

Family Handbook

Early Learning & Care



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Dear Families,

Welcome to Sparkways

Since 1883, we've been setting children and young people on pathways of accomplishment.

Today, we provide services for children and young people at pivotal developmental stages, to empower them to grow and thrive together with their communities.

In addition to kindergarten and childcare we offer youth mentoring and employment pathways for young people facing barriers to inclusion and participation.

As a not-for-profit organisation, it is our vision and values that inform and guide our work each day. All profits made in the delivery of our services goes back into those services to improve them, or to fund our programs which help young people experiencing disadvantage.

So when you choose to enrol your child in one of our kindergarten or childcare services, you'll not only be providing your own child with a great educational start, you'll also be helping to transform the life chances of other children and young people too.

Our service offering in early learning and care reflects our unwavering belief that strong social and educational foundations in a child's early years, provides a pathway for the best possible outcomes in later life.

Each of our kindergarten and childcare services is designed to reflect the needs of the local community and families they serve.

This ensures children's early education is fundamentally informed and influenced by the families and communities they live in, and while each of our services is unique, at every one of our kindergarten and childcare services you will find:

- ▶ High-quality play-based educational programs designed around children's interests and developmental needs.
- ▶ Highly qualified and dedicated educators who work in close partnership with families to maximise children's learning outcomes in the lead up to starting school.
- ▶ Safe and stimulating indoor and outdoor learning environments filled with resources to support children's learning.
- ▶ A program that encompasses the community and cultural context of the children and families attending and takes a family-centred approach.

We look forward to welcoming you to the Sparkways community and sharing in your child's early learning experience.



Who we are and what we believe in

We're a not-for-profit organisation with a 138 year strong history.

Our passion is empowering children and young people, so they and their communities can thrive.

We believe that by providing services and programs to children and young people when they are at a critical developmental stage in their lives and by using a child and youth centred approach, we can build relationships, and work in partnership with families and communities embedding innovative, evidence-based practice.

This will result in children with enhanced resilience, confidence and wellbeing, who are engaged in their learning. We will also see young people with the necessary tools, who feel supported and confident to set goals and take the next steps for their future.

Our end goal? Young people who are active contributors who have a strong sense of belonging and connectedness to their communities and children who are thriving, strongly connected to their schools and communities, with a foundation for lifelong learning.



Play and enquiry-based learning

Play and enquiry-based experiences are the best vehicle for young children's learning, providing the best stimulus for healthy brain development. The National Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) and the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF) also recognise the importance of communication and language, including early literacy and numeracy, along with social and emotional development.

The Frameworks outline the highest expectations for all children's learning from birth to eight years. They identify five learning outcomes:

1. Children have a strong sense of identity
2. Children are connected with and contribute to their world
3. Children have a strong sense of wellbeing
4. Children are confident and involved learners
5. Children are effective communicators

Play provides the means for children to explore and make sense of their social worlds, as they engage actively with people, objects and representations.





Play provides a context for learning that:

- ▶ Allows for individual expression
- ▶ Enhances curiosity and creativity
- ▶ Enables children to make connections between experiences
- ▶ Assists children to develop relationships and concepts that are essential stepping stones to more formal reading and writing learning that happens at school
- ▶ Stimulates a sense of wellbeing

It is during play that children learn and expand on life skills such as confidence, relationship building, emotional regulation, problem solving, empathy and resilience.

The role of Sparkways Early Learning

Sparkways Early Learning is an Early Years Manager (EYM) and the approved provider for your kindergarten and/or childcare. Sparkways is responsible for the legal and financial accountability for the day-to-day operations of your service and is the employer of all the staff at the service.

In partnership with our Local Government Authorities and the Department of Education, our responsibilities include:

- ▶ Meeting all of the relevant legislation and regulations that cover provision of early childhood services.
- ▶ Ensuring that all aspects of the National Quality Framework (NQF) are met.
- ▶ Managing, supervising and recruiting staff and providing staff with professional development and training, along with mentoring and leadership opportunities.
- ▶ Managing enrolments in partnership with families, communities and local government.
- ▶ Coordinating all aspects of fees.
- ▶ Advocating for the needs and rights of children and families at all levels of government.
- ▶ Exploring new and innovative ways to provide high-quality early childhood education.
- ▶ Adheres to all Child Protection and Safety Standards, policies and procedures and maintains a “Zero tolerance to Child Abuse”

For more information visit our website: www.sparkways.org.au

We encourage every community to participate in the service by forming Parent Support Group’s (PSG) that can contribute to fundraising, excursions, activities and community engagement – the fun and enjoyable activities that form part of your child’s early learning experience!



Sparkways quality promise

All Sparkways services operate in accordance with the National Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) and the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF).

Developed in 2009, these frameworks provide the basis for professional practice for early childhood professionals working with children from birth to eight years.

The frameworks describe the principles, practice and outcomes essential to support and enhance young children's learning, with a strong emphasis on play-based, enquiry learning.

These frameworks underpin the National Quality Framework (NQF) and the National Quality Standards (NQS) which provide a national approach to regulation, assessment and quality improvement in all kindergartens and childcare services. Both the NQF and NQS are overseen by a national regulatory body the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA).

Sparkways is also committed to ensuring that we adhere to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) which was ratified in Australia in 1990. This recognises that children have the same rights as adults, however need special protection because of their vulnerability. These rights ensure that children have the right of participation, protection and prevention from harm.

Sparkways policies and procedures

Sparkways is committed to ensuring that all children receive high-quality play-based learning in a safe and inclusive environment.

We have a number of policies and procedures to support staff in their work with children and families. Sparkways policies and procedures are available to be viewed on our website www.sparkways.org.au/early-learning/tools-advice/early-learning-policies or via hard copy at your child's service.

If you would like to view these documents, please see your Centre Director or Nominated Supervisor.

Review our policies

We invite you to review our policies, which cover operation, quality, health, safety and wellbeing in our centres. These are available on our website www.sparkways.org.au/early-learning/tools-advice/early-learning-policies or at your child's centre.

No smoking, vaping or alcohol

Please be advised that all Sparkways services, internal and external, are designated as smoke and vape free at all times. Educators, staff and volunteers must not consume alcohol or be affected by alcohol or drugs (including prescription medications) that may impair their capacity to carry out their duties.

Beginning the journey

Starting kindergarten or childcare is a special time for families. Your child can look forward to engaging in new experiences, developing friendships and learning valuable lifelong skills.



To support your child's transition to kindergarten or childcare there are a few things you need to know and can do to help:

Documentation

Make sure your enrolment form and any other required documents (e.g. Medical Management Plans if applicable) are fully completed before your child starts kindergarten or childcare. This is a regulatory requirement and your child will not be able to start at the service until this is received.

Privacy and confidentiality

We have put in place a Privacy and Confidentiality Policy, which explains how we will collect, use, disclose, manage and transfer personal information including health information. This policy is available on request.

Individuals on whom we hold personal or health information are able to gain access to this information in accordance with applicable legislation. The procedure for doing this is set out in our Privacy and Confidentiality Policy.

You will be asked to provide specific consent in relation to photographs and videos of your child within the enrolment form and how these images are able to be used.



Meeting your educators

Before you start your Sparkways Early Learning journey, our educators will spend some time with you as part of orientation.

Orientation will be organised by the educators in your service and is designed to provide you with an opportunity to spend time in the program with your child to help them explore and settle into a new environment, while meeting the staff and other children.

This is a great opportunity to share information about your child's likes and dislikes, and to ask any questions you may have. During the orientation process you will also be provided with detailed information about what you need to provide.

Every child is different and our orientation will be tailored to the needs of you and your child. Kindergarten services will often have orientation days whereas our childcare services will provide more individual orientation schedules according to the family's needs.



Other tips and suggestions

- ▶ Visit the service one or more times to explore the environment.
- ▶ Talk to your child about what to expect when they come. Tell them when they will be attending, their educator's names and the activities that they can look forward to.
- ▶ Talk to your child about your own rewarding early childhood experiences.
- ▶ Read your child stories about school, or about trying new things.
- ▶ Tell your child where you will be while they are at kindergarten or childcare. Often children want to know!

Once your child starts

- ▶ Our educators will support your child to settle in and will work in collaboration with you and your child to create a "goodbye routine".
- ▶ You may like to stay with your child to engage in play or watch them as they play. You can reduce your stay time as your child becomes more confident in their new environment.
- ▶ Establish good relationships with your child's educators. Let your child see you speaking with the educators and/or participate in an activity with them and your child.
- ▶ If your child is anxious, try to be calm and acknowledge how they feel.
- ▶ When it is time to leave, let them know you will be collecting them later in the day.
- ▶ When you collect your child, take some time to ask them about their day such as what was their favourite activity.

What your child should wear

Children are encouraged to wear comfortable clothing which allows for freedom of movement with play activities while being mindful of both the weather conditions and the safe sleeping guidelines. Children's clothing should be suitable for messy and active play and shoes should enclose their feet and have a firm grip sole.

What to bring

We ask that your child's belongings be clearly labelled with their name.

- ▶ A backpack/bag.
- ▶ If your child is attending a kindergarten service, they will need to bring snacks and/or lunch.
- ▶ A complete change of clothing and spare pair of shoes (including extra if your child is independent in going to the toilet).
- ▶ A wide brimmed sun hat when the Ultra Violet (UV) rating is over 3. We also encourage the application of SPF 30 (or higher) sunscreen and sunglasses. See our sun protection policy for more details www.sparkways.org.au/early-learning/tools-advice/early-learning-policies
- ▶ In winter – a warm coat and beanie.
- ▶ Comfortable shoes for playing and climbing (thongs and crocs are not recommended).
- ▶ A drink bottle filled with fresh water.
- ▶ If your child would like to bring along a favourite toy from home, please let your educator know (educators cannot accept responsibility for toys brought from home).

Meals and nutrition

Our childcare services provide nutritious and healthy meals for children every day ensuring that children's dietary requirements are met to support their growth and development. Our menus are based on the Australian Dietary Guidelines and are consistent with the recommendations in the *Australian Government's Get Up & Grow: Healthy Eating and Physical Activity for Early Childhood*. All allergies and intolerances are catered for and seasonal menus are planned to provide a range of delicious meals for children from when they start solids to school age.

Children in our kindergarten services are required to bring their own lunch and snacks for each session. Families will be advised of any Allergy Awareness requirements on orientation. Educators use mealtimes as opportunities to promote healthy eating.



Committed to each other

We believe we're stronger together and strive to work in active partnership with families and the community to deliver early learning and care services that meet and exceed community needs.



Family helpers

We believe that volunteering develops strong partnerships between our services, families, volunteers, community services and the broader community.

We're committed to child safety and ask all parents, guardians and carers wanting to participate in our kindergarten and/or childcare programs to obtain a Working with Children Check (WWC). WWC's are a requirement for parent's participation in Primary School so getting yours is great preparation for the whole family to be 'school ready'. There is no charge for volunteer Working with Children Checks which can be obtained from your State Government.

All other volunteers (who are not family members) will be required to have a valid WWC card to engage in programs and activities in services. Volunteers will also be asked to sign into the visitor's book on each occasion as it is a requirement of the Education and Care Services Law and Regulations that the service maintain records of family helpers participating in the program. And provide evidence that they are fully vaccinated for Covid-19 or hold valid evidence of a medical exemption.

Other ways you can be involved at your child's service include:

- ▶ Providing feedback regularly and participating in our Parent Surveys
- ▶ Joining your Parent Support Group (PSG)
- ▶ Supporting fundraising and working bee initiatives
- ▶ Attending events and parent information evenings
- ▶ Suggesting ideas and sharing your skills

Speak to your child's educator about other ways you can become involved.



Excursions

Learning can take place in many settings and as such, excursions form a valuable part of our services.

Risk assessments are conducted by staff prior to any excursion taking place and parents will be required to sign written permission for their child to attend. Parents are actively encouraged to attend these excursions to support the children and staff and will require a Working with Children Check.

Storypark

Storypark is available in all Sparkways Early Learning services as a digital means to communicate with families.

Storypark is an online communication platform that enables educators to share regular information about children's development, milestones and activities with families.

Storypark can be used to communicate learning stories, updates and for program and planning purposes. It can also be used as a tool for broadcasting emergencies. Families are administrators of their child's account and can decide who has access to their child's information.

If your enrolled centre uses Storypark, families will receive an email from the service to set up your account on enrolment. For further information, please speak with your child's educators.

Creating a diverse and inclusive culture

Children and families are not all the same.
We are committed to ensuring that our services are
accessible and meet the needs of all children.



We strive to create learning communities that are rich in diversity and opportunity where all children can access high-quality learning and care, and are given opportunities to reach their full potential.

Our approach ensures that each child is treated as an individual and that they are recognised for who they are.

We recognise that each family and child is unique, and work in partnership with families to identify children's strengths and needs, ensuring every child is included in our play and enquiry-based learning programs.

We encourage the participation of your child by planning learning experiences and environments that are inclusive of their needs, abilities, culture, language & communication strengths and learning styles.

If you believe your family and/or child will require additional support to fully access a childcare or kindergarten program, it is important that you speak as soon as possible with your child's educator – they are best placed to guide you through a successful transition.



Children from culturally and socially diverse backgrounds

We offer a family centred practice approach in all of our services and work to ensure that children and families from all cultures and backgrounds are welcome. We encourage use of first language, family histories and rituals within our programming. You can assist your child by providing us with information about your languages, beliefs and cultural practices during your enrolment and orientation period.

Families attending funded kindergarten can access a free interpreter service through the Victorian Government. Ask your child's educator for more information.

Children from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds

We acknowledge, respect and value the traditions, heritages, stories, rituals and histories of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

We strive to work collaboratively with our local Indigenous communities to ensure we provide culturally safe and appropriate programs for all children.

We also work hard to build the cultural history of our nations peoples into the curriculum.

Feedback

We encourage feedback about our services and your experiences. Both positive and negative feedback is welcomed to ensure that we are constantly meeting the needs of families.

If you have a concern regarding your child's education or care, please raise the issue with your child's educator in the first instance, then the Centre Director or Nominated Supervisor if necessary.

If after these discussions you are not satisfied with the response, you are encouraged to contact your Area Manager (the name and contact details of this person are listed on the Complaints Procedure displayed in your service).

Should you wish to take the matter further, please contact the Early Learning Chief Operating Officer, on 1300 677 275.



For a full outline of the Complaints and Grievances Policy, please refer to our website: www.sparkways.org.au/early-learning/tools-advice/early-learning-policies



Operating hours and session times

- ▶ Kindergarten services operate in line with school term times each year.
- ▶ Childcare services close for a two-week period over Christmas and New Year, you will be advised of the dates early in your attendance at your service (subject to annual review).
- ▶ Please check with your enrolled service(s) to confirm specific operating hours.
- ▶ Session times are also available for viewing through our website at **www.sparkways.org.au**
- ▶ If a family is delayed for pickup time due to unavoidable circumstances, they must contact the service staff to advise the details and when the child will be collected.
- ▶ If the service has not been contacted by the family, a staff member will attempt to contact both parents and emergency contacts before calling the police.
- ▶ A late collection fee will be charged at \$20 per 15 minutes or part thereof at kindergarten and childcare services.



Additional closures

Our Early Learning services all close for one full day of professional training each year. In addition, our Kindergartens close for two professional training days and three organisational set up and pack away days. These dates will be confirmed upon enrolment. The training days enhances educator's skills and knowledge, which benefits all children, families and the wider community.

Public Holidays

All Sparkways Early Learning services are closed on public holidays.

- ▶ New Year's Day
- ▶ Australia Day
- ▶ Labour Day
- ▶ Good Friday
- ▶ Easter Monday
- ▶ Anzac Day
- ▶ King's Birthday
- ▶ Grand Final Holiday
- ▶ Melbourne Cup Day
- ▶ Christmas Day
- ▶ Boxing Day

Fees policy

Each of our services have fees relating to the programs they offer, determined by the cost of operating the service. As a not-for-profit organisation we aim to keep our fees as low as possible, reviewing fees for all services annually:

- ▶ Fees for kindergartens are fixed per term for the calendar year.
- ▶ Fees for childcare services are reviewed throughout the year. Families will be advised in writing of any change to fees at least 30 days prior.
- ▶ From 2023, the Victorian Government is making kindergarten programs free for three and four-year-old children

Kindergarten Billing

The Victorian Government provides funding to support children to access a high quality kindergarten program in the two years before they start school. This helps to ensure all Victorian children get the best start in life.

From 2023, the Victorian Government is making kindergarten programs free for three and four-year-old children – saving you and your family up to \$2,500 per year for their program. Free Kinder is a critical component of the Victorian Government's Best Start, Best Life reform.

Childcare Billing

Families using our childcare services will be billed on a fortnightly basis, and are expected to pay two weeks in advance. This process is set up through direct credit or debit facilities via our payment gateway Debit success.

Our fees are reviewed twice annually, and written notice is provided to all families prior to any fee increase.

Integrated Kindergarten in Childcare

From 2023, the Victorian Government is making kindergarten programs free for three and four-year-old children – saving you up to \$2,000 per year for each year of a kindergarten program your child attends in an integrated long day care setting. Free Kinder is a critical component of the Victorian Government's Best Start, Best Life reform.

The Victorian Government's Free Kinder payments will be deducted from the childcare fees that you pay, up to a value of \$2,000 for a 15-hour program. If your child is enrolled in an Integrated Three-Year-Old Kindergarten at program for less than 600 hours per year, Free Kinder will be applied on a pro-rata basis.

Overdue accounts and late payment fees

An account is overdue when payment hasn't been made by the due date specified on the statement.

If an account is overdue, the parent will be notified and advised that:

- ▶ the account must be paid in full;
- ▶ Late Payment Fee of \$22.00 (inc GST) may be added to the account and will be added each week until the account is paid in full;
- ▶ failure to pay the account in full may result in their child's place being forfeited; and
- ▶ If not resolved within 14 days, the service may stop your child's care. The debt including any late payment charges may be handed over to the company's debt collection agency for processing.
- ▶ Please contact your Centre Director if you're experiencing difficulties paying your child care fees so a payment plan can be put in place. Payment plans will cover your existing weekly childcare fees and an additional amount to pay off the incurred debt. The additional payment will be worked out in consultation with the Centre Director.

Late collection of children

If a family is delayed due to unavoidable circumstances, they must contact the centre staff to advise the details and when the child will be collected. If the centre has not been contacted by the family, a staff member will attempt to contact both parents and emergency contacts before calling the police. A late collection fee will be charged at \$20 per 15 minutes or part thereof.

Public holidays

Childcare fees are calculated on a weekly basis including public holidays. Families will be charged for public holidays at the same rate as a regular day of care.

Absenteeism

If your child is absent for the day, parents are requested to telephone the service as soon as possible to inform educators. If your child is sick, it is important to inform the service of the nature of the illness, symptoms and any diagnosis to assist in containing the spread of illness.

We strongly discourage children attending if they are not well. See page 41 Illnesses and Infectious Diseases.

Cancellation of booking

Families are asked to provide two weeks written notice to cancel their enrolment at kindergarten or childcare services.

For childcare services no Child Care Subsidy or Additional Child Care Subsidy is payable for any session of care that occurs after the last day a child physically attends care. Families whose last day of care is after the last day of attendance will be required to pay full fees for the remaining days.

Child Care Subsidy

On 2 July 2018 the Child Care Subsidy (CCS) replaced the Child Care Benefit and Child Care Rebate. The Child Care Subsidy is paid directly to services.

Three things determine a family's level of Child Care Subsidy:

1. the combined family income
2. the fortnightly family activity level – how much your family works, undertakes recognised learning, training, studying or volunteers
3. the fees charged by the early learning and care service.

For more information on the Child Care Subsidy, please visit the following website: www.dese.gov.au/child-care-package

If you have any questions, please feel free to speak with your Centre Director.

The full Fees Payment Policy is available for your review at your child's service or on our website at www.sparkways.org.au/early-learning/tools-advice/early-learning-policies



Our commitment to safety

We're committed to providing a child safe environment where children are safe, feel safe, and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives.



Building and playground safety

Our staff conduct daily safety inspections of the indoor and outdoor environments. Any hazards are removed or made inaccessible to children and reported to management / local council for further action. The Australian Standards for Playgrounds are used to guide all outdoor equipment purchases.

Please refer to the Sparkways Building Safety Checks and Maintenance of Buildings and Equipment Policy which is available at your children's service or on our website at www.sparkways.org.au/early-learning/tools-advice/early-learning-policies

Emergency procedures

Fire extinguishers and first aid kits are located at each service and are regularly maintained. Emergency evacuation procedures are clearly displayed at each service. Staff are required to practice emergency procedures (including lock-down, evacuation etc), with the children each term. In the event of an emergency evacuation, the procedures outlined in the displayed information will be followed. Parents will be notified as soon as feasible to collect their child.

Visitors book

All visitors must sign in and out in the service's visitors book. This is a regulatory requirement and is important for the security of children, parents and educators. Visitors include any maintenance personnel, local council employees, government representatives, Sparkways representatives, specialists, parents assisting for the day, etc. All visitors assisting/working directly with children are required to hold a valid Working with Children Check. This will be checked and verified as up to date on each occasion of a visitor's attendance. The visitors book provides a record of visitors on the premises in the event of an emergency evacuation.

Your child's health and wellbeing

Wellbeing incorporates both physical and psychological aspects and is central to belonging, being and becoming.

Sparkways Early Learning policies

Your child's health and wellbeing is important to us. We have a range of policies that cover all aspects of operation and quality in our services.



We invite you to review these policies, to discuss them with your educators and to provide feedback. Policies are available at your child's service and on our website www.sparkways.org.au/early-learning/tools-advice/early-learning-policies

Medication

Administering medication to children at the request of their parents is a task that requires attention to detail, record keeping, teamwork and communication with children and families. Medication (including prescription, over the counter and homeopathic medications) will not be administered to a child without authorisation by a parent or person with the authority to consent to administration of medical attention to the child.

Parent/guardians are required to:

- ▶ Authorise medication administration and hand medication directly to an educator.
- ▶ Complete all necessary documentation required under the Education and Care Services National Law Act and Education and Care Services National Regulations.
- ▶ Notify the service of any special medical treatment or consideration required for your child, and where necessary, in consultation with educators, develop appropriate medical management plan and risk minimisation plans.

Medication will only be administered:

- ▶ From its original container (whether prescribed or non-prescribed) before the expiry or use-by date.
- ▶ In accordance with any instructions attached to the medication or provided by a registered medical practitioner.
- ▶ For prescribed medications, from a container that bears the original label with the name of the child for whom it is prescribed.
- ▶ Non-prescription medication will only be administered when accompanied by a medical management plan from a doctor.
- ▶ Please note paracetamol is not supplied by Sparkways Early Learning.



Illness and infectious disease

We follow legislated procedures to promote children's health and minimise the spread of infection. Please keep your child at home if they are unwell. We require that children with the following symptoms or illness must be kept at home until they are completely well:

- ▶ High temperature (38 °C or above).
- ▶ Vomiting.
- ▶ Loose bowel motions.
- ▶ Rashes – any irritation that cannot be identified.
- ▶ Red, swollen or discharging eyes.
- ▶ If a child seems sick without obvious symptoms, for example unusually tired, irritable, lethargic, not eating or drinking.
- ▶ Any of the infectious diseases listed in the Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations 2019 exclusion table viewable here www2.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/infectious-diseases/school-exclusion/school-exclusion-table
- ▶ In the event of your child suffering an infectious disease, you may be required to provide Sparkways Early Learning with a medical clearance to return to the service.

Please inform staff as soon as possible if your child is diagnosed with an infectious illness. Educators are required to alert all families at the children's service. Confidentiality will be respected at all times.

Parents/guardians will be asked to collect their child if they show any signs of the symptoms mentioned above of illnesses or infectious diseases. You will be required to keep your child at home for at least 24 hours, with symptoms not displayed for at least eight hours before returning to the service, depending on the circumstances.

If your child becomes ill while in our care, you will be notified as soon as possible. An ill child will be kept comfortable and under observation until the parent/guardian, or authorised person collects the child from the service. Educators will complete the details of your child's illness in the Illness Record and you will be required to read and sign this record upon collection of your child.



Immunisation

By law, your child must be fully vaccinated for their age to attend any early learning and care service.

Please complete your child's immunisation details on their enrolment form and provide a current immunisation history statement, approved catch-up schedule or medical exemption form as soon as possible.

If your child is not vaccinated, our educators will support you through the process outlined in the No Jab, No Play tool kit however your child will not be able to attend a Sparkways service until their records meet the requirements of the law.



For more information, please review our policy at www.sparkways.org.au/early-learning/tools-advice/early-learning-policies. Your child's educators can also answer your questions.

Your child's Immunisation History Statement can be downloaded from your MyGov Account. Alternatively, you can go to your local Medicare office or GP to download a copy from the Australian Immunisation Register.

For children vaccinated overseas, parents will need to consult with their GP who will transfer the information to the Australian Childhood Immunisation Register. Once these have been confirmed an Immunisation History Statement can be issued.

Health conditions

If your child has a medical condition that requires particular treatment and is attending the centre, educators will provide support and care so that your child can participate equally in all aspects of the program.

Please inform your child's educators of your child's healthcare needs or diagnosed medical conditions. The Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011 (amended version 2017) regulation 162(d) requires families to provide a copy of a medical management plan for children who have a specific healthcare need, medical condition or allergy, examples include:

- ▶ asthma
- ▶ an allergic reaction
- ▶ anaphylaxis
- ▶ eczema
- ▶ allergic rhinitis (hay fever)
- ▶ diabetes
- ▶ epilepsy

Please consult with your Medical Practitioner to obtain these plans if applicable.

Educators will work with families to develop procedures for the safe and effective management of these matters. This may include developing:

- ▶ a Risk Minimisation Plan
- ▶ an understanding of the signs and symptoms of the medical condition and requires attention or treatment
- ▶ an understanding of how to keep your child well
- ▶ a strategy of how to respond if your child shows any signs or symptoms

Parents/caregivers are to supply all relevant medications required for their child and these are to remain on the premises for the duration of their care. Staff will monitor expiry dates regularly and will communicate with families when these are due for renewal. If your child's medication is not provided or available for staff to use in an emergency, children will be unable to attend the service.

Accidents, incidents and injuries

Under the Education and Care Services National Regulations, we are required to follow procedures in the event of a child sustaining an injury.

All educators hold current first aid qualifications. At enrolment, parents are required to sign an authority for educators to seek emergency medical or ambulance assistance if necessary.

Incidents and accidents

If your child is involved in a minor incident (e.g. tripping over) or accident (e.g. bumping their head), educators will comfort your child, assess their condition, and monitor their wellbeing. Educators will record the details on the Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Record and will contact you to discuss the incident. You may be required to collect your child and seek medical advice. You will be asked to read and sign the accident record when you collect your child. Please inform the educator if your child's condition changes or if you seek medical advice.

Medical emergencies

Your child's wellbeing is our priority. If your child is involved in a medical emergency staff will administer first aid as required, call emergency services and contact you. Educators will be directed by paramedics. We will endeavour to keep you informed of all actions until you are with your child. Parents/guardians are responsible for any initial and subsequent medical costs (including all ambulance costs) associated with their child's accident/injury.

Child safe environment

Sparkways is committed to fulfilling the requirements of the Victorian Child Safe Standards.

We have a legal and moral responsibility to ensure that all children are safe in our care. We are committed to:

- ▶ Ensuring the health, safety and wellbeing of children at the service is protected at all times whilst also promoting their learning and development.
- ▶ Fulfilling its Duty of Care obligations under the law by protecting children from any reasonable, foreseeable risk of injury or harm.
- ▶ Ensuring that people caring for children at the service act in the best interests of the child, and take all reasonable steps to ensure the child's safety and wellbeing at all times.
- ▶ Fulfilling its legal obligations to report all allegations and incidents of abuse, neglect and misconduct to the appropriate authorities.
- ▶ Supporting the rights of all children to feel safe, and to be safe at all times.
- ▶ Developing and maintaining a culture in which children feel valued, respected and cared for.
- ▶ Encouraging active participation from parents/guardians and families at the service, and ensuring that best practice is based on a partnership approach and shared responsibility for children's health, safety, wellbeing and development.
- ▶ Promoting children's development and wellbeing.

A referral to Orange Door Family Support Services or a report to Child Protection will be made whenever there are reasonable grounds to believe that a child has, or is likely to, suffer significant harm or the child's safety and/or wellbeing is at risk. Actions and decisions made under this policy consider the importance of maintaining respectful and collaborative relationships with children and their family. Please refer to the Sparkways Early Learning Child Safe Policy www.sparkways.org.au/early-learning/tools-advice/early-learning-policies

Court orders

We are committed to ensuring that both parents are entitled to have a significant involvement in their child's care and welfare.

If there are any court orders, parenting orders/plans or Apprehended Violence Orders (AVO) relating to the powers, duties, responsibilities of authorities of any person in relation to your child, you are required to provide these orders to the service.

Unless specifically prohibited by a court order or parenting plan, we will not refuse either parent in being involved in their child's education and care. Sparkways staff are committed to ensuring that there are arrangements in place for communications between both parties.

Parents are requested to issue the service with any updates or amendments to these plans as soon as possible to ensure that all parties can adhere to these orders. Sparkways staff will not mediate disputes between parents in relation to contact with children.

Work health and safety

We are committed to ensuring the safety of everyone who uses our services. Staff conduct daily checks in regard to the safety of the indoor and outdoor space as well as equipment. Should you become aware of an area of our service which you believe to be unsafe then please direct your concerns to the Centre Director/Teacher in Charge as soon as possible.

Code of Conduct

We have a strong commitment to safe, child friendly environments and expects all visitors to our services to adhere to the following codes of conduct:

- ▶ Respectful behaviour towards all children, staff, families, and visitors attending Sparkways services.
- ▶ No aggressive language or behaviour will be tolerated in Sparkways services.
- ▶ Smacking children on Sparkways premises will not be tolerated.
- ▶ Sparkways expects all its employees to be always treated with courtesy and respect.
- ▶ Sparkways has a zero tolerance for any form of discrimination including racial, gender, sexual or religious discrimination.
- ▶ Valuing the differing perspectives and contributions of all members of our community.

Should you be unhappy with any aspect of your child's education and care then please refer to our Complaints and Grievance Policy located on the Sparkways website.

Sparkways does not condone the engagement of Sparkways staff to care for children outside the service, whether this is for payment or not. This can place the staff member in a conflict of interest between both their professional and personal boundaries.

Sparkways strongly discourages staff from being connected on social media with families attending our services.



Contact us

If you have a query or concern, please don't hesitate to speak with your educators or contact our customer service team.



cs@sparkways.org.au



www.sparkways.org.au



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