



EARLWOOD CARING FOR KIDS INC.

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2024 FEE POLICY STATEMENT

Earlwood Caring for Kids Inc. (ECFKI) is a not-for-profit association of community members (parents). A voluntary group of parents comprise the Management Committee, which decides matters of policy, fees, staffing and all matters relating to service operation.

The financial objectives of the Centre in 2024 are to:

- Continue to maintain a high level of quality care.
- Comply with all requirements of the National Quality Framework and associated Laws & Regulations
- Aim for 85% attendance each day.
- Ensure service administrative processes are efficient and costs maintainable.
- Continue to meet commitments when they fall due.

The Committee reserves the right to review the fees each term based on attendance and the Centre's ability to meet running costs. Members will be given a **minimum** of two weeks' notice of any change to fees.

STARTING DATES for Bookings (fees payable **regardless** of attendance & bookings cannot start beyond these dates)

- **Years 1-6:** Thursday 1st February 2024
- **Kindergarten-** Tuesday 6th February

MEMBERSHIP

ECFKI is a not-for-profit, community-based organisation. To use the service, families must join the association each year and become members. Members are required to pay the annual membership fee of-

- \$40 (one child)
- \$45 (two children)
- \$50 (three children)
- \$55 (four children)

The membership fee includes a sun safe centre hat to keep on the premises. Replacement hats are \$10 each.

Note- the cost of membership is the same regardless of when an enrolment begins except for a Term 4 start, i.e., Term 1, 2 or 3 start, membership is as above; Term 4 start, membership is 50% of the above cost. Regardless of enrolment start, in all instances a full membership is charged for each new year.

Existing members of this incorporated association are required to renew their membership and pay the annual membership fee each year.

For completely new members, this is payable upon enrolment.

The membership fee is not refundable and there is no CCS reduction. The fee must also be paid prior to a child attending the Centre for the first time.

The Committee reserves the right to increase the membership fee if required for the start of a new school year. Parents will be given at least two weeks' notice of any increase.

PERMANENT & CASUAL FEES

The fee structure is grouped into permanent and casual for the purposes of bookings and fees.

- **Permanent Booking** - has permanent set days for morning and/or afternoon care booked each week for a minimum of a month (four **full** weeks of care). Casual bookings (if available) may also be utilized in addition to permanent bookings; however, permanent fees must be up to date.

All bookings for positions are for a **minimum of four full weeks of care** to ensure consistency of numbers and funding for staff ratios. If you need to make a change, please advise the Director or Admin Manager via email, and note that it will take effect from the date sent in the return email confirming the booking cancellation.

If you cancel a permanent booking and then wish to re-instate the booking, this will be determined by availability once the booking has been cancelled for **at least** a month. There will be no cancel & then re-request a permanent booking within a month after cancellation as staffing arrangements are made in advance. During this four-week period, a casual booking may be offered if there is availability. If the cancelled sessions are full, the child will have to go on the Centre's waiting list.

Note- in term 4 of the school year, a permanent booking cannot be cancelled during week 7 or the period after, unless the child is not returning to care in the following year. Two weeks' written notice still applies.

- **Casual Booking** - is for occasional care where no set days are booked each week:
 - Casual bookings are available to current members.
 - Casual bookings are not guaranteed and are subject to availability.
 - Casual bookings must be made in advance (by 5.30pm the day before for a morning booking & by 1.00pm for an afternoon booking that day) and paid for on the day. Bookings can be made by phone or email. If your booking is at the last minute, please call & check that the centre has received your request.
 - Casual bookings will not be made if fees are not up to date.

NEW ENROLMENTS

For new children and families, the following enrolment procedures must be completed prior to your child's commencement at the Centre.

To enrol, you are required to:

- Pay the annual family membership fee.
- Complete IN FULL an enrolment form per child (typed & scanned- no photos of forms)
- Complete a booking form (if applicable)
- Complete a Confirmation of Childcare Arrangement form (done at the service when the child first attends)
- Provide a copy of your child's Medicare Immunisation Certificate which states that your child's status is up to date.
- Provide a current photo of your child (head shot preferred)
- Complete and return the appropriate health care plan **provided to you by the service** if you have advised your child has asthma, an allergy, anaphylaxis, or any other health care need. Note that plans must be signed by a registered medical practitioner.
- Provide any relevant and up to date court orders (with official stamp)
- Complete the ECFKI 'About Me' survey.

All the above paperwork must be completed in full before a booking is processed and your child can attend the centre.

RE-ENROLMENTS

For families intending to continue use of the Centre in the next year, the re-enrolment process will commence in early Term 4. For re-enrolling children and families, you are required to:

- Pay the annual family membership fee.
- Complete IN FULL an enrolment form per child (typed & scanned- no photos of forms)
- Complete a booking form (if separate from the enrolment form)
- Complete a Confirmation of Childcare Arrangement form (done at the beginning of each year)
- Provide a copy of your child's Medicare Immunisation Certificate (if not previously provided)
- Complete and return the appropriate health care plan provided to you by the service if you have advised your child has asthma, an allergy, anaphylaxis, or any other health care need (**if close to being due**).
- Ensure the service has medication still in date for the new school year.
- Provide any up to date and relevant court orders not previously provided (or if circumstances have changed)
- Complete the ECFKI 'About Me' survey if you have not previously done so.

All the above paperwork must be completed in full before a booking will be processed for a new year of care.

Important Note - Re-enrolment & Booking forms for current families will not be processed until any outstanding fees are paid. Due to the Centre reaching capacity on most days, unpaid fees may result in current families not receiving a place for the following year. It is strongly recommended that all families ensure fees are always up to date or contact the Centre immediately to discuss payment options.

PRIORITY OF ACCESS

The Centre aims to provide places for all children needing care whilst always meeting government requirements. There are currently 125 licensed places available for each before and after school care. Management cannot accept children over these numbers, or if staff ratios are jeopardised.

ECFKI allocates places in the fairest & most impartial way possible. The priority of access guidelines was updated & the following is an excerpt from the Childcare Provider Handbook our service is obliged to follow (to receive childcare subsidy on behalf of parents).

“Do vacancies need to be prioritised? There are no requirements for filling vacancies. Providers can set their own rules for deciding who receives a place. Providers are asked to (but are not legally obliged to) prioritise children who are:

- *at risk of serious abuse or neglect*
- *a child of a sole parent who satisfies, or parents who both satisfy, the activity test through paid employment.”*

September 2023 | p35 education.gov.au

In term 4 of each year, current families re-enrol and where positions are available, a new sibling may enrol at the same time. For new families, an expression of interest is first sent in and after a period of two weeks after the EOI forms are allowed to be sent in, these will be assessed and allocated where available. In previous years, a ballot system has been used where places have exceeded availability. This may be used in future when required.

OPENING HOURS

During the school term, licensed hours are-

- Before school care: 7.00-9.00am
- After School Care: 3.00-6.00pm

Note- at times, there may be a slight variation to hours due to external circumstances, e.g., early school finish during pandemic.

The Centre cannot extend or change these hours.

- Pupil Free Days: CLOSED (no fees payable)
- Public Holidays: CLOSED (permanent fees payable if a public holiday falls during the week & in term time)
- School Holidays: CLOSED (no fees payable)

FEE SCHEDULE

Permanent Booking Fees - apply when permanent or set days are booked each week for a minimum of four weeks. Casual bookings may also be utilised in addition to permanent bookings and are charged at the casual rate (permanent fees must be up to date at the time).

Permanent bookings will be invoiced and emailed in accordance with our administration system, either weekly or fortnightly. It is the parents' responsibility to check invoices are received and to advise the service if there is an issue. Note that invoices are sent to the parent with the CRN on the enrolment form.

| Permanent Fee Structure | Fee per Session per Child | Description |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|---|
| BEFORE SCHOOL CARE | \$21.00 | Fees for set sessions/days each week; booking & payment is required for a minimum of 4 weeks . |
| AFTER SCHOOL CARE | \$25.00 | Fees for set sessions/days each week; booking & payment is required for a minimum of 4 weeks . |

Casual Booking Fees- uses the centre for adhoc or occasional care when there are no set days booked each week.

| Casual Fee Structure | Fee per Session per Child | Description |
|----------------------|---------------------------|--|
| BEFORE SCHOOL CARE | \$24.00 | Fees for pre-booked casual sessions/days; payment is required in advance where possible. |
| AFTER SCHOOL CARE | \$28.00 | Fees for pre-booked casual sessions/days; payment is required in advance where possible. |

Casual bookings are still payable if a child does not attend, and notice is not given by **5pm** the previous day for before school care & **1pm** for after-school care on the day.

Late Pick Up Fees - children **must** be collected by **6:00pm**. Parents or guardians that have been unavoidably delayed should contact the Centre to inform staff, so that the child can be advised, and any anxiety alleviated.

After 6:00pm a late fee, as per below, is to be paid -

Late pick up fee (after 6:00pm): \$3.00 per minute per family for the first 15 minutes
 \$15.00 per family for the next 15 minutes or part thereof

If the child has not been collected by 6:10pm and no contact has been made with the Centre, staff shall attempt to contact the parent/guardian. If these attempts are unsuccessful the alternate, contact people listed on the enrolment form will be contacted. Under no circumstances will a child be allowed to leave the centre on their own.

Late pick-up fees will be added to the next invoice and must be paid on time. **Continual late pick-up of children may result in bookings being cancelled with a warning letter from the Management Committee sent first.**

Non-notification fee - \$10 per non notification where service is not notified **prior to 2.50pm** on the day of booking of the child's absence for that afternoon.

ATTENDANCE & BOOKINGS

Permanent fees are to be paid for the days the child is booked into the Centre, including times when the child is absent due to **illness or family holidays** (during the school term).

Casual bookings are still payable if a child does not attend, and notice is not given **by 5pm** the previous day for before school care and **1pm** for after school care on the day.

Please notify the Centre if your child/children are not attending a booked session. Much time is spent by staff looking for children who have not arrived at after school care and often this compromises staff: child ratios.

All permanent bookings are required to be kept for a minimum of four full weeks. Permanent bookings will be carried through to the next term (in the same year) unless cancelled by email. To cancel a permanent booking, two week's written notice must be given (for example, cancel a permanent booking for Term 2 by notifying the Centre in writing BY week 8 of Term 1). A confirmation email will be sent advising the date which the booking will be cancelled from (and therefore not charged).

All fees must be up to date when a permanent booking is to be cancelled.

No booking will be reinstated, regardless of availability, if fees are not up to date.

PAYMENT OF FEES

The payment of fees as outlined below is a requirement to both start and keep your child's booking at ECFKI.

- A weekly invoice is sent (to the parent with the CRN) on a Monday or Tuesday each week.
- A reminder invoice may be sent at the end of the week.
- Towards the end of term 4, an invoice may be sent to cover care till the end of the school year. This will assist administration in collecting all fees due before the Christmas school holidays.

Fees must be paid weekly or in advance (i.e., a 'bulk' amount put on the account).

Invoices received at the beginning of the week must be **paid in full** by 6.00pm Thursday of that week (this allows funds to be cleared in the bank). After the last day of the week & where fees are still owed, the account is now considered **overdue**.

Casual/emergency care must be paid for on the day of care or when the booking is made.

Fees are to be paid for the days the child is booked into the Centre, including times when the child is absent due to illness, holidays, and public holidays (that fall during the term).

Payment Methods-

- EFTPOS (paid at the Centre during licensed hours)
 - Direct Deposit- Earlwood Caring for Kids Inc. Bank- ANZ BSB: 012 286 Account No: 5739 212 02
- From July 2023, cash is no longer accepted due to changes around childcare subsidy.

Note- fees that are overdue may result in a phone call to a parent for immediate payment over the phone. Parents will be expected to clear their account this way at the end of each term and especially at the end of the school year.

A dated receipt of each payment will be in the next statement.

All records will be kept confidential and stored appropriately. Parents may access particulars of their fees during office hours and information given in writing upon request.

The continual non or late payment of fees will result in the cancellation of a child's booking. As a community-based centre, fees for care are the main source of operational income & therefore, must be paid on time each week.

COMMONWEALTH CHILDCARE SUBSIDY (CCS)

The current CCS system, where all families are required to register for a My Gov account with the department of human services and complete a Childcare Subsidy assessment to use an OOSH service, began in 2018. This process allows families to be assessed for childcare subsidy which may lead to reduced fees for care. The subsidy is given directly to the service & varies from family to family depending on eligibility. Once the service has received the subsidy, this amount is deducted from the weekly fees thus reducing a parent's account.

More information can be found at <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/child-care-subsidy>.

All new families are required to have set up their My Gov account and completed their assessment by the time their child is ready to start at the centre. All relevant CRN's (customer reference numbers) & date of birth must be provided on a child's enrolment form. This is applicable **regardless** of a family's intention to claim CCS.

Please note- if a child has a block of absences, 12 weeks or more, the registered parent will need to reconfirm the booking on MyGov to receive CCS again. It is a parent's responsibility to regularly check their MyGov account.

CONFIRMATION OF CHILDCARE ARRANGEMENT FORM (CWA)

This form is signed by a parent or guardian at the beginning of a new enrolment, at the beginning of a new school year or if there has been a change to care. It shows a child's confirmed booking and is an agreement between the service and the family that the booking is correct and that the service has permission to receive the subsidy on the family's behalf. The subsidy is directly applied to the fees which reduces a parent's account.

ALLOWABLE ABSENCES

Each family registered for Childcare Subsidy is eligible for 42 allowable absences each financial year.

Once a child has exceeded 42 allowances, parents are required to pay full fees for any sessions the child is absent thereafter (until a new financial year begins). Note- at times, there is a variation to this number of allowances, e.g., an extra 10 days during the pandemic lockdown. A child who is absent on the first or last day of a calendar booking **will not receive CCS for that session**. This is a government ruling & a full fee will be shown on that week's invoice.

All documentation pertaining to CCS will be kept for the specified time in line with DEEWR requirements and the Education and Care Services Act. These documents will be made available to the Commonwealth Departmental Officers on request.

OVERDUE FEES

As a community-based organisation with fees for care as the main source of operational income, it is imperative that fees are kept up to date.

Parents are encouraged to discuss any difficulties that they may have in paying fees with the President or Administration Manager, where suitable arrangements for payment of fees will be discussed.

If no previous arrangements have been made regarding overdue fees the Centre will:

After 1 week overdue: Send an email notifying both parents the account is overdue. Include the option to discuss any issues around payment. Notification will be given that their child's place may be cancelled if suitable arrangements cannot be made within the current week to clear the account.

After 2 weeks overdue: Personally approach, text or call the parent to notify the account is two weeks' overdue. An email by the accounts department may be sent identifying the possibility of cancelling the booking with a date of final payment required. The option of the service taking payment remotely will be offered (parent completes payment authorisation form & fee is processed remotely each Monday with a receipt issued for payment).

After 3 weeks overdue: An email of 'final notice' will be sent to the account holder. If the payment is not made within 48 hours, the booking will be cancelled at the end of the week. Once paid & to keep the booking moving forward, the parent will be asked to complete the payment authorisation form (where payment is made remotely each week). If this is not agreed to, fees have not been cleared or arrangements have not been made for repayment, the child's place will be cancelled.

If the above procedures are not effective, details of unpaid fees should be referred to the Management to commence debt recovery procedures.

Next Review of Fee Policy- November 2024.