



'Where the community spirit shines'

NQS - Quality Area 5

Orientation Policy (New Families)

Philosophy

We believe that children and families settle more successfully into a long day care environment if their initial introduction is a positive experience. A slow introduction period provides the opportunity for parents to become familiar with the early childhood educators at Highgate Early Childhood Centre (the "Centre"/"Highgate"), its routines, centre policies and procedures. Children benefit from a gradual introduction, gaining trust and familiarity within a new environment. There is opportunity for parents and educators to exchange information and build a foundation for an on-going professional relationship.

Policy

To assist with a smooth transition for children into a long day care environment Highgate recommends that families work in collaboration with educators and embrace the recommendations outlined in this Policy. It is recommended that children are introduced into the centre over a two week period during which time the fee will be reduced to 50% of the fee for each scheduled day the child attends the service. During the two week orientation period, on scheduled days of attendance, families will be encouraged to leave their children for increasing lengths of time. When the child is attending the centre for more than 4 hours, usually towards the end of the two week period then full fees will apply. If a family chooses not to utilise the full two weeks of orientation then full fees will apply when the child attends the centre for more than 4 hours a day.

Pre-Enrolment Consultation:

This is usually when a family expresses an interest in putting their child's name on the waiting list or when the have received a verbal offer of a place:

1. Parents are shown around the Centre.
2. An overview of the Centre's management structure is outlined, including parent involvement, staffing, and number of children attending, hours of operation, fees, levies and provision of meals.
3. Discuss the daily routines relevant to each room.
4. Discuss philosophy and aims of the Centre.
5. Discuss programs and individual record keeping.
6. Discuss policies and procedures.
7. Provide the Parents with an *Information Booklet* and *Application for Entry Instructions (waiting List)*.

Enrolment Consultation:

- Make contact with families to offer a childcare placement.
- Provide families with an *enrolment package* that includes copies of the pre-enrolment information, including the orientation Policy.
- If the offer of enrolment is offered with a view to commencing at Highgate the following year encourage the family to attend the information evening which is held in November of each year.
- The written offer of a placement (enrolment) at the centre must include the following information:
 - i. The name of the family, child and the environment (room) where the education and care will be provided
 - ii. The scheduled day/s on which the child may attend the centre
 - iii. The daily and weekly costs involved
 - iv. Information about the charge of levies
 - v. The Date on which the written acceptance form and payment is due to be returned to the office.
 - vi. Date of the Information evening
 - vii. The commencement and end date of their child's allocated Orientation Program
 - viii. A note to parents requesting that at the Information Evening they discuss with educators a suitable time on which to attend the centre on the first day of their orientation. Alternatively Parents may telephone the centre to organise a time.

Child and Parent Orientation Process:

First Visit:

The parent and child will visit the centre at a pre-arranged time for approximately 1-2 hours in the relevant room. Parents will meet with a Team Leader complete a Background Information Sheet and discuss the child's individual needs. The Parent will also be required to meet with the Director to ensure that all Enrolment documentation has been completed. No charge will be applied for this visit.

Second Visit on the child's scheduled day of care:

Child and Parent will be invited to spend up to 4 hours within the room observing routines, play experiences and educator/child interactions. During this visit the child will usually start to move around the environment independently and the parent may leave the child for a period of time.

The child and educators will begin to develop a relationship and a Primary Caregiver will be identified for Infants and young children (to assist primary attachments, fostering a sense of trust and security). Note: 50% of the daily fee will be charged.

Subsequent Orientation visits on scheduled days of care:

Child and Parent will be invited to spend up to 4 hours within the room and the parent will be encouraged to leave their child for longer periods of time so that by the end of the two week period the child has eaten lunch at the centre and possible a sleep. (This will depend on the child's usual sleep routines).

After each orientation visit the child's progress will be reviewed in consultation with the parent, educators and in some cases the Centre Director. If required, specialist services can be

sought to assist in the settling process e.g. a Bi-lingual worker or Inclusion Support Facilitator (ISF).

Please Note: A charge of 50% of the daily fee will be applied for all orientation visits with a duration of less than 4 hours during the specified two week period. After this 2 week orientation period, or if the child attends for longer than 4 hours each day, the full fee will apply.

Additional Orientation Visits:

During your allocated 2 week orientation period, parents may visit the centre at any time with their child in order to foster relationship with educators and become more familiar with the environment and routines. It is important to note that if parents visit the centre with their child on a non – scheduled day, the parent must stay with their child throughout the visit. Please organise a suitable time to visit with the Team Leader in the room. Fees will not be charged for these Additional Orientation visits.

Morning Arrival Process:

When preparing to leave the child in the care of educators it is important for the parents and educators to work in collaboration to establish a consistent settling routine with the child upon arrival. Educators will greet children and families and facilitate a brief exchange of information relevant to the child. It is recommended that parents facilitate a quick and consistent arrival routine which will create a sense of predictability and therefore security for children. If parents are hesitant to leave or spend a long time in the room with their child in the morning, this can cause children to feel anxious about being left and increase the chances of the child developing separation anxiety.

If parents would like to spend time in the room with their child this is usually best done at the end of the day. Parents are encouraged to speak to educators about this process and can telephone the Centre any time to check on their child or have longer discussions with educators.

Orientation Schedule at the commencement of the year:

The Infants room provides an environment where up to eight children are cared for each day. More than twenty children may be care for across each week depending on the number of days that the individual children attend. All children are to be oriented by the end of February each year and so the following schedule must be adhered to:

- The Orientation period (Mid-January - end of February) will be divided into 3 blocks of two weeks
- The first orientation block will commence on the Monday of the first full week after the centre re-opens after the Christmas closure
- When an offer of a place is made to a family they will be advised of the commencement and end date of their child's orientation.
- The number of children enrolled and their scheduled days of attendance will be taken into consideration when orientation dates are assigned
- It is anticipated that a minimum of three children (three full time places) will be included in each orientation block. If two or more children share the full time place, then the number of children orienting in each block will increase.

Annual Review & Evaluation of the Orientation Process

1. During the months of April and May of each year all new families who have started care with their child will be asked to give written feedback about the orientation process within Highgate.
2. The written feedback will consist of a number of pre-set questions asking families to reflect on the process of orientation within Highgate.
3. The purpose of asking families for this information is to be able to continually provide a consistent and individual approach to orientation for both children and families starting at Highgate.
4. All feedback will be compiled and quality improvement plans will be documented and communicated via the Centre newsletter 'Bright Star'.

Reviewed & Approved

February 2013