

# **JOHN STREET COMMUNITY EARLY CHILDHOOD CO-OPERATIVE**

## **PARENT HANDBOOK**

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>1. INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2. PHILOSOPHY.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>3. CENTRE MANAGEMENT .....</b>	<b>6</b>
3.1 Co-operative structure .....	6
3.2 Board of Management .....	6
3.3 Staff.....	6
3.4 Parent involvement.....	7
3.5 Role of government .....	9
3.6 Quality Improvement and Accreditation System (QIAS) .....	9
3.7 Confidentiality .....	10
3.8 Protecting your privacy.....	10
3.8 Complaints procedure.....	10
3.9 Mandatory reporting.....	11
3.10 Environmental responsibility.....	11
<b>4. DAILY OPERATION.....</b>	<b>12</b>
4.1 Hours and session times .....	12
4.2 Daily routines.....	12
4.3 Food.....	12
4.4 Delivering and collecting children.....	15
4.5 Clothing.....	16
4.6 Sun protection and hats.....	17
4.7 Nappies.....	17
4.8 Children's bags .....	18
4.9 Toys and treasures .....	18
4.10 Behaviour guidance.....	18
4.11 Independent toileting.....	19
4.12 Communication .....	19
4.13 Safety.....	20
4.14 Enrolment forms .....	20
4.15 Sick children.....	20
4.16 Medication.....	21
4.17 Accident/illness record .....	22
4.18 Emergency procedures.....	23
4.19 Immunisation.....	23
<b>5. CHILDREN'S PROGRAMS .....</b>	<b>25</b>
5.1 Planning .....	25
5.2 How children learn.....	25
5.2 Learning Story Books.....	26
<b>6. BOOKINGS .....</b>	<b>27</b>
6.1 Waiting list .....	27
6.2 Allocation of places .....	27
6.3 Acceptance of a place.....	27
6.4 Changing bookings.....	28
6.5 Withdrawal from care .....	28
6.6 Casual bookings .....	28
<b>7. FEES.....</b>	<b>30</b>
7.1 Rates.....	30
7.2 Payment.....	30
7.3 Absences.....	30
7.4 Child Care Benefit (CCB) .....	30
7.5 Late payment of fees .....	31

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Welcome to John Street Community Early Childhood Co-operative (John Street). We hope that your association with the centre is a long and happy one.

John Street was formed in 1976 from the generous donations of E M Dauber. Formerly known as the Fitzroy Community Childcare Co-operative, a name change was initiated in 1997 in order to establish a firmer identity within the surrounding Fitzroy community.

In 1998, we merged with another well-known and well-established Fitzroy centre, Central Fitzroy Childcare Co-operative, in the interests of preserving community-based childcare.

John Street is a community-based childcare centre; therefore, it depends on active participation from the parents at all levels of operation. This enables the centre to keep costs affordable and to maintain a community ethos within the centre environment. The centre is a not-for-profit centre; that is, the centre does not endeavour to profit from the service that we offer. Parents are instrumental in determining policies by which John Street is run, as this ensures the needs of the current families are being met.

This handbook is intended for new families attending the centre and we hope it answers most of your queries about John Street. It is based on the centre's Philosophy and Policy Document, available in the office and from the Director. We appreciate that parents often have mixed feelings about putting their child in care and encourage you to see the centre as an extension of family life. Don't hesitate to approach the staff on all issues concerning your child.

Programs cannot adequately meet children's needs unless they also recognise the importance of the family unit. Parents are therefore encouraged to:

- communicate briefly with staff at each end of the day
- exchange information with staff concerning their child
- notify staff of any changes in family situations that could affect their child
- use staff as a support and resource for any routine care issues they may be having with their child.

## **2. PHILOSOPHY**

The philosophy of John Street has been developed by staff in collaboration with parents and management so that the views and values of all are respected. This ensures a sound basis to organising and planning for children at the Co-operative.

The programs offered are unique, catering specifically for particular children and reflect an appreciation of the diverse nature of our community.

John Street works to foster the social, intellectual, physical, creative and personal development of each child. The aim of John Street programs is toward the development of children as thoughtful, creative, industrious, empathetic and resourceful individuals.

John Street staff value the child within the context of the family. The primacy of familial relations is acknowledged and supported. Family bonds are respected and nurtured through the development of open communication and close working relationships between home and John Street.

John Street focuses on positive self-esteem as essential for optimal learning and development. Children learn best in an atmosphere where they feel comfortable, safe and secure, where they are self-motivated and able to take responsibility for their actions and learning (appropriate to their developmental level).

Staff recognise that children have the ability to make both rational and intuitive choices and that children learn not only from what we intend them to learn but also from all experiences. Relationships are developed where children and staff value, trust, respect and listen to each other. A framework of acceptance is established where richness and diversity of experience in relation to abilities, age, colour, culture, ethnicity, family structure and gender, are respected and valued equally. Staff are pro-active in supporting such diversity, promoting equal opportunities for all children.

Learning experiences are developed which focus on the uniqueness of the individual, of their varied life experiences and of their many learning styles. Children's development and education is promoted through meaningful experiences. The foundations of all learning areas including science, literacy, numeracy, music and the arts are rooted in the child's world, and therefore, are relevant, interesting and functional for the child.

Children are engaged in active learning through play experiences as this is a natural extension of children's innate sense of curiosity. There is acceptance of Einstein's proposal that imagination is more important than

knowledge in our constantly changing world. Staff share this view with an emphasis on encouraging children's exploration of their environment, their efforts at creative problem solving and the generation of novel ideas rather than the retention of isolated facts.

Staff encourage independence and inventive decision-making, and promote collaboration with others in learning. In this way, they enhance children's skills in independence and interdependence, a sense of autonomy, as well as a sense of connection with others. Our aim is to empower children with positive and proactive skills and attitudes for dealing with everyday life and the educational setting, as well as to meet the certainty of change with confidence and competence.

Staff interactions convey expectations of all children's capability for success and of acceptance of approximate gains towards this. As such, practise is encouraged and positive feedback given.

Staff view learning as a life long process and take a forward-looking perspective in their work with children. Staff support the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and are mindful of this in our aims for, and work with, children and families. Empowering children in critical thinking and active decision-making is laying the foundations for adults who perceive themselves to be active participants in their local and wider communities.

### **3. CENTRE MANAGEMENT**

#### **3.1 Co-operative structure**

As a Co-operative under the Co-operatives Act 1996, John Street is a parent-managed non-profit organisation. In accordance with the Co-operative's rules, the Board of Management actively encourages all members to participate in all aspects of the management and daily activities of the Co-operative. Each parent becomes a shareholder/member and is eligible to vote at general meetings, stand for election to the board and take a role in the management of John Street.

Staff members are able to become members/shareholders and vote at general meetings, but they may not be elected to the Board. Under the rules, parents must comprise at least 80% of the membership of the Co-operative at any one time. Parents and staff with ideas for improving the Co-operative are encouraged to speak to a board member or the Director.

#### **3.2 Board of Management**

There are seven parents on the Board of Management. The Board is elected at the Annual General Meeting for a term of two years on a rolling basis, (four are elected one year, three the next), or as the need arises. All parents are eligible to nominate for the Board. The current offices on the Board are:

- Chairperson
- Secretary
- Treasurer
- Staff Liaison
- Policy and Accreditation
- Parent Liaison
- Maintenance
- Fund Raising

The Board of Management is responsible for making financial and policy decisions for the users of the Co-operative. Members of the Board make themselves available as practicable for discussion on all issues. The Board meets every month and these meetings are open to staff and parents. If issues on the agenda are confidential, staff members and non-Board members may be asked to leave during the discussion. Under the rules of the Co-operative, non-Board members may not vote at Board meetings.

#### **3.3 Staff**

John Street currently has a complement of full-time staff members and

part-time childcare workers. The trained childcare workers hold the equivalent of at least a two year qualification as per the Regulations (some have three year qualifications). Photos of all current staff members are on the noticeboard in the foyer.

We have a contract cleaner who is responsible for nightly cleaning of the centre. Hearty Health are contracted to provide meals for children at John Street each day. John Street staff are responsible for food preparation and serving on-site.

### **Director**

The Director is responsible for the management of the co-operative in accordance with the philosophy, objectives and policies of John Street. As with all staff members, she is in close liaison with all members and is available for consultation regarding any concerns or problems with your child.

## **3.4 Parent involvement**

Parents are encouraged to see the Co-operative as an extension of their family life and should feel comfortable to approach the staff on all issues concerning their child. Parental involvement is supported in all aspects of the Co-operative's operations.

Programs cannot adequately meet children's needs unless they also recognise the importance of families. Parents are therefore encouraged to:

- communicate with staff at the end of each day
- exchange information with staff concerning their child
- notify staff of any changes in family situations that could affect their child
- use staff as a support for any routine care issues that they could be experiencing with their child
- provide comments and feedback on program evaluation sheets
- participate in family feedback meetings.

The provision of childcare at John Street is centred on the notion of mutual respect between children, staff and parents. With regard to this parents have the right to:

- effective participation in service management and policy development
- a service that is flexible and responsive to the needs of the families
- service providers who hold relevant professional qualifications in Early Childhood Education
- service providers who are aware of and abide by the AECA Code of Ethics and the National Childcare Accreditation Council's Quality Improvement and Accreditation System.

John Street actively encourages families to be involved in all its activities. Parents are encouraged to assist with the programs offered by making

times to visit John Street. During these times, parents are encouraged to share ideas with staff, read a story, play a musical instrument or simply spend time with their own and other children in the group.

John Street families are from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds and parents are encouraged to share their experiences with John Street staff so they can be included in John Street's programs.

### **Working bees**

Working bees are held four times each year to help maintain a safe and attractive environment for the children at a reasonable cost. Working bees also provide a chance for:

- building supportive networks amongst parents
- making new friends
- speaking with other parents in a more relaxed setting
- sharing and participating in your child's environment.

All families are expected to participate in one working bee held during the year. Non-attendance will result in a levy of \$200 (+ \$20 GST) being imposed.

Board members (who attend the monthly board meetings) are welcome but not required to attend working bees.

Childcare is not provided at working bees. Children are welcome to attend if there are two parents/guardians in attendance but must be supervised by their own parent/guardian.

### **Policy development**

From time to time, parents will be invited to participate in the development and review of John Street's policies and to assist the centre in the accreditation review process. This may take the form of subcommittee membership, attending review meetings or answering questionnaires.

### **Other skills**

If you have any special skills, talents or maybe just a willing pair of hands that you are able to contribute to the operation of John Street, please talk to the Director or a staff member.

### **Program development**

Parents' ideas for activities to include within the children's programs are always welcome. Perhaps your child has a special interest or there is a particular cultural event coming up that we could all share at John Street.

Please talk to a staff member or jot your ideas on the Parent Evaluation Sheets to be returned with your child's Learning Story Book.

### 3.5 Role of government

#### State Government

John Street operates in accordance with the Children's Services Regulations 1998 and the Children's Services Act 1996. Copies of the Regulations and Act are available to read within the office.

**Please note: these documents must remain on the premises at all times. If you are interested in reading them, please make time to do so within the centre.**

#### Staff/child ratios

Under the Children's Services Regulations, we are registered with the Department of Human Services. The staff/child ratio is:

- one staff member to every 5 children under the age of 3 years
- one staff member to every 15 children over the age of 3 years.

#### Federal Government

The Federal Government assists parents meet the cost of childcare with the Child Care Benefit scheme. Information about this scheme can be found in section 7.4 of the Parent Handbook.

### 3.6 Quality Improvement and Accreditation System (QIAS)

John Street is committed to ongoing evaluation of its service and programs to ensure that we are meeting the changing needs of the children and families.

The Quality Improvement and Accreditation System is an initiative of the Federal Government to ensure that all pre-school children in childcare are receiving *quality* care, not just care.

All childcare centres in Australia must undergo the QIAS process to ensure nation-wide standards and guidelines. If a centre doesn't participate in QIAS, the Federal Government will not allow its users to claim Child Care Benefit.

The QIAS guidelines list a range of principles relating to quality care. We are required to rate ourselves against these principles and then work out an action plan that assists in the maintenance or improvement in each specific area. It is an ongoing process. The National Childcare Accreditation Council assesses our ratings and actions plans as required.

We currently hold a three year accreditation rating. Regular informal evaluations by all staff occur continuously.

Parent involvement in the operation of a centre is a mandatory part of the QIAS. You can help by taking an active interest in the QIAS process, talking about it with staff and the Director, and requesting to read available

material.

During times of review, you will be asked to complete questionnaires aimed at maintaining the high standard of care we currently offer at John Street. We know we can count on your co-operation and participation at this time.

### **3.7 Confidentiality**

From time to time you may be asked to provide personal information to the centre (e.g. medical records for your child, information about your income or custody details). You can be assured that staff will treat this information with complete confidentiality.

We also ask that you, in turn, respect the rights of the other members of the centre.

### **3.8 Protecting your privacy**

John Street is committed to ensuring full compliance with the privacy principles under the Information Privacy Act 2000 and Health Records Act 2001 and seeks to responsibly manage any personal information or health information we may hold in carrying out Council functions and activities.

John Street will collect some personal and health information from families to enable us to provide for the care and education of your child. This information will be used solely by this service to assist us with the day to day administration of John St and to satisfy the service's legal obligations and duty of care. John Street's privacy policy and statement can be viewed on our website ([www.johnst.com.au](http://www.johnst.com.au)) or you may view and/or obtain a copy in the office.

Where a child has a food allergy, this information will be displayed in the kitchen and your child's room to enable us to provide for your child's care and safety needs.

You may access and amend your personal information if necessary by contacting the Director.

### **3.8 Complaints procedure**

If parents have any queries, concerns or issues regarding the care of the children or the management of John Street they are asked to address these concerns to the Director.

If this is deemed inappropriate, given the nature of the concern, or the parent feels their issue was not adequately addressed, any further communication should be directed to a current Board Member – preferably

either the Parent Liaison member or the Chairperson.

If this still to produce an adequate response, further concerns may be taken to the local Children's Services Advisor with the Department of Human Services (145 Smith St, Fitzroy. Ph: 9412 5419).

If concerns raised with the Director or Board Member are not resolved adequately, either party may call for a mediation session. This will be conducted by an independent third party.

### **3.9 Mandatory reporting**

Under the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005<sup>1</sup>, specific people are obliged by law to notify the Department of Human Services if they believe a child has suffered, or is likely to suffer, physical or sexual abuse. Some of these include: registered nurses including mothercraft nurses, teachers (primary and secondary), kindergarten teachers as well as owners/operators of children's service centres. At John Street this also means qualified child care workers. The above people are referred to as mandated officers or mandated notifiers.

### **3.10 Environmental responsibility**

John Street is committed to protecting the environment in the conduct of its day to day operations. We actively try to minimise waste and avoid products that are harmful the environment. Our centre is subject to internal environmental audits in which opportunities to conserve resources are identified and practicable actions suggested. Such internal review has seen the installation of water tanks at John Street, the exploration of solar energy panels and the use of a nappy wash service. All milk cartons, glass, aluminium and steel cans and paper are recycled. Food scraps are added to the worm farms, or provide foods for our chickens as appropriate. Children's artwork is sent home.

We believe that it is important that children see staff and parents model good environmental practice. Parents are encouraged to support John Street and at times may be asked to bring in materials such as plastic bags or scrap paper for reuse within the centre. We also welcome any suggestions that parents may have to help us further protect the environment.

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<sup>1</sup> See [www.dhs.vic.gov.au](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au) for further information

## **4. DAILY OPERATION**

### **4.1 Hours and session times**

John Street's hours of operation are between 7.30 a.m. and 6.00 p.m. We request that you collect your child by 5.55 p.m. to allow staff time to pack away equipment and lock up the centre.

John Street is closed on all public holidays and for three weeks over the Christmas/New Year period. Two weeks fees in advance are due prior to centre closure to ensure your booking for the new year.

### **4.2 Daily routines**

7.30	Centre opens. Activities set as per programs in each room. Children assist in setting up programs. Family grouping time.
8.30–9.00	Children move to own rooms. Participation in planned experiences.
9.45	Morning tea
11.15–11.30	Lunch time
12.00–2.00	Rest time
2.00	Participate in afternoon experiences as per program.
2.45	Afternoon tea
5.15–5.30	Family grouping re-commences
6.00	Centre closes

\*NOTE: These times are only approximate and vary between the rooms and according to the children's needs. More detailed daily routine outlines are displayed in each room.

### **4.3 Food**

Hearty Health provides a food service for the children in our centre. We provide a nutritious and balanced diet that helps develop children's enjoyment and understanding of food. Meals are prepared by Hearty Health and delivered refrigerated each morning to John Street. Meals are then re-heated on-site by John Street staff in compliance with all safe food handling principles. Weekly menus are displayed in rooms and in the kitchen window

John Street aims to fulfil special dietary requirements to meet the needs of particular religious or cultural groups, vegetarian and vegan diets. Families with specific dietary requests should speak to staff to ensure that your child's needs are catered for.

#### **Bottles and breast feeding**

Bottles of formula should be sealed with the teat well-covered and placed in the fridge in your child's room upon arrival. Each bottle must be clearly

labelled with your child's name. Bottles will be rinsed after use and placed in your child's bag.

Mothers are welcome to visit throughout the day to breast feed their child. Bottles of expressed breast milk must also be clearly labelled.

### **Food intolerance/allergy**

Food allergies in children are not uncommon. They may result in minor symptoms such as skin rashes or vomiting. In severe cases anaphylaxis (difficulty breathing, swelling of mouth and throat, circulatory collapse) may occur endangering life. A child with a mild reaction to a food may go on to develop a severe reaction unexpectedly. The aims of our policy on food allergies and anaphylaxis are to ensure physical safety of the children within John Street, while minimising their feeling of 'difference'.

### **Identification of food allergy**

John Street must be informed at the time of enrolment of all children with food allergies and at risk of anaphylaxis. An assessment of the potential for accidental exposure to allergens while in the care of John Street will be conducted and a risk minimisation action plan for the centre will be developed in consultation with staff and families of the child.

If a genuine allergy exists, the parents and carers are encouraged to seek specialist advice and further explanation of the potential seriousness of the allergy (e.g. from the Allergy Clinic at the Royal Children's Hospital).

Enrolment forms must clearly identify the food allergies and include the following attachment:

- anaphylaxis action plan signed by child's doctor.

Children's allergies will be clearly displayed in the child's home room and in the kitchen. Parents are requested to complete the Parent Agreement attached to their child's enrolment form requesting consent for the display of their child's food allergy details. The risk minimisation action plan for each individual with anaphylaxis will also be displayed. Food given to children with known allergies is double-checked by staff to minimise the risk of allergic reactions. Relieving staff are introduced to any children with allergies as they arrive and informed of the first aid procedure if the allergen is ingested. Relief staff are requested not to give any child food or milk unless permission is given.

### **Parents' role**

It is the parents' responsibility to:

- inform staff either on enrolment or on diagnosis of their child's allergies
- provide staff with an anaphylaxis action plan and written consent to use the EpiPen in line with this plan
- provide staff with a complete and up-to-date EpiPen kit

- notify the staff of any changes to their child's allergy status and provide a new anaphylaxis action plan in accordance with these changes
- ensure that contact numbers on the enrolment form remain current
- sign the medication book and accident book should an incident occur
- comply with the policy that no child who has been prescribed an EpiPen is permitted to attend the service or its programs without that EpiPen.

### **Role of staff**

Staff responsible for the child at risk of anaphylaxis shall:

- ensure a copy of the child's anaphylaxis action plan is visible to all staff
- follow the child's anaphylaxis action plan in the event of an allergic reaction, which may progress to anaphylaxis and immediately follow steps for a medical emergency
- practise EpiPen administration procedures using an EpiPen trainer and 'anaphylaxis scenarios' quarterly.

### **First Aid**

If a child ingests food to which they are deemed/appear allergic, staff encourage the child to spit it out and will rinse the child's mouth out with water. Staff will then follow the guidelines for that child regarding medication/treatment.

If required, staff will follow the steps for a medical emergency. Staff do not take responsibility for diagnosing allergies, nor advising parents of treatment options.

### **Documentation**

After any such incident, notes must be made and witnessed, and the medication given, written up and signed by the parent. The Department of Human Services must be notified as required by the Regulations.

### **Birthdays**

Birthdays are important events for young children and parents are welcome to bring a cake and perhaps balloons for their child's birthday. However, in line with John Street's food policy, lollies and sweets are discouraged.

Parents are requested to check with room staff for any existing food allergies within the room. Simple cakes are encouraged and tend to be more popular than highly decorative cakes; that is, children seem to prefer a simple carrot cake to an elaborate cream-filled sponge. Parents may purchase a cake through our food company for \$10 that is egg free, dairy free and nut free.

Due to changes in food safety standards, foods prepared at home are not to be brought in to John Street. Store-bought foods are allowed provided a complete list of ingredients is included. This will enable staff to check all ingredients against any existing allergies.

#### **4.4 Delivering and collecting children**

##### **Entry to the centre**

The code to the keypad will be issued to all new families by the Director. When using the front door please make sure it closes properly behind you. For the safety of the children we ask that only immediate family members use the access code. If your child is being dropped off or collected by someone else we ask that they use the doorbell. This enables staff to check identification.

When the doorbell does ring, please do not open the door unless it is a parent you know. If you do not know the person, please let staff know that there is someone at the door.

##### **Signing in and out**

Regulations require that each child be signed in and out of the centre each day.

If there is any variation to the normal collection arrangements, parents should advise staff. If someone else is collecting your child, staff must be informed and an Authorisation to Collect form must be filled out and witnessed by the Director.

##### **Leaving your child**

When leaving your child at John Street, it is very important that you say good-bye so that s/he knows you are going. This may cause tears but it is less distressing than you disappearing. Your child will be reassured by your honest goodbye and later return as s/he has been told will happen. Any tears will disappear soon after you leave. If you are at all concerned, please feel free to call and check with room staff. We recommend the following steps when you are leaving your child:

- greet staff
- inform staff of your child's night, morning, mood, etc
- sign in together
- take time to settle into an activity
- say goodbye and tell your child you will return
- try to leave quickly after saying goodbye because this helps your child to settle.

##### **Picking up your child**

You are welcome to stay as long as you like and join your child in some of the planned experiences, talk to the staff or to the other parents. However,

please remember that you are less daunting to the children if you get down low. Sit on the chairs or cushions; tables are for activities.

Don't forget that staff are still working so please don't distract them from their overall responsibilities. You are more than welcome to join in and assist with the activities.

Be aware. Your child's behaviour may change while you are at the centre and become demonstrative and disruptive. This is not uncommon. But please consider the effects this will have on the rest of the children and the extra strain placed on staff. If this happens it is usually best if you and your child go home.

Don't forget that John Street closes at 6.00 pm. Please leave the centre before this time so staff can finish up and go home.

### **Collection by others**

If someone else is collecting your child, staff must be informed and an Authorisation to Collect Form must be filled out and witnessed by the Director or the child cannot be handed over. Staff will request proof of identification from (unfamiliar) people intending to collect a child.

### **Late pickups**

Please make sure you ring the centre if you are going to be late.

Although the centre closes at 6.00 pm, we ask that all children be picked up by 5.55 pm. This enables the staff to pack away the remaining activities and lock up the centre before leaving at 6.00 pm. Under State regulations, two people, of which one must be a qualified staff member, are required to stay with a child who has not been picked up by 6.00 pm. Parents are asked to consider the inconvenience to staff and the stress for your child. The cost of detaining two staff members will result in a fine – \$30 for every 15 minutes or part thereof.

<b>Note: Fine implementation begins after 5.55 pm</b>
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## **4.5 Clothing**

Your child will need to bring the following items in a clearly named bag:

- two full changes of **fully-labelled** clothing
- appropriate clothing for the season (e.g. sunhat in summer)
- several pairs of undies and pants if your child is being toilet trained
- an adequate supply of formula/breast milk for babies, in clearly labelled bottles
- two 'home nappies' for going home (this allows for the inevitable accidents!)

Staff try to ensure children's clothing and belongings are not misplaced. Please assist us by labelling everything. If clothes and belongings get mixed-up, please return items promptly to staff in the room. There is a lost property box located in each bathroom; please check these for any missing items. Any clothing not collected after a reasonable time will be recycled as centre spares or donated to charity.

Children should wear comfortable, practical clothing. The programs within all rooms can include sensory experiences such as water, goop (cornflour and water), mud and clay, and smocks are not provided. The paints used by the children are water-based and should wash out (soak in cold water for half an hour, then wash in cold, soapy water). Some paint colours have proven difficult to remove so staff have been encouraged to dilute these colours. However, to avoid any costly upsets we recommend that your child wear inexpensive 'play' clothes. Dresses are not recommended as they are difficult to crawl, run and climb in. Subject to parent's wishes, children decide whether they wear their shoes or go barefoot.

#### **4.6 Sun protection and hats**

In spring and summer, all children will be encouraged to wear hats while using the outdoor area. All yards have shaded areas in which the children can continue to have indoor outdoor experiences throughout the day. We ask that you leave a labelled hat at the centre for use by your child; this ensures it is not forgotten in the morning rush. The centre has a small supply of spare hats for emergency use.

Young children who need encouragement to wear a sunhat may benefit from having a piece of elastic sewn underneath the chin of their hat. Consistency also helps to reinforce the need to wear a hat while outdoors. If your child seems reluctant to wear a hat, by modelling this yourself, along with providing a sunhat for your child during each outing, this behaviour will change over time.

A \$5 levy is added to your bill at the start of the year for sunscreen. This ensures that we have allergy friendly sunscreen throughout the year. If your child needs a certain type of sunscreen, you will have to provide a labelled bottle that your child can use.

If you would prefer that your child not wear any sunscreen, this must be advised at the time of enrolment.

#### **4.7 Nappies**

John Street uses a nappy wash service for all children while at the centre. As stated earlier (4.5 Clothing), parents of children who wear nappies will be asked to make donations of plastic pants and nappy fasteners as the need arises.

If you would prefer that your child remain in disposable nappies throughout the day, you will not be required to donate plastics or nappy fasteners. You will need to provide adequate nappies for use during the day. Your child's soiled nappies will be placed in a plastic bag and sent home for disposal.

Any creams or lotions you would like to be applied will need to be supplied by you. All creams, including non-prescription creams, need to be written up in the medication book.

#### **4.8 Children's bags**

Please provide a clearly labelled bag for your child's belongings. This is to be placed inside your child's locker, located in the bathroom of their allocated room.

Since these bags are accessible to children when using the bathroom please make sure that there is nothing unsafe inside them (e.g. safety pins, small toys, medication).

#### **4.9 Toys and treasures**

We understand that sometimes bringing a toy or treasure to the centre is important to a child's sense of security. However, we ask that items are limited to those which are inexpensive and replaceable as lost items can cause distress.

We hope you appreciate the difficulty in trying to be responsible for all of the toys that the children bring in. A good strategy is to encourage the child to leave the toy in the car for the ride home.

All toys brought in to the centre must be SAFE and NON VIOLENT. In keeping with our efforts toward children developing peaceable conflict resolution strategies, we ask that guns and other violent toys and superhero costumes not be brought to the centre.

If your child has a security toy, this is acceptable and your child will be encouraged to use this only at rest time. This is so her/his participation in the planned experiences is not hindered in any way.

Centre toys are to remain at the centre for all to use and children should be discouraged from taking these home. Removal of centre toys may disrupt programs and replacements are costly to the centre. Please encourage your child to take only their own belongings.

#### **4.10 Behaviour guidance**

At John Street we aim to foster and develop self-discipline, consideration of others and compromise in a positive and empathetic way. Our aim is to build confidence and self-esteem. Our staff use the following strategies with age-appropriate expectations:

- when behaviour is disruptive, redirect the child's energies
- encourage positive behaviours
- create environments that build up feelings of competency and self-esteem
- staff reinforce reasonable limits
- children are taught what they can do rather than what they can't do
- children are encouraged to talk about their feelings rather than demonstrating them
- parents will be contacted to assist with the development and implementation of strategies if ongoing difficult behaviour occurs.

Our full policy on behaviour guidance is in the centre Policy Document. A copy of this is available upon request.

#### **4.11 Independent toileting**

The timing of the commencement of independent toileting is based on your child's readiness and will be done in consultation between parents and room staff. When your child commences independent toileting please remember to provide several spare pairs of undies and changes of clothes. Dress children in a way that will assist with their growing independence. Remember that overalls make undressing very difficult for those in a hurry to go to the toilet.

#### **4.12 Communication**

Parents are welcome to phone, email or drop in to the centre at any time throughout the day to check on their child's well-being.

Daily communication with staff is encouraged. We understand that you will want to know about your child's day and we value your input. However, please realise that as staff are still working they are unable to chat with you for long periods of time. Any issue requiring privacy or more than a few minutes to discuss may be better handled by pre-arranging a meeting time with the relevant staff member.

A centre newsletter is published each month to keep you up to date with the goings on at John Street. If you have any ideas for articles or would like to assist with the newsletter please talk to staff. This is made available via email or hard copy, depending on your preference.

Please check noticeboards regularly. Notices on community affairs, centre issues, child related events, child development information, programs and concerns are all on display.

#### **4.13 Safety**

We comply with Children's Services Regulations 1998, the Children's Services Act 1996 and the Occupational Health & Safety Act 1985 in regard to requirements on safety and emergency procedures. We aim to create a safe and friendly play environment as well as a safe workplace. Playground equipment is set up to be challenging but safe.

All potentially dangerous products such as medication, detergents and cleaning products are stored safely away from the children. The kitchen is inaccessible to children unless accompanied by a staff member.

Please remember if you bring anything hazardous into the centre (such as medication) you must make sure it is stored safely at all times. If unsure about the placement of these items, please check with a staff member.

The current Occupational Health & Safety Representative and other relevant OH&S information are displayed in the entry area. All staff members have Level 2 First Aid Training, which is updated regularly and renewed every three years.

#### **4.14 Enrolment forms**

Under the Children's Services Regulations, your child cannot be left in care at the centre unless an enrolment form has been filled in, giving details of parents' contact numbers and two emergency contact people with phone numbers. You must also give the centre permission to seek medical treatment and the assistance of an ambulance if necessary. Please make sure that you tell staff of any changes to the original details so that the form can be kept up to date at all times.

#### **4.15 Sick children**

There are strict guidelines as to the exclusion of children with infectious diseases. If your child is ill, feverish with a cold, or is unwell in any way, they should be cared for away from the centre in the interests of the staff and the other children's health. You will be informed by notices at the front door of any infectious illness within the centre.

Remember, the room in which the illness starts is not important as through family grouping and integration times the children will come in contact with each other throughout the day.

Equally, we need to be told when your child has attended the centre and is later found to be infectious. A certificate clearing your child of the infection may be required in some instances.

The Director and the staff will (in consultation with the parent/guardian) use their professional judgement in deciding when a child is not well enough to attend John Street. Staff will take into account the parent's/guardian's situation, and the wellbeing of the other children at John Street in deciding whether a child is able to attend for the day.

In the event of a child becoming ill at John Street, staff will contact the parents/guardians to collect the child immediately. Staff reserve the right to contact an authorised emergency contact if the parents/guardians are unable to be contacted. Please ensure that your emergency contacts listed on the enrolment form are updated with any changes needed.

#### 4.16 Medication

As it is important for medication to be administered accurately, medication will only be given with the written authority of the parent or guardian, except in the case of high temperature where verbal consent may be sought.

Parents/guardians are required to fill out the Medication Book before staff will give any medication to a child. The following details must be completed within the Medication Book:

- date
- child's full name
- name of medication
- last dose given
- time next dose is to be given
- dosage required to be given
- parent/guardian signature.

A separate entry must be made in full if there are two or more medications to be given on the same day, including two doses of the same medication.

	I	C	M	T	D	F	T	D	M	S	St
	N	o	r	b	e	s	i	g	g	o	r
										a	W
										e	
										m	
										o	
1/	J	e	D	11							
1/	J	e	D	5:0							

Parents/guardians are responsible for verbally informing a staff member that medication is required during the day. Parents are then required to place the medication in the allocated area according to the child's room; that is, either in the medication bucket within the room or, if requiring refrigeration, in the closest fridge. Please ask staff as to the correct location in each room.

**Under no circumstances is medication to be left in a child's bag.**

In the event of a child having a high temperature while attending John Street, staff will make every attempt to contact parents to remove the child from care and to get verbal authority to administer paracetamol to reduce the high temperature. This verbal permission is to be witnessed (i.e. repeated to) a second staff member. Parents will then be required to sign for this authorisation on collection of their child.

Staff cannot administer any medication that is not in its original container, does not have the child's name on it (prescribed), or is past its use-by date.

To reduce/ prevent inappropriate use of medication, staff will only administer over-the-counter medication for two days in any one week unless a doctor's note is provided supporting the use of the medication.

Many over-the-counter cold medications are deemed not suitable for children under two years of age and will not be given unless prescribed by a doctor. As with all over-the-counter medications, cold preparations will only be administered for two days of any given week.

Parents are required to dispose of any empty medication containers.

#### **Chronic conditions / asthma plans**

In the case of children who suffer a chronic condition, such as asthma, a general authority to administer medication as required may be given. It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to inform staff of their child's condition and provide an up-to-date management plan. Please speak to the Director and room staff to ensure staff have a thorough understanding of the management of your child's condition.

In the case of known allergic reactions in children, we request that parents fill in all appropriate forms relating to the anaphylaxis policy at the time of enrolment.

#### **4.17 Accident/illness record**

In the event of an accident or illness occurring while a child is attending John Street a record is kept in the bound Accident/Illness Book in each room. The following details will be recorded by staff:

- date
- time of accident
- child's full name
- description of how the accident occurred and the injuries received
- treatment administered to the child by the staff
- signature of staff member who witnessed accident
- signature of second staff member

- signature of child's parent/guardian after being informed of the accident.

The first aid kit for the children is mounted on the wall opposite the office windows.

You will be told if your child has had an accident and the details surrounding it and you must sign the book confirming your awareness of the incident. We are required to inform the Children's Services Advisor within 48 hours of any accident requiring medical attention.

You may also take a copy of the accident/illness report (the carbon copy).

#### **4.18 Emergency procedures**

Our emergency procedures are on display in each room. Please take time to read them.

The First Aid Kit for the children is mounted on the wall opposite the office windows. Material Safety Data Sheets are held in a clearly labelled folder above the First Aid Kit

It is important that all children are signed in and out so that in an emergency we are able to check that all children are accounted for.

We practise regular evacuation drills which involve all children, staff and other visitors in the building at the time. We try to vary the time and day of each drill so that we can practice in different situations.

#### **4.19 Immunisation**

Immunisation is particularly important for children in childcare as pre-schoolers have the highest age-specific incidence of measles, pertussis, rubella and Hib disease.

Younger children are at higher risk than older children for complications of such illnesses, which can be extreme (for instance, encephalitis, an infection of the brain, is a rare complication of measles).

It is a centre policy that all children must be immunised according to the State of Victoria immunisation schedule. Parents electing not to immunise their children must provide written confirmation of this upon enrolment. Children who have not been immunised **MUST** be excluded from the centre should there be any confirmed cases of measles or diphtheria. Proof of immunisation is required upon enrolment and should be updated at each subsequent immunisation.

Homeopathic immunisation is not an acceptable substitute. The

Department advises that there is no evidence whether any form of homeopathic treatment (or any other 'natural' therapy) can provide immunity to infectious diseases.

We prefer that children be kept at home for the remainder of the day after receiving immunisation injections because some may suffer an adverse reaction. However, children may be returned to the centre following immunisation if they appear well. As with any case of illness, if a child returned to the centre following immunisation becomes unwell, you will be contacted immediately to take your child home.

## **5. CHILDREN'S PROGRAMS**

### **5.1 Planning**

Staff have regular scheduled planning sessions. During this time, children's play and development, current interests and other related issues are discussed. From this, individual and group programs are planned. John Street offers additional planning time (above-award) to staff in recognition of this importance and time-intensive part of their role.

### **5.2 How children learn**

Young children learn through their play and this is the reason a range of activities are provided for the children to explore throughout the day. Activities are devised based on the needs and interests of individual children as observed by the staff and from feedback given by parents. Staff take account of the child's own learning style, cultural and family background. This is done on a rotating basis to ensure all children's needs are being met equally and consistently.

These individual goals form the basis of the program plan for the entire group of children. The aim of the program is the development of your child as a thoughtful, creative, industrious, empathetic and resourceful individual. Staff aim to develop activities to challenge your child's thinking, skills and abilities. Staff focus on positive self-esteem as essential for optimal learning and development, ensuring your child feels comfortable, safe and secure at all times.

Staff recognise that your child will learn not only from what we intend her to learn but from all experiences. Relationships are developed where you child and staff value, trust, respect and listen to each other. A richness and diversity of experience.

The program plan for the group is displayed within the room for all to see. Check with room staff if you are unsure about the location of the program in your child's room.

Individual records for all children are maintained along with samples of their play in the form of photos and artwork. These records are kept in your child's 'Learning Story Book' and will be given to you for perusal throughout the year. (These books will become yours to keep when your child finishes care at the centre.)

If you have any queries about your child's development or are concerned about aspects of their behaviour, staff are always happy to be of assistance. Any concerns or discussions you have will be kept confidential.

## 5.2 Learning Story Books

Your child's Learning Story book will be an ongoing record of their time at John Street, and includes individual snapshots and meaningful documentation of your child's time while in care. Staff include samples of your child's work and play throughout the year and photos of their endeavours, carers and peers. Although some artwork will be included in the Learning Story Book, we recommend that you collect your child's artwork daily when you pick up your child so that you can decide which masterpieces should be kept for memory's sake.

Your child's Learning Story Book is also a means of communication between you and staff. John Street staff value your child within the context of their family. Family bonds are respected and nurtured through the development of open communication and close working relationships between home and John Street staff. The Learning Story Book provides a means for staff and you to work together in the planning process. When it is time for your child's individual plan to be completed we will seek your input via a brief note to be returned to staff. We encourage you to make a time to speak to staff at any stage during the year.

Evaluation is a critical part of the planning process and any feedback you would like to offer is greatly appreciated. There is an individual evaluation sheet inside each child's Learning Story Book. Feel free to jot down any comments or ideas about either the group or individual programs as this helps when formulating future programs.

## **6. BOOKINGS**

### **6.1 Waiting list**

John Street has a waiting list. If you are interested in using our service you are encouraged to drop in and visit so that you can see the centre in operation and fill in a Waiting List Form. You may fill out a Waiting List Form for our centre as soon as an estimated date of delivery can be given. Any family who is on the waiting list will remain there until they are ready for their child to be placed in our care; that is, if you decline an offered position you will not forfeit your place on the list. Your name will remain on the list until a place is offered or you withdraw your name for your own reasons.

It is helpful if you keep in touch with the Director while your name is on the waiting list to advise of any changes to contact information, the amount of care required or the date for care to start. If we are unable to contact you or you do not respond to our waiting list update letters or emails we will assume that you no longer require care. In this event your name will be taken off the waiting list.

### **6.2 Allocation of places**

For John Street to remain financially viable, we have to fill places vacated as soon as possible. Therefore, we attempt to fill vacancies as they occur. Places are offered according to the Federal Government's Priority of Access guidelines. These guidelines give priority of placement to:

- workforce participants, where a single parent or both parents are employed, seeking employment, or studying or training for future employment
- children or parents with a continuing disability or incapacity
- children at risk of serious abuse or neglect
- parents at home with more than one child below school age
- single parents at home.

We also give priority to children on the waiting list who have siblings already at the centre and to past users of our service. All things being equal, parents who have had their name on the waiting list longest will have priority.

We can not reserve a place unless you are willing to begin paying for it. When there are other families waiting for care, we are unable to leave a place empty and receive no income from it.

### **6.3 Acceptance of a place**

#### **Prior to starting**

Upon notification of the availability of a place and acceptance, you will

need to come into the centre to fill in an Enrolment Form and to sign a Shareholders Card. Child Care Benefit (CCB) application forms will be given to you and this will enable you to contact the Family Assistance Office (FAO) to apply for this scheme.

### **Orientation**

To ensure a successful and comfortable adjustment to childcare, children need a gradual introduction to John Street.

As all children are individual, so too is the manner and time it takes for them to settle unique to each child's circumstances. We encourage parents/guardians to talk to staff and devise an orientation that they feel comfortable with and that is suitable for their child.

Staff may also request information about your child's home routine. This enables staff to get to know the children more completely, allowing for a smoother transition from home to John Street.

Spending time with your child at the centre in the early days is important for both of you to gain confidence and trust, and to get to know the staff, other children and centre routines.

Parents are free to telephone or email the staff at any time to enquire about their child.

### **What to bring**

Please refer to the previous section, 4.5 Clothing, for a list of what your child will need to bring to the centre.

## **6.4 Changing bookings**

Changes to bookings must be made directly to the Director preferably in writing. This request will be assessed and you will be contacted and told whether we are able to meet your request. We try to accommodate changes whenever possible as we understand that circumstances can and do change. However, this is not always immediately possible. If we are unable to meet your needs immediately, your name will be placed on the waiting list and you will be given priority if a vacancy becomes available on a day you have requested.

## **6.5 Withdrawal from care**

Two full weeks' notice is required if you no longer need care for your child. All fees must be paid up in full before your child leaves the centre.

## **6.6 Casual bookings**

Vacant places and those where a permanent child is absent are offered

for use by children needing extra days/sessions. These positions are only offered to current users of the centre. 'Swapping days' is not available. In the event that you take up an additional day/s, this will be charged accordingly regardless of attendance or absence on your child's usual booked days.

## **7. FEES**

### **7.1 Rates**

Fees at John Street are kept to a break-even budget. Funding authority guidelines are adhered to when setting fee schedules.

<b>Booking type</b>	<b>Full fee</b>
Weekly	\$310
Daily	\$62

Fees are charged for 49 weeks of the year. This includes public holidays, if your child is away sick, on holidays or away for any other reason. Fees are not paid for the three weeks the centre closes over Christmas.

### **7.2 Payment**

Fees are payable from the agreed commencement date and must be paid fortnightly in advance.

Fees may be paid by cash, cheque or EFTPOS or internet banking. Fees may be paid to the Director, a qualified staff member or placed in the box in the wall of the office.

Cash is not kept on the premises and therefore change cannot be given. Credit will be made for the following weeks of childcare if the incorrect amount is given.

**Include internet banking details**

### **7.3 Absences**

If your child is absent on a day they would normally attend we request a phone call. This allows staff to note on the Attendance Sheet the reason for the absence, which you must then sign on the next attendance day. This is especially important if you receive Child Care Benefit as assistance may be withdrawn if attendance becomes too irregular.

### **7.4 Child Care Benefit (CCB)**

The families of John Street may be eligible to claim Child Care Benefit. Families wishing to apply for CCB must complete the relevant forms and lodge them with the Family Assistance Office. Forms are available from the Director.

#### **Allowable absences**

Families who receive CCB are only able to receive this for a limited number of child absences throughout the year. All families must record in

writing why their child is away from John Street and sign this as being correct within the corresponding days on the Sign-In Sheets. Absences allowed by the government are as follows:

Families who receive CCB are only able to receive this for a limited number of child absences throughout the year. All families must write why their child is away from John Street and sign this as being correct, within the corresponding days on the Sign-In Sheets. Absences allowed by the government are as follows:

#### Sick days

A medical certificate is not required for up to and including five consecutive care days. From 6–15 care days either a medical certificate or parent statement is required. For periods greater than 15 days a medical certificate is required.

#### Holidays

25 days care per year.

CCB can be claimed in the event of a non-immunised child being excluded from John Street due to an outbreak of an infectious disease against which the child has not been immunised. In the event of this occurring, a medical certificate or a written statement from the parents is required to support the claim for CCB.

A record is kept of your child's absences. Fees will be charged at the full rate if all of the family's allowable absence entitlements have been used.

#### **Adjustments**

In the event of an individual family's circumstances changing which qualifies them for CCB or alters the percentage of CCB to which they are entitled, it is the responsibility of the family to notify the Family Assistance Office and the Director. New forms will need to be lodged with the Family Assistance Office and fees will be recalculated and adjusted accordingly. John Street is in no way liable for increased fee payments owing due to a family's delays in contacting the FAO regarding change of circumstances.

### **7.5 Late payment of fees**

As a not-for-profit organisation, the day to day operation and overall viability of John Street depends on families paying fees two weeks in advance.

If fees are outstanding for a period of four weeks, John Street will implement a debt recovery process. John Street has the right to cancel the child's place. Non-payment of fees may also result in loss of Child Care Benefit eligibility and full fees will apply.

Should fees remain unpaid, John Street will refer the matter to a debt collection agency and legal action may be taken to recover any fees not paid.

In the event that your family is experiencing financial hardship, please contact the Director to arrange for a confidential discussion of your circumstances *prior* to the accrual of a debt and to negotiate a repayment plan.

**A final word**

**We would like to welcome you all to John Street. We hope that you and your child have a long and enjoyable time with John Street staff, children and families.**