



Foundation
Early Learning

Family Handbook



Welcome

On behalf of our educators and management, welcome to our community. We trust that the time spent with our service will provide rewarding experiences for your children and your family: magical moments, new friendships, and connections that deepen the learning journey of your child through their head, heart and hands.

Please read this handbook thoroughly – and keep it somewhere safe as a quick-reference guide. A detailed policy folder is available in the office for your reference, and our Service Managers are at the ready to answer any questions you might have.

When completing your child's enrolment form, you will be asked to sign that you agree to the policies contained in this handbook. That way we can be sure that your orientation process has been informative and thorough.

Ethos and philosophy

Foundation Early Learning provides quality early education and childcare programs across Australia. We are devoted to creating a safe and stimulating environment where children can laugh and learn together.

We nurture the minds of young children during their early social experiences beyond the home, and recognise the importance of building trusting and supportive relationships with families.

Our mission is to give the children in our care the best possible foundation for a happy and rewarding future.

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we walk, play and learn, and recognise that these have always been places of teaching and learning. We wish to pay respect to their Elders – past, present and emerging – and acknowledge the important role Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people continue to play within our community.



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Our service

How we educate your child

At Foundation Early Learning, we are committed to a holistic approach to learning, set in environments that promote and support all aspects of a child's development.

We know our children learn best through play, so our educators and programs foster safe spaces for fun, creativity, and positive social connections.

Quality children's education and care is where children are happy, engaged, and learning with qualified educators who are nurturing and caring.

Service outline

Our service complies with the National Quality Framework (NQF), including the National Quality Standard (NQS), the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) and the National Regulations.

Our centres are overseen by the national body for early education and care, the Australian Children's Education Care Quality Authority (ACECQA), as well as the licensing department in your state/territory.

As specified in the Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011, there are national minimum staffing levels for each group of children. The Service Manager at your centre can advise you of the educator-to-child ratios.

Teaching methods and the value of play

Foundation Early Learning services believe in child-directed, play-based learning. We know it's important for children to be active participants in their learning. This means our educators carefully observe their young charges, allowing individual children's learning to be guided by their interests and reactions to the environment. This is known as an emergent curriculum.

When educators plan for and follow this type of curriculum, children are invited to learn and create in an inspiring environment that engages them in meaningful, rich experiences.

Research has shown the many benefits of play-based learning:

- Enhanced dexterity
- Improved social skills
- Sharpened cognitive and language skills
- Fortified spatial understanding
- Developed knowledge of cause-and-effect reasoning

- Ability to identify pretend and real concepts
- Enriched sensory and aesthetic appreciation
- Extended attention span, play persistence and self-mastery
- Assistance in the release of emotions.



The most influential gift we will present to your child is the healthy concept of play, including how to be successful at play with peers. At our centres, your child will participate in creative learning experiences:

- Creative expression – dance, movement, visual art, and story-telling
- Healthy minds and bodies – building positive relationships with peers, educators and others (e.g. other parents, visitors), and physical activities like climbing, running, digging and dance
- Language development – two-way conversation, stories and rhymes, and deeply responsive interactions with adults and other children
- Cognitive (intellectual) development – creative problem-solving, science and technology experiences, and rich numeracy and literacy interactions
- Strong growth mindsets with an attitude for gratitude.

All Foundation Early Learning centres are guided by the Early Years Learning Framework's ideals of Being, Belonging and Becoming. Each centre also follows the guidelines of its state regulatory body along with Education and Care Services National Regulations.

Foundation Early Learning centres employ qualified early childhood teachers to deliver our educational programs. Our aim is to transition your child to school by ensuring the development of emotional and social skills necessary for independent and self-directed learning in a school setting.

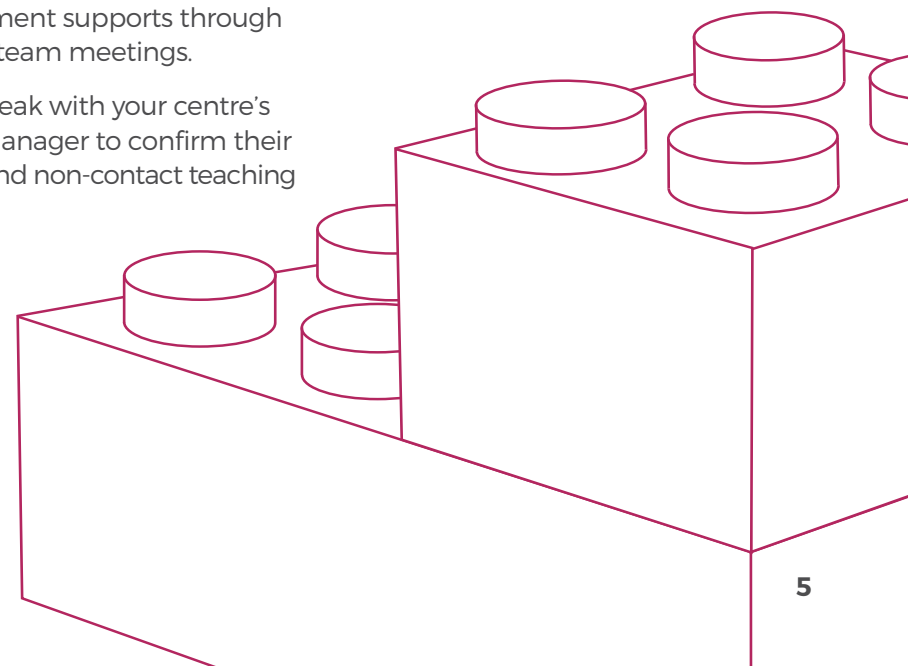
With thoughtful planning, educators choose the best strategy to support children's progress towards a particular learning outcome. They are informed by their knowledge of child development and by their keen observation of children at the centre. This approach to teaching is called intentional teaching and we welcome the opportunity to share our knowledge with students and volunteers.

A quality program relies upon educators having a thorough knowledge of current theory and practices in early childhood education and care. We strive to develop and implement rigorous and relevant programs for team member induction and training, including external and in-house professional development.

Educators attend various seminars and workshops relevant to our service philosophy, aiding their professional development, which management supports through monthly team meetings.

Please speak with your centre's Service Manager to confirm their contact and non-contact teaching times.

Staff members are required to be qualified in line with legislation applicable to their employment status. All educators must hold a valid Working with Children check and First Aid (including CPR and asthma/ anaphylaxis) qualifications. They must also undertake annual child protection training. All students and volunteers are supervised by an allocated mentor and will not be left alone to care for children under any circumstances.



Our community

Family participation and conduct

Supporting a developing child is a collaboration. We encourage parents to actively participate in the education and care of their children at our centre.

Parents are welcome to share special occasions with their child, spend time participating in the room, read a book to the class, play an instrument, share a creative skill or just join in; we value families' input and feedback and encourage regular check-ins with centre educators.

Communication

Open and effective communication between families and educators is something we champion at our centres – with benefits to the whole community:

- Building trust and respect between families and educators
- Fostering positive relationships built on cooperation

- Helping to involve families and include them in their child's early learning experiences
- Deepening our mutual understanding of the children's needs
- Helping educators feel valued and appreciated
- Promoting understanding of the needs of diverse families and children.

During the year we provide newsletters and other regular written communication. We also offer formal parent-educator interviews.

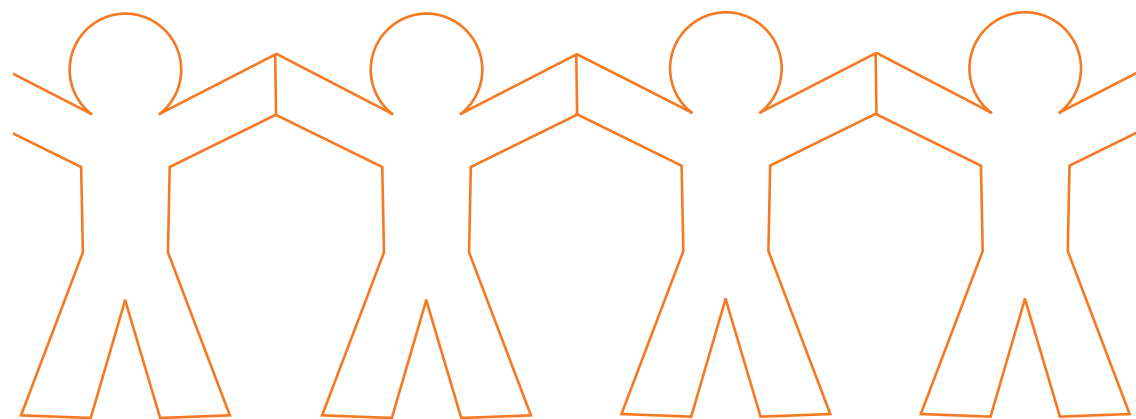
For the most part we use email to communicate (in line with our sustainability plan). However, please let us know if you would prefer printed communication.

Our educators and management endeavour to provide the children in our care with positive behaviour role models and so it is expected that our families and associated visitors will also be patient and courteous at all times.

Creating an inclusive community

Our service has a non-discriminatory access policy. This ensures children of different needs, diverse families, and different religious, cultural and ethnic backgrounds are treated equally. Children playing and learning together are able to participate in

the typical experiences of childhood, while developing their social skills with new friends from all walks of life. This also presents children with opportunities to gain the skills and confidence to pursue inclusion in other settings.



Getting started

Settling in

We all know new experiences can be overwhelming for young children. The transition to childcare, or changing to a new centre, can be emotional for both children and their families.

Our educators want your child to look forward to coming in each day. To ease this transition, we're happy to facilitate visits that can help children familiarise themselves to their new peers and surroundings, with the safety blanket of parents still being present.

We recommend you plan extra time to settle your child on their first day. You're welcome to sit with your child as they become comfortable, joining them in the first activity of the day. Communicate with staff and your child about what time you will return – this way, your child can begin to connect your regular pick-up time to their daily routine. Please don't hesitate to call to see how your child has settled.

Goodbye ritual

Each time you leave your child at the centre, be sure to say goodbye and re-state what time you will return. This helps build trust between you and your child, as well as with the educators who will provide consistent emotional support through the day.

Separation anxiety

Separation anxiety – when a child becomes upset if separated from a parent/guardian – is normal during early childhood. It reflects the child's attempts to hold on tight to what feels safe, and will settle as the child gains confidence. It's important you always return when you say you will or – if you are running late – you let the centre know so that educators can reassure your child.





Children's toys

We have lots of wonderful, fun and educational toys for children to enjoy at our centres. We encourage children to leave their own toys at home so nothing special to the child is lost or broken.

We understand that some children may need 'comfort' items. If your child has a comfort item, please ensure it is clearly labelled with your child's name and that their educator is aware of it. Our service and educators will not accept responsibility for the care of any personal items.

What to bring for the day

Your child's educator will confirm what you should bring to the centre each day. As a minimum guide we recommend the following, clearly labelled:

- Broad-brimmed hat – the centre will provide a bucket or legionnaires-style hat, as recommended by the Cancer Council, to be left at the centre each day
- Bag or backpack (must be able to fit inside the child's locker)
- A water bottle
- At least two (2) spare changes of season-appropriate clothes, including underwear, training pants and socks (if toilet training, we recommend additional spare clothes are packed)
- For rest time, appropriate bed sheets designed for beds at the centre
- Bottle/s with milk (if required)
- Dummy or comforter (if required).



Quiet time

*Quiet time and rest are essential.
Children in our care will be offered rest –
whether sleep or simply a period of quiet
– whenever they require.*

Everyday best practice

Providing exceptional care is at the heart of our service. To guide your child towards independence, each of our centres is staffed by teams of qualified, capable educators for whom children's wellbeing is paramount. Foundation Early Learning centres have consistent Child Safety Standards in place to ensure safety comes first each day.

Sun safety

The Cancer Council Australia advises that skin can burn in as little as 15 minutes in the summer sun – and the main cause of skin cancer in Australia is overexposure to ultraviolet (UV) radiation from sunlight.

As skin damage can never be repaired, prevention is the best cure. For this reason, we protect our children and educators from direct exposure to the sun. Planned outdoor play and activities will be set up in shady areas, with areas of focused play (such as fixed play equipment) provided with shade throughout the year.

Educators will use age-appropriate teaching tools to ensure children develop sun-safe habits. Parents and guardians can support this learning at home by ensuring children have sunscreen applied to all exposed skin before leaving home in the morning or upon arrival at their centre. Loose, comfortable clothing and sun-safe hats will also help to protect children from sun exposure.

Children under 12 months of age should not be exposed to direct sunlight. For more information, visit www.cancer.org.au or call the Cancer Council Helpline on 13 11 20.

Food: hygiene and nutrition

Healthy eating habits should be fostered at an early age. It is important that we meet the nutritional, social, cultural and educational needs of the children in our care. For this reason, we ask that no food is brought into the centre. An exception is birthday cakes, which must be accompanied by a complete list of ingredients.

This is so that we can ensure children with allergies are safe and well.

The meals we provide follow strict nutritional guidelines, set out by Nutrition Australia, that ensure children receive all the vital nutrients they require to grow. Your Service Manager can provide you with your centre's seasonal menu. Our service is also governed by Food Safety programs overseen by Food Safety Supervisors.


If any child or educator is diagnosed with a food allergy that can cause anaphylaxis, this will be displayed to alert community members, visitors and educators of the dangers of bringing these foods into the centre.

Managing illness

A child who is unwell cannot participate fully in their day. We encourage parents to keep unwell children at home to ensure their comfort and rest, as well as to protect other children from contagious illness. If your child does become unwell while in our care, we will follow these steps:

- Your child will be removed from the group (to ensure other children do not become sick if the illness is infectious)
- The Service Manager or responsible person in charge will contact the child's parent/guardian to collect them as soon as possible
- If we are unable to make contact, our Service Manager will use their discretion in deciding whether to seek medical attention
- Staff will complete an Illness Form to be provided to the child's medical practitioner
- In the case of a suspected or confirmed infectious condition, we require a medical clearance prior to your child's return to the centre.

If a child has a suspected infectious condition, their parents will be contacted and asked to collect the child as soon as possible. If parents cannot be contacted, we will endeavour to contact other individuals listed on your child's enrolment form.



To minimise the risk of infection at our centres, we follow the current guidelines for exclusion periods. Please ask for specific details at your centre.

Parents are encouraged to seek medical advice and inform the service of the outcome, for the purpose of keeping an accurate illness register. Our centre will maintain clear and concise records of both team member and child illnesses as they occur at our service.

As per the Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011, each team member must observe good health and hygiene practices and ensure the childcare facilities are kept clean and in good repair.

Immunisation

Immunisation benefits communities by not only protecting immunised individuals, but by building herd immunity around vulnerable people, e.g. very young babies, the elderly, and those with compromised immune systems.

While immunisation is not compulsory to attend Foundation Early Learning centres, it is a requirement to claim Child Care Benefit. Whatever your choice, the centre will require your child's up-to-date immunisation records. In the event of an outbreak of a vaccine-preventable disease, a child who isn't fully immunised may be excluded from the centre for the duration of the outbreak (with fees ongoing through this period).

For more information about immunisation requirements and Child Care Benefit, Child Care Rebate and Family Tax Benefit, please call the Family Assistance Office on **13 61 50** or visit www.familyassist.gov.au. Exemptions may apply for children with medical conditions that make immunisation unsuitable.

Medication

Our policy is that if a child has a temperature they should go home, no matter what, as their body is indicating it's fighting an illness of some sort.

In the case where a child has a temperature of 38.5°C or above, our staff are able to administer children's paracetamol. A child's enrolment form must give permission for the child to receive paracetamol, and we will seek clarified permission from a family member or authorised person before administering. Educators will complete the emergency medication form and the parent/guardian/authorised person will be asked to sign upon arrival on the day.

In this instance we will continue to monitor your child frequently. An ambulance will be called if the responsible person in charge determines that the child is in immediate danger, as per first aid directions.

In general, if your child requires medication to be administered at the centre, an authorisation form must be completed by a parent/guardian or authorised person.

All medication must be in its original container with the dispensing label or doctor's letter confirming the child as the prescribed person and the dosage to be given. This applies to all medications, including those prescribed by a naturopath. All medications, whether prescribed or non-prescribed, require authorisation for application. Under no circumstances may medication be left inside a child's bag.

Asthma and anaphylaxis

If a child requires a Nebuliser or volumatic spacer, their parent/guardian is asked to demonstrate the procedure to educators – with the child – before the initial dose.

In the case of a child susceptible to acute asthma attacks, medication may be permanently left at the centre. Parents must provide the service with an asthma management plan developed in consultation with a doctor, which includes regular review and a risk-minimisation plan.

Adrenalin pens will be administered in accordance with an anaphylaxis action plan developed in consultation with a doctor, which includes a risk-minimisation plan. Adrenalin pens should be kept near where the child is at all times, but out of reach of children and not within a locked area – it must be accessible in an emergency. Parents/guardians are responsible for ensuring the adrenalin pen is within its expiry date at all times.

Children with anaphylaxis or other acute needs are unable to attend without their adrenalin pens or other required medication.

Incidents and injury

Our educators program daily indoor and outdoor activities, allowing for maximum supervision and promotion of safety. If a child is injured while in our care, qualified educators will administer first aid immediately.

If an injury requires further medical attention, the child's parent/guardian will be contacted to arrange a plan of action. If we are unable to make contact, the Service Manager or responsible person in charge will arrange a plan of action to seek the appropriate medical assistance. We will ensure that a team member the child knows accompanies them at all times until the parent/guardian arrives.

Documentation of all incidents will be made on the Incident, Accident and Injury Form, which the child's parent/guardian will be asked to sign this upon collection

If the child requires external medical treatment, we are obliged to report the incident via the ACECQA/ National Quality Framework portal.

Children with additional needs

Foundation Early Learning believes children of all abilities and backgrounds deserve equal opportunity to learn, play, socialise, and grow. Please speak with the Service

Manager at your local Foundation Early Learning centre to discuss how we can best accommodate the individual needs of your child.

Grievances

We are here to ensure that your child is happy, healthy and safe in our care. If you have any concerns, please let us know. Our grievance procedure and support structure are displayed in the foyer of each of our centres; however, you are encouraged to contact your child's lead educator or, if necessary, the centre's Service Manager to discuss any issues. If an agreement cannot be reached within the centre please contact Foundation Early Learning directly on **1300 851 331**. Following this procedure gives those involved an opportunity to discuss and follow through on your concerns, and to ensure you are satisfied with the end result and action taken.

Biting

Biting may seem a surprising behaviour, but it's not uncommon in younger children, who may bite when teething, frustrated or struggling to communicate. Biting can be very distressing for children and parents alike, but be reassured that our educators will support both children (both biters and children who are bitten) through this common phase of development. We will work with families to develop appropriate strategies, including recommending professional help if biting behaviours persist.

Operation

Operating hours and holidays

Foundation Early Learning centres are open every day of the year, except public holidays. Your Service Manager can provide details of your centre's operating hours or alternatively, please visit your centre website for this information.

Signing in and out

Your child must be accurately signed in and out of the centre every day they attend. This is a legal requirement – this information is used for checking general attendance, in emergencies, and for the calculation of Child Care Benefit.

Please ensure our educators are aware that your child is arriving or departing. You will be trained in sign-in/sign-out procedures prior to your first day, but don't hesitate to ask if you have any queries about this essential part of attendance.

If a child is absent for a booked day due to illness, being on holiday, or if their booked day occurs on a public holiday, the corresponding days

must be signed for by the parent or guardian. If the service has kiosk sign-in, the authorised person must accurately confirm sign-in times and absences.

Delivery and collection of children

Our centre staff will not release any child into the care of someone not known by educators. If someone unknown arrives to collect a child, they must provide photo ID that proves they are a person listed on the enrolment form (or other approved written confirmation) as authorised. (Please note that any person authorised to collect a child must be over 16 years of age, unless the person is the child's parent.)

In the event that a child has not been collected by closing time, the responsible person in charge will begin to contact the parent/guardian on the numbers provided – so it's essential these are up-to-date at all times. If the parent/guardian is unable to be contacted, the responsible person in charge will then begin to contact the individuals listed on the

authorised contacts list. If, after 30 minutes, we are still unable to make contact, then Foundation Early Learning will follow Department of Communities Abandoned Child procedures, including contacting the Child Protection and Crisis Centre 24-hour service.

Your centre's car park is for delivering or collecting children. Please be thoughtful, especially during peak times, and adhere to signed directions and speed limits.

Smoking is not permitted on any Foundation Early Learning centre campus or car park.

Absences and cancellations

Parents are requested to phone the centre if their child is unable to attend for the day. Please note: notification is urgently required in the instance of an infectious or contagious illness.

Families receiving Child Care Benefit are allocated 42 allowable absent days per child per financial year. When the 42 absent days have

been used, CCB will not be paid for any further absences unless they are for the following reasons:

- Illness with a medical certificate
- Non-immunisation
- Parent with a rostered day off and a Statutory Declaration signed by a JP
- Parent with a rotating shift and a Statutory Declaration signed by a JP
- Periods of local emergency
- Court-ordered shared parenting
- Attendance at preschool (where applicable)
- Temporary closure of a school or pupil-free days (OSHC)
- Exceptional circumstances (please ask at your individual centre).

Should you wish to cancel your child's care, two weeks' written notice is required. If two weeks' notice is not given, you will be charged full fees to finalise your child's enrolment, with CCB unable to be claimed. Any unpaid fees will be passed onto a debt collection agency, which may affect your credit rating and incur further fees.

Payments and rebates

Ongoing fees are to be paid one week in advance and prior to commencement of care. Fees are calculated and billed weekly.

All fees are to be paid weekly via Ezi Debit direct debit system and families are required to complete all forms required for Ezi Debit prior to commencement of care. A \$10 dishonour fee is charged to the account if payment fails.

Weekly statements outlining care for the period, and fees paid, are provided to all our families, who will be notified in advance (at least 14 days) of any changes relating to fees.

Please note the following in relation to calculation of fees:

Public holidays

- Fees still apply for public holidays.

Termination of child's care

- Two full weeks' (14 days') written notice is required to be received by the centre on the Friday prior to the week commencing,

advising of termination of childcare. (14 days' notice is also required for reducing days of care.)

- The Child Care Benefit and the Child Care Rebate are only paid to the last day of attendance. Where children are absent during their notice period, they will be charged full fees.

Places held for child

- Child Care Benefit will only commence after the child has attended the centre for the first time. Families are responsible for full fees for non-attendance on any booked days prior to the child's first attendance.

Child Care Benefit

Child Care Benefit (CCB) is a payment made by the Australian Government to assist families with the cost of quality childcare. Families using approved childcare are able to choose to receive CCB through fee reductions or as a lump sum. A family's eligibility is

subject to an income test administered by the Family Assistance Office (FAO). Registering for CCB is the responsibility of the parent. Information and forms can be accessed from your nearest Family Assistance Office (FAO), calling **13 61 50** or by visiting www.centrelink.gov.au.

Families are required to be registered to receive CCB through fee reductions. Your enrolment form clearly outlines the information you need to provide in order to receive your CCB reduction. Please note: Foundation Early Learning is unable to change any of this information on site – this can only be performed by contacting the FAO. Full fees must be paid until CCB has been approved.

Child Care Rebate

The Child Care Rebate (CCR) is paid to families or guardians who are working, studying or training. (CCR is not income-tested). The Australian Government will make a payment of 50% of

out-of-pocket childcare costs, up to \$7,500 a year for each child. The CCR can be paid weekly or fortnightly to the childcare service as part-payment of fees or can be paid quarterly as a lump sum payment into families' nominated bank account. For more information, contact the FAO on **13 61 50** or visit www.childcarerebate.gov.au.

Working together

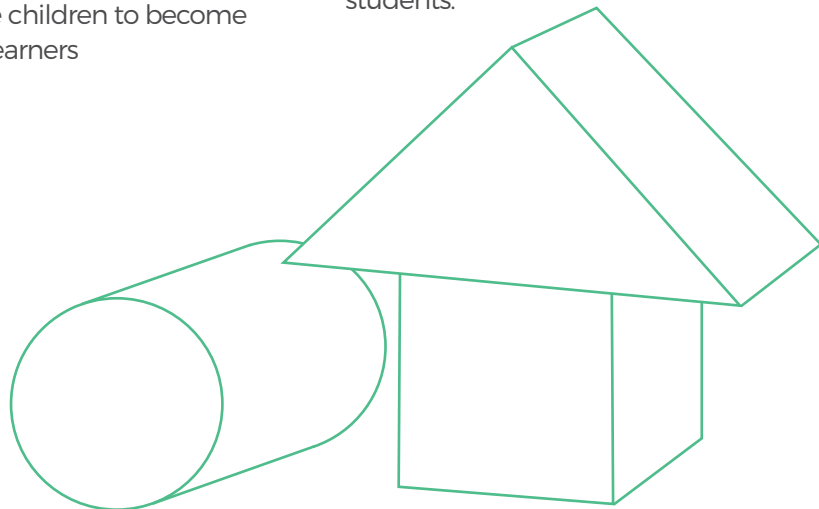
From the team at Foundation Early Learning, we look forward to beginning this journey with your family.

You're already raising amazing children – thank you for entrusting us with these next steps towards success and creativity at school and beyond. We are excited to share our core values:

- To educate the next generation by growing emotionally intelligent and resilient children
- To engage our practitioners in current research that guides pedagogy and practice
- To inspire children to become lifelong learners

- To see children as capable and competent, and promote independence
- To strive for exceptional standards through constant Quality Improvement.

Quality childcare does more than just prepare children to become eager school students – it builds resilience, vital social skills, and independence. Choosing the right early learning service gives children a structured head-start with the verbal, literacy and problem-solving skills essential for them to thrive as future students.



*Joining a Foundation
Early Learning centre
connects you with
the support of our
caring educators and
other local families
in our community.
Welcome, again –
we sincerely hope
you and your child
treasure this time
learning and growing
together with us.*





Foundation
Early Learning

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