

## WELCOME TO GRAY EARLY LEARNING CENTRE

**Principal: Sue Beynon**

Victoria Drive

Palmerston N.T. 0830

Phone (08) 89321614

Fax: (08) 8932 1007

Email: [admin.graysch@ntschoools.net](mailto:admin.graysch@ntschoools.net)



This booklet outlines policies, so keep it handy for future reference.

## GRAY PRESCHOOL PHILOSOPHY STATEMENT

At Gray Learning Centre we promote children's social, emotional, cognitive and physical development through the use of the National Early Years Framework which focuses on the Belonging, Being and Becoming of each child. Using this framework, we maximise children's learning through play based activities, investigations and open ended experiences. Play and hands-on experiences enable the child to manipulate, explore, discover, practice and become competent in a variety of ways. Through play, children construct their own understanding and knowledge of the world. Children's interests and needs, as well as the important contributions made by the home, are an integral part of our learning program. Our teachers are highly dedicated staff who will nurture and guide your child with patience, understanding and consistency. With our well-resourced modern facilities we provide a safe, happy and healthy environment for your child to develop as a life-long learner.

### The 3 criteria for entering Preschool are:

- Children must be fully toilet trained
- Children are able to separate from parents/carers
- Children are able to follow reasonable instructions from adults



### CENTRE SESSION TIMES

(15 HOURS PER WEEK)

**Session (a) - Monday, Tuesday 8:00am – 2:30pm**

Wednesday 8:00am – 10:00am

**Session (b) - Thursday, Friday 8:00am – 2:30pm**


Wednesday 8:00am – 10:00am




## REQUIREMENTS

Each child will need to bring the following items to Preschool each day. These items must be clearly labelled:

 A school bag with a spare change of clothes

 Healthy snack and lunch (sandwich, fruit, cheese etc)


 Suitable shoes (no thongs)

 A hat

 Library bag



 Bathers and a named towel (on swimming days)

 Cot size sheet or towel for rest time

## DROPPING OFF AND COLLECTING CHILDREN

The first twenty minutes of the Preschool session is open for parents to bring in their child and join them in reading a book, completing a puzzle or allowing them to show you what they have been doing. You are welcome to stay for part or all of the session.

To ensure your child does not become stressed and upset, we would appreciate if you can be prompt when picking up your child from Preschool. It is important to let us know as soon as possible if you are going to be late or if someone else will be picking up your child. You are required to contact the Preschool and let us know.

During the wet season please feel free to collect your child early if there is a storm approaching.

Gray Early Learning Centre Ph. 8932 1614 or Gray Primary School Ph. 8932 1700

## Session Timetable

	<u>Monday/Tuesday</u>  <u>Or</u> <u>Thursday/Friday</u>		<u>Wednesday</u>
8:05-9:00	Mat-time  Mathematics/Literacy	8:00-8:40	Mat-time
9:00-9:40	Sensory Motor  Outdoor Activities	8:40-9:00	Outdoor Activities
9:45-10:00	Snack-time	9:00-9:20	Recess
10:15-11:30	Inside Activities  Mat-time	9:20-9:50	Investigative Activities
		9:50-10:00	Mat-time/End of session
11:30-12:20	Outside Activities		
12:20-12:40	Lunch		
12:40-1:15	Rest time		
1:15-2:00	Investigative Activities		
2:00-2:30	Mat-time/End of session		

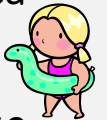
## SNACK TIMES & LUNCH

Your child needs to bring a packed healthy recess and lunch each day. These should be placed in a named lunch box. All lunches are placed in the classroom fridge so no ice block coolers or frozen poppers are needed to keep lunches cool. Please ensure only healthy food is sent to school, such as a sandwich, fresh fruit, rice crackers and yoghurt. Children need to bring their own drink bottles filled with water only. There are no canteen orders available for preschoolers.



## SPECIAL DAYS

Swimming Days will be offered when the weather is suitable. The Preschool pool is very shallow and our swimming program encourages children to feel safe and become more confident in the water. On swimming days your child will need bathers, towel and a plastic bag for putting their wet clothes in.



Library Day. The Centre has its own library where children can borrow a book to take home and read. To borrow a book, children will need a library bag.



## CONTACT DETAILS

Parents/Caregivers are required to notify staff of any changes to their contact details i.e. new phone numbers, new address

## PARENT CONTRIBUTIONS

All students are entitled to a \$150 back to school voucher from the NT Government. This voucher can be used to purchase the following things:

- Preschool Resource Pack (\$150) that consists of shared art and craft materials, Portfolio folder, scrapbook, two readers, one Library Bag, one bucket hat, one Preschool shirt and Healthy Harold Life Education lesson in term one.

In order for parents to authorise this voucher you must either come into the office, telephone the office (89321700) or email the office on [admin.graysch@ntschoools.net](mailto:admin.graysch@ntschoools.net) to let us know how you want to spend your voucher. Students will be issued with the school resource pack once payment has been authorised. All vouchers expire at the end of Semester One 2013, so it is important that you access these funds before the end of Semester One.

School contributions will not be collected in 2013 as we will be using a 'User Pays System'. This means that all students will pay the same amount for school performances, special programs such as electives and excursions.

## COMMUNICATION

Notes and letters are an important form of communication between the Preschool and parents/Carers. These will be placed in your child's 'pocket' in the Centre along with any work to take home. These pockets need to be checked daily as your child leaves the Centre. If your child is the eldest at Gray School they will also receive a Gray Primary School newsletter each Wednesday.



## TOYS

Toys are not to be brought to Preschool.

## LABEL ALL BELONGINGS

Please write your child's name on all their belongings that are brought to Preschool to avoid confusion and ensure that lost property is returned.

## BEHAVIOUR

Preschool follows the 'Gray Way' which promotes Resilience, Confidence, Getting along, Organisation and Persistence.

Inappropriate, aggressive, non-compliant behaviour is not acceptable and parents will be contacted if this type of behaviour is displayed.

The Preschool uses the behaviour management program of '1, 2, 3 Magic'. During this process children are given a reminder of their behaviour, followed by a warning and then time out in a quiet area to reflect on their actions.



## ATTENDANCE

Due to recent changes and implementations in the Department of Education's Attendance Policy, a child's attendance record is flagged to other government departments if your child is away for five 'unnotified' absences a term. Although preschool is not compulsory, once your child is enrolled, attendance is compulsory. Please ensure that you ring us when your child is away from school on 89321614 to avoid any government intervention.

Regular attendance (9 days out of 10) is important for your child to achieve success at Preschool. This leads to more success at school so it is really important to establish excellent attendance habits while in Preschool. Once your child is enrolled at the Preschool, attendance is compulsory.

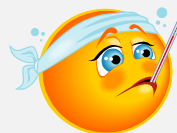


## PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

We really value parental/Carer's involvement in our Preschool and encourage you to participate in the following ways:

- Preparing materials for art & Craft activities
- Assist with fundraising events
- Attend parent forums to discuss latest educational developments in Early Childhood
- Excursions – preparation and supervision
- Reading
- School Council

## ILLNESS



- If your child is suffering an **infectious disease** such as German measles, Chickenpox, or Mumps he/she should be excluded from the Centre for specified times. Please inform the staff if your child contracts any of these. Please keep your child at home when they are sick so the infection does not spread.
- If your child has a specific health issue please discuss this with the staff and fill out a Health Care Plan form, so we can be aware of any problems.
- **Head lice** are a major ongoing problem in all schools in the Northern Territory. It is every parent's responsibility to regularly check their children's hair for lice (tiny pale insects) and nits (tiny black or white eggs glued to the hair). Please notify the Preschool ASAP and children must be treated before they can come back to Pre-school. The Department of



Health and Community Services is available to provide education, support and training about head lice and nits. For further information contact Palmerston Community Care Centre on 89993344, your local pharmacy or Doctor.

- **Medication/Allergies** – Parents need to fill in a medication form to authorise the relevant staff to administer the medication to your child. Please note: Medication CANNOT be administered at school without this form being completed.

## UNIFORMS

Gray Early Learning Centre T-shirts are available to purchase for \$15 and come in a variety of colours. We have sizes 4-6.

## THE ROLE OF PLAY IN EARLY CHILDHOOD



Young children are active learners who construct their own understanding and knowledge of the world. Play is an essential part of learning for young children and it comes in many forms e.g. blocks, sandpit, home corner, sports. Through play experiences, children learn to lead, to follow, to cooperate, to take turns and to wait. Play also helps to develop language skills, relationships, problem solving strategies and creativity. Our play based program will facilitate a smoother transition into formal learning.

## DO YOU WANT TO HELP YOUR CHILD LEARN TO READ?

*"If every parent understood the huge educational benefits and intense happiness brought about by reading aloud to their children. If every parent and every adult caring for a child read aloud a minimum of three stories a day to the children in their lives, we could probably wipe out illiteracy within one generation."*

Mem Fox (author)



- Parents can help their children learn to read by reading to them every day from the day of their birth
- Time taken to read aloud together is the best time you can enjoy with your child
- Children who come into our classrooms from homes filled with books are more likely to succeed in reading than those who do not have books in the home
- It is never too late to start and no need to stop once children can read for themselves, they will still enjoy this "book time togetherness"
- Babies love books with simple labels plus pictures of familiar things, eg. Shoes, hat, mum, dad, car, doll, eyes, nose, feet etc.
- Toddlers love 'lift the flap' books and all nursery rhymes.



(Adapted from presentation written by Sue Craven)

### **Preschool Readiness at Gray Preschool Is My Child Ready for Preschool?**

Just because most preschools will accept children at around 3 ½ years old, it doesn't mean your child is ready for preschool when he/she reaches that age. Is he/she socially, emotionally and physically ready to participate in a structured educational program with a group of children? The following will help you think about some of the important skills needed for preschool.

#### **Is your child independent?**

Your child should be able to take care of some basic needs, like washing their hands, eating their lunch without assistance and sleeping alone. Gray Preschool want your child to be toilet trained.

#### **Has Your Child Spent Time Away From You?**

If your child has been cared for by a babysitter or a relative, they will be better prepared to separate from you when they are at preschool. Kids who are used to being apart from their parents often bounce right into preschool with hardly a backward glance. If your child hasn't had many opportunities to be away from you, you might want to schedule some – a weekend with grandma, for instance, or a day with your sister/brother and their kids. But even if you can't work out your separation issues up front, don't worry too much; many children leave Mum or Dad for the first time to go to preschool and they do just fine. The trick is to help your child adjust in short doses. Gray Preschool will allow you to drop off your child for an hour or two during their first few days as they get more used to their environment, you gradually work up to a full day. Some experts believe that

preschool may even be more important for kids who've been at home with their parents, to help get them ready for the move to Transition.

### **Can your child work on projects on their own?**

Preschool usually involves lots of arts and crafts/projects that require concentration and the ability to focus on an individual task. If your child likes to draw at home or gets engrossed in puzzles and other activities on their own, they are a good candidate for preschool. But even if they're the kind of child who asks for help with everything, you can start getting them ready by setting up playtimes where they can entertain themselves for a half hour or so. While you wash the dishes, encourage them to make creatures out of clay, for example. Gradually build up to longer stretches of solo play. Your goal here is to keep yourself moderately preoccupied with an activity so that they can work semi-independently without too much hand holding from you.

### **Is your child ready to participate in group activities?**

Gray Preschool activities, like "mat time," require that all the children in a class participate at the same time. These interactions give children a chance to play and learn together, but also require them to sit still, listen to stories, and sing songs. This can be very difficult for kids who are naturally active explorers and not always developmentally ready to play with other children. If your child isn't used to group activities, you can start introducing them yourself. Take them to story time at your local library, or bring your child to Gray Playgroup to get them used to playing with other children.

### **Is your child used to keeping a regular schedule?**

Preschools follow a predictable routine: circle time, play time, snack, playground, then lunch. There's a good reason for this. Children tend to feel most comfortable and in control when the same things happen at the same time each day. So if your child doesn't keep to a schedule and each day is different from the last, it can help to standardise their days a bit before they start preschool. Start by offering meals on a regular timetable. You could also plan to visit the park each afternoon or set – and stick to – a bedtime ritual (bath, then books, and bed).

### **Do they have the physical stamina for preschool?**

Gray Preschool is a full-day program, and this keeps kids busy. There are art projects to do, excursions to take, and playgrounds to explore. Does your child thrive on activities like this, or do they have trouble moving from one thing to the next without getting cranky? Another thing to consider is how and when your child needs to nap. Gray schedules nap time after lunch. If your little one can keep going until then or even all day like a wind-up toy, they are set. If they still need a mid-morning snooze, it might not be time yet to go to preschool. You can work toward building their stamina by making sure they get a good night's sleep.

### **Are they toilet trained?**

Children attending Gray Preschool must be completely toilet trained.

### **Can they speak clearly?**

Children need to be able to speak clearly so they can be understood. If your child does not speak clearly you need to contact Children's Development Team (89227283) to organise urgent speech intervention.

## Why do you want to send your child to preschool?

Think carefully about what your goals are for sending your child to preschool. Do you just need time for yourself or day care for your child? There may be other options if it seems they aren't ready yet for the rigors of preschool.

## Are you worried that if you don't enrol your child in preschool they won't be ready for Transition?

Most experts agree that there are plenty of other ways for children to develop the skills necessary to be successful in Transition, including attending a good day care facility or spending quality time at home with you or another loving caregiver. A study by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development found that children do best if they're cared for by someone who is genuinely concerned about their well-being and development, and who makes sure they're doing a variety of age-appropriate activities.

If you find that the main reasons you want to send your child to preschool are that; they seem eager to learn new things and explore, they aren't getting enough stimulation at home or day care, or they seem ready to broaden their social horizons and interact with other children, chances are it's the perfect time to start preschool.

## What are Fine Motor skills?

**Fine Motor Skills** are small muscle movements of the fingers that help your child to perform school readiness activities, such as:

- Painting with a paintbrush
- Cutting with scissors
- Drawing and writing using a pencil, crayon or texta correctly
- Holding and manipulating small objects
- Holding and using a knife and fork
- Craft activities.

Being able to isolate the movement of your fingers can be tricky, especially when combined with all the other things that are needed for school skills, such as balance, muscle tone, hand stability and muscle strength to name a few. It's hard to imagine but it can take a lot of effort to combine all of these things and then remember to use the finger muscles accurately.

Between the ages of three and five children usually demonstrate rapid gains in fine motor manipulation, finger dexterity and tool use. Fine motor skills don't develop overnight but take time, patience and practice.

Upright working surfaces can also help to encourage fine motor skills in your child. These can include chalkboards, painting easels, magnet boards, the front of the fridge, windows, mirrors and whiteboards.

These surfaces work by encouraging a stable writing position to develop good thumb movements, strengthen fine motor muscles and encourage your child to use both the arm and shoulder muscles.

As a parent, you can encourage your child to develop these skills through every day tasks including buttons, using pegs, opening and closing jars, threading beads, cutting with scissors and playing with play dough.

## What are Gross Motor Skills?

**Gross motor skills** are the movements of the large muscles of the body. Children learn new gross motor skills by practicing them until the skill is mastered, and can be seen in school readiness activities such as:

- Jumping
- Hopping
- Climbing
- Skipping
- Catching and kicking balls
- Ball games

Because gross motor skills are so obvious, they tend to be the skills that we as parents will notice first if they are not quite right. Concerns often exist about sending a child to school with gross motor difficulty, as gross motor skills can make up so much of a child's school day.

Good gross motor skills are essential, because the body develops from large movements such as control of the arms and the legs, to small, isolated movements that include the hands and fingers. Without reasonable gross motor control, it can be difficult for children to move onto developing the fine motor skills that are so essential to starting school.

Gross motor skills start to develop right at birth, with trunk and head control and keep developing at a rapid pace right up until we are around the ages of 6 and 7.

A child's ability to perform motor skills depends on a number of factors, including muscle strength and coordination, and flexibility. Sometimes problems with low muscle tone and balance can affect the development of gross motor skills. Flat feet and hyper-extensive joints can cause awkwardness in motor movements. Poor motor planning may lead to difficulties in learning certain skills, such as throwing and catching a ball. With some of the sensory defensiveness we see in children, gross motor movements may be inhibited by a reluctance to catch a ball, focus on a target, or other sports related skills. Balance problems may cause riding a two-wheel bike to be more difficult, or climbing over a climbing frame seem almost impossible.

Children with gross motor difficulties often need a hand to break the activities, or games, into small achievable steps.

## What is Visual Perception?

**Visual Perception** is how we see and interpret all of the visual information that is around us. For your pre-schooler, visual perception is still developing, and will continue to develop right through primary school.

Although most children develop the ability to focus visually and to make fine discriminations in visual materials as they grow, some children will take longer to develop these skills, and may need some additional help, or additional practice.

Visual perceptual processing is very important, but especially so when learning. Without visual perceptual processing, your child would not be able to accurately learn to read, give or get directions, copy from the board or from a book, visualise objects or past experiences, remember things visually, have good eye-hand coordination, integrate visual information with our other senses to do things like; ride a bike, play ball, or hear a sound and be able to visually recognise where it is coming from (like an ambulance), just to name a few.

Children who have difficulty processing visual stimuli, may show some of the following difficulties:

- Lack of coordination and balance (clumsy)
- Difficulty learning left and right
- Reverses letters or numbers when writing or copying
- Difficulty with activities involving rhythm
- Not good at sports
- Does not cross the midline when doing tasks (switches objects from hand to hand)
- Does not use non dominant hand for support when writing or copying
- Rotates body when writing or copying (again to not cross the midline)
- Trouble learning the alphabet
- Trouble recognising words
- Mistakes words with similar beginnings
- Confuses minor likenesses and differences
- Does not recognise the same word if repeated again on a page
- Trouble with remembering and writing letters and numbers
- Distractable
- Short attention span
- Problems concentrating
- Traces or touches figures
- Difficulty with understanding instructions
- Hyper or hypo active

Because visual perception is so complicated, it is broken up into different areas, which include:

**Figure Ground:** Being able to attend to or search for something specific, and ignore irrelevant information. Eg: Looking for a blue pencil in a box full of colored pencils.

**Visual Form Recognition/Discrimination & Constancy:** Being able to discriminate differences. This includes differences of size, shape, color and orientation. Eg: Recognising that a shape when it has been turned onto its side, is still the same shape.

**Visual Closure:** Being able to recognise visual clues and then determine the appearance of the final product without all the details being present. Eg: Recognizing what will appear in a picture, or on a dot to dot puzzle before it has been completed.

**Visual Spatial Memory:** Being able to remember the location of an object. Eg: Remembering a lost or hidden object.

**Visual Sequential Memory:** Being able to view and then recall a sequence of numbers, letters or objects in the order they were originally presented. eg: A phone number or a row of colored beads.

Once all of these skills are developed, it is important that they become automatic so they take up less brain power to use. Just like learning to drive a car. At first, it takes a lot of brain power to get your feet to move the right way and for you to time it with what your hands do. Not only are you learning a new skill, but you also have to make sure you pay attention to the road and steer accordingly. Once you get the hang of it, the ability to shift gears becomes automatic and you can devote that brain power to eating an ice-cream and talking along with driving the car.

In order to have efficient visual perception skills, you have to learn the skills well to the point where they become easy, and this takes practice!