CatholicCare
DIOCESE OF BROKEN BAY

Children's Services

Illness & Infectious Diseases

Policy

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What do we believe?

At CatholicCare Diocese of Broken Bay (CatholicCare), we are committed to the safety and wellbeing of children and hold this at the centre of our decision making and practice. We believe in the principle of the paramountcy of the safety of children. This means that the safety, wellbeing, and best interests of the child are the primary consideration in all decisions, actions, and practices. Where there is a conflict between the interests of a child and those of adults or the organisation, the child's safety and wellbeing will always come first.

We believe every child, family and staff member has the right to a safe, healthy and hygienic environment. We recognise that children in education and care settings are in close contact with others and that illness and infection can spread easily. We believe keeping children and staff who are unwell away from the service when required is an important part of protecting the wellbeing of the whole community, while ensuring children who become unwell while in our care are treated with care, comfort and dignity.

What are we going to do?

We will promote good health and hygiene practices across our services by supporting effective handwashing, maintaining clean and hygienic environments, following recommended exclusion periods and responding promptly when a child or staff member becomes unwell. We will work in partnership with families to communicate concerns about illness, support appropriate collection arrangements and provide information about infectious disease outbreaks while protecting the privacy and confidentiality of individuals. Our practices will be guided by current health advice and relevant requirements to help minimise the spread of illness and keep our children, families and teams safe.

How will it be done?

When children are unwell

Families are to ensure that children using our services are healthy and well to attend on their booked days. If a child has had paracetamol or ibuprofen within 6 hours of arriving at the service, the child will not be able to attend the service. Families need to be prepared to come and collect their child or arrange for their emergency contacts to come if their child becomes unwell during the day at the service.

However, for their own welfare, as well as that of other children and staff, children are asked to be kept at home until they are well or have received medical clearance from a registered health provider, if they exhibit any of the following symptoms:

- Influenza symptoms, which may include a fever or severe weakness and muscle ache during the night before or on the morning of care.
- An unidentified rash.
- Gastroenteritis symptoms, including vomiting and/or diarrhoea. Children must stay home for 24 hours after they last vomited or had diarrhoea.
- Exhibiting signs of intense fatigue, paleness, weakness, or sudden personality change which may indicate the onset of an illness.
- Eye discharge, unless diagnosed by a doctor as non-infectious.
- After a hospital admission until they have a doctor's clearance stating the child is fit to return to care.

- Diagnosis of an infectious disease. The National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC)'s *Staying Healthy in Childcare 6th Edition* has recommended minimum exclusion periods for infectious conditions for schools, preschools and childcare centres.

Keeping sick children away from a Children's Service until they are well enough to return is important for their own wellbeing, as well as for controlling and stopping the spread of infection to others.

While isolation periods for COVID-19 no longer apply from the Department of Health, we strongly recommend that anyone with COVID-19 or any other illness, particularly respiratory infections does not attend the service.

Infectious diseases

Infections are spread very easily in the environment of a Children's Service because of the close contact between all users. In order to minimise the spread of infection, staff and Educators will promote the following:

- Effective hand washing. Hand washing procedures will be displayed in appropriate locations in the centre-based services.
- Immunisation.
- Exclusion of unwell children and staff. Any staff, Educators and children who have an infectious condition must be excluded from the Children's Service for the periods specified in the latest publication of NHMRC's *Staying Healthy in Childcare 6th Edition*.

If staff or Educators are concerned that a child may be exhibiting symptoms of an infectious disease or other type of illness, they will contact the parent immediately. Parents will be requested to promptly collect their child from the service, seek medical advice, if required and obtain a medical certificate from their doctor, if required.

Educators and staff will notify other parents of children attending the service if there is an outbreak of one or more cases of an infectious disease. This information will be provided in a manner that protects the privacy rights of individual children, staff and Educators e.g. "one known case of whooping cough was reported to the service", as opposed to "child x was diagnosed with whooping cough".

Parents are required to advise the service if at any stage their child is diagnosed with an infectious disease, so that other families, and in some cases the *Public Health Units*, may be advised of the outbreak. CatholicCare has a high regard for the privacy and confidentiality of children and their families and will not disclose any information that is prejudicial to their rights.

Under the *Public Health Act 2010*, some infectious diseases must be reported to the *Public Health Units*. In these cases, the service is required to follow the instructions of the *Public Health Units*.

Response to outbreak of reportable infections

At CatholicCare our priority is keeping children, families, and our teams safe at all times. During an outbreak of an infectious disease or a pandemic (e.g., COVID-19), we ask that our teams, family members and children respond to signs of illness, no matter how mild, and do not attend or visit our services until well.

During these times, we will follow the advice from both NSW Health and the NSW Department of Education to ensure that we are following the most up-to-date guidelines and practices. We always aim to ensure that any changes are communicated with as much notice as possible. However, in some cases, we may need to change practices without notice to ensure the safety of our families, children and staff. These changes will be communicated to families as soon as practicable.

A notice will be displayed advising families of any occurrence of an infectious disease.

When a child becomes unwell whilst in care

If a child becomes unwell whilst in care, staff and Educators will:

- Isolate the unwell child from other children whenever practicable and attend to their immediate needs (i.e. comfort and reassure the child as required). Please also see the *Administration of First Aid Policy* and *Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy.*
- Notify the parent or persons nominated by the parent to collect the child as soon as possible.
- Notify the Service Coordinator.
- Monitor the child's condition at regular intervals. Record information about the illness in the *Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Record*.
- Please see the *Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy* for more information about using this record.
- Ensure the health and safety of other children, staff and Educators by cleaning and disinfecting all contaminated areas (i.e., toys, linen, bench surfaces etc.).
- Follow the steps in the Serious Incidents section of the *Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy* for any illness that would require urgent medical attention or the involvement of emergency services for the child.

When staff and Educators are ill

If a staff member or Educator has any of the following symptoms, they are advised not to report for work until they are fit and well enough. Symptoms include:

- They are too unwell to perform their regular duties effectively.
- Influenza symptoms, which may include a fever during the night before or on the morning of care.
- An unidentified rash that has not been diagnosed by a doctor.
- Gastroenteritis symptoms, including vomiting and/or diarrhoea – staff and Educators must stay home for 24 hours after they last vomited or had diarrhoea.
- Exhibiting signs of intense fatigue, paleness, weakness or sudden personality change which may indicate the onset of an illness.
- Diagnosis of an infectious disease.

Staff and Educators may be requested to provide a doctor's certificate to verify that they are fit and well enough to return to work in Children's Services.

If a parent is concerned that a staff member or Educator is too ill to care for their child, they should speak with the Director or Service Coordinator. If parents are still concerned, they have the right to seek alternate care without the penalty of paying fees for that day.

Key hygiene and infection activities

Handwashing

Hand washing will be applied as an effective way of preventing the spread of infection. As set out in the *Staying Healthy: 6th Edition 2024* we will implement its recommendations for when we should be washing hands:

Who	Before	After
Educators, other staff and students and volunteers	• When arriving at the service, so harmful germs are not introduced into the service • Eating or handling food including baby bottles • Giving medication • Putting on gloves • Administering first aid (disposable gloves must be worn when administrating first aid) • Applying sunscreen or other lotions to self or children • Going home, so harmful germs are not taken home with you.	• Eating or handling food • Using the toilet • Assisting children to use the toilet • Taking off gloves • Changing a nappy • Cleaning the nappy change area • Wiping a child's nose or your own nose • Cleaning up body fluids such as faeces, urine, vomit or blood • Carrying out cleaning procedures • Handling garbage • Coming in from outside play • Applying sunscreen or other lotions to self or children • Touching animals
Children	• Starting the day at the service • Eating or handling food • Touching animals • Going home, so harmful germs are not taken home with them.	• Eating or handling food • Using the toilet • Touching mucus (snot) or wiping their nose • Coming in from outside play • Touching animals

When washing hands, staff and Educators will

1. Wet hands with running water.
2. Use soap (liquid or solid) and spread it over the hands.
3. Rub hands vigorously paying attention to the back and front of the hands, in between fingers and under fingernails.
4. Rinse hands thoroughly to remove all soap.
5. Dry hands thoroughly with a disposable towel. If using a cloth hand towel, staff, educators and children must have an individual towel which they alone use. This must be laundered daily.

Staff and Educators will:

- Display a waterproof poster for handwashing instructions above all handwashing basins.
- Staff are encouraged to use moisturising lotion after handwashing. Moisturising lotion must be kept out of reach of young children.
- Ensure that cuts, abrasions, dermatitis and open wounds on hands are covered with a water-resistant covering that is changed regularly.
- In situations where running water is not available, use non-water cleansers or antiseptics such as foam or gel for cleaning hands.

Nose wiping

Educators and staff will minimise the spread of infectious diseases by ensuring nose wiping is conducted in an effective way. Educators and staff will:

- Ensure disposable tissues are used by all educators to wipe children's noses.

- Where appropriate, teach children to wipe their own nose with a tissue, and to dispose of tissues in a hygienic way.
- Ensure both educators and children wash their hands after nose wiping.
- Use a separate tissue to wipe different children's faces and noses. Tissues will be disposed of immediately after wiping a child's nose.

Cleaning blood and other body spills

All body fluids should be treated as if they are infectious. Promptly removing the spilled substance and cleaning and disinfecting the area reduces the risk of spreading infection.

When cleaning bodily fluid spills staff and educators will follow the Staying Healthy Guidelines spill cleaning process:

1. Put on disposable gloves
2. Wipe up the spill immediately with a damp cloth, tissue or paper towel. If the spill is larger, cover it with an absorbing agent such as a spill kit or large disposable pads. Use a disposable scraper and pan to scoop up the absorbent material and any unabsorbed body fluids.
3. Put the cloth, tissue, paper towel, absorbing agent and scraper into a plastic bag. Seal the bag and put it in the rubbish bin.
4. Remove disposable gloves and put them in the rubbish bin.
5. Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water.
6. Put on clean utility gloves, wash the surface with detergent and warm water and dry with paper towels.
7. Wipe the area with disinfectant and allow to dry.
8. Remove utility gloves and wash your hands with soap and water.

For further information see *Staying Healthy: 6th Edition 2024* (How to clean spills of body fluids).

Other hygiene practices

Staff and educators must:

- Ensure that the playrooms in centre-based programs are maintained in a clean and hygienic manner.
- Use towels and face washers only once before laundering.
- Prevent the sharing of combs, brushes, bottles, drink bottles, dummies and towels.
- Wash cots and highchairs with warm soapy water and air them regularly.
- Wash or disinfect resources regularly.
- Clean bottles, accessories and dummies after each use and store them ready for collection by parents.
- Ensure each child uses their own drinking and eating utensils. These will be washed after each use.
- Encourage children to sneeze or cough into a tissue, or their elbow if a tissue is not immediately available and wash and dry their hands afterwards.
- Clean nappy change mats after each use following the nappy change policy and procedure.
- Spot clean nappy change and bathroom areas as required during the day and clean the areas thoroughly each day.
- Services are encouraged to wipe down touch points across the service e.g. door handles, family's sign in/out iPad.
- Ensure daily checklists are completed.
- Ensure that surfaces are sanitised each day.

Staff and educators will actively support children to learn appropriate hygiene practices through role modelling, discussion and ensuring transition times are a learning experience.

Minimising the spread of infectious disease

All families will be asked to ensure children do not attend during the infectious period of a contagious disease and if parents do present children during this time they will be asked to take them home as per this policy.

Who is responsible?

Roles	Responsibilities
Approved Provider	• Ensure the service operates in line with the Education and Care Services National Law and National Regulations including: • Ensuring that where there is an occurrence of an infectious disease at the service, reasonable steps are taken to prevent the spread of that infectious disease (Regulation 88(1)). • Ensuring that where there is an occurrence of an infectious disease at the service, a parent/guardian or authorised emergency contact of each child at the service is notified of the occurrence as soon as is practicable (Regulation 88(2)). • Ensuring that information from the relevant State/Territory Public Health Unit about the recommended minimum exclusion periods is displayed at the service, is available to all stakeholders and is adhered to in the event of an outbreak of an infectious disease (as designated by the Department of Health). • Ensuring that the parent/ guardian and Public Health Unit are notified as soon as possible, after being made aware that an enrolled child: o Has one of the following vaccine preventable diseases, or o Is reasonably suspected of having come into contact with a person who has one of these vaccine preventable diseases and the enrolled child has no evidence of immunisation lodged to show that the child is immunised against, or acquired immunity by infection from, that disease: a) Pertussis, or b) Poliomyelitis, or c) Measles, or d) Mumps, or e) Rubella, or f) Meningococcal B&C, or g) Diphtheria, or h) Haemophilus influenza Type b (Hib), or i) Tetanus. • Ensuring that any directions provided by the Public Health Unit are followed regarding the possible exclusion of a child or educator who is not immunised against a vaccine preventable disease. • Notifying the regulatory authority within 24 hours of a serious incident including when a child becomes ill at the service or medical attention is sought while the child is attending the service. • Ensuring that appropriate and current information and resources are provided to staff and parents/guardians regarding the identification and management of infectious diseases, blood-borne viruses and infestations. • Keeping informed about current legislation, information, research and best practice. • Ensuring that any changes to the exclusion table or immunisation schedule are communicated to staff and parents/guardians in a timely manner. • Display a notice stating that there has been an occurrence of an infectious disease at the service premises, FDC residence or approved venue

Roles	Responsibilities
	• Meet jurisdictional requirements relating to the enrolment or attendance of children who are not up to date with their scheduled vaccinations • Ensure the premises, furniture and equipment are kept safe, clean and well maintained, including high risk areas (e.g., bathroom, toilet, nappy change area, sandpit), furniture (e.g., cots), clothing, linen, and equipment (e.g., toys, carpets, mats) • Take reasonable steps to ensure that the nominated supervisor, educators and staff follow the policy and procedures • Ensure that copies of the policy and procedures are readily accessible to nominated supervisors, coordinators, educators and staff, and available for inspection
Practice Manager	• Providing oversight and guidance to services to support the consistent implementation of this policy. • Providing oversight and guidance to ensure services maintain appropriate health, hygiene and infection control practices. • Supporting Service Leaders to respond appropriately to illness and infectious disease concerns. • Monitoring compliance with relevant legislation, regulations and current health advice. • Advising Nominated Supervisors and support them to review and update procedures and resources when health advice or regulatory requirements change. • Supporting services to manage and respond to infectious disease outbreaks. • Providing guidance and support to staff and leaders where complex health or infection control matters arise. • Identifying and addressing areas of non-compliance or practice improvement. • Supporting ongoing staff education and awareness of health, hygiene and infection control practices. • Escalating significant health, safety or compliance concerns where required.
Nominated Supervisor	• Implement the Illness and Infectious Diseases Policy and Procedures • Ensure that reasonable steps are taken to prevent the spread of any infectious disease at the service • Ensure that families or an authorised emergency contact of children attending are notified of the occurrence as soon as practicable and in a manner that is not prejudicial to the rights of any child, educator or staff member • Display a notice stating that there has been an occurrence of an infectious disease at the premises, FDC residence or approved venue • Meet jurisdictional requirements relating to the enrolment or attendance of children who are not up to date with their scheduled vaccinations • Ensure premises, furniture and equipment are kept safe, clean and well maintained • Promote hygiene practices with all children, families, educators and staff • Implement the Dealing with Infectious Diseases Policy and Procedures • Ensure that reasonable steps are taken to prevent the spread of any infectious disease at the service • Ensure that families or an authorised emergency contact of children attending are notified of the occurrence as soon as practicable and in a manner that is not prejudicial to the rights of any child, educator or staff member • Display a notice stating that there has been an occurrence of an infectious disease at the premises or approved venue • Meet jurisdictional requirements relating to the enrolment or attendance of children who are not up to date with their scheduled vaccinations • Ensure premises, furniture and equipment are kept safe, clean and well maintained • Promote hygiene practices with all children, families, educators and staff

Roles	Responsibilities
Educators	• Implement the Illness and Infectious Diseases Policy and Procedures • Stay at home if unwell or have an excludable infectious disease • Ensure that any children that are suspected of having an infectious illness are responded to and their health and emotional needs supported at all times. • Implementing appropriate health and safety procedures, when tending to ill children. • Ensuring that families are aware of the need to collect their children as soon as practicable to ensure the child's comfort. • Maintaining their own immunisation status and advising the Approved Provider/Nominated Supervisor of any updates to their immunisation status. • Providing varied opportunities for children to engage in hygiene practices, including routine opportunities and intentional practice. • Observing signs and symptoms of children who may appear unwell and informing the Nominated Supervisor. • Providing access to information and resources for parents/guardians to assist in the identification and management of infectious diseases and infestations. • Monitoring any symptoms in children that may indicate the presence of an infectious disease. • Maintaining confidentiality at all times.
Parents / Guardians	• Providing Immunisation documentation upon enrolment and as administered. • Be familiar with and follow the service's illness and infectious diseases policy and procedures • Keeping their children at home if they are unwell or have an excludable infectious disease. • Keeping their children at home when an infectious disease has been diagnosed at the service and their child is not fully immunised against that infectious disease if directed to do so by the Public Health Unit. • Informing the service if their child has an infectious disease or has been in contact with a person who has an infectious disease.

National Quality Standards (NQS)

Quality Area 2: Children's health and safety		
2.1	Health	Each child's health and physical activity is supported and promoted.
2.1.1	Wellbeing and comfort	Each child's wellbeing and comfort is provided for, including appropriate opportunities to meet each child's needs for sleep, rest and relaxation.
2.1.2	Health practices and procedures	Effective illness and injury management and hygiene practices are promoted and implemented.
2.2	Safety	Each child is protected.

Education and Care Services National Law and National Regulations	
S. 2A	Paramount consideration - safety, rights and best interests of children
S. 3A	Paramount consideration
S. 172	Offence to fail to display prescribed information
S.174(2)(a)	Serious incident- any emergency for which emergency services attended

Education and Care Services National Law and National Regulations	
12	Meaning of serious incident
77	Health, hygiene and safe food practices
83	Staff members and family day care educators not to be affected by alcohol or drugs
85	Incident, injury, trauma and illness policies and procedures
86	Notification to parents of incident, injury, trauma and illness
87	Incident, injury, trauma and illness record
88	Infectious diseases
89	First aid kits
90	Medical conditions policy
92	Medication record
93	Administration of medication
162	Health information to be kept in enrolment record
168	Education and care service must have policies and procedures
170	Policies and procedures to be followed
173	Prescribed information to be displayed
175(2)(c)	Prescribed information to be notified to the Regulatory Authority- (2) any circumstance arising at the service that poses a risk to the health, safety or wellbeing of a child or children attending the service.

Related documents

Children's Services policies

- *Administration of First Aid Policy*
- *Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy*
- *Medication Policy*
- *Nappy Changing and Toileting Policy*

Forms

- *Authority to Administer Medication*
- *Children's Services Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Record*
- *Kitchen Checklist*

Resources

External

- *5 Steps to stop the spread of respiratory illness*
- *Children (Education and Care Services National Law Application) Act 2010 No 104 - NSW Legislation*
- *Education and Care Services National Regulations (NSW) (2025 SI 601a) - NSW Legislation*
- *How to Wash Hands Poster*
- *How to Use Alcohol-based Hand Rub*
- *NSW Health: Stopping the spread of childhood infections factsheet*
- *NSW Public Health Act 2010*
- *NSW Public Health Units*
- *Staying Healthy in Childcare 6th Edition 2024*

Glossary

ACECQA – Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authorities

The independent national authority that works with all regulatory authorities to administer the National Quality Framework, including the provision of guidance, resources and services to support the sector to improve outcomes for children.

Child Paramountcy

Child paramountcy refers to the obligation to ensure that the best interests, safety, and wellbeing of children are paramount above all other considerations. All decisions, practices, and actions must prioritise the protection and wellbeing of children, particularly where competing interests exist.

ELC

All centre-based services for children aged 0-5 years including Long Day Care and Preschool services.

Illness

Poor health condition due to a disease of the body or mind

Infectious Disease

Diseases caused by a microorganism and can be passed on from one person to the other

Influenza

A contagious viral illness that causes fever, pain and weakness

OSHC

Out of School Hours Care

Practice Manager

A practice manager oversees and supports a cluster of services within a local area. They work with the Nominated supervisor to ensure services operate safely, meet legal and quality requirements, and follow organisational policies. They do not work directly with children day to day.

Risk Assessment

A systematic process of evaluating the potential likelihood and consequences of risks that may be involved in a projected activity or undertaking.

Sign off and review

This document remains valid until it is either superseded by a new version or officially revoked.

CatholicCare values your input and welcomes feedback on this policy. Your suggestions help us improve and better support your work. Please send any feedback to policy.updates@catholiccaredbb.org.au.

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