

Milestone Child Care and Kindergarten

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Family Handbook

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FAMILY HANDBOOK

Welcome to Milestone Child Care and Kindergarten. You have chosen a quality child care centre. Our centre is registered to cater for 120 children daily, aged 6 weeks to 6 years. It is privately owned and managed by a director. The centre is appointed by Trident Personnel Pty Ltd.

The following policies and procedures have been developed to enhance the wellbeing of all children within our care, and to assist families to feel secure that their children are receiving the highest quality early childhood education.

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ABOUT THE CENTRE

HOURS OF OPERATION

The centre is open Monday to Friday from 7:00am to 6:30pm. We operate for 52 weeks of the year and remain open on school holidays and over the Christmas period. We ask that families arrive by 6:20pm to collect their child, so the centre can close at 6:30pm.

Please Note: *The centre is closed on recognised Victorian Gazetted Public Holidays.*

CENTRE PHILOSOPHY

Our centre philosophy has been developed over many years with help from educators, families, children, management and the community. It outlines the principles under which we operate. We welcome any family feedback to help further develop our philosophy.

Play Based Learning Program

At Milestone, we believe that play is a vital component in the development of all children which is why we follow a play based learning program. The implementation of an indoor/outdoor program has given children the freedom to decide where they wish to play regardless of weather. We value outdoor play and think of our indoor and outdoor environments as one whole space rather than separate areas. Through the provision of a wide range of materials, children have the opportunity to explore and extend on their learning and experiences. We believe in letting the children play without interruption from adults and encourage them to take risks and make their own choices.

High Expectations for Children

We pride ourselves on having high expectations on what children can achieve. Every child at Milestone is viewed as a capable and active contributor to their own learning. We allow children to make choices and inspire them to engage in risky play. Children are provided with many opportunities to demonstrate their independence and are encouraged to further extend on their skills throughout their day. We allow the children to regulate their own play while also encouraging them to respect their environment and others.

Inclusive Environment

At Milestone, we respect all cultures and believe in unity in diversity. The centre challenges stereotypes surrounding gender bias, culture, age and ability. We believe that the cultural blend of families in our community has a positive effect on our centre via the opportunity to explore these cultures through experiences and celebrations. Our team is committed to providing an environment that is inclusive for every child and family at the centre.

High Quality Relationships

The development of high quality relationships with children and families is of the utmost importance at our centre. We aim to provide a home-like environment that is warm, friendly and nurturing. Educators work closely with families to foster collaborative relationships that will assist children to achieve quality outcomes. We believe that a working partnership between families and educators is beneficial to the ongoing development of each child. Families are encouraged to be involved in all aspects of the centre's operations and are invited to participate in all events. Our families have identified communication as being of the highest standard. We endeavour to act on concerns raised by families quickly and efficiently.

Committed Educators

We are proud to provide warm, affectionate, dedicated and compassionate educators who are available to children & families when required. We feel that our team is one big, happy family who are devoted to continuously evolving in the early childhood field. All of our educators work collaboratively to improve practice and relationships through team meetings, reflection and professional development. They are excited and open to change, show a thirst for knowledge, and are proactive in providing children with engaging play spaces. The relationships we foster with our families and the local community is of the highest priority.

Connected to the World

Our centre is committed to embedding sustainability within our daily practices. We encourage children to be environmentally responsible and engage them in many sustainable practices such as recycling and maintaining edible gardens. We provide play environments, both indoors and out, that allow children to explore a multitude of natural materials. We aspire to build many meaningful relationships within our local community and regularly utilise social media as a more sustainable and effective way of staying connected.

ABOUT THE CENTRE

WHAT YOU WILL SEE AT MILESTONE

- **Indoor and Outdoor Play:** Our indoor/outdoor program operates all year round regardless of the weather. Families are encouraged to provide appropriate clothing for children to play outdoors at all times & experience all types of weather. Generally speaking, children are not well enough to attend if they are unable to go outside due to illness.
- **Messy Play:** We provide children with many different opportunities to get messy. This means they will explore paint, water, dirt, slime, sand, mud etc. Children will not be discouraged from engaging in messy play at any time.
- **Barefoot Play:** We believe that children need opportunities to explore indoor and outdoor environments without shoes. Going barefoot is beneficial to children as it nourishes, strengthens, and promotes agility in a child's growing feet, ankles, legs, knees, and hips.
- **Risk Taking:** Children both need and want to take risks in order to explore their limits, venture into new experiences and develop. Any injury is distressing for children and those who care for them, but the experience of minor injuries is a universal part of childhood and has a positive role in child development.
- **Loose Parts Play:** Loose parts are materials that can be moved, carried, combined, redesigned, lined up, and taken apart and put back together in multiple ways. They have no specific set of directions and can be used alone or combined with other materials. Some may consider it "junk" but we know these items are very beneficial to children's development.
- **An Anti-Biased Approach:** We encourage children to engage in any activity or with any child or educator at the centre regardless of their gender, race, culture, abilities, family background, appearance or behaviour.
- **High Expectations for Every Child:** We believe that children achieve better outcomes when they are expected to succeed. The concept of high expectations relates closely to acknowledging children's agency. Children are able to construct their own understandings and initiate, contribute to and lead their own learning. From infancy, children are capable of making choices and decisions.
- **Exploration of Nature:** It is not enough for children to look at trees and plants in children's services. They must be able to actively explore, engage with, and experience different types of natural spaces. This is why we encourage children to touch and interact with the natural environment in their everyday play.
- **Choice and Independence:** Allowing children to make choices for themselves is an important yet relatively easy step towards encouraging independence and agency. When we make materials and resources easily accessible, without the need for adult assistance, we promote children's ability to resource their own learning independently and successfully.
- **Free Choice Art:** We believe that the process of exploring art is more important than the end product which is why we provide a range of materials for children to explore rather than providing teacher-directed art experiences.
- **Self-Regulation:** Children experience ups and downs when they are trying to manage their feelings and behaviours. Finding ways to balance this is called self-regulation. We believe in encouraging and supporting children to resolve problems and frustrations, where appropriate. Children who play and learn in an environment which promotes independence are less likely to display inappropriate behaviours.
- **Commitment to Health and Wellbeing:** The health and wellbeing of all children, educators and families is of the utmost importance. Policies and procedures have been implemented to develop positive health and nutrition habits, minimise illness and the spread of infection, and strengthen the mental health of each child and person at Milestone.

ABOUT THE CENTRE

WHAT YOU WON'T SEE AT MILESTONE

- **Children will never be discouraged from:**
 - * Playing outside in cold, wet or hot weather
 - * Taking calculated risks
 - * Engaging in experiences that are usually regarded as only "for boys" or "for girls"
 - * Attempting tasks that may be considered "outside of their abilities"
 - * Taking off their shoes when exploring indoor and outdoor environments
- **Children will never be expected to:**
 - * Make gifts for special events without showing an interest
 - * Participate in formal lessons on topics such as numbers or the alphabet
 - * Engage in teacher-directed or end-product art, e.g. *we would never ask all of the children to colour in the same template or construct the same snowman*
 - * Participate in any experience that they are not comfortable with or interested in

CENTRE WEBSITE

Milestone has a comprehensive website for families to view which includes information, frequently asked questions and documents to download – www.milestonekinder.com.au

ASSESSMENT AND RATING

Milestone is registered with the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA). We were assessed in February 2018 and are officially "Exceeding the National Quality Standard". Please refer to the quality profile certificate in the centre foyer.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

An extensive policy manual is available for you to peruse in the foyer at any time. This manual outlines the most common questions asked of us. Please feel free to ask about any further policies or procedures as we are only too happy to outline them for you. The centre welcomes feedback on any policy or procedure in written or verbal form.

CENTRE MENU

Each day our in-house cook provides a varied breakfast, morning tea, lunch, afternoon tea & late snack, which takes into account the nutritional needs, likes and cultures of our young children. Our meals are prepared fresh daily here at the centre. Children with cultural requirements, allergies, sensitivities and food preferences are appropriately catered for.

The meals are freshly cooked using premium quality ingredients. The menu is displayed in the foyer and on our website for your perusal. It is rotated over a four week period. Vegetarian, gluten-free, dairy-free, and soy-free options are available.

In Term 4, our pre-school room hosts a weekly *Lunch Box Day*. Our lunch box days familiarise the children on how to open wrappers, peel fruit, and punch through straws, all by themselves. We request that families **do not** provide junk food and **refrain from sending food containing nuts or eggs.**

We do not use any nuts or eggs in our meals. Please refrain from bringing any meals into the centre without prior consent. We are a **NUT AND EGG FREE CENTRE.**

ABOUT THE CENTRE

EDUCATORS AT MILESTONE

At Milestone, we pride ourselves on providing educators who are dedicated, experienced and highly qualified. Our educators are warm, affectionate, compassionate and always available for children and families. Whether you have queries or concerns about your child's experience in care, their development, or things happening at home, our educators are more than willing to share their time, knowledge and support.

The relationships we foster with our families and the local community are of the highest priority. Family participation is always welcomed and encouraged across all aspects of our program. Our educators value ideas and contributions from families, and part of our aim is to make your family feel that this is a home away from home.

All educators on the premises have recognised early childhood certificates, diplomas and/or degrees. Many educators are currently furthering their education by studying tertiary courses or university degrees. All educators have completed first aid, CPR, anaphylaxis & asthma management training. They have been trained in child protection, food safety practices, infection control, and all educators have current *Working with Children Checks*, also.

We have developed some key roles for educators showing interest and skills in certain areas, e.g. *Sustainability Coordinator*. We have a *Wellbeing Team* for educators interested in improving health and wellbeing practices, a *Green Team* for those interested in improving sustainability, and an *Emergency Management Team* to review emergency procedures and provide regular training.

ROOM SCHEDULE

The rooms at Milestone are split up between 5 age groups:

Nursery	6 weeks to 15 months	12 children daily	2 Qualified Educators and 1 Assistant
Toddlers	1 to 2 years	20 children daily	2 Qualified Educators and 3 Assistants
Pre-Kinder	2 to 3 years	24 children daily	2 Qualified Educators and 4 Assistants
Kinder	3 to 4 years	33 children daily	2 Qualified Educators and 1 Assistant
Pre-School	4 to 5 years	33 children daily	2 Early Childhood Teachers and

ROOM COMMUNICATION

Each room has its own email address so families can communicate with educators directly:

Nursery: nurseryroom@live.com

Toddlers: toddlerroom@live.com

Pre-Kinder: prekinderroom@live.com

Kinder: kinderroom@live.com

Pre-School: preschoolroom@live.com

ADMINISTRATION

CONDITIONS OF ENROLMENT

A deposit of the first week's fee must be paid to secure your child's place in the centre. The enrolment form and direct debit form must be completed before the child can begin orientation. These forms contain important information relating to where families can be contacted, emergency phone numbers etc. Families need to inform the centre of any changes to the details on this form, to keep it regularly updated. This is a regulation.

FEE POLICY

The fee structure is based on the following:

Full Day's Care	\$119.00
Full Week's Care	\$565.00

Until Child Care Subsidy (CCS) has been approved, full fees will be charged. Families are required to supply the centre with the customer reference numbers (CRN) for both the account holder and the child starting care.

FEE BOND

The first week's fee is required before a place for any child will be held. This will ensure that you remain within the centre policy regarding fees in advance. The fee bond will pay for the child's first week of care once commenced.

Please Note: *Fees are payable weekly or fortnightly (in advance) for the entire year that the centre is open. Fees are paid for public holidays and any days of absence. This includes days of illness, or any personal holidays.*

FEE PAYMENTS

The first week's fee deposit can be paid by cash, credit card, or EFTPOS, as a once off payment. From then onwards, fees are to be paid via direct debit from a credit card or bank account.

Both of the above payment methods require an authorisation form to be signed in advance. Families have the option of deciding how regularly their payments are made (weekly or fortnightly). Families can also decide on the day of the week their debits will occur.

Fees must not be in arrears for more than two weeks at any time. Milestone has the authority to terminate an enrolment at the centre where fees remain outstanding for two or more weeks and no agreement to pay is in place. Continual or habitual lateness in payment of fees can jeopardise the child's place at the centre.

Families with permanent bookings pay full fees for all public and personal holidays, sick days and any other miscellaneous absences that fall on your child's booked days. Fees are due and payable in advance as per the *Payment of Fees* policy, prior to taking any holidays.

Please Note: However regularly payments are made, e.g. *weekly*, that's how far in advance the account must be.

Please refer to our *Payment of Fees* policy for more information.

ADMINISTRATION

PAYMENT DISHONOURS

Occasionally families may have their direct debit dishonoured due to issues such as insufficient funds or a cancelled credit card. A declined payment will attract a dishonour fee. Full details of this information can be found on your signed *DebitSuccess* agreement.

Upon notification of a dishonour, the director will contact the family to organise an immediate payment. Families with regular dishonoured payments may have their child care cancelled if a regular payment cycle cannot be implemented.

It is up to each family to keep the centre regularly updated regarding bank and credit card details. Families can update their account or card details at any time.

LATE FEES

If your child is not collected by 6:30pm, a late fee will be charged consisting of:

\$1:00 per minute, per child, after 6:30pm.

After 6:30pm, we no longer have the protection of the regulations. By law, two educators must remain at the centre whilst a child is still there. Therefore, overtime wages incur. You must ring the centre if you are going to be late collecting your child, or arrange for an emergency person to collect your child. If this person has not been to the centre before, photo ID will be required. If by 8pm, educators have not been able to contact any of the above, the director will advise the Child Protection Authorities at DET.

ACCOUNT STATEMENTS

Account statements are emailed to families fortnightly at the beginning of week two of the CCS fortnight. Families can request a statement at any time. These can be emailed or printed out upon request. If you do not understand your statement, please do not hesitate to ask for an explanation.

CANCELLATION OF ENROLMENT OR REDUCTION OF BOOKING

A minimum of **two full week's written notice** via email is required for any cancellation of enrolment or reduction of booking. Fees will continue to be payable until such notice is given.

Families need to be aware that failure to attend on the last day of the notice period will result in no CCS forthcoming from Centrelink & full fees will be charged from last day attended. Therefore, full fees will be payable during this period. Families leaving the centre with unpaid fees will incur the cost of a debt collection process.

UNSETTLED ACCOUNTS

If any family has not paid for two weeks, a reminder will be issued. If no payment is forthcoming within the following week, no further child care can be offered until payment of arrears is made and fees are brought into line with centre policy. Families leaving the centre with outstanding fees will have their debt sent to our nominated collection agency and will incur all costs associated with the recovery process.

ADMINISTRATION

ABSENCES

Families will receive child care subsidy (CCS) for 42 absence days per child each financial year. These can be for any reason, *e.g. illness, personal or public holidays, and any range of miscellaneous reasons*, without having to bring in supporting documentation such as a medical certificate. However, once they reach 42 absences, any absent day following that will be charged at the full fee unless there is supporting documentation.

If you do not use a purchased day of care, (*e.g. the day is no longer needed or your child is absent due to being unwell*), you will still be charged the full cost of the day.

You cannot claim absences if your child has not started care or has stopped care. You also cannot claim an absence if you have notified the service that you are taking your child out of care on a set date and then change your mind and remove your child earlier.

- Fee assistance is not payable before the child has physically attended care or after a child has physically ended care at the service.
- An absence cannot be reported for a child **before** they start attending care at the service unless it is for an additional absence reason and the child has already used their 42 initial absence days at another service.
- An absence cannot be reported for a child **after** the last day they physically attend the service unless it is for an additional absence reason with supporting documentation and the child has already used their 42 initial absence days.
- If the family has advised that their child will leave the service on a particular day, but that child does not attend their last session(s) of care, the family may only receive CCS for the days the child was expected to attend if the child's 42 absence days have been exhausted and the absence is an additional absence. Initial 42 absence days may not be claimed for these days.

Please Note: Medical certificates **do not** cover the absent day fee. Fees are charged as normal when a child is away due to illness, regardless of documentation. However, if your child is away and has used up all of their 42 absences, a medical certificate will allow an additional absence to be claimed. Therefore, the child will receive CCS as normal, rather than being charged the full fee.

OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES

- Milestone does not do day swaps. If you require an extra day, you must pay for your current booked days as well as your extra day. We cannot supply day swaps if your child's booked day falls on a public holiday or if your child had an absence due to illness or holiday.
- Milestone's operating hours are 7:00am to 6:30pm. Children cannot be dropped off before 7:00am and must be picked up by 6:30pm or a late fee will apply.
- Direct debit payments may be altered due to increase in fees charged, extra booked days, changes to child care subsidy or for non-attendance during the two week leave period.
- The centre does not offer half days.

ADMINISTRATION

CASUAL DAYS

Milestone is able to provide once-off casual days to families if:

- We have the space available in that particular room on the day
- We have adequate educators to ensure the required ratio is maintained
- The family requiring the extra day does not have an account in arrears
- The casual day was pre-organised with the director with at least 48 hours' notice

If a casual day is cancelled, it will still be charged, unless we receive at least 48 hours written notice of the cancellation.

HOLIDAY LEAVE ENTITLEMENTS

The centre offers up to 2 weeks of holiday fees for each child's current booking per financial year. The amount is determined by how regularly the child attends, *e.g. a child that attends for 2 days per week receives 4 days at the holiday rate per financial year*. Holidays will be charged at 50% of the usual fee. This is applicable if you have notified the director in writing **at least two full weeks** before you require the leave for holidays.

Holiday entitlements do not roll over into a new financial year. Any unused holidays will be lost at the end of the financial year. To receive the holiday rate, children must be absent from the centre. It cannot be granted if children are still in attendance.

Holiday leave will be granted at the discretion of the director. If a child is absent due to a public holiday, sick day, family holiday or miscellaneous reason, fees are still payable. Please note that holiday leave may not be granted due to certain circumstances, *e.g. account in arrears*. Holiday leave usage is reset at the start of a new financial year.

Families will become eligible to receive holiday leave entitlements after 6 months of continuous attendance at the centre. Any leave applications submitted during the first 6 months of enrolment will not be granted and will be marked as an absence only.

WAITING LIST

When the demand for child care exceeds the number of places available, a waiting list is compiled. This waiting list is referred to when a place becomes available, in order of date and enquiry, taking into account the age of the child & days available. We give priority to sibling children, and existing families wishing for changes in the days of care. Families who have used our service in the past will also have priority. To join the waiting list, we require a deposit of one week's fees. We cannot take enrolments more than one month in advance so families wishing to enrol earlier than one month in advance will be placed onto the waiting list in the meantime.

COURT ORDERS

It is a guideline of this centre to comply with any legally binding written instructions regarding custody arrangements and to make every effort to ensure the safety and security of the children whilst at the centre. Families must provide the centre with copies of current court orders before we are able to comply with them.

EARLY CLOSURES

Each year, the centre closes at 4:00pm on two days over the Christmas/New Year period rather than the normal 6:30pm closing time. Generally these closures are on Christmas Eve (December 24th) and New Year's Eve (December 31st). If either of those days fall on a weekend, the early closure days will be generally the day before or the Friday before. Families will still be charged their normal daily fee on these days.

ADMINISTRATION

CURRENT FAMILY DETAILS

Please ensure that the centre always has your current family details and contact numbers. All emergency contact details need to be up to date at all times. We must be informed if:

- You move house or change your phone number or email address
- You want to add or remove a contact from your child's contact/collection list
- The phone numbers of emergency contacts change
- Your child has recently had an immunisation
- Your child has recently been diagnosed with an allergy and/or medical condition
- You have just had a court order put in place or your current order has changed
- You have changed bank accounts or received a new credit card or expiry date

CHILD CARE SUBSIDY (CCS)

The Australian Government is committed to ensuring that Australian families are able to access affordable, flexible and high quality child care. The Government provides a number of subsidies and programs to help with the cost of child care, with the Child Care Subsidy being the main type of assistance that most families will use.

To be eligible for the Child Care Subsidy the following requirements must be met:

- The child must:
 - be a 'Family Tax Benefit child' or 'regular care child'
 - be 13 or under and not attending secondary school
 - meet immunisation requirements
- The person claiming the Child Care Subsidy, or their partner, must :
 - meet residency requirements
 - meet the Child Care Subsidy activity test (or be eligible for an exemption)
 - be liable to pay for care provided under a Complying Written Arrangement, also known as a CWA, with their child care provider

Families need to access the MyGov website or app in order to organise Child Care Subsidy. The portal will ask for details regarding income and activity which will be submitted to Centrelink.

Once your child is enrolled, and a CWA has been signed, we will put all of the child and family details into our child care provider software and attempt to link your child to CCS. Once Centrelink receives this information, they will go through the process of confirming that data.

Families will then be required to sign back into the MyGov website or app to confirm that their child will be attending our child care centre on the days listed and for the daily fee listed. Once this has occurred, CCS will automatically be applied to the fees at the centre, leaving families to pay the difference remaining - known as the gap fee.

Please note: The percentage and amount of subsidised hours given is different for each family and subsidised hours may not cover the full fortnight's child care usage.

ADMINISTRATION

PRIORITY OF ACCESS

Within Centrelink guidelines, we have to take children of working families, children at risk, and children of family members who are studying, over respite care, e.g. non-working family members. If you are using the centre as respite care, you may be asked to swap to alternative days, if available, so children from the above list can attend. In extreme circumstances, your position may be cancelled.

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE

Children must always enter the centre with an adult over 18 years of age. At least one educator must be aware of your arrival. You are required to “**sign in**” on our centre kiosks when you arrive each day. This is a legal requirement.

When collecting your child, educators must once again be aware of your child’s departure, and you must “**sign out**” on our centre kiosks. Each child must have recorded arrival and departure times, and be signed out of the centre daily. This is a legal requirement.

Please Note: *No child will be allowed to leave the centre with any person other than the custodial parent/guardian unless this has been pre-arranged, and/or details are listed on the enrolment form. In an emergency, custodial arrangements and nominated persons must be listed correctly on the enrolment form, and updated as necessary.*

Please ensure that your child is collected at the pre-arranged time. If you are late, the educators will be concerned and your child may become anxious. If you are unavoidably detained, **please telephone us**. If the educators do not hear from you within an hour of your expected departure time, they will phone you.

If contact cannot be made, your emergency contact will be asked to come and collect your child. If a child has not been collected one hour after closing time, and we cannot contact any person nominated on the enrolment form, we must contact Children’s Protective Services. This is a regulation.

We require the centre to open with 2 educators at 7:00am. In the event of an employee being late for this shift, we ask that you remain with your children until the staff member arrives or is replaced with alternative staff. The centre acknowledges the inconvenience of such an event, however, this procedure is in the best interests of the children and staff.

The nominated supervisor may refuse an authorised person to collect a child from the centre if:

- The person is not currently nominated as an authorised nominee
- The person is prohibited by any court order relating to the child from having contact with the child (unless written authorisation has been given by the custodial guardian)
- The person poses a risk to the safety of the child in question, or to the children and educators of the centre
- The person is under the age of 18 years

Please refer to our *Delivery and Collection of Children from the Service* policy for more information.

DAILY OPERATIONS

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR FAMILIES

Milestone provides an inviting, safe, open and welcoming environment for all educators, families and children that attend the centre. All families are required to abide by our code of conduct for families.

All families who attend Milestone agree to:

- Act courteously and respectfully at all times.
- Refrain from impolite, abusive or offensive behaviour and language towards educators or other families.
- Respect the centre's environment.
- Deliver and collect children during the scheduled operational hours.
- Practice safe driving on the service road outside the centre and in the carparks, including the use of the one-way street in its correct manner.
- Ensure no child is left unattended in a vehicle on the centre premises.
- Respect cultural differences of educators and other families.
- Ensure any child being dropped off or collected from the centre is placed into a suitable car seat or booster seat appropriate for their age, weight and height.
- Not be adversely affected by alcohol or other drugs.
- Not smoke tobacco or other substances on, or near, the centre and its carparks.
- Maintain a professional relationship with educators.
- Refrain from posting anything on the internet or social networking sites, e.g. *Facebook*, that can be construed to have any impact on the centre's reputation or that would offend any educator or family at the centre.
- Abide by all of Milestone's policies & procedures, and all information detailed in the family handbook.
- Understand that we may need to discuss sensitive topics such as behavioural difficulties or developmental issues on occasion and that we only have the best interests of your child in mind when we are discussing this.
- Follow the centre's grievances procedure when raising concerns or issues.
- Respect and interact with all educators regardless of age, years of experience, qualifications, abilities, race, culture, gender or orientation.
- Accept & respect the decisions made by educators and management of the centre.
- Maintain complete confidentiality regarding any information or events that occur within the centre and ensure these topics are not discussed inside or outside of the centre.
- Refrain from bringing any nuts or nut products into the centre.
- Be responsible for any child brought into the centre that is not enrolled. This includes supervising them and ensuring they do not damage property. If non-enrolled children are disrupting the program, you may be asked to remove them.

A breach of the *Code of Conduct for Families* may result in your child's enrolment being terminated. Please ensure your emergency contacts are aware of this code of conduct. Cancellation of child care due to a breach of the *Code of Conduct for Families* is at the discretion of management and may occur without notice.

DAILY OPERATIONS

FAMILY PARTICIPATION

We would like to encourage family participation across all aspects of our program. Ideas or suggestions are most welcome at any time. Also, we would be interested in hearing from you if you have any “special talents” you may wish to share with us, such as playing the guitar, singing, cooking, etc. This centre values ideas and contributions from families, and part of our aim is to make your family feel that this is a home away from home.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

We follow the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework for Children from birth to eight years at Milestone. Educators have worked together to create formats that encourage program flow and incorporate the children’s current interests.

A weekly or fortnightly educational program will be devised in each room, in accordance with the interests of all children. The centre will offer a variety of developmentally age-appropriate experiences and activities for all groups, depending on the particular stage of development of each child. Children will be encouraged to choose the experiences that will be provided to them through discussions & visual aids.

Educators will utilise observation formats, such as learning stories, to gain an understanding of each child’s interests, skills and knowledge. At the end of each program, educators will evaluate how the program went with children’s interactions, group dynamics and interests. Family input is encouraged frequently throughout the planning procedures.

Educators use a variety of evaluation techniques, such as reflection documents. Photos of the children and educators engaging in activities and experiences are regularly displayed around the centre to show families what the children are interested in and what they are learning at the centre. Each room has its own iPad for educators to utilise. Families have access to these, also. We have linked each iPad up to its own email address so educators & families can communicate directly.

At Milestone, we continue to improve our practices by engaging in collaborative reflection. We believe working as a team and collaborating together creates a great team spirit and benefits the quality of our teaching for families and children. Educators also engage in critical reflection within their rooms. Reflection allows us to continue to learn and improve on our practices, or to recognise what is working well. All of our educators are encouraged to work on personal professional goals to increase their knowledge and skills in an area they think needs improving or simply want to know more about.

We believe play is very important for children to develop relationships & learn new skills as well as developing independence and self-worth, so plenty of time is allowed for this.

LOST PROPERTY

Any clothing, toys or objects found by the educators will be placed in lost property boxes in each room. Please ask an educator if an item has been misplaced.

NEWSLETTERS AND WEEKLY UPDATES

A bi-monthly newsletter is provided to all families. This will allow us the opportunity to pass on any information regarding the centre’s activities. These newsletters are emailed to families. We also send out a weekly update email keeping families informed on what’s happening at the centre. Additional updates can be found on our Facebook page: www.facebook.com/milestonekinder

DAILY OPERATIONS

ORIENTATION

If this is the first time your child has been in care, or even in another centre, we encourage a short settling-in time to be arranged a day or two prior to commencement of your child's position. This will allow your child to be introduced to the educators, children and their new environment. This short time also reassures the child that you will be returning for them.

We also offer another day where you would leave your child for an hour. This will allow time for the child to be separated from you and for you to become familiar with leaving, and signing in & out of the centre. Please note: this must be no longer than 1 hour. Any orientation period longer than one hour will attract a daily fee charge.

When the time comes for separation, remember to be cheerful and positive, without lingering unnecessarily when making farewells. Reassure your child that you will return. You may ring the centre at any time to check on your child. Our educators will contact you, should your child become distressed or unwell.

In conjunction with the enrolment form, a '*Child Profile*' is provided for you to fill in any information that you feel may be helpful to the care of your child. The more we know about your child's likes/ dislikes, routines etc., the easier it is for us to get to know your child, therefore, the easier it will be to settle them into care.

RECOMMENDED CLOTHING

We encourage families to dress children in a way that protects them from accidents, the elements, and ensures ease of dressing. Remember to dress your child in comfortable, practical clothes that they can manage. Jeans, belts, braces and overalls are often hard to manage, especially at the toilet. Long skirts and thongs can hinder running and climbing. We dress for comfort and not for style. Please dress your child in a way that makes play easy and comfortable and taking clothes on and off a far less frustrating task for them.

We follow sun protection procedures here at the centre. Children are required to wear loose fitting clothing that covers as much skin as possible. Clothing made from cool, densely woven fabric is recommended. Tops with elbow length sleeves and knee length or longer style shorts and skirts are best. If a child is wearing a singlet top or dress, they should wear a t-shirt/shirt over the top before going outdoors.

All children are required to wear hats that protect their face, neck and ears, e.g. legionnaire, broad-brimmed or bucket hats. Baseball or peak caps are not considered a suitable alternative. Children are also encouraged to wear sunglasses if families are happy to provide them.

Good or special clothes should be kept at home as we provide lots of messy activities for the children each day. We will not discourage children from getting dirty. Labeling clothes is important. Children take off their clothing and educators cannot be expected to remember what each child wears every day. Particularly for younger children as they are undressed for sleep.

During wet weather, we still go outdoors, so we encourage families to provide raincoats, jackets and gumboots for their children.

DAILY OPERATIONS

WHAT TO BRING

Each child should bring the following items daily:

- A crèche bag
- SunSmart hat
- A bottle of water
- At least three spare changes of clothes
- A weatherproof jacket for colder weather / raincoat
- Appropriate footwear (Gumboots can be provided for wet weather)
- Bottles of formula or breast milk (if required)
- A comfort item, e.g. dummy, blanket (if required)
- Sensitive sunscreen for children that may be allergic to our provided sunscreen

WHAT THE CENTRE PROVIDES

The centre provides the following:

- High quality learning programs for children aged 6 weeks to 6 years
- A funded 4 year old kindergarten with school readiness program
- A gourmet, 4 weekly rotating, nutritional menu which takes into account the likes, cultures, dietary and allergy requirements of each child
- All meals, milk, water, nappies, linen & daily consumables, e.g. wipes, sunscreen
- Two large recreational playgrounds with an undercover play area
- Doctor that visits weekly, bulk-billing to Medicare (Mondays)
- Nursery with separate, tranquil sleep room
- Highly qualified & experienced educators with a very low staff turnover
- Annual calendar of events including a range of incursions and special celebrations

TOYS AND BELONGINGS

We provide toys, games, dress-ups, art/craft activities etc., at all times during the day, so please leave home toys at home. A favourite toy, such as a teddy, is acceptable if it is a comfort item. Bringing something special for show & tell is acceptable for pre-school.

Favourite or expensive toys are better kept at home to prevent them being lost, broken or borrowed by other children. Milestone will take no responsibility for items brought from home that are damaged, lost or stolen.

TRANSLATING AND INTERPRETING SERVICE NATIONAL (TIS NATIONAL)

The Translating and Interpreting Service National can help non-English speaking people understand the content in this handbook, or any other correspondence to do with the centre, by arranging a telephone conversation with an interpreter. TIS National is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week for any person or organisation in Australia requiring interpreting services. Phone: 131 450 (24 Hours)

DAILY OPERATIONS

BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT

Re-direction is the preferred method for behaviour management in the centre. If a child is behaving in a manner considered unacceptable, they are re-directed to a new activity. Diversion & distraction play a major role in behaviour management. Some rooms have provided children with a 'calm place' that they can go to when they are sad or frustrated.

Children are also given the opportunity to solve their problems by dealing with the problem themselves. Under the guidance of our educators, children can learn to deal with difficult situations for themselves, until a time that educators consider it necessary to intervene.

All educators practice these behaviour procedures to maintain consistency in our educator/child interactions.

Please refer to our *Interactions with Children* policy for more information.

COMPLIMENTS, QUERIES AND COMPLAINTS

Any compliments, ideas or suggestions are most welcome to assist in the operation of our child care centre, and can be given to educators or the director. If you have a complaint or concern, please speak with the director or a person concerned, to resolve the matter. All correspondence will be treated in a confidential manner.

Alternatively, you may write to:

Management – Milestone Child Care and Kindergarten
374 Maroondah Highway,
Croydon VIC 3136

If you feel the matter has not, or cannot be resolved, you may contact:

Children's Services Authorised Officer
Department of Education and Training
Level 3, 295 Springvale Road
Glen Waverley 3150
Ph. 1300 651 940
emr.qar@edumail.vic.gov.au

Please refer to our *Dealing with Complaints* policy for more information.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND NETWORKING

Milestone utilises social media & networking platforms (*Facebook*) as an additional means of communication between families and the centre, and also to connect with the wider community. Through social media and networking, the public is kept informed on centre events, programs, achievements and information. Photographs are also posted regularly of the centre and the experiences that are provided.

Whether you wish for your child to appear on social media or not is completely at your discretion. You are able to specify your preference on your child's enrolment form. Photographs of children will only be shared if appropriate permissions have been given. We take the matter of online protection very seriously so children will only be referred to by their first name. Every picture or video will first be screened by management before being posted to any site. All children depicted will be suitably clothed and displaying appropriate behaviour.

Please refer to our *Social Media and Networking* policy for more information.

DAILY OPERATIONS

SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES

Milestone is committed to taking an active role in caring for our environment and contributing to a sustainable future. We are currently enrolled in the Small Green Steps program. This program has been designed to help childcare services embed sustainable practices into service operations in order to meet National Quality Standard 3.3 contained in the National Quality Framework.

One of the requirements of the Small Green Steps program was to implement a *Green Team*. This team is lead by a Sustainability Coordinator. Together they work through the modules and regularly meet to discuss new ideas for the centre. We welcome family input at any time.

STUDENTS AND VOLUNTEERS

Students & volunteers are limited, but are a regular part of the service we offer to the community. The director and educators give all students and volunteers guidance and supervision. The centre educators remain responsible for the children and the students are never left unattended. All students and volunteers require current *Working With Children Checks* prior to commencement.

FOUR YEAR OLD KINDERGARTEN

Milestone offers a 4 year old kindergarten program with a qualified kinder teacher. This includes a comprehensive school readiness program. Our program runs all day from Monday to Friday. Children must attend a 4 year old funded kindergarten at least 15 hours per week which can be achieved at Milestone over 2 full days.

Each child is observed & planned for, and their needs addressed, to prepare children for school. Our teacher is more than happy to answer any questions or concerns you may have. Teacher interviews take place twice a year, to discuss development in the year prior to school.

We believe that children learn best through play, so we incorporate those elements into our programs, and refrain from making children write their name or trace letters. When planning the children's activities, we aim to present a program that is structured to a certain extent, yet allows for a lot of choice, spontaneity and flexibility. Our kinder program prepares each child for the move to school, in a manner which is non-threatening and educational.

Play is the children's work through which they learn and make sense of the world around them. Play is also a process of development in everything a child does whereby a child's curiosity is fulfilled by use of fantasy, imagination, independence and sensory exploration.

Our play based curriculum is child-oriented; emerging from current interests, needs and developmental levels of the group. We provide an indoor/outdoor program where children can choose where they wish to play and explore. We find that kinder aged children learn most readily when the curriculum is relevant to their lives.

Our program is interactive and exploratory involving interaction with a rich variety of materials and equipment. We also incorporate as many 'real life' play experiences as possible into the program.

Our first priority is to instill a love and appreciation for meaningful learning, thus helping to ensure children reach their full potential in later years. It is through this child-oriented play based curriculum that children gain a range of social, emotional, cognitive, lingual and physical skills.

Continued on next page.

DAILY OPERATIONS

FOUR YEAR OLD KINDERGARTEN CONT.

At Milestone, we do not focus on the alphabet or learning to write letters, names and numbers. The way we incorporate letters and numbers in our program is with experiences such as group games that include counting or recognising letters & numbers, singing songs and the letter of the week show and tell.

We don't have specific times in the day where we focus on academic skills or knowledge as we know that children learn all they need to know through play (with gentle intentional teaching by educators).

We like to encourage family participation across all aspects of our program. Families can contribute to our programs through many ways, such as parent duty, feedback and an open-door policy which allows families to come in to the centre to play or share a story, talent, cultural experience etc. We value contributions from families and part of our aim is to make your family feel that this is a home away from home.

Some of the areas that we focus on are:

- **Independence** – e.g. getting the children to put their own belongings in their bags, self-serving themselves meals, using “real-life” objects in play
- **Social Interactions** – e.g. helping the children solve problems during social interactions so they can negotiate their way out in the playground
- **School Readiness** – e.g. providing the children with scissors, sticky tape, glue sticks, hole punchers etc.
- **Sustainability** – e.g. growing our own produce, becoming environmentally responsible, recycling

By providing small group activities such as home corner and block corner, we believe this gives children the opportunity to work on social and problem solving skills like working out an issue between two or more children, turn taking, sharing etc.

Throughout the year, we provide numerous learning experiences that will assist children in the transition to school, such as:

- *Responsible Pet Ownership* incursion
- *Lunch Box Days* in term 4 where children bring lunch boxes to kinder & are familiarised on how to open wrappers, peel fruit, punch through straws etc.
- Cooking experiences
- ‘*Letter of the Week*’ show and tell
- Events and celebrations on our calendar of events
- Gardening and growing fruits, vegetables and herbs
- Free Hearing Screenings in term 3 by *Knox Audiology*
- Multicultural and community projects and discussions
- An end-of-year graduation ceremony

DAILY OPERATIONS

RESOURCES FOR MILESTONE

If you have any of these items at home that you no longer need, please feel free to donate them to us. We are always on the lookout for new materials to add to our collection. Thank you.

Frames	Logs	CDs
Cushions & Pillows	Corks	Pallets
Rugs	Buttons	PVC Pipes
Wool	Toothpicks	Patty Pans
Rolling Pins	Stickers	Pots
Blankets	Tyres	Bibs
Gumboots	Old X-Rays	Streamers
Crockery	String	Envelopes
Tape	Ropes	Beads
Straws	Glass Jars	Towels
Drain Pipes	Plastic Bottles	Ribbon and Lace
Newspaper	Wrapping Paper	Jewellery
Wooden Cookies	Fake Flowers	Baskets
Face Washers	Old Street Signs	Magnifying Glasses
Greeting Cards	Cardboard Cylinders	Traffic Cones
Wood	White or Coloured Paper	Wooden Crates
Kitchen Utensils	Books in Good Condition	Material/Fabric
Hand Puppets	Baking Pans and Trays	Cardboard Boxes
Lids – Plastic or Metal	Craft Paints	Clothes – New & Old
Rocks & Stones	Bubble Wrap	Bark
Plants	Bags and Wallets	Scarves
Tupperware	Trinket Boxes	Outdoor Paint
Clay	Tea Sets	Tents/Sunshades
Dinosaurs/Animals	Cars and Trucks	Binoculars
Plastic Containers and Tubs	Tapestry Needles or Bodkins	Sheets/Pillow Cases/Linen
Cable Reels (all sizes, plastic or wooden)	Aluminium Foil Bakeware, e.g. pie pans, BBQ trays	Large Paper, e.g. from an architectural firm
Natural Items, e.g. Pinecones, Shells, Gumnuts, Seed Pods	Metal and Plastic Pots, Pans & Cookware	Trays – Wooden, Metal or Plastic

HEALTH AND SAFETY PROCEDURES

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

In the event of an emergency situation, all educators are aware of the emergency procedures. Families will be contacted should any situation occur. We have an *Emergency Management Team* who regularly meet to review emergency procedures and refresh the knowledge of the team. We welcome family input at any time.

HEALTH AND SAFETY GUIDELINES

We follow strict guidelines regarding illness and your children.

- This centre must be notified if your child is to be absent, especially if this is due to an infectious illness.
- Families of a child who has a chronic illness which requires prolonged or preventative medication, *e.g. asthma, epilepsy, diabetes or anaphylaxis*, should provide the centre with an action plan written and signed by a qualified medical practitioner at the time of enrolment, giving details of treatment. Families should keep educators up to date with new techniques and requirements. Action plans must be updated by a doctor annually.
- The safety of the children in our care is of utmost importance, therefore, we have behaviour management, hygiene, and food handling policy guidelines that are adhered to and set by the Department of Human Services.

MEDICAL CONDITIONS

The educators at the centre can effectively respond to and manage medical conditions including asthma, diabetes, epilepsy, anaphylaxis and allergies to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children, families, educators and visitors. All educators are trained in first aid, anaphylaxis management, and asthma management.

Any child with an ongoing medical condition, *e.g. asthma, anaphylaxis*, is required to have an action plan or management plan prepared by their doctor. We also require that any prescribed medication is left at the centre on a permanent basis, *e.g. asthma puffer, EpiPen*. Action plans must be reviewed by your child's doctor every 12 months. It is the family's responsibility to ensure action plans are reviewed and medication is in date.

Constant communication is the key to minimising the risks associated with these conditions and families are asked to continuously update the centre of any changes to their child's conditions.

Please Note: Medication should never be left in your child's bag. Please give it to an educator upon enrolment and we will keep it in our medication box.

Please refer to our *Dealing with Medical Conditions* policy for more information.

HEALTHY TOGETHER ACHIEVEMENT PROGRAM

Milestone is enrolled in the Victorian Healthy Together Achievement Program. The Achievement Program is a simple, evidence-based framework to create a healthy learning environment and support the health and wellbeing of everyone in our service. This initiative gives children the best possible start to their learning and development and also boosts staff productivity.

The program helps coordinate health and wellbeing actions across six health priority areas. We can apply for recognition for promoting these health priorities once we have successfully met state-wide benchmarks. We have a *Health and Wellbeing Team* who work through the priority areas and regularly meet to discuss new ideas for the centre. We welcome family input at any time.

HEALTH AND SAFETY PROCEDURES

ILLNESS AND INFECTIOUS DISEASES

In the event of your child becoming ill, we will offer them a quiet area to rest. The child will be comforted until a family member is contacted & arrives for the child.

Once a family has been contacted to collect an unwell child from the centre, the family is required to organise for the child to be collected within a one (1) hour time frame. If the child has not been collected after one hour, we will contact the family a second time for an estimated time of arrival. If after one hour, the family member is still more than 15 minutes away, we will contact other emergency contacts on the child's collection list to find someone who can collect the child sooner.

We aim to protect all children from the risk of cross-infection. Children who are unwell will be excluded from the centre in accordance with the centre's '*Dealing with Infectious Diseases*' policy. Children may not return to the centre until the conditions fulfill the criteria for return to care. Medical certificates must clearly state that the child is not infectious to others.

Children suffering from vomiting, diarrhoea, or fever (38.0°C and above) will be excluded for at least 24 hours after their last symptom or last temperature of 38.0°C and above. On arrival, if any staff member considers your child to be unwell, they will ask you to take your child home.

Child care fees are still payable for days which children do not attend due to illness. If a child is excluded due to illness, families are still required to pay for these absent days. Any child that is considered unimmunised will be charged full fees during the period of exclusion.

Families should note that children entering a group care environment for the first time have a tendency to pick up illnesses that may be going around. The reason for this is not poor standards of hygiene but is due to the fact that the child has not been exposed to bugs before and therefore has no immunity.

Please Note: *Children who are ill must remain at home. The care we provide is for children who are well and able to cope with a busy day. We are not able to cater for sick children. We have other children, their families, and our educators, to consider.*

Please refer to our *Dealing with Infectious Diseases* policy for more information.

MEDICATION

Medication can only be given if an educator has received the appropriate details, and written authority. Please record on a medication record all correct details and a signature. All medication must be handed to an educator to be placed in a locked medication box. No medication is to be left in a child's bag. Please remember to write a separate line for each dose of medication required.

Any medication given will be witnessed by another educator to verify that we are indeed giving the correct dose & medication to the correct child. These requirements are regulations set by the Department of Human Services.

Educators at Milestone **WILL NOT** administer 'over the counter' medications to children without a letter from a doctor stating the reason, dosage and period of time the child requires the medication. Medications must be in their original container with the child's name written on a label from the doctor/pharmacist. This includes asthma puffers.

The centre will keep *Panadol* on the premises in the event of a child experiencing an extreme temperature. *Panadol* will only be administered after parental permission has been given and whilst the child is waiting to be collected. *Panadol* will not be administered to any child on a regular basis or on request if a child is not feeling well.

HEALTH AND SAFETY PROCEDURES

ACCIDENTS AND INJURIES

In the event of an accident, your child will be comforted and given appropriate first aid. Immediate medical attention will be sought, if the educators consider it necessary. We require your written authorisation on the enrolment form. We will notify you as soon as possible to inform you of what has happened.

In the event that your child needs to go in an ambulance to hospital, we will notify you of the hospital where we are going, so you can meet us there.

If we cannot reach you, we will contact your nominated emergency person. Please ensure that these phone numbers are up-to-date. Make sure your emergency contacts are aware they are nominated.

All educators are required to practice good safety procedures both indoors and out. If your child has had a minor accident during the day, you will be notified upon collection of your child, and asked to sign an accident form. The accident form contains information on how the accident occurred and where the injury is located. All accident forms are taken to the person in charge for verification once they have been written.

Sometimes, if the accident is more serious, an educator will call to notify you that an accident has taken place, and what action we have taken to rectify it. It may be necessary for you to collect the child.

*Please refer to our **Incident, Injury, Illness and Trauma** policy for more information.*

SAFE SLEEPING

We follow safe sleeping guidelines set by the Sids & Kids Foundation. Information on SIDS is on display throughout the centre, in the nursery and available on request.

SUN PROTECTION

We use a combination of sun protection measures for all outdoor activities from **September to the end of April** and whenever UV levels reach 3 and above. Children are required to wear hats and clothing that protect them from the sun. Children are also encouraged to wear sunglasses.

We provide SPF50+ sunscreen which we apply to the children regularly throughout the day. Children are encouraged to play in the shaded parts of the yard. Our centre has been recognised as a SunSmart Centre by SunSmart Victoria for the past 16 years. Our current certificate will be valid until February 2020.

*Please refer to our **Sun Protection** policy for more information.*

EXCLUSION TABLE

The exclusion table describes the minimum period of exclusion from a children's service for infectious diseases & contacts. This is on display in the centre for you to see and is also in our *Dealing with Infectious Diseases* policy. In this schedule, "medical certificate" means a certificate from a qualified medical practitioner. A child who has been absent with an infectious disease is required to show a medical certificate that proves the child is "no longer infectious and may return to child care".

*Please refer to our **Dealing with Infectious Diseases** policy for more information.*