



## Family Information Handbook



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## Document Information

### Version Control

| Version No. | Date (MM/YY) | Comment  | Author                                |
|-------------|--------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| 1           | 01/2016      | Redeveloped old handbook to provide one consistent handbook for all ACS families                       | General Manager                       |
| 2           | 02/2016      | Added a section on 'Standards of Behaviour'  | ACS Board President & General Manager |
| 3           | 05/2016      | Added a section on Communication for families to Chapter 3, Communication. Re-formatted contents page. | General Manager                       |
| 4           | 08/2016      | Added note about what details are required for proof of immunisation                                   | General Manager                       |
| 5           | 12/2016      | Added note about personal property   | Business Manager                      |
| 6           | 02/2017      | Added contact information for child protection services  | General Manager                       |
| 7           | 11/2017      | Update fee collection procedure and re-scheduling fee  | General Manager                       |

## Our Services

This Family Information Handbook applies to each of the following services managed by ACS.

| Service                              | Location     | Hours                              | Programs                           |
|--------------------------------------|--------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Alpine Family Day Care               | Alpine Shire | 8.00am - 6.00pm                    | Home Based Child Care              |
| Alpine View Children's Centre        | Bright       | 8.00am - 6.00pm                    | Kindergarten & Long Day Care       |
| Bright Outside School Hours Care     | Bright       | 3.20pm - 6.30pm<br>8.30am - 6.30pm | After School Care<br>Vacation Care |
| Lake View Children's Centre          | Mount Beauty | 8.00am - 6.00pm                    | Kindergarten & Long Day Care       |
| Mountain View Children's Centre      | Myrtleford   | 7.45pm - 5.45pm                    | Long Day Care                      |
| Myrtleford Outside School Hours Care | Myrtleford   | 3.20pm - 6.30pm<br>8.30am - 6.30pm | After School Care<br>Vacation Care |

## Other information

Together with this Family Information Handbook you will also have received copies of the following documents for your reference, if not please request a copy from your service's Coordinator or Administrative / Office staff or refer to our website [www.alpinechildrensservices.asn.au](http://www.alpinechildrensservices.asn.au):

- Fee Schedule & Staff Listing: for the service you have enrolled your child in; and
- ACS's Family Feedback & Complaints Information Sheet;

We hope the information in this Handbook assists in understanding our services and we welcome any feedback or questions you may have regarding this Handbook and our policies.

## 1. About Alpine Children's Services

Alpine Children's Services (ACS) is a proud, not-for-profit organisation that has been providing quality early childhood education and care services to families throughout the Alpine Shire since 2000. ACS is managed by a Board of Management made-up of parent representatives from each of the services managed by ACS together with community and Alpine Shire Council representatives. Please refer to our website [www.alpinechildrensservices.asn.au](http://www.alpinechildrensservices.asn.au) for a list of our current Board members.

### Our Vision

To deliver excellence in early childhood education and care to all children in the Alpine Shire region.

### Our Mission

Our focus is children, which underpins everything we do. We understand that to get the best out of our children it takes a united effort. Together with our people, our families and our communities we strive to provide the highest quality early childhood experiences.

### Our Values

Our values provide the framework for all decisions and actions that uphold the performance of our organisation and have been developed through consultation with our communities, families and staff. Our values are:

**Collaborative Relationships:** Acknowledgement, Contributions, Communication, Interactions, Genuine, Meaningful

**Integrity:** Being fair, respectful, open, honest, accountable, responsive and consistent in all our actions - doing what we say we will do

**Innovation:** Inventions, Inspiring, Creative, Brainstorming, Team work, Vision, Change, Transformation, Metamorphosis, Ideas, Improvement, Future Restructuring, Communication, Solution

**Sustainability:** Planet, People, Viable, Well Being, Vitality, Prosperity, Environment, Productivity, Community

### Our Philosophy

In relation to children

We believe...

- Children are invaluable and are the future of our community; they have a right to reach their full potential
- Children's learning accelerates when they form secure attachments to adults they interact with

We will...

- Support, respect and acknowledge the diverse values and cultural beliefs of every child
- Respect all young children as valuable members of our community
- Provide a caring and secure environment with appropriate expectations and boundaries

In relation to families

We believe...

- Families are the primary contributors to a child's education and development

- Families consist of various structures, languages, cultures, religions and socio-economic backgrounds

We will...

- Support, respect and acknowledge the diverse values and cultural beliefs of every family
- Respect and value the contributions made by all families
- Establish and maintain partnerships with families which enable educators to fully encompass a child's belonging, being and becoming

In relation to Community

We believe...

- Our service is an active member of a close and unique community that values young children as individuals
- In the importance of embracing diversity, culture, celebrations and special events

We will...

- Support, respect and acknowledge the diverse values and cultural beliefs within our community
- Endeavour where possible to participate in local community events
- Advocate positively for the community by respecting all aspects of where we live
- Connect our community to the curriculum

In relation to education

We believe...

- Learning starts at birth and that children learn best through play
- Learning is a lifelong process and children, families, educators and community members are constantly learning
- In having high expectations of learning for: children, families, educators and of our community
- Sustainability recognises the importance of diverse skills such as building capacity and confidence, resilience and risk taking, transformation and change, and collaborating with others.

We will...

- Provide educational programs from birth, through fun play experiences
- Use the Learning Frameworks, National Quality Standards and a range of child development perspectives as a foundation for our programs
- Show commitment to further learning as educators to ensure that the program we provide encompasses current research and educational theories
- Create a sustainable organisation through the adoption of practices in environmental protection, social responsibility and economic strength
- Document children's learning from a strength-based perspective

## **Standards of Behaviour**

ACS has a Code of Conduct that outlines the standards of behaviour expected of all ACS employees, contractors, staff on exchange, volunteers and student placements. Our Code of Conduct aims to ensure that all ACS staff act professionally and reliably when interacting with families and with each other.

To ensure our staff, families and children feel respected and safe at all times, ACS also has expectations of the standards of the behaviour of families when they are within our service; these include acting respectfully and safely. Examples of unacceptable behaviour include:

- Aggressive or abusive behaviour such as threatening gestures or actual violence or assault
- Verbal abuse (for example, yelling, screaming, abusive or offensive language)
- Being under the influence of illicit drugs or impaired by alcohol
- Bullying, harassment or intimidation

If a family member breaches these standards of behaviour they will be asked to leave the premises. If the family member refuses to leave the premises, ACS may contact the Victoria Police for support.

## **2. Educational program**

### **National Quality Framework**

Introduced in 2012, the National Quality Framework (NQF) is the result of an agreement between all Australian governments to work together to provide better educational and developmental outcomes for children using long day care, family day care, preschool/kindergarten and outside schools hours care services.

### **National Quality Standards**

The National Quality Standards (NQS) is a key aspect of the NQF. The NQS consists of seven quality areas, each containing standards and elements, that children's education and care services are assessed and rated against. The seven quality areas covered by the National Quality Standard are:

1. Educational program and practice
2. Children's health and safety
3. Physical environment
4. Staffing arrangements
5. Relationships with children
6. Collaborative partnerships with families and communities
7. Leadership and service management

ACS is required to have a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) for all of our services. The aim of the QIP is to help us self-assess our performance in delivering quality education and care and to plan future improvements by documenting our strengths and recognising areas for improvement. The QIP also helps the regulatory authorities with their assessment of each of our services.

### **National Quality Rating & Assessment Process**

Our services are assessed and rated against the National Quality Standards. This drives continuous improvement in the quality of early childhood education and care services, and gives families better information for making choices about their children's education and care.

ACS is committed to achieving high quality results and regularly evaluates their services to ensure a very high standard is maintained. The current ratings of each service are:

| Service                              | Location                            |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Alpine Family Day Care               | Meeting National Quality Standard   |
| Alpine View Children’s Centre        | Exceeding National Quality Standard |
| Bright Outside School Hours Care     | Exceeding National Quality Standard |
| Lake View Children’s Centre          | Exceeding National Quality Standard |
| Mountain View Children’s Centre      | Meeting National Quality Standard   |
| Myrtleford Outside School Hours Care | Exceeding National Quality Standard |

### Early Years Learning and Development Frameworks

Our educators use the National & Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework and the My Time Our Place (Framework for School Age Care in Australia) as the basis of our educational programs. The frameworks refer to a number of practice principles and outcomes.

The practice principles describe the most effective ways for our educators to work with each other, children and families to facilitate learning and development. They are based on the understanding that when our educators establish respectful and caring relationships with children and families they are able to work together to deliver effective learning and development experiences relevant to each child.

Both frameworks incorporate the five learning outcomes, which form the basis of educational curriculum. The learning outcomes outline the goals for the children throughout the year.

### Educational program planning

Each week our educators have non-contact time to plan and evaluate the educational program. All educators contribute to your child’s educational program. Children are provided with a wide range of developmentally appropriate experiences in language, literature, music and movement, art & craft, dramatic play, science, maths, physical development, coordination and sensory activities.

### Learning Journals

Each child has a learning journal (portfolio). Your child’s learning journal is a celebration of your child’s process of learning: what your child has learned and how they have gone about learning; how your child thinks, questions, analyses, synthesises, produces, and creates; and how your child interacts (intellectually, emotionally and socially) with others. Your child’s learning journal will include observations about your child, which relate to the National & Victorian Frameworks.

Families are able to contribute to their child’s learning journal by providing comments or suggestions and our educators will incorporate these contributions into the education program (where relevant).

Your child’s learning journal is available at all times in your child’s room. Families are encouraged to take their child’s learning journal home to share with other family members or to take more time to add to the learning journal.



## Excursions & Incursions

Throughout the year a variety of incursions and excursions are planned to enrich the educational program. Incursions typically include musical performances, visits from local paramedic, police, and CFA officers, local rangers from Parks Victoria and water education officers from North East Water. Excursions may include visits to local playgrounds or shops or for older child may include attending a performance or place the children have shown recent interest in.

### 3. Communication

#### Communication - why is it so important?

Communicating together involves a two-way sharing of information and helps to develop a common understanding. Effective communication helps:

- Families and staff to build a trusting partnership and develop honest and respectful relationships.
- Parents, carers and staff to support one another.
- Improve everyone's understanding of a child's strengths and challenges to work together to support the child's learning and development and social / emotional wellbeing.
- A child feels like they belong and are well cared for.

When families and staff have a genuine interest in one another, people are able to be open about their thoughts and feelings.

#### What happens when staff communicate effectively?

Parents and carers are able to understand what is happening in their child's day and how they are progressing at the service.

Examples of what we may communicate with you:

- How your child is settling into the service e.g. your child settled within a few minutes of being dropped off and is forming an attachment to two educators.
- Highlights of their day e.g. your child loved playing in the sandpit today.
- An accident / incident e.g. your child grazed their knee whilst riding a bike this morning and we applied a cold face washer. Please note that there may be times when we haven't witnessed an accident / incident and if your child hasn't communicated this to us we may not be aware something has happened.
- How we can all work together to support your child e.g. settling into the service, sharing toys, biting or communication.
- Any concerns about invoicing e.g. overdue payments and how we can support your family.
- Your child's development and learning and the strategies that the educators are using to promote and support your child's learning and development.

#### What happens when families communicate effectively?

Early childhood staff are able to understand what is happening at home or how they would like their children's behaviour managed in the service.

Examples of what you may communicate with us:

- Highlights of their weekend/holiday e.g. your child loved the visit to the beach.
- Any accidents or incidences e.g. they have a small bruise on their leg from falling off the slide yesterday.

- Any significant events e.g. you are expecting a new baby..
- How we can all work together to support your child e.g. settling into the service, sharing toys, biting or communication.

We understand that dropping off and collecting children can be a busy time.

Families are always able to arrange a catch-up / meeting with our team of educators.

Please speak to an educator to arrange a catch-up / meeting.

We also offer sharing sessions mid-year as an opportunity to discuss progress and future goals for your child.

### **Getting involved**

At ACS, we welcome and encourage family participation and involvement as we enjoy working with families to develop better outcomes for all children in the Alpine Shire. Being involved is the best way of becoming familiar with each of our programs & staff. Ways you might like to become involved:

**Stay for a few extra minutes:** spend time in your child's room reading to your child or letting them show you around before you leave or when you return. Try to leave enough time each day for a daily 'check in' with educators. This will enable you to report any significant changes happening at home that may affect your child's day. Likewise, the educators will be telling you about your child's day at the service.

**Sharing your special skill, talent or hobby:** do you, a family member or friend have a special skill, talent or hobby that you would like to share? If so please speak with an educator about organising a time to visit.

**Kindergarten programs:** being parent / special guest helper with your child while they are attending one of our kindergarten programs is a lovely opportunity for you to participate in your child's experience at kindergarten. You are encouraged to play with your child and if / when necessary we may ask you for assistance with odd jobs, preparation and activities. You are welcome to bring along another child, we just ask that you supervise your child at all times as our kindergarten activities may not always be appropriate for younger children.

**Family & Friends Group:** each of our services has a Family & Friends Group (not applicable to Outside School Hours Care) made-up of parent representatives and each service's Coordinator & Education Leader. These groups aim to:

- Promote opportunities for families & friends to contribute to each service & to develop a sense of community;
- Coordinate working bees and fundraising activities to raise money for the benefit of each service, including furthering the education of the children and funding extra resources and improvement of facilities; and
- Provide representation for the families of children attending each of our services and provide input and recommendations to ACS regarding policies, educational opportunities and any proposed changes to services.

Our Family & Friends Groups typically meet twice per school term. If you are interested in becoming involved with one of our Family & Friends Groups please speak with a your Coordinator

**ACS Board of Management:** ACS is an Incorporated Association, which means it is made up of members. A member is a parent or guardian of a child attending one of the services managed by ACS. Any member of ACS is eligible to be a Board of Management parent representative. Our Board is responsible for:

- Strategic planning & Financial management
- Governance, Policy direction & compliance
- Developing relationships with families and communities

Our Board meets 8 - 10 times per year, typically on the last Monday of each month at 6.30pm. If you are interested in becoming involved in our Board please speak with your service's Coordinator or ACS's General Manager.

### **Keeping you informed & Staying connected**

During your orientation process and the completion of your child's enrolment form we will discuss your communication preferences with you. We typically communicate with families via:

- **Child's 'pocket'** (Lake View Children's Centre and Mountain View Children's Centre): children attending one of our services may have a dedicated 'pocket', either outside or inside the room in which the child attends. We place paper copies of relevant information such as receipts, newsletters, Family & Friends Group information, notices, excursions and forms in each child's pocket.
- **Notice boards:** please take a moment to read the notice boards at your service for current information about meetings, discussions and other activities happening both within and outside each service. Weekly plans and daily routines are on the notice boards in your child's room. Families can also arrange with the each service's Coordinator to display notices of events and items of interest on the notice boards.
- **Email:** weekly fee invoices together with each service's quarterly newsletter, advice regarding upcoming policy reviews, annual family feedback surveys and questionnaires on specific topics and ACS's Annual General Meeting details are all sent via email to you.
- **Family Information Sharing sessions:** family information sharing sessions are offered annually for all children who attend one of our services. These sessions provide an opportunity to discuss your child, their progress and any concerns you may have. Please also remember our educators are always available to discuss your child's development, we encourage you to make use of this valuable resource during your child's time at ACS.
- **Learning Journal:** your child's learning journal is a key tool to keeping up to date on programming, development and learning outcomes, Your child's learning journal is available at all times in your child's room and families are encouraged to take their child's learning journal home to share with other family members.

We strongly encourage you to read all information sent home and available at your Service and clarify with a staff member anything you are unsure of.

### **Updating Information**

As the safety and wellbeing of your child is our primary concern, please keep us informed when changes occur so we always have accurate information in relation to your child & family. Please advise our staff or update your Hubworks account as soon as possible of changes to:

- **Contact details:** any changes to you or any authorised contact's home & work telephone numbers & addresses as it is essential we can contact you in an emergency;

- **Medical details:** any medical details relating to your child including immunisation updates and changes to contact details of your child's medical practitioner;
- **Custody arrangements:** if you are experiencing any problems associated with custody and access, please discuss this with your service's Coordinator or ACS's General Manager *as soon as possible* including providing copies of any current court orders together with any changes to court orders;
- **Babies / infants:** please keep our staff informed of any changes to babies routines, introduction of foods etc; and
- **Annual Family Survey:** to ensure our staff & the ACS Board understand your views and we continue to offer high quality early childhood services we survey all families annually either online or in hard copy, typically in August / September of each year.

## 4. Fees

Please refer to ACS's Fee Policy & Procedure for further information relating to fees, fee payments & outstanding fees.

### Current Fees

A fee schedule should be provided to you with this Family Information Handbook, if not please ask a staff member. Our fees are typically reviewed annually and any changes will be advised to you at least 2 weeks prior to taking effect.

Families may be eligible for Child Care Subsidies (refer following page) paid by the Australian Government. If you are not eligible for Child Care Subsidies or if you elect not to register with the Family Assistance Office you will be charged our full fees as detailed in our current Fee Schedules.

### Enrolment Application Fee

All new enrolments will be charged a non-refundable fee of \$10 to cover administrative costs.

### Late Pick-up Fees

We understand families experience unavoidable delays in collecting children occasionally, if you are going to be late collecting your child please call us as soon as possible, especially if this is towards your service's closing time.

Late fees will be charged at the discretion of the service Coordinator or ACS's General Manager. Typically you will be charged a once-off fee of \$10 the first time a child is collected up to ten minutes late. Where you regularly collect your child late, further fees will apply.

### Fee Payments

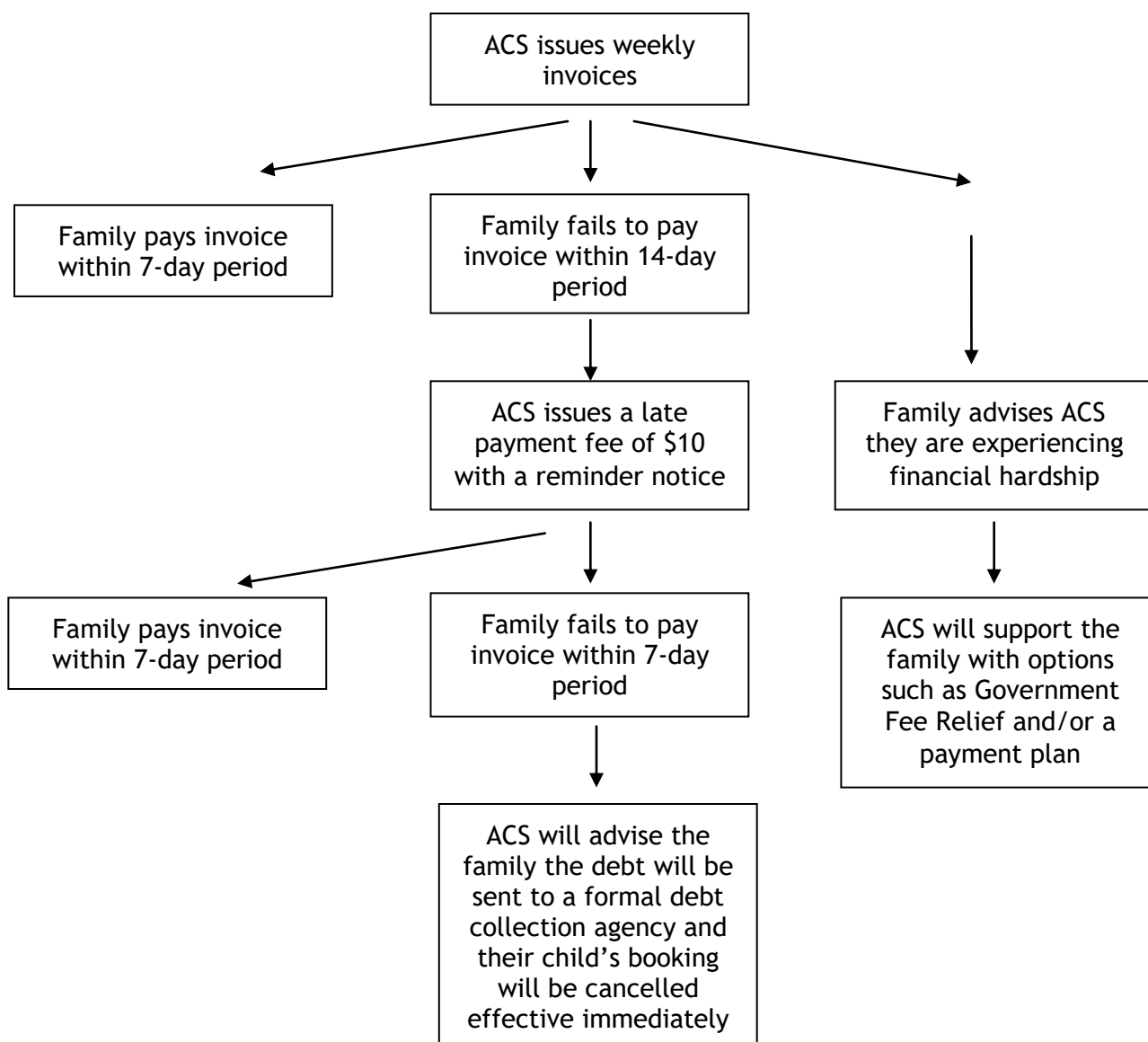
Fees are invoiced on a weekly basis and either emailed to your nominated email address or a hard copy provided. All fees must be paid on a weekly or fortnightly basis unless otherwise agreed with your service's Coordinator or ACS's General Manager. Fees can be paid by:

- **BPAY:** Details of ACS's Biller Code and your family's individual reference number are printed on your weekly invoice
- **Cheques:** Cheques should be made payable to *Alpine Children's Services* and placed in an envelope with your child's name on the front of the envelope and given to Administrative or Office staff.
- **Cash:** we are unable to accept cash payments at each of our services, if you would like to pay in cash, deposits can be made at any NAB branch - please speak with Administrative / Office staff at your service regarding ACS's bank account details, references & a deposit slips.

## Debt Collection Process

If fees are not paid within 14-days of the invoice being issued, the Administration Officer or nominated person will:

1. Charge a late payment fee of \$10 and issue a reminder notice stating fees are overdue, giving five working days for payment. The reminder notice will advise families if they are experiencing financial hardship to contact the Administration Officer or the OSHC Lead Educator or the Centre / Service Coordinator or the ACS General Manager to discuss payment options as soon as possible.
2. When a family is experiencing financial hardship, ACS will discuss options that may include fee relief from the Federal Department of Education & Training and / or a payment plan. ACS may request evidence of financial hardship such as an employment separation certificate or medical certificate.
3. If payment has not been received within 7-days of the reminder notice being issued families will be advised that the debt will be sent to a formal debt collection agency and their booking will be cancelled effective immediately.



## Child Care Subsidies

In line with Federal and State Government legislation:

- Only parents of children who are fully immunised or are on a recognised catch-up schedule can receive child care subsidies;
- Children with medical contraindications or natural immunity for certain diseases will continue to be exempt from the requirements; and
- Conscientious objection and vaccination objection on non-medical grounds will no longer be a valid exemption from immunisation requirements.

## Child Care Benefits (CCB)

The CCB is available to most families to assist in reducing the amount of childcare fees that you pay. The amount of CCB you receive for approved care depends on your annual family income. Current thresholds are detailed below:

| Number of children in care | Income limits  |
|----------------------------|--|
| 1                          | \$134,443  |
| 2                          | \$139,333  |
| 3 or more                  | \$157,329 plus \$29,721 for each child after the 3rd |

It is important to understand that your CCB percentage reduces the cost of your fees but isn't a straight percentage of the total fee charged by ACS, so even if your CCB is 100%, you will still be required to pay a gap fee. *We understand that this can be confusing so please chat with our Administrative staff or your service's Coordinator if you would like any further information.*

**Allowable Absences:** The Family Assistance Office (the funding body for child care services) has introduced an accountability requirement for families receiving the CCB. As well as signing attendance records when you drop off and collect your child, you are also asked to give a reason for your child's absence/s. You will get CCB for 42 absence days per child per financial year. These can be for any days and do not require proof. You can also get CCB for additional absence days if your initial 42 absence days have been used, there is no limit on these days but you will be required to provide documentation to support any additional absences over 42-days.

The CCB usually remains current for up to 12 months ending on 31 March of the year after you apply. As a courtesy, the Family Assistance Office will send you a reminder and form each year, before your assessment expires.

When applying for the CCB you will need to advise the Family Assistance Office which service your child is attending.

## Child Care Rebate (CCR):

The CCR is a payment from the Australian Government that helps working families with the cost of childcare. To be eligible for the CCR, both you and your partner (if applicable) must have had work, training or study-related commitments at some time during a week or have an exemption. No minimum number of hours is required. The CCR is currently capped at \$7,500 per child per year and is not income tested.

If you are eligible for CCB but your CCB entitlement is zero due to income, you are likely to still be eligible for the CCR. As with the CCB, to receive the CCR you must first register with the Family Assistance Office.

**For further information regarding you eligibility for CCB and CCR please contact the Family Assistance Office** - located in Medicare & Centrelink Customer Service Centres or via [www.familyassist.gov.au](http://www.familyassist.gov.au) (online & email services) or call 13 61 50 between 8am and 8pm (local time) Monday to Friday.

## **5. Bookings**

Please refer to ACS's Enrolment, Transition & Cancellation Policy & Procedure for further information relating to bookings, cancellations & priority access.

### **Orientation for your Child**

A new environment can create anxiety for many children. Even if your child has been in another early childhood situation or service, they will still need time to adjust to the new staff and environment. You are more than welcome to come in and look around our service and become familiar with the educators, children and daily routines.

Families can help their child adjust by:

- Visiting the service several times with the child prior to actually leaving him or her.
- If applicable, ensuring that your child has his or her special 'security' object such as a teddy or blanket.
- By always telling your child that you are going and that you will return.
- Returning at the agreed time - educators use this time to reassure your child as to your arrival (e.g. Mummy will be back after afternoon tea).

Parents are encouraged to phone the centre as many times, and for as long as necessary to find out how their child is settling. A phone call is better than calling in if your child has trouble settling. The educators will not allow your child to be upset for long periods. They will always call if needed.

### **Permanent bookings**

When you enrol your child to attend either kindergarten, child care or OSHC services on a regular basis we consider this a permanent booking and hold a place for your child on those regular days / times. It is important that you adhere to these times for two reasons:

- ACS must always maintain a legal staff/child ratio in accordance with the Education and Care Services National Regulations 2012; and
- Your child knows at what time to expect you and may become concerned if you are late.

Once children have a permanent booking, days may be changed subject to the availability of a vacancy on the preferred day. Such changes need to be made two weeks in advance and must be a permanent booking, e.g. if you wish to change your day for one week only you will be required to pay for your permanent day plus the new casual booking. Two weeks written notice is required to cancel a permanent booking. If notice is not given, two weeks fees will be charged in lieu.

If a child does not attend their permanent session for two consecutive weeks without parent notification, his/her booking will be cancelled.

Enrolments for our kindergarten program and Outside School Hours Care programs are for a calendar year and school terms only.

Information about booking a place for your child for the following year will be provided to families during October each year.

Please keep in mind we are unable to accept any child until their enrolment form is fully completed.

## Casual bookings

Casual bookings can be made depending on availability (and assuming your child is already enrolled with ACS). Casual bookings incur a booking fee and must be cancelled at least twenty-four hours prior to the start of the session to avoid being charged.

## Re-scheduling Fee

A re-scheduling fee of \$20 will be charged for all families who cancel their child's booking and then recommence a booking within the same calendar year.

## Priority of Access

The government has established guidelines for priority of access, which apply to our services. These guidelines are:

**First Priority:** Children at serious risk of abuse or neglect

**Second Priority:** Children of families who are both working/studying (as defined under section 14 of the Family Assistance Act).

**Third Priority:** All other children.

Within each category, children are to be given priority who fall into these groups:

1. Children from Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander families
2. Children from families which include a disabled family member
3. Children in socially isolated families
4. Children of single families

When there are no vacant places at a service and your child is considered 'third priority', your child may be required to change days or leave the service in order for the service to provide a place for a higher priority child. You will be provided with at least 14 days notice of the requirement for your child to leave the service.

Please advise your service's Coordinator or ACS's General Manager if your circumstances change as your child's place at the service may require reviewing.

Families with children attending in the year prior to school are also given priority to ensure each child receives a minimum of 15 hours of kindergarten each week.

## Program Eligibility

### *Myrtleford & Bright OSHC*

Children may attend Myrtleford & Bright OSHC in the year they commence school. Children may attend the January vacation program if they are starting school that same year.

### *Kindergarten program (AVCC) & 4YO Kindergarten (LVCC)*

The following children are eligible for attendance in the Kindergarten program:

1. Children who will have turned four years of age by 30 April in the year they would attend kindergarten.
2. Children who have received funding for a second year of four year old kindergarten.
3. Children turning six years of age in their year at kindergarten who have been granted an exemption from school entry age requirements by their regional office of the DET (for more information call the Benalla regional office on 03 8392 9500).



4. Giftedness is identifiable in very young children, and early identification is essential for the long-term wellbeing of the gifted child. Early entry to kindergarten may be appropriate for gifted or talented children who meet the criteria for early entry to school. A child that is less than four years of age by 30 April in the year they are to attend a funded kindergarten program, may only attend the program if the child's parent(s)/ guardian(s) have requested approval for early entry to school.

Requests must be made in writing to the appropriate Departmental regional office in accordance with government school entry processes, or directly to the nongovernment school that the child will be attending. It is unlikely that the regional office or the non-government school will be able to determine the outcome of the request for early school entry until close to the school commencement date.

Early school entry in government schools must be approved by the appropriate Department Regional Director and is only granted in exceptional circumstances when there are strong grounds for believing it is in the best interest of the child and that long-term educational disadvantage would otherwise occur.

Service providers should advise parents that only a small number of applications for early school entry are successful and their child is not guaranteed early school entry as a result of being enrolled to attend kindergarten early. A copy of the written request for early school entry must accompany the child's application for kindergarten enrolment. The service must sight this request and include a copy in the child's enrolment record.

#### Pre Kinder program (AVCC) & 3YO Kindergarten (LVCC)

The Pre Kinder/3YO Kinder program is for children attending in the year prior to attending the Kindergarten/4YO program. The following children are eligible for attendance in this program:

1. Children who will have turned three years of age by 30 April 2016, and
2. Children must be three years of age before starting the program.

#### Waiting Lists

ACS maintains waiting lists for all services where the service, a room at a service or kindergarten program is full. As vacancies occur, families are contacted and offered a place. Extra days can be offered to families as they occur.

The waiting list is maintained according to the following guidelines:

1. Priority of access
2. According to date of request

#### Transition

Families will be advised in advance if their child is to move from one room to another within one of our services, as young children can become unsettled with the change. Family/staff communication is vital to ensure that the child settles into the new situation. A child will progress to the next room according to their age, stage of development and the availability of a position in the next room in consultation with each family.

This section is not applicable to the Myrtleford & Bright Outside School Hours Care programs.

## 6. General Information

This section is in alphabetical order and provides information regarding our most frequently asked about topics.

### Accidents, Injury, Trauma or Illness

All incidences are recorded in each service's Accidents, Injury, Trauma or Illness form. Families will be asked to sign this form to confirm they have been advised of the incident. The Department of Education and Training will be notified of any incident involving injury or trauma to a child requiring medical attention.

In the case of a significant accident, injury, trauma or illness an ACS staff member will attempt to contact you / the authorised contact immediately. Please ensure that the telephone contact you have given is correct. If emergency treatment is required an ambulance will be arranged without delay.

On enrolment families will sign the authority for staff to seek treatment at a hospital or call a doctor and/or ambulance so that emergency treatment may be commenced.

It is advisable that families consider having ambulance membership, as families will be responsible for all costs involved should an ambulance be required.

*Please refer to ACS's Incident, Injury, Trauma & Illness Policy & Procedure for further information.*

### Child protection

ACS promotes the safety, wellbeing and inclusion of all children and fully complies with the Child Safe Standards.

All ACS staff have a responsibility with regard to the monitoring of each child under our care and must comply with mandatory reporting requirements regarding a child's safety. ACS staff will respect confidentiality in all matters.

### Where to get help?

Talking about concerns help prevent harm or abuse

|  |              |   |
|--|--------------|---|
| Parentline                               | 1300 30 1300 | <a href="http://www.parentline.com.au">www.parentline.com.au</a>            |
| Lifeline                                 | 13 11 14     | <a href="http://www.lifeline.org.au">www.lifeline.org.au</a>                |
| 1800Respect Online                       | 1800 737 732 | <a href="http://www.1800respect.org.au">www.1800respect.org.au</a>          |
| Upper Murray Centre Against Sexual Abuse | 1800 806 292 | <a href="http://www.casa.org.au/umcasa/">http://www.casa.org.au/umcasa/</a> |
| Child First                              | 1800 705 211 |   |
| Child Protection                         | 1300 360 391 |   |
| Child Protection After Hours             | 13 12 78     |   |

*Please refer to ACS's Child Safety Policy & Procedure for further information.*

### Clothing, shoes & weather protection

We believe that young children learn through play and they will be encouraged to explore a wide range of materials and experiences, including messy activities. Therefore it is important that your child is dressed in clothes that allow them to feel comfortable move freely and that can stand dirt. All children should have a spare change clothes. We do have spare clothes available at each service however our experience is that children prefer to be changed into their own clothes.

For your child's safety, children are not permitted to wear thongs, crocs or backless sandals. Shoes need to be comfortable, well fitted and suitable for outdoor play and climbing.

In cold weather a warm coat, gumboots and boots or sturdy shoes are necessary so that children can still go outside to play.

In hot weather, children must have their shoulders covered at all time to provide sun protection (i.e. no singlets or thin straps on dresses) and must wear a sun hat.

This section is not application to the Outside School Hours Care programs.

*Please refer to ACS's Sun Safety Policy & Procedure for further information.*

### **Confidentiality & Privacy**

ACS is committed to protecting the privacy and confidentiality of all children and families with whom we interact. We are required by law to protect personal and confidential information collected and held about all families. We take these requirements very seriously and as such have a detailed approach to dealing with confidential and private information received from families.

*Please refer to ACS's Confidentiality & Privacy Policy & Procedure for further information.*

### **Custody & Access**

Prior written authority must be given if someone other than family or lawful authorised person (as listed on your enrolment form) is to collect a child. If you are experiencing problems associated with custody and access, please discuss this with the service Coordinator or ACS's General Manager as soon as possible. A copy of current court orders together with any changes to court orders must be provided if there is any likelihood of problems associated with custody and access of a child.

*Please refer to ACS's Delivery & Collection Policy & Procedure for further information.*

### **Dangerous Goods & Hazardous Substances**

ACS has a Health & Safety Policy & Procedure that outlines our commitment to providing a safe environment for your child. There are a number of methods we implement to control risks from dangerous goods and hazardous substances. For example, a quarterly audit is performed to ensure all dangerous products are stored and labelled correctly and a material and safety data sheet (that outlines first aid treatment) is available.

*Please refer to ACS's Occupational Health and Safety Policy & Procedure for further information.*

### **Drop-off & Collection of Children**

Children must arrive and leave the service with their family or lawful authorised person (as listed on your child's enrolment form). For regulatory and safety purposes families are required to complete the attendance register (sign-in / sign-out books) at both arrival and departure times. We appreciate that you do not allow your child to write/draw on the attendance register, as these are legal documents.

Please also keep in mind:

- Persons under the age of eighteen years of age are **unable** to collect a child from the service (with the exception of the parent / legal guardian);
- Our staff care about each child so if your child is absent for the day, or there will be any variation to the normal drop-off & collection arrangements please let us know as soon as possible including the reason why to ensure we comply with government requirements; and
- Please ensure children are supervised prior to drop off and after collection times.

*Please refer to ACS's Delivery & Collection Policy for further information.*

## Family feedback & Complaints

We understand that from time to time families may experience concerns regarding a staff member, our services or another child or family. We take these concerns very seriously and as such have a detailed approach to dealing with feedback, concerns & complaints received from families. Please refer to the flyer provided with this handbook.

*Please refer to ACS's Family Feedback & Complaints Policy & Procedure*

## Food & Nutrition

Depending upon your child's booking, we provide the following meals: morning tea, lunch, afternoon tea and a late snack.

ACS has a comprehensive nutrition policy that has been developed in consultation with families and local dietitians. Our services follow a healthy eating program that ensures children are provided with 50% of the recommended daily intake for young children. Please keep in mind ACS is *nut-free* and that due to stringent Food Audit requirements we ask that children not bring in their own lunch, snacks, cordial or juice.

**Allergies, food intolerances & dietary restrictions:** please ensure you advise our staff as soon as possible should your child have any food allergies, intolerances or dietary restrictions or if these change.

**Infant formulas:** must be supplied and bottles must be *clearly labelled* and placed in the refrigerator on arrival. Please ensure you inform an educator of the time your child had their previous bottle.

**Water bottles:** please bring a labelled water bottle for your child each day with the exception of Alpine View Children's Centre where water containers and cups are provided.

*Please refer to ACS's Nutrition, Food Safety and Oral Health Policy & Procedure for further information.*

## Head Lice

Head lice are friendly little creatures, which show no particular bias to whose head they are attracted. Having head lice is no indication of lack of cleanliness and should not have any social stigma attached. It is highly recommended as a preventative measure to tie back long hair.

Regular checks should be made of your child's head, particularly if he/she seems to have an itchy scalp. If lice are found, a treatment solution can be obtained from the chemist. In compliance with the Public Health and Wellbeing regulations 2009, at the end of the day, the service will provide the child with a note to take home to tell their parents that they have head lice. Children may return to the service after treatment has commenced. Effective treatment is when a treatment is used and all the lice are dead. Families will be notified of any outbreaks of head lice.

Please refer to Staying Healthy - Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services for further information at [www.nhmrc.gov.au](http://www.nhmrc.gov.au)

## Illness

Please refer to ACS's *Infection Control Policy & Procedure* for full details regarding our approach to infection control. Please do not send your child if he/she has:

- **A Fever:** the definition of a fever is an oral (mouth) temperature or forehead using a forehead thermometer) temperature greater than 37.5°C or an axillary (armpit) temperature greater than 37°C. A child with a fever must be kept at home (or will be sent home) until the child is fever free for at least 24 hours. Your child's activity level and appetite should also be back to normal.

- **Been Prescribed Antibiotics for an Acute Illness:** a child who has been prescribed an antibiotic for an acute illness should be kept at home for at least 24 hours.
- **Conjunctivitis:** Viral and bacterial conjunctivitis are infectious while there is discharge from the eye. Children with infectious conjunctivitis will be excluded from the service until discharge from the eyes has stopped.
- **Hand Foot and Mouth disease:** Hand, foot and mouth disease is a common viral infection. It is infectious as long as the blisters contain fluid. Faeces can remain infectious for several weeks. Children will be excluded from the service until the blisters have dried.
- **School Sores (Impetigo):** is a skin infection caused by staphylococcus and/or streptococcus bacteria. Impetigo appears as flat, yellow, crusty or moist patches or blisters on the skin. It is infectious as long as there is fluid weeping from the sores. Children will be excluded until appropriate antibiotic treatment has commenced. Any sores on exposed skin should be covered with a watertight dressing.
- **Vomiting & Diarrhoea:** a child who has vomited or has had watery stools should not return to the service until he/she has been free of the symptoms for 48 hours. A doctor's certificate may be required stating that your child is clear of infectious diarrhoea. Vomiting & Diarrhoea causes great concern to staff each year as children can be hospitalised with a severe attack. It can be highly contagious which has the potential to spread through the service very rapidly.
- **Any Contagious Disease:** such as measles, mumps, and chicken pox - exclusion periods are set by the Department of Human Services and must be adhered to.

## Immunisation

Protecting children from preventable diseases is a common goal shared by early childhood education and care services and the health sector and by local, state and federal governments. Working together towards this goal will result in improved outcomes for our children.

*Please note that the following section is not applicable to school-aged children attending Outside School Hours Care:*

Under the 'No Jab, No Play' legislation, before enrolling their child/ren families must provide evidence that the child/ren is:

- Fully immunised for their age, OR
- On a vaccination catch-up program, OR
- Unable to fully immunised for medical reasons.

The following can be used as evident:

- An Immunisation History Statement from the Australian Childhood Immunisation Register, or
- An Immunisation Status Certificate from a medical doctor or a local council immunisation service may also be used, however this must contain the following information:
  - Date of the child's next due vaccine OR a statement saying the child has completed all their childhood vaccinations
  - If relevant, list of any vaccine/s that child cannot receive for medical reasons (GP only)
  - List of vaccine/s the child has received and when the vaccine was given (can be a separate attachment)
  - Child's full name, date of birth and address
  - Provider's full name

- Organisation name
- Signed and dated by immunisation provider
- Medicare provider number OR Australian Childhood Immunisation Register number

Other immunisation records, such as ‘homeopathic immunisation’ or a statutory declaration from you are not acceptable.

Immunisation History Statements are available on request at any time by contacting Medicare:

- By telephone on 1800 653 809
- By email on [acir@medicareaustralia.gov.au](mailto:acir@medicareaustralia.gov.au)
- Online at [www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/services/medicare/medicare-online-accounts](http://www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/services/medicare/medicare-online-accounts)
- In person at your local Medicare service centre.

If you are experiencing difficulties accessing vaccinations or required related documents, please contact us for assistance as soon as you are able. In some cases children can commence at the service while the required documents are obtained.

Immunisations are the responsibility of each family and can be arranged through your local medical practitioner or by contacting the Alpine Shire’s Maternal & Child Health Service on 0417 147 120.

*Please refer to ACS’s Infection Control Policy & Procedure for further information.*

### **Inclusion & Diversity**

ACS strongly believes in supporting all children and families within our communities. Our educators ensure all children are included regardless of cultural background, additional needs, family situations etc.

To assist in ensuring no child is disadvantaged there are government support programs that provide funding for inclusion support and additional staff across all early childhood services. If your child has additional needs please speak with a staff member to ensure we support your child and family in the best way possible.

*Please refer to ACS’s Interactions with Children Policy & Procedure for further information.*

### **Interactions with Children**

ACS has a comprehensive *Interactions with our Children Policy & Procedure* that is in line with current early childhood theory, practice and our philosophy. Our policy describes the ways in which ACS staff interact with children and guide behaviour. In their interactions with children, our staff aim to promote a sense of self worth and empowerment, allowing children to resolve conflicts by developing a positive attitude towards themselves and others.

*Please refer to ACS’s Interactions with Children Policy & Procedure for further information.*

### **Medications & Medication Book**

To protect your child from incorrect administration of medications, ACS has a strict Medical Conditions Policy & Procedure. ACS staff can only administer medications if:

- A medical practitioner has prescribed the medication;
- The medication is provided to ACS in a clearly labelled container from a pharmacy containing the child’s name and administering instructions; and
- ACS’s Medication Form has been completed & signed by an authorised parent or guardian.

For children with a chronic condition (e.g. anaphylaxis, asthma, allergies, epilepsy etc.) which require prolonged / preventative medication, ACS must be provided with a doctor's certificate or action plan regarding the child's conditions. Prior to commencement of care ACS staff must have developed a risk minimisation plan with you.

Medications are to be either stored in refrigerators or locked first aid cabinets, depending on requirements. *Medications must never be left in your child's bag.*

*Please refer to ACS's Medical Conditions Policy & Procedures for further information.*

### **Nappies**

Each service provides disposable nappies, children are changed regularly throughout the day and this is noted in your child's room.

*Please refer to ACS's Infection Control Policy & Procedure for further information.*

### **Referrals**

On occasion, the educators may determine that a child or family requires additional support, which ACS is unable to provide, e.g. speech therapy. In these cases a qualified and experienced member of our team will discuss this with you and offer some recommendations.

*Please refer to ACS's Interactions with Children Policy & Procedure for further information.*

### **Rest and Sleep**

Rest and sleep is available to all children, however we are guided by families as to the individual needs of their children, such as timing and comforters. Sleep and rest routines are based on SIDS recommendations.

*Please refer to ACS's Sudden Unexplained Death in Infancy Policy & Procedure for further information.*

### **Safety**

**Arriving & departing safely:** we understand that arrival and departures times at our services are busy so we ask that you please keep the following in mind when arriving and departing:

- Ensure the entrance gate/s (not applicable to Outside School Hours Care) are closed securely after entering / leaving
- Only open gates or doors for the child/ren in your care - DO NOT open gates or doors for other children
- Ensure children are supervised prior to drop off & after collection times
- Children are encouraged to play in our Welcome / Rainbow Gardens prior to drop off & after collection times - please ensure you supervise your child/ren at these times
- Prevent your children from swinging / hanging from gates

**Car park safety:** Car parks are confusing for small children. Please ensure you have some rules to help your child to know what to do when getting out of the car. When parking at one of our services please:

### **Staff**

ACS has a high retention of staff and as such staff at each service remain very consistent from year to year. A full staff listing should be provided to you with this Family Information Handbook, if not please ask a staff member.

## **Sun Smart Centre**

All of our services follow the Sun Smart Victoria guidelines. Families must provide a sunsmart hat (without cords) to use and remain at the service. Broad brimmed and bucket hats provide the best sun protection for the face, head, ears and neck. Legionnaire hats also provide good UV protection. Baseball caps do not protect the face, head, ears and neck. A good sun protective hat must protect your child's face, head, ears, neck and eyes. Hats are to be worn by all children when outdoors during anytime the UV rating is 3 and above.

Each service will ensure there is a supply of SPF 30+ broad spectrum, water resistant sunscreen for use as directed by staff. If your child has a particular sensitivity to the sunscreen provided by the service, please supply a clearly labelled alternative with a signed permission form and material, safety data sheet (MSDS) sheet. Please note the sunscreen must not contain any nut products including nut oils.

*Please refer to the ACS Sun Safety Policy for further information.*

## **Sustainability Focus**

As an organisation we strive to embed 'green' practices into the way our services are run. We have nominated sustainability officers at each service and family representation who help to initiate and implement environmental awareness and education to staff, children and families. Some of our activities at the service include:-

- Growing your own - vegetables, herbs, fruit and plants
- Ride or Walk week - encouraging families to rethink the way they travel (Oct)
- Water education session with North East Water (Nov)
- Recycling - all most everything you can think of (paper, mobile phones and batteries).
- Worm farms and composting
- Simple things like switching off lights and saving water
- Using natural resources for art and craft

## **Toilet Training**

Educators aim to follow the child and family's lead regarding toilet training. Since it is important that there is consistency in expectations for successful toilet training, educators and families will discuss the child's progress regularly. Please remember to supply plenty of spare underpants and trousers/shorts. Any wet or soiled clothing will be sent home in a waterproof bag.

*Please refer to the ACS Infection Control Policy for further information.*

## **Personal Property**

Alpine Children Services' insurance policy does not cover personal property brought to any of our centres or events. This includes but is not limited to mobile phones, other electrical items, teaching materials, sporting and play equipment and cars parked at the centre's properties. As we do not cover for any loss or damage of personal items, we discourage anyone from bringing any unnecessary or particularly valuable items to ACS sites or events.

We discourage children bringing toys from home (other than those for comfort or security reasons e.g. a special bear or and a blanket for sleep). Our educators cannot keep track of these items throughout the day and any loss can be a disappointment for the child.

Toys brought to the service must be placed in the child's bag until home time to avoid disruption. Toys that encourage aggressive play are not available, and we request that families ensure that guns, swords and similar toys are not brought to the service.



## **Staff Training**

Most staff hold current first aid, anaphylaxis and emergency asthma management certificates. Where we have a child at risk of anaphylaxis attending our service we will ensure that there is at least one staff member with a current certificate in management of anaphylaxis certificate at the service at all times.

Staff attend training each year, including professional development in the areas of behaviour guidance, child development, dealing with conflicts, communication skills and any training relevant to early childhood education and care.

## 7. Policies & Procedures

Each of our services operates within a framework of policies that have been developed in consultation with staff and families and approved by the ACS's Board. Policies and procedures are reviewed on a regular basis with both families and staff encouraged to provide feedback. Families are informed of policy changes via email.

All Family related policies and procedures are available at each service and on our website [www.alpinechildrensservices.asn.au](http://www.alpinechildrensservices.asn.au) or copies can be requested from the office or any staff member. A full listing of all Family related policies and procedures are detailed below:

1. Child Safety Policy & Procedure
2. Confidentiality & Privacy Policy & Procedure
3. Delivery and Collection Policy & Procedure
4. Emergency Management Policy & Procedure
5. Enrolment, Transition & Cancellation Policy & Procedure
6. Excursions Policy & Procedure
7. Family Feedback & Complaints Policy & Procedure
8. Family Day Care (FDC) Policy & Procedure
9. Fee Policy & Procedure
10. Incident, Injury, Trauma and illness Policy & Procedure
11. Infection Control Policy & Procedure
12. Interactions with Children Policy & Procedure
13. Medical Conditions Policy & Procedure
14. Nutrition, Food Safety & Oral Health Policy & Procedure
15. Social Media Policy & Procedure
16. Sudden Unexplained Infant Death policy & Procedure
17. Sun Safety Policy & Procedure