00am to 4.00pm (short day)
8.00am to 5.30pm (long day)

Age: 18 months-6 years

48 weeks per year, we are closed for 4 - 5 weeks
over the Christmas period and for all Public Holidays

Service Provider number: 555 011 979L

Director: Kylie Tofts
Assistant Director: Sarah Alexiou

Welcome to our Service.

The Parent Handbook outlines important information you will need to be aware of while you are a part of our Services family. It is important that you read over this booklet and ask questions about matters you do not understand. You will find a section in the enrolment form to sign confirming that you have read the information in this booklet and your enrolment pack.

Our Service has an open door policy. You and your family are welcome to visit the Service at any time.

Our Policies

All our policies are available in the policy folder which is located in each room, staff room and are emailed to all families at the time of enrolment. Please feel free to look and comment on our policies at any time.

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to St Stephen's Children's Centre. Finding a new education and care Service for your child can be a daunting task. At St Stephen's Children's Centre our aim is to provide a secure and happy environment where children can develop their intellectual, social, emotional, physical and aesthetic skills to become competent and confident individuals. As well for you as a parent/guardian, to feel safe in the knowledge that your child is receiving the best possible care.

We believe the best way to work with you and your child is by building a **partnership of care**. To do this we want you to feel:

- Welcomed, recognised, acknowledged and respected by all our Educators.
- That your child is really known by, and really knows, the people who care for him or her.
- You are given lots of information about what is occurring and are asked for your views.
- You are involved in making decisions about your child's experiences.
- You and your child are received and greeted upon arrival.
- Your child is happy, secure and engaged.
- Your child is not just looked after but really cared for.

Contact Information

Approved Provider: St Stephen's Children's Centre
Approved Provider Representative: Richard Lane
Nominated Supervisor: Kylie Tofts
Educational Leader: Bruna Sardenberg - Campista

Education, Curriculum and Learning

We will be following the Early Years Learning Framework as per our Education, Curriculum and Learning Policy.

All Educators at our Service are trained and experienced in areas of early education and care. Due to our high standard and commitment of our Educators, we are able to provide developmental and educational programs for each group of children.

The Educators will develop a daily program, observe the children in their care and plan their programs around the needs and interests of the children in child free time.

Early Years Learning Framework Learning (EYLF) Learning Outcomes:

Outcome 1: Children have a strong sense of identity

- Children feel safe, secure, and supported
- Children develop their emerging autonomy, interdependence, resilience and sense of agency
- Children develop knowledgeable and confident self-identities
- Children learn to interact in relation to others with care, empathy and respect.

Outcome 2: Children are connected with and contribute to their world

- Children develop a sense of connectedness to groups and communities and an understanding of their reciprocal rights and responsibilities as active and informed citizens
- Children respond to diversity with respect
- Children become aware of fairness
- Children become socially responsible and show respect of the environment

Outcome 3: Children have a strong sense of wellbeing

- Children become strong in their social, emotional and mental wellbeing
- Children become strong in their physical learning and wellbeing
- Children are aware of and develop strategies to support their own mental and physical health and personal safety

Outcome 4: Children are confident and involved learners

- Children develop a growth mindset and learning dispositions such as curiosity, cooperation, confidence, creativity, commitment, enthusiasm, persistence, imagination and reflexivity
- Children develop a range of learning and thinking skills and processes such as problem solving, inquiry, experimentation, hypothesising, researching and investigating
- Children transfer and adapt what they have learned from one context to another
- Children resource their own learning through connecting with people, place,

technologies and natural and processed materials

Outcome 5: Children are effective communicators

- Children interact verbally and non-verbally with others for a range of purposes
- Children engage with a range of texts and gain meaning from these texts
- Children express ideas and make meaning using a range of media
- Children begin to understand how symbols and pattern systems work
- Children use information and communication technologies to access information, investigate ideas and represent their thinking

If your child's Educator feels there is an area of concern, they will inform you and advise where help may be sought, e.g. speech therapist. It is always your decision to follow this up. Educators are willing to discuss any aspect of development with parents.

Philosophy

At St Stephen's Children's Centre, we respectfully acknowledge the Gadigal people as the Traditional Custodians of the land where we learn and play. We pay our respects to elders past and present, and we promise to care for the land, the animals and each other. This is and always will be aboriginal land.

We honour and uphold the rights of every child to learn, explore, and discover through play and interest-based learning. We believe every child can flourish when they feel safe, connected, and their many ways of learning and expressing themselves are recognised and nurtured. We see children as capable, curious, and active participants in their own learning. Each child is a unique individual with their own strengths, ideas, and voice, and we provide an environment that encourages them to express themselves, form relationships, and grow in confidence and ability. We view childhood as a valuable and unique stage of life, a time to be immersed in wonder, joy, and discovery. We are dedicated to creating secure and trusting environments that allow children to feel safe, supported, and inspired to explore their world.

Our curriculum is informed by the *Early Years Learning Framework for Australia – Version 2.0 (2022): Belonging, Being and Becoming*. This national framework guides our practice and supports our goal of nurturing children to become confident

and involved learners, helping them go beyond achieving learning outcomes to become kind, contributing members of society. We are committed to embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives in our practice and fostering a sense of respect, understanding, and belonging for all children and families. We observe and document children's individual interests, strengths, and learning to inform and guide our educational program, ensuring we meet each child where they are in their learning journey. Play is central to our approach, and we embrace spontaneous and intentional learning experiences that evolve from children's interests and interactions.

Our indoor and outdoor learning environments are thoughtfully designed to stimulate curiosity and invite children to lead their own learning. We are proud of our nature-rich surroundings, which provide countless opportunities for exploration, inquiry, and autonomy. These environments support children's creativity, critical thinking and problem-solving, while fostering a deep connection to nature and sustainability.

We deeply value the role of families as a child's first and most important teachers. We foster respectful partnerships with families through open, honest communication, shared decision-making, and recognition of the knowledge and insights they bring. We encourage family participation in the Centre, including through our Management Committee, where parents can directly contribute to the governance and direction of our service. We embrace and celebrate the diverse cultural and social contexts of every child and family, creating a culturally responsive and inclusive environment where all children experience a strong sense of belonging and are supported to actively participate.

Our educators are committed, reflective, and collaborative professionals who continuously develop their skills and knowledge through ongoing professional learning. We work together as a team to provide high-quality education and care that meets the evolving needs of children, families, and our community. As a Child Safe Centre, we place children's safety and wellbeing at the centre of everything we do. We uphold and advocate for the rights of all children, as defined in the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*, and teach children to stand up for their own rights and the rights of others. We take child safety seriously and are committed to continuously improving our practices to ensure every child is protected. Every staff member, committee member, and volunteer shares a legal, ethical, and moral responsibility to maintain a child-safe environment and culture, as we believe

protecting children's safety and wellbeing is everyone's responsibility.

The Daily Routine

Although the routines of each room and age group will vary, the same aspects are contained in each. We endeavour to provide a home and family environment at the Service where the children feel comfortable and secure at all times and our daily routines reflect this.

Throughout the day the children will be experiencing a number of different activities which are part of the educational and developmental programs operated by all of our Educators.

Each room will display their routine in the rooms which are available for parents to read and ask questions. In place are both summer and winter routines, which adapt to weather conditions.

Age Groups

The Service has **three rooms** which will promote a spacious, warm and inviting environment for all our children. The rooms will be offered as followed:

- 18 months -2.5 years- Wombat / Wumbat Room
- 2.5 years- 4 years- Kookaburra / Gugagini Room
- 4yrs + - Echidna / Barugin Room

CHILDREN

Those First Weeks

The introduction into long day care can be difficult for children and parents. Children's welfare and happiness are the priority for Educators when welcoming new children to the Service and when assisting the family to settle into the Service environment. It is recognised that family's needs will vary greatly in the orientation process and individual needs will be met as best as possible.

The following outlines some helpful hints for parents on settling their child into care:-

- Make sure you familiarise your child with the environment and the people in the environment (children and adults) by coming in for an orientation visit before commencing care.
- Ease your child into care with short stays to begin with.
- Provide a favourite toy, blanket or comforter to support your child when they are separating from you or settling to sleep. This can help your child feel more secure.
- Interactions between Educators and parents or Educators and other children can produce positive role models and be reassuring. This experience can help to establish trust in an unfamiliar setting.
- Try to talk at home about child care. Mention the names of the Educators and other children. Talk about the things your child will be able to do at child care that are fun and enjoyable.
- Talk to the Educators about your child, for example, what they like to do; successful ways of settling them to sleep; foods they like and dislike and so on. This helps Educators to get to know your child.
- When leaving your child it is best to make sure you say goodbye and then leave. Hesitating and not going after you have said your goodbyes, if a child is upset, only confuses them. Reassure your child that everything is alright and you will return later, this can help them to settle.
- It sometimes helps to establish a routine when leaving. For example, giving your child a cuddle and giving them to an Educator or sitting down with them for a short play or reading a book together then leaving.
- At first some children protest strongly while others may take a day or two to realise that you are leaving them and begin to protest after several days. Children soon learn that you do return and in the mean time they are well cared for.

What to Bring

- A change of clothing that is weather appropriate (younger children- especially those toilet training- will need extra changes)
- A hat – a full brimmed wide hat (not a peaked hat). A Centre hat can be purchased from the office for \$10.
- A security item for rest time.

- Cot sized top sheet for their bed (18 month-3 year old room only).
- Nappies if required.
- Water Bottle
- Piece of fresh fruit for the fruit basket each day your child attends.

Communication

What is the best way to communicate with you? Everybody has a different communication style and time for communication. We understand that mornings and afternoons can be a little rushed, and not the best time to discuss your child. At any time if you require a private discussion with our Educators, please inform us. This can happen face to face or by phone.

Confidentially and Discretion

Information received through written and spoken communication with families will be treated with discretion.

Ways we will be communicating the events of the Service:

- Our main form of written communication is via email. If you are not receiving regular emails from the office please check we have your correct email address.
- Face to face verbal interactions at arrival and departure time.
- Regular newsletters which will be sent home via email bimonthly.
- A notice board where various messages and notices are displayed advertising current issues and upcoming events.
- Parents are able to leave more detailed written messages, for the purpose of expressing concerns, positive or evaluative input that they feel they need to let Educators know about. These can be anonymous if so desired.
- Occasionally Educators will ask parents to complete short surveys in order to maintain up to date records and seek parent feedback on various topics
- Each family will be allocated an individual 'parent pocket' in which written communication will be placed. It is the parent's responsibility to read these notices and ensure they are aware of current issues and events in the Service.

- Policies will be regularly reviewed in a variety of ways (sign in area, newsletters and via files to enable parent comment on Service practices.)

Communication and Educators

What can you expect from Educators?

Educators will make every effort to communicate effectively with families.

- Educators will inform families promptly and sensitively of any out of the ordinary incidents affecting their child
- Educators will share with children's families some of the specific interactions they had with the children during the day
- Information on children's eating and sleeping patterns at the Service will be provided to families through verbal communication and through the room wall chart.
- When families and educators make a joint decision that affect children's progress, interest and experience, the educators will make sure all their team members are aware of the change.

Please feel free at any time in person, by phone or email to discuss your child's progress, relationships, interests and experiences.

Priority of Access

Please refer to our Enrolment Policy for more information about the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations' (DEEWR) requirements for Priority of Access.

Parent Involvement

This is vital to ensure maintenance of a quality service. Your contribution of ideas, experiences and skills are welcomed and greatly valued. You may be able to share your skills and experiences in Music, Craft, Cooking and Storytelling etc to enhance your child's program at the Service.

Parents are welcome to visit or call the Service at any time. If you have any talents or hobbies, we welcome and encourage you to please share them with the children.

Fundraising

We do appreciate your assistance in raising funds towards specific projects. Please see the director if you are interested in joining our fundraising committee. The centre holds one large fundraising event each year and we also carry out smaller events like book fairs, cake stalls and sausage sizzles etc.

Commencement Fees / Bond

A bond is payable equivalent of 2 full weeks of fees. This is refundable at the cancellation of care as long as the required 4 operational weeks' notice is given. The bond will be refunded 1 month after you have left the centre, to ensure that any payments from Centrelink will have been received and recorded. The bond is repaid to you less any outstanding amounts, either by cheque or direct debit into your nominated bank account.

Service Fees

- \$171.50 per day for short day attendance 8.00am – 4pm
- \$189.00 per day for long day attendance 8.00am – 5.30pm

Fees can be paid by direct deposit or bpay. Fees are payable one month in advance. If your child's fees are not paid by the due date a \$50 late fee will apply. If you are experiencing difficulties please don't hesitate to contact us.

We do not charge for public holidays.

Absences and sick days require payment of full fees at all times. Extra days can be arranged if a vacancy exists within the licensed numbers. Fees for extra days are charged accordingly.

If you wish to drop the days your child attends on a permanent basis then the service must be given 4 operational weeks' notice in writing. If you wish to increase the days your child attends then where there is a free spot your child will be able to commence immediately, otherwise your name will go on a waitlist for when the days becomes free.

Child Care Subsidy (CCS)

This is a family subsidy that is available from the Department of Human Services (Centrelink or Medicare Office). The Department of Human

Services will conduct an activity test on a families combined income and a scale will be used to determine the amount of assistance each family will receive. The subsidy is paid directly to the service, therefor reducing the amount families pay. Parents are responsible for accessing Centrelink to organise these rebates. CCS is no longer available if your child is not fully up to date with their immunisations. For further details please speak to our Nominated Supervisor or contact Department of Human Services on 13 6150.

The Service is opened for 9.5 hours per day, 48 weeks per year and caters for children 18 months –6 years.

Accounts

Any change of financial income will alter your fee structure, please advise our Service and the Department of Human Services (13 6150) if this occurs. Payments can be made by direct deposit.

Waiting List

When our rooms have full enrolment, children's names will be put onto a waiting list. There is a \$20 waiting list fee per child. Once a position is vacant, parents are then contacted about placement. When parents wish to change days to other days, this can be effective immediately provided the group enrolment is not full. If it is full the child's name will be placed on a waiting list. Once a position is available, days will then be adjusted. Our waiting list does give priority to working parents as per Priority of Access Guidelines.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

The service provides a healthy and safe environment for children, educators and families to grow and develop in – as such the service has a health, safety and hygiene policy regarding illnesses and medications. Children with contagious illnesses are required to be kept at home and a doctor's certificate must be presented to show that the infection cannot be passed when the child returns to the service.

Food Allergies

We are an allergy aware Service and Nut Free. Please do not bring any food onto the premises at any time. Please inform the Nominated Supervisor if your child has any allergies.

Illness

NO CHILD will be admitted with obvious signs of any highly contagious infection or illness. Our policy states the incubation period, symptoms and exclusion periods of such diseases. It is now law that a child is immunised before commencing in a child care service.

Asthma

The Service aims to provide a safe environment for children who have asthma. It is Service policy that an "Asthma Record Plan" be completed by parents/guardians in consultation with the family doctor. It is also a requirement that the record plan be reviewed by your family doctor annually or as circumstances change. This must be completed and returned before enrolment commences. These will be available at the time of enrolment.

Sun Protection

Our Service's policy is enforced. Parents are asked to provide a wide brim hat and appropriate clothing to wear during outside activities. These must be named. The most suitable hat is one, which shades the ears and neck, as research is showing a high incidence of skin cancer on people's ears. Please apply sunscreen in the morning prior to arriving or at the centre before you say goodbye to your child, the educators will then re apply it in the afternoons before they come outside.

Using the Service Safely

Never leave children unattended in cars while collecting children from the Service. Do not park in or across the driveway at any time. This is an emergency exit and a private driveway for the rectory. Car parks are dangerous places for children, always hold children's hands when arriving and leaving the Service

Close all gates behind you.

Never leave your children unattended in a room.

Children are not permitted into the kitchen and laundry areas.

EDUCATORS

Suitable qualified Educators are employed in all age groups and the child Educators ratios are adhered to according to our legal requirements. All educators will have their senior first aid certificates, working with children checks completed and attend regular educator meetings. Educators are regularly involved and encouraged to attend further development and training.

CONCLUSION

We guarantee your child will have a happy, safe and secure relationship with the Service and its Educators and that the time he or she is in our care will be positive and fulfilling.

IMPORTANT CONTACTS AND INFORMATION FOR FAMILIES

The Service provides families with current information on child and family resources and services accessible in the local community.

Our Service has a parent library with resources you may find helpful.

ACECQA is the new national body ensuring early childhood education and care across Australia is high quality

Address:	Level 15, 255 Elizabeth St, Sydney, NSW, 2000
Postal Address:	PO BOX A292, Sydney, NSW, 2000
Email:	enquires@acecqa.gov.au
Phone:	1800 181 088

Family Assistance Office

Phone: 13 6150

Australian Childhood Immunisation Register

Phone: 1800 653 809

Regulatory Authorities

Our Service complies with the National Quality Framework (NQF) including the National Quality

Standard (NQS), the Early Years Learning Framework and the National Regulations (Education and Care Services National Regulations).

Our Service is regulated by the new national body for early education and care – the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) as well as the state licensing department in our State/Territory. To contact our Regulatory Authority, please refer to the contact details below

New South Wales
NSW Early Childhood Education and Care Service
The NSW Early Learning Commission
1800 619 113,

Email:
information@earlylearningcommission.nsw.gov.au

