

childcare checklist

the basics

- Where is the centre? Is it convenient to home or work? (Use our Find a Centre tool on our website for locations of your nearest centres.)
- What are the daily fees? How does the centre manage government rebates?
- Is there availability at the times/days you require? (Each centre's webpage shows its availabilities. Find out more by using the Find a Centre tool on our website.)
- What age ranges does the centre cater for?
- What are the centre opening hours, and how do they fit with your daily routine? Are they open late/early, weekends, public holidays?
- Is the centre flexible enough to allow for last-minute changes to bookings? Are there financial penalties for changing days at the last minute?
- Does the centre meet the requirements of the National Quality Framework?

facilities

- What are the facilities like in general? What is your gut feeling? Would you be happy to spend time
- Are the facilities, equipment and toys well maintained and modern?
- Do they have a variety of indoor and outdoor space?
- Is there shade in the outside areas? Is there a sun protection policy?
- Are there adequate amounts of safe play equipment?
- Do the rooms seem like stimulating environments? Lots of toys, books, educational materials, art on the walls?
- Is the facility clean? Ask about hygiene/cleaning routines and don't forget to check the toilets.
- Is the sleeping area quiet and comforting? Would your child be able to sleep soundly here?
- Do the other children look happy and content?

food

- Does the centre provide food? If so, ask to see a sample menu. What is the nutritional value of the food offered?
- What are the arrangements for children with allergies?
- What food do you need to provide yourself?

programming and activities

- The programming (or 'curriculum') at a centre is the essence of the early learning experience. Programming should be within the guidelines of the Early Years Learning Framework, and offer every child the opportunity to develop to the best of their potential.
- Does the centre follow the Early Years Learning Framework?
- Ask to see the day's activity log, 'what we did today' or 'learning story'. Centres are required to write up and display the centre's activities so that parents can see what their children enjoy doing each day.
- Is there a set daily routine? Basic routine is beneficial, but the centre shouldn't be too regimented and inflexible.
- Ask for an outline of activities provided in your child's age group. Is there a good mix of exercise, music, art, reading, play and games? Do the activities suit your child's interests? Is there time for free play too?
- Are there special days at the centre such as Book Week, Dental Week or other educational and cultural events?
- What is the ratio of group and one-on-one activities. You want a good mixture of both types of interaction.
- What is the centre's philosophy on tailoring care and education? You want to look at whether the learning activities (and educators!) are flexible enough to cater to your child's individual needs and strengths.
- What is the centre's policy on sleeping? Children should be allowed to sleep if they need to, but should never be forced to sleep if they don't.

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administration

- Ask about parental involvement in the centre. Is there any opportunity for parent input in decision-making? Can you spend time in the centre whenever you like? Can grandparents visit too?
- Does the centre provide regular feedback on your child's progress? Do they have open days? Do they report progress on developmental milestones?
- What are the health and safety procedures?
- Does the centre administer medication? If so, what is the procedure?
- What is the centre policy on sick children?
- Are there excursions? If so, what are the procedures involved?
- What records are kept? Centres are required to keep your enrolment forms, up-to-date medical information, contact numbers and reports on your child's development. Check that all of these requirements are being met. You have a right to look at these records at any time.
- The Centre's policies and procedures should be available for you to view at the Centre at any time.

people

- Are the staff warm and engaging? Do they seem happy and passionate about what they're doing? Do you like them as people? Are they happy to answer your questions?
- Are the staff accredited and experienced? Centres should show staff profiles on the walls so you can see their qualifications and how long they've been at the centre. Look out for high staff turnover – this is something to be avoided.
- Are the staff clean and well presented? Do they seem confident?
- How do the staff interact with the children in their care?
- How do the staff interact with each other?
- What is the staff-to-child ratio of the centre? Centres are required to meet particular ratio limits under the National Quality Framework. In the 0-2 age group, this ratio is one educator to every four infants.

