

From little
seeds grow
mighty
trees







Parent handbook

Dear Parents and Carers,

Welcome to Branches Early Learning Centre (ELC) Merriwa.

The children in our care are provided with a warm, welcoming, nurturing environment where learning goes hand in hand with play, fun, a sense of belonging and building secure attachments.

Our main priority is children's happiness, safety and well-being.

Branches ELC acknowledgement of country

We would like to acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the traditional custodians of the land on which we play and learn.

We pay our respects to the Elders, both past, present and emerging.



Our philosophy

At Branches ELC it is our belief that all children have the right to experience quality care. We believe when early learning is valued and nurtured appropriately, with diversity, it can foster individuals to positively contribute to their world and community.

Our aim is to nurture and empower children to thrive and be their own individual best by supporting resilience and emotional security in each child and infant in our care.

We know all children are capable, competent learners. Using power of play to discover, grow and create in an enriched environment we will support them to take an active role to build a sustainable future for our surroundings.

Our learning experiences are thoughtfully planned by our Educators and shaped by the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) and the My Time, Our Place Framework that are play based and child led.

At Branches ELC we embrace all cultures and support equity for all children and families.

Our main priority is children's happiness, safety and well-being.

Hours of operation

We provide early education and care to children between the ages of 6 weeks to school age, we also provide an Out of School Hours Care (OSHC) service for older children.

**We operate Monday to Friday 6.30am-6.00pm
(excluding public holidays)**

Fees

Our fees are set annually and parents will be informed of any change in advance. Our current fees are available on our fee schedule.

To assist with the cost of child care, the Australian Government offers two types of financial assistance. To be eligible for reduced fees, families are required to provide current and correct information, as requested on the Enrolment Form. Full fees will be charged until this information is received. For further information, contact the Department of Human Services.

Fee accounts must be paid weekly by direct debit from a bank account or credit card. Overdue fee accounts may result in the suspension or termination of your child's enrolment. Direct debits returned as unpaid are regarded as a late payment. Outstanding fees may be handed over to our debt-collection agency, and all costs associated with the recovery of the debt will be added to the fee account.

For children who are collected after the Centre's closing time, a late fee will be charged to the fee account. Please call the Centre if you think you are going to be late, so that children can be informed.



Authorised persons to collect

A child can only be released into the care of a parent, guardian or a responsible person approved by the parent in writing (including email). This will only include persons nominated as emergency contacts or persons nominated to collect on specific occasions. The persons must be over 18 years old and be able to produce proof of identity.

Medication

If children require medication while attending Branches ELC a qualified staff member will be able to administer in accordance with our policies and procedures once a form has been completed.

Parents are asked to consider whether their child who requires medication is well enough to be at the service, and to keep them home if they are unwell.

Illness

Temperatures

If your child unexpectedly develops a high temperature (37.5 degrees or higher) while attending our service, you will be contacted to come and collect your child.

Should parents or other emergency contacts be unable to be contacted, an ambulance may be called to ensure the wellbeing of your child.

Infectious illnesses

If there is an outbreak of an infectious illness within the service, all families will be notified.

Please notify the service if your child develops a contagious illness whilst not attending the service.

Children who have had a contagious illness or an unspecified rash must produce a doctors clearance certificate on return to the service

Nutrition

Nutrition is of the upmost importance, and we promote healthy food habits in accordance with the requirements of the Australian Dietary Guidelines, providing delicious meals prepared on site by our Centre Cook. We aim to cater for all dietary requirements and cultural or religious practices.

Due to child allergies, we cannot accept outside food being brought into the centre. If you wish for your child to celebrate a specific event, please let us know in advance so we can arrange to cook the food within the centre.

Rest and sleep

Rest and sleep are an essential part of children's development. At Branches ELC we believe children should be allowed to sleep and rest when needed throughout the day and will accommodate individual routines. Please speak to your child's Educator to discuss individual needs. Educators will follow our sleep recommendation procedures to ensure safety.

Sun protection

Educators will monitor the UV rating to determine safe outdoor play time and comply with the service's sun protection policy. The service will provide sunscreen, however you may provide your own preferred brand if you wish to. Please ensure your child wears clothing appropriate for the weather.



Educational program

At Branches ELC our curriculum is guided by the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) and the My Time, Our Place Framework. This was developed with the fundamental view of a children's world being characterised by belonging, being and becoming.

We are committed to providing a developmental and educational program, which caters for each child's individual needs, abilities and interests. We encourage children to be responsible for their own learning through choices, experience, interests and routines using conversation, actions and play to promote this. We support independence by encouraging self help skills. We value children and family input and involvement to gather a comprehensive and holistic view of each child.

Belonging

Belonging is knowing where and with whom you belong, and is integral to human existence. Children belong first to a family, a cultural group, a neighborhood and a wider community. Belonging acknowledges children's interdependence with others and the basis of relationships in defining identities. In early childhood, and throughout life, relationships are crucial to a sense of belonging. Belonging is central to being and becoming in that it shapes who children are and who they become.

Being

Childhood is a time to be, to seek and make meaning of the world. Being recognizes the significance of the here and now in children's lives. It is about the present and knowing themselves, building and maintaining relationships with others, engaging with life's joys and complexities and meeting challenges in everyday life. The early childhood years are not solely preparation for the future but also for the present.

Becoming

Children's identities, knowledge, understandings, capacities, skills and relationships change during childhood. They are shaped by many different events and circumstances. Becoming reflects this process of rapid and significant change that occurs in the early years as young children learn and grow. It emphasises learning to participate fully and actively in society.

Preparing for the day

At Branches ELC we pride ourselves in ensuring all children and families feel a sense of belonging whilst being welcomed into our service.

Our orientation is an important start for your child and family to connect with Branches ELC . We encourage each child to attend our service in the company of a family member a few times before their first day with us. Our orientation process is flexible and tailored to your child's needs. Orientations occur over a 1 or 2 week period and are free of charge.

During the orientation visits you and your child will get the opportunity to gain an understanding of our program, the layout of the room, where to find things and provide our Educators with additional information about your child needs and routines.

Communication between home and Branches ELC is important at this stage. There may be tears and extra tight hugs as you say goodbye for the first few weeks but there are always extra cuddles, reassurance and genuine care from our Educators for both children and families.

Saying goodbye

Saying goodbye in the morning can occasionally be filled with emotions.

What often works well is a set routine. We encourage families to try and establish this from the orientation process. Trying to be organised and having a calm start to the day can assist with this.

It is important to tell your child when you are ready to leave as they can often become upset if they haven't had the opportunity to say goodbye. This will gain trust from your child, not only in you but in the educator who will be reassuring your child throughout the day and when you will return.

We understand the first days, weeks and months can be really hard on both children and parents or carers. Please feel free to call at any time to check on how your child is settling, and we will give you an update.



What to bring

- ▶ Spare clothing
- ▶ Water bottle
- ▶ Bottles to match number of feeds required
- ▶ Unopened tin of formula (if required)
- ▶ Nappies (if required)
- ▶ Wet bag for soiled clothing
- ▶ Small backpack to keep belongings in
- ▶ Dummy/ comforter
- ▶ Sleepbag if usually used



PLEASE LABEL ALL ITEMS BELONGING TO YOUR CHILD.

A bucket style hat will be provide for each child in the service (You may provide your own labelled, bucket or legionnaire style hat if you prefer)

Guidance & Challenging Behaviours

The Educator's approach behaviour management in a positive manner. This includes guidance, re-direction, anticipation and elimination of problems, and positive encouragement rather than competition, comparison and criticism.

Educators offer techniques that are consistent and caring with clear guidelines and limits which are shared with families and explained to the children. Any behavioural concerns will be discussed between the families and the Qualified Educator in the room.

Parent Involvement/Concerns

The care of your child is a partnership between you and us and therefore it is important to keep the channels of information open to facilitate your child's best interests.

We actively encourage and value your involvement within the centre. Centre policies are updated regularly and displayed on the notice board, and we welcome your input at any time. We also have a suggestion box in the foyer, so if you have any ideas you wish to keep anonymous please place them here. The Educators are always willing to assist you in any way we can. Should you have any concerns regarding the care of your child, please do not hesitate to discuss them with the Qualified Educator in your child's room and/or the Centre Director.

For your information, the regulatory body for administering Child Care Services in Western Australia is:

Department of Local Government and Communities

Education and Care Regulatory Unit

Phone: 1800 199 383

Email: ecru@communities.wa.gov.au

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Level 7, 130 Stirling Street

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