

# Little Acorns Childcare Mt Martha

4 Watson Rd, Mt Martha, VIC 3934

Email: [mtmartha@littleacorns.com.au](mailto:mtmartha@littleacorns.com.au) Phone: 03 5974 4568



# Parents' Guide

## Service & Contact Info

### Days & Hours of Operation:

Monday to Friday 6.30am – 6.30pm

### Email address

[mtmartha@littleacorns.com.au](mailto:mtmartha@littleacorns.com.au)

### Phone:

(03) 5974 4568

### Licensee & Director:

Tracey & Nicole

*Open for 52 weeks a year  
Closed on Gazetted Public Holidays*

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## **Contents:**

### **Page 3**

Welcome Message from Tracey  
Belief and Goals

### **Page 4**

Philosophy

### **Page 5**

Enrolment  
Deposit  
Orientation

### **Page 6**

Parent Participation & Communication at Little Acorns  
Educator Ratio & Qualifications  
Saying Goodbye to Your Little Ones  
Arrival & Departure of Children

### **Page 7**

Fees  
Annual Leave  
Late Fees & Closing

### **Page 8**

Nutrition & Mealtimes  
Make-Up Days  
Rest/Sleep Times  
Educational Program

### **Page 9**

Xplor Home App  
Funded Kindergarten Program

### **Page 10**

Allowable Absences  
Clothing  
Sun Safety  
Children's Belongings

### **Page 11**

Confidentiality  
Medication Administration  
Accidents  
Illness & Infectious Diseases

### **Page 12**

Positive Guidance  
Withdrawal of Children  
Child Protection National Quality Framework  
Childcare Subsidy (CCS)

### **Page 13**

Emergency Drills  
2 Day Minimum  
A Final Message from Tracey

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## **Welcome to Little Acorns from Tracey**

Our team at Little Acorns Childcare Centre are pleased to be able to undertake a care and educative partnership with you and your child. We feel privileged to be able to share this valuable stage in your child's life with you and will provide a safe, nurturing, and happy environment in which all children can thrive. Our centre provides the highest standard of quality early learning for babies, toddlers, and kindergarten (4-year-old) aged children.

I have more than 20 years' experience in early childhood education. Creating Little Acorns alongside my husband Dennis and daughters Kirsty and Nicole is the realisation of a long-held dream of mine to establish a high-quality early learning environment, here in Australia. At Little Acorns, children, families, and educators will work together to create a relaxed and happy atmosphere which facilitates learning with your child to enable them to reach their full potential.

The centre has qualified and experienced educators. Educators hold professional teaching and early childhood qualifications. All our educators have current First Aid and Anaphylaxis qualifications. We encourage our educators to continue their professional studies in early childhood by attending in-service and training courses.

This operational manual sets out information regarding our services, policies and procedures and is available in the entry foyer.

We look forward to our association and are freely available to answer your queries.

## **Our Beliefs and Goals**

- At Little Acorns, our activities are driven by the ideas, excitement, information, and questions from the children.
- We believe in building intrinsic motivation and a long-term love of learning in children.
- We support and encourage the interest and involvement of families.
- We believe that the quality of early relationships, experiences and environments strongly influence children later in life.
- We believe that each child comes to the centre with a different set of experiences, knowledge, and interests. We seek to build on the individual home experiences and acknowledge the range of diverse backgrounds of our families.
- We believe language and learning go hand – in – hand to increase children's concept development, social relationships, and their understanding of the world around them.
- We believe each child has the right to an environment that develops a strong sense of respect for self, for others and for the environment.
- We believe that each child should be given the opportunity to experience success so that they are able to face the future challenges, build on their strengths and accept their individual limitations without fear of failure or loss of self-esteem.
- We believe equality within the learning environment is essential to the overall development of all children.
- We believe that positive, supportive, and nurturing educators are essential to a successful early learning environment.
- We are committed to the Australian Early Childhood Association Code of Ethics.

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## Philosophy

At Little Acorns Childcare Centre we are committed to our responsibility to do all we can to optimise every child's *developmental experience*; to achieve this:

- We support and encourage learning through play; believing that play is an essential element to young children's development.
- We ensure our children are safe, secure, respected and supported during every moment of their time with us.

We believe that *communication and learning* go hand-in-hand to increase children's development, social relationships and their understanding of the world around them through.

- Emergent play-base curriculum, driven by the ideas, excitement, information and questions from the children, their families, and the community.
- Providing a natural resourced and stimulating environment.
- Including an awareness to cultural diversity throughout the community and environment.
- Creating a learning environment where the children within the service are able to develop the social, emotional, cognitive and physical needs.

We believe that communication between *educators and families* is vital in guiding children's learning and that families are the children's first and most influential educator. Vital to quality of life is the ability to work together, learn from each other and help each other grow in confidence. Our staff educators achieve this by

- Developing our educators to be confident communicators, who are able to engage with parents about how their child spent their day with us, as well as discuss the progress and development within the centre and encourage families to be involved.
- Having educators with great love and passion for their workplace and children in care.
- Holding relevant qualifications and a positive attitude to continuous learning and personal development.
- Developing strong partnerships with families and their community. Meaningful relationships with families are the foundation in developing and understanding each other's expectations and attitudes and build on the strength of each other's knowledge.

We are committed to the *Early Years Learning Framework* for Australia, actively support, and implement the National Quality standard within our service and adhere to the Australian Early Childhood Association Code of Ethics.

We understand the importance of *sustainability* and emphasise this within our curriculum.

We uphold our *values* to be passionate, enthusiastic, family orientated, open, honest, respectful and strive for excellence in being a high-quality provider of care and learning for all families and children throughout the service.

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## **Enrolment**

*To enrol at the centre parents are asked to undertake the following process:*

- Contact the centre to arrange a visit to familiarise yourself with the centre and to meet the educators.
- Arrange Child Care Subsidy. Application forms are available from any Centrelink or on your MyGov Website.
- Pay a non-refundable \$150 deposit which holds your child's spot in the centre for up to 6 weeks.
- Complete all the details on the *Enrolment Record*.
- Ensure you have provided your family CRNs if applicable from Centrelink/FAO 13 61 50.
- Read the *Parent Guide* and if you would like to read any policies/procedures, they are located in our Foyer (a digital version can be accessed on the iPad, or alternatively paper copies are available at the desk).
- Phone to confirm booking arrangements and orientation days.

The content of the *Enrolment Record* is kept strictly confidential in accordance with the centre's policy and *Privacy Act*. A child may not commence care until these forms have been completed and a non-refundable \$150 deposit has been processed. The form includes the immunisation record, medical contacts, and the names of at least two authorised people who can be contacted in the event of an emergency.

## **Deposit**

Payment of a non-refundable \$150.00 deposit secures your child's place within Little Acorns. Once the deposit is paid, if the enrolment is not processed, the deposit will be retained as an administration fee. The deposit payment must be paid within 48 hours of email being sent by Little Acorns due to high demand of inquiries. The deposit payment will hold your spot for 6 weeks, any longer will require a deposit of \$300.00 which must be approved by management prior to payment along with proposed commencement date. The deposit payment will come off your fees. The deposit payments are per child.

## **Orientation**

At Little Acorns Childcare Centre, we respect and support families who attend our centre, we do our best to provide families with as much guidance, support, and information as possible through the orientation and settling process. This allows the parents to become familiar with the educators that will be caring for their child, the environment and centre/room routines.

Orientation enables us to begin to establish a relationship with you and your child over a short period of time, so that when their first day does come around, they are beginning to be comfortable in the centre. For this reason, we require a minimum of 1 orientation session with your child to ensure they are comfortable with the educators and you are comfortable for Little Acorns to care for your child. There is no maximum, you will know best when your child and yourself are comfortable and satisfied.

Orientation is from 8:30am-11:30am, charged at half fees, and morning tea will be provided to your child.

\*Booking is required in advance.

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## Parent Participation & Communication with Little Acorns

At Little Acorns we understand that it is a good working relationship and sense of belonging that underpins our service. This involves listening, honesty, sharing, encouraging, and working together. Significant relationships between children, families and educators can evolve, grow, and develop through mutual respect.

It is this warm and caring relationship between the parents and educators that is fundamental to the process of providing high quality care. We have an “open door” policy that welcomes families to come to the centre during any part of the day.

We foster open lines of communication by the mutual sharing of information about your child at arrival and departure times.

Parental participation in the centre’s curriculum, planning implementation is encouraged.

Information is made available to families in a variety of ways including the day sheet in each room (this outlines routine times in the day), personal appointments, notice boards, regular newsletters, the centre’s operational manual, parent guide, email, telephone, Xplor Home App and most importantly face to face contact.

## Educator Ratio & Qualifications

Little Acorns educators all hold qualifications that have been recognised by Victorian standards and either hold a certificate III, diploma, or advanced diploma. We also have a qualified Early Childhood Teacher who teaches the registered kindergarten program. Our ratios reflect the standard of 1 educator to 4 children for under 3’s and 1 educator to 11 children for over 3’s.

## Saying Goodbye

We ask that parents keep their goodbyes as short and sweet as possible. In past experiences we find this is the best way to separate from your child into an easy transition whilst making it comfortable for them. We understand that children may get upset and we welcome you as parents to do what feels right. But in 99% of cases, we find that children settle within the first 10 minutes, and if a child is not settling, we will call to ask what you would like us to do, don’t forget that you can call as many times in the day as you like to ensure your own peace of mind.

## Arrival and Departure of Children

When a child is left in care at Little Acorns an authorized person **must** sign the child using their **mobile phone to scan the QR Code** on the *Xplor Kiosk* located in the foyer. Likewise, an authorized person **must** sign the child out using their **email address and password** before departure. This process is a requirement under Victorian regulations governing childcare and is for the safety of your child.

**An authorized person is one whose name is stated on the Enrolment Record.**

When alternative arrangement is needed to be made for the delivery or collection of children, other than those disclosed on the enrolment form, an authority must be given by the parent in writing via email. **Identification of the person collecting your child will be required at the time of collection.**

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## **Fees**

Fee payment arrangements must be made with management prior to commencement of care.

Fee payments are calculated using the rate set out in the Fee Schedule (displayed in the Foyer) and based on a family's care requirements in days.

If Child Care Subsidy (CCS) contributes to part of your payment then your CRN details must be forwarded to management during the enrolment process and prior to care.

Full fees are to be paid until CCS is approved and applied by centrelink.

Fees are to be paid weekly via our Direct Debit system and must be a week in advance.

Payments must be maintained to ensure your child's permanent place within the centre.

Arrangement for payment of fees is preferably via a credit/debit card in conjunction with our Debit Success payment system. Please note if the payment doesn't go through, we are now charged a fee and will have to pass this payment onto you.

Centre management will need to sight the credit/debit card to ensure the details match with the Debit Success parent registration form.

Statements are found on your Xplor Home App (Account – Finance – Click on the coloured box at the top to view statement). If you require a full statement, please email the centre and we will gladly provide it.

Full fees will be charged for all absences, including illness and public holidays.

## **Annual Leave**

Provided payments are not in arrears, and two weeks' notice of intended holiday is given, a child's place will be held for a maximum of four weeks (week block) for a holding fee charged at half fees. *Families experiencing difficulty paying their fees should see Little Acorns' management and all information shall be treated confidentially.*

## **Late Fees and Closing**

The centre closes at 6:30pm. If a child has not been collected by the nominated person by 6:30pm the following process will be undertaken.

If you do not make arrangements to contact the centre before closure to let the educators know you will be late; one of the authorized emergency contacts will be called to collect the child. It is important that the people with lawful authority are aware of their responsibility. If no contact can be made by 6.40pm the Police and the Department of Health and Human Services Child Protection Unit will be notified, and arrangements shall be made. A late fee of \$2.00 per minute per child will need to be charged. This is to cover the cost of overtime of two educator's that are required by law to stay to care for a child. These fees will be added to your account.

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## Nutrition & Mealtimes

At Little Acorns we will provide 50-80% of children's food intake, proportionate to their time spent in care. It will be provided through a healthy, balanced diet that is low in fat, salt, and sugar and high in fibre, and where possible, free from artificial flavours, colours, and preservatives.

Mealtimes are a very social occasion at Little Acorns that allows educators and children a time to come together in small groups and share food as well as conversation in a relaxed, happy atmosphere. To ensure a mealtime is enjoyed by all we undertake the following guidelines throughout the centre:

- Meals are timed to meet the needs of the children.
- All food is stored, prepared, and served according to the principles of safe food handling.
- Independence and social skills in children are encouraged through serving, choosing and where appropriate preparing their own food.
- We encourage children to try new or different food whilst respecting their choice.
- The environment in which children may eat varies from indoors to outdoors or maybe at the table or in a small group on a mat picnic style.
- A record of your child's food intake is available in their room.

Babies require sufficient bottles of formula for the days care. Bottles should be named, and a cover provided. Older babies, who drink cows' milk, need only provide a bottle, cover and teat which can remain at the centre or be taken home.

## Make-up Days

Little Acorns unfortunately **do not** provide make up days in lieu of an absence. Should you require an extra day because of any reason, Little Acorns will always do its best to provide the care as an additional day to your normal days in care.

## Rest/Sleep

Incorporated into our daily routine is a quiet time for children that is flexible and meets the particular needs of individual children.

Babies have their own cots to sleep in. We provide individual sheets and blankets.

Toddlers and children under 4 years have a mattress to sleep on. These children also have their own individual sheets, which we provide and launder weekly.

Children over three may not wish to sleep during the middle of the day. We do; however, encourage children to have a quiet time where they spend some time by themselves undertaking a quiet activity of their choice.

## Educational Program

The Early Years Learning Framework underpins our play based retrospective curriculum. Our plans of the room and our children are displayed in each room with detail on individual children's learning and development needs along with group objectives which are being addressed. This is supported by EYLF and Planning Cycle.

Our focus is on learning through play from birth through to the year before school. Play is essential and allows children to build on their knowledge and skills through communicating, creating and problem solving whilst being part of a group. The environment will offer a variety of activities and experiences for each child, as part of the room curriculum, to work toward their potential, whilst considering individual differences and inherent abilities of each child. Our centre curriculum aims to include all children's families and communities.



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## Xplor Home App

Home allows for quick and convenient communication, digital sign-ins and attendance, payments, booking and program tracking. Every child has a profile in which we record individual and group learning situations in story format, coupled with photos that are uploaded on to the app. Different learning and development stages are recognised, respected and diversity is encouraged where appropriate. Educators welcome reciprocal sharing information, knowledge, and skills with your family.

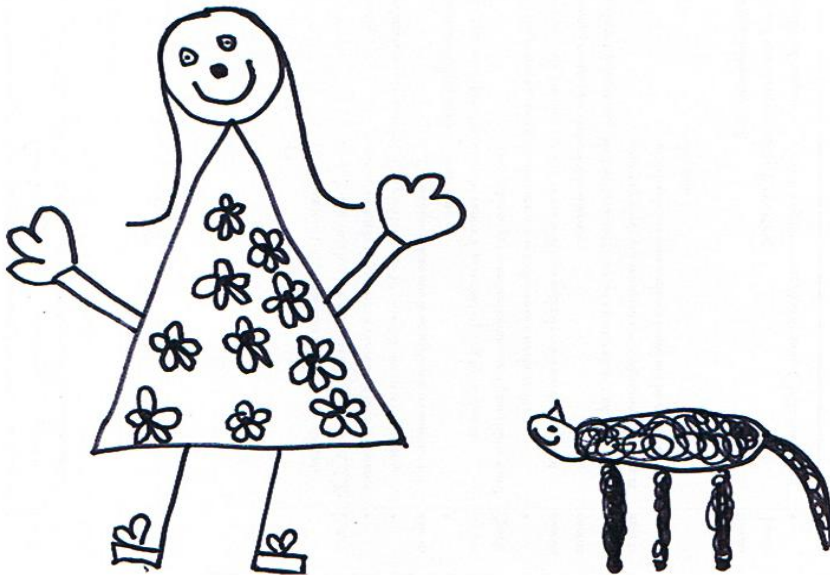
## The Funded Kindergarten Program

We offer a 4-Year-Old Kindergarten program that is delivered by our qualified Early Childhood teacher. The kindergarten program is offered every day between the hours of 9.00am and 5.00pm.

We work within the guidelines of The Victorian Early Years Learning Framework (VEYLF) and The Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) that provides a way to understand how learning and development facilitated by our Educators sets the foundations for success at school and life beyond.

- Learning outcomes from the Victorian Early Years Learning Framework describes what children should know and be able to do in the early years and links these outcomes to the ELYF.
- Our Little Acorns curriculum supports children's transitions into and between early childhood education and care and school.
- Children attending Little Acorns Kindergarten will be issued transition reports prior to attending primary school.

For more information regarding kindergarten please refer to our Kindergarten Information Book.



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## **Allowable Absences**

The Family Assistance Office monitors the number of absences from the centre each child has. If your child has been away and you receive CCS, you are required to notify the centre of the reason for the absence. CCS is paid for up to 42 allowable absence days per financial year and it will cease unless you have legitimate reasons for the additional absences.

Notify the centre if your child is going to be absent.

Absences covered by a medical certificate do not count in the 42 allowable absences. So, we suggest it is advisable to get a medical certificate if your child is ill or if your child's absence is due to illness of a family member.

Absences as a result of irregular shifts/hours with evidence would not be counted in the 42 allowable days. Shift workers and those on a roster should ask their employer for a letter outlining their employment requirements.

## **Clothing**

It is essential that children arrive for the day in clothing that is suitable for play. Clothing that is comfortable and easy fitting, washable and durable. We ask that parents consider the following:

- Bring a spare change of clothes just in case. Children in the process of toilet training may need a few changes of clothes.
- Label all clothing; unlabeled lost property clothing will be donated to a charity at the end of each month if not claimed.
- Consider the weather and include a coat and beanie for cooler days.
- Thongs, plastic shoes, rubber shoes (with the exception of gumboots) and crocs are not acceptable footwear at Little Acorns, and you may be asked to provide a different pair of shoes for that day, so please be aware.

**“There is no such thing as bad weather, just bad clothing choices!”**

## **Sun Safety**

Little Acorns is a SUNSMART CENTRE and follow the guidelines set out by SunSmart.

A Broad rimmed sun hat and lightweight clothes that cover sun exposed skin for sunny days is required during the sun smart periods. Educators will monitor each child for their clothing suitability and changing weather.

## **Children's Belongings**

Valuables should not be left on the premises since management cannot accept responsibility for lost or stolen items.

Families/Guardians should be advised that children need suitable clothes and footwear to attend their day care service.

Families/Guardians should be advised to label their child's entire clothing.

Families/Guardians should be discouraged from allowing their children to wear jewellery, to attend their day care placement, for reasons of safety.

Any jewellery or accessories being worn for religious or cultural reasons will be allowed.

Educators should make parents aware that they must take full responsibility for loss or damage or accidents involving the jewellery.

Little Acorns cannot accept any responsibility for damage or loss of personal belongings of the children in our care.

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## **Confidentiality**

It is our policy at Little Acorns to keep private matters strictly confidential. Any information that is deemed confidential will not be disclosed. Individual educators will discuss with Management (in confidence) if they are unsure about any matter that might be of a confidential or sensitive nature. Children's records as well as parent interviews are confidential and are subject to privacy restrictions.

## **Medication Administration**

Occasionally educators are required to administer medication to a child at the centre. At such times, the following procedure is undertaken by qualified educators only:

- Medication must never be left in a child's bag. It is to be handed directly to an educator.
- Parents must give authorisation to administer the medication by filling out the medication form with the child's name, the name of the medication, the dosage, and the time it is to be given.
- Medication must be provided in its original container which is labelled with the intended child's name, the name of the medication and the dosage to be given.

One educator will prepare the medication and the qualified educator will check the medication name, child's name, dosage, and time before administering the medication and signing the medication form.

## **Accidents**

There is an Incident/Accident Form located in each room.

Parents are notified by the staff/management.

Parents are requested to sign the *Incident Form* that is in their child's room.

Parents would be contacted immediately if any head injury occurs or serious injury whilst at the centre.

## **Illness and Infectious Diseases**

At Little Acorns Childcare Centre, we recognise the demands and needs of working parents with respect to securing childcare.

The following points may help in avoiding the spread of infection between children and to ensure the health of all at the centre:

- Notify the centre if your child becomes ill or is diagnosed with an infectious disease.
- Keep your child at home when unwell.
- Do not send your child to care if anyone in the household also has an infectious disease or is unwell.

The centre will not accept any child suffering from a contagious disease or illness.

- It is important you let the centre know if your child has been diagnosed with a contagious illness.
- Parents will be contacted if their child shows signs of illness, sleeping at unusual times, a fever of 37.5°C, crying constantly as a result of discomfort due to illness, two loose bowel motions, vomiting reacting badly to medication or in need of constant one to one care.

If parents are unable to be contacted, educators will notify emergency contacts.

Children with an infectious disease shall be excluded from the centre for the period as outlined by exclusion available from reception.

Parents should consult centre management before bringing their child back to the centre after an illness. Some conditions may require a doctor's certificate before the child can return.

In an emergency it may be necessary to call an ambulance to convey the child to hospital. An educator would accompany the child. Parents will be responsible for the costs involved.

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## **Positive Guidance**

At Little Acorns, our positive approach to guidance focuses on a child's strengths and understands that each child develops at their own pace. Educators are guided by 'Kelso's Choice' which empowers children with the ability to determine their own behaviour. Educators are supportive and respectful of each child's stage of development and the expectations of their age. All children need to develop self-confidence, initiative, self-esteem and a feeling of wellbeing to cope more easily with today's society. Our educators will endeavour to create a happy, relaxed tone in the centre.

## **Withdrawal of Children**

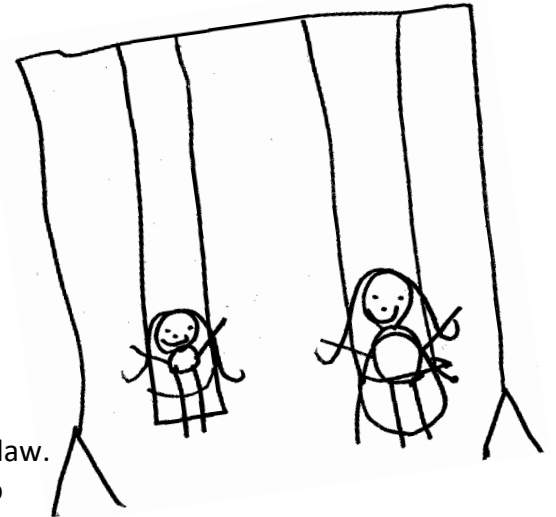
We require two weeks notice of a parent's intention to withdraw their child or reduce the hours of attendance.

Unexplained absences of more than two weeks may result in your place being offered to another family.

## **Child Protection**

Children have the right to safety and security. Child physical and sexual abuse has a long-term impact on children. Any belief or suspicion of sexual or physical abuse or neglect must be reported by law.

This process is known as mandatory reporting and applies not only to childcare workers but also to school teachers and healthcare workers. Educators must consult with management on any concern they may have about a child. Management will then contact the regional Child Protection Services officer from the Department of Human Services. Once reported the childcare educators are no longer involved in the proceedings.



## **National Quality Framework**

The Australian Government has initiated the National Quality Framework, the purpose of which is to improve, through self-assessment processes, the quality of care and education for children in children's services.

Little Acorns Childcare supports this initiative and welcomes the involvement of parents and educators in examining our policies and procedures on a monthly basis. We value any comments or feedback on the principles and our practices that affect the quality of the service we provide for the children. It is a continual and ongoing process whereas a community service we will examine each of the principles underpinning our policies and procedures including Health and Safety, Curriculum and Professional Development.

Through feedback from educators, parents, and children we are able to make ongoing assessments about what we do and how we can improve. Input that is constructive and places emphasis on co-operation produces a quality program and an environment that continually grows in excellence.

## **Child Care Subsidy (CCS)**

Child Care Subsidy is available to all families. This subsidy is paid according to a means and activity test and the assessment is carried out by the Family Assistance Office (Centrelink). For more information go to [mychild.gov.au](http://mychild.gov.au). Higher levels of CCS are available when more than one child is in care, even if the sibling is at another centre, or is in out of school hours care. We need to be informed if you have a child in care at another service and are claiming CCS for that child i.e., before or after school care.

It is the parent's responsibility to ensure that their CCS is current; full fees will be charged if it lapses.

The childcare Subsidy amount is paid direct to the centre and deducted from the actual fee charged.

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## **Emergency Drills**

The safety of children and the educators is our first priority. Fire and emergency procedures are practiced regularly to ensure prompt and safe evacuation from the building.

The Attendance Book is taken to be an accurate record of the children who are present. It is essential that your child's first name and surname is in the Attendance Book on each day of attendance.

Should an emergency arise where we have to leave the property, educators will evacuate the children to the designated evacuation points deemed safe on the Emergency Evacuation Plan displayed in each room. Parents would be contacted and are required to pick their child up from this location. Children must be signed out in the usual manner.

## **'2 Day Minimum'**

'Two day minimum' are days whereby a child attends the Service a minimum of two days which will enhance and develop their social skills, help them create relationships with other children and educators, and encourage their belonging within Little Acorns. At the discretion of Management, and the operational needs of the service, 'two day minimum' will be agreed upon by the family and the service together.

## **A Final Word**

It is our intention to work cooperatively and in partnership with educators, parents, and children here at Little Acorns.

We are always reflecting and learning more about the service we offer families as we take our role as educators very seriously. Please feel free to tell us how we are doing; you can approach us on any matter about the service.

***We hope you and your family enjoy your time with us at Little Acorns.***