



Parent Handbook



Mitchell Street
Early Learning Centre

2019

Mitchell Street ELC

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Welcome

Mitchell St would like to wish you a very warm and friendly welcome to our centre. We trust that your child's experience will feel like an extension of your home. By working together, we will provide an environment that promotes quality care and education for your child, a place where they will be accepted for who they are, and a place where laughter and play are cherished and where children's innate curiosity is captured and given a chance to grow.

We believe that childhood is like no other time in a person's life. It is a time for exploring for creating ... for discovery about one's self ... for meeting the world ... for learning how to learn ... for being accepted. It is a time for growing and a time for being allowed the time to be a child.

This Parent Handbook contains important information about Service activities. You will find explanations for how our Service functions, our approach to young children's learning, our beliefs about education, and practical information to explain why we include specific routines and practices in our daily practices and actions.

We suggest that you keep a copy handy for reference during your time with us. Mitchell Street's Policies and Procedures Folder is also available for you to read at any time. Of course, you are always welcome to ask questions and we will be happy to provide explanations or assist you.

We look forward to sharing many learning and growing experiences with you and your child during your time at Mitchell Street.

Kindest Regards,

Kerry Lenoble
Centre Manager

Contact Details

Mitchell Street Early Learning Centre

21-25 Mitchell Street Belmont 3216

Phone: 52457670

Email: enquiry@mitchellstreetelc.com.au

Website: <http://www.mitchellstreetelc.com.au/>

Operating Hours

Day	Hours
Monday	6:30 am to 6:30 pm
Tuesday	6:30 am to 6:30 pm
Wednesday	6:30 am to 6:30 pm
Thursday	6:30 am to 6:30 pm
Friday	6:30 am to 6:30 pm
Saturday	CLOSED
Sunday	CLOSED

Mitchell Street ELC Security and Video Surveillance

Mitchell street ELC places a very high value on the safety and wellbeing of all staff, families, children and visitors. All staff and families have their own unique security code to enter the building, this is also monitored on a program called AZTRAC. Mitchell Streets main camera monitor is located at reception to your right as you walk in. The purpose of these camera's is to monitor any person entering and exiting the building. The camera's are for security purposes only and the storing of data is cleared every 4 days. The only time that security footage is viewed off site is in the event of an emergency, vandalism, a break in or unauthorised trespassing. Listed below are the cameras and their locations within our premises

- Camera 1: kinder outdoor yard (left side)
- Camera 2: Gumnut grove outdoor yard
- Camera 3: back stairs emergency exit
- Camera 4: front of car park
- Camera 5: reception counter
- Camera 6: koala cove/ willow way outdoor yard
- Camera 7: kinder outdoor yard (right side)
- Camera 8: middle of car park
- Camera 9: end of car park
- Camera 10: front entry gate
- Camera 11: middle stairwell upstairs
- Camera 12: main reception foyer area

Our Aims, Values and Philosophy

Our **Mission** is to support, nurture and encourage children's strengths through our play based environment, where children feel empowered to seek out their own learning.

Mitchell Street's unique **philosophy** believes in the benefits of providing holistic approaches through learning experiences for all our children in a child safe, caring and nurturing environment. Mitchell Street's values incorporate the need to honour the family, nurture our children and care for our environment through the use of sustainable practices. We encourage children and families to be active participants in our curriculum.

Mitchell Street ELC offers a nurturing environment providing high quality care and education within a natural setting. Children are encouraged to explore their environment, using their imagination, creativity and individuality. We believe that through developing a sense of belonging and providing opportunity for children to be children they will become confident learners.

Our Values and Aims in relation to children:

In relation to children:

- We encourage a strong sense of identity
- To be confident and involved learners
- To feel secure in their environment
- To encourage children to experiment and explore
- To respect and celebrate culture and promote the cultural diversity
- To share and care for each other
- To promote the cultural safety of aboriginal children
- To promote the cultural safety of linguistically diverse backgrounds
- To promote belonging

Mitchell Street values each child as unique with an importance on learning through play and strongly values the human rights of the child.

In relation to families:

- We will treat and view families as valued partners, collaborators and positive advocates for their children.
- We support parent involvement in all aspects of our daily program and encourage their involvement and feedback.
- We work closely with families to assist them in their wishes and future aspirations for their child.

Our open reception area allows families to speak with management in a friendly welcoming environment.

In relation to staff:

- We appreciate and acknowledge our team as individuals and respect diverse personality traits, beliefs and cultural backgrounds.
- We believe in networking with each other and with experts in our industry in relation to ongoing education for best practices for our children.
- We are dedicated to keeping our team inspired.
- Draw on each other's strengths rather than focus on weaknesses

Our easy going can do attitude is evident in our daily practices and interactions with each other.

In relation to our community:

- Mitchell Street is building a strong relationship with Give Where You Live through both its team and business giving as well as in house fund raising events.
- Throughout the Centre educators liaise closely with external health specialists, jointly working towards positive health outcomes for the children.
- The centre supports a number of community services through donations.
- Regular calendar events in the Centre help raise awareness within the Centre's community for various local and national causes and assist in promoting the Centre's commitment to its local community.

Mitchell Street believes it is important to educate our children using the Victorian Early Years Learning Framework, where play is our children's work and their way of exploring the world around them. We encourage them to be curious and ask questions - why, how, where, when and what. The National Quality Standards, National Law, National Children's Services Regulations guide our practice. We are strong advocates for Child Safe Standards and Mitchell Street is an approved Sun Smart Centre.

Goals

For families, children and communities to have access to a well administered, organized service that meets the local needs by offering quality, best practice, individual programs with developmental outcomes and excellent standards.

For employees to be supported in their professional growth through training, networking, career pathways, respectful communications, encouragement, acknowledgment of skills and problem solving challenges.

Code of conduct

Code of conduct for educators, students and volunteers

As an employee of Mitchell St ELC support the safety and wellbeing of all children by

- adhering to Mitchell St ELC child protection and child safe standards policy at all times / upholding Mitchell St ELC statement of commitment to child safety at all time
- taking all reasonable steps to protect children from abuse
- treating everyone with respect
- listening and responding to the views and concerns of children, particularly if they are telling you that they or another child has been abused and/or are worried about their safety or the safety of another
- promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal children (for example, by never questioning an Aboriginal child's self-identification)
- promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children with culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds (for example, by having a zero tolerance of discrimination)
- promoting the safety, participation and empowerment of children with a disability (for example, during personal care activities)
- ensuring as far as practicable that adults are not left alone with a child
- reporting any allegations of child abuse to Mitchell St ELC leadership, and ensure any allegation to reported to the police or child protection
- reporting any child safety concerns to Mitchell St ELC leadership or MANAGEMENT.
- if an allegation of child abuse is made, ensure as quickly as possible that the child(ren) are safe

- encouraging children to 'have a say' and participate in all relevant organisational activities where possible, especially on issues that are important to them.

Code of conduct for children and young people

As children and young people who are part of Mitchell Street Early Learning Centre we agree that:

- We will respect other children, young people and adults
- We will cooperate and treat our friends fairly
- We will listen to rules in our room
- We will have a say about what we are involved in
- We will speak up if we are worried or concerned about something
- We will not engage in dangerous play or use hurtful language
- We will not pressure others into doing this that make them uncomfortable

Code of conduct for parents and guardians

As a parent/guardian of a child involved in the service provided by Mitchell Street ELC I agree that:

- I will respect the rights, dignity and worth of every person, regardless of their abilities, gender, religion or cultural background.
- I will respect the decisions of the Service's staff and role model respectful behaviours
- I will focus on and encourage children's efforts and performance
- I will support all efforts to remove any form of abuse in this organisation and encourage a safe and supportive service environment
- I will remember that every child participates in activities for their own enjoyment, not mine
- I will raise any issues or concerns with educators or the Nominated Supervisor
- I will not treat any child or young person in an unfair, unjust, or discriminatory manner

If you believe a child is at immediate risk of abuse phone 000.

Reference: The Office of the Child Safety Commissioner (Victoria). A Guide for Creating a Child-Safe Organisation. (2006)

Groups

Each day, Mitchell St ELC provides care and education for up to 130 children aged 6 weeks to school age. Children are placed in age appropriate groups with educators and children familiar to them. These placements take into consideration the children's ages and developmental stages. The groups are:

Room Name	Age group
Gumnut Grove	6 weeks – 15 months
Koala Cove	15 months – 2 years
Willow Way	2 years- 3 years
Emu explorers	3 years – 4 years
Kangaroo Kinder's	4 – 5 years (Government Approved Kindergarten Program)

In the early morning and late afternoon, and for special activities and events, children are given the opportunity to play in mixed-age groups and with their siblings.

Family grouping	Room opening times
Morning	6:30am- Koala Cove opens All Children combine
	7:15am- Kangaroo Kinder room Open- Emu Explorers and Kangaroo Kinder's combine
	7:30am- Gumnut Grove opens
	7:45am- All rooms open as per normal
Evening	5:45pm- All rooms combine in Koala Cove

Staffing

Educators are the key to high quality care and education. Mitchell St ELC employs suitably qualified and experienced educators to nurture and support young children.

All team members maintain their knowledge of the regulations, codes of practice, learning framework and the Child Safe Standards. We maintain appropriate educator to child ratios enabling the best care and education.

All staff have permanent shift times to support a continuity of care throughout all of the rooms

Quality Assurance

Mitchell St ELC participates in the Australian Government's National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care. To be accredited, the Service must adhere to the requirements of the seven quality areas of the National Quality Standard. These are:

- Quality Area 1 – Educational program and practice
- Quality Area 2 – Children's health and safety
- Quality Area 3 – Physical environment
- Quality Area 4 – Staffing arrangements
- Quality Area 5 – Relationships with children
- Quality Area 6 – Collaborative partnerships with families and communities
- Quality Area 7 – Governance and Leadership

Priority of Access

When allocating places in the Service, Mitchell St ELC the priority of access guidelines set down by the Australian Government.

Priority 1	A child at risk of serious abuse or neglect
Priority 2	A child of a single parent who satisfies, or of parents who both satisfy, the work/training/study test under Section 14 of the of the 'A New Tax System (Family Assistance) Act 1999'. Proof that you satisfy these requirements is needed.
Priority 3	Any other child

Mitchell St ELC is committed to non-discriminatory access.

Enrolment

The Centre Manager meets with all parents and children before commencement at the Service. Parents have the opportunity to go on a tour of the Service, be introduced to the educators, ask questions, complete the enrolment paperwork and provide the Service with any pertinent information.

In brief, parents need to:

- Complete the enrolment forms
- Provide children's birth certificates, immunisation records, and any court orders affecting the child so that these documents can be photocopied for Service records.
- Communicate information necessary to ensure your child's health, education and care needs are met.
- Receive a Parent Handbook detailing how the Service operates, and its practices.
- Be shown where the Service Policies and Procedure Folder is located
- Have explained the importance of maintaining up to date information about emergency contact and other details
- Be provided with information about fees, how to pay them and agree to a payment schedule
- Provide the documentation required to attract government payments, and be reminded of the need to inform Centrelink of any change to these arrangements
- Pay the appropriate administration and enrolment fees
- Agree to a day and date for commencement

Fees

Please speak to our Centre Manager regarding our current fee schedule. Full fees will be charged until Centrelink advises Mitchell St ELC of your Childcare Subsidy (CCS) entitlements. Centrelink can be contacted on 13 61 50.

- Fees must always be paid one week in advance.
- A \$200 bond is required upon enrolment

- Minimum booking of 2 days per week
- We require a full two weeks' notice in writing (not verbal) if you intend to withdraw your child from the Service or to decrease/increase the number of days required. The two weeks' notice starts from the close of business of the day you inform the Service in writing. The bond will be credited into your account to assist with the payment of the last 2 weeks of care.
- Normal fees apply when your child is sick
- Families (including parents, foster parents, guardians, grandparents or any other eligible person who is liable for paying childcare fees) are responsible for registering your child to receive Centrelink payments. This must be done prior to commencing care to ensure that all details are received by the Service and payments can be applied accordingly.
- Child Care Subsidy will only be paid for days where child care attendance records (both arrival and departure) are accurately completed and signed by the parent/guardian or other nominated adult collecting the child.
- Fee's are charged weekly every Thursday with a statement being sent to your email address with fee's being debited from your nominated bank account on the Friday
- Outstanding fees are managed according to the Service's Fee Policy.
- Reduced Holiday Fees apply 4 weeks per calendar year pro rata at a discount of 30%. We require a minimum of 2 weeks notice in writing to apply the holiday discount.
- Public holiday discount of 20% is applied if your child attends on a Victorian public holiday
- The Service closes at 6.30pm each night. A late fee of \$5.00 per minute by the Service clock applies for children collected after 6.30pm. Please note that late fees do not attract CCS. Refer to the Service's Fee Policy.

Orientation

After enrolment, and prior to your child commencing at Mitchell St ELC , you and your child will be encouraged to attend 2 orientation sessions (or more is required). At this time, you will be:

- Shown information boards, brochures and menu displays
- Shown how to sign your child in and out of the Service
- Shown where to store your child's belongings
- Introduced to the educators in your child's room, and spend some time in that room
- Given an explanation of the educational program in your child's room
- Offered an opportunity to ask questions, share information about your child or clarify any concerns you may have

Settling Your Child into our Service

We understand how difficult it can be for you to leave your child in care for the first time. Some children settle quickly, some take longer. We are sensitive to and aware of the anxiety that children and parents can feel. We make this transition as smooth as possible for you and your child through our orientation. As part of the orientation process, you visit the Service with your child for short periods prior to their commencement date.

Other ways you can help your child to settle in on the first day are:

- Prepare your child by talking about what they will occur in the Service, and about the activities (e.g. painting, drawing, craft, music, games). If you are positive, your child is likely to be positive as well.
- When it is time for you to leave, do so quickly. Wherever possible, settle your child into an activity, say goodbye and go. Even when a child understands that you will be coming back, the moment of parting can still be sad
- Be certain to say goodbye. Use set phrases such as 'I'm going now' and 'I will be back after rest time'. Smile. Children take their social cues from their parents. If a parent appears happy and confident in the Service environment, the child will be too. Saying goodbye develops a secure and trusting relationship between you and your child.
- Arrive with time to spare. Your child is more likely to settle readily if unhurried.
- If your child becomes distressed or inconsolable during the day, rest assured we will contact you. A plan to gradually introduce your child to the new environment will be developed to help them settle in and reduce your stress.

Should you have further concerns about settling your child into our Service, please talk to our educators. We encourage parents to ring a couple of times throughout the day to find out about their children's day.

WHAT PARENTS NEED TO BRING EACH DAY – ALL ITEMS SHOULD BE CLEARLY NAMED.

- A back pack or bag with your child's articles in it.
- 2-3 changes of seasonally appropriate clothing – all named
- Comfort items such as a dummy, soft toy or blanket for rest time – also named

If your child is requiring bottles please bring along their bottles, formula or breast milk, cows milk will be supplied. If bringing in formula, the formula tin needs to be new and unopened or stored in premeasured containers. Label all the parts of your child's bottle so we can be sure to place all the right pieces back together after cleaning. All food will be supplied by the service we do not accept any food or food products to be bought in by families.

Every item is to be clearly labelled with your child's name. We do not take responsibility for any items not named. Remember, many children have the same items, so naming them is essential.

What The Service Provides Each Day

- All food and drink, including breakfast, morning tea, lunch, afternoon tea and late snack.
- Hats (your child receives a hat on enrolment)
- Sheets for rest time
- Sunscreen (If you require a special type for medical reasons – bring that along)
- Nappies, wipes and nappy cream (If you require a special type for medical reasons – bring that along)

Children's Toys

Toys and items of value should be left at home. While many children would like to bring their own toys to the Service, sharing these can be difficult for young children, and can cause distress. It is difficult for staff to monitor personal toys and to ensure the toys will not be damaged. Our staff are unable to spend time searching for personal toys if lost as they must supervise children at all times.

Security items (e.g. dummy, rug, sleep teddy) are exceptions. However, these items are to be clearly labelled with each child's name.

Lost Property

Un-named lost property is placed in a labelled basket in the room in which it was found. Unclaimed items are donated to a local charity or placed in our spare supplies at the end of each month. Please regularly check the lost property basket in your child's room so your items are not given away.

Birthdays

We enjoy celebrating children's birthdays and special events at Mitchell St ELC

If your child is having a birthday you are welcome to order a cake via reception at the cost of \$10 with a minimum of 48 hours notice to share with the room at afternoon tea time.

You are welcome to join us for the birthday - when we blow out the candles. Please advise staff if you intend to come along - otherwise we may have eaten all the cake before you arrive! If you are unable to attend on the day, we are happy to take photographs for you.

Arrival and Departure

Arrival

For your child's safety, we require that you or an authorised listed contact on your enrolment form

- Sign your child in - a legal requirement
- Inform an educator if
 - Your child has been given medication at home within the past 24 hours
 - Your direct contact number will be different for that day in case of any emergency
 - Someone other than yourself is collecting your child
 - Your child is unwell, has been sick or is teething
 - Your child requires medication throughout the day
 - Anything has happened/or is planned that we should know about to ensure we meet your child's needs
- Assist your child to place their bag in their locker
- Encourage your child to greet educators and children
-

Before you leave, inform an educator of your child's arrival.

Departure

For your child's safety, we require that you or an authorised listed contact on your enrolment form

- Take a minute or two to read the information we provide about the experiences your child enjoyed so you can chat to your child about their day
- Check the notice board for important information
- Check that all belongings, including medications are collected
- Encourage your child to say goodbye to educators and children
- Inform an educator of your child's departure
- Sign your child out - a legal requirement

Persons Authorised to Collect Children

At the time of enrolment, parents provide the Service with the names and contact details, including telephone numbers, of any authorized persons to collect their children. Parents must notify the Service of any changes to these arrangements. If someone other than an authorised person (as indicated on the child's file) is to collect your child, the Service must be notified in writing.

Children will be released to authorised persons only. Photo ID must be shown before a child will be permitted to leave the Service with a person unknown to staff.

Parents who have court orders must provide us with a copy for our records. If no legal documentation exists, the child will be released to either parent, until the Service is advised otherwise in writing. Refer to the Service's *Arrival and Departure of Children Policy*.

In the case of a non-custodial parent arriving to collect a child where a court order is in place, the Centre Manager/Responsible Person will explain the Service's legal obligation not to release the child to them. Should that person persist with their claim, the police will be contacted.

Reminder: Custody or court orders should be brought to the attention of the Centre Manager upon enrolment or as they are granted.

Late Collection

It is stressful for children and staff when parents arrive late to collect their children. The Service closes at 6.30pm each night. Parents need to arrive with sufficient time to collect the child, sign-off, gather any personal belongings, and perhaps have a brief chat with educators. If you are not able to collect your child before closing time, please organise for someone else to collect them and inform the Service.

A late fee of \$5.00 per minute (by the Service clock) applies for children collected after 6.30pm. Payment of any late fee is due the following week. Refer to the Service's *Fee Policy*.

We understand that emergencies do occur. In such an event, parents are asked to advise us well before closing time. Please be mindful that our staff have families and other commitments too.

If your child is still at the Service at 6.30pm and we have not heard from you, we will take the following steps:

1. Attempt to contact you.
2. Call the people listed on your child's Enrolment Form as 'Emergency Contacts' and nominated to collect your child
3. Call the Police Department or Child First to advise them of the situation and consult on what action to take
4. Inform the Department of Education and Training.

Sharing The Learning Journey

Children learn best when educators work in partnership with families. Effective communication and exchange of information about children's wellbeing, growth and learning are integral to these partnerships. Parent participation in the Service also results in better outcomes. It is important that educators and parents develop trust and respect.

Parents can participate in the Mitchell St ELC activities by:

- Chatting to educators about your child's day
- Discussing your child's needs and interests with educators
- Offering ideas and suggestions
- Reading to the children
- Sharing skills, talents and cultural aspects of family life with your child's group
- Contributing resource materials
- Assisting with excursions
- Attending social and parent functions
- Sharing special occasions and events (e.g. birthday celebrations) with your child
- Being involved in an advisory manner
- Being involved in the review of the Service's philosophy, policies and procedures, and the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP)
- Assisting in any of the Service's daily routines

Some of the many ways Mitchell St ELC communicates with parents include:

- Newsletters
- Information meetings
- Notice boards
- Emails
- Displayed information about your child's day
- Communication Books
- Making available details of your child's food and drink intake, rest/sleep times, nappy changes
- Speaking with you informally when you collect your child or through phone calls

Providing a comprehensive parent resource library, leaflets on topics related to young children, and the services of support organisations and agencies within the community.

Please let us know your preferred means of receiving information.

Parents can contribute to and provide feedback to the educational program at Mitchell St ELC by:

- Informing educators about your child's special talents, interests and hobbies away from the Service
- Immediately communicating any concerns that you may have about your child's learning
- Conversations with your child's Educator or the Centre Manager
- Writing comments and feedback on the displayed program
- Attending parent/ teacher events

- Completing surveys about the program, routines, policies and overall operation of the Service
- Sharing your skills and interests with your child's group. Children are delighted when parents contribute to their activities. Grandparents are also welcomed
- Viewing your child's individual portfolio regularly, asking questions about it, and adding your comments
- Contribute recycling items.

Parent Concerns

Mitchell St ELC always seeks to promptly resolve any parental concerns that or affect the wellbeing of children, parents or educators, or the operation of the Service.

Concerns about the care or safety of your child are best raised with the educators in your child's group in the first instance, or with the Centre Manager.

The Department of Education and Training can also be contacted.

The contact details for this Department are:

Phone : 5215 5136

<http://www.acecqa.gov.au/regulatory-authorities1/contact-your-regulatory-authority>

Accurate Information

Please inform the Service in writing if:

- Your child is sick or going on holidays
- Custody/access arrangements have changed
- Your child's immunisation has been updated this is a legal requirement every 6 months
- Your home telephone number/address has changed
- Your work telephone number/workplace has changed
- The name of your child's doctor, telephone number or address has changed
- The names of persons authorised to collect your child or their telephone numbers have changed
- Any other information pertinent to the education and care of your child has changed

The Victorian Early Years Learning Framework (VEYLF) In our Service

At Mitchell St ELC, we facilitate learning programs that build on your children's interests and abilities and will communicate with you about their learning. Educators support each child to achieve the VEYLF's five learning outcomes using a variety of strategies throughout each day.

The 5 Learning Outcomes are:

1. Children have a strong sense of identity
2. Children are connected with and contribute to their world
3. Children have a strong sense of wellbeing
4. Children are confident and involved learners
5. Children are effective communicators

The VEYLF emphasises learning through play and recognises that play is an ideal vehicle for learning. The VEYLF has been designed to provide young children with learning opportunities to maximise their potential and develop a strong foundation for future success.

At Mitchell St ELC we devise programs to ensure that play is central to early learning and development. Play is spontaneous, meaningful and inclusive of all children. Through play young children explore and learn to understand the world around them as they communicate, discover, imagine and create. When children play, they test out their ideas, challenge each other's thinking and build new understandings.

Each child will learn at their own pace. Educators guide play by carefully designing environments and interacting with the children. The VEYLF identifies three important elements in children's early years, Belonging, Being and Becoming.

- **Belonging** is the basis for living a fulfilling life. Children feel they belong when they are able to form secure relationships within their family, community and connect with their culture and physical environments
- **Being** is about recognizing that children live in the here and now. Childhood is special, and children need time to just 'be' - time to play, try new things, make friends and develop meaningful relationships and just have fun.
- **Becoming** is about the many kinds of learning that young children experience. Children form their sense of identity from an early age, and this shapes the kind of adult they will become. We all have a role to play in ensuring that the early years are a positive time for young children.

The VEYLF focuses on how children learn, and our educators work with each child to achieve positive learning outcomes. Building strong relationships with families and children is an important step.

Our Program – The Shared Learning Journey

Mitchell St ELC provides a quality education and care program for children based on best practice. We promote each child's social, emotional, physical, language and intellectual development. We encourage exploration, experimentation and investigation and facilitate this through individual, small or large group experiences.

Physical Activity and Sustainability

Parents are children's first educators. Our service is an extension of the home environment. In order to maximise the benefits of our program, we work with families to share the learning journey with children.

We promote learning by balancing our growing knowledge of each child, ongoing interactions with children, and planning. We encourage, extend and value children's spontaneous learning. Children are the focus of the curriculum. They are individuals with similarities and differences from their peers and have interesting ideas to share with us and their friends. Curriculum opportunities are provided for all children to use and develop their particular interests and abilities.

We facilitate learning by extending, applying and introducing new experiences that stimulate each individual's interest and learning. We allow interests to extend over time so that each child may achieve needed outcomes. Learning needs to be ongoing and sustained to enable adequate depth and breadth of investigations.

Excursions and incursions

Excursions

Occasionally our children will go out and about on an excursion. This is usually cause for much fun and excitement, but this kind of experience also has a serious side. Before we leave our premises for any reason parents will be asked to sign a permission form for the event for their child. This is a legal requirement. If we do not have a signed permission form, your child will be unable to attend the activity.

Parents are encouraged to attend these events as it is a requirement that we have a high ratio of adults to children for safety reasons.

Incursions

We also invite performers to visit our Service to entertain and educate the children in a variety of ways (e.g. puppet shows, singing groups, dance troupes, story tellers, and the baby animal farm).

Parents receive advance notification about these activities along with the cost involved for each child to attend. The Service's regular newsletter is a good source of information about these events, so it is important to read these. Notices will also be displayed in the foyer on our white board easel about these exciting events.

The 4 Year old Kinder Program

The Kindergarten Program at Mitchell St ELC follows the Kindergarten Guidelines which align with the Victorian Early Years Learning Framework (VEYLF). Both are part of The National Quality Framework under which all approved early learning programs operate. Our Kindergarten Program is taught every day by a degree qualified Early Childhood Teacher (ECT).

The Kinder Program aims to specifically enrich children's learning in the year preceding Prep. Throughout the kindergarten year children's right to experience the joy of childhood is fundamental and learning is promoted through play, emergent and planned learning experiences and interactions.

Children attend the Kinder Program for a minimum of three days per week up to five days a week.

Families requiring more information about the Kinder program may ask our Kinder Teacher or Centre Manager and they will be happy to assist and provide families with the Kinder information handbook.

Learning and Development

When children feel comfortable and encouraged in their surroundings they are able to build strong relationships and explore the learning opportunities offered.

Creating an Atmosphere for Learning

Staff will greet all children and families on arrival with warmth and friendliness, using their names.

- All rooms at the centre will be inviting, challenging, uncluttered and aesthetically pleasing. Activities will be presented in an appealing way.
- Staff will encourage and support children to try new experiences.
- Staff will consider the cultural needs, background and temperament of each child.
- Staff will talk to children about their day and what is to happen next.
- The noise level will be minimal to allow many engaging activities to occur simultaneously.
- Staff allow siblings within the centre to spend time with one another.
- The program will cover all areas of a child's development.

Encouraging Physical Development

- Daily structured and free active play is a significant part of the program every day.
- Outdoor equipment will be flexible so that variety, challenge and interest can be offered for children.
- Staff will encourage children to try new skills while ensuring that the challenge is within their capabilities.
- Staff will offer opportunities for children to practice balance, flexibility, climbing, skipping, crawling, eye-hand co-ordination, rolling, walking, grasping.
- Staff will offer music and movement sessions, games and other fun, playful activities every day within the program.
- The active play experiences will be inclusive of all children.
- Staff will be actively involved in active play experiences to promote children's engagement.

Encouraging Language and Literacy Development

- Staff will talk to children about a wide variety of topics.
- Staff will interact with children during routine times such as nappy changing, toileting and meal times and make these occasions fun.
- Children will have a variety of art and craft experiences to allow creative expression.
- A child's home language is encouraged and supported.
- Resource people can visit to assist with home language and settling for new children with limited English language.
- Written and spoken language, other than English, is used to foster children's interest.
- Singing, chanting, questioning, rhymes and stories are used to support language development and children are encouraged to participate.
- Children are encouraged to listen to the spoken word and understand its meaning.

Encouraging Social and Emotional Development, Creativity and Choices

- Staff will know each child as an individual and provide experiences that will interest them, provide humor and give them success.

- Staff will encourage emotional development by positively reinforcing the way they interact with others, respecting their choices and acknowledging their abilities and efforts.
- Self-esteem will be promoted through staff modelling acceptable behavior / interactions and initiating discussions about feelings.
- Opportunities for dramatic play will be varied and interesting.
- Children will be able to self-select the play materials that interest them from thoughtfully arranged storage at their level.
- Children will be encouraged to play games together, share, negotiate, appreciate and co-operate with each other.
- Children's work will be appreciated and thoughtfully displayed within the centre using photographs, models and recordings.

Encouraging Cognitive Development, Curiosity and Logical Thinking

- Children will be encouraged to think, reason, question, problem solve and try their solution.
- Staff will include children's ideas, suggestions and interests when planning the program.
- Opportunities will be offered for children to practice numeracy, sequencing and predicting skills.
- A variety of construction materials will always be on offer.
- Staff will ask open-ended questions so that children can explain and express their opinions.

Toileting

Staff will consult with families about a child's readiness to commence toilet training. Staff will observe the child for signs of readiness that include dry nappy for long periods of time, a growing awareness of the need to pass urine and a wish to imitate other children who are toileting.

Staff and families should have a relaxed, sensitive attitude to toilet training. Staff and family will consult about the type of training aid to be used – toilet or potty. Children will be given a book or toy while sitting on the potty / toilet and staff will remain close by or sit and talk with child.

Families may supply a "pull up" nappy pants to encourage independence when toilet training has commenced. Staff will assist children to wash hands after toileting.

Older children will be encouraged to use the toilet as needed and follow hygiene practices of flushing the toilet and washing their hands. Staff will remain close by to supervise.

Health and Safety Issues

Please find information about how we manage these issues below.

Accidents and injuries

Educators at Mitchell St ELC take every precaution to minimise the likelihood of any accident occurring. They supervise children closely and do so knowing when accidents are most likely to occur. They hold current First-aid and CPR certificates and are attentive and quick to respond to any injuries.

If children have an accident at the Service, staff will:

- Follow the DRSABCD Action Plan
- Complete the Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Form
- Contact parents/guardians
- In the event of an emergency or serious accident, contact 000 and follow operators' instructions
- Advise the regional ACECQA Regulatory Authority (emergency or serious accident)
- Ensure the parent/emergency contact signs the Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Form.

In the event that a parent notifies the Service of any incident, injury or illness to their child believed to have occurred during the course of the child's day at the Service, and the Service has no record of the incident, then details must be documented by the staff member receiving the call. Any such incident must also be reported to the Centre Manager or Responsible Person present at the Service immediately.

Medication

Children requiring medication are best kept at home. If the child attends the Service after being given medication at home, we should be informed of its purpose and possible side effects.

When medication is administered at the Service, the following procedures will apply:

Parents have completed the Service's Medication Permission Form

Prescribed medication is only administered to a child when in its original container, bearing the original chemist's label with full details of:

- Child's name
- Name of medication
- Dosage
- Frequency
- How to be administered
- Date of dispensing
- Expiry date

Ongoing prescribed medications are accompanied by a Medical Action Plan or an authority letter from the child's doctor and staff are fully trained to all requirements contained within the Plan. When implementing an Asthma Management Plan, the staff member(s) attending the child must be trained specifically in asthma first-aid management

Medication is to be handed directly to an educator, and not left in the child's bag or locker.

All medication is stored in a cupboard/box secured with a childproof lock and, if required, refrigerated. However, Epi-pens and Asthma medication are stored readily accessible to staff (but still inaccessible to children).

Important: Medication must NEVER be put into a baby's bottle or drinking cup. Refer to the Service's *Medication Policy*.

Car park safety

To ensure the safety of our children in our car park, we ask that parents:

Drive slowly and with care into and out of our car park and surrounding streets.
Hold their child's hand when walking through the car park and crossing the road.

For the safety of all children, the Mitchell St ELC carpark is not a play space for bikes, scooters, skateboards at anytime. This area is under constant video surveillance. Damage to property or gardens will be treated as vandalism and reported to the police.

Child protection and Child Safe Standards

Staff must adhere to mandatory reporting laws. Any suspected instances of child abuse and/or neglect will be managed according to the Service's *Child Protection and child safe standards Policy*.

Multicultural Diversity

The children within the centre come with a wide range of backgrounds, skills and knowledge. Staff will have an open and caring attitude to diversity and inclusion within the centre. Cultural sameness and diversity will be celebrated.

On enrolment, staff will gather information about the family and children to enhance understanding of the background, culture and expectations of the family. The cultural and linguistic background of each family will be respected and acknowledged.

The program will offer many opportunities for children to explore similarities and differences across the diversity of cultures.

Cultural safety for Aboriginal Children

Mitchell street acknowledge the Original Traditional Custodians of the land where we live the Wathaurong people of the Kulin Nation. We pay respect to all Aboriginal and Torres trait islander people both past and present and recognise they are the first people of Australia.

Mitchell Street does Acknowledgement of Country at most meetings and important events. Throughout our service you will see many art displays of our Children's interpretation of Aboriginal art this includes a permanent display set up at reception with displays of our 'Welcome to Country' ceremony by Corrina Eccles - Wadawurrung Traditional Owner. Throughout our Playspaces you will see copies of our Welcome to Country story book this is read on a regular basis also being incorporated as a feature in our Kinder graduation every year with the children confidentially quoting pages of the book.

Mitchell Street actively participates each year in special events including but not limited to

- NAIDOC Week
- Reconciliation Week
- Human Rights day
- Children's week
- Harmony day
- Footy week

Cultural safety is “An environment that is safe for people where there is no assault, challenge or denial of their identity, of who they are and what they need. It is about shared respect, shared meaning, shared knowledge and experience, of learning, living and working together with dignity and true listening” – Williams, R 2008

Gender Equity / Non-bias

It is important that children are exposed to a wide range of experiences that value their choice within the environment. Staff will respect children's skills, abilities and knowledge and ensure that interactions and materials within the centre support gender equity and non-bias principles.

Staff will consult with families about their expectations for care and education and discuss the centre's policy of inclusion and equity.

All children will have equal opportunity to experience all areas of the play environment. Staff will respect children's choices and encourage the development of self-confidence, self-awareness, empathy and acceptance within each child.

The centre will ensure that posters, books, equipment and displays are inclusive of all people, regardless of gender, abilities or background.

Children with Additional Needs

It is the policy of the centre to protect and foster the dignity of children with additional needs by ensuring that staff treat each child as an individual, valuing their unique attributes and qualities.

The centre has a commitment to the inclusion of children with additional needs. These children may include children with physical impairments, intellectual delays, medical conditions, behavioral challenges, diagnosed conditions or conditions undergoing assessment by a medical professional.

Facilitating Inclusion

- Centre staff will work together with families and support agencies to actively support the inclusion of a child with an additional need.
- Children with additional needs will be integrated into the daily activities and routines of the centre.
- The centre will provide an environment that is safe and understanding, all children will be encouraged to develop positive self-esteem and self-image.
- Communication strategies will be developed in consultation with families.
- Where possible, the physical environment will be adapted to better meet the needs of the individual child.

Existing Children who develop an Additional Need

In some cases, children may be diagnosed with an additional need whilst enrolled at the centre. Staff and families must work together to support the child, arrange for assessment and make any necessary changes to ensure the additional needs of the child are being met and that the child's safety and well-being are being catered for. All relevant documentation including an Additional & Special Needs Form needs to be completed in conjunction with the Centre Manager and a Doctors Certificate and/or Action Plan provided by the child's Doctor.

Cleanliness

The Service maintains a safe, clean, tidy and hygienic environment. Staff routinely clean spillages as they occur.

Confidentiality and Privacy

Mitchell St ELC records personal, sometimes sensitive information about families and children in order to meet regulatory requirements. Confidentiality is maintained at all times, and all information is handled according to the Australian Privacy Principles (APPs) contained in the *Privacy Act 1988*.

We are legally required to provide pertinent information to government organisations and agencies, and to certain community service organisations, on request. Wherever possible, we will ask you first.

Food and Nutrition

The Service provides morning tea, lunch, dessert and afternoon tea for all children except babies. Meals are freshly cooked on site each day and are healthy, and seasonally and culturally appropriate. Babies' bottles, formula and first foods are supplied by parents.

The weekly menu is displayed in the foyer. Water is offered to the children regularly throughout the day and children may also access water independently. Information about the children's food and drink intake is recorded on each room's daily feedback sheet.

At enrolment, specific instructions or requests regarding your child's dietary requirements, particularly allergies are discussed. Mitchell St ELC is a 'nut free' environment.

Meal times are pleasant occasions. Educators sit with small groups of children during meals, talk with them and encourage conversation between children.

Children are encouraged to taste or try different food, but never coerced to eat. Toddlers and pre-schoolers are encouraged to serve and feed themselves.

Babies are held in a warm and affectionate manner while being bottle fed. Babies are introduced to food in consultation with parents.

(Refer to the *Nutrition Policy* in the Service's Policies and Procedures Folders.)

Immunisation

The Service is required to maintain an Immunisation Register of all children enrolled. Parents need to provide approved documentation of the immunisation status of their children upon enrolment and every 6 months after, this is a legal requirement. If no evidence of immunisation is shown or evidence is not up to date upon enrolment the child will not be able to commence care until evidence is provided and if immunisations are not updated in accordance with legal requirements the child will no longer be able to attend the service until immunisation details are updated and current.

Infectious Diseases

Young children are still developing, and the nature of their play makes them more susceptible to the risk of cross-infection, especially in their first year of group care.

In addition to staff and children maintaining healthy and hygienic practices, the Service excludes children and staff according to the National Health and Medical Research Council Guidelines.

Children and staff with an infectious disease may only return to the Service with a medical clearance certificate, which confirms that they are no longer contagious and are well enough to return. However, the Centre Manager has the ultimate responsibility for deciding if a child is well enough to return to the Service. If a difference of opinion exists between the parents/doctor and the Centre Manager, we will contact the local Public Health Unit for advice.

Note: A child who has had vomiting or diarrhoea may only return to the Service **24 hours** after their last loose bowel motion or episode of vomiting.

The Service is required by legislation to inform their local Public Health Unit whenever:

Children or staff contract a vaccine-preventable disease

An outbreak, that is two or more cases of other infectious diseases, occurs in a Service

Staff or children contract a notifiable disease.

The local Public Health Unit guides and assists the Service to manage any such outbreaks (e.g. immediately treat staff and children with medication or vaccination in the case of meningococcal) and provides the Service and families with accurate information.

The Service is also required, by the Early Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011, to inform all families:

- That an instance(s) of the disease has been identified in the Service
- Of the symptoms of the condition
- Of the exclusion time from the Service for any infectious persons
- If a medical clearance is required before returning to the Service
- In a way that maintains the confidentiality of individual persons or families.

To minimise the risk of spreading the disease, parents are asked to inform the Service immediately if their child or a member of their immediate family has contracted an infectious disease.

Management of Unwell Children

We understand it is difficult to balance children's illness and your work commitments, but sick or ill children cannot remain at the Service. We suggest that you establish a back-up plan so you will not be inconvenienced if your child becomes ill unexpectedly. Check with family, friends or trusted neighbours and obtain their agreement to be your back-up carer(s), and inform the Service of this arrangement.

To safeguard the health of other children and staff members, a child with any of the following symptoms will not be admitted to the Service:

- Ear, eye or discoloured nasal discharge
- An undiagnosed rash
- High temperature
- Infectious sores or diseases (children need a Doctor's clearance before re-admittance)
- Vomiting and/or abnormally loose bowel actions for that child (exclude for 24 hours after last bout)
- Any obvious signs of ill health (e.g. obvious difficulty breathing, barking cough)

If a child becomes ill at the Service, a staff member holding a first-aid certificate is to assess the child's condition as per the steps below:

- Take the child's temperature. If a child has a temperature higher than 38 °C
- Inform the Centre Manager of the child's condition
- Find a quiet area where the child can rest comfortably and be observed by an adult for any escalating or further symptoms
- Inform the parents and ask them to collect the child from care as soon as possible
- Call an ambulance, if necessary.

Sleep and Rest Time

The Australian Medical Association recommends that children who are in care for more than 4 hours need to rest for a period of time.

All children are encouraged to rest during the day but are not compelled to sleep. The length of time children rest is dependent upon their individual needs.

Quiet activities are available for children who do not sleep. The length of time your child sleeps will be recorded daily. (Refer to the 'Sleep and Rest Policy' in the Service's Policies and Procedures Folders.)

We ask all families to respect this practice. It helps children to understand that the needs of others may differ from their own, an important life skill.

We require in writing if sleep limits apply for your child.

Smoking

Mitchell St ELC is a non-smoking area. This includes all indoor and outdoor play areas and anywhere that is within sight or smell of the children. Smoking is NOT permitted within 5 meters of the property/Facility

Sun Protection

We ask that you support this by applying sunscreen at home before arrival. This reflects the Australian Cancer Council recommendations that sunscreen be applied 20 minutes prior to sun exposure. Mitchell St ELC follows the Sun Smart guidelines in accordance with our Sun protection policy. This means:

- Children and educators wear broad brim hats outside
- The Service provides all children with a hat upon enrolment
- Children without hats play indoors or in the shade
- When outdoors, all children and educators wear clothing that covers as much of the skin as possible, especially the shoulders, back, and stomach
- Children and educators play inside between 10.00am and 2.00pm (11.00am and 3.00pm Daylight Saving Time) unless a specific experience is planned within those times or shaded play can be offered
- All children and educators apply a SPF 30+ broad-spectrum water-resistant sunscreen 20 minutes before going outdoors

Mitchell St ELC meets regulatory requirements for shade in the playground:

- Sun protection is prioritised when excursions are planned
- Sun protection awareness activities (both planned and spontaneous) are included in the Service's program
- Sun protection information is promoted to staff, families and visitors.

Safety Procedures

The Service has an emergency and evacuation plan, displayed in each room, for a range of possible incidents and threats, including fire. Fire extinguishers are installed, and regularly maintained, throughout the Service.

Safety drills involving educators and children are rehearsed every two months. They are called without warning at different times of the day and on different days of the week.

Evaluations are conducted after every drill. If an evaluation reveals any problem, appropriate modifications are made.

Teething

Parents are asked to inform their child's educators when their child is teething. When a child who is teething becomes unwell and displays symptoms such as a high temperature, flushed cheeks or drooling, the Service will contact the parent.

Visitors

Visitors, other than parents or guardians of children enrolled in the Service need to be admitted to the Service by the Centre Manager. Visitors will be asked to provide appropriate photo ID, and to sign the

Visitors' sign in sheet on arrival and departure. Visitors will be accompanied by a staff member at all times while in the Service.

We trust you have found this information helpful. Please see our Centre Manager if you have any further questions and she will be happy to assist you.