



Family Handbook



Our Vision

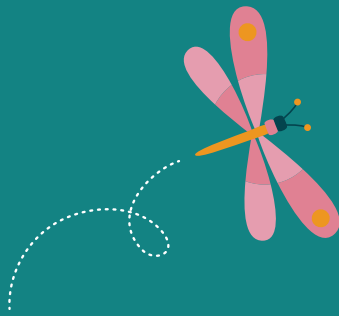
To be our communities' number one choice
for early childhood education.



Our Purpose

Creating healthy and safe communities,
Sparrow Early Learning prepares children for
the rest of their lives, because what we learn
becomes part of who we are.





Sparrow would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we provide our services. We pay our respects to Elders, both past and present, and extend that respect to the Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander persons present within our communities. We recognise the significance of their culture, histories, stories and traditions that originated around and within this land and waterways.





inspire

nurture

grow

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Welcome to the Sparrow Family

At Sparrow Early Learning, we are committed to providing your child with the basis for a fulfilling life. Our Educators provide a safe and friendly environment where your child will be inspired and nurtured, so they can grow and prepare for a life of learning.

We provide early education and care to children between the ages of 6 weeks to school age. At some of our childcare centres, we also provide Outside School Hours Care to older children.

We are open Monday to Friday, 52 weeks per year (apart from gazetted public holidays). Opening hours vary slightly between our centres to meet the community's needs.

Our team is highly experienced, with a passion for providing positive outcomes for all children in their care.

Our Support Office assists us by providing guidance, training, advice and assistance to Educators so they can focus on delivering responsive programs for your child. We also have a dedicated Operations Manager who visits each centre regularly to support and mentor the team and oversee educational quality.

The Australian Children's Education and Care Authority (ACECQA) regulates our services, and we work alongside the State-based Regulatory Authorities. Depending upon the location of our childcare centres, the Regulatory Authority's contact details are:

QLD

The Office of Early Childhood Education and Care
13 QGOV (13 7468)

VIC

The Department of Education and Training
1300 307 415

WA

The Department of Communities, Education and Care Regulatory Unit
1800 199 383





Once again, welcome to the Sparrow Family.

We are always available to answer any questions you may have, so please feel free to contact our team if you have any queries.

We would love for you to be involved in your child's early learning journey and appreciate all feedback and suggestions.

We can't wait to build your child's foundation for lifelong learning.

Our Partnership With You

We recognise that family is the most important influence in a child's life and that you are your child's first and most important teacher. Our Educators are here to complement that relationship and collaborate with you on decisions that affect your child while in our care.

At all times, we appreciate your contribution to the educational program and learning environment. Please feel welcome to share your thoughts and ideas or participate in any aspect of your child's learning journey. Our doors are always open for parents as we strongly believe your participation sends a strong message to your child.

We also welcome your involvement in reviewing our policies, procedures, philosophy and the Service's Quality Improvement Plan. Copies of these documents are on display in each childcare centre.

All successful relationships are based on open and honest communication. At arrival and departure, your child's Educators can provide you with as much information as you like about your child's experiences and development.

We understand that with today's busy lifestyles, you may not have time to talk in person. That's why we also offer communication via emails, newsletters, displays, notices, information evenings, special events, and digital media such as Facebook and Storypark.

Throughout the year, we also hope that you will take a moment to fill out our Family Surveys and provide us with valuable insights into areas where we are performing well and those where we can improve.



“The art of teaching is the art of assisting discovery.”



Our Pedagogy and Practice

We believe that the best way for a child to develop the educational building blocks for their future is through play. While playing, children experiment with new ideas, test theories and understanding, express creative ability and share their emotions.

Our programs are thoughtfully planned by our Educators and shaped by the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF). They are play-based, child-driven and inspired by the Reggio Emilia approach.

“Our task is to help children communicate with the world using all their potential, strength and languages, and to overcome any obstacle presented by our culture.”

LORIS MALAGUZZI — CREATOR THE REGGIO PHILOSOPHY

Developed in the mid 20th Century, Reggio Emilia is a child-centred and constructivist educational philosophy which utilises self-directed, experiential learning in relationship-driven environments.

It is based on the principles of respect, responsibility, and community through exploration and discovery via a self-guided curriculum.

Underpinning the philosophy is the core assumption that children form their personality during the early years of development. During this time, they are endowed with a hundred languages through which they can express their ideas.

The EYLF is a national early childhood curriculum framework and has been included in the National Quality Standards to ensure delivery of consistent and quality early childhood programmes across Australia.

Educators use this play-based learning framework to develop learning programs responsive to children's ideas, interests, strengths and abilities.



The EYLF describes childhood as a time of belonging, being and becoming:

- Belonging is the basis for living a fulfilling life
- Being is the significance of the here and now in children's lives
- Becoming is the learning and development that children experience

Through the Framework's five learning goals, Educators will assist your child in developing:

- A strong sense of identity
- A connection with, and contribution to, their world
- A strong sense of wellbeing
- Confidence and involvement with their learning
- Effective communication skills

For more information, please visit: www.education.gov.au



“Children need the FREEDOM to appreciate the infinite resources of their HANDS, their EYES, and their EARS, the resources of FORMS, MATERIALS, SOUNDS and COLOURS.”

LORIS MALAGUZZI





Our Kindergarten Programs

Our Kindergarten programs provide children with the skills needed to engage in life-long learning.

Our programming and planning cycles allow our Early Childhood Teachers to develop meaningful experiences for every child, whilst also documenting progress and developments throughout the year. This approach not only enriches a child's learning but also allows for insightful preparations of transition statements. Transition statements can then be shared with future school teachers, allowing a smooth pass over of the education baton.

In selected QLD and VIC Services, we offer Government-funded kindergarten programs that provide foundational learning to support the preparation for, and transition to, formal schooling. These Government-funded Kindergarten programs are led by a Bachelor qualified Early Childhood Teacher, delivering a program that develops a child's social, emotional, intellectual and communication skills.

By providing this program within our childcare centres, children smoothly transition into the program in familiar surroundings, aiding the learning process.



Helping Your Child Feel at Home

Starting at one of our centres is an exciting time for you and your child; however, it can also be an anxious one. Before your child's first day, an orientation visit will help familiarise you and your child with the childcare centre and introduce you to our Educators.

Depending on your child's needs, your orientation might be a quick visit the day before or a series of short visits leading up to the first day. It may also involve shorter days once the child has started to ease them into the routine.

Don't worry if your child seems upset at first. Separation anxiety is completely normal, and you can expect that you and your child will share some tearful goodbyes.

On your first day, we will assign one of our Educators as your dedicated point of contact who will ensure your child eases into Kindergarten. Below are a few helpful hints to assist with this process:

- Bring your child to the orientation visit to meet their Educators before their first day. This is an excellent way for you to spend time with our Educators and for them to gather information about you and your child.
- Talk to your child about what will happen each day and all of the fun experiences they will have.
- Stay and play with your child on their first, or first few days to help engage them in play. Bring a comforter, favourite teddy or a family photo to help your child feel safe.
- Establish a routine when you arrive at our centre and always say goodbye rather than sneaking away. This helps to develop trust.
- Engage with our Educators. Children notice these relationships, and inherently feel more comfortable.

We understand that the first few days can be hard on you.

Please feel free to call at any time to find out how your child is settling in.





What You Need to Bring

Before your child's first day, our Service Manager will tell you what you will need to bring. Please ensure all belongings are clearly labelled with your child's full name to avoid loss or confusion.

What to Wear

Our programs and learning experiences involve physical activity, exploration, a little mess at times and lots of serious fun.

Please dress your child in unrestrictive clothing that allows for comfort, toileting and appropriate for the climate. Please avoid clothing with cords that have the potential to be caught on play equipment. Please also consider sun protection and dress your child in sun-safe clothing.

We recommend children wear comfortable, enclosed, non-slip shoes that can be easily removed to assist in physical activity and independence.



Your Responsibilities

By enrolling at our centre, you agree to abide by our policies and procedures outlined in this handbook and the Sparrow policy manual.

On Arrival

It is a legislative requirement that your child is signed in and out every day they attend. We use a Kiosk System, where you sign in on a tablet using your phone number and a PIN. On arrival, please sign your child in using the Kiosk, place belongings in their locker and take them to where the Educators and other children are. Never drop them off in an unattended room or in the centre foyer.

If you arrive and outdoor play is underway, please ensure your child is wearing their hat and have sunscreen applied. Sunscreen is provided at each of our childcare centres.



“Their minds were not built to sit and be taught. They were built to explore and learn.”



On Departure

On departure, please sign your child out and collect their belongings. You're also welcome to chat with our Educators to find out more about your child's day.

If you are running late to collect your child, please phone the centre so our Educators can let your child know. If we don't hear from you by closing time, one of our Educators will phone you and anyone on your list of authorised persons if you are uncontactable. If no contact has been made after 30 minutes of closing, we will then notify the police.

Authorised Persons

When you enrol at our centre, we will request that you provide us in writing with an authorised person we can contact. An authorised person might be one of your child's grandparents or a close family friend you trust to discuss your child's details and pick up your child if need be.

To ensure your child is protected, it is vital that you keep details about authorised persons up to date. Any person attempting to collect a child will always be asked to produce photo identification to confirm they are an authorised person.

Court Orders

If Child Custody Orders are in place, you must provide court papers to the Service Manager to enforce this at our childcare centres. In the case of a non-custodial parent arriving to collect your child, our Service Manager will contact the police and notify you of the incident.

Our Educators will follow the court instructions to the best of their ability.



Health and Safety

Immunisation

On 1st January 2016, the Australian Government's 'No jab No Play' policy came into effect. This policy requires that children be fully vaccinated to be able to attend Childcare Services.

Prior to your child's first day, your Service Manager will require a copy of your child's current immunisation history status letter or vaccination certificate. Please inform the Service Manager of all future immunisations.

Infant Feeding

All of our childcare centres are breastfeeding-friendly environments. Mothers are welcome to breastfeed their child at any time. You are also welcome to:

- Bring in clearly labelled bottles of expressed breastmilk for your child
- Provide formula for your child (by providing premeasured, dry formula powder in a sealed, labelled container, along with a bottle of premeasured, cooled boiled water.)

Our Educators will mix and prepare the bottles at the required time. All bottles must be labelled with your child's full name. The date the milk was expressed (or thawed) must also be on the label for those containing breastmilk.

On arrival, please store all bottles towards the back of the main body of the fridge. Please do not place bottles in the fridge door. Bottles will be heated at your request by standing them in a container of tepid water or by using a bottle warmer. We will test the temperature of all heated fluids before offering it to your child. When babies move onto solids, please discuss your child's food experiences/requirements with our Educators.





Meals and Nutrition

At Sparrow Early Learning, we promote good nutrition and healthy food habits at all of our centres.

We aim to cater for all special dietary requirements and specific cultural or religious practices. If your child has any dietary requirements, please provide us with the details on your enrolment form and inform our Service Manager of any changes. We are required by legislation to ensure the provision of healthy foods and drinks meet the requirements for children according to the Australian Dietary Guidelines. At most of our childcare centres, our meals are prepared by our on-site Chefs. They follow strict licence requirements in line with the Food Safety Program and compliance with Food Standards.

Rest and Sleep

Children develop and change quickly in their early years, and rest and sleep are essential parts of their development.

We believe children should be allowed to rest and sleep when, and for as long as they need to throughout the day. To ensure home life is not impacted, please speak to our Educators about your child's rest and sleep needs. We aim to accommodate individual routines where possible and inform you of your child's rest and sleep activity each day.

Babies will be assigned their own cot, and we follow strict SIDS recommendations. You should discuss individual calming and soothing techniques with your child's Educator.



Emergencies



In the case of an emergency or illness, we will contact you immediately. If we cannot contact you for any reason, we will contact the authorised persons you have nominated.

Our Educators have been trained in emergency evacuation procedures and regularly practise emergency procedures. Please make sure you keep your contact details and authorised persons' contact details up to date by informing the Service Manager in writing.

Accidents or Incidents

Unfortunately, accidents can happen. If your child is involved in a minor incident, Educators will comfort them, administer first aid and notify you when you collect them.

If the incident involves injury to your child's head or if your child is unable to be consoled, we will notify you immediately. If a more serious incident occurs, we will call an ambulance and notify you immediately. If your child requires hospitalisation and you have not arrived at our childcare centre prior to when the ambulance is ready to leave, one of our Educators will accompany them to the hospital and wait with them until you arrive.

We complete an Incident Form with all incidents, which will require your review and signature when you collect your child. It is important that you review the Incident Form thoroughly, in case your child complains of feeling unwell later.

We will report any serious incident to the Regulatory Authority within 24 hours. If you seek medical attention following an incident at our childcare centre, please notify our Service Manager as soon as possible so we can also report this matter to the Regulatory Authority.



“Playtime is precious. Play builds brain pathways for thinking, creativity, flexibilities, empathy & many other lifelong skills.”

HEATHER SHUMAKER



Illness and Exclusion

To best control infection, we ask that you do not bring your child to the centre if they feel unwell. The best place for them is at home, where they can rest and recover faster. If your child becomes ill at one of our centres, you will be contacted immediately and asked to collect them.

Depending upon the nature of the illness, you may be asked to provide medical clearance before they can return.

A list of common infectious illnesses and their exclusion periods is available in every centre's foyer. If there are any reported cases of infectious illnesses at our centre, we will notify you immediately to be aware of any symptoms and take appropriate preventative steps.

If your child will be absent due to illness, please use the KindyNow Childcare Booking App (available for Apple and Android) or call our centre as soon as you can. If your child has an infectious illness, please let us know so we can notify all other families and minimise the spread.

Medication

On the advice of a medical professional, we may administer medication. Any medication you request to have administered to your child, either prescribed or over the counter, must be specifically for your child. Only medication with a dispensing label will be administered and must contain the following details:

- Your child's name
- The name of the medication
- The dosage and instructions
- The doctor or pharmacist's name
- The date issued
- The expiry date



A Medication Authorisation Form must be completed and signed by you at drop-off and pick-up. This form details the medication's name, when the last dose was administered and instructions for future dose/s. The information you provide on the Medication Authorisation Form must match that of the dispensing label.



Medical Conditions Including Asthma and Anaphylaxis

If your child has an ongoing medical or health condition, such as asthma or anaphylaxis, it is your responsibility to disclose this on your enrolment form, or in writing as soon as the condition becomes diagnosed.

Our Service Manager will issue you with a copy of the appropriate procedure(s) and help you complete a medical management and communication plan in conjunction with your child's doctor. The communication plan is a document that clearly outlines your child's condition, health care needs, any medications and actions to take if symptoms become present or in the case of an emergency.

All medical management and communication plans are to be reviewed every 12 months. We will ensure that our Educators are familiar with the communication plan, and it may also be displayed in the centre, so others are familiar with your child's health needs.

Using the Childcare Centre Safely

Never leave children unattended in cars during drop-off or pick-up as serious health issues can arise very quickly, particularly on hot days.

Please hold your child's hand at all times when in the car park to ensure they are as safe as possible. Please be aware of other families and drive slowly and carefully when entering and exiting the car park. Please also be mindful to ensure gates and doors are closed behind you and that you only allow your child through.



**“Education is the most powerful weapon
which you can use to change the world.”**

NELSON MANDELA

Fees

Method of Payment

Fees will be collected via direct debit from your nominated bank account weekly or fortnightly as assigned by you. You will be given a direct debit form to complete and return to our Service Manager prior to your child's first day.

Fee Responsibilities

Two weeks' of fees are required to be paid before your child's first day. Thereafter, fees must always be paid two weeks in advance. Continual dishonouring of payments or habitual late payment may result in the suspension of care.

Fees are charged for bookings on every operating day, whether your child is in attendance or not. Fees are charged for all public holidays.

If you are experiencing financial hardship, we may be able to help. Request to have a confidential discussion with our Service Manager, and we will aim to find a solution.

Flexible Hourly Sessions

Subject to availability, we offer a range of flexible session times. Our Service Manager will work with you to determine what will work best for your family.





Child Care Subsidy

To assist with the cost of attending our childcare centre, you may be eligible for the Government's Child Care Subsidy (CCS).

To apply for CCS, you must register with the Family Assistance Office and confirm your bookings through your MyGov account. It is your responsibility to apply, and full fees will be charged until our centre receives your CCS percentage notification, if any. If you require any assistance, please speak to your Service Manager.

Any CCS received is paid directly from the Government to us and subtracted from our daily fee. The amount remaining, known as the gap fee, is the amount you have to pay us. To receive CCS, you must sign your child in and out of our centre each day of attendance and on return after any absence (which must not exceed 42 days in a financial year).

The Family Assistance Office outlines exceptions to the 42 allowable absences rule. Fees applied to your account due to late collection of your child are not eligible for CCS.

Changes to Bookings and Cancellation

For any changes in bookings, a minimum of two weeks' written notice is required. If two weeks' notice is not given, regular fees will be applied. If you wish to cancel your child's booking, two weeks' notice is also required. Your child must attend on their last day for CCS to be received.

If your child does not attend on their final day, you will only receive CCS up until your last attendance, meaning that any booked days after this attendance will be charged fully to you. If you do not give notice of your child's cancellation, two weeks' full fees will be charged to you from your last day of attendance and you will not receive CCS for these days.

We appreciate that your everyday routine may be interrupted and you may require an additional day of care on a casual basis. Please use the KindyNow Childcare Booking App (available for Apple and Android) to check availability and book a casual day of care.

Sometimes you might need a few hours to run errands, attend an appointment or recharge your batteries. Subject to availability, and available strictly on a short-term casual basis, we also offer 3-hour morning and afternoon sessions. Please speak to our Service Manager for further details.

Late Fees

If you have not collected your child by closing time, a late fee may be applied to your account. This may be applied even if you have notified our Service Manager that you would be late.



Governance

Privacy

We are committed to upholding the Australian Privacy Principles for the fair handling of personal information and respecting your right to privacy. We follow strict procedures to protect the collected information used as part of our business operation.

Please see our Privacy Policy on our website or at your local centre for further information.

Child Protection

From 1st July 2017, all of our Educators became mandatory reporters of child abuse or suspected child abuse. Our Educators are required to act in the best interest of children and to protect them from risk of harm or neglect.

If any of our team suspect a child may be at risk of harm or neglect, they will follow strict legislative procedures to support the child and to report their concern to the local regulatory authority responsible for child safety or the police.

Exclusion

In addition to exclusion due to illness, exclusion (temporary or permanent), may be applied under the following conditions:

- Inappropriate, abusive or threatening behaviour from a family member, or their associate, towards children, Educators, families or other visitors at the centre
- Ongoing physically or verbally aggressive behaviour by a child where other children and/or Educators are at risk
- Continual late-payment or non-payment of fees.

Thorough consideration will be provided for individual circumstances, and the final outcome will be communicated to all involved.

Policy Compliance and Development

We have a comprehensive set of policies and procedures that assist our centres in complying with legislative requirements and contemporary early childhood practice. Policies are available to view at your local centre, and are systematically and reviewed as regulations and best practices change. We encourage you to share your views and have input into these reviews.

Grievances

Our Service Manager and Educators aim to foster relationships with you and your child with effective, open and honest communication.

In the unfortunate event that you have a grievance, we recommend speaking to your child's Educator or the Service Manager first. If a mutually acceptable outcome has not been reached, your grievance should be escalated to the Business Operations Manager or other senior management. Please see our grievance policy for further details.



Notes





“Our task is to help children communicate with the world using all their potential, strength and languages, and to overcome any obstacle presented by our culture.”

LORIS MALAGUZZI





www.sparrow.edu.au