



Parent Information Book

60 Industrial Drive

PO Box 24

Mayfield 2304

PH: 4967 4991

Fax: 4968 2491

Email: sixhats@optusnet.com.au

Website: www.sixhats.com.au

CRN: 555 000 251C

Account Details:

Greater Building Society

160 354 677

637 000

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Introduction

Welcome

On behalf of the team and myself I would like to welcome you to our service.

As a team we take pride in our work and building relationships with the children and their families. We believe that this is the most important aspect of our role: working in partnership with families.

Please do not hesitate to speak to a staff member if you have any questions regarding the information from this handbook.

Cherylanne Williams

Service Manager

What does Six Hats stand for?

The six was relevant as our service is number 60 on Industrial Drive and we enrol children from 6 weeks to 6 years.

Hats: this suited us well as it denoted inclusion and diversity. We all wear different hats at different times, they may be cultural, gender or role specific and all are welcome at Six Hats.

And the Logo?

Our logo is a symbol of the many different personalities that gather at Six Hats Early Childhood Service. A hat can signify imagination, individualism, personality and role-playing – all of which are embraced and encouraged by the Six Hats service.

The hat stand is placed where these many and varied hats come to rest, just as Six Hats is a community of many diverse individuals, each with a unique personality.

Our History

Our service was established in May 1976 to provide care for children from the community and supply much needed childcare for working women. The service opened as, 'The Hunter Women's Child Care Service', and in 2003 the name changed to reflect our policy of inclusion and diversity.

Who manages Six Hats?

We are a not-for profit community based service and receive a small amount of re-current funding from the Department of Community Services. The service also participates in the National Child Care Accreditation program and has continually met the standards required.

We are sponsored by, 'The Hunter Region Working Women's Group Ltd'. This group is made up of two individual services:

1. Six Hats Early Childhood Service
2. The Hunter Women's Centre.

Both services are managed by a voluntary Board of Management with nine (9) members, a service manager for each service and paid workers. Formal control and responsibility for managing the affairs of the organizations is vested in the Board of Management who are elected at the Annual General Meeting for a three (3) year term. Board members are nominated to the Board of Management, based on their qualifications and commitment, by a sitting Board member.

Overview of service Philosophy

At Six Hats Early Childhood Service we offer an inclusive environment that fosters partnership with the family, community and other professionals who become a part of our service. We believe that children learn in harmony via the partnerships that are formed between families and our service, and in everyday play and interactions with peers and the environment.

We believe that each child is capable from birth and that early learning provides the foundation for all future learning, which we believe is a continuum throughout life. In doing so, we believe that all theories of child development need to be explored, discussed and if our community within the service believe it worthy, implement into practice.

A full copy of our philosophy is available at our service. If you would like a copy please contact us and we will forward this to you.

Qualifications of staff members?

We are fortunate to have a high level of trained and experienced staff. Each staff member falls into one of the following categories:

Early Childhood Carer

Does not hold an educational or developmental qualification

Early Childhood Educator

Holds either a Diploma / Associate Diploma / Certificate 3

Early Childhood Teacher

Holds a University Qualification

Our service provides well above the expected child to staff ratio's, giving more opportunities to interact with your children. We also provide a high level of office administration, with competent and highly trained staff willing to assist you with any enquiries you may have.

My Child's Day

What do I need to bring?

- Own morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea. *See Nutrition Policy*
We have a microwave so feel free to pack meals that can be heated.
- If your child is on formula, breast milk or soy please bring in ready made and labelled bottles. If your child is on cow's milk our service will supply the milk but you are required to bring in labelled empty bottles. It is advisable to send in more than the required amount of bottles, once heated and if wasted they will not be re-heated.
- Nappies – it is recommended to send between 4-6 nappies per day.
- Dummies – we supply an individualised compartment for your child's dummy to be placed throughout the day. Dummies are to be taken home of an evening.
Security items for rest time: if your child has a favourite.
- Spare clothes – if toilet training it is advisable to send several changes including underpants and spare shoes. Please make clothes appropriate to the current weather and that are easy for the child to take off or put on.
- A broad brimmed hat, this is in accordance with the Cancer Council recommendations.
- Cot sized sheets inside a pillowcase and a blanket for winter. **NO PILLOWS ARE ALLOWED IN THE NURSERY.**

Please remember to clearly mark your child's name on all belongings – this includes shoes, socks and underwear. It is difficult for staff to remember who owns what.

What about my child's toys?

We do not encourage children to bring their toys from home (except a special soft toy for sleep, if necessary). Home toys get lost and cause a disruption between children. Please do not bring toys into the service; Six Hats has lots of equipment for your children. Please keep dress-up clothes for dress-up days.

NOTE: Six Hats is a 'War Free Zone', so please no guns, swords or weapons.

How do I say Goodbye to my child?

Separation can be a difficult and emotional time for you and your child. At Six Hats we try to make this as painless as possible. We believe that it is important for your child to feel comfortable in their new environment.

This can be achieved through shorter days initially then extending over a period of time. You can also reassure your child by staying for a short time before saying goodbye, although we understand that due to work commitments this may not be possible.

We strongly recommend at least one orientation visit prior to your child's commencement at our service. This allows both you and your child to meet the staff, familiarise yourselves with the service environment and routine and for you to give

the staff useful information about your child's special needs and daily routine. Please speak to the Service or Office Manager to make arrangements for this orientation visit.

We ask that you **always say goodbye to your child** and never leave without doing so as this gives the child a sense of security and s/he will not feel as though you have just 'disappeared' without a trace – never to return. We understand that this may be hard on you but a quick goodbye and a reminder that you will be back later is much more comforting to your child.

What does my child do all day?

Using the interests of the children.

By using the information you give us at time of enrolment, staff observations and asking children, we are able to determine what the children are interested in and then hypothesise which direction the children will go. Whilst the children are completing their investigations the staff encourage them to document their ideas, by either or all, drawing, recording words, painting, dancing, clay or choice of many other methods to communicate their ideas and learning.

So what your child does all day is play and follow their interests but at the same time have their learning encouraged by skilful staff who draw out their ideas and thoughts and assist them in making their ideas come to life.

Please ask for our brochure: How Children Learn

What happens to my child's home routines?

Each room has its own individual daily routines: these are displayed in the room. We are aware that each child has their own routine and we would appreciate it if you would complete the, 'Family and Child Profile and the Individual Information sheet' forms and discuss these with the staff within your child's room at the time of orientation. It is essential that the Caterpillar room receive this information so that your baby's routine can be followed as closely as possible to that of home. The Butterfly: pre kinder and Rainbow: kinder rooms also require this information but their routines are set within the timetable of the day.

We would appreciate you discussing with us anything that we are doing that is interfering with your routine at home and we will do our best to rectify this.

What will my child eat?

Your child will be offered food from the lunchbox that you pack each day. We encourage families to pack a healthy lunchbox in accordance with our, 'Nutrition Policy'. Our service is bound by the regulations to ensure that children who are enrolled receive 50% of their daily intake from all food groups whilst they are in attendance. This is strictly adhered to and if any food items are sent that are not in line with our Nutrition Policy they will be sent home and a staff member will speak with you requesting that this item not be sent again.

We believe that it is important to create a calm and social environment at meal times. Staff members sit with the children encouraging them to remain seated during meals and interaction with their peers. The kinder group are encouraged to assist in the set up and pack away of items used during meal times, this fosters responsibility and knowledge of what is required in the meal time process.

What about my child's birthday?

If you wish for your child to celebrate their birthday at our service we would welcome the opportunity to participate. Please feel welcome to bring in a simple iced cake or individual cakes and these will be shared with the children in their room. Photos will be taken with our digital camera and placed on the slideshow for all to enjoy and then recorded in your child's individual file.

Will my child be able to visit a sibling from another room?

Yes, we encourage interaction between siblings in various ways. During outside play the children are able to communicate and visit with each other and at appropriate indoor times the children will be able to visit each other's rooms. At times pictures of siblings will be placed onto the daily slideshow so that children are able to use this as a point of discussion with friends.

Health and Safety

What are the service policies on health issues?

At Six Hats we believe that good health and safety of the children is vital to their continued development.

Exclusion of sick children

The policy outlines why children are excluded from our service or sent home due to illness. Our service retains the right to exclude any child / ren or staff member who the Service manager considers to be a health risk to others, or who is obviously unwell and cannot cope with a group situation.

This specifically deals with high temperatures, vomiting, diarrhea, unusual spots or rashes, feverish appearance, conjunctivitis, severe and persistent cough and other signs and symptoms that indicate the child or staff member is unwell. If your child becomes unwell whilst at the service you will be contacted and asked to come and collect your child. If the condition is serious such as an extremely high temperature, an ambulance will be called.

Staff members keep a record of all accidents and incidents that occur during the day. These are recorded in the relevant folder and must be signed off by a parent.

If your child is on medication you must fill in an, 'Authorisation to administer medication form': please ask a staff member for a form. Any prescription medication must be in the original container and have the child's name on it: non-prescription medication will only

be administered with a Doctor's letter advising us of the nature of the illness and why the medication is required.

Paracetamol is on the premises and will only be administered in cases of emergency. Written authorisation must be given on the 'Parents Agreement form', although this has been signed verbal permission will still be sought on the day and the written permission only used in emergencies.

If your child suffers with Asthma and non-prescribed medication we require are used, your Doctor has to complete an '**Asthma Action Plan**'. Please ask staff for a form.

If your child has an allergy that requires non-prescribed medication we require a letter from your Doctor authorising administration.

Medications must NEVER be left in your child's bag: please hand to a staff member who will lock it away in the box in the fridge.

If your child is having a day off due to an illness please ensure that you obtain a medical certificate to cover you for your allowable absences. In the case of your child being absent due to an infectious disease it is advisable to obtain a medical certificate stating that your child is able to return.

Six Hats understand that keeping a child at home is difficult when both parents are working but imagine how you would feel if you discovered that your child had spent the day with another infectious child. Moreover Health Regulations do not allow sick children to attend childcare due to the high risk of cross infection. If your child is sick and will not be attending please phone as early as possible to advise us of their non-attendance.

Scratching, Biting and other behavioural issues

All children have the right to a safe and healthy environment.

Scratching incidents will be avoided wherever possible using the following strategies:

- Parents are responsible for ensuring their child's nails are kept short
- If a child's nails are too long families will be notified of their responsibilities to ensure that nails are kept short

If a biting incident occurs the attention is not focused on the child who bites. Re-direction and positive strategies are used: biting the child back or singling them out goes against our service policy. If the child is an habitual biter the family will be asked to seek other professional assistance and if refused may cause the child's placement to be terminated.

Exclusion from our service due to behavioural issues will only be used when all other strategies fail and another child or a staff member is at risk of physical injury or harm. Staff and management will liaise with parents and other professionals at all times.

How do I know my child is safe?

We have a security intercom system at the front of our building. This is to ensure that no-one enters our building unless they are meant to be there. It is advisable that when you

enter the building, if possible, you allow no-one to enter behind you that you do not know. Please ensure that the gate and door are securely locked after entering or leaving.

All visitors to the service must press a buzzer at the front door and wait to be admitted by a staff member who checks their credentials.

What happens in the event of an evacuation?

The evacuation procedure is clearly displayed in each room: please familiarise yourself with this procedure. If in the event of an evacuation the service has a mobile phone that a staff member takes with them to call all families of the attending children, requesting that they arrive as soon as possible to collect their children. If you enter the building and witness an emergency event you are allowed to ring the bells that are in the hallway, at both ends of the service. It is also advisable that you inform a staff member of what you have witnessed so they are able to follow the correct procedure.

Sunsmart

Our policy has been written in line with the Cancer Council recommendations: this policy is in effect all year round.

- It is your responsibility to supply a broad brimmed hat for your child
- If your child does not have a hat the staff will ensure that they either play indoors or within a shaded area, such as, the veranda or sandpit
- There is adequate shaded areas for your children to play
- SPF30+ sunscreen is provided by the service but we ask that you administer this to your child upon arrival at the service and staff members will reapply throughout the day
- We ask that your children are dressed in clothes that cover their shoulders and tops of their arms
- Staff, students and volunteers act as role models by using the shade, sunscreen and hats
- Learning about sun protection is incorporated into our programs

Administration

Fees

Six Hats Early Childhood Service is a not-for profit organization. Fees are calculated after the budget is prepared annually and are structured to cover the running costs of the service.

The current maximum weekly fee and other rates are available from the Office or Service Managers. Parents are required to pay for fees the entire 50 weeks the service is open even in the following circumstances:

- a. The child is absent through illness or on holidays
- b. Public and school holidays

If your fee payments are 2 weeks in arrears without cause being discussed with and accepted by the Service Manager **CANCELLATION** of your child's placement will be

considered. If a family leaves the service owing fees it is our policy to pass the bad debt onto our debt collector who will take appropriate action to recover the debt, **this will be enforced.**

For security we would prefer payment of fees by Direct Credit, cheque, money order or internet banking. If paying cash please pay the correct amount as change is not available and this is done so at your own risk. If a cheque is not honoured the fees incurred from the bank will be charged to your account. After making a payment a receipt will be placed into your child's pocket and you will receive a statement each week.

If your child is returning to the service the following year you need to ensure your payments are 2 weeks in advance (as usual) at the date nominated by the Office Manager in November of each year: this ensures that your child's place is secure.

Childcare Benefit

Upon enrolment the Office Manager will ask if you wish to apply for Child Care Benefit from the Family Assistance Office. Child Care Benefit can only commence from the date you lodge your application with the Family Assistance Office, therefore the ONUS IS UPON YOU to get your forms lodged quickly. Until we receive notification from the FAO we must charge you full fees.

To receive the Child Care Benefit your child must be immunised unless you complete a conscientious objection form and submit to the Family Assistance Office.

Late collection of children fees

Parents will be liable for a late fee if your child is not collected by the official closing time of 6pm. The fees are:

1st 15 minutes \$15 2nd 15minutes \$30 3rd 15 minutes \$45

After 3 occurrences you will be charged the overtime that the service must pay staff members.

What do I do about arrivals and departures?

Children are not to arrive earlier than the opening time as our insurance coverage and licensing for children does not commence before this time. Our hours are from 7.30 am to 6pm, Monday to Friday. On arrival please ensure that you take your child to the area where the staff and children are and acknowledge the staff, letting them know that your child has arrived. **DO NOT LEAVE YOUR CHILD IN AN UNSUPERVISED ROOM.**

You need to be punctual when collecting your child and to be out of the service by closing time, 6pm. A late fee will apply if staff members are required to stay back. You need to allow enough time to pack your child's belongings, have a chat with staff and then be able to sign out before the closing time. **It is important that you say good-bye to a staff member so that we know you have taken your child.**

If your child is not picked up by 6.30pm the local police and the Department of Community Services will be contacted. Please note all efforts to contact you or an emergency contact will be made during this time.

We cannot send a child home with someone who has not been authorised. All authorised persons are to be written on your enrolment form: if you have to ask someone who is not on this list you must phone the service and then provide written permission: this can be done by email or fax. **All authorised persons MUST provide photo ID at time of collection.**

We cannot be responsible for the removal of a child from the service by a non-custodial parent, although every attempt will be made to ensure this does not occur. The service will try to contact you or your emergency contacts to advise you of the circumstances: if the parent is not to have access attempts will be made to contact the police.

It is vital that you sign your child in and then out of an afternoon. This is a legal requirement and it indicates clearly to staff in times of evacuation that your child is at the service.

How do I use the car-park?

Our driveway is clearly marked, 'ENTRY' and 'EXIT' with additional signage that there is 'NO RIGHT TURN FROM THE EXIT'. When using the car-park please ensure that you park within the marked lines and that unless permitted you do not park in the disabled space.

Can I book extra days?

Occasional Care Positions – Rainbow Kinder room

We have 2 occasional care days allocated for the Kinder room, this caters for enrolled children only. The full cost of these places is \$50 per child per day and bookings will be taken two weeks in advance and will be on a first come, first served basis. You will also be able to be wait listed if the day you require is unavailable: these days can be booked with the Service or Office Managers.

Cancellation of the Occasional Care Position once booked

If you wish to cancel a booked place, you must provide us with a minimum **24 working hours notice**, either verbally or in writing. *For example*, if you have booked a Monday, we require you to call no later than close of business Friday.

If the notice is given via the phone, it is your responsibility to ensure you note the staff member's name and time of call. Staff will complete a Cancellation Notice and forward it to the Office to ensure you are not charged for the day's care.

We do not 'swap' children from the regularly booked days onto spare days, they can only be taken as 'extra'. The 2 positions available for occasional care are used for that purpose, or as emergency care days.

FAILURE TO PROVIDE US WITH NOTICE WILL RESULT IN YOU BEING CHARGED FOR CARE FOR THE DAY.

Occasional Care Positions – Whole Service

We are also able to offer extra days in the event of a child's absence. Please be aware that sometimes these places become available at very short notice. The full cost of these places is \$50 per child per day. If you would like an extra day, please notify the Service or Office Managers.

Who gets priority on enrolments?

The service uses the priority of access guidelines as defined by the Department of Community Services. When positions become vacant during the year the waiting list is checked and positions offered based on these guidelines.

Siblings attending another 'approved child care service'

If your child has a sibling who attends another 'approved child care service' your family may be able to claim a higher rate of Childcare Benefit, for example, an OOSH service. If you think your family is eligible to claim this higher rate of CCB let us know: you will be required to fill in a 'Parent Statement', that we are required to keep on file.

When will my child be required to leave Six Hats?

We encourage families of children who are not returning to Six Hats for a full year after the Christmas break to find alternative care, rather than start their child for 2 weeks and then begin them at their school or new service. The reasons for this are:

- a. Your child is ready for the change and doesn't really want to come back
- b. It allows other families to start their child at the beginning of the year

If you find that there is simply no other choice please speak to the Service Manager to discuss options.

Notice of Withdrawal

If you no longer require a placement for your child or wish to add or drop days 2 weeks notice **IN WRITING** must be given. If 2 weeks notice is not given, the 2 weeks full fee bond is forfeited. If your child is absent for 2 weeks without communication this will indicate that you no longer require your placement, therefore your child's position will be allocated to another.

How can I get involved in my child's program?

Our service values family participation. We encourage parents to visit our service whenever they feel, that is why we have an **Open Door Policy**. The service supports a '**Parents and Friends Advisory Committee**' that meet bi-monthly on the first Monday of the second month in the Pre-Kinder room (Butterfly). Other ways that we ask parents to participate within our service are:

- Join your child at a meal time
- Bring in your favourite music, stories, safe pets or your individual talent to share
- Organise and activity or prepare something at home to share with the children
- Grandparents are encouraged to visit
- Gardening, woodwork, sharing your national festival and customs
- Joining excursions or borrow from our parent library
- Staying a while at drop off time or pick up
- Breast feed your baby during the day
- Check your pockets regularly and read notes and notices that are placed around our service
- To talk with staff about your child's day and discuss the program being offered

- Input into the program by telling staff members your ideas or writing it on the sheet provided

Why is communication so important?

Our service believes that communication is a two way process and that the service and the families have a responsibility to work in partnership ensuring that the channels are open and both are listening to each other.

There are several methods that we adopt to ensure our communications are received by your family:

- Speaking to staff members each day
- Connections newsletter
- Room communication diaries
- Individual books in the Caterpillar (Baby) and Butterfly (Pre-kinder) rooms
- Pockets
- Noticeboard at the entry to our service
- Surveys are conducted annually
- Slideshow of the children's activities throughout the day
- Email
- Website
- Phone calls
- Program input sheets
- Displays around the service
- Teacher meetings upon request to receive current information about your child

Who do I talk to if I have a problem?

Complaints Procedure

We would like to hear from you if you are not happy with any part of our service. We welcome compliments, complaints or suggestions because it helps us provide a better service to you and your child. If you have any concerns or complaints during your time with us please do not hesitate to speak with the Service or Office Manager. They will record the problem and take every step to resolve the issue. If you are still unsatisfied with the result, please feel free to contact:

Department of Community Services
 Children's Services Advisor
 Glenda Dawson
 49039509

Thankyou for choosing our service for your child to attend.

Regards
 Team members
 Six Hats Early Childhood Service