

Murwillumbah Early Education Centre

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MEEEC



"Where learning is fun!"

Parent Handbook

WELCOME!

We wish to extend a warm welcome to you from the Approved Provider, the Centre Manager and the educators at Murwillumbah Early Education Centre (MEEC).

This Parent Handbook is designed to provide an insight into the service we provide and includes a summary of some of our policies and procedures.

Please take the time to read this handbook as it will assist you with the information that is required for the smooth transition of your child/children to our Centre.

CENTRE INFORMATION

Murwillumbah Early Education Centre is a private, family owned long day care centre.

The Centre is open Monday to Friday, 52 weeks a year (except gazetted public holidays) from 6.30am to 6.30pm.

We provide a quality education program for children aged 6 weeks to 6 years and outside school hours care for younger school age children.

MEEC has four rooms:

1. The Babies' Room for children aged between 6 weeks - 2 years.
2. Toddlers' Room for 2 – 3 year olds.
3. Junior Preschool Room 1 for 3 – 4 year olds.
4. Senior Preschool Room 2 for 4-6 year olds

We have an open door policy and you are always welcome into the Centre to visit any time.

All information we collect about you and your child is treated with discretion and kept confidential.

CENTRE PHILOSOPHY

Our Mission Statement:

Our mission is to **protect, educate, and nurture** children in a safe, stimulating, and positive environment so they are prepared for school and for life.

Our Vision Statement:

Our vision is to have the community recognise the value of our education program and care. We will be an active voice within the community and invite the community into our centre.

Our Values:

In consultation with our families and children we have identified the following values to be of highest importance to us:

- ∞ *Providing a safe environment.*
- ∞ *Nurturing children's development and wellbeing.*
- ∞ *Respecting family values.*
- ∞ *Being 'ready' for school.*
- ∞ *Caring for our environment.*
- ∞ *Fostering our community's cultures.*

How do we incorporate our values?

Providing a safe environment doesn't mean that we child-proof our environment. We recognise that children love to play and explore and engage in "risky" behaviour and we provide opportunities for children to do this safely. We encourage children to experience the world and all of its adventures, using their imagination and trusting their instincts.

Providing a safe environment also implies that our children feel safe to be here, away from their parents or caregivers, on a regular basis; they trust us. They trust us to respond to their needs, to help them when they feel hurt or lonely or scared, to share their happiness and their sadness. They trust us to keep them safe.

We nurture our children's development and wellbeing. We understand the importance of listening, observing and engaging with our children and families and everything we do centres around our children's development and wellbeing. Again, this is built around trust.

Respecting family values is only possible if we understand what these values are. To this end, we form meaningful relationships with our families and talk to them to ascertain what is important to them and what they need from us as carers and educators of their children. They trust us to respect their wishes and to uphold values similar to their own.

We foster a play-based learning environment for all our children and firmly believe that children learn best when they are at play. Our *school readiness* program (called *Step Up*) is also founded on this belief and focuses on the whole person being ready for school. This extends beyond cognitive abilities and into what we consider to be the most important skills at this stage of children's development: looking after themselves, looking after their belongings and being ready to learn.

We are fortunate to have a large *natural play environment* which we treasure. We engage our children in sustainable practices like planting and harvesting vegetables, recycling in all forms, water conservation, worm farming and composting. We teach our children to be caretakers of their environment through our programming and practice.

We belong to a *community* of diverse *cultures* and recognise the need for children to feel a sense of belonging. We strive to accommodate our families' cultural beliefs and values and incorporate these into our programming and practice through stories, discussions, dance, food, art and visitors.

LEARNING AND EDUCATION

MEEC is committed to the Federal Government's Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) and play-based learning. Our aim is to guide your child to become an effective learner and to assist their development in all areas.

Activities are planned for children of all ages to enable learning through play. Qualified educators plan for all age groups and abilities, providing experiences to support and enhance your child's optimal developmental learning potential.

The outdoor program extends children's skills in balance, strength, agility and coordination.

Our strong yet flexible routines provide time for individual play, small group play and large group play.

Children's literacy and language skills are developed during play as they are involved in storytelling, drama and games. Music is also an integral part of the curriculum and children are involved in dancing, singing and movement.

Our educators create and provide a program that is challenging, interesting and stimulating for your child.

ENROLLING YOUR CHILD

We aim to ensure your child's transition between home and MEEC is a smooth and positive experience for everyone.

To achieve this, we ask that you complete your enrolment package forms and return them to the Centre at least 24 hours prior to your child commencing care. This allows time for the Centre educators to prepare for your child's first day and ensures that we have a thorough understanding of your child's needs and are able to provide routine and consistency of care.

We encourage you to visit the Centre with your child prior to commencing care so that he/she will feel more comfortable on his or her first days. Orientation sessions can be arranged with the Centre Manager when you return your enrolment forms.

Sometimes it helps to talk about attending preschool in the time leading up to commencing care. Talk about all the fun activities your child will do: use play dough, play in the sandpit, paint, listen to stories, play with construction toys, meet new friends and much more.

A positive outlook from you will give your child a feeling of security about their new experience (children can pick up on a parent's anxiety quite easily).

Always say goodbye to your child before leaving MEEC and remind him/her that you will return in the afternoon after rest time. If your child is distressed when you leave, an educator will assist you. Our educators are trained in these situations and understand that separation can be as difficult for parents and carers as it is for children. Invariably, however, all children settle down within a few minutes. Always say, "Goodbye, I'm going now and I'll be back this afternoon," without prolonging the farewell. Give your child a kiss and a hug, then leave.

We know how important your children are and we want them to settle in quickly and easily.

You are welcome to phone the Centre at any time to check on your child's progress.

WHAT TO BRING

- ✓ Firstly, please ensure that all your child's belongings are clearly **labelled**.
- ✓ At least **two (2)** additional **changes of clothes**.
- ✓ **Bibs** for the younger children.
- ✓ Your child should wear a disposable **nappy** when attending MEEC. Please also bring enough nappies for the day plus a spare nappy to wear going home.
- ✓ Any creams/lotions your child may require.
- ✓ If your child is toilet training, please include **four (4)** pairs of **training pants**.
- ✓ A soft cuddly toy for security at rest time - only if needed.
- ✓ A **carry bag** for transport of all possessions, works of art and notices.

PLEASE DON'T

- Allow your child to bring any "home toys" to school.
- Allow your child to bring anything valuable or "precious" to MEEC.

Nappies

If your child is not toilet trained and you do not send nappies a charge of \$2 per nappy will be charged to your account.

YOUR CHILD'S FIRST DAY

The sign in/sign out records are used in emergencies and as part of fire safety measures (fire drills) and all children in attendance at MEEC are noted from these records. The sign in/sign out records are also used for the calculation of your Child Care Subsidy (CCS).

The following are your *legal requirements*:

1. Each child must be signed in and out of the Centre each day of attendance using the kiosk.
2. If your child is absent for any reason, upon return, all absences must be confirmed by parent/carer.
3. **Parents/carers are responsible for payment of full fees for any booked days that are not signed for.**

On arrival each day we ask you to:

- ✓ Sign your child in at the kiosk
- ✓ Assist your child to place his/her belongings in a locker.
- ✓ Place the filled water bottle on the tray.
- ✓ Present your child to an educator.
- ✓ **Check the noticeboard for correspondence.**

Before leaving the Centre in the afternoon we ask you to:

- ✓ Greet your child.
- ✓ Collect all of your child's belongings (including shoes).
- ✓ With your child, say goodbye to your child's educator and his/her friends.
- ✓ Sign your child out at the kiosk.
- ✓ **Check the noticeboard for correspondence.**

A late fee of \$10.00 per minute will be charged if your child remains at the Centre after their session time (please refer to the Fees section).

PARTNERSHIPS WITH PARENTS

When parents work in partnership with our educators, a trusting and respectful relationship develops and learning improves. Consequently, your child clearly benefits.

We welcome information about your child's interests and hobbies as this allows us to focus your child's learning experiences more effectively.

It is important for us to know about situations that may affect your child's interest in learning – a seriously ill family member, the arrival of a baby, changes in the family structure. We are better able to provide appropriate learning experiences if we know what's happening at home.

There are many things you can do at home to encourage learning:

1. Show an interest in your child's day and what is happening at MEEC.
2. Encourage a positive attitude towards learning and attending MEEC.
3. Help your child understand that learning is important and fun.

PARENT EDUCATOR COMMUNICATION

Our ways of communicating with you:

Information about your child's day (eating, sleeping, playing and toileting) is available for you when you collect your child.

Educators will provide written information on your child's care as well as photos on the centres Kindyhub.

Educators will speak with you about your child's day when you arrive and discuss any issues that arose during the day. You will be contacted by phone if anything serious arises.

Don't forget to "Like" our Facebook page for important updates and general information.

Formal parent/educator interviews can be scheduled during the year for parents of children who are eligible to attend formal school the following year and at this time all areas of development for your child will be discussed, along with your expectations and an evaluation of your child's progress.

OUR EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING IS ALWAYS ON DISPLAY AT THE CENTRE.

Ways you can communicate with us:

Please feel free to speak to the educators or the Centre Manager about any concerns you may have. You can do this when you drop your child off in the morning or when you pick him/her up at the end of the day.

You can phone throughout the day to check on your child.

Place a suggestion in our suggestion box near the sign in/sign out area.

If you have any concerns regarding your child's progress please speak with the educators in the first instance so that we can work together towards a suitable solution.

CHILD CARE SUBSIDY (CCS)

The Child Care Subsidy (CCs) is a payment funded by the Federal Government to help all families with the cost of quality child care. All families who are residents of Australia may be eligible for at least the minimum child care subsidy. To be eligible to be assessed for CCS, families must register with Family Assistance Office at Centrelink.

Ph: 13 61 50.

ENROLMENT FEE

A non-refundable enrolment fee of **\$40.00** is payable on enrolment. You will be provided with a MEEC hat for your child.

When your CCS payments take effect, your account will be credited with the CCS that the government pays to us on your behalf. You are responsible for full fees until CCS payments commence.

Please see the Centre Manager prior to your child's first day to ensure your CCS payments begin from the first day of your child's enrolment at the Centre.

CHILD CARE FEES

Your childcare fees play an important role in supporting the educators, the Centre, the educational programs and all other children at the Centre.

As of 1st January 2020, all fees are to be paid by direct debit.

Fees can be paid via our easy Direct Debit system. You will find a direct debit authority form in your enrolment pack.

Fees must be paid for the current week and are due on the Monday morning when Direct Debits are processed. Accounts that do not have a zero balance (i.e. no money owing) will have their enrolment suspended to allow families to catch up with child care fees.

Fees are to be paid for all days that your child is enrolled regardless of attendance.

Fees are payable for all public and gazetted holidays. The Centre is open for 52 weeks per year. We may offer make-up days for families enrolled on Mondays if a public holiday falls on this day. Make-up days must be approved by the Centre Manager and booked in advance. Please speak to the Centre Manager for further information.

For reasons of safety we do not accept cash or cheques for your fees at the Centre and no money is kept at the Centre.

All accounts which do not have a **zero balance each Monday morning attract a 20% (of the total debit)** penalty which will be applied to the account weekly.

Accounts are to be paid 1 week in advance and remain 1 week in advance at all times.

Accounts are to be paid by direct debit only.

Accounts which are in arrears may be closed and the family unenrolled from our centre.

A late fee of \$10.00 per minute will be charged if children remain in the Centre after their session end time.

One-to-One Ratio Fees

In the event a child is unwell or for any reason requires a one-to-one ratio, as deemed necessary by the responsible person in charge at the time, additional charges will be added to the family's account. The amount will be \$50.00 per hour or part hour for the duration of time the one-to-one ratio was deemed to be necessary by the responsible person at the centre. This charge will be updated annually to reflect changes in educators' rising costs.

NOTICE PERIOD

Two weeks' notice is required when your child leaves the Centre and all accounts must be finalised prior to this time. Outstanding accounts will be pursued through the Courts.

Our fees policy is available, and we encourage all parents to read it.

ABSENCES

If your child is unable to attend the Centre for any reason, you are requested to phone and inform the Centre Manager or a senior educator the day prior to care or in the early morning on the day of care. This will help us with our staffing arrangements.

For families receiving CCS, allowable absences are allocated for each child per financial year. Once you have reached your allowable absence limit (42 per financial year), CCS is not paid for any further absences without certificates from your doctor (these are known as "approved absences"). There is no limit on the number of approved absences, provided documentation is provided.

SPECIAL NEEDS

After assessment by Inclusion Support Services we may be able to offer care for some children with special needs. This is at the discretion of the Approved Provider. Please speak to the Centre Manager for further information.

BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT

Our goal is to encourage the development of a range of skills which will enable children to resolve conflict in a socially acceptable way without using negative, aggressive or destructive behaviours.

The educators provide children with clear guidelines on acceptable and unacceptable behaviour and children are given realistic limits to comply with requests.

HEALTH GUIDELINES

Maintaining a healthy community in child care is a shared responsibility of parents and the Centre educators. You are required to have alternative care arrangements in place at short notice (possibly family members or friends) who you can rely on in case your child is excluded from the Centre for health reasons.

The Centre is **NOT** a place for sick children and care cannot be provided for children with high temperatures, and/or suspected infectious conditions.

The Centre Manager will not accept a child into care if he/she is not well enough to participate in the activities or requires special attention because of ill health.

If a child in care has a suspected infectious condition, his/her parents will be contacted and asked to collect the child as soon as possible. Parents are encouraged to seek medical advice and contact the Centre to inform us of the outcome and any suggestions made by the doctor. Families of children who are not immunised will be contacted to withdraw their children.

To minimise the spread of infection, children suffering from certain infections are excluded from attending Murwillumbah until they are no longer contagious. Children with a suspected infectious condition must produce a medical clearance certificate before the child will be allowed to return to care.

The Centre Manager informs families of any current infectious outbreaks by posting a notice in the foyer which includes a statement regarding symptoms and exclusion time from MEEC. A fact sheet will also be emailed to all families.

A SICK CHILD

If your child is sick while at Murwillumbah, the Centre Manager or a senior educator will phone you and ask you to collect your child. You must always have alternative travel and collection arrangements in the event your child gets sick. If your child is not collected within a reasonable time, approximately 30 minutes to one hour, the educators will phone the NSW Ambulance service to take the child to the nearest hospital. The costs of this will be the responsibility of the parents.

Please note that educators will not drive your child home in their own vehicle.

NUTRITION

Nutrition education is an important part of our Centre programming. Food should not only be nutritious but should help meet the social and educational needs of children. Meal times provide a wonderful opportunity to

create a sharing family atmosphere. Our Centre is a learning environment where new food experiences are welcomed.

ALLERGIES

Please keep us informed in writing of any allergies your child has or develops whilst in our care.

MEDICATION

If your child requires medication while in care, the medication must be brought in, handed to an educator who will immediately store the medication in a locked cupboard or a locked medication box in the refrigerator and a medication form must be completed by the parent. All medication that is to be administered by an educator must have a chemist's label on it clearly stating the child's full name and dosage requirements.

Our medication policy for prescribed and non-prescribed medication is available for parents to read. Only medications supplied and authorised by a parent will be administered at the Centre.

Under no circumstances is any medication or any dangerous item to be left in the children's backpack or bag.

IMMUNISATIONS

Parents must supply evidence of current immunisations to the Centre at enrolment and updated as per the current NSW Immunisation Schedule. If your child's immunisations are not kept up to date, CCB will be discontinued and you will be responsible for payment of full fees. In the event of an outbreak of a vaccine preventable disease, any child who is not fully immunised will be excluded from Murwillumbah for the duration of the outbreak. Families of unimmunised children will be notified of the outbreak of the infectious disease and will also be excluded from the Centre for the minimum exclusion period. Parents are responsible for all fees during this period.

ACCIDENTS

In the case of a minor accident involving your child while in care, educators will immediately administer first aid. An incident report will be completed by an educator and on arrival at MEEC you will be asked to sign the report to indicate that you have been notified of the accident.

If the injury requires further medical treatment, you will be contacted and a plan of action organised.

If urgent medical treatment is required and a parent or emergency contact is unable to be contacted, the Centre Manager will act on behalf of the parent and proceed with whatever medical treatment is required. If a child requires hospital treatment, if possible, an educator known to the child will escort the child and stay with them until the parent or authorised person arrives.

Our *Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy* is available for all parents to read.

CLOTHING

You are encouraged to dress your child in comfortable clothes that neither restrict nor reduce his/her ability to be active. Clothes and footwear that potentially adversely affect the child's safety cannot be worn at preschool (e.g. scarves). Clothes that do not restrict or inhibit playing, exploring, running and climbing are encouraged so that your child can explore the environment.

Clothing must also provide sun and cold protection and be comfortable for indoor and outdoor experiences. Clothes which allow children independence for toileting are essential i.e. pull off pants that come off easily. Young

children enjoy and need “messy” play with paint, glue, sand and water. Dress your child in play clothes that wash easily. We follow the Cancer Council guidelines for sun protection and all children are required to comply. Please see our *Clothing Policy*.

Please clearly label all clothing, footwear and personal belongings.

REST TIME

Rest time is an essential part of the day's program which we must allow for. This time allows children a quiet time to recoup from a busy morning. Children who do not sleep are encouraged to rest quietly and then are allowed quiet activities such as books and puzzles.

SOCIAL EVENTS

We welcome sharing any special social events with all the children at the Centre. If something special is happening in your child's life, please let us share it. A small food platter, balloons or just a special visit from a loved one will help introduce all the children to special days. Please remember our NO NUTS POLICY.

BIRTHDAYS

A cake may be brought to share on your child's birthday. Please let the educators know that you will be bringing in a cake. You are welcome to visit and celebrate with your child. Alternative foods are more than welcome. Should you not wish your child to consume cake you are welcome to bring alternative foods (clearly labelled with your child's name) to freeze for special occasions.

DELIVERY OF CHILDREN

Children must arrive prior to 10 am on each day they are booked to attend the centre.

A child may not be accepted at the centre after 10 am without prior arrangement or prior knowledge of reasoning.

Families and family members are encouraged to contact the centre via phone or email.

COLLECTION OF CHILDREN

Children will only be released into the care of the authorised persons listed on your enrolment form. No child will be released into the care of any persons not known to the Centre educators. Unknown persons will need to prove that they are authorised as listed on the enrolment form.

If your child has not been collected by the end of their session time (we are only licensed till 6.30pm), the authorised persons listed on your enrolment form will be contacted. If no authorised person is able to be contacted to collect your child and you are unable to be contacted, educators will follow procedures for children left at the Centre after closing time. The Department of Family Community Services and the local Police will be informed.

Parents will be charged a late fee of \$10.00 per minute for each child who remains at the Centre after their session time.

GRIEVANCES

We welcome comments from parents as it helps us improve our quality of care. Our *Parent Complaints Policy* is available in the foyer for all parents to read.

OUR EXPECTATIONS OF PARENTS/FAMILIES

When enrolling your child at our Centre you have certain expectations of us. We also have expectations of you, the parents and families, as follows:

Parents and families are expected to:

- **Sign their child in and out of the Centre and sign for any absences**
The Centre is required to keep a record of children within the service. You must sign your child in on arrival and sign them out on departure. If your child has been absent you are required to sign for this absence on your first day of return. We ask that you are diligent with this procedure.
- **Notify the Centre of any change to your enrolment details**
When your child is enrolled at our Centre it is your responsibility to notify us of any changes to your Child Care Subsidy entitlements, contact details including authorised persons to collect and all contact phone numbers and addresses, changes to employment contact details, changes to your address, dietary changes, medical and court order information pertaining to your child.
- **Adhere to Centre policies**
The Centre has policies in place to ensure appropriate practices and procedures are implemented. By enrolling your child at our Centre you are agreeing to abide by all Centre policies. All of our policies are available for parents to read.
- **Pay your child care fees**
Your fees are to be paid one week in advance at all times and due every Monday morning.
- **Collect information from your communication pocket**
You are responsible for collecting information from management and educators from your parent pocket. It is your responsibility to keep yourself updated and informed.
- **Collect your child from the Centre if he/she becomes ill**
The Centre has a duty of care to all children within the service. If your child becomes ill during the day you must collect your child from the Centre when you are notified by the educators.
- **Keep your child at home if showing signs of illness and advise the Centre of your child's absence**
The Centre cannot care for sick children. Please advise the Centre of your child's illness and the period of time that your child will not be attending.
- **Label all of your child's belongings**
It is important that we are able to return misplaced articles of clothing or treasured belongings to you. Please label all of your child's belongings and regularly check the lost property basket.
- **Always leave your child with an educator on arrival**
Do not leave your child in an unattended part of the building or room and always ensure you hand over your child to an educator. At times educators may be busy with another child. Please wait until an educator is free before you leave your child.
- **Always say goodbye to your child**
It is very important to say "goodbye" to your child even if he/she becomes upset. A relationship of trust needs to develop between you and your child during separation time. This will not happen if you leave without saying goodbye.

Thank you for choosing Murwillumbah Early Education Centre for your child's early education and care. We look forward to a long and happy relationship for all.

Centre Management and Educators

“Where Learning Is Fun!”