Federation Children's Centres

Family Information Booklet



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Our philosophy

Knowledge is central to quality

The acquisition and development of knowledge is central to the education of young children. A team of knowledgeable adults, who embrace and engage with the complexities of teaching enriches our work as well as improves the educational outcomes for children. We see a fostering and commitment to ongoing learning amongst educators as being central to our work and underpinning our educational practices.

Relationships and nurturance are important

Relationships take time to build and contribute to well-being, understanding of others, and supports collaboration. Working with children and families requires educators to commit to collaboration and in doing so view their work as being undertaken with the support of others.

Anything is possible

A mindset that supports success, is full of possibilities and is positive, ensures that we don't limit ourselves. An environment which supports reflection, contemplation, wonder and awe creates facilities learning for all. In doing so we foster a sense of pride that gives permission for us to be proud to be different.

We make a difference

Education is about making a difference to the lives of children. The difference we make should last a lifetime and have an impact on children, their families and their communities.

Environments matter

The environments we create have an impact on educational outcomes and the work we do. In creating these environments, we need to take into consideration the context in which we are situated and the power of the built environment and nature in impacting on our lives.

Welcome to Federation Children's Centres

Welcome to Federation Children's Centres – Centres for Early Childhood Education. We look forward to creating a warm, happy and stimulating environment for your family.

Federation University has three Early Childhood Education Centres located at the Mt Helen, SMB and Gippsland Campuses. Our Ballarat centres centre are 80 places and Gippsland 75 comprising of 5 rooms and each including a Kindergarten in Long Day Care. Our centres care for children from 6 weeks to 5 years.

This booklet sets out the conditions under which Federation Children's Centres operate. It is important that you read and keep it for future reference. The Federation Children's Centre Information Book is updated as necessary. If you have any questions about the information, please discuss these with the Federation Children's Centre Coordinator or Deputy Coordinator.

Educators

The most important aspect of our Centre is the warm, caring educators that understand the diverse needs of children and their families. Within the team we have a range of qualifications and experience. When you visit the centre you will be introduced to the Educators, please take time to talk with them about your child.

To ensure that educators have access to their leave and program planning time, we employ a number of other educators to relieve educators. Although these educators are employed casually, they are an integral part of our team and are experienced in educating and caring for children. We attempt to employ regular relievers so that trusting relationships can develop between the children and the relief educators.

The child:educator minimum ratio is 1:4 under three years and 1:11 over three.

Management

The day-to-day management of the Centre is the responsibility of the Federation Children's Centre Coordinator and Deputy Coordinator who are accountable to Federation University Commercial Services.

- Federation Children's Centres Coordinator - *Sally Matthews (based at SMB)*
- Federation Children's Centre Coordinator – *Jo Corliss (Mt Helen)*
- Federation Children's Centre Coordinator - *Jodie Petesic (Churchill)*
- Federation Children's Centre Deputy Coordinator - *Lea McPhee (SMB)*

Education and Care Services Regulations and National Law

Federation Children's Centres complies with the Education and Care Services National Law and Education and Care Services National Regulations and is regulated by the Victorian Early Childhood Regulatory Authority (VECRA). The Centres participate in regular assessment and rating processes and maintain ongoing engagement with VECRA. Copies of the National Law and National Regulations are available at the Centres and online. Further information about VECRA is available at https://www.vic.gov.au/early-childhood-regulatory-authority.

National Quality Standards

Federation Children's Centres is committed to achieving high-quality outcomes for children and families by meeting, and where possible exceeding, the National Quality Standard (NQS). The safety, wellbeing and inclusion of all children underpin our practices and decision-making. Through ongoing self-assessment, critical reflection and continuous improvement, we regularly review our programs, environments and operations to identify strengths and opportunities for growth. This process is documented in our Quality

Improvement Plan (QIP), which outlines our goals, priorities and strategies for improvement. The QIP is regularly reviewed and updated and is available for families and visitors to view at the Centres.

Centre policies and procedures

Federation Children's Centres maintains a comprehensive suite of policies and procedures to support the safety, wellbeing, education and care of children. These include policies relating to Child Safety and Child Protection, Behaviour Guidance, Asthma, Anaphylaxis, Medical Conditions, Dental Health, Privacy and Confidentiality, Inclusion, Excursions, Governance, and Infectious Diseases, among others.

As these documents are detailed and extensive, they are not included in this handbook. All policies and procedures are reviewed regularly, and at least annually, to ensure they reflect current legislation, regulatory requirements, evidence-informed practice, and contemporary research in early childhood education and care.

Families, children, staff and other stakeholders are encouraged to contribute to the development and review of policies and procedures. Feedback from our community helps ensure our policies remain relevant, responsive and reflective of the needs and expectations of children and families.

Copies of all policies and procedures are available in the centre foyer for families and visitors to access. Please speak with the Coordinator if you would like a copy of a specific policy or procedure, require clarification regarding a policy, or would like to provide feedback as part of the review process.

Paramount Consideration

Federation Children's Centres is committed to ensuring that children's safety, wellbeing, rights and best interests are paramount in all service operations, decisions and practices. Child safety and wellbeing underpin our culture, governance, policies, procedures and daily practice, and take priority over all other considerations.

We actively implement the Victorian Child Safe Standards and uphold our obligations under the Reportable Conduct Scheme to ensure concerns about child safety are managed appropriately, transparently and without delay.

We are committed to child-safe recruitment and screening practices, including comprehensive referee checks, Working with Children Checks/VIT Registration and other legislative requirements, to help ensure suitable people are engaged to work with children. All staff, educators, volunteers and students receive child safety training and ongoing professional learning to support their understanding of child abuse prevention, recognising indicators of harm, responding to concerns and meeting their mandatory reporting obligations.

We promote children's rights, participation and voice and provide environments where children feel safe, respected, included and empowered. We are committed to fostering culturally safe, inclusive and responsive environments for all children and families, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, children with disability, and children who identify as LGBTQIA+.

We recognise that keeping children safe is a shared responsibility, and we work in partnership with children, families, staff and the broader community to maintain a strong culture of child safety and wellbeing.

Kindergarten

Federation Children's Centres offers Victorian Government funded Free Kindergarten programs at all our locations across Ballarat and Gippsland. Our kindergarten programs are delivered within a Long Day Care setting by Bachelor-qualified Early Childhood Teachers, providing children with high-quality educational programs that support learning, development and school readiness.

While the funded kindergarten component is free, Long Day Care daily fees apply for the full day, with the Child Care Subsidy (CCS) available to eligible families.

Enrolments for funded kindergarten are managed through the **City of Ballarat** and **Latrobe City Council** Centralised Kindergarten Enrolment Schemes. Priority is generally given to children already attending the service for Long Day Care; however, limited places may be available for children enrolling directly into the kindergarten program.

Further information about the enrolment process is available through the:

- City of Ballarat Kindergarten Enrolment Scheme
- Latrobe City Council Kindergarten Enrolment Process

For more information about kindergarten, including the Victorian Government's Free Kinder initiative, visit the Best Start, Best Life website.

Access to Additional Kindergarten Hours

Children enrolled in a funded 4-Year-Old Kindergarten program may be eligible for additional funded kindergarten hours where they meet Victorian Government eligibility criteria. Federation Children's Centres will support families to access available funding and programs where applicable.

Further information about eligibility and available supports can be found on the Victorian Government's More Hours of 4-Year-Old Kinder webpage.

Priority of Access

Where applications exceed available places, enrolments will be allocated in accordance with the Victorian Government's Priority of Access requirements.
Priority is given to:

- Tier 1: children who will benefit the most from improved access and participation in a kindergarten program.
- Tier 2: for children currently attending the service, applied after all Tier 1 children are placed.

Supporting documentation may be required to confirm eligibility.

Further information about the Victorian Government's Priority of Access criteria is available at the How to Enrol in Kindergarten webpage.

Federation Children's Centres is committed to providing equitable access to high-quality early childhood education and supporting all children to participate in kindergarten programs that promote learning, wellbeing, inclusion and successful transitions to school.

Educational Curriculum

At Federation Children's Centres, our educational curriculum is designed and delivered by qualified Early Childhood Teachers and Educators. The curriculum is informed by the approved learning frameworks, including the **Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF)** and **Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia (EYLF)**.

Our curriculum is play-based, responsive and informed by contemporary research and evidence-based practice. Educators build on children's interests, strengths, ideas, culture, identity and emerging knowledge to create meaningful learning opportunities. Through intentional teaching, inquiry, exploration and positive relationships, children are supported to develop confidence, creativity, communication skills, critical thinking and a lifelong love of learning.

Learning experiences are planned to support all areas of development and may include opportunities for literacy, language, STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics), creative arts, music and movement, wellbeing, sustainability, social and emotional learning, physical development, and connections with community and culture.

Sharing Your Child's Learning

Federation Children's Centres use EarlyWorks, a secure digital family communication and pedagogical documentation platform, to strengthen partnerships between families and educators and to share each child's learning journey. We encourage all families to download the EarlyWorks app to receive important centre updates, notifications, information about events and programs, and documentation of their child's learning and development.

EarlyWorks enables educators to document children's learning through observations, learning stories, photographs, artwork and reflections linked to the approved learning frameworks. This documentation makes children's learning visible and informs ongoing curriculum planning, assessment and decision-making.

Families are valued partners in their child's learning and are encouraged to engage with their child's portfolio, share feedback, contribute observations from home, upload photographs and celebrate milestones. These contributions help educators develop a deeper understanding of each child and strengthen connections between home and the Centre.

Federation Children's Centres are committed to protecting the privacy, dignity and confidentiality of all children and families. Children's information, photographs and learning documentation are collected, stored and shared in accordance with relevant privacy legislation, organisational policies and family consent arrangements.

Written consent is obtained from families regarding the use of children's photographs, videos and other documentation. Images and recordings of children are only used for approved educational and communication purposes in accordance with the permissions provided by parents or guardians. Educators take reasonable steps to ensure that images and information are shared securely and only with authorised individuals.

To support the privacy and safety of all children, families are asked not to copy, download, share or post images of other children obtained through Centre communications or digital platforms.

You can learn more about EarlyWorks through their introductory video: EarlyWorks Overview.

Children's Agency and Choice

We recognise children as capable, competent and active participants in their own learning. Children are encouraged to make choices, express their ideas, follow their interests and contribute to decisions about their day. Educators support children to develop independence, confidence and agency while ensuring experiences are safe, inclusive and developmentally appropriate.

Daily Program

Our daily program provides a balance of experiences that support children's wellbeing, learning and development. Opportunities are offered for active and quiet play, indoor and outdoor learning, individual and group experiences, and both planned and spontaneous learning. Flexible routines enable educators to respond to children's interests, needs and rhythms throughout the day.

Learning Through Play

Play is fundamental to children's learning, development and wellbeing. Children are encouraged to explore, investigate, create, imagine and problem-solve through a wide range of engaging experiences and materials. This includes sensory and creative experiences, which can sometimes be messy. We encourage families to provide comfortable clothing that allows children to participate fully, move freely and enjoy all aspects of the program.

Mealtimes

Mealtimes are viewed as valuable opportunities for learning, connection and social interaction. Educators create relaxed and inclusive mealtime experiences that encourage conversation, independence and positive food choices. Children are supported to develop self-help skills through age-appropriate participation in serving food, making choices and caring for their environment.

Rest, Relaxation and Sleep

Rest, relaxation and sleep are important for children's health, wellbeing and development. We recognise that each child's needs are individual and may vary from day to day. Opportunities for rest and relaxation are provided throughout the day, with sleep offered according to each child's needs and family preferences. No child will be required to sleep. Families are encouraged to discuss their child's sleep and rest requirements with educators to ensure these needs are supported in a respectful and responsive manner.

Approved Learning Frameworks

Federation Children's Centres' policies, practices and educational curriculum are guided by the **Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF)** and the **Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF)**. These frameworks support us to provide high-quality, inclusive learning environments that promote children's learning, development and wellbeing from birth through to school age.

Through ongoing reflection, assessment and planning, educators use these frameworks to extend and enrich children's learning while fostering a strong sense of identity, wellbeing, connection, confidence and engagement with learning. Copies of these frameworks and supporting information are available for families at the Centres.

The safety, wellbeing, inclusion and rights of children are at the centre of all curriculum decisions, ensuring every child is supported to learn, grow and thrive in a safe, nurturing and respectful environment.

Orientation to the Centre

For many children entry into Early Childhood Education and Care will be the first experience they have had separating them from their parents. Many children will experience some anxiety leaving their parents for the first time (and vice versa). It is important that both parents and Educators work together to build the special relationship necessary for successful adjustment.

Even if your child has been in another care situation or Centre they will still need time to adjust to the new Educators and environment.

We encourage you to visit the Centre prior to starting care, visiting as often as possible to ensure a happy start at the Centre. As part of the enrolment procedure, we ask that you share your child's needs such as comfort items, sleeping/rest routines, food allergies and medications with the Educators involved with caring for your child.

We ask that you bring your child into their room so that we can greet you and your child. Please always say goodbye to your child, no matter how distressing this may be for you. It is important that your child knows that you are leaving and that you are coming back. It is upsetting for your child to suddenly miss you, to look for you and discover that you have disappeared. Your child's trust in you may falter, and subsequent separations may become more difficult.

We are here to help you should you need help at separation time.

You are more than welcome to telephone, email or send an EarlyWorks message to the Centre if you are concerned about your child. Remember that educators will not hesitate to contact you if your child becomes distressed. We will often send you photos and comments throughout the day with updates via EarlyWorks. You are welcome to visit at any time.

The centre values your opinions, please let us know how the orientation process was for your family, is there anything that we can do to improve this process?

What to bring

- Each child should bring a complete change of clothes (including underwear and socks) in a suitable named bag or backpack. Infants may need more than one change.
- A water bottle for your child to drink from during the day, please ensure it is clearly labelled.
- If your child is in nappies, bring him/her into the Centre wearing one of your own nappies. The Centre uses disposable nappies throughout the day. You are welcome to provide disposable nappies of your choice if you'd prefer. Due to hygiene policies, we do not use any reusable or cloth nappies at the centres. Whilst your child is being toilet trained, please bring lots of extra underwear, trousers, socks etc.
- To help avoid accidents we ask that children wear appropriate shoes or sandals rather than thongs whilst at the Centre.
- Babies' bottles are to be prepared hygienically by the parent and clearly labelled. All bottles are to be cooled and then transported to the centre appropriately (preferably in an insulated container). All bottles must be signed in to state that they were prepared hygienically and transported correctly and then placed in the fridge immediately.
- In cold weather a warm coat is necessary. A pair of slippers would be appreciated for indoor play and gumboots for outdoors.
- On hot days please remember to send an appropriate sun hat and dress your child in sun protective clothing i.e. not sleeveless. The Centre provides sunscreen for the

children although we ask that you please sunscreen your child prior to arrival and inform staff of this. If your child has a sensitivity to sunscreen please bring along one that suits their skin best to leave at the centre. Parents are welcome to view the relevant Federation Children's Centre Sun smart policy and procedure.

- Special security toys like a dummy, blanket or teddy are most welcome in helping children settle to sleep or settle – these must be clearly labelled. It is difficult to be responsible for any other toys that children bring from home, it is often disappointing if they are broken or lost. It is best for all concerned if they are left at home.
- The Centre will provide smocks for messy play; however please dress your child in appropriate play clothes. Please label all your child's clothing. Any unnamed clothing found at the Centre will be placed in the Lost Property bin in the foyer.
- The centre provides all meals although children are welcome to bring a piece of fruit each day to instil and encourage them to contribute and share within their community.

Leaving and picking up your child

On *arrival* please:

- Sign your child in via the tablet using your allocated pin number, and sign in your child's bottle if necessary
- Help your child place their belongings in their named locker
- Speak with an Educator and exchange any relevant information

On *leaving* please:

- Help your child collect their artwork and belongings
- Take your child to be farewelled by an Educator and exchange information about the day.
- Sign your child out via the tablet using your allocated pin number

Only people authorised by you on your child's enrolment form can collect or drop off your child, if they are authorised to collect by you, they will be allocated their own pin number to sign the child out. You must also state at sign-in who will be collecting your child at what time. If there are changes after you leave the centre, you are required to telephone, email or send an EarlyWorks message and advise educators who will be collecting the child. Please also inform the person collecting your child that staff will be expecting to see identification when they arrive at the Centre: a driver's licence is ideal.

Unless we have a copy of a custody order both parents have a legal right to collect their child from the centre.

Which room will your child be in?

Federation Children's Centres operate five rooms including a kindergarten room. Children are placed into the appropriate room according to their age and stage of development. Children under three are not permitted to be booked into the next room unless they have turned three years of age due to child: educator ratios.

Children will be transitioned to the next room level after consultation with parents and subject to availability of spaces in that room. At some times the children will spend time in another room where they are comfortable enough to do so. The age range and make-up of our rooms changes from time to time due to the demand for places and the age of the children.

Sharing of information about your child

Educators will document what your child has eaten, nappy changes, sleep and other relevant information throughout the day via EarlyWorks or on a paper form. This information will let you know what has happened in your child's life that day. Journals and observations via EarlyWorks will also share what your child has done at the centre throughout the day. Although we endeavour to speak to all parents when they arrive to collect children, we do not always get to exchange a lot of information. These forms of documentation aid us to communicate with you about your child.

Priority of Access for Enrolments

Federation Children's Centres are committed to providing equitable access to high-quality early childhood education and care. Where the demand for places exceeds availability, enrolments will be managed in a fair, transparent and consistent manner.

Priority may be given to:

- Children currently enrolled at the service seeking additional days.
- Siblings of children currently attending the service.
- Children of Federation University students and employees.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.
- Children at risk of harm, abuse or neglect.
- Children in Out-of-Home Care.
- Children with disability, developmental delay or additional support needs.
- Children and families experiencing vulnerability, disadvantage or significant family stress.
- Families requiring care to support workforce participation, study or training commitments.

When allocating places, the Centre may also consider factors such as the availability of places within the relevant age group, staffing requirements, educator-to-child ratios, the child's individual needs, and the family's requested pattern of attendance.

Federation Children's Centres are committed to creating inclusive environments where all children can participate, learn and thrive. We work collaboratively with families and support services to promote access and inclusion for children from diverse backgrounds and with additional support needs.

Please note: Enrolment processes and priority requirements for funded Three-Year-Old and Four-Year-Old Kindergarten programs are managed through the relevant Centralised Kindergarten Enrolment Scheme and Victorian Government Priority of Access requirements and may differ from the Long Day Care enrolment process.

Waiting List

Prospective parents are advised to visit the website to place their child's name on the waiting list via our SmartCentral system. Although every effort is made to meet the needs of families regarding times and starting dates, there is no guarantee that a place will be available at a particular time.

A waiting list also applies for children already attending the centre who wish to pick up extra days that are unavailable. New places are offered to existing children before children on the general waiting list.

One off extra days are available for all current children, if you wish to have your child booked in for an extra day please let us know as this may be possible depending on availability.

Cultural Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging

Federation Children's Centres values and celebrates the diversity of our children, families, staff and community. We are committed to creating inclusive, welcoming environments where every child and family feels respected, safe and a genuine sense of belonging.

We recognise and respect the diverse cultures, languages, identities, family structures, beliefs and experiences that children and families bring to our Centres. These differences enrich our community and are reflected in our programs, environments and everyday practices.

We acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples as the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which our Centres operate and recognise their continuing connection to Country, culture and community. We are committed to embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives throughout our programs and creating culturally safe environments where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families feel valued, respected and supported.

We encourage children to learn about and respect their own cultures and the cultures of others, helping them develop a strong sense of identity, inclusion, empathy and belonging.

Families are encouraged to share their culture, language, traditions and experiences with educators and children as part of our learning program. These partnerships help us create meaningful experiences that reflect and celebrate the diversity of our community.

Where needed, we will make every effort to support families who speak languages other than English by accessing translated information and interpreter services. Families requiring assistance are encouraged to speak with the Coordinator.

Federation Children's Centres is committed to providing inclusive and culturally safe environments for all children and families, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, children with disability, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and children of all family structures, genders and identities.

Fees

The 2027 current fees are:

Ballarat
Full day $166
Half Day $120
Please note: Half day bookings only available to Federation students at the Ballarat campuses.

Gippsland
Full day $142.50
*fees are charged for all days booked including sick days, public holidays, school holidays and any other days due to absence.

Late fee
Please collect your child on time. A late fee of $50 for the first 10 minutes and $10 for every 5 minutes thereafter will apply; this is applicable for late collection of your child from a morning session (after 1pm) and an afternoon/full day session (after 6pm) without reasonable cause. This fee will be added to your next account.

Child Care Subsidy

The Child Care Subsidy (CCS) is the Australian Government's primary fee assistance program to help eligible families with the cost of approved child care. The subsidy is paid directly to Federation Children's Centres, and is applied to your child care fees, reducing the amount you pay.

The amount of CCS a family may receive depends on a range of factors, including family income, the age of the child, the type of care used, and the family's recognised activity level. Families are responsible for any gap fees and additional charges not covered by the subsidy.

To receive CCS, families must complete a CCS assessment through their myGov account linked to Centrelink and confirm their child's enrolment details. To ensure CCS can be applied from the commencement of care, Federation Children's Centres requires both the parent/guardian Customer Reference Number (CRN) and the child's CRN prior to enrolment. Families are responsible for ensuring their details remain current and for advising Centrelink of any changes that may affect their CCS entitlement.

Please note that CCS cannot be applied until the enrolment has been confirmed by both the service and the family through Centrelink. Where CCS eligibility has not been confirmed, full fees may be charged until the enrolment is processed and approved.

For more information about CCS, eligibility requirements and how to apply, please visit the Australian Government's Child Care Subsidy webpage.

Complying Written Agreement (CWA)

A Complying Written Agreement (CWA) is an agreement between our centres and a parent or guardian to provide childcare in exchange for fees. The CWA includes information about your child's enrolment including your child's full name and date of birth, the date the arrangement is effective from, session details and details of the fees to be charged. Before Child Care Subsidy can be paid, you must confirm the enrolment information via the MyGov website.

Payment of fees

Invoices are issued fortnightly by Federation Children's Centres via email. Payment is made via Direct Debit through our direct debit provider ChildCare Easy Pay, families pay the bank transaction fees and any failed transaction fees. Failure to keep up to date with fee payment may result in cancellation of your child's place until the account is paid in full and re-enrolment will be required. Outstanding accounts may be forwarded to our Dept. Collection Agency, and if applicable a 'No Service Indicator' will be attached to your Federation University Student Account.

For enquiries regarding accounts please contact Lynne Douglas, Administration who works at the SMB Centre on (03) 5327 6326 or childrenscentres@federation.edu.au

Absences

If your child will be absent it's important you let us know asap either in advance or on the day as soon as possible, you can call the centre or our preference is communication via EarlyWorks comment or email: childrenscentres@federation.edu.au

Fees are charged to your calculated weekly rate regardless of attendance and if your child is absent.

Fees will be charged when your child/ren is absent, which includes public holidays, rostered days off, annual & school holidays, and sickness. We do not charge for the four-week Christmas Holiday period.

If you are receiving Child Care Subsidy and your child is absent from the Centre over 42 days, you should provide e.g. medical certificate, letter from employer if it is an approved absence. This is a legal requirement from The Department of Education, Skills and Employment. Each child eligible for CCS can have up to 42 absences before there CCS may stop receiving CCS payments, these 42 days includes public holidays. Please contact Lynne Douglas- Administration for more information.

Please note that if you are absent for two weeks without notifying the centre the coordinator may cancel your child's place at the centre.

Cancelling care

When you wish to cancel care completely, change or drop sessions, two weeks' notice in writing must be given via email. If your child does not attend for the final session cessation of care will apply and you will not receive any CCS back until their last attendance.

Additional Care and Changes to Booked Days

Families may request additional casual days or ongoing permanent changes to their child's attendance pattern by contacting the Centre. Requests will be considered based on availability, licensing requirements and educator-to-child ratios.
Additional casual days are subject to vacancy availability and will be charged at the applicable daily fee. Where a casual day has been booked and is no longer required, families are asked to provide as much notice as possible. Less than 24 hours' notice may result in the booked day being charged.

Requests for ongoing additional days or permanent changes to booked days will be accommodated wherever possible; however, availability cannot be guaranteed and families may be placed on a waiting list for their preferred days.

To ensure fairness and consistency for all families, Federation Children's Centres does not offer day swaps or credits for absences. All booked days, including permanent and casual bookings, are subject to the Centre's fee and attendance requirements.

Custody and access

If a parent is experiencing problems associated with custody and access, please discuss this with the Federation Children's Centre Coordinator. A copy of current court orders must be kept on file and updated as relevant. It is a parent's responsibility to notify the Coordinator of any changes to court orders.

Privacy and Confidentiality

We are committed to protecting the privacy and confidentiality of children, individuals and families and have policies in place to ensure strict confidentiality is maintained.

Information, including personal information, will not be disclosed to any individual without obtaining prior written permission of the respective person. Families must ensure they do not share data or personal information of others from the centres with anyone, including other families of the same centre.

All families are not to use or share images obtained from the centres, via the Service's app, Facebook pages or other format. Families are not to share photographs taken during special events for publishing on any social media or for sharing in any format.

Research and observation

Federation Children's Centres are dedicated to Early Childhood Education and are research and observation centres. On enrolment, all parents will need to consent to their child being observed for the purpose of education and research. Students and Educators have the opportunity to view the children in their own environment which will assist linking their theory into practice. This is an important part of Federation University Australia's teaching programs and has the full support of the Federation Children's Centres.

Family involvement

Families are encouraged to be involved in the Centre, since this is the best way of becoming familiar with the program and educators. Through your involvement your children develop a sense of continuity and community between home and the Centre.

Try to leave enough time each day for a daily chat with educators. This will enable you to report any significant changes of events happening at home that may affect your child's day. Likewise, educators will be reporting to you regarding your child's time at the Centre.

On enrolment at the centre, we ask you to provide a family photo and a photo of your child, this will assist in the settling process for your child.

Supporting Children's Behaviour and Wellbeing

At Federation Children's Centres, we recognise that behaviour is a form of communication and that children learn social and emotional skills through responsive relationships, guidance and positive experiences. We are committed to creating safe, respectful and inclusive environments where every child feels a sense of belonging and is supported to develop confidence, resilience and positive relationships with others.

Educators use positive, respectful and developmentally appropriate strategies to support children's behaviour, emotional regulation and wellbeing. Through consistent expectations, responsive interactions, intentional teaching and modelling, children are supported to develop self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, problem-solving skills and the ability to manage conflicts in constructive ways.

We acknowledge that every child is unique and will respond to different support strategies. Educators work collaboratively with children, families and, where appropriate, external professionals to understand individual needs and promote positive outcomes for learning, participation and wellbeing.

Children are supported to contribute to group expectations, respect the rights and feelings of others, and develop the skills needed to participate successfully in their learning environment and community.

Federation Children's Centres are committed to guidance practices that protect children's dignity, uphold their rights and promote positive relationships. Behaviour guidance approaches are guided by the Education and Care Services National Regulations, the National Quality Standard, the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) and the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF).

Meals

Federation Children's Centres provide morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea. A Sample Menu is available here (pdf, 41.5kb).

The meals at the Centre are carefully planned to ensure that your child has a balanced diet, and the food and drink offered are nutritious and culturally appropriate and comply with the Healthy Eating Guideline for Long Day Care.

Healthy eating habits are promoted through our curriculum. The menu is displayed in advance in the kitchen as well as on the EarlyWorks documents, so you know what your child will be eating. The only food that we ask you to bring into the centre regularly is a piece of fruit. We believe that if children can select fresh fruit to bring into the centre this will instil and encourage children to contribute and share within their world. This fruit will then be shared among their peers and will also provide the opportunity for children to try something different. As part of our food safety policy, we ask that children do not bring any other food into the centre other than fruit.

Please let staff know of any special dietary requirements your child has e.g. cultural, religious, and medical. Meals are planned to accommodate individual special diets where possible.

Our centres aim to provide a NUT FREE Environment (although this cannot be guaranteed) and at no time should nuts come into the building. We also ask that if your child has had peanut butter before coming to the centre that you wash their hands and face.

Food Safety

Our Centre has an extensive food safety policy. All Educators complete training in safe food handling. Our Centre cook is a trained Food Safety Supervisor and attends all relevant training as required. As a Class 1 food safety premise we have a Certificate of Registration (Food Act 1984) and partake in regular inspections by the City of Ballarat's Environmental Health Officer, and an annual audit from an independent Registered Victorian Food Safety Auditor.

Allergies, Medical Conditions and Risk Management

The health, safety and wellbeing of all children is our paramount consideration at Federation Children's Centres. Families are required to provide up-to-date information about any diagnosed medical condition, allergy, anaphylaxis, asthma, diabetes, epilepsy or other health condition that may impact their child's participation, health or safety while attending the Centre.

Prior to a child commencing care, families must provide all relevant medical information, documentation and medication as required by the child's Medical Management Plan. For any child with a diagnosed allergy, anaphylaxis, asthma or other significant medical condition, a Risk Minimisation and Communication Plan will be developed in partnership with the family and the Centre Coordinator before the child begins attending the service.

The Risk Minimisation and Communication Plan identifies:

- The child's specific medical condition and individual needs.
- Known triggers and risk factors.
- Strategies to minimise risks and support the child's safe participation in all aspects of the program.
- Required medications, storage and administration procedures.
- Emergency response procedures.
- How information will be communicated to educators, staff, volunteers, students and relief staff to ensure the child's safety and wellbeing.

These plans are regularly reviewed with families and updated whenever there is a change to the child's medical condition, treatment, medication or management requirements.

Federation Children's Centres are committed to providing inclusive environments that enable all children to participate safely and fully in the educational program. Educators receive regular training in the management of medical conditions, including anaphylaxis, asthma, first aid and emergency response procedures, and follow all legislative and regulatory requirements relating to children's health and safety.

Families are responsible for ensuring all medical information, action plans and medications remain current and are provided to the Centre prior to the commencement of care and throughout their child's enrolment. No child is to attend the centre without the medication listed on their plan.

Toilet training

Educators like to follow the child's and families lead in regarding toilet training. Since it is important that there is consistency in expectations, for successful toilet training, Educators and parents should discuss the child's progress regularly.

Transitions between age groups and rooms

As children grow and develop, they will move through different rooms and learning groups during their time at Federation Children's Centres. Families will be kept informed throughout this process.

Transitions are planned carefully to help children feel safe, confident and supported. Children will have opportunities to visit their new room, meet educators and build relationships before their move.

When considering a transition, educators take into account each child's age, development, wellbeing, individual needs and the availability of places in the next room.

Families play an important role in supporting their child's transition. Talking positively about the new room, educators and experiences, encouraging questions, and sharing any concerns with educators can help children feel more confident and prepared for the change. Educators are available to work with families to support a smooth and successful transition.

By working together, we aim to make transitions a positive experience that supports children's sense of belonging, confidence and ongoing learning.

Infectious diseases

One of our most important goals is to provide a safe, hygienic environment that will promote the health of children and staff. As a general principle, children and adults should not come to the Centre unless they are well and able to cope adequately with the normal daily routines and activities.

If your child is diagnosed as having an infectious disease it is important to:

- keep the child at home, and
- notify the Centre immediately as other children and staff at the Centre may be placed at risk.

The Centre does not have facilities to look after sick children. If your child becomes unwell, we will inform you and isolate the child from other children until you can arrange to collect your child.

Parents will be notified of any cases of infectious diseases within the Centre. There are notices posted throughout the Centre.

Diarrhoea, vomiting, conjunctivitis and thrush are all highly contagious and will spread through the Centre very rapidly. A child should not return to the Centre for at least 48 hours until the problem has stopped and /or appropriate medical treatment has commenced.

***The following table indicates the minimum period of exclusion from schools and children's centres required for infectious diseases cases and contacts as prescribed under regulations 13 and 14 of the Health (Infectious Diseases) Regulations 2001 – Schedule 6.

Disease	Exclusion of Cases	Exclusion of Contact
Chicken Pox	Until blisters have dried (usually at least 5 days after the rash first appears in unimmunised children & less in immunised children).	Only if child has an immune deficiency or receiving chemotherapy.
Conjunctivitis	Until discharge from eyes has ceased.	Not excluded
Diarrhoea	Exclude until there has been no loose bowel movement for 24hrs.	Not excluded
Hand, Foot and Mouth disease	Until all blisters have dried.	Not excluded
Impetigo (School Sores)	Until appropriate treatment has commenced. Sores on exposed surfaces must be covered with a watertight dressing.	Not excluded
Measles	For at least 4 days after onset of rash.	Non-immunised contacts must be excluded for 14 days unless immunised within 72 hours of the first contact.
Mumps	For 9 days or until swelling goes down.	Not excluded
Ringworm, Head Lice, Scabies	Re-admit the day after appropriate treatment has commenced.	Not excluded
Rubella (German Measles)	Until at least 4 days after rash appears, or until fully recovered.	Not excluded
Streptococcal Sore Throat – including Scarlet Fever	Until child has had antibiotic treatment for at least 24 hrs. and the child feels well.	Not excluded

(Please note: this chart is on display in the Centre and states exclusion periods for other conditions too)

Immunisations

No Jab, No Play legislation requires parents/carers to provide evidence that their child has received all the vaccines they need and can confirm enrolment in a service. We request that parents/guardians keep the Centre informed of their children's immunisation status and provide an updated AIR Immunisation History Statement as changes occur. Children will not be able to start care until we have received their AIR Immunisation History Statement and we are unable to accept a copy of their child health record book.

Under Victoria's *No Jab, No Play* legislation, children may attend an early childhood education and care service on a 16-week grace period while catch-up immunisations are completed, provided an approved immunisation catch-up schedule is in place.

Medications

Only medication prescribed by a medical practitioner will be given at the Centre.
To protect your child from incorrect administion of medicines, your child may only be given medication if the appropriate form has been completed this can also be done via an online form initiated by the parent on EarlyWorks.

Details, which are required:

- Date
- Child's name
- Name of medication and dosage
- Time of last dosage and time for the next one
- Parent's signature

This information must be provided; otherwise medication will not be given.
Medication must be clearly labelled and given to an Educator – not left in your child's bag.
If you require more information, please ask to see the medication policy.

Asthmatic children

Federation Children's Centres have many children who suffer from Asthma which is a serious and life-threatening condition. If your child has Asthma, you will need to provide the centre with a current Asthma Management Plan on enrolment to Federation Children's Centres; this will need to be updated at least every 12 months. Asthma medication is required to be kept at the Centre permanently to ensure that your child will receive his/her medication, if and when they have an attack. All Educators are trained in Emergency Asthma Management and hold current certificates and the centres have an Asthma Policy.

All children with a diagnosed medical condition are required to have an Action Plan signed by a Doctor, the centre will use this to develop a Risk Minimisation Plan and Communication plan. These documents will need to be completed prior to the child starting care and updated at least annually.

Accidents, Incidents, Injury, Trauma and Illness

The safety, health and wellbeing of children is our paramount consideration at Federation Children's Centres. In the event of an accident, injury, trauma or illness, educators will provide immediate care and first aid as required and will contact a parent or authorised nominee as soon as practicable. It is essential that families ensure all emergency contact details remain current and accurate at all times.

Where emergency medical treatment is required, the Centre will arrange an ambulance or other appropriate emergency services without delay. As part of the enrolment process, families are required to provide authorisation for educators to seek emergency medical treatment, ambulance attendance and, where appropriate, administer prescribed medication in accordance with medical management plans and legislative requirements.

Families are responsible for any costs associated with ambulance transport and are encouraged to consider appropriate ambulance cover.

All accidents, incidents, injuries, trauma and illnesses are documented and communicated to families. Records are maintained through EarlyWorks or approved Centre documentation, and families will be asked to review and acknowledge the record as soon as practicable.

In accordance with the Education and Care Services National Law and Regulations, certain serious incidents must be reported to the Victorian Early Childhood Regulatory Authority (VECRA) within required legislative timeframes. These incidents may include serious injury,

trauma or illness, incidents requiring urgent medical attention or hospitalisation, attendance by emergency services, incidents where a child cannot be accounted for, appears to have been removed from the service in breach of regulations, or any circumstance that places the safety, health or wellbeing of children at risk.

Federation Children's Centres maintains procedures for responding to emergencies and incidents, including the provision of first aid, emergency medical treatment, communication with families, incident investigation and regulatory reporting where required. These processes support our commitment to maintaining safe environments and promoting the health, safety and wellbeing of all children.

Sun Protection

Federation Children's Centres are proud to be a SunSmart accredited service and are committed to providing a safe environment that promotes children's health and wellbeing. Our SunSmart practices are based on the recommendations of SunSmart Victoria (Cancer Council Victoria) and are tailored to the local context of our Centres.

Our Sun Protection Policy has been developed to ensure children, educators, volunteers and visitors are protected from the harmful effects of ultraviolet (UV) radiation and to support lifelong healthy sun protection habits. Sun protection measures are implemented whenever UV levels are 3 or above, in accordance with SunSmart recommendations, which is typically from 1 September to 30 April, and at other times when UV levels warrant protection.

Sun protection strategies include:

- Wearing approved sun-safe hats that protect the face, neck and ears.
- Applying SPF50+ broad-spectrum sunscreen.
- Providing and encouraging the use of shaded play areas.
- Scheduling outdoor activities to minimise exposure during peak UV periods where possible.
- Promoting sun-safe clothing that covers shoulders and protects skin.
- Educating children about sun safety and the importance of protecting their skin.

The Centre provides SPF50+ broad-spectrum sunscreen for children and staff. Families must advise the Centre if their child has a sunscreen allergy, sensitivity or medical condition that prevents them from using the Centre's sunscreen. In these circumstances, families may provide a suitable alternative sunscreen, clearly labelled with their child's name. Educators will work with families to support individual health needs while maintaining appropriate sun protection practices.

Families are asked to support the Centre's SunSmart practices by providing appropriate sun-safe clothing and ensuring their child has a suitable hat each day. Through our accredited SunSmart program, we work in partnership with families to help reduce the risk of skin damage and establish positive sun protection habits from an early age.

Please also see 'What to Bring' section in this handbook.

Health, Safety and Wellbeing

Federation University is committed to providing a safe and healthy environment for children, families, staff and visitors, and Federation Children's Centres actively support this commitment.

The Children's Centres have a dedicated Health, Safety and Injury Team (HSIT), with representatives from each Centre meeting every quarter to discuss health and safety

matters, review incidents and hazards, and identify opportunities for improvement. Children's Centre health and safety matters are also communicated through the University's broader Occupational Health and Safety processes.

Each year, the Centres contribute to an Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Plan that guides health and safety priorities and continuous improvement activities. Regular workplace inspections, hazard identification and risk assessments (HIRACs) are undertaken to help ensure our environments remain safe for children, families and staff.

Each Centre maintains an Emergency Management Plan that outlines procedures for responding to emergencies such as fire, evacuation, lockdown, severe weather and medical incidents. Emergency drills, including evacuations, are conducted regularly so that children and staff are familiar with emergency procedures.
We encourage families, staff and visitors to report any health and safety concerns so that we can continue to provide safe, welcoming and supportive environments for all members of our community.

Excursions and Incursions

At Federation Children's Centres, excursions and incursions are an important part of our educational program. They provide children with opportunities to explore, learn about their community, develop confidence and extend their learning through real-life experiences.

Children may participate in excursions within the local community, visits around the University campus and incursions where visitors or specialists come to the Centre to share experiences with children.

The Centres also undertake approved routine outings within the University campus. These regular outings allow children to explore their surroundings and access campus facilities as part of their everyday learning.

Families will be informed about excursions and incursions through EarlyWorks and other Centre communications. Written authorisation will be obtained for excursions where required.

To ensure children's safety and wellbeing, educators complete risk assessments for all excursions, incursions and routine outings. Families are welcome to speak with educators or the Coordinator if they would like further information about any planned experience.

Through excursions and incursions, we help children build connections with their community, develop new skills and engage in meaningful learning beyond the Centre environment.

Enrolment Information Updates

To help us ensure our information is correct, please let us know as soon as possible if any of your enrolment details change, including:

- Home or postal address
- Email address
- Phone numbers
- Emergency contacts
- Authorised nominees or collection arrangements
- Family or custody arrangements
- Medical information, health conditions or medications
- Child Care Subsidy (CCS) details

Keeping your information up to date helps us communicate important information, respond quickly in an emergency and meet our legal and regulatory requirements. If your details change, please update them through the enrolment system or speak with the Centre Coordinator.

Compliments, Feedback and Complaints

Federation Children's Centres values feedback from children, families and the community. We encourage families to raise any questions, concerns, suggestions or complaints so that they can be addressed promptly and respectfully.

If you have a concern regarding your child's education and care, we encourage you to:

1. Speak with the educator or staff member involved.
2. Discuss the matter with the Centre Coordinator or Deputy Coordinator if your concern remains unresolved.
3. If the matter cannot be resolved at the Centre level, contact the Associate Director, Commercial Services on (03) 5327 9848.

Families also have the right to raise concerns directly with the Victorian Early Childhood Regulatory Authority (VECRA), the regulatory authority responsible for early childhood education and care services in Victoria.

Victorian Early Childhood Regulatory Authority (VECRA)
Website: https://www.vic.gov.au/early-childhood-regulatory-authority
Online complaints and enquiries: https://www.vic.gov.au/make-enquiry-or-complaint-about-education-and-care-service
Email: eces@education.vic.gov.au
Phone: 1300 307 415

Regional Contacts
Ballarat Region
Victorian Early Childhood Regulatory Authority (VECRA)
109 Armstrong Street North
Ballarat VIC 3350
Phone: (03) 5337 8444

Gippsland Region
Victorian Early Childhood Regulatory Authority (VECRA)
71 Hotham Street
Traralgon VIC 3844
Phone: (03) 5172 0200

Complaints relating to children's health, safety, wellbeing, supervision, compliance with the Education and Care Services National Law and Regulations, or any other regulatory matter may be made directly to VECRA.

Federation Children's Centres is committed to managing complaints confidentially, fairly and in a timely manner. Raising a concern or complaint will not affect your child's enrolment or participation in the service. Families are encouraged to provide feedback as part of our commitment to continuous improvement and high-quality outcomes for children and families.

Support for families

We value open communication and encourage families to talk with educators about their child's learning, development and wellbeing. If you have any questions, concerns or

information you would like to share, please speak with your child's educators or the Centre Coordinator.

Families are welcome to arrange a meeting at any time to discuss their child's progress, learning, development or wellbeing.

As a teaching and learning environment, Federation Children's Centres may host students undertaking university placements or work experience. Students are supervised by qualified educators at all times. While students may interact with families as part of their learning, any advice regarding a child's care, learning, development or wellbeing will be provided by Centre educators or management.

Referrals and Additional Support

Sometimes educators may identify that a child or family could benefit from additional support services. If this occurs, an educator or the Centre Coordinator will discuss this with you and, where appropriate, provide information about available services and supports.

With your consent, we may work with other professionals or support services to help meet your child's individual needs and support their learning, development and wellbeing.

Our goal is to work in partnership with families to ensure children and families can access the support they need to thrive and fully participate in the Centre's program.

Newsletters

Newsletter and information about the rooms will be sent out to families via EarlyWorks. These provide families with important information about the centre events and happenings.

If at any time you require any further information regarding Federation Children's Centres please feel free to phone, email or visit the centres.