Family Handbook

The Kids' Castle provides quality Before & After School Care for children of Castle Cove Public School, and Vacation Care service for children aged 5-12 years from any primary school.

The Kids' Castle is accredited and is a Not-for-Profit organization run by a parent committee in conjunction with the Director.

The Kids' Castle is located within Castle Cove Public School near the infants' playground. Our Centre aims to meet the needs of parents in our local community who are working, studying or require care for school aged children.

Service Philosophy

At TKC, we create a **home away from home** where children feel **seen, happy and connected**. We believe TKC is a space for belonging, friendship and growth, where **play is learning, growing and connecting** and shapes everything we do.

Children are genuine co-creators of their experience, with their voices, interests and ideas guiding our program, supported by educators who facilitate play, enable safe choice and build independence. Our educators are partners with families, advocates for children, and we view behaviour as communication, responding with curiosity, care and understanding. We work in close partnership with families, recognising the trust placed in us and holding it with respect and responsibility for every child's wellbeing and experience

Our policies

Our policies can be viewed on our website. This Handbook attempts to capture the intent of our policies. However, we recommend that all parents take the time to familiarize themselves with the detailed information of our policies. Our Policies take precedence over this document.

Our website

Our website (**www.thekidscastle.com.au**) provides additional information about the Centre and our Services. We recommend all parents become familiar with the website.

Service management structure

The Kids' Castle Before & After School Care is a non-profit, community-based organization. It is administered by a Parent Management Committee. The Management Team is committed to managing the service in line with relevant legislative requirements under the National Quality Framework for school age children and the Education and Care Services National Regulations. The committee employs the Director and other staff to oversee the day to day running and operations of the service.

Your smiley TKC permanent staff members are:

Director/Nominated Supervisor - Anna So

Educational Leader & Administrative Director - Anna So

*Other casual educators on duty will be shown on the noticeboard at the centre

Our experienced educators are dedicated and motivated to meet the needs of the children. The educators will listen, respond to and respect each child whilst promoting good self-esteem and modelling positive behaviors.

The staff team will not discriminate against anyone, based on their race, cultural background, religion, gender, disability, marital status, income or any other reason. There will always be a minimum of two educators on duty: The National Quality Standards ratio of staff to children is 1:15 (one educator to fifteen children).

Please feel free to talk to the Director with any questions, concerns, or feedback that you might have, and an appropriate time will be arranged to discuss these issues if they cannot be discussed at that time. All information given to the staff by parents will be kept confidential.

We have a wide range of Policies available on request at the Centre.

If parents have a problem with the Centre or its staff, please arrange for an appointment with the Director. These issues will not be discussed in front of staff or the children.

If the complaint is not handled to the parent's satisfaction, parents or caregivers are encouraged to contact The Kids Castle Management Committee President. A meeting will then be arranged with the Director and the TKC Management Committee President to resolve the problem. The Management Committee President can be contacted by written correspondence addressed to:

The Kids Castle President C/- The Kids' Castle, Castle Cove Public School, Kendall Road, Castle Cove, NSW 2069.

Email: ccpspandcpresident@gmail.com

Activities

Play is one of the most important and valuable ways children learn and develop. At Kids Castle, we provide a wide range of age-appropriate indoor and outdoor activities that support children's learning, wellbeing, creativity, and social development.

Children are encouraged to participate in whole-group experiences, small-group activities, or individual play, depending on their interests and preferences. We foster an inclusive environment where every child is welcome and encouraged to participate, with opportunities to join activities at any time.

Through a variety of planned experiences, including arts and crafts, construction and block play, cooking, sports, and both small and large group games, children develop important life skills such as problem-solving, communication, cooperation, creativity, and confidence.

Our weekly program is developed by educators in collaboration with children, incorporating their ideas, interests, and suggestions. This helps ensure that activities are engaging, meaningful, and responsive to the children's needs. The weekly program is available for families to view at the service and on the Kids Castle website.

Children are encouraged to respect and support one another's ideas, interests, and contributions, helping to build positive relationships and a strong sense of belonging within the service.

A range of self-select resources and equipment is available during morning and afternoon sessions, allowing children to make choices about how they spend their time. Providing opportunities for choice and decision-making promotes independence, self-confidence, and a positive sense of self.

Daily Program

MORNING

7:15am - Centre open. Breakfast is available from 7:15am to 8:30am, Indoor games & activities, art & craft.
8:30am - Breakfast finishes, pack away time and finish morning off with indoor or outdoor games.
9am to 9:15am - Educators walk children to school grounds.

Educators will stay with children until school staff supervision is verified

AFTERNOON

3:25pm - Educator sign in children from designated location
3:30pm to 4pm - Afternoon tea
4pm to 5:15pm - Programmed activities
5:15pm - Free play
5:30 pm - Pack up time, indoor games, reading, quiet activities
6:00 pm - Centre Closes

Homework

Homework is an optional activity during the service session. If you would like your child to complete homework while attending the service, please discuss this with your child and ensure they bring any required materials.

While educators may provide general supervision, they are not responsible for ensuring homework is completed. It remains the responsibility of parents/guardians to monitor and check their child's homework progress and completion.

If you would like your child to receive additional support with homework or reading during TKC session times, please speak with the Director to discuss available arrangements.

Parent Participation

We value the important role families play in our service and welcome parents and guardians to visit the Centre at any time. Building strong partnerships with families helps us create the best possible environment for children to learn, grow, and thrive.

We encourage families to share their ideas, feedback, and suggestions, as your input helps us continually improve our programs and services. If you have any questions, concerns, or would like to discuss any aspect of the service, please contact the Director to arrange a suitable time to meet.

Kids Castle is a community-based service governed by a volunteer Management Committee. Families who are interested in becoming more involved in the operation and future direction of the service are encouraged to consider joining the Committee. Participation provides an opportunity to contribute to decision-making, support the ongoing success of the service, and help ensure that Kids Castle continues to meet the needs of children and families in our community.

We welcome and value the diverse skills, experiences, and perspectives that families bring and encourage all interested parents and guardians to learn more about how they can get involved.

Food and Nutrition

At Kids Castle, we promote healthy eating habits and provide children with nutritious food options during their time at the service.

Children attending Before School Care are offered a light breakfast between 7:15am and 8:30am. During After School Care, children are provided with a variety of healthy and nutritious snacks. All food is prepared, handled, and stored in accordance with food safety and hygiene requirements.

We value and celebrate the diversity of our community and welcome families to share ideas for cultural and family food experiences that children may enjoy as part of our program.

Fresh drinking water is available to children at all times.

Allergies / Dietary Requirements

Parents/guardians must record any allergies, medical conditions, dietary requirements, or food intolerances on their child's enrolment form. Where required, families must provide relevant medical management plans, risk minimisation plans, and prescribed medication before their child attends the service. Alternative food options will be provided for children with identified allergies or dietary requirements where appropriate.

Children attending Vacation Care are required to bring their own morning tea, lunch, and additional snacks. The service provides a light breakfast between 7:15am and 8:30am, as well as a light afternoon tea. Fresh fruit is available throughout the day, including during morning tea, lunch, and afternoon tea times.

Anaphylaxis is a severe and potentially life-threatening allergic reaction. To help ensure the safety and wellbeing of all children, Kids Castle maintains a nut-aware environment. Families are asked not to send peanut butter, Nutella, nuts, or products containing nuts to the service to help keep children with allergies safe. While the service cannot guarantee a completely nut-free environment, we actively minimise the risk of exposure to nut products and appreciate the cooperation of all families

Hours of Operation

Monday to Friday

Before School Care	7:15am – 9:15am
After School Care	3:25pm – 6:00pm

The Centre is open on **Pupil Free Days** from 7:15am to 6:00pm.
The Centre is closed on public holidays. December and January operating days/hours will be displayed at the centre at closer time.

Membership Fees

An annual membership fee ($30 per child) applies at time of enrolment/re-enrolment, for the calendar year (January to December). **This fee is non-refundable and will be charged with or without bookings.**

Fees and Payments

Fees are payable in accordance with the terms outlined on your invoice. Statements are issued weekly via email and can also be accessed at any time through the Xplor Home App.

To maintain your child's enrolment and booking arrangements, it is important that accounts remain up to date. Outstanding fees may affect your child's ongoing place at the service.

Current fee schedules and payment information are available on the Kids Castle website. Families will be provided with a minimum of two weeks' notice of any changes to fees or relevant policies.

Payment Method

Direct debit is the required payment method for all fees at Kids Castle. As part of the enrolment process, all families must provide and maintain valid direct debit details.

Bookings

Permanent Bookings

Bookings can be made by emailing the centre on tkcteam@thekidscastle.com.au

Bookings are considered permanent if they are made for the same session continuously for a minimum of two consecutive weeks.

Permanent bookings can be cancelled with two weeks' written notice. Full fees applied to bookings within the two weeks' notice period, regardless of attendance. If a member wishes to cancel one permanent booking and re-book in the same two-week period, the booking will be charged at a casual rate instead of a permanent rate.

Changes to permanent bookings, either cancellations or session additions, must be made by email before 9am of the Friday prior to the week that the changes are to take place. Additions not put through by this time will be at the discretion of the Centre Director.

Permanent bookings falling on a public holiday or day of closure are non-chargeable.

Casual Bookings

Pre-bookings are required for Before and After School Care. The Centre accepts bookings at short notice subject to a place being available. If you require Before or After School Care on a day that your child is not booked in, please request a booking on the Xplor Home App before 12 noon the working day before; **this will be charged at the casual rate for the session.**

If the Centre is not informed of your child's absence before the start of the session (i.e. 7:15 am and 3:25 pm) or if the casual booking is not cancelled with 24hrs notice, **the full fee will apply.**

For emergency bookings, please contact the Centre on **0468 481 604.**

Child Care Subsidy (CCS)

Families who are eligible for the Child Care Subsidy (CCS) are generally only required to pay the gap fee (the portion of fees not covered by CCS).

To ensure CCS can be processed correctly, the following information must be provided on the enrolment form and must match Centrelink records exactly:

- Parent/Guardian details (the person registered with Centrelink for CCS purposes):
    - Full name
    - Date of birth
    - Centrelink Customer Reference Number (CRN)
- Child details:
    - Full name
    - Date of birth
    - Centrelink Customer Reference Number (CRN)

Accepting Your Complying Written Arrangement (CWA)

Once your enrolment has been completed and bookings have been created, the primary carer registered with Centrelink must accept the Complying Written Arrangement (CWA) through Xplor Home App and confirm the child's CCS enrolment at Centrelink online (via MyGov)

Once all required steps have been completed, any CCS entitlement will be paid directly to the service and applied to your family account. Future invoices will generally reflect only the gap fee payable by the family.

For further information about Child Care Subsidy eligibility, applications, and enrolment confirmation, please refer to the relevant links available on the Kids Castle website or contact the service for assistance.

Late Pickup Fee

If your child/children are collected after 6:00pm (by the sign out time in our system), this will be considered a late pickup, hence a late fee will apply: **$15 for the first 15 minutes or part thereof, followed by $1.00 per minute thereafter.**

This applies even if you are a few minutes late (by the sign out time in our system) for any reason. If you are unable to pick up your child on time, please phone one of your authorized persons to pick up your child before 6:00pm and inform the Centre immediately.

Please phone the Centre if you are going to be late (late fees will still apply). This will also enable educators to inform your child of your call to avoid any anxiety.

Dishonoured Payments

It is important that fees are paid by the due date, as these contributions support the provision of care, meals and snacks, educational resources, equipment, staffing, and the day-to-day operation of the service.

If a direct debit payment is declined or dishonoured, fees will be charged by Debit Success in accordance with your Direct Debit Agreement. Families are responsible for any dishonour fees imposed by the payment provider.

If a payment is unsuccessful, families should ensure that their payment details are up to date and that sufficient funds are available for future payment attempts.

Recurring late payments or multiple dishonoured payments could affect your child's ongoing enrolment at the Kids Castle.

Cancellation of Permanent Bookings

If you no longer require a permanent booking at The Kids' Castle for your child, you must inform the Centre by email giving a minimum two (2) weeks' notice. Full fees applied to bookings within the cancellation notice period. To book again within the two-week cancellation period, casual rate applied to the sessions before the permanent spots start after the two weeks period.

Children's Absences

Families must notify the service as soon as possible if their child will be absent from a booked session. Absences can be reported through the Xplor Home App, by email, or by texting the service directly. Messages passed through children will not be accepted.

If a booked child is absent and the service has not been notified, educators will contact parents/guardians and, if necessary, emergency contacts to confirm the child's whereabouts. A search fee will apply where follow-up is required.

Families may be eligible to receive Child Care Subsidy (CCS) for allowable absence days in accordance with current government guidelines. Please notify the service of all absences to ensure attendance records remain accurate.

Search Fee

If your child is absent and the Centre was not informed prior to the session start time, a search fee of $10.00 per child will be charged to your account.

Collection Procedures

To ensure the safe arrival of all children at Kids Castle, educators follow the collection procedures outlined below.

Kindergarten, Year 1 and Year 2 (Junior Campus)

- Term 1: Kindergarten children will be collected by educators directly from their classrooms. Year 1 and Year 2 children will make their way to the service independently.

- Terms 2–4: Kindergarten, Year 1, and Year 2 children will make their way to the service independently.

Year 3 to Year 6 (Senior Campus)

- Monday to Thursday: Children will meet educators at the designated collection area near the school library and administration building. Educators will then accompany the children as they walk to the Kids Castle.
- Friday: Children are required to wait at the school reception/office area, where an educator will collect them and escort them to the service.

Families are encouraged to remind their children of these procedures to help ensure a smooth and safe transition from school to Kids Castle each day.

Signing In/Out

> **IT IS A LEGAL REQUIREMENT THAT A PARENT OR GUARDIAN PHYSICALLY SIGN THEIR CHILD/REN INTO THE CENTRE- DROPPING THEM OFF AT THE GATES IS NOT ALLOWED.**

Parents must sign in via the Centre's touchscreen each session when dropping their children off or collecting them. The roll recorded by the Centre's device is a legal document and serves as a safety feature informing educators when children are at the Centre.

An attendance roll is marked every afternoon by educators when the children arrive at The Kids Castle after school. If your child is enrolled, but does not turn up, Staff will notify parents immediately.

The authorized person who is collecting the child from After School Care must ensure that an educator is aware that they are taking a child from the Centre and the child must be signed out via the Centre's device. Children will not be released from the Centre without this being completed**.** People under 18 years of age are not legally allowed to collect your child/children from the Centre.

We do not accept verbal requests for collection of a child, this must be done in email or by letter. The person collecting the child must be on the enrolment form as an Authorized Person.

Our educator cannot release your child until your written permission has been given. Any person unfamiliar to our educators will be asked for identification. This is for your child's safety as well as that of the caregivers.
After 6:00pm (by the sign out time in our system), the system will automatically generate a late fee charge. **Persistent late pick-ups will incur a possible suspension of service.** Letters will follow subsequent late pickup. After 6:15pm if the educators have not heard from the parent, they will ring the emergency phone number. After 6:30pm the Police Department and the Department of Community Services will be called. Two educators will wait with children who have not been collected by 6:00pm. No child will be permitted to travel home alone.

Under no circumstances is the staff of The Kids' Castle allowed to escort or transport your child home.

Priority of Access

The Director at the Centre maintains a waiting list. The main priority will be given to working parents, parents seeking work or studying for work purposes. Priority of access will be determined as follows:

1. **First -** a child at risk of serious abuse or neglect
2. **Second -** a child of a single parent who satisfies, or of parents who both satisfy, the work/training/study test under Section 14 of the *'A New Tax System (Family Assistance) Act 1999';*
3. **Third -** any other child.

If there are any court orders affecting custody of your child, please provide a copy for our records. Staff cannot restrict access if this is not produced.

Updating information

It is your responsibility to inform us of any changes of address, phone numbers or authorized persons to collect your child/children. Please email tkcteam@thekidscastle.com.au to update your details.

Illness

The Centre will not accept a child who is unwell or has a contagious illness (e.g. mumps, measles, chickenpox, influenza, head lice, COVID-19, heavy colds, gastroenteritis or other infectious diseases).

If a child arrives at the Centre unwell or becomes ill during their attendance, parents/guardians will be contacted immediately. The Director (or nominated responsible person) reserves the right to exclude a child who is unwell or contagious. Parents/guardians, or an authorised nominee, must arrange to collect the child as soon as possible.

If the Centre is unable to contact a parent/guardian, staff will attempt to contact the authorised emergency contacts listed on the child's enrolment record. It is the responsibility of parents/guardians to ensure that all contact details and emergency contact information remain current and that emergency contacts are available to collect the child if required.

If the child's condition requires urgent medical attention and the Centre is unable to contact a parent/guardian or any authorised emergency contact, the Centre will seek appropriate emergency assistance, which may include calling an ambulance. Any costs associated with medical treatment, ambulance transport or other emergency services are the responsibility of the parent/guardian.

Medication

If a child is undergoing medical treatment and requires medication, the medicine must be given to the Director along with the management plan filled out by the child's doctor. Staff cannot administer over the counter medication without written permission. The Director is to be made aware of any medical conditions that affect your child.

Injuries and Accidents

At least one educator or the responsible person on duty will hold current First Aid qualifications and maintain up-to-date training. First Aid will be administered by a qualified educator when required.

In the event of a serious injury or medical emergency, an ambulance will be called immediately and parents/guardians will be contacted. If parents/guardians cannot be reached, emergency contacts listed on the enrolment form will be notified.

All incidents requiring First Aid will be recorded in the Xplor Playground App and can be viewed by families through the Xplor Home App. Serious incidents will also be reported to the relevant regulatory authority as required.

Behaviour Guidance and Discipline Policy

At Kids Castle, we promote a consistent and positive approach to guiding children's behaviour. Educators use positive reinforcement to encourage appropriate behaviour and support children's confidence and self-esteem.

Inappropriate behaviour is managed calmly and respectfully, with a focus on helping children understand expectations and make better choices. Children are supported to reflect on their behaviour and are offered appropriate choices to help guide positive outcomes.

Educators provide clear expectations, simple instructions, and close supervision to ensure children understand the rules of the service. Children are always encouraged to seek support from educators when needed. Families will be kept informed of both positive achievements and any behavioural concerns.

Where required, children may be given a short period of time away from an activity to help them calm and regulate their emotions. Following this, educators will support the child to reflect on the situation and consider alternative responses.

For ongoing or more serious incidents, an Incident Report will be completed. Where three (3) or more incident reports occur, a meeting may be arranged with families to

discuss appropriate support strategies. Serious incidents will be discussed with families at the earliest opportunity.

Unacceptable behaviour will not be tolerated. The service, in consultation with the Management Committee and School Principal, reserves the right to suspend or refuse a child's attendance where necessary to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all children and staff.

Lost Property

Please check our lost property basket regularly. Please label all belongings with your child's name. Items of school uniforms will, if possible, be returned to their owners, however, other items of clothing from vacation care, unless clearly labelled, will be donated to charity after the school holiday period.

Confidentiality

The Centre has a strict confidentiality/privacy Policy developed in consideration of the Privacy Act of 1998. Family information and individual children's records will always remain private and confidential, and only made accessible to relevant Staff and Management members on a need's basis. All records and information are always kept in a lockable cabinet. Records will be shredded after the correct time frame has elapsed, as per legislative guidelines.

No information about children or families will be given to persons outside of the Service. The only exception to this is, if we are obliged to share information with an authorised prescribed body under Child Protection Legislation.

Use of mobile phone / other digital devices

Children's mobile devices (phone and/or smart watch) must be kept inside the children's school bag or in the Kids Castle office. Children are not allowed to take photos or videos of other children within the service. Parents and carers are not allowed to take photos or videos of children other than their own child(ren).

The Kids Castle has a centre mobile phone, that will be used according to the centre's Digital Media, Photography, and Surveillance Policy. Educator's mobile devices (phone and/or smart watch) must be kept inside the staff lockers. A responsible person on duty will carry a person device for emergency reasons.

We hope that this booklet has answered many of your questions and provided you with the information you require. We hope that your children's journey over the primary school years can be enhanced through the relationships, friendships and experiences that they will encounter whilst with us here at The Kids' Castle. Please don't hesitate to contact the Service and any of its representatives to clarify any additional information that you may require.