



ascolta

early learning and care

Family Handbook

1. Introduction

Wanjoo/Welcome

Kaya, Benvenuti, Marhaba, Namaste, Hyälō, Bemvindo, Bienvenue, Hoş geldin, Huānyíng.

A warm welcome to all our families to a circle of partnership between Ascolta, your child and your family.

We endeavour to build a strong partnership and encourage you to become participants of your child's learning journey.



What's in a Name?

The Italian word, "ascolta" means "to listen". Listening is at the heart of our education – how can we know what to teach without actively listening to each child?

When children are empowered through listening, they feel safe, secure, confident and "heard". Our philosophy is built on relationships where educators actively listen and tune in to every child's individual needs. That means not just listening to sounds and words but knowing each child on a deep personal level where non-verbal cues and body language are intuitively responded to. Additionally, we listen to families so we can cater to each child's unique needs, learning challenges, and developmental stages.

To actively listen to your child, means to value not only what you hear but also what you see and feel. This implies understanding without judgment. To actively listen we need to take a step back, suspend our actions and trust the child.



"Listening is the basis for any learning relationship"

- Professor Carla Rinaldi

Meet Larry and Lexi!

Larry and Lexi are influential partners in our journey towards inspiring children to love learning. Of course, there is no substitute for physical, human role models – that's where our outstanding educators come in – but Larry and Lexi are here to support children in a unique and different way.

They are role models for the children, motivators, teaching tools and the perfect empathy doll. Larry and Lexi are used in all aspects of our teaching curriculum. This may be through taking part in a puppet show to reinforce the importance of sharing, or, if your child is having a tricky drop off, Larry and Lexi are there to welcome and cuddle.

Before your child starts, you might like to tell them about Larry and Lexi. This will help them settle in when they arrive, so they will already have a sense of excitement and familiarity about their new friends.



Our Values and Philosophy

Fostering A Love Of Learning – Listen, Love, Laugh, Learn – At The Core Of Everything We Do.



LISTEN

Educators actively listen and tune in to every child's learning journey.



LOVE

Children are nurtured with an intuitive sense of love.



LAUGH

Every child thrives in a happy, secure, and fun environment.



LEARN

Everyday opportunities for reflective, inquisitive, play-based learning.

There's power in play!

We believe play is the root of all learning, and listening is the foundation of love.

Ascolta Early Learning and Care's philosophy is crafted to support the wonder and magic children create. We view early childhood education as a living, breathing form of art that requires principled listeners, mastery and heart.

When educating children, we follow the pedagogy of listening. Educating with listening and sensitivity means that we value and consider every child's place. We give children recognition of their right to play, celebrate their strengths, and encourage them to try new things.

A blend of teaching methods that inspire and delight.

We're guided by the Early Years Learning Framework and inspired by a blend of best teaching practices: Reggio Emilia, Inquiry-Based Learning and Montessori. Alongside teaching children, we seek to create an environment of attuned educators, where listening becomes an attitude for life.

2. Family Communication

We know that parents are the “First Teachers” and we view our families as ‘partners’. Communication within the circle of partnership, where families, children and educators come together to share experiences, knowledge and ideas is fundamental to each child’s learning journey. We encourage our families to take an active role in the education of every child.

Earlyworks – An Online Communication Platform



Documenting the entire learning process is paramount and ensures families are aware of the progress their child has made over time and can assist educators in meeting each child’s needs.

All Ascolta families have access to an online communication platform called EarlyWorks. This platform enables easy access to your child’s portfolio of observations, journals and images. Parents can view their child’s current learning, areas of strength and progress towards goals. Having each child’s individual documentation in one place also allows educators to easily reflect, evaluate and plan for each child.

EarlyWorks allows parents to easily view:

- Photos, videos and document sharing;
- Record of sleep times;
- Record of all meals;
- Record of sunscreen application times; and
- Communicate between family and educators with ease via daily notes and quick notifications.

3. Curriculum

Our curriculum is a blend of three prevalent methods of best teaching practice;

Reggio Emilia, Inquiry-based-learning and Montessori together with the Early Years Learning Framework. Listening to children is a powerful tool that we believe enhances children's capabilities and is at the heart of education.



4. Enrolment

Enrolments are processed online via our website at www.ascoltaelc.com.au by simply following these steps:

1. Open our website at www.ascoltaelc.com.au
2. Click on the link "Enrol Here" located in the top right corner of the home page.
3. Follow the prompts via the SmartCentral online platform.

Prior to enrolling your child, we encourage you to get in contact with our friendly Centre Director to discuss your child's requirements and preferences. During this process we are happy to facilitate centre tours and encourage open discussions.

At the time of enrolment, families are required to provide their child's birth certificate and their immunisation record issued by Medicare as well as current contact details. Any information provided as part of the enrolment process is strictly confidential and will not be disclosed to anyone outside of Ascolta (unless we are legally obligated to do so).

Orientation

Individual orientation sessions are offered prior to commencement at the centre.

During this time we may discuss with you our philosophy and values, our rhythm of the day for your child's room. In collaboration with you we will discuss how best to support you and your child, safety and security measures along with what to bring for your child each day.

We do not charge for orientations and highly recommend them to all families.

Additional Support

Before enrolling your child, it is important to discuss any individual needs your child might have and how they can be met, including any cultural requirements.

Planning for children with individual needs requires careful thought and often the assistance of specialists. It is important to know how your child's specific needs may affect his/her learning and participation in experiences. This information will help us to meet the needs of your child and seek assistance from specialist and support workers if or as required.

5. Fees And Payments

Daily Childcare Rates

Please consult the Centre Director for confirmation of the current daily rates applicable to the Ascolta Service Centre.

Our daily rates and late fees are reviewed periodically. A notice period of no less than 14 days is provided to families should any changes to the daily fees occur.

Payment Methods

All fees must be paid by direct debit which is a secure online payment system where you can elect to transfer funds from either your bank account or credit card. Direct debit surcharges may apply.

Payments will be debited from your nominated account, each Wednesday afternoon.

If your Direct Debit declines, a failed transaction fee will apply, and alternative payment must be received by 4pm on Friday. If this deadline is missed, your child may not be able to attend until all outstanding payments have been received.

Two weeks written notice is required for any cancellation or changes to your booking. Accounts are always to be paid two weeks in advance. If you fall behind in your payments your child may risk losing their place at Ascolta.

Please refer to our Payment of Fees Policy (which may change from time to time) for more details. This is provided in the enrolment pack or can be found in the reception area of the Centre.

Late Pick-up Fees

Parents and guardians are asked for co-operation in dropping off and collecting children within our operating hours.

If at any time you are going to be delayed, please contact us as soon as possible. Educators and staff can then reassure your child's concerns and make plans for their own commitments. A late fee of \$1.00 per minute, per child, may apply if your child is left at the Centre after closing time. The late fee is NOT subject to Child Care Subsidy and will be reflected on your statement.



The Child Care Subsidy (CCS)

The Childcare Subsidy is a federal government funded program to assist families with the financial cost of childcare services. All families are encouraged to visit <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/child-care-subsidy> for all information relating to the childcare subsidy and utilise the MyGov website to confirm enrolment at Ascolta and determine the extent of subsidy applicable for their circumstances.

Ascolta is an approved provider to receive the Childcare Subsidy and as such will receive the childcare subsidy payment directly from the Government and pass on this subsidy to families as a reduced daily fee. The difference between the daily childcare fee and the subsidy is commonly referred to as the "Gap" fee.

How to apply?

You can apply for the Child Care Subsidy (CCS) via your MyGov Account, which is linked to Centrelink. Do this as soon as you know when you might be sending your child into care so that it is all set up and ready to go for their first day.

The entire process may take between four and six weeks, and if it's not set up when you begin care, you may be paying full fees until it's all complete.

Five easy steps to apply for the Child Care Subsidy

1. Sign into your MyGov Account and go to Centrelink.
2. From the menu select 'Payment and Claims', 'Claims' and then 'Make a claim'.
3. Under 'Families' select 'get started'.
4. Answer all the questions.
5. Press submit.

Once your child is enrolled you will need to confirm your Complying Written Agreement (CWA) and enrolment through your MyGov. This needs to be done so you to start receiving your CCS from your child's first day.

How Absences Work

Full daily rates are payable even in the event of a child's absence from the centre. This includes holidays, illness, etc.

Families are eligible for CCS when their child is absent from a session of care they would normally attend for up to 42 days per child, per financial year. Families can use their 42 absence days for any reason. Families do not need to provide evidence to use their absences. In shared care arrangements, the 42 absences are allocated to the child, not to each individual parent.

A clearance letter from your child's doctor may be required if we have any doubt of your child's suitability to return to the centre during times of illness.

Public holidays are included in the 42 days. All public holidays are payable and if eligible your CCS will apply. Please refer to our Payment of Fees Policy regarding holidays.

6. Attendance

We understand that choosing how often your child attends can be complex. We believe it is for the best interest of your child that they attend for a minimum of two days per week. This allows your child the opportunity to build a trusting relationship with our educators together with building social relationships with their new friends. We encourage all families to have an open discussion with the Centre Director at the time of enrolment to determine the attendance arrangements.

Outlined here are several important guidelines to ensure we can operate in a safe and efficient environment.

Sign In / Sign Out

Each child attending an Ascolta centre must be signed in and sign out by a parent or authorised person via the kiosk iPad located in the reception of the Centre.

Parents and guardians should make certain the sign in and sign out protocols of the centre are followed to ensure that your child's attendance is formally documented.

Collecting Your Child

Children's safety and security is of the utmost importance.

Children must only be collected by authorised persons listed on the child's enrolment.

Anyone collecting a child may be asked to present photo ID, at any time. Children will not be released into the care of anyone under the age of 18.

If you wish to nominate an additional person as an authorised contact, please advise the Centre Director in writing.

7. Health Safety And Hygiene

Policies and Procedures

Ascolta has several policies and procedures pertaining to the health, safety and care of your child. All policies for the centre are regularly reviewed and can be found at Reception.

General Illness

Children and educators are actively encouraged to practice good personal hygiene to minimise the instances of illness. We also believe that if your child is ill, the best place for them is to be at home where they can recover faster.

If your child presents at the centre with signs of illness, the Centre Director may advise that they are not well enough to participate in the day's experiences. You will be asked to make alternative arrangements until well or the exclusion period has ended (you may be asked to provide a medical clearance letter before your child can return). We understand this can be inconvenient for parents, it is in the best interest of all children, families, and staff at the centre to minimise the risk of infection.

Should your child become ill during the day, documentation and first aid will commence and you may be contacted to collect your child from the centre and seek medical advice. It is important that you read the centre's medication policy carefully to know when educators can administer medications. A list of common infectious illnesses, their exclusion periods and policies and procedures related to illness and minimising the spread of infectious diseases are available in the reception.

Immunisation

As part of your enrolment process you will be asked to provide details of your child's immunisation status. In the event of an outbreak of an infectious disease it may be necessary to exclude any children who are not immunised for their health and wellbeing. Specific immunisation requirements are available on request.

Emergency Evacuation

Emergency evacuations as well as lockdown procedures are regularly practiced and the centre has individual plans for local emergencies, flood and bushfire. As part of our fire safety measures all children in attendance are noted from the electronic sign-in device in the event of a drill or evacuation.



Accidents And Emergencies

Our educators take a proactive approach to safety and conduct thorough risk assessments of all play areas so that each child can feel safe and free to explore their environment.

All Ascolta educators and staff are required to obtain their first aid and CPR training

Should an accident or sudden illness occur, educators will immediately commence first aid and you will be contacted. In emergency situations you will be advised of the plan of action regarding further medical treatment. In emergency situations, should the injuries be deemed serious enough, an ambulance will be called immediately. The parent will incur the cost of any medical services.

Medication

Medication can be given to children in our care only after a medication form has been completed. All medication provided to the centre must be clearly marked with a pharmacy label showing the child's name, the name of the medication and the dosage to be applied. It is essential that all medication is within the expiry date.

Medical action plans are also required for children with ongoing medical considerations or long term medication needs (such as asthma or allergies).

Nappy cream and teething gel can be administered to your child if authorisation has been provided on the child's enrolment form.

High Temperatures

If your child unexpectedly develops a high temperature, (38 degrees or higher) age specific Panadol may be administered if written consent has been provided, on enrolment. We will contact you before any Panadol is administered and you will be required to collect your child from the Centre.

Contagious Illnesses

Children with contagious or contractible illnesses which can be transferred to others must not be in attendance until they have been cleared by a doctor. If your child starts showing symptoms of an illness while they are in attendance they will need to be collected immediately.

Ascolta is not responsible for any illness contracted by your child whilst in attendance and if your child has recently suffered from a contagious illness, a medical clearance must be provided before your child returns to care. This clearance must state there is no further risk of spread of infection and your child is fit to return to a group care environment.

Nutrition

We understand the important role we play in supporting the nutritional needs of children while in care. Children who attend a full day of care will be offered at least 50 per cent of their recommended daily dietary intake while in care. We are guided by Australian dietary guidelines when creating our menus to ensure nutritionally balanced meal plans and recipes. We also have a commitment to assist children to develop healthy food attitudes and habits.

Our weekly menu is on display for all families to view in reception.

Rest

All children have opportunities to relax, recharge or rest during the day. This allows for self-regulation learning.

If a child falls asleep, they are deemed to need a rest and will not be woken. Some children, who may not need sleep will be provided opportunities to rest their bodies or sit and enjoy quiet experiences.

More information around these guidelines are found in our "Sleep and Rest Policy."



Toys And Comforters

Please do not bring toys from home. It is always so sad when they get broken or lost. A special comfort toy is most welcome. Make sure special comfort toys are named.

Clothing

These are a few factors that you may wish to consider when choosing what your child wears to childcare.

Temperature

It is important that children are not over or under dressed, and that clothing suits the temperature of the day. It is a good idea to send spare clothes for unexpected changes of weather, especially during changes of season, when the weather can be unpredictable.

Footwear

Children need to wear safe, comfortable shoes that fit well.

Sun Protection

Hats are essential and should have soft brims to allow for movement and to provide maximum protection. Ascolta will be able to provide you with information about our sun protection policy and practices and the times that your child will be playing outdoors.

Birthdays

Birthdays are special times for children and we enjoy sharing the occasion amongst all educators, families and children.

Unfortunately, due to many children having allergies it is not possible for the parents to supply a birthday cake. Please speak with the Centre Director on the different ways we can celebrate your child's birthday.

Raising Concerns

If you feel your concerns have not been resolved, you may request a grievance form to formally state the concern and desired actions required to rectify the problem. All concerns are managed in a confidential and professional manner. If parents would like to contact the Approved Provider about any unresolved or sensitive issues, this contact information can be found in the reception area.

8. Helpful Links

Early Childhood Australia

<http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/parent-resources/>

Early Childhood Australia has developed a variety of resources for parents. These cover everything from children's health and nutrition to sleep.

Learning Potential

<https://www.learningpotential.gov.au/>

Learning Potential has lots of useful tips and ideas to help busy parents support their child's learning.

Raising Children Network

<https://raisingchildren.net.au>

Visit the Raising Children website you will find reliable and scientifically validated information and resources to support you in raising your children.

Starting Blocks

<https://www.startingblocks.gov.au/>

Starting Blocks provides parents with information about early childhood education and care to help them make the best choice for their child and family.

Kidsafe

<https://www.kidsafewa.com.au/>

Kidsafe is dedicated to the prevention of injuries and accidents in children in Western Australia.

Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC)

<https://www.snaicc.org.au/>

SNAICC is the national non-government peak body in Australia representing the interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.

Red Nose

<https://rednose.org.au/>

Red Nose is Australia's leading authority on safe sleep and safer pregnancy advice, and bereavement support for anyone affected by the death of a baby or child.

The importance of listening at Ascolta Early Learning and Care

Listening is when we understand that integrated knowledge unites our community

Listening recognises diverse languages, codes and symbols people use to express themselves

Listening means to listen to yourself

Listening takes time

Listening helps us ask good questions

Listening allows powerful observation

Listening fosters emotion

Listening can be active

Listening is not easy

Listening helps create relationships

Listening involves being aware

Listening is being open to uncertainty, diversity, and doubt



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*Attentive, intuitive, holistic
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integrates all areas of learning.*

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