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Parent Handbook

Welcome and Introduction

Welcome! At the child-oriented Harmony Child Learning Centre, the children are the most important people. Harmony has an Open Door policy for parents to visit, breastfeed or talk.

Harmony strives to support families in today's busy world by providing various programs to meet the needs of parents and children. We aim to give young children a head start to enjoyable learning and independence.

The Harmony motto is "Fun and Learning in Harmony". The logo is a large oak tree which sprouts from the tiniest acorn, symbolising the growth and learning at Harmony.

Philosophy and Goals

Our philosophy upholds the belief that the Harmony Child Learning Centre is an educating and caring community that involves children, their families, and their caregivers, in a warm and supportive environment.

Harmony aims:

- To provide a safe, healthy, and caring environment.
- To recognise each individual's needs and potential.
- To stimulate sound physical, social/emotional, and intellectual development through encouragement of each child's natural curiosity.
- To enhance learning through the senses and play, by using:
 - (i) music, dance, and movement,
 - (ii) art and creativity,
 - (iii) a love of nature and natural materials,
 - (iv) community resources, and places and people of interest,
 - (v) experiences of different cultures,
 - (vi) developmentally-appropriate pre-reading and pre-math computer programs.
- To develop pride in self-worth.
- To introduce the Virtues, the universal values that allow humans to live in harmony.
- To encourage personal development and access to knowledge.
- To inspire everyone to live and grow in harmony with self, with others, and with nature.

Hours of Operation

7.30 a.m. to 6.00 p.m, Monday to Friday
(closing 4.00 p.m. on the last day of the year before Christmas)

Open 50 weeks a year

Harmony is closed:

- Public holidays
- 2 weeks at Christmas/New Year
(i.e. the week that includes Christmas Day and
the week that includes New Year's Day.)

Occasional and unexpected overtime can be arranged with the Manager or Second-in-Charge. This must be requested by 4.30 p.m., so that staff to child ratios comply with child care regulations. Arrangements may be made with the Manager to open the Centre earlier in the morning for a special reason.

Two-Way Communication

Communication builds bridges between children, Educators, parents and the wider community. The more comprehensively we know your child, the better the staff can meet your child's needs. Therefore, we ask that you keep enrolment details up to date and also communicate to your child's qualified Early Childhood Educator any events or changes in your child's life or routines.

Harmony staff will tell you about your child's day regarding sleep, eating, and general behavior. Please make sure you pick up notes, newsletters etc. that are left in the message pocket or the cubicle labelled with your child's name.

Developmental Record

Developmental records are written for every child. Parents are encouraged to make an appointment with the Early Childhood Educator to discuss their child's progress. Parents are also given a written summary as an ongoing record of their child's development (more often for full-time children).

Educators use the following tools for recording children's progress:

- Observations
- Anecdotal notes
- Checklists and comments
- Work samples
- Educator devised methods
- Summaries

The activities program is written weekly and is evaluated daily with regard to the children's abilities and needs, as well as the processes and outcomes of the activities that actually took place.

Newsletter and Noticeboard

A periodic newsletter about the children's learning activities and important events is sent home to parents. Interesting news relating to young children and community services is posted on the noticeboard at the front entrance.

Open meetings

Open meetings for parents and staff provide a forum for outside community workers to pass on valuable information that assists in effective parenting and may be of general interest in a community. Parents will be asked for their suggestions and will be given advance notice of topics which could include Fostering Self-Esteem, Pre-reading Skills, or First Aid.

Parent Participation

Parents are welcome at the Harmony Centre, bearing in mind the needs of children and staff at the time.

Parents are encouraged to contribute ideas or suggestions to staff and to participate in a part of your child's day. Staff realise that parents are busy with outside commitments, but there are many ways in which you can become involved:

- Invite grandparents to read a story.
- Play an instrument.
- Help with fundraising.
- Attend parent and staff evenings.
- Provide favorite recipes or recipes from other cultures.
- Collect resources (e.g. computer paper).
- Draw a large picture (e.g. for collage).
- Bring in a family pet.
- Help with excursions.

If there are any other ways in which you can help children learn through new experiences, please feel free to talk with the Manager or other staff.

At the entry to Harmony is a Parents Suggestions box, which can be used for anonymous comments. Every effort will be made to act positively on suggestions.

A Parent and Staff Committee is set up to address the continuous process of national accreditation. The members endeavor to review the various aspects of the high quality program desired at Harmony, with regard to programming, staffing and the environment. The Committee includes adults who represent children of different ages, different cultures, children with disabilities or other special needs. Meetings are held more often prior to reviews for accreditation and minutes are recorded. The honorary membership may comprise:

- 3 to 5 parents
- 1 staff member from Babies group
- 1 staff member from 2 year olds group
- 1 staff member from Kindergarten group
- 1 Child Care Assistant from any group
- Manager

This Committee may also assess the options for raising funds for extras that make the children's day at Harmony more comfortable or more stimulating.

Staff

Under Community Services (Child Care) Regulations the staff to child ratios and staff qualifications are governed by the licensed number of children, as follows:

- 0 - 24 month olds 1 : 4
- 2 year olds 1 : 5
- 3 - 6 year olds 1 : 10

The Harmony staff have a wide range of qualifications and experience relevant to your child's care and learning:

- Diploma in Child Care (0-12 years) 2 years full-time
- Certificate III in Children's Services 1 year part-time
- First Aid Certificate
- Music, art, foreign language and culture, computer programs.

Staff members participate in regular staff meetings and throughout the year attend inservice training sessions to further personal development and child care knowledge.

During the year TAFE and university students and volunteers perform practicums and work experience for relevant child care courses. If possible parents will be given notice of any new staff or workers in the children's groups, and all relief staff and students wear identifying badges.

Programming

A high priority is safe and hygienic equipment and facilities. Good manners and common courtesies, with lots of hugs and one-to-one contact by caring staff, are equally important.

Well qualified and experienced staff spend paid time researching and preparing appropriate resources and plans for the children in each age group. Staff recognise that young children learn through doing and that every play situation presents an opportunity to extend a child's thinking, logic and problem-solving skills, choices and decision-making, vocabulary, science and math knowledge.

These skills are learned through sand and water play, building blocks, puzzles, the home corner, dramatic play, the library shelf, woodwork and other manipulative materials.

Language is learned through listening and reading and is expressed through speaking and writing. A strong emphasis is placed on verbal communication and listening.

The day's program takes into account a balance between indoor and outdoor play and quiet and boisterous activity. During wet weather gross motor equipment is set up inside, so that children can continue their large muscle development.

Visiting community workers, artisans and craft experts, senior citizens, and ethnic workers add another dimension to your children's experiences. In all age groups staff actively encourage use of home languages of children from various ethnic backgrounds.

Outcomes are not seen as a measure of specific levels of social/emotional, physical and intellectual development but rather they are planned to be a foundation for success from the very first year of primary school and as a basis for life skills.

Babies

Scientific research shows that brains begin learning even before birth. The babies' activities concentrate on physical coordination (gross and fine motor) and social/emotional development, with constant verbal interaction and frequent expressive storytelling in order to stimulate language. As with all children at Harmony, there are many willing arms to hold, comfort, and rock.

2 year olds

The 2 year olds continue to participate in a balance of indoor/outdoor activities and quiet and active play, using music and movement, arts and crafts, table "games", storytime and discussion, climbing and running, etc. They can participate in caring for animals (e. g. Chinese chicken, hermit crabs, fish) and a vegetable garden (using compost from the kitchen). This shows an appreciation for nature and the environment. Again verbal communication and listening are very important for the building of self-confidence and expression of needs and feelings of the young child.

Kindergarten/Preschool

Harmony includes a full-day Kindergarten/Preschool curriculum for three to five year olds, so that they have continuity of care and education until they enter Year 1. (In Western Australia it is currently compulsory for a child to commence Year 1 of school in the year the child turns six years old.)

Working parents with children in Harmony Kindergarten/Preschool do not have to worry about making arrangements for school holidays, before and after school care, staff development days, or early school closures. Parents also know that their child is secure at the premises and is not being transported to and from short day programs elsewhere during hot, wet or cold weather. During end-of-term school vacation periods Harmony runs a special Holiday Program, with a number of low-cost excursions to places of interest.

The Kindergarten/Preschool group has an excellent staff to child ratio of 1:10 and includes a tertiary qualified Early Childhood Educator and Assistant/s who are experienced in basic child development.

The two preschool years are a non-compulsory period of schooling. However, this period of transition from the home environment to school is important for development of:

- Independence
(e.g. toileting, dressing and undressing, caring for own and others' belongings)

- Attitude
(e.g. confidence, cooperation, sharing, following instructions, staying on task)
- Concepts
(e.g. abstract, spatial, pre-reading and pre-math skills)

This period of informal learning allows children the time to absorb and reflect on experiences in a fun manner before the more structured pressures of primary school.

The more independent and physically controlled 3 to 5 year olds use educational tools to help with abstract concepts such as classification, measurement, comparison, cause and effect. Other areas considered relevant include language, numeracy, thinking skills, decision making, problem solving, value forming, sequencing, pattern recognition, individual expression and acceptable social adaptation. For Show and Tell sessions children may bring any item from home (except war toys) and they learn to talk in front of their peers and to appreciate others' points of view by carefully listening to each other.

The Early Childhood Educator and the Assistant/s make sure that the 5 year olds going into Year 1 from Harmony have mastered the important skills of listening, concentration, following instructions, making decisions and staying on task. The alphabet is introduced phonetically using the Letterland system and writing in the Modern Victorian cursive style mandated for all West Australian schools (copy at end of Handbook). If parents wish to work with their child at home, they should use all lower case letters, except of course for the initial letter of a place or a person's name.

French as a Second Language

The 3 to 5 year olds are offered a foreign language and culture (French at present) through songs, games, poetry, cooking, stories, mime, conversation, pictures and simple instructions.

The aim of the French program is to expose children at an early age to another culture, while they are receptive to a foreign language. The children learn that there are other ways of speaking, eating and living. This is an important concept to understand in multicultural Australia. Learning any other language enhances development of the native language. French has been chosen because it is a universal language like English, is the language of the arts, and can be found sprinkled throughout books and daily English conversation.

Activities are built around the concepts preschool children have already acquired in their first language. When introducing new words, children are encouraged to say them as much as possible in any relevant activity (e.g. eating, cooking). French becomes alive and meaningful for children when they associate it with familiar objects they can name and handle, or with events in their lives (e.g. shopping). Therefore, language sessions may be carried out in the playroom or outdoors.

At the end of the year parents will be given a written summary of their child's progress, and a taped recording in French will be made by full-time children.

Computer

The 4 and 5 year olds will become familiar with the use of a computer and appropriate software for pre-math and pre-reading skills. The computer sessions are conducted on a one-to-one basis. This is a fun way for children to learn matching, pattern differences, counting, logic, etc.

Children enjoy the challenge of technology, the feeling of control with the keyboard and mouse, and the visual and auditory feedback from the monitor. They learn the names of the hardware, how to load and unload software, and to operate the keyboard with the correct touch and pressure. Parents are encouraged to participate in these sessions and training is available.

The Virtues Project

As children grow, they need parents and carers to guide them, to help them make sense of their world, and to make life safer for them. Every family has its own rules and values, their own ideas about what is important to develop as good character in children. More than ever, in today's society we need to talk about what's right and wrong and what is expected as moral behavior. Virtues are universal truths, universal values that have the same meaning all over the world. For example, virtues such as Kindness, Gentleness, Helpfulness and Truthfulness are desirable and similar in all cultures.

Harmony has staff who have been trained to use *The Virtues Guide, a Handbook for Parents Teaching Virtues* by Linda & Dan Popov. Of the thousands of virtues, 52 that are suitable for young children have been gathered under four headings—e.g. What is Creativity, Why Practise Creativity, How do you Practise Creativity, and Signs of Success. Harmony's Preschool children learn and practise one virtue a week, which is posted for parents to read and talk about at home.

Rest Time

At 12 noon the Harmony lights are turned off and blinds are drawn. Soft relaxation music is played for half an hour to encourage rest and a "switching off" of body and mind.

Each child has a mattress with sheets for his/her use only. A pillow case brought from home identifies each child's mattress. Blankets are used in cold weather.

Babies

Caregivers will meet babies' demands individually. Generally, there are two sleeps a day for younger babies and one sleep after lunch for older babies. Staff will accommodate parents' wishes as indicated in the Usual Routine at Home form.

2 year olds

Most children of this age will sleep, and they have an opportunity to sleep for up to two hours, from about 12 noon to 2 p. m. Caregivers are on duty to encourage rest and some patting to sleep if needed. Children who will not sleep can read books quietly. It is expected that 2 year olds will have given up their bottle during the day.

Kindergarten/Preschool

Some of the older children of this group will not need sleep, but they are encouraged to rest or read books on their mattress. They may then listen to storytelling or do quiet table activities, while other children continue sleeping for up to two hours.

Discipline

Discipline at Harmony aims at encouraging self-discipline. Discipline is through redirection of inappropriate actions and positive reinforcement of desirable behavior.

On commencing attendance in Harmony, children are made aware of limits and acceptable behavior, appropriate to age.

Children are not permitted to cause hurt to another person or damage the belongings of others. Staff model desirable behavior and praise children who are exhibiting desirable behavior.

If unacceptable behavior occurs, any “victim” is comforted first. The perpetrator is made aware of the particular action that led to disciplining and is given possible alternative actions that can be used to avoid similar problem behavior in the future.

If a child does not respond to redirection of behavior, staff will gently take the child to one side of the group to settle and use the time to reflect, depending on age. No child will be humiliated, threatened, put in a corner, faced to a wall, or isolated in a place alone. No child is left unsupervised during time aside, and under no circumstances will physical punishment be implemented. The staff encourage children to recognise it is certain behaviors that are unacceptable, not the child (the child is always valued).

When a child's negative behavior cannot be modified within a reasonable time, and staff have justifiable concerns for the child, the Manager will discuss with the parent further possible action that may be taken, e.g. referrals to other agencies or alternative types of care.

Excursions

The Harmony Centre's Public Liability insurance covers all attending children and volunteers on any excursions outside Harmony.

Harmony staff always adhere to state child care regulations that require a staff to child ratio of 1:4 for any excursion. Every child needs to be adequately dressed and wear closed shoes for excursions. Parents are asked to assist as helpers on excursions whenever possible, so that they share a valuable experience with their child and to keep the cost to parents for the excursion to a minimum. A first aid kit, a holder of a current first aid certificate, and a qualified Early Childhood Educator accompany every excursion.

When staffing and weather permit, Harmony may arrange exploratory walks and discoveries in the local neighborhood. It is expected that parents have given permission for local walks, unless otherwise indicated, when signing their child's enrolment form.

However, prior written permission must be given by parents for any transported excursions. Parents are informed about the venue, the type of transport being used, cost and estimated departure and return times. All children wear their hats, tagged with the Harmony Centre name and address. A list of children is taken with staff on an excursion and is used for

periodic head counts. A child not going on an excursion is welcomed into another group at Harmony.

If staff and parents' cars are used, seat belts will be adjusted to size before use. Parents may provide a booster seat if desired for a smaller child.

Toilet Training

Children themselves indicate their readiness to begin a toilet training routine. They will usually be dry for about two hours during the day and demonstrate awareness of the process of elimination. This awareness may be in the form of words or gestures or wanting the toilet or potty.

Please keep the qualified Educator up to date with your child's interest in toileting, so that staff can follow a similar routine to what is happening at home.

Toilet training may commence in the babies group with potties and in the 2 year olds' group with child size toilets. Staff are always on hand to help a child become successful in toilet training and make it a pleasant experience.

Priority of Access and Waiting List

The Harmony Child Learning Centre must comply with Commonwealth Priority of Access guidelines, in order to be eligible for Child Care Benefit. These guidelines instruct centres as to which children should be admitted first to vacant places. The highest priority are children in families where a single parent, or both parents, are employed, seeking employment or studying/training for future employment. Also a priority group are children at risk of serious abuse or neglect and those from families in crisis.

Enrolment

Certain formalities are required of parents before a child commences attendance:

- Enrolment Form
- Usual Routine at Home (babies only)
- Child Care Benefit assessment (related to income)
- Immunisation Record
- Holding Fee (refundable on termination of enrolment)
- Annual Administration Fee
- Two or three orientations for familiarisation (no charge)

Re-enrolment

Re-enrolments for the following year are processed October/November. This is so that parents have plenty of notice of a child care place confirmed in writing, for those planning return to work or study in the new year.

All places are vacant as of the last day of the year. First priority is given to children already attending. The days of attendance may be changed and/or the number of days of attendance may be reduced or added to. Second priority is given to siblings of the most recently

attending children, and third priority to siblings of children who terminated some time in the past. Fourth priority is for children whose parents have previously visited Harmony, are waitlisted, and have phoned the Manager by mid-October.

Within the above parameters of priority are children under the Commonwealth Priorities of Access guidelines.

Re-enrolments and new enrolments for a new year are confirmed in writing, but take effect only on payment of the Annual Administration Fee in the case of existing families and of the assessed Holding Fee for new families.

Orientation and Walk Through

No child is enrolled or placed on the waiting list unless the parent and child have walked through Harmony and discussed the family's requirements with the Manager or other qualified Educator. During this visit the family will be shown rooms and equipment relevant to the child's age group, as well as the toilets, kitchen, office, and outdoor play area. Staff on duty will be introduced, and examples of written programs for weekly activities will be discussed with parents.

Whether they subsequently enrol or not, every visiting parent will be given a Harmony policy statement with basic information about the Centre's operating hours, staffing, programming, and items that children need to bring.

Payment of the once-off Holding Fee and the Annual Administration Fee confirms an enrolment. The comprehensive Parent Handbook is available at Harmony's entry.

Arrival and Departure

In order for all children to participate in the planned learning activities without interruption, please have your child settled in his/her group by 9.00 a.m. Please leave your child in the care of a staff member and be assured that your child will settle quickly once left.

Please phone staff between 7.30 a.m. and 9.30 a.m. at the latest, if your child is not attending or is arriving late. This courtesy means that morning snack and lunch can be kept aside for your child.

Only adults who are authorised by a parent on a child's Enrolment Form will be permitted to collect a child from Harmony, and suitable identification must be shown to staff. Note that no child will be released to a stranger if the Manager or representative has not been notified by phone, letter, or in person. Parents need to ensure that any current restraining order arrangements are attached to their child's enrolment form.

Children's services regulations require that parents/authorised persons write the time of arrival and time of departure every day for each child in the sign in/out file at the front entrance, and initial beside the time.

The regulations require that parents state the reason for all absences (e.g. "I" for illness with medical certificate, "AA" for any occasional absence, etc.) and initial beside the absence when next the child attends Harmony. If parents do not complete this requirement, Child Care Benefit/Subsidy cannot be claimed and the full child care fee is charged.

If a child is left at Harmony after 6.00 p.m. and no parent or other contact person can be reached within one hour, staff on duty will phone Crisis Care to determine the child's fostering needs.

Child Care Subsidy

Child Care Benefit (CCB)

Families attending the Harmony Child Learning Centre may be eligible for Child Care Benefit (CCB) which must be assessed by the Family Assistance Office (FAO) at any Centrelink, prior to the child commencing. The benefit relates to gross family income and work/study status and is calculated as a percentage of a ceiling which is set by the Commonwealth usually in July each year. Parents and Harmony are both notified by mail of the percentage of benefit, and the rate of child care fees is confirmed or adjusted at this time.

If gross family income decreases, it is in parents' interest to apply for a re-assessment immediately; conversely, if family income increases during the year, parents must apply for a new Child Care Benefit assessment. Otherwise, an adjustment is made at the end of the financial year, when FAO will give families any underpayment of CCB or will request a refund of the amount of CCB overpaid.

If no proof of income is provided, the benefit will be calculated at the end of the financial year, when a lump sum may be paid to the family.

Fees

Fees are assessed in order to fund the highest quality care and learning program run by tertiary-qualified Educators and well experienced assistants, with the best possible physical facilities and equipment.

Government Child Care Benefit is a subsidy of fees that is available once a parent has applied to the Family Assistance Office of Centrelink. Current fees without any government subsidy are listed on Harmony's Policy Summary.

Fees are payable for enrolled days whether your child attends or not (i.e., during sickness, public holidays, family holidays etc.). Due to regulated staff-to-child ratios, staff are always on duty for the total number of children enrolled at the Centre. A sick child's place is held open for the child to return on recovery from the illness; all sick days throughout the year are subsidised by Child Care Benefit if a medical certificate is provided to staff. Other allowable absences (AA) for family reasons will be subsidised up to a maximum of 30 days per financial year. Parents need to discuss with FAO officers the details for rostered days off for shift work.

At any time your fees are in arrears of three weeks or more Harmony has the right to ask the parent to remove the child. If you are having a problem paying the fees for some reason, please make an alternative arrangement with the Manager. Failure to pay outstanding fees will result in recovery by legal action.

Harmony requires 2 weeks' notice (or 2 weeks' fees in lieu of notice) when parents wish to terminate their child's place.

The cost for overtime is \$10 for each 15 minutes or part thereof. The overtime must be paid in cash to the staff member undertaking the overtime, payable during the same week as the overtime is incurred.

Your Child's First Day

We, as adults, may find new experiences daunting and unfamiliar and this can be the case for your child when commencing at child care. If your child has siblings or has attended a play group or other child care service, he/she may settle more quickly. Some children may seek the reassurance of mother or father to settle the first day.

Some points are offered to help your child settle more easily:

- Make sure your child has visited Harmony and stayed for at least an hour, once, twice or three times, in order to spend relaxing time with other children and the relevant staff, before commencing care.
- Talk to your child over several days beforehand about the excitement of playing with new friends and doing lots of interesting activities.
- Help your child label and pack the bag/backpack with things required for child care.
- Make sure that you say goodbye before you depart.
- Feel free to phone at any time during the day to see how your child is progressing.

What to Bring

Please make sure that all your child's belongings are clearly marked with his/her name or initials.

Because young children learn best through hands-on participation, please dress your child in comfortable play clothes, with spare clothing (especially underwear, pants and socks) in case of wet or dirty play and during toilet training. At the change of seasons it is advisable to pack warm and cool clothing, so that staff can dress your child appropriately for the day's temperature.

Children may bring a soft security item for nap time, but no other toys unless requested (e.g. items for Preschool Show and Tell). If a child brings personal toys, no responsibility can be accepted for loss or damage.

All children must have a jumper in winter and between seasons. Bathers are desirable in mid-summer, so that children can play under the sprinkler or in the supervised wading pool on very hot days.

A suitable hat should be brought by each child, labelled and left at Harmony. Children wear a hat and sunscreen outdoors all year round (the hat will be washed regularly). Refer to Section "Protection from Sun".

Every child over 12 months old should bring a piece of fruit (or cheese cubes or sultanas). The pooled fruit is cut up and shared amongst the children for morning snack. This enables them to experience a variety of tastes and is in line with daily nutritional requirements.

Babies

Babies and toddlers not toilet trained should bring in enough disposable nappies for each day (approx. 5 per day) or a bag for the week. If parents prefer to bring cloth nappies from home, staff will place soiled nappies in a separate plastic bag which is tied to the outside of the child's bag. Sorbolene lotion is provided by Harmony, but any nappy rash ointments/creams must be brought from home. Staff will follow parents' wishes regarding toilet training.

If they wish, parents of children under 24 months may bring formula, milk, and juice in bottles or sipper cups; otherwise, water is given by cup (boiled water for babies under 12 months old). All items should be clearly labelled with marker pen.

Harmony supplies pureed fruit at morning and afternoon snack times for babies under 12 months of age, but babies over 12 months old should bring a piece of fruit to share. Lunch and afternoon snack (pureed, mashed or chunky) is provided for all babies (refer to Section "Nutrition").

In summary, babies need to bring:

- Bag for belongings and work samples
- Spare clothing (2 complete sets)
- A piece of fruit (not babies under 12 months)
- Hat, washable and suitable for sun protection (stays at the Centre)
- Disposable nappies for the day (or week)
- Special cream for nappy rash, labelled (optional)
- Bottle or sipper cup with juice, formula or milk (optional)
- Pillow case (to identify cot sheets)

2 year olds

Children should be weaned off bottles and sipper cups by the time they enter the group of 2 year olds, because that group has no facilities for keeping them safe.

Children not toilet trained need to bring sufficient nappies for the day.

In summary, 2 year olds require:

- Bag for belongings and work samples
- Spare clothing (2 complete sets)
- A piece of fruit
- Hat, suitable for sun protection (stays at Harmony)
- Disposable nappies (if not toilet trained)
- Several spare underpants during toilet training
- Pillow case (to identify mattress sheets)

Kindergarten/Preschool

All preschool children are to bring a large box of white tissues. Full-time children learning French may bring a blank audio cassette tape, which will be returned to parents as a record of their child's progress in the French language. In summary, the following items are required specifically for 3 to 5 year olds:

- Bag for belongings and work samples
- Spare clothing
- A piece of fruit
- Hat, suitable for sun protection (stays at Harmony)
- Large box of white tissues
- Blank audio tape (full-time children only)
- Pillow case (to identify mattress sheets)

Nutrition

A weekly menu is displayed at the main entrance. The Centre's Cook provides a wholesome 2-course lunch commencing between 11.10 and 11.30 a.m. (depending on age group). Menus are based on the main food groups, using no added salt and as little sugar and fat as possible.

To reduce risk of allergic reactions from immature stomachs, we do not serve egg, dairy, or wheat products to children under the age of 12 months. Babies without sufficient teeth for chewing have their food pureed or mashed with a fork. Their food will not always be mixed together, so that babies learn to distinguish between tastes, textures and colors. Parents can supply bottles, sipper cups and formula or juice if desired. Breastfeeding mothers are welcome at any time of the day.

Any unusual dietary requirements for strict vegans, vegetarians, and food allergies must be noted on the enrolment form and communicated to the Manager. Parents are asked to provide an alternative lunch for children on a completely special diet.

Harmony can easily adapt to a dairy-free diet by omitting all dairy-based foods, and parents may supply soy or rice products (e.g. yogurt, non-dairy ice cream) for their child's use only. Wheat-free diets can be worked around, and parents may supply products such as non-wheat pasta, bread, and afternoon snack. Other allergies may also be accommodated (e.g. allergies to oranges, strawberries) simply by omitting them.

Please ensure that your child has had breakfast before arriving at Harmony. A morning snack at about 9.15 a.m. consists of the pooled fruit supplied by older children or pureed fruit for very young babies. Lunch is eaten between 11.10 and 11.50 a.m., depending on ages of children. Afternoon snack is served after the rest period, at about 2.30 p.m. Children still at Harmony at 5.30 p.m. have a snack of bread and Vegemite™ and water.

Filtered water is supplied by Harmony (boiled for infants under 12 months old), and this is offered three to five times a day depending on demand and daily temperature. Water also serves to rinse children's teeth after eating.

Children are encouraged to try different foods, including foods from other cultures. However, children are not forced to eat food they dislike and will be offered an alternative. The children's common courtesies and social development are especially enhanced at meal times.

Health

Harmony Centre staff use the publication "Staying Healthy in Child Care" for reference, exclusion guidelines and notifiable diseases.

Illness

If your child has any type of allergy (e.g. to bees, plants, food), please make sure that the symptoms, severity of allergy and recommended treatment are detailed on the enrolment form and are communicated to the Manager.

Under the state children's services regulations, child care centres are not permitted to accept any child suffering from a high temperature or a contagious infection, e. g. ear, eye, or nasal discharge, infected sores, diarrhoea.

Medication prescribed by a doctor can be administered only by a qualified Educator at Harmony. Parents must complete an Authority to Administer Medication form (available from staff). This procedure includes administration of treatments for asthma control.

The medication must be in its original container, it must be current, and the name on the container must be the same name on the signed Authority to Administer form.

Nonprescription medicine provided by parents can be administered after parents have given written details in the Medical Book in each children's group.

If a child becomes ill while at Harmony, staff will endeavor to contact parent/s to discuss options. Available nonprescription medicine may be administered by a qualified Educator, (paracetamol for fever only as a last resort) and details will be entered into the Medical Book referred to above. Parents are shown the written record of medicine, dosage and time it was administered. They are then asked to sign alongside, to acknowledge that they are aware of what has occurred.

If staff feel that the child needs to go home or medical advice is recommended, they will contact parent/s (or other contact person if no parent can be reached) so that arrangements for pick-up can be made.

Injury

Harmony has a current Public Liability insurance policy for all enrolled children, which covers them at Harmony and while on excursions anywhere outside.

If a child is injured in Harmony, at the discretion of a qualified Educator, the parent/s will be phoned and appropriate action taken (e.g. first aid administered, child taken to hospital). In any case, a staff member with current first aid qualification will deal with the injury and parent/s will be notified as promptly as possible.

Staff write a detailed Incident Report for any incident that requires professional treatment. An incident that requires only minimal first aid (e.g. a grazed knee, splinter, bite) will be recorded in the Incident Book kept in each children's group. As with the Medical Book, parents are asked to sign the report or record, to acknowledge their awareness of what occurred.

Common childhood illnesses

Following is policy for exclusion from attendance at the Centre:

High temperature

If a child appears unwell (and has no obvious symptoms such as diarrhoea, vomiting), staff will keep the child under close observation in a quiet and comfortable area and offer fluid, such as water. If the child appears feverish, a qualified Educator will take his/her temperature (normal temperature is 36.9 deg.).

If temperature is elevated but not any higher than 38 deg., staff will remove clothing (making sure that the child remains comfortable and not too cold, as shivering tends to increase temperature). Using a cool wet washer, a staff member will wipe child's skin and reassess in half an hour.

If, after sponging the child with cool water, temperature remains above 38 deg., a qualified Educator will seek parents' permission to administer paracetamol (such as Panadol™) and follow the procedure in the above paragraph.

If temperature remains elevated or continues to rise after paracetamol should have taken effect, a parent will be contacted urgently and the situation discussed.

Diarrhoea or vomiting

If a child vomits two or more times or has three or more episodes of diarrhoea, a qualified Educator will telephone a parent. The child will be isolated from other children until collected by a parent. The child must be excluded from Harmony until the vomiting or diarrhoea ceases and the child feels well.

Staff are aware that diarrhoea due to teething or antibiotics is not a reason for exclusion. If there is doubt as to the cause, parents will be asked to provide a doctor's medical clearance to certify that the child is not infectious.

Conjunctivitis

If a child develops any symptoms of conjunctivitis, a qualified Educator will contact the parent and arrange for the child to be collected from Harmony as soon as possible. The child will be isolated from other children until collected and bed linen stripped for washing.

The child can be re-admitted to Harmony 24 hours after antibiotic treatment has commenced as long as no discharge is evident. If the parent decides not to use antibiotics, the child is to be excluded for five days.

Nose discharge

If a child has a thick yellow or green runny nose, the child must be excluded from Harmony or collected by a parent as soon as possible. This type of discharge can indicate infection and poses a risk to other children, their families, and staff.

Colds, rashes, and pains

If a child has a rash, cough and/or wheezing, or complains of a pain or headache, staff will keep the child under observation. If no improvement is evident, or if the child does not eat or sleep well, the parent will be contacted to discuss options and/or treatment.

Other illnesses and communicable diseases

For communicable illnesses and exclusion guidelines, staff refer to the "Staying Healthy in Child Care" handbook kept in Harmony. Following medical advice, parents must immediately consult with the Manager if their child has HIV positive infection; such children require consideration of their impaired immune system and risks to them and to others.

Following is an exclusion summary:

Asthma

Exclude until child feels well. A child's treatment can be managed in Harmony by a qualified Educator.

Bronchitis

Exclude until child feels well.

Chicken pox

Exclude from onset of first skin eruption and until the most recent blisters are dry and crusty and the child feels well.

Cold sores (herpes simplex)

Exclude until infected area has completely dried.

Common cold

If a child has a clear, runny nose, exclude only if child feels unwell. If child has a thick yellow, brown or green nasal discharge, child may be infectious to others and must be excluded.

Conjunctivitis

Exclude until discharge from eyes has ceased. Antibiotic eye drops may be prescribed to hasten recovery.

Ear infection

Exclude while there is any discharge from ear. Re-admit when child feels well. Antibiotics will be prescribed and can be administered at the Centre.

Hand, foot and mouth

Exclude from onset of first skin eruption and until the most recent blisters are dry and crusty. Re-admit when child feels well and with a medical certificate of recovery.

Head lice

Exclude until effective hair treatment (e.g. hair conditioner applied as per Health Department guidelines) has been carried out on all family members at the same time. All used linen and clothing must be washed, and all eggs removed from the hair (using a fine, metal nit comb).

Impetigo

Exclude until effective treatment (including proper use of watertight dressings) has been carried out and all used linen and clothing has been washed. Antibiotics may be prescribed.

Influenza

Exclude until child feels and looks well.

Measles

Exclude for 5 days after appearance of rash or re-admit on a medical certificate of recovery.

Mumps

Exclude and re-admit on medical certificate of recovery.

Ringworm

Exclude and re-admit on medical certificate that child is no longer infectious.

Roseola

Re-admit when child feels well and with a medical certificate of recovery.

Scabies (and other mites)

Following doctor's diagnosis and treatment using an insecticidal prescription, child may be re-admitted. All family members and close contact people must be treated at the same time.

Sore throat and streptococcal throat

Re-admit on medical certificate of recovery.

Thrush (candida)

Thrush in babies' nappy area which is due to antibiotic treatment is not a reason for exclusion. A medical treatment may be prescribed to hasten recovery. However, thrush evident in a baby's mouth is considered highly communicable to others through mouthing toys and so is excludable.

Protection from Sun

Sunscreen and a hat are put on children all year round, so that children are protected and get into the habit of preparing themselves against exposure to the sun at all times. Bulk SPF 30+ sunblock is bought by Harmony and is applied on face and exposed arms before going outside.

Immunisation

It is natural that in group care and despite high standards of hygiene, children may be exposed to contagious illnesses. Parents are encouraged to have their child immunised according to the recommended Health Department schedule and to make sure that vaccinations are kept up to date.

Parents are required by regulation to present their child's immunisation record at the time of enrolment and also annually so that Harmony records are updated.

Following is the Health Department Recommended Immunisation Schedule for children under school age:

2 months	First Triple Antigen (DTP)
	First Oral Polio (OPV)
	First Hib

4 months	Second DTP Second OPV Second Hib
6 months	Third DTP Third OPV Third Hib (depending on type)
12 months	Measles, Mumps and Rubella (MMR) Third Hib (depending on type)
18 months	Fourth DTP Fourth Hib (depending on type)
5 years	Fifth DTP Fourth OPV

Under Health Department direction, a child not immunised against measles (MMR vaccination at 12 months) must be excluded from a child care centre for two weeks once any case of measles is diagnosed. A case of measles must be notified to the local medical authority.

Child Protection

Procedures for dealing with complaints regarding the abuse of a child are in accordance with state Department for Family and Children's Services (FACS) guidelines. These are outlined in a separate manual entitled *Child Protection in Children's Services*, a copy of which is included in the Parent Handbook at the front entry of Harmony. The procedures cover duty of care and recommended procedures for responding to concerns at home, in a child care centre, in a family day care service, and in out-of-school-hours care.

Emergency Evacuation

A detailed copy of the building evacuation procedure is displayed for parents on the Harmony Centre's main bulletin board and also in each age group.

Staff are familiar with emergency requirements, and impromptu drills (following three blasts on a whistle) are carried out periodically so that fast and effective evacuation is practised without panic.

Once outside in the designated safe area, staff will take a head count against the daily attendance roll.

Confidentiality

Information in records and matters pertaining to families are kept confidential. When records are written up, they are as detailed, accurate and clear as can be possible at the time. A child's records (e. g. Authority to Administer Medicine, Incident Report, etc.) are kept in the child's file within the Centre so long as the child is attending.

Harmony Child Learning Centre

All staff have access to details on the Enrolment Form. Other relevant information may be shared among Harmony staff after consultation with parent. The following records must be kept by the Centre for six years after the child reaches 18 years of age:

- Enrolment Form
- Authority to Administer Medication (prescription)
- Incident Report

Parent/Staff Conflict

If a parent has a concern about any matter, the parent is encouraged to discuss the situation with the Early Childhood Educator of the group concerned. If the parent prefers, or if the matter remains unresolved, or if further action is required, the matter should be taken up with the Manager.

In fact, if you have any questions or concerns at any time regarding your child or Harmony's operations, please don't hesitate to contact the Manager or the relevant staff member.

Unwelcome Visitors

Any person entering the grounds or premises of the Harmony Centre who is abusive, threatening or otherwise presenting a risk to staff or children will be told to leave. If this does not occur immediately, the Police will be phoned.

Enrolment details may indicate that someone is prohibited from collecting a child or may be the subject of a current court restraining order. If such a person enters the Harmony premises, all efforts will be made by staff to keep the child safe, and the Police will be phoned immediately. Safety of children and staff is a priority.

Equipment and Maintenance

Toys and equipment purchased for Harmony are appropriate for the developmental stages, interests and cultures of the children in care. In consultation with staff, the Manager will arrange purchase of equipment, taking into account safety, durability, ease of maintenance, cost, and benefit to the children. Staff members will ensure that equipment is kept in good repair (or is discarded) and is stored in a safe manner. Toys and equipment are cleaned and disinfected as often as practicable and where possible are dried in the sun.

Children are shown how to use the equipment appropriately (e. g., building with construction blocks and not throwing them, cuddling or role playing with soft toys rather than swinging them by the tail). Toys of war are not permitted in the Centre and rough role playing with influences from television is actively discouraged. Television is not available, and videos are shown only for a special focus (e.g. road safety) or activities (e.g. The Wiggles for dancing or during wet weather). Children using climbing equipment indoors or outdoors must remove their shoes first, for safety reasons.

No Smoking

Inside the Centre is a No Smoking Zone. There are designated times and places outside for adults who feel they must smoke whilst within the perimeter fence of the Centre.

Children with Special Needs

Children with disabilities or other special needs can be referred to Harmony by parents or agencies. In the past such children have shown noticeable progress whilst integrated (mainstreamed) into a small group of peers and provided with routine and stimulating activities. Harmony links with the agencies mentioned below and endeavors to access their workers who can assist the child, parents and staff on a regular basis.

Accessing Community Resource Units

Council Libraries

In addition to using Harmony's extensive collection of junior fiction and non-fiction books, the staff access the local council library system for bulk loans of books and for periodic visits by a librarian.

Ethnic Child Care Resource Unit

The Harmony Child Learning Centre is a member of the Ethnic Child Care Resource Unit (ECCRU) and accesses the workers and library resources for hands-on assistance and many positive experiences for young children. This unit's resources and expertise are especially useful for settling children from a non-English speaking background (NESB) and providing translations to and from English.

In consultation with parents and staff, the Harmony Manager can arrange for a bilingual Ethnic Worker to work with the NESB child within the Centre over several weeks. The main aims are to help parents with the enrolment process, to integrate the child with his/her peers, to assist staff with child-rearing practices in the relevant culture, and with any other information required.

Resource Unit for Children with Special Needs

The Centre is also a member of the Resource Unit for Children with Special Needs (RUCSN) which caters for families and young children with a developmental delay or continuing disability. Harmony staff can borrow from RUCSN's library and can organise for a trained Assistant to help the child with special needs to participate in the daily routine. This Assistant also meets with parents and provides information to staff to help meet the individual child's ongoing needs.

Child Health Nurse

The W.A. Department of Health's local Child Health Nurse may be asked to assist with assessing development and health of full-time children (e.g. weight, gait, ears and eyes) and for basic areas of concern for any child (e.g. muscle tone, toileting).

Child Development Centre

The W.A. Department of Health operates the Child Development Centre in West Perth, through which Harmony can request child testing and assessment reports to assist staff in their working with an individual child.

All the above services are provided at no charge.

Anti-Bias Curriculum

The Harmony Child Learning Centre recognises that Australia is a society of diversity and different practices and values. It aims to provide opportunities so that each child can develop to his or her full potential regardless of class, culture, disability, gender, or race. This approach seeks to create an environment which "accepts and respects the differences, rejoices in the diversity, delights in the similarities, minimises biases and stereotypes" (ECCRU).

Harmony supports the objectives of ECCRU:

- To help children develop a positive self-identity/ self-esteem.
- To help children comfortably interact with diverse people.
- To help children learn about the unfairness of bias, prejudice and stereotyping.
- To empower children so that they can stand up for themselves or others when faced with bias.

International Days

Harmony fosters a strong multicultural philosophy in its programming. Throughout the year staff read stories and discuss items from many cultures (including the Australian aboriginal culture) and prepare ethnic foods for lunch.

They also research and organise International Days which promote several ideals for today's Australian society:

- Harmony staff learn more about each child and his/her culture, to gain more understanding.
- Harmony children learn more about other ways of living, and are encouraged to accept the similarities and the differences.
- Ethnic children learn to feel proud about their own heritage.
- Parents become involved and contribute to their child/ren's learning and activities, by lending artefacts, native costumes, recipes, games, books, music, photos, etc.
- Ethnic artists/workers from the community visit to provide interest and another dimension to the children's learning.

Quality Assurance

There are two external systems that measure quality in children's services. The state Child Care Services Board regulates practical issues such as staff to child ratios, height of fences, space per child indoors and outdoors, and number of toilets. Centres must meet these regulations in order to be licensed. The National Child Care Accreditation Council assesses qualitative issues such as feedback to parents on their child's progress, a balanced diet that includes foods from different cultures, the way staff interact with children, maintenance and safety, management of all aspects of operations, etc.

Harmony Child Learning Centre

The Harmony Child Learning Centre has been awarded the highest possible level of quality accreditation through the national process, gaining 52 highest ratings of a possible 52.

Changing Policies

The policies contained in this Parent Handbook have been developed and tried over time. Although changes are inevitable, they must reflect a better policy for the majority of users. For this reason, a meeting of the Parent and Staff Committee will decide what and how changes are implemented. Parents are encouraged to put forward suggestions for discussion.

In Conclusion

The management and Educators of the Harmony Child Learning Centre work from the heart to encourage and support parents in their important role of raising children to be happy and productive individuals. We want to help every family feel they are not alone when dealing with complex commitments and responsibilities in modern society. We want families to feel they are a part of a small team in the Harmony community. This sense of community is enhanced by high values and excellent quality in all aspects of the Centre's operations, so that families are relaxed and confident when they leave our doors.

We trust that your association with the Harmony Child Learning Centre will be a long and satisfying one.

Fun and Learning in Harmony

Modern Victorian Printing

January, 1992

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