

THE MEETING HOUSE KINDERGARTEN

PARENT HANDBOOK 2019

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PHILOSOPHY OF THE MEETING HOUSE PRESCHOOL

The following is The Meeting House Kindergarten's Statement of Philosophy:-

- We provide a welcoming, nurturing, warm and caring environment for children, families and staff.
- We provide qualified, passionate educators that go an extra mile for the children.
- We provide a play based, stimulating program which reflects best practice current educational thinking and the needs and interests of the children.
- We provide an inclusive program that meets the diverse cultural needs of the children and families.
- We work in partnership with the parents where they are encouraged to participate in the program by volunteering at the centre.
- We aim to be actively engaged and involved in our local community.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE CENTRE

- The Meeting House Policy Document is available for all parents to read.
- Sessions are offered Monday to Friday 8:30am to 3:30pm (minimum 2 day booking). The preschool reserves the right for exceptions.
- **Emergency procedures** – In the event of an emergency the children will be evacuated from the premises and their parents notified ASAP.
- Complaints are to be made in writing and addressed to the Director of The Meeting House Kindergarten. Any concerns a parent may have may always be discussed directly with the teacher or with the Director. An appointment may be necessary if discussion is likely to be lengthy. A complaint form and submission box is located above the lockers.
- To discuss your child's progress at any time, please make an appointment with the staff. Parent/teacher interviews are available at parent's request.
- Out of Term Holidays – If your child is going to be absent please make sure you let a member of staff know.
- Family Emergencies – Please notify the Meeting House Kindergarten Director if your family suffers an unforeseen situation and needs emergency care and, if a position is available in either group, we will do our best to accommodate your needs. The current daily rate will be charged.
- The Meeting House Kindergarten is licensed by:-
Department of Education & Communities (NSW)

WELCOME TO THE MEETING HOUSE KINDERGARTEN

We look forward to a happy and rewarding time together with you and your child at The Meeting House Kindergarten. Our service has operated for many years. We are a non-profit organisation partially funded by fees from parents. We rely on prompt payment of fees to meet our ongoing financial commitments.

The Meeting House understands the purpose of preschool education is to:-

- support, nurture and extend the holistic development of the child through planned activities and experiences based on the children's interests, strengths and needs.
- allow each child to develop at his or her own rate.
- help the child to relate to other children and adults outside his or her own immediate family.
- develop feelings of self-confidence and self-esteem in the child so that he/she is eager for new experiences.
- in preparation for school we endeavour to foster self-care skills, gross motor and fine motor skills by providing experiences with a variety of materials, as a pre-requisite to formal learning.
- encourage the development of caring, sharing and co-operation among the members of each group.
- implement a multi-cultural, anti-bias program.

Our program is designed for 18 children aged 3-6 years. The children are taught by qualified preschool educators. Our aims for the children are to:-

- gain confidence in a caring environment.
- expand language and communication skills.
- learn to socialise and become more independent.
- support each child to work with, learn from and help others through collaborative learning opportunities.
- enjoy good self-esteem.

THE MEETING HOUSE PROGRAM OUTLINE

At the Meeting House Kindergarten staff are committed to put into practice the Early Years Learning Framework incorporating children's learning in the five outcomes and to set the basis for meeting the National Quality Standard. We are striving to achieve best practice through reflective processes involving staff, parents and the wider community giving all families and children a sense of belonging.

The Meeting House Kindergarten recognises that children learn best when they have a good self-image and feel accepted by both educators and peers. The children are all treated as individuals who bring their own set of personal experiences and strengths to the centre. They will be presented with opportunities to DISCOVER, EXPLORE, BE CHALLENGED and PROBLEM SOLVE through direct experiences. They will be given diverse choices that can lead to SELF REGULATION, SELF CONFIDENCE, INDEPENDENCE and a SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY. This will be done in a rich learning environment where each child's developmental, individual needs and interests will be taken into account.

We consider the family and cultural values, age and physical and intellectual development and abilities of each child.

PROGRAM

Play is the basis through which children learn in the early years. We therefore place a high emphasis on each child enjoying themselves, whilst learning through fun activities that are presented to help them grow and develop at their own pace.

LEARNING AREAS

Learning areas are the places in the Centre that are set up to focus on the five learning outcomes. Our program uses all these areas to help the children learn, develop and grow at their own individual pace. The areas that are constant at The Meeting House Kindergarten include:-
Home Corner, Art Room, Block Construction, Puzzles, Book Corner.

POLICIES

SUN PROTECTION POLICY

The aim of this policy is to develop positive attitudes to skin protection and to help reduce the incidence of skin cancer whilst employing personal responsibility for decision making about skin protection.

Staff will limit the children's exposure of sun, and shaded areas have been established in the outdoor play areas. Children are required to wear their hats and shirts must have collars and sleeves that are made from closely woven fibre. **NO SINGLET TOPS OR DRESSES WITHOUT SLEEVES PLEASE.**

Parents are required to apply SPF 50+ broad spectrum sunscreen before the child comes to the Centre. A pump action sunscreen is available for use on the occasion that parents have forgotten. Staff will reapply this if a consent form has been signed.

NO NUT POLICY

The Meeting House Kindergarten has a NO NUT POLICY which has been introduced to protect children against allergic reactions. Many foods contain nuts or traces of nuts so parents must be aware and check labels on all foods before sending them in. This includes : NO PEANUT BUTTER, MUSELI BARS, NUT BREADS, NUTS OF ANY DESCRIPTION OR NUT BISCUITS. **ANY FOOD CONTAINING NUTS WILL BE IMMEDIATELY TAKEN FROM CHILDREN AND PLACED IN A SEALED BAG TO BE RETURNED TO THE PARENTS AT THE END OF THE DAY.**

INSECT PROTECTION POLICY

Mosquitoes can be a problem when playing outdoors – if you wish us to protect your child from bites with a spray please inform your teacher and sign the consent form to allow us to apply a repellent.

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TOILET POLICY

- THE CENTRE EXPECTS THAT CHILDREN WILL HAVE BEEN INTRODUCED TO TOILET TRAINING BEFORE ATTENDING the Centre.
- Staff will supervise toilet times ensuring that children wash their hands with soap after visiting the toilet.
- Children will be allowed to go to the toilet at any time.
- Staff will not wipe a child's bottom after they have passed a bowel motion; they will however encourage and provide instruction in order that the child may do it themselves in order to manage the task successfully.
- Staff will wear disposable gloves whilst they help children take off their wet/soiled clothing and staff will handle whatever 'clean-up' may be required. The wet/soiled clothing will then be placed into a plastic bag and given to parents at the end of the day.
- Staff will assist children to change into dry clean clothes. In the event that children do not have a spare set of clothing then we will lend the children some belonging to the centre. Parents are asked to clean and return borrowed clothing.

MEDICAL POLICY

PLEASE DO NOT SEND YOUR CHILD TO THE CENTRE WITH AN INFECTIOUS CONDITION (e.g. heavy colds, diarrhoea, head lice and any common childhood diseases). Please feel free to discuss your child's illness with your teacher if in any doubt.

If your child cannot manage a runny nose such as blowing and cleaning, it is best that your child stay home as touching of toys with a runny nose is not best practice. We need to be mindful of germs spreading to other child.

STARTING YOUR CHILD AT THE KINDERGARTEN

Staff will greet and welcome children and parents upon arrival at the centre and involve them in interesting activities.

Parents are encouraged to seek assistance from staff if they are having difficulty separating from their children. Parents are not encouraged to slip out unnoticed as this makes it difficult for the child to trust them next time – instead parents must say goodbye to their children and assure them that they will return at the end of the day. Staff will comfort and support children if they are upset when saying goodbye to their parents.

The preschool program begins at 8.30am and finishes at 3.30pm. Children can arrive anytime between 8.30am and 9.15am and can be collected anytime between 2.45pm and 3.30pm. Please arrive promptly to collect your child as they are not covered by The Meeting House insurance outside these hours. (Please note that there is a fee which will be charged for late pick-ups in the afternoons of \$25 per 15 minutes, as two members of staff must remain on the premises until the child is collected)

Always bring your child inside the Centre to meet the staff before leaving. Children **SHOULD NOT** be left at the door unattended. Children are not allowed to leave the Centre with an adult who is not known to staff, unless prior arrangements have been made and identification will be required. There is also a play date sheet that needs to be completed if your child is to be collected by any other parent from the Centre.

There is a government regulation concerning safety of children that you must **SIGN IN** and **SIGN OUT** of the Centre each day.

Please feel free to speak to the staff or to the Director if you have any problems or queries that you may wish to discuss. We work in close partnership with parents to achieve the best outcome for your child. If a longer interview is required this can be arranged at a mutually convenient time.

Whilst some children settle into the Centre quite easily others may take a little more time. It often helps to leave quickly and firmly during your child's early days at the Centre after having said "Good-bye". Children will usually settle within minutes of your departure and, in the rare case of a child continuing to be upset, we will contact you accordingly. Please also feel free to call the Centre if you are at all concerned and be assured that our staff will handle all situations with due care and compassion for your child's feelings.

What your child needs to bring and wear to the Centre:

- (1) Please mark all of your child's clothing and belongings with their name. The first letter only of their name in capitals with the rest in lower case. The children are learning to identify their own names and it is important we stick to one style.
- (2) Clothing that children can manage on their own, such as pull-on pants, shorts, t-shirts etc. – please keep jeans, belts and overalls for home. In Winter we encourage you to dress your child in layers so that they can easily remove and put on if necessary. If the girls wish to wear dresses/skirts, please use leggings and socks as tights are more difficult to put on.
- (3) Clothing that is inexpensive and easy to wash. Many of our preschool activities are messy and even though we do provide aprons, children do end up with some paint on their clothes.
- (4) Clothing that is safe. Please no party or ankle length dresses. Please provide shoes that are safe and flexible with a good grip. Leather shoes, crocs, thongs and gumboots are particularly dangerous when children are climbing on the outdoor equipment.
- (5) A spare set of winter/summer clothes in a backpack big enough to hold morning tea, a lunch box, drink bottle, clothes and sunhat.

- (6) Morning tea + lunch packed separately in small plastic lunch boxes and a drink bottle for water. Frozen poppers are an ideal way to keep food fresh and cool during summer. Please place food that needs refrigeration in a marked container and notify a staff member. Please try to pack a nutritious lunch and morning tea. We discourage sweet cakes, biscuits, potato chips, roll-ups, chocolate, etc. Please do not forget the NO NUT POLICY and check the ingredients of muesli bars etc. before packing them. Healthy snacks include fresh fruit, dried fruits, cheese, savoury biscuits, sandwiches, etc. Please ask staff for further suggestions.

Rest time

All children may be offered a rest time in the afternoon in the early part of the year. The staff will monitor the current children's needs and adjust rest time accordingly for the remainder of the year. Children are not required to sleep but encouraged to have a quiet down time.

Parents of children who need to rest are asked to provide a fitted large cot sheet set and a blanket for cooler weather. All bedding is to be clearly labelled.

Time for Discipline

Unfortunately, at times staff must take action when children are breaking rules or hurting others. The preschool's guidelines refer to a 'calm down' approach, which acknowledges that children need time to calm down and think about how they have behaved. In this way children become responsible for their own behaviour. When disciplining children please remember:-

- take the child aside so as not to embarrass them in front of their peers.
- allow the child to calm down before discussing the problem.
- don't react in such a way that shows you are not in control of the situation.
- ask them why they behaved that way and what they are feeling.
- listen to their answers.
- be fair, but firm.
- remain calm and choose your words carefully.
- follow through the consequence of the child's action.

Behaviour problems

Action must be taken when children are constantly breaking the rules or are displaying inappropriate behaviour. Staff will devise strategies for solving ongoing behavioural problems. When attempts to decrease problem behaviour are unsuccessful, it may be necessary for the educator/director to discuss the situation with the parents.

Staff may feel it necessary to inform parents at the end of the day if a child's behaviour has been inappropriate e.g. biting, kicking staff or other children. The 'victim's' parents will also be informed and it may be necessary for the staff in charge to set up a meeting with the parents to discuss the issue. In extreme cases the Director should refer the matter to the Management Committee, whose decision it is to exclude a child from the program. In all these cases, there is to be a written account of all interactions and discussions.

All children's profiles are confidential and are kept in a safe place. Parents may review these profiles upon request but they are not to be removed from the Centre without written consent of a parent or an official legal request.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Participation of Parents

Parents are invited to attend parent meetings and concerts arranged to support their children. Any parents with special skills in areas such as yoga, ballet, music etc. are welcome to share these skills in consultation with the staff at a suitable arranged time. Parents may also assist their child's learning by contributing to current areas of interest.

Parents may enter the Centre at any time that their child is being cared for by the M.H. Kindergarten however a parent may be refused entry if it would pose a risk to the safety of the children or staff or it would conflict with any duty of the provider, supervisor or educator under the Law.

In lieu of fund-raising each family is asked to contribute \$60 equipment and maintenance levy per term. Each group has a parent representative to arrange out of school social contacts for parents and children.

Group time

During the day all children participate in group times. These include story, news, drama, dance, singing, music and movement. These sessions allow for enjoyment and for children to learn to maintain concentration, listen and follow instructions and participate in group times.

Parking Restrictions

Please be aware of the parking restrictions near the Centre. You are asked not to park in the staff car park or the driveway as these are in continual use by staff, delivery drivers and the community bus.

Pocket mail System

We have a mail system with a pocket for each child. Please check daily for mail as this will be our written communication system. The Management Committee may also use it and parents are free to notify others of upcoming birthdays, parties, play days etc.

Birthdays

Cakes, iced biscuits, cupcakes, muffins etc. may be brought for your child's birthday as it is a special occasion and we are happy to celebrate with your child.

Please also remember the NO NUT policy.

Special Occasions

During the course of the year we have special occasions when family members are invited into the Centre. These include:-

- Father/Mothers' Day celebrations
- End of term parties
- Meeting House Inc. AGM
- Seniors' concerts
- Graduation/Christmas concerts and parties

CONCLUSION

The staff at The Meeting House are here to nurture and support your child's development, therefore your concerns are our concerns. Some people may think children appear to be just playing at the Centre, however they are learning from everything that they do. Our philosophy is based on learning through play and this can be considered as child's work. We look forward to a happy and rewarding time together with you and your child at our Centre.

"Learning is a treasure which accompanies its owner everywhere"

Anonymous

FEES

The 2019 fees are **\$60.00** per day. Fees must be paid by cheque, cash or direct deposit (Meeting House Inc. BSB 032-085 Acct No. 292618) at the beginning of each term.

- **A 10% late fee is applied if fees are not paid by the due date.** If fees are outstanding beyond 2 weeks of the due date you may be asked to remove your child.
- Dishonoured cheques will incur a \$50.00 administration fee.
- Parents are required to pay an equipment and maintenance levy of \$60.00 per term.
- A sun hat is provided at the cost of \$10.00. This stays at the Centre and is sent home at the end of each term for cleaning.
- A **\$200 non-refundable enrolment fee** is required before your child starts.

All public school holidays and staff development days that are noted by the Preschool do not incur a fee. Public holidays and holidays taken during term however must be paid for.

We ask that a minimum of 4 weeks in term notice is given if a child is withdrawn from the programme or you wish to change your child's attendance schedule.