

Norwest News February 2012

Directors Update

Welcome to our first Newsletter for 2012! I hope everyone has had a great start to the New Year and are starting to settle back into the swing of things. I have recently returned from maternity leave after having my second baby (Kaeden). My 6 months off was lovely and I have come back to work re energised picking up where I left off. There are many new faces I have not yet met and will do my best to continue introducing myself to those of you I don't know over the coming weeks. We have been very busy at the centre with so many things going on in the first few weeks back. Most of the children seem to be settling in very easily which is making it an easy transition process for parents, children and staff. We appreciate all the feedback that we can get - everyone's input is of immense value, especially those of you who have suggestions for improvement or additions. We are particularly excited about our upcoming Parent Information Night in February and our Art and Craft Exhibition in April when we'll get a chance to chat with many of you. Hope to see you all there!



Office Hours

Office hours here at the centre are between 8.00am and 5.00pm. Between these hours there is at least one person available (Ashley, Sarah or Nesha). Outside of these hours, or if on lunch breaks please feel free to leave a note, call through the day, or send an email so that one of us can get back to you as soon as possible.

Limited Vacancies for 2012

We have a small amount of limited positions still available for 2012, so get in quick if you are wanting to add additional days or know someone who is looking for care. Just speak with Ashley or Sarah to discuss availability.

Labels

All items of clothing and other belongings that are brought to the centre need to have a clear label with your child's name. Anything that is found and is unidentifiable by staff will be placed in the lost property basket. This basket gets emptied on a regular basis so please keep an eye on it should any of your child's belongings go missing.



The cheapest, and most effective way of labelling your child's clothing is to buy a **laundry marker** from the supermarket. You can then easily write your child's NAME (not just initials) clearly on their clothes so that our staff can return any misplaced clothing to you. There are also a number of companies who do great labels at an affordable price including:

- <https://www.stuckonyou.biz>
- <http://www.identikid.com.au/>
- <http://www.ozlabels.com.au>
- <http://www.labelkingdom.com.au/>
- <http://www.brightstarkids.com.au/>

Family Pigeon Holes

All family pockets/pigeon holes have been updated – each family has one in the foyer, which we use for printed communication, and your child's art/ craft work. If you don't seem to have one, or can't find your family pocket please see Ashley or Sarah. Remember to empty your pocket regularly.

Sun safety: Hats, Sunscreen and Shirts

Sun Safety is very important for your children during these warm & sunny months. We are a 'Sunsafe' centre, as certified by the NSW Cancer Council, and as such, we have strict guidelines on how to keep your children 'Sunsafe' during summer.

Please remember that it is the responsibility of parents to ensure their children arrive at the centre with **sunscreen** on. We have a large pump bottle of sunscreen in the foyer for parents to apply on arrival if you didn't already do it at home as a part of your morning routine. As per our policy/procedure, morning sunscreen is your responsibility – we don't apply sunscreen in the morning. Room staff will reapply sunscreen on all children approximately 20 minutes before going outside in the afternoons.

Brimms are Best: We also ask that all parents make sure that their children are coming to the centre with a labelled **hat**. All hats are to stay in the childrens bags and are put on when going outside. When the children return inside, staff assist them in returning their hats to their bags. If your child does not have a hat we do have some spares, however after 3 days of wearing a spare hat, the child will be given a centre hat and a charge of **\$8.00** will be added to your account.

Finally, it can be very tempting to dress your child in a 'singlet top' or a 'tank top' during summer. Please remember that all children need to be in tshirts/tops with **capped sleeves**, to ensure that their shoulders are protected adequately from the sun.

Attached to the email you received with the newsletter link are also 2 articles relating to children wearing brimmed hats and not caps.

What is the Early Years Learning Framework?

The Early Years Learning Framework describes the principles, practice and outcomes essential to support and enhance young children's learning from birth to five years of age, as well as their transition to school. The Framework has a strong emphasis on play-based learning as play is the best vehicle for young children's learning providing the most appropriate stimulus for brain development. The Framework also recognises the importance of communication and language (including early literacy and numeracy) and social and emotional development. The Early Years Learning Framework has been developed collaboratively by the Australian and State and Territory Governments with substantial input from the early childhood sector and early childhood academics.

At Norwest Child Care Centre we have developed our own strategy to implement the Framework, taking our own unique context into consideration and present this in many distinctive ways, including our learning stories and project documentation. We have many workshops and team meetings to review our program and practices, brainstorm new ideas, reflect on our pedagogy and to collaboratively overcome any challenges. This is to ensure we are producing and maintaining high quality educational programs and documentation for your children.



What is the National Quality Framework (NQF)? And how will the changes affect us?

National Quality Framework

The National Quality Framework aims to raise quality and drive continuous improvement and consistency in education and care services through:

- a national legislative framework
- a National Quality Standard
- a national quality rating and assessment process
- a new national body called the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority.

The National Quality Framework will take effect on 1 January 2012 with key requirements being phased in overtime. Requirements such as qualification, educator-to-child ratios and other key staffing arrangements will be phased in between 2012 and 2020.

National Quality Standard

The National Quality Standard sets a new national benchmark for the quality of education and care services. The National Quality Standard is divided into seven Quality Areas:

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.

The National Quality Standard aims to promote:

- the safety, health and wellbeing of children
- a focus on achieving outcomes for children through high-quality educational programs
- families' understanding of what distinguishes a quality service.

There are a couple of minor adjustments that we've made across the centre, mostly to do with the wording of policies to bring them into line with the new national standards.

- The **policy change drafts** will be displayed in the foyer in the coming weeks and we invite your input
- You'll notice a new sign in the foyer providing our basic information all in one spot
- We've also made some minor adjustments to our forms - eg Accident Form, updating wording etc and these will be displayed for comment after our policies have been reviewed.
- Our Director, Ashley, is now our **Nominated Supervisor** (old title was Authorised Supervisor)
- If Ashley is absent (and neither Nesha or Ngaire - the licensees – are onsite) we'll always have a **Responsible Person** at the centre – we have appointed a number of Certified Supervisors and are waiting for their applications to be approved by the appropriate department – Sarah, Rachel, Rebecca, Fernanda, Amanda EJ, Amanda G, Louise, Jen, Caitlin, Laura and Alison are all going to be **Certified Supervisors**.
- Ashley will continue to provide input, guidance and mentoring for our educators, leading the program across the centre, as such she has been appointed our **Pedagogical (Educational) Leader**. She will ensure that we continue to incorporate the Early Years Learning Framework in our program of play-based educational activities and guide the team in reflective pedagogy.

If you have any questions about the new regulations / national standards, Nesha (the Secretary to the Board of Child Care NSW) is a wealth of information and is happy to answer your questions.

News from the kitchen?

This year has started positively with my Summer Menu being well received by the children (including the new ones!). Some of their favourites are Shell's Cheesy Creamed Corn and Vegetable Pasta, Mexican Tortilla Pie and the yummy Poached Chicken and Basil Wraps with salad. We have been enjoying fresh seasonal fruits in our morning and afternoon tea platters which currently include watermelon, grapes and other stone fruits. Lots of baking has been going on with the Ocean Room cooking Damper and Anzac biscuits for Australia Day and the Bush Room baking Cheese and Tomato muffins and Jam drops. Delicious!

I am in the process of developing the autumn menu which will be on display soon. If you would like a copy of the summer or future menus or recipes please come and see me in the kitchen between 8 and 3 or leave me a note in the communication tin.



Breakfast

At the centre we do not provide breakfast for children, however are more than happy to supervise them while they eat a healthy breakfast from home. We understand that being busy parents, it's often more convenient to feed your children after they leave home in the mornings. However, as our staff are focusing on welcoming and settling children into the centre each morning, they cannot be responsible for one-on-one feeding at this time of day.

If your child needs to be fed prior to 8am, you have several options:

- If they are able to self-feed – eg a bottle, finger foods – pack them into a disposable container and staff will supervise the group of children who are eating breakfast. Please note that these foods need to be given to staff and not left in bags. They also need to be easy to manage foods – nothing that can cause too much mess for the staff to clean up (eg cereals, yogurts) a list of suitable foods is provided below.
- If they are not able to self-feed you can sit with them at the centre and feed them prior to departing. Staff will provide you with a seat / high chair and a bib.

Suitable Breakfast Options:

Fruit pieces
Toast / Crumpets
Sandwiches
Crackers
Fruit bars

Unsuitable options:

Farex, porridge, cereal with milk
Yogurt
Anything that staff are required to make up
Anything that staff are required to provide cutlery for, or wash up afterwards
Fast foods / unhealthy foods



Please remember that we are a nut free zone, so no nut spreads (peanut butter, nutella etc). Unfortunately this has to be thrown out immediately. Please remember to check muesli bars etc as some contain nuts.



Open Door Policy

Parents and family are always welcome at the centre at any time. If you would like to come in and do an activity with the children, speak to the staff in your room. You may like to participate in activities including:

- Reading a story to the children – perhaps one from home?
- Doing some gardening
- Doing some culturally significant cooking
- Teaching them a new song
- Bringing in photos or souvenirs from a trip (overseas or interstate) or visit (zoo or aquarium) with your kids

Spotlight on..... Amanda G??

Name: Amanda Giesler

Role at Centre: Rainforest Room Leader

Background: Amanda has worked in child care since September 2002 and will be turning 28 this year.

Amanda has moved around a lot in the last 3 years and has lived and worked in both the city and the country. Amanda was employed at Norwest Child Care Centre in August 2011 and is a valuable part of our team.

Qualifications: Diploma of Childrens Services

Family: Amanda currently lives at home with her mum and dad. She has a brother and a sister and two gorgeous nieces.

Something you don't know about me: I used to collect Elmo's.

In my spare time I... like to go to the gym, participate in athletics, go shopping (like most girls) and spend time with my friends and my family.



Entertainment Books

With all the great fundraising that we do throughout the year we will be doing the entertainment books again this year. Details of when we will be selling them will be coming in the next few months. Please let all your family and friends know in case they would like you to get one for them too. The Entertainment Book is a local restaurant and activity guide which provides valuable 25% to 50% off and 2-for-1 offers from the finest restaurants, activities and accommodation throughout Australia and New Zealand. In addition you can get 5% off all Coles purchases. You can enjoy valuable offers for the things you like to do every day. All money raised through fundraising goes directly to buy fantastic extras for your children – e.g. performances, equipment and experiences.

What happens when we don't have your CRN details?

As a part of your enrolment documentation, we require a CRN for you and your child. If we do not have this information within the first 2 weeks of attendance, your attendance details are not forwarded to DEEWR/FAO. This means that you will not be receiving CCB (Child Care Benefit - a reduction in your weekly fees) nor CCR (Child Care Rebate - 50% of your fees paid back after each quarter). We have given all of our families an information sheet about CCB/CCR with their printed account information at the beginning of the year - and can give you even more information if you're still confused. If you contact us after a significant period of time with the details it requires HOURS of work to resubmit all of the information - it is an incredibly time consuming and frustrating exercise for us (particularly since it could have been done easily at the time of enrolment). As such our policy is that you will be charged an administration fee of **\$250** prior to us doing the work - and this doesn't actually cover our costs! In addition, if we have any trouble 'formalising' the enrolment (i.e. connecting to the DEEWR system) we contact you to have the issues resolved. These issues need to be resolved ASAP for the same reasons. Please help us to ensure that you get all of the money back from the government to which you are entitled by ensuring that your enrolments are formalised.

Parent Information Night

We are holding a Parent information Night the 16th February. This is a great opportunity to hear about all the fantastic things that are going on at the centre, and it also gives you the opportunity to contribute ideas and feedback as well. As a part of our partnering with families, we ask that all families send along at least one adult, so that everyone knows about the centre. It's a good opportunity to send the parent who doesn't normally do drop off/ pick up, to meet and chat with our team. If you are not able to attend, please speak with staff.



Dates for your diary

7th Feb - Bush Room sports day
16th Feb - Parent info night
23rd Feb - 2011 Bilbies school reunion
24th Feb - Sunnies for sight day - children to wear sunglasses
14th March - Bush Room sports day
16th March - Crazy Hair Day and St. Patricks day - children to dress in green
20th March - Grandparents' Afternoon Tea
21st March - World Harmony Day - children to wear orange
23rd March - NWCCC 9TH Birthday Celebrations

Digital Portfolios:

Please remember to return all *Dreams and Goals* sheets to the staff in your child's room so they can be added to their portfolios

Again this year we are going to continue with the electronic portfolio system. After a lot of parent feedback we've all agreed that CDs are a great option as you are able to keep soft copies of all your childrens documents, they can be emailed to family and friends, re saved on numerous computers and so on. And importantly it minimises the amount of paper we go through at the centre allowing us to be 'greener', having less impact on the environment.

There will also be the option of having a book made up at the end of the year. This will be at an additional cost to families. More info and prices coming soon.

If you have any questions regarding the electronic portfolios feel free to ask Ashley or Sarah.



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Setting the Standard for High Quality, Affordable Child Care in the Hills District

Email Communication

Email is the quickest and most effective way for us to communicate with our families. We can email you our newsletters, accounts statements and reminders – and can include both parents, and even grandparents in our communications. If you are not receiving your newsletters/ statements via email please contact Sarah to update your details, or add an additional recipient.

Sign In and Out

Please don't forget to 'sign in' as you arrive in the morning and 'sign out' as you depart. If you are not signed in, we are meant to record that day as an absence for CCB/CCR (even if your child is here!). In addition, if there is an emergency – e.g. a fire or evacuation – we won't be looking for your child!

Library

We've got a brilliant little library here at Norwest for you and your children. For parents we've got some lovely resource books that you can borrow. For children, we've got a large library of top quality children's books that you can borrow overnight or for a week. For a joining fee of just \$5, you have access to all of our books! It's a cost effective way of introducing new books to your children, and helps you find that '10 minutes a day' to share a book with your kids. See Sarah or Ashley for details.



Thanks for all the wonderful and generous donations!

Ward family: Wall stickers, party bags, balloons & dress ups

Van Neijenhoff family: Books

Gauci family: Percussion instruments

Swansborough family: Baby toys

Walker family: Books

Bukovsky family: Soft toys

Bourne family: Books and flash cards

Feedback

Finally....you know that we love to hear your feedback here at the centre – the good, the bad and even the ugly. Often there are things that come up for families – questions, concerns, annoying little things, that aren't shared at the time but may build up and cause you to have a poor opinion of the centre, or our team. In order for us to make this a fantastic centre for you and your children, it's important that you tell us what's on your mind. You can call, email, speak with your teacher, make an appointment, write a communication note, drop an anonymous note into our letterbox/ communication box, speak with the Director (Ashley) or chat with the licensee (Nesha). Please don't feel worried about our reaction to your comments – we appreciate the time that our families make to give us feedback and we take it all on board.