



The Peter Toms Early Learning Centre



Parent Handbook 2024

The Peter Toms Early Learning Centre was rated as Exceeding the National Quality Standard in all 7 Quality Areas by the Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority

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Introduction

At Brighton Grammar School, we celebrate boys - their effort, independence, passion and achievements. With a history of more than 140 years devoted to teaching boys, we are well equipped to meet the developmental needs of boys at every stage of their education. We particularly understand that boys learn differently from girls and require a carefully structured context to optimise the learning experience.

The Peter Toms Early Learning Centre

In the ELC, we know that the early years are vital in a boy's development. Our integrated play-centred program provides each boy with time and opportunities to question, predict, explore, discover and imagine.

We aim to provide a program that supports and acknowledges the many different cultural backgrounds and experiences of our families. We acknowledge the importance of enhancing the self-esteem, self-confidence and self-worth of each boy.

Our excellent staff and facilities, combined with fun and exciting programs, provide a warm and nurturing learning environment and an excellent foundation, to ensure a smooth transition into primary schooling.

The ELC programs cater for young boys between the ages of three and five. We offer full day programs, five days a week, for both three and four year olds, and part-time programs of three days a week for three year olds.

Our emphasis is on learning through play. We place great emphasis on facilitating learning experiences that allow hands-on exploration for the young learner.

Our ELC Vision

To provide a learning community that is passionate, inspiring and supportive for boys in their early years.

Confidential Emergency Information

Information collected by BGS ELC will only include that which is essential to the safety and effective care of the children.

The following information is collected upon enrolment of your son:

- Emergency Information and Contacts
- Background information
- Student Personal Information form
- Immunisation records
- Medical Requirements and Action Plans
- Custodial/access information

It is the parent's responsibility to inform staff of any changes to this personal information for files to be updated.

Enrolment Requirement

ELC3 boys must turn three years old by 30 April of their year of enrolment. They may commence in the centre on or after their third birthday. ELC4 boys must turn four years old by 30 April of their year of enrolment.

Priority of offer

Siblings of children currently enrolled at BGS, sons of Old Boys and siblings of Firbank Grammar School students will be given preference on enrolment if possible.

Commencement – Optional Transition Program

On commencement into both the ELC3 and ELC4 year groups, we can offer a staggered intake for the first two weeks. This will provide the boys with the opportunity to establish themselves within the new environment and become acquainted with their teachers and peers. For our 48 week Long Day Care boys, we begin the year with a holiday program before the school year begins. This provides the boys with a more relaxed program to ease them into the ELC environment.

**Operating hours**

The Peter Toms Early Learning Centre offers Long Day Care for 48 weeks, and Long Day Care for 38 weeks which the boys can access care from 7.30am – 6.00pm. Our Program Only enrolment is based on the Brighton Grammar School term dates as follows for 2024:

Term 1: 31 January – 28 March

Term 2: 16 April – 28 June

Term 3: 24 July – 20 September

Term 4: 7 October – 10 December

E-mail

All Early Learning Centre staff members can be contacted directly by parents by email. You may wish to contact Director Amelia Barrow via email at: abarrow@brightongrammar.vic.edu.au

Delivery and Collection of Children

The Early Learning Centre's doors open at 7.30am. Parents/Guardians must sign their boy in and out daily using the Qikkids system. Boys will only be allowed to leave the centre with their parents unless written permission is given for another person to collect them which is documented in their Confidential Emergency Information Form. In an emergency, a phone call from parents will be accepted, but written permission must be given ASAP.

Programming

All early childhood educators are actively involved in the planning process. Plans are implemented each fortnight and are reflected upon through the Fortnightly Reflective Journal. Planning is undertaken in accordance with the DEECD Regulations and incorporates the Early Years Learning & Development Framework.

Our program is play-based

A play-based program does not mean that the boys just do what they like all day. In a play-based program, there will be times when the boys come together as a group, listen when others are talking, follow the rules of group living and begin to take responsibility for their actions and their environment. Children are offered choices that reflect their developmental stage. The choices are determined by adults and are provided within the limits of safety and the group setting.

In practical terms, a play-based program gives emphasis to encouraging children to express their own ideas in play, to represent their world to understand it better. In the process of representation, as they play with others, children's language and social abilities are fostered. They are encouraged to think flexibly and creatively as they seek solutions to problems and conflicts; they share their understandings with others and explore and experience the content associated with all the learning areas.

Why is play important?

Play is how children learn. They learn most effectively when they are relaxed and having fun. Children's learning becomes meaningful when they are free to learn at their own rate and in their own way. It has previously been thought that teaching children earlier is better; that teacher-directed work is the most efficient way for children to learn and play has little value. Research shows us that a work-oriented, rigid approach to learning is not likely to help children develop a love of learning or provide the skills and attitude they need to be lifelong learners. Tension and anxiety can inhibit learning.

What are the benefits of play?

- Play enables children to develop all their skills, and as children develop so does their play.
- Play provides opportunities to improve small and large muscle skills and maintain physical health.
- Play helps to develop imagination and creativity, provides a context in which to practise social skills, acts as an outlet for emotional expression and provides opportunities to understand value systems.
- Play ensures that the child has opportunities, resources and time for play appropriate to each child's stage of development.
- Long periods of uninterrupted play build children's concentration and the inner motivation to take responsibility for their own learning. A positive sense of self is the most powerful tool for all learning.



Programming Procedures - Observations

Staff members will undertake observations of all children in their care and document these in the provided format. Observations are objective and cover all areas of development to assess a child's developmental level.

Forms of observations will include –

- developmental checklists/learning stories
- anecdotal records/running records
- comments/feedback and conversations with parents
- group observations/photos

Observations on children are kept strictly confidential (see privacy policy) and remain the property of the ELC. They will all be placed into their portfolios which can be taken home by parents on request.

Child Portfolios

Child portfolios are a record of your son's learning throughout his year. It is a purposeful collection of his work that tells the story of his efforts, progress, and achievements in all developmental areas. It includes work samples, records of various forms of observations of what and how he has gone about his learning, how he thinks, questions and creates, and how he interacts intellectually, emotionally and socially with others. Portfolios enable children to participate in assessing their own work, keep track of development and provide a basis for evaluating the quality of individual growth and development. The use of a portfolio ensures that classroom practice and policies meet the wide range of each child's developmental needs.

Individual Planning

Based on observations, staff will devise long and short-term Learning Intentions and Success Criteria for each boy that will assist in his overall development. These goals will be shared with parents at Termly Parent Teacher Discussions. Experiences are then chosen that will enable the child to achieve the stated goals.

Group Planning

The group developmental program/plan incorporates children's individual planning as well as the developmental needs and interests of the group as a whole. The group plan will also take into consideration the following aspects:

- Emphasis on learning as an interactive process between materials, people and the environment.
- Provide a balance of experiences – indoor/outdoor, quiet/active, individual/small group, child-initiated/ adult-initiated, spontaneous/planned.
- Allow children to choose experiences in which to participate.
- Allow flexibility within the program to extend children's interests and play.
- Provide and facilitate the incorporation of children with additional needs.
- Reflect and represent cultural/religious/linguistic diversity.
- Include greater gender equity.

Outdoor Programs

The outdoor area is another equally important learning environment and experiences for this area need to be planned and implemented accordingly. Outdoor experiences will be planned to allow:

- Development of all areas
- Learning about outdoor environments through the provision of experiences that stimulate curiosity and avenues for experimentation
- Freedom of movement that is not possible indoors
- Active and passive areas – which extend from the indoor environment and experiences
- Flexibility to accommodate changes in routines

During outdoor experiences, staff will ensure children are adequately sheltered from the weather and dressed appropriately. They will also ensure children are outside at the most appropriate times for climate and seasonal changes and in accordance with the BGS ELC SunSmart policy.



Program Evaluation

Individual child evaluations will take place in the allocated planning sessions. Group plans will be evaluated by staff on a daily/weekly basis and will be displayed in the reflection journal. As we are incorporating an emergent curriculum, modifications and extensions can be made at any time during the fortnightly plan. The effectiveness of the programs will be continually evaluated on the following criteria:

- achievement of goals – individual and group
- suitability of resources
- desired outcomes
- review of goals
- recording and evaluation of all experiences
- children's responses to experiences
- adults' responses to experiences
- parent feedback

The planning process is a continual cycle and is a combined effort of staff, children and parents.

Specialist Classes

As part of our learning experiences, we offer the boys specialist classes in Health & Wellbeing, Creative Arts, Performing Arts, Library/Literacy, Cooking, and a Cross-Age Buddy activity time. These classes provide new and exciting experiences for the boys and an opportunity for lots of fun and adventures.

Behaviour and guidance

The aim of the ELC is to maintain an environment that encourages children to be cooperative, fosters self-esteem and develops a child's ability to interact with others. Each group within ELC has Group Behaviour guidelines for indoor and outdoor. These are drawn up in consultation with parents and provide age/developmentally appropriate limits for the group. The guidelines are monitored and evaluated regularly to ensure they remain appropriate.

The establishment and observance of group behaviour will:

- Encourage cooperation.
- Encourage a child to accept responsibility for their actions.
- Assist the child to understand and appreciate the rights, feelings and needs of others.
- Help to develop respect for others.
- Help the child to learn the rules and limits of the group in which they live so they can enjoy interaction in their peer group.
- Support the child in developing positive and secure relationships with adults.

To meet these objectives, staff will encourage appropriate behaviour by avoiding conflict (distracting from a situation or giving another toy to play with) and encouraging the child to:

- Accept responsibility for, and the consequences of, their actions.
- Understand and appreciate the rights, feelings and needs of others.
- Develop respect for others.
- Understand limits that are based on safety and concern for others.
- Learn the rules and limits of the group in which they live to enjoy interaction in the peer group.
- Develop positive secure relationships with adults.

The Children's Services Regulations state that no child may be subjected to any form of corporal punishment, immobilisation or any other humiliating or frightening techniques. All behaviour management techniques need to be discussed and developed in conjunction with parents. If the behaviour continues to be unacceptable, this should be discussed with the Director and parents to seek additional help and support from another service.



Routines and procedures

Routines are an integral part of daily programs and provide boys with a secure structure in which to learn. When formulating routines, consideration will be given to the child's developmental age/stage, and the needs of the child.

Rest time

This is a required component in our daily program which provides each boy with the opportunity to learn relaxation techniques that transform stress into vitality. It is not essential that your son goes to sleep, and they can bring a soft cuddly toy for rest time. Please note that colouring books, electronic devices etc are not allowed as they can be quite disruptive. If you do not wish for your son to rest, he can be picked up after lunch at 1.00pm.

Allocation of a locker

Each boy is allocated his own locker outside his classroom for the year. It is to store your son's school bag, morning tea and lunch box. Please note that artwork and parent information will be placed in your son's locker. We ask that lockers be cleared every day.

Toilet training and Spare Clothes

We encourage boys to be toilet trained upon entrance to the ELC. We understand they may have 'accidents' throughout the year, therefore we require a spare full set of your son's uniform in his school bag for accidents and experimental play. With our exciting program, sometimes it is impossible to stay clean and dry.

Home toys and trinkets

Toys and trinkets brought to the ELC from home can be broken or lost, so ideally these should be left at home. As mentioned previously, a special toy can be brought for rest time comfort. It should be noted that war toys such as guns are forbidden in the ELC. Interesting items such as flowers, books, shells, insects and the like are welcome.

Food

Eating times are seen as relaxed and happy occasions and staff are encouraged to sit and eat with the boys. Boys are encouraged but never forced to eat any part of their meal, and uneaten food will be sent home so parents can see what was eaten. Parents/guardians are asked to identify any food allergies or religious requirements in regard to our cooking program and celebratory occasions. Our Long Day Care boys are offered breakfast between 7.30am and 8.00am and also provided afternoon tea between 3.30pm and 4.30pm.

Due to the Department of Education and Early Childhood National Regulation 77 Health, Hygiene and Safe Food Practices, we are now required to store all food items such as dairy products, cold or processed meat and items at risk of food poisoning in the refrigerator. These items are in the 'danger zone' of food poisoning after four hours from being removed from the refrigerator at your home. This relates to your son's lunch transferred from home, not morning tea. If your son has a hot lunch in a thermos, we cannot be responsible for the food being served at a safe temperature of 60 degrees and above.

The following process has been implemented:

- Each day place all items for refrigeration in a brown paper bag (the ELC will supply) and label it with your son's name
- Place the labelled bag in the blue cooler bag outside your son's classroom
- At 9.15am, the cooler bags will be placed in the ELC refrigerator
- At lunchtime. The cooler bags will be collected and your son's lunch will be distributed

Please note that if you do not place your son's lunch in the cooler bags we will not be responsible for food poisoning. We recommend ice packs and cooling devices in your son's lunch boxes as an alternative.

The Peter Toms Early Learning Centre encourages a **NUT AND SESAME FREE ZONE**



Birthdays

Birthdays are a very exciting time for children, and the staff enjoy sharing these events with the boys. Due to our nut-free policy, we require that cupcakes or other cakes **do not** contain traces of nuts or sesame seed products. If your son is allergic to nuts, dairy or any other food allergy, we suggest you might like to bring along a 'treat' to be given to your son if he cannot eat the food provided.

Parent/Guardian involvement

The ELC recognises the time limits of parents and guardians but we do encourage a partnership between yourself and the staff members caring for your child. Your involvement in your child's life at the ELC creates wonderful benefits for you, your son and the Centre. Parents/guardians are most welcome to participate in parent activities, but please note you will require a current Working with Children Check – volunteer basis. Please let your son's teacher know if you are interested in participating in an activity.

Every year, the ELC hosts exciting events in which we invite you to join your son. These dates will be given to you at the beginning of each term. Other opportunities for involvement include assisting with excursions, attending parent meetings and information evenings, and becoming involved in the JPG events.

We also ask for continual feedback on your and your son's experience, in writing or verbally. We will email policy updates, procedural changes, health alerts, DEECD parent information and QIP progress to you and ask for your feedback.

At the beginning of the year, staff will host a parent information evening and discuss ways in which you can be involved in your son's learning.

Parent / Teacher communication

We strongly encourage you to make an appointment with the teacher, if there are any concerns or matters to discuss regarding your son. We are always happy to chat, but please understand that **drop off and pick up times do not provide you with a professional and confidential environment**, therefore a private appointment would better suit your needs. Parent/Teacher Discussions will be scheduled for each term to discuss your son's development and set his learning goals across each developmental area.

The Transition Learning and Development Statement

A child's Transition Learning and Development Statement summarises their strengths, identifies their individual approaches to learning alongside their interests and indicates how they can be supported to continue on their learning journey. This document has been developed by the Department of Education & Early Childhood Development for children entering Prep. The information in the Statement helps future teachers get to know the children entering their classes and plan appropriate learning and teaching programs. It provides an opportunity for children, their families and all the professionals who work with them to support a child's transition to Prep. These Statements are written at the beginning of Term 4 and will be discussed in Parent/Teacher Discussions before being handed to your son's teacher for the next year.

BGS App

The BGS app is the School's primary parent communication tool for day-to-day operational matters, so it is essential that all parents [download the app](#). With the BGS app, you can access Schoolbox, the latest eNews, school notices, parent portal, calendars, music and sport information relevant to your son(s), on your mobile phone or tablet, using a single sign-on.

The [Brighton Grammar School website](#) also contains important information, dates and events and policy and procedures documents.



Diversity and Inclusion Policy

We aim to have an Early Learning Centre where children can realise their full potential regardless of race, colour, or religion. To achieve this, the Centre will endeavour to ensure that:

- Children recognise and appreciate the diversity of cultures within Australia by providing access to information about these cultures.
- We plan programs that will actively attempt to counter much of the misinformation that can lead to racism and sexism.
- We provide experiences that develop an awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage.
- We encourage all persons to communicate respectfully with each other.
- We ensure equality and a sense of belonging amongst all persons at the centre.
- We develop guidelines
- We recognise the values and differences of all persons.

Multicultural policy

Multicultural education will be introduced, where possible, through books, music and song, cooking, arts and crafts, clothing and play equipment. Parents from non-English speaking backgrounds will be encouraged to contribute knowledge of their culture to enhance the program. No activities at BGS ELC will contain negative or discriminating images of other cultures. We will:

- Ensure that employees understand bilingual and multicultural issues.
- Enlist the active support and participation of the School's ESL Department.
- Encourage parent participation in the areas of language development and cultural awareness.
- Encourage the maintenance and development of the primary language spoken at home.
- Provide appropriate resources for staff, parents and children.
- Advocate on behalf of bilingual families.
- Encourage parents to contribute knowledge of their own culture, either through discussions, resources or materials.
- Provide a variety of cultural choices of books, pictures, puzzles, stories, music, dancing, cooking experiences, singing, play equipment, and posters.
- Celebrate festivals within the centre.
- Encourage informal discussions with children about valuing and respecting differences in others.

Anti-bias and Non-sexist policy

Programs will be developed by staff that allow for positive experiences for all children, ensuring programs are not based on sexual stereotypes. The promotion of the equality of both men and women in traditional and non-traditional roles will take place. Children will be encouraged to express emotions and display affection.

At BGS we will:

- Ensure that all children have equal opportunities to participate in all aspects of the program
- Encourage all children to actively participate in a wide range of learning experiences and activities that are physically challenging and that encourage nurturing and caring roles.
- Provide resources and materials (songs, books, posters, tapes, puzzles, etc.) that portray women, men, girls and boys in diverse roles.
- Provide resources for children to feel comfortable exploring their own interests whether it is to play in the home corner, dress up, construct with blocks or play with trains.
- Ensure that activities and tasks are not gender bias
- Ensure that the language used does not reinforce sexist stereotypes.
- Challenge sexist ideas and comments when expressed.

Individual Needs

Brighton Grammar School ELC believes that all children have the right to develop to their full potential. Children and their families who attend the centre are encouraged to accept differences, appreciate each other and adopt a positive attitude toward people with different abilities. Staff are to ensure that resources: i.e. books/posters/puzzles on display reflect people with different abilities.

**Illness**

Where staff have a reasonable suspicion that a child is suffering from an illness or disease, BGS ELC reserves the right to require certification from a medical practitioner that a child is safe to attend the centre. In the case where a child has a condition or common infectious disease, as per the exclusion list from the Department of Education & Early Childhood Education, the child shall not be permitted to attend the centre.

Notwithstanding the above, children will not be allowed to attend the centre if, due to illness, they:

- are unable to cope in a group situation or the childcare environment
- require an unmanageable level of staff time
- are, in the opinion of the First Aid Coordinator or Director, too unwell to attend the program

Management of illness

To ensure the best possible management in case of illness and to minimise the risk of cross-infection, parents are asked to advise the staff if their child is unwell. If parents notice any of the following they should take their child to a medical practitioner, to be advised whether there is any risk of infecting others. If any of the following symptoms are noticed by staff at the centre, they will contact parents or nominated contacts to collect the child:

- Inflammation or sticky eyes i.e. conjunctivitis
- Persistent green /yellow nasal discharge
- Severe diarrhoea or vomiting
- Unusual skin rashes
- Fever at 37.5 degrees Celsius or above
- Persistent pain

If a child has suffered from vomiting, diarrhoea or fever at home, he must not attend the centre until the symptoms have ceased for 48 hours and normal eating habits have resumed.

Accidents

In the case of an accident, staff will complete the Accident/Injury form which a parent/ guardian will be asked to read and sign. In the case of an accident, where the parent/guardian cannot be contacted and medical attention is required, then an ambulance will be called at the parent's/guardian's expense. Parents/guardians will be notified as soon as possible and informed of all actions taken.

Medication

There is a Medication Register for children in each room. This is a legal document and parents and staff must ensure all information is accurate and signed. The Medication Register is used to record the medication needs of the child. The information, which must be recorded by the parent/guardian, must include:

- the name of the medication, when it should be administered and the amount to be administered
- the dosage and the time the medication was last administered
- the authorisation of the parent must also be recorded.

Infectious diseases

In the case of your son contracting an infectious disease, parents must inform the ELC as soon as possible. The ELC staff will then inform all facility users that this disease is present at the centre and parents can then check their own child for symptoms. A child with an infectious disease may not attend until fully recovered and with medical clearance. A schedule of the recommended minimum periods of exclusion from the centre for cases and contact with infectious diseases as determined by the National Health and Medical Research Council is included at the end of this information.

Immunisation

The centre must have current records of a child's immunisation details which is a requirement for enrolment.

**SunSmart practice**

From September through to the end of April, SPF30+, broad spectrum, water-resistant sunscreen will be provided for staff and children's use and applied on arrival. Staff will reapply sunscreen after lunch at approximately 12.30pm. If sunscreen has not been applied, the parent/carer must inform the staff on arrival. Children will be encouraged to use available areas of shade for outdoor play activities.

Child protection

Child abuse is an act that endangers a child's physical or emotional health or development. The abuse may occur as physical injury, sexual abuse, emotional abuse or neglect. Should a staff member have reason to suspect abuse of a child, they will work with the Director and the parent/guardian (if appropriate) to determine the validity of the concern. If the review of the situation identifies abuse is taking place, then the Director will refer the situation to the appropriate authorities. At all times, the situation will be treated confidentially.

Excursions

An excursion is defined as any activity in which children are taken out of the premises. Children learn from experience; therefore, excursions are seen as a valuable part of the program. Careful planning is needed to ensure the success of an excursion.

Child Records

In accordance with the requirements of DEECD, the following records will be maintained confidentially for each child enrolled in the Centre:

- Completed Enrolment Forms.
- Details of the period during which the child is in care at the ELC.
- Developmental records with up-to-date information on the child.
- Individual programs with specific objectives set for the child.
- Daily Attendance records.
- Details of any consent given to take the child on an excursion.
- Details of any court orders affecting the custody of the child of which the Director is aware.
- Medication forms and medical clearances.
- Letters of referral, assessments, or reports sent to the ELC.
- Where required, Special Needs permission forms.
- Accident forms.

All of the above records are to be kept in the child's individual files. Student individual files are to be retained at the ELC for a minimum of three years after the child has left the Centre. Accident and Medication Authority forms are to remain at the Centre for 25 years.

Policy and procedures

Brighton Grammar School ELC has a policy and procedures manual which contains policies relating to the National Quality Standard areas of:

- Educational program and practice
- Children's Health and Safety
- Physical Environment
- Staffing arrangements
- Relationships with children
- Collaborative partnerships with families and communities
- Leadership and service management

These policies have been developed by the ELC staff, families and boys, and copies of the policies are kept in the Director's office, foyer area and can be accessed on [the BGS website](#). We encourage you to read these and comment on them or any other aspect of the ELC.



We forward to a long and happy association with your son and your family.