



EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTRE

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Family Handbook 2011 / 2012

(Reviewed July 2011)

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Introduction

Sandhills Early Childhood Centre was opened in August 1995. The Centre was established to provide the Byron Shire community with the best childcare facility for children aged between 0-5 years. Licensed to accommodate up to 54 children per day, the centre is, on most days, filled to capacity.

Centre Management

Sandhills Early Childhood Centre is sponsored by Byron Shire Council. Funding is received from the Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (Commonwealth), and the Department of Community Services (State), and we are consequently accountable to both.

A Parent Committee provides input into policy development, social and fundraising activities. Meetings are held monthly and all parents are welcome to attend.

Access to the Centre

Sandhills adheres to the "Priority of Access" guidelines determined by the Commonwealth Government. Once each family's circumstances are assessed, they are assigned to a level of priority. Access to the centre can be reviewed if the family's circumstances change so they require less hours of care, or care placed at a higher level of priority.

Hours of Operation

Monday to Friday **8.00am to 6.00pm**.

The Centre is open throughout the year, closing only for approximately two weeks around Christmas/New Year.

Staff spend the first half hour in the morning setting up the day's resources and experiences. Children will not be permitted into the centre before 8.00am. Staff are only employed to 6.00pm, so it is essential that parents arrive at the centre to collect their children prior to that time.

Staff need to be compensated if they are delayed by parents who collect their child late. Consequently, we charge a **Late Fee of \$10.00 for each 5 minutes or part thereof**, after 6.00pm.

Our Philosophy

“As educators, we acknowledge and respect the uniqueness of families and the contributions they make to our environment. We encourage and support children’s development and celebrate children’s achievements of personal and social goals. We encourage and support the development of all friendships and promote empathy and self esteem. Our interactions with children are respectful and authentic. We are influenced by the early childhood teaching from Reggio Emilia that recognizes children as competent learners who are resourceful, curious, imaginative, inventive and possess a desire to interact and engage with their environment.”

We believe that....

- *A flexible emergent program based on children’s strengths and interests will positively engage children in creative learning and play.* All children have the right to be respected as capable and resourceful co-contributors of their own social wellbeing and development. Individual children will be supported in the development of their strengths and interests and will be guided by qualified and dedicated staff in the explorations and investigations of the program. Our staff utilize the Early Years Learning Framework – Belonging, Being and Becoming in their work with children.
- *Children’s play is both an essential learning tool for young children, and deeply affected by the quality of the teaching environment in which it takes place.* We support children’s play by providing a variety of possibilities and observing what unfolds. We support the problem solving process and pay attention to spontaneous interests. We value children’s eagerness to learn about the world in which they live.
- *The social relationships of the group are central to children’s learning.* The events of the day are recorded, evaluated and documented in the children’s portfolios by the teaching team. Portfolios are valuable tools for guiding and extending learning experiences and facilitating meaningful reflection.
- *Families have the right to nurturing and supportive care, where cultural diversity is valued and respected.* We support an open door policy, and believe it is important when working with complex and changing family circumstances, to be able to empathize and adopt a flexible attitude that promotes respect and sensitivity for the perspectives and issues impacting on families. We work in close partnership with parents to get to know and understand their child in order to provide the quality of care all children deserve.
- *Family and community involvement in our centre is invaluable, as it enables our program to reflect the customs and values of the society in which our children are living.* Through genuine interest in our families, we are able to build trusting relationships in a partnership that brings together our mutual expertise for the benefit of the child.
- *Ongoing professional development and training is essential for our early childhood team, who remain committed to current practice and research ideals from within the early childhood professional field.* We acknowledge, refer to and reflect on the work done with children by educators at Reggio Emilia, Italy in our daily work. Our staff work collaboratively to create a mutually supportive environment, where each team member is valued for their diversity and the strengths and interests they contribute to the group.

- *Children have a natural affinity with their natural environment.* We support the ideals of reducing the effects of climate change, and are committed to improving our carbon footprint within the centre. We endeavour to raise children’s environmental awareness of sustainable solutions, and their appreciation of nature by modeling and implementing sustainable practices.

Costs & Services

| | |
|-----------------------------------|---------|
| Waiting List Fee | \$20.00 |
| Enrolment Fee – per family | \$30.00 |

Holding Fee - One week’s fee based on the full daily rate. This fee is refundable on departure from the centre.

Two weeks notice is required for any changes in your child’s attendance pattern - either permanent withdrawal or a reduction in days. Sandhills offers two different services:

| | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Long Day Care: | Birth - 3 years | \$82.00 per day |
| | 3 - 6 years | \$76.00 per day |

Families wishing to claim Childcare Rebates must ensure they and their children are registered with the Family Assistance Office and that their child has been assessed for Child Care Benefit. Each family’s claim is assessed by the Family Assistance Office at Centrelink and their eligibility for assistance is determined.

| | | |
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| Occasional Care: | 0 - 6 years | \$15.00 per hour |
|-------------------------|-------------|------------------|

The above charges enable us to provide 3 nutritionally balanced meals each day, sun block and entertainment - visiting puppet shows, musicians etc.



Our Staff

| | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------|------------------------------------|
| Director | Fasha Steen | Early Childhood Teacher |
| Child Contact | Jodee Bond | Early Childhood Teacher |
| | Subhadra Chapman | Early Childhood Teacher |
| | Fiona Stanistreet | Early Childhood Teacher |
| | Leanne Norton | Diploma Child Studies |
| | Katie Rabinau | Diploma Child Studies |
| | Glenda Mitchell | Diploma Child Studies |
| | Kim Godwin | Diploma Child Studies |
| | Paula Fagerstrom | Diploma Child Studies |
| | Angela Ward | Diploma Child Studies |
| | Leanne Burnett | Certificate III Childcare |
| | Corinne Fisher | Certificate III Childcare |
| | Elisha Cooksey | Certificate III Childcare |
| | Jenny Ward | Certificate III Childcare |
| | Melissa Horwood | Childcare Trainee |
| | Kelly Bryer | Childcare Trainee |
| Administration | Bernice Bradford | Grad. Diploma Community Management |
| Chef | Andrew Hoult | Nutrition & Menu Planning |



Enrolment

An enrolment interview gives the staff, parents, and children a chance to meet. The enrolment form is filled out, the family can tour the centre, meet staff, etc.

This is the opportunity to pass on as much information about your child, family routines, customs, and beliefs to us as possible. The more information we share with each other, the easier the transition to care will be for you and your child.

Please bring:

- Full immunisation records, these need to be up dated regularly
- Birth Certificate
- Addresses, phone numbers of relatives and/or friends to contact in case of emergency
- Family doctor's name and phone number
- Any medical/developmental assessments your child may have
- Custody/access documents (if applicable)

Policies

A copy of Sandhills Policy Document is made available to all parents on enrolment. Please make yourself familiar with this document and ask staff for clarification if you have any concerns or questions.

Settling Your Child into Sandhills

Beforehand:

- Visit, spend time with your child in the new environment and show them EVERYTHING
- Learn all of the staffs' names and use them repetitively
- Discuss your child's worries with us - we can all help to reassure them about toileting, rest time, finding friends, etc
- Tell us all about your child's interests, routines, comforts, etc
- Talk about the centre and staff at home

When you are ready to leave:

- Ensure that your child is involved in an activity, and that a staff member is nearby.
- Say a cheerful 'good-bye' then leave quickly.
- Don't hesitate to ring anytime, and as many times as you like! We are always glad to tell you how your child is, and we will always be truthful.

Daily Requirements

Please ensure your child brings a school bag each day with:

- A hat - Burbi & Mani Rooms only
- Spare sets of clothes - ALL CLEARLY MARKED
- A piece of fruit
- Breast milk/formula bottles (if required)
- Special items for comfort - a dummy, soft toy etc.



Please let us know:

Who will be collecting your child and when.

If your child will be absent - sick/holidays. Families receiving Childcare Benefit are entitled to 42 Allowable Absences per year, after which no child care benefit can be claimed for absent days.

If your child is leaving permanently - two weeks notice is always required. Two weeks notice is also required to drop or change your child's allocated days. If the child does not attend during the last 2 weeks, full fees will be charged for those days—ie. no child care benefit is available.

If custody/access arrangements have changed.

Any new enrolment details—address/phone numbers, emergency contacts, immunisation updates, medication/illnesses.

Parents of Burbi & Mani Room children are asked to supply a hat that can be kept in your child's hat pocket at the centre to ensure it is always available. Sunblock is supplied but if your child reacts to our cream, please supply the brand you have found to be successful. If you do not want your child to have sunblock applied, you will need to request this in writing.

Our Early Childhood Program

Both the long day and occasional care services offer a fully educational pre-school program staffed by early childhood qualified professionals. The staff monitor each child, observing their skills, characteristics and assessing their development. They will provide your child with a portfolio that stays at the centre, into which parents are encouraged to make entries. This portfolio makes a visible record of your child's learning. Our 4 rooms are set up to make provision for four totally different developmental stages; Birth -18 months; 18 months - 2 years; 2 - 3 years; and 3 - 5 year olds.

However, the children are NOT necessarily placed in the rooms according to their chronological ages. Each child develops at their own pace, and the decision to move a child up into the next room is made by staff in partnership with parents, and depends upon availability of space.

Specific staff are assigned to a room each year so the children know their consistent caregivers, and can rely on them. All staff work together to offer the best care possible for each group of children, becoming familiar with each child's personality, and particular requirements. Our aim is to build up a warm, trusting relationship with the children, so they feel secure and confident at Sandhills.

We encourage children to experience play in all four rooms at different times:

- Siblings may enjoy spending time in each others' rooms
- A pre-schooler might enjoy helping to feed the babies/toddlers
- An 18 month old might benefit from some playtime with the older groups for added stimulation
- A 2 year old might need to slow down and relax in the babies' room

The outdoor environment has three distinct play areas in it, to be used by each age group. 'Family grouped' play, when all ages play together, can lead to many positive learning opportunities. We come together in this way in the late afternoon after 4.00pm.



Daily Routine

Burbi Room (Birth - 18 months) 8 children / 2 staff

We aim to follow each child's home routine as closely as possible. Environmental logic persuades our use of cloth nappies in the infant and toddler rooms. We launder them here, and often children assist staff to hang out the washing. Nappy changing is done as required, with routine checks made before each meal time, plus before and after sleeps.

All information about your child's feeding, sleeping and toileting is recorded on the white board daily. Caregivers will try to write in your child's portfolio on a weekly basis.

The children spend most of the day in their own room, with play on the verandah and outdoor area which is shared with the children from the Mani Room. After 4 pm they move into the Winyum room for family grouped time. This time is flexible.

Mani Room (18 months - 2 years) 11 children / 2 staff

The Mani Room is set up to allow these curious explorers to venture a little further from the homely environs of the baby room. They share the playground and sand play area. Their own bathroom provides for autonomy with their toileting and hand washing. A separate room with stretchers makes an easy transition from cot to bed.

The program provides the children with lots of chances to explore different materials/equipment, and follow their own interests.

- Paint – finger and brush
- Water play
- Music – tapes and instruments, songs
- Language – books, pictures, conversations
- Puzzles— fine motor play, cause and effect play
- Gross motor play – push and pull toys
- Drama – puppets, dress-ups, dolls, home corner

Gabul Room (2 -3 years) 15 children / 2 staff

The 2 - 3 year olds have their own play area and sometimes mix with the pre-schoolers. This mix allows the children to have group times and emergent programs developed for them, and also the opportunity for the different ages to spend time together.

In this room, the children adapt to basic routine times for eating and sleeping. The times for music and stories; free play; outdoor play etc. enable children to feel secure and confident. As these children develop, we encourage them to:

- Spend longer periods of engagement in experiences
- Join in at group time - singing, dancing, discussing

- Move - Climbing, running, jumping, obstacle courses
- Create - Explore paints, collage, construction, etc.
- Socialise - Playing next to, then with each other.
- We supply the children with a hat that is left in their hat pocket at the centre until their next visit.

Winyum Room (3 - 5 years) 20 children / 2 staff

The pre-schoolers are encouraged to be autonomous, choosing the activities they wish to participate in, and selecting their own materials, etc. As their confidence increases, they become capable of many daily tasks:

- Serving at meal times, rinsing their own bowls then clearing away
- Helping to pack up the equipment
- Hanging up their artwork to dry
- Washing down the tables
- Folding up their sheets after rest time
- Dressing – wearing hats outside, jumpers, shorts, shoes and socks, and learning to be responsible for their own belongings

We supply the children with a hat that is left in their hat pocket at the centre until their next visit.

The Preschool Program

Our Pre-school program provides an educational program which values play as a learning environment in which children's ideas and thoughts are valued. It is a dynamic environment, which is attuned to the needs and interests of each child. The environment is a helpful and caring one in which children are encouraged and supported to become confident, social beings who feel comfortable to say "I can't" or "I don't know" and know they will be supported in their attempts to overcome their problems.

Children have the freedom to play with materials, with each other and their thoughts and ideas, and in playing, they are learning. The role of the caregiver is to be leader, questioner, comforter, facilitator, and negotiator.

Families should be aware that children from the preschool room who are to attend school the following year, finish at Sandhills at the end of their preschool year. Council provides a Vacation Care service for children requiring care in January before they start school.



Rest Times



Children can find even just a few hours at the centre exciting, but tiring. After lunch they are provided with the opportunity to rest or sleep, so they can rejuvenate for the afternoon program.

The room is set up with beds for each child, soothing music is played and the lights are dimmed. Staff settle the children and sit close by, quietly documenting the day. The children can bring in a special comforter from home to have at this time. Most children need this time to unwind and drift off to sleep.

As each child awakes, they are helped with dressing, toileting, etc. and provided with quiet activities. Each child requires a different amount of rest, and when they are ready to get off their beds, they have access to puzzles, drawing, threading, etc.

Meal Times

Children are provided with approximately 70% of their daily nutritional requirements through the meals supplied at Sandhills. A hot lunch, plus morning and afternoon tea is served. The weekly menu is displayed on our notice board, please feel free to discuss the meals, and your child's specific needs with the cook, and staff.

Parents are asked to supply one piece of fruit each day that their child attends the centre. The children are encouraged to give their contributions to the cook or place them in the duck bowl, and in this way become involved in the kitchen routine.

Meal times are valuable parts of the daily routine. The children and staff spend this time talking, sharing their opinions and ideas about the food, the different tastes, etc. It is also a great time to discuss the morning's activities, the upcoming events, etc.

Dessert is regarded as an essential part of the children's daily intake - NOT as a reward. Children are offered second helpings, and encouraged to eat dessert, even if they did not eat the main meal.



Children's birthdays are always cause for celebration and we are happy for you to provide the children with a cake, however due to the special diets of some children, the cake must be wholesome and nutritious and devoid of any overly sweet toppings or lollies.

Parents as Partners

Our centre is community based. We see ourselves as a 'community of learners' partnering with parents in the care and education of children.

Parents are valued as partners in the process, and communication between caregivers and families is considered essential to the effective achievement of our goals.

Parents are welcome to stay and play, or contribute to the program by reading stories, teaching new songs, music, dance or games. Home languages and celebrations are encouraged as opportunities for children and staff to learn. So please feel free to find out what happens at Sandhills by visiting and sharing with us.



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