



Parent information

Essential for new starters

2016/17



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Welcome

Thank you for enrolling your child at Reid Early Childhood Centre (RECC), we hope your time spent with us is enjoyable.

This parent handbook will provide you with information that you need to know whilst you are part of the RECC community. If you are unsure of anything, please don't hesitate to ask and feel free to share any comments or concerns with us. It is also important for you to share with your child's carers as much information as possible about your family.

Contents

Introduction	3
Contact Information	3
Operating Hours	4
Christmas Shut Down	4
Enrolment	4
Permanent Bookings	4
Fees	5
Child Care Benefit	5
Child Care Rebate	6
Bond and Waiting List Fee	6
Immunisation Requirements	7
Settling into Care	7
Educational Program	8
RECC Philosophy	8
Our Program Goals for the Children	8
Family Involvement	8
Staffing	9
Communication	9
Daily Routine	10
What to bring	10
Clothing	10
Signing In and Out	11
Policies	11

Introduction

Reid Early Childhood Centre is situated in the grounds of the Reid Campus of the Canberra Institute of Technology (CIT) on Constitution Avenue, Reid. The CIT owns the building with the centre run by a not-for-profit association made up of the centre's parents. The association has a management agreement with the CIT for the operation of the centre.

Our aim is to provide high quality care and education for children whilst their parents or primary carers are at work or studying. We cater for children from six weeks old to school age. We are a community-based centre that is utilised by parents in the general community as well as those who study, teach or work at the CIT.

The Management Committee (made up of parents who perform their duties in a voluntary capacity) assists the Centre Director in the management of the centre. This committee consists of a President, Vice-president, Treasurer, Public Officer and general committee members.

The committee is elected at the Annual General Meeting which is held in December each year after the completion of our independent financial audit.

The centre's Director and the committee are responsible for planning and policy development as well as the recruitment of Educators and financial management. A list of committee members' positions and contact numbers is published in each centre newsletter, or ask the Director.

We are licensed to accommodate and provide care for 67 children, which are spread across the following age groups:

Nursery (6 weeks – 2 years)	10
Toddlers (18 months – 3.5 years)	16
Junior Preschool (2 years - 3.5 years)	20
Preschool Room (3 years – 5 years)	21

These age divisions may vary depending on each child's developmental stage. When children are ready to move up to the next room, every effort is made to accommodate them as soon as a space becomes available.

Contact Information

Our office phone number is: **6230 5660**

Email addresses are:

Centre Director - director@recc.com.au

Lead Educator – education@recc.com.au

Executive Committee – recc.committee@recc.com.au

Operating Hours

The Centre is open from 8.00am to 6.00pm Monday to Friday, except for public holidays and the Christmas shut down (see below). To meet licensing and legal requirements children cannot be on the premises before or after these times.

All children must be collected by 6.00pm. To ensure this, we ask you to be at the centre by 5.50pm to allow time to exchange important information about your child's day and to collect their belongings. If you know that you are going to be late, please call us on 6230 5660.

A late charge of \$30 will be applied if you arrive to collect your child after 6pm. This fee will increase by \$10 for every 5 minutes after 6.15pm also the department of care & protection will be contacted at this stage.

Christmas Shut Down

RECC is closed each year for two weeks during the Christmas and New Year break. No fees are charged for this period.

Please ensure that you read centre emails and newsletters so that you are aware of closing dates, as they will vary each year. The first day back at the commencement of the year is a pupil free day, allowing for staff to engage in professional development and prepare for the new year.

Enrolment

Permanent Bookings

Depending upon availability, we offer any combination of five, four, three and two day-per-week enrolments. We only offer one day-per-week placements when it is the only day available for that age group. When more days become available, it is expected that parents will pick up additional days. Where possible, we encourage consecutive day attendance, this can be particularly helpful for children who are new to the centre.

You are required to give 2 weeks written notice when cancelling your child's place in the centre, or decreasing their days. Increasing or swapping days can be made in a timeframe agreed upon by the Director and parents.

If space is available due to another child being absent, there is the possibility of being able to book additional care days for your child on a casual basis. This can be particularly helpful during school holidays for parents with a child who also attends preschool. Any request for extra days will need to be made via email to the Director.

If your child is away, please advise the centre as soon as possible. In the case of illness, we may need to advise staff and parents if it is a contagious illness. If your family is going on holidays or your child is having a day at home, we will then be able to provide an extra day to the parents who need it.

Fees

All fees include morning and afternoon tea, a hot lunch with dessert and a late snack. If applicable, parents provide disposable nappies for each day their child attends. Also included are external literature and music/movement programs.

All fees are reviewed annually by the management committee and adjusted as required. Our current fees, as at 1/1/2016, are as follows:

Children under 3 years of age:		Children over 3 years of age:	
Daily	\$95	Daily	\$93
Weekly	\$427.50 (10% discount)	Weekly	\$418.50 (10% discount)

A full daily or weekly fee is charged regardless of the number of hours that your child attends each day. When commencing with us we require payment of 2 weeks' fees in advance, which is held as a bond. When they are processed, invoices are either emailed to you or placed in the 'parent pockets' in the foyer area; we recommend that you check your pocket daily. Any account enquires are to be forwarded to our office manager: in person or via phone or email.

Please note we charge the normal daily rate for all Public Holidays, this is due to the need to pay our staff on these days.

Fees can be paid in the office by EFTPOS/credit card (2% fee on credit card). You can also use online banking to directly deposit your fees into our NAB account, the details are as follows:

Bank: NAB
Account Name: Reid Early Childhood Centre Inc
Account Number: **123524701**
BSB: **082 926**

Fees are the main form of income we receive. It is vitally important that accounts are kept up to date, to ensure the adequate ongoing operation of the centre. A late payment fee is applied to all overdue accounts and the child's place in the centre will be forfeited if the situation is ongoing.

Please refer to the Fee and Debt Management Policy available from the office or at recc.com.au/policies for further information.

Child Care Benefit

Child Care Benefit (CCB) is a payment from the Australian Government that helps eligible families with the cost of child care. This benefit is income tested, and is available on application online or in person through Centrelink. To check your eligibility or apply online, login to your Centrelink online account, or visit the [Department of Human Services website](http://www.deptofhumanresources.gov.au). You will need to provide RECC with both you and your child's customer reference numbers (CRN).

Please note that if you are already receiving CCB for approved child care for one or more children, you will still need to apply for CCB for any additional children who start attending approved care.

Benefits are paid in certain circumstances when a family is charged for care that their child does not attend. The circumstances are categorised into two groups – allowable absence days and approved absence days. Benefits will be paid for up to 42 allowable absence days for each child per financial year. Once the child reaches more than 42 days, you could automatically lose your CCB. Your allowable absences are recorded on the bottom of parent's invoices. However, the responsibility is on the parent to check and clarify any adjustments to the days.

Approved absences are paid for the following reasons: Illness (with a medical certificate), non-immunisation, rostered days off, rotating shift work, temporary closure of the centre, public holidays, periods of local emergency, court order shared custody and attendance at preschool.

For more information about the Child Care Benefit, please visit the Department of Human Services website www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/services/centrelink/child-care-benefit or, for enquiries, contact Centrelink on 13 61 50, from 8am to 8pm, Monday to Friday.

Child Care Rebate

Child Care Rebate (CCR) is an additional payment to the Child Care Benefit. This rebate is not income tested, and helps families cover the cost of child care by reimbursing 50% of your out-of-pocket approved child care expenses, up to a maximum of \$7,500 per child per year. Even if your income is too high to receive the CCB, you may be eligible for the CCR. Out-of-pocket costs are calculated after deducting any Child Care Benefit payments that are received.

Further information about the Child Care Rebate, including eligibility, can be obtained from the Department of Human Services website www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/services/centrelink/child-care-rebate.

Bond and Waiting List Fee

Demand for child care placements with us is high; therefore, we keep a waiting list that allows us to manage future enrolments. A non-refundable fee of \$30.00 is required to join RECC's waiting list. Once on our waiting list you will be notified when a place for your child becomes available. We recommend for you to periodically confirm your position on our waiting list, as this assists us when offering places.

When we offer a placement at the centre, we require the payment of a bond. This bond will guarantee a place and start date for your child. It reflects the current value of two weeks of care and is non-refundable. However, the bond will be applied to your account toward the last two week of fees when we receive notification that your family or child is leaving the Centre.

Immunisation Requirements

It is a requirement of the Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011 under the Education and Care Services National Law (ACT) Act 2011 that the centre has up-to-date immunisation records for all children who attend RECC. Upon enrolment, for our records, we ask parents to bring in your child's recent immunisation statement from Medicare. We ask that each time your child has an immunisation; you provide an updated record to the centre.

If your child is not immunised, you need to provide us with a copy of the Conscientious Objection form. Please note that if your child is not immunised they will be excluded from the centre if there is an outbreak of a vaccine preventable disease. The exclusion period will vary between each illness, with the average length being 2-5 days. If your child is excluded because they are not immunised, you will still be required to pay for the days that they are absent.

Settling into Care

Entering formal child care for the first time, or even changing services, can be an overwhelming experience not only for children, but their parents too. At RECC we understand how hard this can be and our warm, friendly staff will endeavour to support your family during the transitioning phase.

We highly encourage all new families to have 3 orientation sessions to help your child feel secure in their new environment. It also provides you with the opportunity to discuss with the teacher the routines and program in the room and to have any questions addressed. It also allows staff to meet and get to know you and your child. Provided that a parent/guardian stays with them, your child can visit as many times as needed before their start date – a few 2 hour visits.

It is not uncommon for children to become emotional upon separation from a parent and it can often be harder on the parent. Try to be positive about the experience - if your child sees that you are happy and secure in leaving them with us, they will feel the same too. Children will usually settle after a few minutes and carers will be there during this time to comfort your child and re-direct their attention. We encourage discussion with your room leader regarding the best way for you to manage leaving your child for the first time with us.

It takes time for children and parents to settle into a new environment, so please feel free to call the centre to check on your child. As children's welfare and happiness are a priority for staff when welcoming new children, staff will always contact parents if they feel that the child is not settling.

Tips for positive drop-offs include:

When leaving your child, it is best to make sure that you say goodbye to them and then leave. Hesitating and not going after you have said goodbye, particularly if your child is upset, will only confuse your child. Reassuring your child that it is ok and that you will be back can assist them to settle.

Establishing a routine can help your child to know what to expect – read a book or do a puzzle together, then after a short period leave.

Talk about child care at home, in the car, out shopping.... Mention staff names, as well as names of other children in your child's group. Discuss the activities that your child participates in while at care.

Bring a familiar item from home for rest time to help with the settling process.

Educational Program

RECC Philosophy

The Centre is proudly community based and operates as a not for profit service to Reid CIT staff, students and the broader local community. Parents and staff at RECC aim to build strong partnerships so that the centre is managed effectively, through a process of consultation and collaboration. The centre aims to reflect the values of the community in all its diversity, and is committed to excellence in the provision of care and education.

We have a parent committee that is elected on a yearly basis. Together with the director this committee wants to ensure that the service is compliant and welcoming, that all regulations are adhered to and that the assessment and rating process is a clear reflection of our care and education provisions.

You as parents are essential to our service and we welcome any form of feedback which is constructive and relevant to education in today's society. So please if you want to share in our journey please don't hesitate to see the director or place your suggestion in our suggestions box located in the foyer.

Our Program Goals for the Children

belonging - the centre aims for each child to feel like they belong. This sense of belonging contributes to inner well-being, security and identity. We aim to create an atmosphere which has meaning and purpose in which the child feels welcomed and nurtured.

develop - in all aspects - cognitive, physical, emotional, social, language, literacy and numeracy; and to learn through all the senses – sight, touch, sound, smell and taste; and with access to a wide variety of resources, with skilled, responsive and interested adults as the most important resource.

explore - to actively and enthusiastically discover knowledge; to use initiative and achieve independence; to develop creativity, imagination, curiosity, a love of learning and a love of life.

empathise - to recognise the rights of others to be safe; to understand fairness, cooperation, and to resolve conflicts peaceably.

identify - with their families, and their community while also having a strong sense of self as an individual. To gain a sense of the wider world and their participation in it. To be aware of diversity of life, families, and other cultures within their community and the wider world.

Family Involvement

We support and encourage family involvement in many ways. We are your centre and you can be involved in a way that suits you, from joining the management committee or sub-

committees, working bees, by participating in your child's program, or as a parent volunteer on excursions. Please see your child's room leaders for more information.

We recognise the right of all children to equal opportunities in recognition of gender, background, language, religion, age, family structure, health, culture and abilities. We celebrate a variety of cultural events in the centre, which can be a great opportunity for families to share their talents, culture or religion. Please let us know if you have any ideas.

Staffing

Reid Early Childhood Centre team members are committed to providing high quality education to the children in their care. Educators employed by RECC have varying levels of qualifications and experience. All educators at RECC are required to have at least a Certificate III in Children's Services. To update their skills and knowledge, educators are encouraged to participate in regular professional development on a range of topics, including Mandatory Reporting, First Aid and behaviour management. We pride ourselves as being professional in our approach to our personal and professional development. We are active in providing in-service training for all the educators in the centre.

The Centre Director is employed by and is responsible to the Management Committee. They are employed as a non-contact staff member, working for 38 of the centre's 50 operating hours each week. The Director ensures the smooth running of the centre by monitoring the care and education provided by the centre, as well as overseeing and managing the educators, making certain that the centre's policies and procedures are adhered to. Allocating child care places and ensuring the centre meets licensing requirements are also part of the Director's duties. Please feel free to approach the Director at any time with feedback or a concern relating to the centre, educators or children -parents and children are always welcome in the office.

Senior staff members are responsible for observing the children and planning weekly activities and are supported by the other educators. Our qualified Preschool teachers coordinates a preschool program for children aged 3-5 years.

In accordance with the Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011 under the Education and Care Services National Law (ACT) Act 2011, RECC meets or exceeds the minimum educator to child ratio for each age group. Currently, the regulations require a ratio of 1 staff member for every 4 children (1:4) under the age of 2 years. Educators in our Nursery and Toddler rooms will have a floater to relieve them for their breaks. Children aged 2-3 years require a ratio of 1:5 and children aged 3-5 years require a ratio of 1:11. The Caterpillar and Butterfly rooms both have a permanent educator who covers breaks and assists the rooms at peak times.

If an educator is absent, RECC endeavours to replace them with one of our permanent relief staff, or employ a casual staff member through a local, reliable agency.

Communication

We feel that it is important to have open communication with our families. To ensure that we meet the needs of your child, we encourage you to share as much information as you can. We welcome your feedback and encourage you to be involved in any decisions we make

that may affect your child. We welcome all input into our programming and planning – each room's program has space for you to leave your comments/feedback.

Other methods that we may use to communicate information include the following: Daily information records, as well as a 'What We Did Today' are displayed in each room every day. We keep a portfolio for each child that provides visual and written information on children's' experiences throughout the centre. The centre newsletter is distributed via email monthly. We strongly advise that families read it, as it will contain important information about centre events, policies and staffing. Parents are encouraged to view their child's profile and make an appointment to discuss their child's progress with their group leader at any time. Important notices, such as illness notification, are displayed on the front door or in the foyer.

Daily Routine

What to bring

Please assist staff by labelling all items brought into the centre for your child, using either a permanent marker or professional labelling system.

RECC provides:

- All meals (catering for children with allergies) as well as soy or cow's milk,
- Sun cream – we provide minimum SPF 30+ sun cream. If your child has an allergy to sun cream, please discuss with staff.
- Linen, including sheets, blankets, bibs and face washers.

What you will need to provide:

- At least 2 full changes of clothing, or more depending on your child's age and toileting level. This includes socks, as well as a spare jumper and singlet in cooler weather. When the weather is changing between seasons, we recommend that you provide clothing to suit both warm and cool temperatures.
- Appropriate sun hat (broad brimmed or legionnaires) in summer and beanie and coat for winter.
- Re-usable/green bag for dirty clothes.
- A minimum of 5 nappies every day for children who are not toilet trained. Alternatively, you can provide a pack of nappies for your child, however please check with educators regularly so you are aware of the amount remaining.
- Any comfort items that your child has – dummy, bottle or teddy.
- Formula for infants under 12 months.

Clothing

The clothing that your child wears whilst attending care can influence the quality of their experiences, as clothes can affect their health, safety and comfort. Please dress your child in loose, comfortable clothing that is suitable for the weather. Children in the older rooms, particularly those who are toilet training, are encouraged to be independent with their

dressing skills, so please bear this in mind when choosing their clothing and footwear. Where needed, staff will assist children to adjust their clothing throughout the day.

Clothing with drawstrings, loose buttons or decorative items, as well as scarves and necklaces are not considered appropriate for child care. They may catch on equipment or come loose and cause strangulation or choking. Thongs or slip on shoes are also considered to be unsafe as they may cause trip hazards and do not provide sufficient protection.

Whilst we provide smocks to protect clothing from messy activities, please be aware that some paints, glues, etc. may get on your child's clothing, we therefore recommend that you do not dress them in their 'best' clothes.

Signing In and Out

It is a legal requirement to sign your child in and out when arriving and departing the centre. The sign-in sheets are a legal record that are kept for up to 21 years for insurance purposes and provide proof of your child's attendance. These records are also required as part of the Child Care Benefit administration.

The sign-in sheets are also used during emergency evacuation procedures to assist staff in knowing the numbers and names of children in their care.

Policies

The Centre has a number of policies covering our daily operations, procedures and practices. Parents can view our policies on the centre's website, recc.com.au/policies, or in the Policy Folder in the foyer. A copy of this folder can also be borrowed from the Director. Each room has a policy folder for the purpose of assisting parents to understand the centre's policies. Please feel free to approach your child's Room Leader or the Centre Director with any concerns or issues you have regarding RECC policies and procedures.

Below is an overview of some important RECC policies.

Illness Policy

At RECC, we aim to provide a safe and hygienic environment for the children in our care. As the needs of a sick child cannot be met in a group care situation, we ask that parents not bring sick children into the centre and to collect children who become unwell while in care. This will also minimise the risk to the health of the educators and other children.

Staff members and families should refer to the NHMRC's recommended minimum exclusion periods listed in Staying Healthy in Child Care – Preventing Infectious Disease in Child Care.

The following exceptions or additional exclusion policies apply:

- where live head lice are detected, the child will be excluded until effective treatment has commenced and lava removed;
- exclusion is required for a minimum of 24 hours after the last episode of vomiting or diarrhoea;

- exclusion is required for a minimum of 1 day after the last spike of temperature above 38°C; and
- exclusion is required for 24 hours of commencing a new antibiotic (due to unforeseen reactions such as allergies or diarrhoea).

RECC reserves the right to exclude any child from the centre if it considers that the child is not well enough to attend.

Medical Conditions Policy

Parents are required to notify the Centre and staff on enrolment or as soon as a child is diagnosed with asthma, diabetes, allergies, anaphylaxis, or at risk of anaphylaxis. Parents must provide a medical management plan for the child, signed by a medical practitioner, that sets out the steps that are to be followed in the event of an incident relating to the specific health care need. At all times, there is at least one staff member present at the Centre with up to date specialist training in emergency asthma management and anaphylaxis.

The Director will consult with parents of such children to develop a medical conditions risk minimisation plan and a medical conditions communications plan. Please refer to the Medical Conditions Policy or discuss the matter with the Centre Director.

Medication Policy

Following the 24-hour exclusion period after your child commences a course of antibiotics, educators are able to continue to administer the medication while the child is at the centre. Medication must be handed to an educator, and you will also need to complete a medication form authorising staff to administer it.

Any prescription medications or over the counter medication must be clearly labelled with the child's name, use by date, directions, dosage and name of medication clearly marked.

Please note that children at RECC are not permitted to self-administer medication.

Nut Free

Due to a high number of children having a potentially life-threatening allergic reaction when exposed to nut products, RECC is a Nut-Free centre.

All products containing nuts or traces of nuts are excluded from the centre in accordance with our Food and Nutrition Policy. Parents must ensure that no peanut butter, Nutella, or other food items which may contain any traces of nuts are sent to the centre. This policy also includes foods which may have been cooked in peanut oil.

SunSmart Policy

Our centre is working towards a SunSmart status and follows the Cancer Council's national standards.

To minimise exposure to ultraviolet (UV) radiation from the sun, a combination of the following sun protection measures are observed when UV levels reach 3 and above:

- Shade: The Centre has adequate shade available in outdoor spaces and the availability of shade is considered when planning outdoor activities. Outdoor time is minimised between 11am and 3pm during the summer/daylight saving period.
- Clothing: Loose fitting and closely woven fabrics assist in protecting children from exposure to the sun. It is recommended that shirts have a collar to protect the nape of the neck and long sleeves to protect arms. Longer style tops and shorts are acceptable items of clothing to protect children from the sun. Sleeveless shirts, sleeveless dresses and singlets are not considered appropriate clothing to protect children from the sun.
- Hats: Children and staff are required to wear hats that protect their face, neck and ears whenever they are outside when UV levels are 3 and above. Parents are advised to pack at least one hat for their child. Children who do not bring a hat are either provided one by the Centre, or will be restricted in their access to outdoor play.
- Eye-protection: Eyes can be protected from over-exposure to UV radiation by wearing an appropriate hat. If sunglasses are worn, RECC recommends that they meet Australian Standard 1067 (sunglasses: categories 2, 3 or 4).
- Sunscreen: Minimum SPF 30+ broad spectrum, water resistant sunscreen is made available and easily accessible to all children, staff and visitors to apply. Children are assisted to apply sunscreen to exposed body parts before going outside when UV levels are forecast to be 3 and above. Sunscreen reapplication needs are monitored regularly.

Grievances and Complaints

Parents have an important role in the centre and we value their comments and feedback. In order to preserve the relationship between staff and parents, any complaints, concerns or differences of opinion will be dealt with promptly to minimise disruption to the running of the centre.

Any complaint should initially be discussed with your child's Room Leader. If the issue is not satisfactorily resolved, or if you are not comfortable raising the issue with the Room Leader, then the matter should be taken to the Centre Director. The Director may refer any concern or complaint to the Management Committee, particularly where the issue relates to the implementation of a RECC policy or procedure. If you are not satisfied with the response of the Director, or are not comfortable raising the issue with the Director, then the matter should be taken to the President of the Management Committee. Matters will be investigated in a discreet and timely manner, with any agreed actions communicated to you.

Orientation Checklist for Parents:

Please go through the checklist below to determine if you have all the information you need, or feel free to ask us more questions to assist you. Are you aware of:

- RECC's opening and closing times?
- The contact numbers for the centre?
- How to enter the centre?
- Where the sign in and out sheets are and how to use them?
- How to pay your fees?
- Where your parent pocket is?
- What to pack for your child each day?

- The name of the staff in your child's room?
- Where the weekly program and daily information for your child's room are displayed?
- Where to put your child's bag?
- What the sleep and meal times are?
- What you need to do if your child will be absent from the centre?
- The procedure to follow if your child requires medication?
- What to do if someone else will be collecting your child?