



Acorn Acres Early Learning & Care

A place where little seeds grow bigger

Parent Handbook

Welcome to Acorn Acres Early Learning.

We acknowledge that by entrusting us with your child you are entrusting us with someone who is very precious to you. We feel privileged and honoured that you have given us this responsibility. We look forward to a wonderful and rewarding partnership with your family as we guide and support your child's learning as they grow and experience the world around them.

<https://acornacres.com.au>

Table of Contents

GENERAL INFORMATION	4
Our Mission	4
Our Philosophy	5
Our Commitment to Children	5
Family and Community Engagement	5
Policies And Procedures	5
Available policies	6
Our Educators	7
Our Leadership Team	8
ACORN ACRES ELC LEARNING PROGRAMS	9
Play-Based Learning	9
Infant Program (0-2 yrs.)	10
Toddler Program (2-3 yrs.)	10
Preschool Program (3-5yrs)	11
Personal And Interpersonal Development	11
Curiosity, Logical Inquiry and Mathematical Thinking	11
Language and Literacy Development	11
Creative Skills	11
Physical Development	11
Positive Transition to School (School Readiness)	12
Documenting Children's Learning	13
ENROLLING YOUR CHILD AT ACORN ACRES ELC	15
Orientation	16
Settling Your Child Into The Centre	16
What To Pack	17
What To Wear	18
Labelling	18
Arrival Routine	18
Departure Routine	19
Hours Of Use	19
Late Pick-Up	19

Authorised Nominees to Collect Children	19
Custody Arrangements.....	20
Absences	20
Cancelling Or Changing an Enrolment	20
Change of details	20
Emergency Care	21
Rest And Sleep.....	21
Breastfeeding.....	21
Food And Nutrition.....	22
Toilet Training	23
Toys From Home	23
Special Events and Celebrations	23
Sustainability and environmental responsibility	23
Visiting Performances and Excursions	24
HEALTH AND SAFETY	24
Illness	24
Medications	25
Medical Conditions.....	25
Accidents And Injuries.....	26
Immunisation	26
Safety Practices.....	27
Sun Safety	27
Sunscreen.....	27
Sun-Smart Clothing	27
PARTNERSHIP WITH FAMILIES	28
Feedback.....	29
FEES AND SUBSIDIES	30
Payment Of Fees.....	30
Child Care Subsidy	31
Recognised activities	32
Absences From Child Care and CCS.....	33
What Is an Absence Day?	33

There are no seven wonders of the world in the eyes of a child, there are
seven million! The future is manifest in our children's imagination
and perfected in the games they play.



GENERAL INFORMATION

Our Mission

At Acorn Acres, our mission is simple: to create a warm, welcoming space where children can thrive. With the Early Years Learning Framework as our guide, we dive into nature play, explore emerging interests, and make learning fun through play-based activities. By teaming up with families and our community, we build a nurturing environment that values friendships across all ages, helping children grow into confident, caring, and capable individuals.

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Our Philosophy

At Acorn Acres, our approach to early childhood education is rooted in a blend of innovation and tradition. We embrace a play-based, emergent curriculum that adapts to each child's unique interests and developmental needs.

This approach encourages curiosity, creativity, and critical thinking through hands-on, meaningful experiences.

Our Commitment to Children

We believe in the inherent potential of every child and strive to create an environment where they can thrive, explore, and develop to their fullest. By fostering a love of learning, curiosity, and creativity, we empower children to become lifelong learners, confident in their abilities to navigate the world around them. Our approach is guided by the principles of the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF): Being, Belonging, and Becoming, which informs every aspect of our practices.

We view children as competent, capable, and curious individuals, and our curriculum is emergently shaped by their interests, questions, and unique perspectives. This approach ensures that learning is meaningful, relevant, and respectful of the cultural backgrounds and diverse experiences each child brings to the Centre.

Family and Community Engagement

At Acorn Acres, we recognise families as the child's first teachers and believe that a strong partnership between families and the Centre is essential to a child's success. We actively encourage family involvement in the learning process through regular communication, involvement in activities, and an open-door policy. We value the diversity and strengths of each family and strive to create a warm, inclusive environment where all voices are heard and respected.

We also acknowledge the importance of our local community and aim to build strong relationships with schools, organizations, and local groups. By working together, we ensure smooth transitions for children and families and create a broader network of support and opportunity.

Policies, Procedures and Resources

Acorn Acres Early Learning centre has developed a wide range of policies and procedures in line with the National Quality Standard, Victorian and Commonwealth Legislation, Laws and Standards.

The policies are reviewed regularly in collaboration with all key stakeholders, including staff and families. Your comments are important to us, so please feel free to provide any feedback on any of the policies.

A copy of the policy handbook is available for you to view at the Acorn Acres Early Learning Centre foyer.

A list of the policies is provided to families on enrolment and a full copy is also be available to you via our Xplor platform under parents portal and on the AcornAcres website.

Available policies

- nutrition, food, and dietary requirements
- sun protection
- water safety
- Administration of first aid
- Medication (including anaphylaxis & emergency asthma management)
 - sleep and rest
 - incident management
 - Incident, injury, trauma and illness
 - infectious diseases
 - medical conditions
 - emergency and evacuation
 - delivery and collection of children
 - excursions, regular outings, and transport
 - child safety and wellbeing
 - staffing - include:
 - code of conduct
 - enrolment and orientation
 - Responsible persons and nominated supervisor nominations
 - the participation of volunteers and students on practicum placements
- interactions with children
- enrolment and orientation for children
- Privacy & Confidentiality
- acceptance and refusal of authorisations
- Fees determination
- Fees payment
- Dispute and complaint management
- Recruitment and Screening
- Child and Vulnerable person safety
- Reporting inappropriate behaviour
- Mandatory reporting and reportable conduct
- Centre closure and holiday schedule

- Early Start Kindergarten
- Diversity and Inclusion
- Dishonesty and Fraud
- No Jab No Play
- Gap fee payment and recovery
- Discounted fees
- Anti discrimination and human rights
- Minimum age for Kindergarten
- Whistleblower policy
- Information sharing
- Governance and Management of Acorn Acres ELC
- Record keeping and retention
- Staff professional development
- Social media policy

Resources

- Parent complaint or concern form
- Child safety concern form
- Risk assessment and Management Template
- Our Service Philosophy
- Food Safety Plan

Our Educators

At Acorn Acres, our educators are passionate, highly qualified professionals who are committed to delivering high-quality care and education. They hold degrees and qualifications in early childhood education and care and engage in ongoing professional development to ensure they are equipped with the latest knowledge and practices. At Acorn Acres, we foster a workplace where educators are valued, supported, and encouraged to continuously grow in their profession.

Our educators understand that learning through play is integral to a child development. By promoting exploration, inquiry, and hands-on learning experiences, we create an environment where children feel safe, respected, and excited to learn.

Primary Contact team members work with specific groups of children and are responsible for developing programmes that meet the individual and group needs.

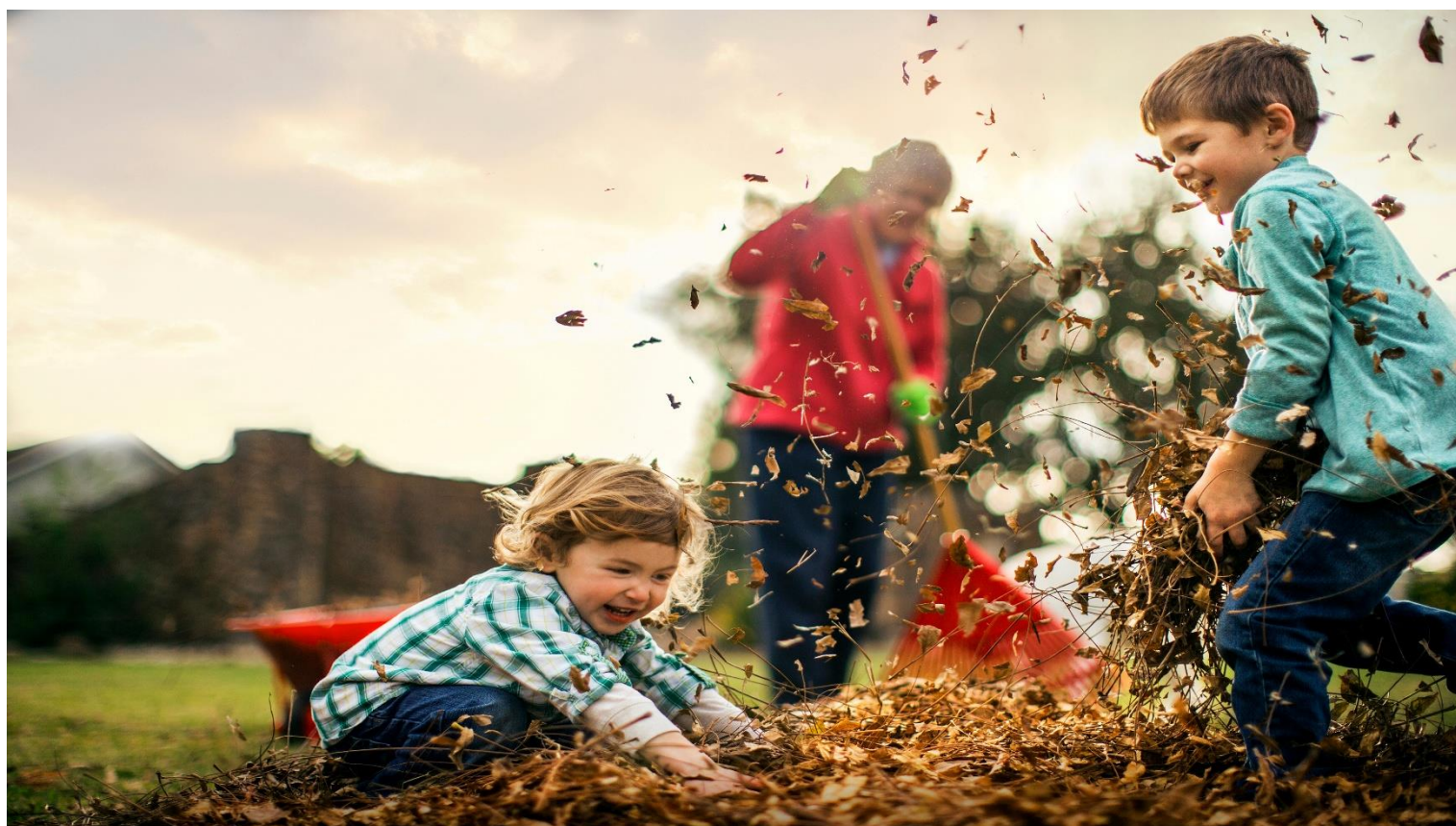
Our Leadership Team

Acorn Acres Early Learning Centre is a privately owned and operated service. The Centre Director, who also serves as the operator, brings over fifteen years of experience in the early childhood sector across a range of roles.

The Centre Director and Centre Manager are jointly responsible for the day-to-day operations and overall management of the centre.

Room Leaders oversee planning and delivering developmentally appropriate programs for the children in their care. They work collaboratively with other team members within each room to ensure a cohesive and supportive learning environment.

An Educational Leader supports and mentors each team across the centre, ensuring that all educational programs are of the highest quality and align with the principles and outcomes of the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF).



ACORN ACRES ELC LEARNING PROGRAMS

Play-Based Learning

At Acorn Acres, we provide a vibrant and nurturing environment where your child can thrive. Our approach centres around three key pillars: the Early Years Learning Framework, Play-Based Learning, and strong Community Connections. These elements are seamlessly woven into everything we do, sparking curiosity, building vital life skills, and instilling a lifelong love of learning in every child.

The physical environment is a key component of our educational philosophy. We believe that the environment is the “third teacher” and should be designed to inspire curiosity, creativity, and a sense of belonging. Our spaces are thoughtfully arranged with natural materials, open-ended resources, and areas that encourage exploration, collaboration, and independent thinking.

We are committed to maintaining clean, well-resourced, and stimulating environments that support the holistic development of each child. Our centres are designed to reflect our values and create spaces that feel welcoming and inclusive for children, families, and educators alike.

The foundation of our program is based on the belief that children are naturally motivated to play and explore their environment and that play provides the best context for learning.

Our programs are underpinned by research that shows play-based programs for young children can provide a strong basis for later success at school.

Our inquiry-based approach to learning is supported through nurturing interactions between educators and children, interactions that are not only warm and responsive to children’s need for comfort and security but also stretch their thinking to higher levels.

The way we organise the play environment, select resources and interact with the children are designed to support children’s thinking skills to solve problems, inspire imagination and creativity, to explore, experiment and ask questions.

We use the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) to guide our program planning. The EYLF, developed by the Council of Australian Governments, has an overall goal "to extend and enrich children's learning from birth to five years so that all children have the best start in life to create a better future for themselves and for the nation."

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 relationships they have with their family, community, culture and place

- Being is about living in the 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

Infant Program (0-2 yrs.)

Babies flourish in environments where their cues are recognised and their needs are met with warmth and attentiveness. In our nursery room, experienced educators are attuned to each child, ensuring they receive consistent, individual attention. Through cuddles, soothing voices, gentle holding, and unhurried play, educators build strong, trusting bonds that form the foundation for healthy development.

Within these nurturing relationships, our educators support each child's natural curiosity and desire to learn by creating a play-rich environment. A key element of this is **sensory play**, which engages babies through experiences that stimulate their senses touch, sight, sound, smell, and movement. Whether it's exploring the texture of soft fabrics, the sound of musical instruments, or the feel of natural materials like sand and water, sensory play helps develop cognitive skills, language, fine and gross motor abilities, and emotional regulation.

We understand that strong partnerships with families are essential. Our educators prioritise open, two-way communication with families, fostering positive, reciprocal relationships. This collaborative approach allows us to better understand each child and to work together toward shared goals that support their individual growth and development.

Toddler Program (2-3 yrs.)

Toddlerhood is an exciting and dynamic stage in a child's development, marked by rapid growth and a blossoming sense of independence. Toddlers are full of energy, curiosity, and wonder, exploring their world with enthusiasm even though they may not yet have the words to fully express themselves.

At our centre, educators understand and embrace this unique phase. They provide attentive, nurturing care while gently guiding each child through their individual journey of discovery. Our learning environments both indoor and outdoor are thoughtfully designed to support hands-on exploration and sensory learning.

Children are encouraged to move freely, engage in music and movement activities, and interact with natural materials that spark curiosity. Through play, toddlers are given every opportunity to make sense of the world around them in meaningful and joyful ways.

Preschool Program (3-5yrs)

Acorn Acres has a distinct preschool program for children aged 3-5 years. These programs are developed and implemented by qualified Early Childhood Teacher with the focus of equipping children with skills that they will need to make a successful start at school.

The Acorn Acres Preschool Program is designed to foster the following areas of development:

Personal And Interpersonal Development

- An ability to form satisfying and happy friendships with other children
- An ability to work and play as part of a group, with the accompanying skills of cooperation, respect for others, sharing and turn-taking
- Recognition of self-worth as unique individuals
- A feeling of security and acceptance, which will lead them to take their rightful place in their family and community with confidence

Curiosity, Logical Inquiry and Mathematical Thinking

- An active, inquiring attitude towards learning
- An acquisition of skills: listening, questioning, observing and problem solving
- A broadening base of general knowledge of the world around us

Language and Literacy Development

- A love of books and poetry as a basis for reading-readiness
- Effective communication through vocabulary expansion, listening and asking questions
- The continued growth of clear speech patterns

Creative Skills

- To able to express one-self in one's own way using a wide variety of material
- To develop children's creative skills and aesthetic awareness
- To develop an appreciation of creativity of others

Physical Development

- The development of both gross and fine motor skills
- The confidence to try new physical activities

Positive Transition to School (School Readiness)

Older Pre-schoolers are preparing for the adventure of a lifetime in school. Whilst our program provides children with essential skills from the day when they first walk through the doors of Imagine Early Learning, the last year of preschool is used to hone-in on these skills. 15 Small-group teaching, independent play in an organised environment and whole-group activities help children to acquire skills to hop, skip, and jump into kindergarten.

The overall aims of our school readiness program are to help and support children to:

- Develop a high level of self confidence in starting school
- Have effective social skills to interact with confidence with peers and teachers
- Be able to ask for help and ask questions whenever necessary
- Develop self-help skills in dressing, toileting, opening lunch boxes, looking after belongings and so on
- Listen and follow instructions
- Handle change in an emotionally secure manner (this includes handling separation anxiety)
- Have good eye-hand coordination skills (handling a scissor, correct pencil grip, using a ruler and so on.)
- Acquire basic understanding in numeracy and literacy concepts. In conjunction with the curriculum areas described in the Preschool Program, during the second half of the year before children commence school, we also incorporate the following specific school readiness activities:

Talking with children about school and encouraging them to ask questions or voice their concerns about school

- Arranging visits to local schools
- Inviting kindergarten children to come and talk with our pre-schoolers about their experience of school
- Reading stories about starting school
- Including school props such as uniforms, bags, lunch boxes and chalk boards in dramatic play areas
- Supporting children to develop their self-help and social skills – looking after the belongings, being able to have the confidence to asking for help when necessary, resolving conflicts with peers, self-help skills in dressing, toileting, opening lunch boxes etc

During this time, we work closely with families to ensure there is consistency between home and the centre in preparing children for school. As well as one-on-one discussions with

families, we also plan information evenings to discuss school readiness. Kindergarten teachers from local schools are also invited to the information sessions to answer any questions from families.



Documenting Children's Learning

Observations of each child's interactions, conversations, interests and work is recorded on the online platform 'xplor'. This information, together with information provided by parents is recorded and reflected upon according to the learning outcomes in the Early Years Learning Framework. This allows us to build up a picture of each child's learning and progress throughout the year. xplor is accessible to families to view at any time.

For children, play is learning and what many affordances nature offers as a play space!

In a technologically advancing world, we are seeing an increased disconnect with children's play in nature and the outdoors.

'Playing outdoors grows resilience, self-confidence, initiative, creativity and more. It encourages the joy of movement; it nurtures wild imaginations, experimentation, friendships, social connections and behaviour' (Nature Play QLD, 2018).

At Acorn Acres we pride ourselves on providing children with ample opportunities to explore nature and the natural environment. Whilst our services differ in environmental contexts, our commitment to exposing children to nature remains at the philosophical front of the Acorn Acres ELC.

Incorporating nature into the curriculum goes beyond outdoor free play. At Acorn Acres, we embed nature-based learning through hands-on experiences such as gardening and maintaining a worm farm.

These activities not only teach children about sustainability, life cycles, and responsibility but also deepen their connection to the earth. Children are actively involved in planting, watering, harvesting, and composting, which supports both their cognitive development and sense of environmental stewardship. The worm farm fosters curiosity about ecosystems and introduces fundamental concepts of recycling and waste reduction in an engaging and age-appropriate way.

In addition, we embrace natural play using elements such as water, sand, mud, sticks, and leaves materials that spark creativity, problem-solving, and sensory exploration. These open-ended resources encourage children to build, experiment, imagine, and connect with their surroundings in deeply meaningful ways. Whether it's making mud pies, constructing stick shelters, or creating leaf art, these experiences foster holistic development while cultivating a respect for nature.

These practices align with our holistic philosophy of nurturing children's well-being through regular, meaningful interaction with the natural world, both within our service grounds and beyond.



ENROLLING YOUR CHILD AT ACORN ACRES ELC

Application To Enrol Starting childcare is an important milestone in not only your child's life, but also in your life as a parent. We encourage you to contact us to organise a tour so that you can check out the facilities, meet the staff and get some information about our programs.

To apply to enrol your child at an Acorn Acres ELC, please complete the 'Application to Enrol' form via our website.

<https://acornacres.com.au>

Positions are offered according to the Australian Government's 'Priority of Access' guidelines. Positions are offered in priority according to the following categories:

1st Priority: A child at risk of serious abuse or neglect

2nd Priority: A child of a single parent who satisfies, or of parent who both satisfy who satisfy the Work/training/study test under Section 14 of the Family Assistance Act.

3rd Priority: Any other child. Within these main category's priority may 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 from a non-English speaking background.
- children in socially isolated families; and
- children of single parents

Once a suitable position becomes available, the centre director will notify you by email or phone. On acceptance of the position, enrolment forms need to be completed and submitted to the centre, together with a copy of the child's birth certificate and immunisation status from the Australian Childhood Immunisation Register:

An enrolment fee is payable to secure the position (please refer to individual centre fee schedule for details).

Orientation

On receipt of the enrolment forms, an orientation visit is arranged during which time the family can meet staff, observe and participate in the centre's program and routines, and ask any questions. The centre director will go through the centre's main policies and procedures during the orientation visit.

During the initial orientation we aim to spend as much time as possible getting to know your child and understanding your expectations and requirements. Your child will have the opportunity to interact with other children and take part in some of the activities. Depending on individual needs, further visits will be organised if necessary.



Settling Your Child into The Centre

Coming to childcare for the first time can be an overwhelming experience for a child. Most children experience separation anxiety. But this is also a learning time for your child where he/she will develop independence, trust, and security outside the home environment.

How you can help.....

Visit the centre with your child to ease familiarity of the new environment. Allow your child to take part in the program, familiarising them with the routines with you there for reassurance.

On the first day spend some time involving your child in an activity. When the time comes to leave, say goodbye and tell your child you will return later. Children can quickly lose trust if you 'sneak' away to avoid a scene.

You can leave a possession of yours for your child's security. One soft toy or maybe a photo of you is fine

Tell a staff member when you are about to leave so they can be with your child to provide a cuddle or to help wave goodbye.

Please feel free to phone us throughout the day to see how your child has settled.

Some children are quite happy to separate from their parents but will have periods of distress during the day, while others will be upset at separation, and will cheer up and play happily once the parent has left.

Although it can be very distressing for parents to see their children upset, it is important to realise that separation anxiety is a very normal reaction. Staff have lots of experience in assisting children through this phase, but if you would like us to handle it in a particular way, don't hesitate to ask.

Whatever the situation, we do not allow a child to be distressed for a long period and would notify you if this were the case.

If your child is distressed at first, our best advice is to be patient and be assured of our support. Most children settle within 15 minutes of the parent leaving, and only exhibit separation anxiety over a few days, or weeks depending on the pattern of attendance.

Parents are encouraged to stay for as long as they feel necessary to settle their child. We understand that at times you may need to leave in a hurry due to work commitments. We will support you in whatever way we can to ensure your child settles into preschool.

What To Pack

The Centre Director will provide you with a detailed list upon enrolment

As a minimum, the following will be required:

- Sun-safe hat (broad brimmed or legionnaire style) for summer
- Change of clothes and underwear – at least 2 sets. Please pack extra's if your child is toilet training
- Rest-time comfort item (if required)
- Dummy in a sealed, named container (if required)
- Sleeping bags for babies. We do not allow pillows, blankets in cots for safety reasons
- Bottles, formula or expressed milk (if required)
- Water bottle with a lid or a sipper cup

- Any medications – please hand these to a staff member and complete a medication form. Never leave medications in your child's bag

What To Wear

Casual play clothes are best. As most of the activities that we provide are of a 'hands on' nature and will include messy play, clothing should be practical and comfortable. Children who are afraid of getting dirty or are afraid of ruining good clothes will not benefit from a large part of their early learning program.

Shorts and tee shirt in summer and tracksuit in winter are the most practical as they allow children the freedom to climb, run and jump.

Older children are encouraged to be independent in dressing and toileting. To help your child experience success in these self-help skills, please avoid buckles, belts and overalls.

Sturdy shoes with a closed toe suitable for climbing and active play are important. Thongs and slip on shoes are dangerous and not permitted at the centre.

Sun hats are essential, even on cloudy days. The risk of sunburn, although reduced, is still present on overcast days. Please make sure that the hat protects your child's face, neck and ears (legionnaire style is best).

An item that poses a risk of choking or strangulation is not permitted (e.g. caps and hats with cords, necklaces and beads)

Labelling

It is extremely important to label all your child's belongings, including all clothing, nappies, wipes, shoes, socks, sheets, drink bottles, hats, teddy bears, lunch boxes and drink bottles.

Shoes, socks, jumpers and hats are taken off and put on many times throughout the day. It is important that we are able to identify what belongs to whom, so please label everything!

Signing In and Out of the Centre

It is extremely important that each child is signed in and out of the centre every day they attend. This is both a legal requirement under the childcare regulations and for you to continue receiving your Child Care Subsidy (CCS). This information is also to ensure your child's safety in case of an emergency evacuation.

Signing in and out is via a digital kiosk located in the foyer of the centre. If you need support with sign in and out, please ask the centre director/manager/staff.

Arrival Routine

Educators will be present within the room to assist you with your arrival routine. After signing in, please take the time to discuss important information including how they slept, if

there is any change in contact phone number for the day or if someone different is picking up/dropping off your child.

Each child has an individual locker for storage of their belongings. When you first start, staff will show the location of your child's locker and guide you in what to unpack, where to place things etc.

If you arrive at a time when children are family-grouped in a different room, please accompany your child to the room where the children are family grouped. For the health and safety of your child they are not to be left within a room if no staff member is present.

Please make sure you say goodbye to your child before leaving, this is an essential step in the settling process.

Departure Routine

Educators will be present with your children where they can inform you about your child's day. If you have any questions or queries, please don't hesitate to discuss these during your pick-up time. Please collect all your child's belongings.

With our child, say goodbye to the educator in charge of the group and sign your child out.

Hours Of Use

Upon enrolment, parents are required to indicate the hours of care that they will require. These are negotiated according to each family's work/study hours and travelling times.

Staff rosters are worked out according to number of children present at the centre at particular times. We are required to abide by strict staff: child ratios under the National Regulations. It is, therefore, mandatory that families use only the hours negotiated on enrolment. Hours can be renegotiated if work or study hours change.

Late Pick-Up

It is essential that children have been picked up by closing time. Please inform us if you are going to be late. There are substantial late fees to cover staff overtime pay.

In the event that the child has not been collected by closing time, a staff member on duty will attempt to contact authorised persons on the enrolment form. If the child has not been collected one hour after closing time, staff will notify the nearest police station and plan for the child to be placed in their care until he/she is collected.

Authorised Nominees to Collect Children

Only parents/ guardians and authorised nominees are permitted to collect your child from our centres.

Children will not be released into the care of persons not nominated on the enrolment form unless written authorisation is received from the parent. For safety reasons, we will request photo identification from any authorised nominee unknown to our staff.

Please note: Under no circumstances will we release a child to any persons under the age of 18 years.

Custody Arrangements

Any parent not subject to any relevant court order may have access to his or her child at any time during the hours that the child is in care and receive information about the child on an ongoing basis.

Certified copies of any court orders regarding custody and access arrangements must be provided on enrolment.

If any changes occur with the court order, please notify the centre director immediately.

Absences

Please let us know if your child will not be attending the centre on their usual days because of illness, holidays or other reasons. A quick email or phone call is all that is required to reassure us that your child is safe.

Please note that fees are payable for all absences. Child Care Subsidy (CCS) will continue to be applied for up to 42 absent days in a financial year. CCS may be available for additional absences provided suitable documentation is provided.

Cancelling Or Changing an Enrolment

Written notice to the centre operator must be provided if you wish to terminate or change your child's enrolment and/or booked days.

For notices provided between 1st November and 31st January within any given year, an eight-week notice period applies. For notices provided outside these dates a four-week notice period applies.

Please note that Child Care Subsidy is not payable beyond a child's last physical attendance at the centre. Full fees will apply if you choose not to send your child during the notice period.

Change of details

It is extremely important that we are informed if there is change to the information provided on the enrolment form. This applies to all contact details and health requirements. Please email any changes to the centre director.

Emergency Care

Sometimes parents may need emergency care in addition to regular attendance days. This can be arranged with the centre director providing a vacancy exists at the time that care is needed.

Rest And Sleep

For infants, rest and sleep occurs throughout the day according to each child's individual needs.

Toddlers and Preschool aged children are encouraged to have a rest for a short period after lunch. Depending on the needs of the child, this will take the form of quiet activities, listening to a taped story, or having a sleep if necessary.

If you wish to send cot/bed sheets from home the sheet needs to be in a labelled drawstring bag or pillowcase. The sheets need to be taken home and washed end of each day.

If children fall asleep Educators will allow them to wake naturally on their own.

Breastfeeding

Acorn Acres ELC is supportive of mothers who want to keep breastfeeding when their child starts childcare.

We provide a quiet place for you to breastfeed your child both at drop-off/pick up or at any time during the day. If you wish to leave expressed breast milk at the centre, please provide

it in ready-to-use bottles that are clearly labelled with your child's name and use-by date. The milk will be kept refrigerated until ready to be consumed.

Food And Nutrition



A child's early years are a critical time for physical and mental development. It is also a time when the eating habits of a lifetime are formed.

At Acorn Acres, we provide children with food that is fresh and nutritious. We have an onsite chef who plans and prepares meals in accordance with Australian Dietary Guidelines.

Food intolerances due to medical conditions and cultural practices are catered for as and when necessary. Our centre is nut free due to minimise any potential anaphylaxis risks.

Mealtimes provide great opportunities for children to develop self-help skills. Staff members sit with children at mealtimes to offer support and encouragement as children acquire self-help skills in feeding, serving, pouring etc.

Whilst children are encouraged to eat, no child is forced to eat against their will. Children's choice of food is respected.

Drinks: Children are encouraged to drink water from their water bottles throughout the day. These water bottles are re-filled with fresh water as needed.

Please note, cordial or juice is not permitted in the water bottles.

Toilet Training

Learning to use the toilet is an important step in a child's life. Some children get the knack quickly while others need a little more time and patience. Staff will work with you to support your child through this process.

Just let your child's carers know when you start toilet training so that they can discuss strategies that can be followed both at home and the centre.

Toys From Home

It is advisable that children do not bring any toys from home as they might get broken or lost. All children will have the opportunity to bring in their favourite toy or a special item on his/her 'News Day'. Parents are informed in advance of their child's news day.

Guns, swords and knives or any other weaponry are not permitted in the centre under any circumstances. Super-hero suits are not to be worn to the centre, except on certain occasions as advised by the centre.

Special Events and Celebrations

We love to celebrate special events in a child's life. These may include things like the birth of a new sibling, birthdays and cultural events. At Acorn Acres our chef can make your child a birthday cake for a fee. Please see your Centre Manager for more information.

Many celebrations include sharing of certain foods, e.g. birthday cakes. If you wish, you can send along celebration foods, which can be shared amongst the children.

It is important to remember, however that any food that is sent to the centre must be in its original packing from the place of purchase with the ingredients clearly marked. Due to health regulations, we are not permitted to share amongst children any food that has been prepared at home.

Sustainability and environmental responsibility

Acorn Acres is committed to protecting our environment and its precious resources. our centre promotes sustainable practices through educating and working with the children, families and wider community. Sustainable practices are embedded in our everyday practices, including using recyclable materials where possible, encouraging children to turning off taps after use, recycling bins in each room, educating children about finite resources, water conservation, reducing waste, caring for plants and education about where food comes from.

Our centre also looking forward to work with community organisations to promote sustainability that we could implement to reduce our carbon footprint on the environment.

Visiting Performances and Excursions

Routine excursions for the preschoolers will be planned according to the needs and interests of the children. Parents will need to give written permission before their child can attend an excursion.

In order to maintain correct adult: child ratios, we may ask for parent volunteers to assist with supervision on excursions. No excursion will be conducted unless correct adult: child ratios are met.

We also organise visiting performances on a regular basis. Parents are notified in advance when these take place.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Our centre has several 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 Director.

Illness

The centre is not the best place for a child who is feeling unwell. Often, they just want to be quiet and with a family member who can provide the extra attention that they need at this time.

Furthermore, the close proximity of children and staff in any childcare centre can increase the risk of cross-infections, in spite of stringent hygiene procedures.

Anyone displaying symptoms of infectious disease, including vomiting and diarrhoea will be excluded from the centre for the period recommend in the 'Staying Healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education & care services (5th Edition)' and in accordance with the centre illness and injury policy. A letter from a medical Practitioner stating the person is no longer infectious is required before being allowed to return to the centre.

It is extremely important that parents inform the centre director if their child has been confirmed to have an infectious disease. This will allow us to implement appropriate strategies to ensure the safety of all users of the service.

If an infectious disease has been confirmed, the centre director will notify all families via email and centre noticeboards detailing the condition. Strict confidentiality will be maintained when conveying this information.

A child who has been prescribed antibiotics for an illness is excluded from the centre for 24 hrs from administering the first dosage. A child who has been administered Panadol cannot attend the centre within six hours of administration.

If your child becomes ill during the day, we will contact you promptly and make every effort to ensure your child is as comfortable as possible until you are able to collect them.

Details of the illness will be recorded on the centre's *Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness* form, in accordance with our health and safety procedures. This record will be made available to you digitally through the Xplor platform, where you will be required to review and sign the report electronically.

Medications

Medications will only be given under the following conditions:

- The centre medication form is completed and signed by Parent/Guardian, including all relevant details of the medication to be administered.
- All medications must be in its original container with a pharmaceutical label clearly showing:
 - Child's Name or Name of Medication
 - Specific Administration Instructions
 - Dispensary and Expiry Date

Non-prescription medications, including herbal preparations, will only be administered if a Medical Practitioner has provided written consent for its administration to the child.

Under no circumstances is any type of medication to be left in children's bags or lockers. Please hand all medications to a staff member and complete the medication form.

Medical Conditions

A 'Medical Management Plan' prepared by a Medical Practitioner must be provided to the centre director if your child has a medical condition, including an allergy, Anaphylaxis or asthma.

If medication is required as part of the management plan, please ensure it is left at the centre whilst your child is in our care.

It is the parent's responsibility to inform the centre director if there is any change to the plan and to update it at least once annually.

Accidents And Injuries

Acorn Acres has stringent measures in place to ensure the safety of the children. However, accidents can occur.

In the case of a minor injury, details will be recorded on the centre's digital 'Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness' form. A copy will be available on the xplor platform to the parent to read and sign when they come to collect the child.

In some cases, the staff may call the parent following an incident just as a courtesy to let them what has happened. The parent will only be asked to collect the child if deemed necessary.

In case of an incident that requires treatment beyond basic first aid, every effort will be made to contact parents and/or emergency contacts nominated on the enrolment form. Medical advice, including calling an ambulance, will be sought if necessary. It is a condition of enrolment that parental agreement to this procedure is provided on the Enrolment Form. Any medical/transport costs incurred, including ambulance costs, will be at the parent's expense.



Immunisation

From 1 January 2018, only children who are fully immunised for their age OR have a medical reason not to be immunised OR are on a catchup schedule can be enrolled in childcare. Children who have not been immunised due to their parent's vaccine conscientious objection cannot be enrolled in childcare.

Before Enrolment, Parents must provide the Centre Director an Australian Immunisation Register (AIR) History Statement (that shows a child is up to date or can't be immunised for medical reasons) OR an AIR Immunisation

History Form (that shows a child is on a recognised catch-up schedule).

Parents can request a copy of their child's AIR Immunisation History Statement at any time (up to their child being 14 years of age):

- using their Medicare online account through myGov <https://my.gov.au/>
- using the Medicare Express Plus App www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/subjects/express-plus-mobile-apps
- calling the AIR General Enquiries Line on 1800 653 809

Safety Practices

- Please shut all doors and gates as you enter and exit the premises.
- Please do not hold open doors and gates as other children may run into unsupervised areas.
- Please exercise caution in the carpark, especially when reversing.
- Please keep hold of your child's hand whilst in the carpark
- No smoking or alcohol is permitted on the premises, including carparks.
- Our centres are nut-free zones, so please do not send anything containing these products.
- Please hand donations children of plastic bags to a staff member to ensure they are stored out of reach.
- Please do not bring glass containers and items with sharp edges/points.
- Emergency Evacuation procedures (displayed in each room) are practised at least once a term. Please read these procedures so that you know what to do in the event that you are on the premises during a drill or an emergency.
- No dogs allowed on the premises, unless prior arrangement has been made with centre director.

Sun Safety

Sunscreen

During spring and summer an outdoor program operates during the early part of the day. This means that your child will probably go straight outdoors on arrival. It is recommended that Sunscreen be applied at least 20 minutes before going out in the sun. Therefore, we request that between October and March children have sunscreen applied before they arrive at the centre.

If you do forget to apply sunscreen on your child at home, it is available for you to apply it at the centre.

We will reapply sunscreen on your child in the afternoon before outdoor play. If your child is allergic to certain sunscreen brands, we ask you provide a suitable alternative and leave it at the centre for staff to use as and when necessary. Please ensure your child's name is clearly written on the tube.

Sun-Smart Clothing

The centre sun smart policy also requires staff and children to wear appropriate clothing. For all outdoor activities, the following are essential:

- A legionnaire style hat (no caps or hats with cords)
- Tee shirts or dresses with sleeves.

PARTNERSHIP WITH FAMILIES

We acknowledge, value and respect the uniqueness of each family and the wonderful opportunities this provides the centre. We believe our programs are enriched through the active participation of families. Families are encouraged and supported to be engaged with the Centre through sharing ideas, thoughts, experiences and values.

Because home experiences are so significant in a child's life, we feel it is important to maintain continuity between the home and the centre. To this end, open and effective communication between the home and the centre is essential. We see parents as partners in the teaching/learning process and their input in all facets of the program is encouraged and valued.



Communication With Families Part of our philosophy is to have a high rate of mutual communication between parents/caregivers and staff. This helps to provide a partnership, which will benefit your child's development to their maximum potential.

At Acorn Acres, we use the xplor app to keep you informed of your child's day. This private secure app allows educators to send you real-time updates, photos and videos throughout the day. Educators use this app to record and communicate with you your child's learning journey with outcomes linked to the Early Years Framework.

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Families can also share information with the educators via the app, creating a powerful platform for a truly collaborative approach between home and the centre. There is also daily communication with parents through our notice boards, parent communication books, suggestion boxes, communication pockets, as well as the daily informal chats on arrival and departure. Parents are welcome at the centre at any time during operating hours.

Feedback

We welcome any compliments, complaints or suggestions as we believe it helps us to provide a better service for you and your children.

We have very clear procedures in place to ensure that any complaints or concerns are dealt with quickly and satisfactorily.

If you have a concern or are unhappy about any aspect of the centre, it should be brought to our attention immediately. In the first instance, and if the concern is minor, the matter is best brought to the attention of your child's teacher. When an issue is of a more serious nature or if a matter has not been resolved satisfactorily, both the parent and teacher should consult the centre director. The centre director will either resolve the matter immediately or arrange a meeting with the parent to come to a resolution.



FEES AND SUBSIDIES

Payment Of Fees

Fees are charged weekly according to your child's booked days.

Fees are charged for every day that your child is enrolled, regardless of attendance, including absences and public holidays closures.

It is our policy that fees are kept one-week in advance (i.e. current week plus one). Overdue account will attract additional charges. Unless a payment plan has been arranged with the centre director, the centre reserves the right to terminate a position if fees are two or more weeks in arrears.

All payments must be made via Debit Success, with debits occurring once a fortnight on a Thursday. Parents are required to complete a Direct Debit Authorisation Form on enrolment. Under exceptional circumstances we may consider payment by Direct Deposit. Our centres do not accept cash payments.

Account statements are emailed to families each fortnight. Please note that a non-refundable once-off enrolment fee is payable upon confirmation of a position.

Please refer to our fee schedule and fee policy for further details. Both these documents are available from the centre director at individual Imagine centres.

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Child Care Subsidy

The Child Care Subsidy (CCS) is a payment made by the Australian Government to help families with the cost of childcare. The subsidy is paid directly to the service to reduce your weekly fees.

It is the responsibility of the parent to register for Child Care Subsidy. This can be done by contacting Centrelink either in person, by phone on 136 150 or by accessing their My Gov account at my.gov.au

Once you have information regarding your CCS rate and hours, you can contact us to obtain an estimate of your gap fee.

Three things will determine a family's level of Child Care Subsidy:

1. A family's combined income will determine the percentage of subsidy they are eligible to receive
2. An activity test will determine how many hours of subsidised care families can access, up to a maximum of 100 per fortnight
3. The type of childcare service will determine the hourly rate cap

Some basic requirements must be satisfied for an individual to be eligible to receive the Child Care Subsidy. These include:

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

The number of hours of subsidised childcare that families will have access to per fortnight will be determined by a three-step activity test. Low-income families on \$66,958 or less a year who do not meet the activity test will be able to access 24 hours of subsidised care per child per fortnight without having to meet the activity test, as part of the Child Care Safety Net.

In two parent families both parents, unless exempt, must meet the activity test. In the case where both parents meet different steps of the activity test, the parent with the lowest entitlement determines the hours of subsidised care for the child.

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Step	Hours Of Activity	Maximum Number of Hours of Subsidy Per Child

1	8 hours to 16 hours	36 hours
2	More than 16 hours to 48 hours	72 hours
3	More than 48 hours	100 hours

*Per fortnight

Recognised activities

A broad range of activities meet the activity test requirements, including:

- paid work, including being self-employed or on leave (including paid or unpaid parental leave)
- doing unpaid work in the family business
- training courses for the purpose of improving the individual's work skills or employment prospects
- an approved course of education or study
- volunteering
- unpaid work experience or internships
- actively setting up a business
- actively looking for work

Recognised activities can be combined to determine the maximum number of hours of subsidy. Time taken to travel between the childcare service and the parents/carers place of work, training, study, or other recognised activity can also be included.

Activity hours do not need to coincide with childcare hours. For example, an individual undertaking work on the weekends is entitled to Child Care Subsidy during the week.

Low-income families with a combined annual income of \$66,958 or less who do not meet and are not exempt from the activity test are entitled to 24 hours of subsidised care per fortnight under the Child Care Safety Net.

Exemptions

There are exemptions to the activity test for individuals who legitimately cannot meet the activity test requirements, such as parents with disability and carers.

Families who do not meet and are not exempt from the activity test and have a preschool aged child who attends preschool at a centre-based day care service may be entitled to 36 hours of subsidised care per fortnight. This only applies to the preschool aged child/ren in the family. To receive this entitlement, the child needs to be in the year two years before grade one of school (based on information provided in the family's claim) and attending an appropriate preschool program at a centre-based day care service (as reported by the family's childcare service).

(Source: <https://www.education.gov.au>) For more information on CCS and how to apply, please visit: <https://www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink/child-care-subsidy>

Absences From Child Care and CCS

What Is an Absence Day?

Under the Child Care Subsidy families are allowed 42 absence days per child, per financial year. These 42 allowable absences can be taken for any reason, including public holidays and when children are sick, without the need for families to provide documentation.

Child Care Subsidy is not payable for absences submitted before a child has started at a service, or after a child's final day of actual attendance at a service. This means that if you child stops attending the centre before their final booked day according to the notice period, full fees will be payable for all booked days until the end of the notice period.

(Source: <https://www.education.gov.au>)

Don't forget to visit our website <https://acornacres.com.au> for more information about each centre.

THANK YOU