Milford Lodge

Term Two News, 2018

Dear Milford Lodge Families & Friends,

Another busy start to the year for us! Not wanting to lose momentum on all of the experiences that we believe are amazing for our children, we definitely hit the ground running for 2018. With very special thanks to all of our before and after school care children who have assisted us in sharing their knowledge and skills with their younger siblings and friends ☺

Please read through this term's newsletter, as we approach the new Child Care Subsidy being rolled out by the government. We endeavour to make this transition for our families as smooth as possible, with the assistance of our software provider.

Happy Reading

x Team Milford

The New Child Care Package

Starts 2 July 2018

On 2 July 2018 the Child Care Subsidy and Additional Child Care Subsidy will replace the current child care fee assistance payments. Child Care Subsidy will be paid directly to your approved child care provider/s to reduce the fees you pay.

In April 2018 all families currently in receipt of Child Care Benefit and/or Child Care Rebate for approved care will receive a Centrelink letter about transitioning to the Child Care Subsidy.

You should follow the instructions in your letter and go online to complete your Child Care Subsidy assessment or claim for Child Care Subsidy as soon as possible.

What happens if I do not complete a Child Care Subsidy assessment or claim before 2 July 2018?

It is important that your family takes action now to prepare for the Child Care Subsidy to ensure your eligibility and entitlement is assessed. You should complete a Child Care Subsidy assessment or claim before 2 July 2018 to ensure you don't miss out on child care fee assistance from 2 July 2018. The new subsidy cannot be paid to your service on your behalf if you do not take action.

Child Care Subsidy Eligibility

Some basic requirements must be satisfied for an individual to be eligible to receive Child Care Subsidy for a child. These include:

- the age of the child (must be 13 or under and not attending secondary school)
- the child meeting immunisation requirements
- the individual, or their partner, meets the residency requirements.

In addition, to be eligible for Child Care Subsidy the individual must be liable to pay for care provided, the care must be delivered in Australia by an approved child care provider, and not be part of a compulsory education program.

How does it work?

There are three factors that will determine a family's level of Child Care Subsidy. These are:

Combined Family Income

Activity Test – the activity level of both parents

Service Type – type of child care service

The Child Care Subsidy will be paid directly to providers to be passed on to families as a fee reduction. Families will make a co-contribution to their child care fees and pay to the provider the difference between the fee charged and the subsidy amount.

The New Child Care Package will also provide targeted additional fee assistance for vulnerable families through the Child Care Safety Net.

For more information, visit https://www.education.gov.au/new-child-care-package-information-resources-families

Team News

We welcomed Casey to our Library team earlier this year. Casey is a qualified Early Childhood Teacher with years of experience, knowledge and a genuine love of beautiful environments for children. She has been a fantastic addition to our Kindergarten team.

~

Amy (chef) had to leave for family reasons, which was very sad for us – as she was bringing us amazing food.
A special thanks to Liz for her cameo appearance over the next month, as well as Margaretha, Marianne & Ravena all helping to ensure that the kitchen operation continued as usual. Thankfully Steve arrived on our doorstep, and has impressed us from day dot.

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We have two new school based trainees who will gain their Certificate III in Early Childhood with us – welcome to Amie (Mondays) and Emma (Tuesdays).

Professional Development

JANUARY ~ FEBRUARY ~ MARCH

- Manual Handling in Early Childhood with Alistair Lavery
- Caloundra Early Years Conference
- Spring Early Years Summit
- Staff Catch Up: Reflections on Key Educator/ Nathan Wallis
- Staff Catch Up: Across the Service Planning & PD

APRIL ~ MAY ~ JUNE

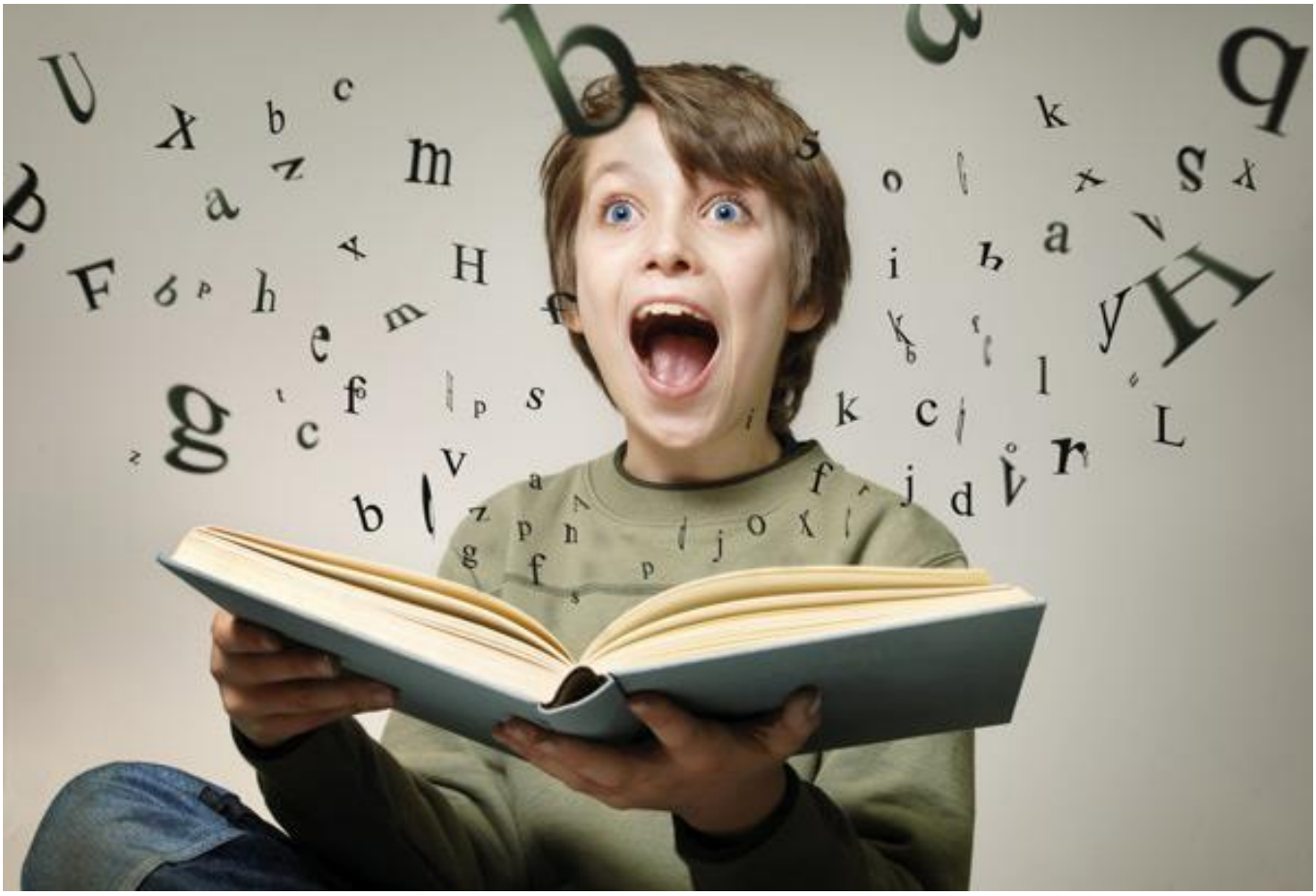
- Brain Development & Early Learning – Debbie Miller
- Hearts & Minds: For and with Children & Educators
- ECW Educators Anonymous Networking for Educators
- Educational Leaders Network Sessions
- CPR Refresher

Most of our professional development takes place on evenings and weekends. We have a strong culture of continuous learning & growing here and appreciate our team's commitment to this.

Caloundra Early Years Conference

Saturday 24th March 2018

9am – 3pm



On Saturday, the 24th of March a group of nine Milford staff attended an exceptional Professional Development conference at Meridan College. The Conference focus was around Brain Development and Early Oral Language, a topic that we all found benefit from. Throughout the day, we were introduced to Early Education Professionals from across the Sunshine Coast. They shared various tools, lessons, and inspirations from their own first hand experiences on how to further develop children's early oral language skills. As parents and early educators we all play a crucial role in the brain development of our children, acting as facilitators to help them grow, learn, and create. Sue Inglis stressed the importance of creating calm, safe, loving and natural environments, giving the children the best possible atmosphere for developing these skills, which I think we all strive for at Milford Lodge!

We also learned that the AEDC (Australian Early Development Census) provides national measurements for children across Australia, monitoring their development to help educators and parents strengthen the areas they are vulnerable to. Their last measurement showed that the top developmental vulnerabilities were language delays, social competence and emotional maturity, all topics that we discussed throughout the conference that very day. Overall, we found the conference and its content extremely valuable, helping us as educators provide opportunities for our children to further develop these skills on a daily basis!

~ Written by Pristine Amrock ~

Remove the Minimum...

http://www.milfordlodge.com.au/blog ~ *Written by Molly Stewart ~ 14th February 2018*

Not too long ago when the resource trucks came past our service, or we had a special day coming up which may require a template craft, each room was given a budget based on the number of children they had in their care across the week. This was before the regulations changed in 2012, and sadly we were still very much stuck in the era of age segregation, developmentally appropriate resourcing, quality checklists and other such nonsense.

Every single room spent their budget, and usually a few dollars more.

Around the time of the change in regulation, I decided not to bother about the room budget, and just asked people to order what they wanted. We spent LESS THAN HALF of the previous times.

We ordered less resources, and I guess you could say became more resourceful.

How did this happen? Some part of our human condition saw the figure and felt we had to meet that?

It still blows me away.

Ever since then, I have ensured each member of the team knows they can purchase what they need whenever they need it, and for larger purchases just come and ask.

Since the regulations changed in 2012 we have been on an amazing journey at Milford Lodge.

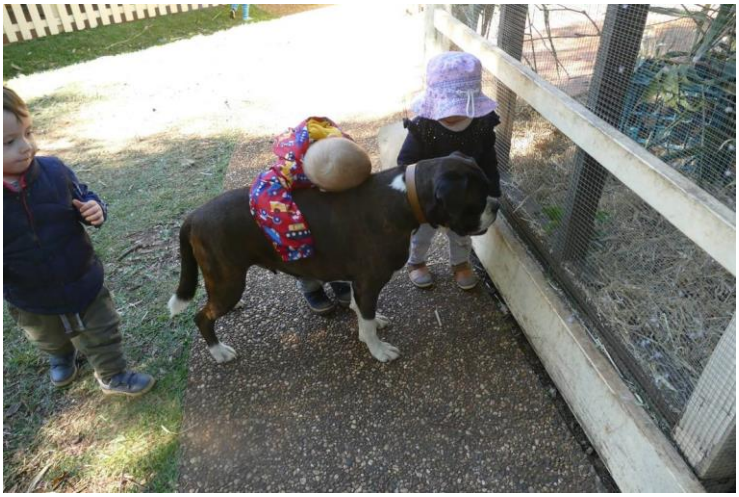
To consider that a few short years ago we were still under the old regulations, and then look at now.

We have 100 children per day, aged birth to Kindergarten who are free to explore around an acre of licensed premise, with the main home and 5 separate cottages / buildings. They can play with whoever they want, whenever they want, wherever they want. They can share their day with their siblings or cousins. They can spend time with previous years' key educators. In fact, one might argue that is still the child's key educator, by their choice to continue to spend a large portion of their day, or share every meal time with them.

What we are utilising when we allow this freedom for children is what is currently referred to as "Across the Service Ratios." In services where age segregation is still occurring, it effectively allows one room to be over ratio, and one room to be under ratio, so long as the ratios across the service are correct. It is to be used to benefit the children.

A simple example of this is that a child has a sibling commence care. The child is distressed when their parent leaves, however is happy to play alongside their sibling. Both rooms are fine with this arrangement, as the child is happy and engaged when with their sibling (do I need to reference Laevers* again?).

Now, if regulation currently allows these children to be together for their day away from their primary carer, why would we not utilise that?



Sadly many services are using what is commonly referred to incorrectly as "Under the Roof" (Not sure how we would work that one, we have many rooves...) to save on money. And because of this there seems to be a general misconception regarding "Across the Service". There are regular outcries in public forums with educators calling 'worst thing ever', 'poor practise', 'stressful', 'wrong' and also 'illegal'. Fortunately for us, our local department host network sessions for free, one of which was all about Across the Service Ratios. They showed us exactly how it works, who it benefits (everyone!) and why it is best practise. So we have a large percentage of qualified Early Childhood Educators suggesting, no, really truly believing that Across the Service Ratios are terrible. But to be honest, it is the fact that the service they work in most probably uses everything they can to the financial gain.

What if we removed the minimum?
Now, I know this sounds crazy, but then, Milford Lodge comes from a time before too many minimums... maybe none actually. Children played freely outside with their friends, and the adults provided some pretty awesome experiences - cooking, gardening, pony rides, water play, community walks, singing and games.... oh, hang on, that's a bit like 2018 Milford!

Imagine if we created beautiful spaces for children to enjoy, and then provided appropriate adult supervision for those children. Not based on their age or size, but in fact based on experience and common sense. Imagine if we drew on the knowledge of our families and community to provide this - oh wait, this is all in the Early Years Learning Framework, Regulations, UN Rights of the child and many more current documents.

So why are we still so ridiculously intent on counting the EXACT number of 0-2s, 2-3s and 3yrs+ children in one space?
Why are there still siblings in Australia crying for each other through an outdated regulated fence?
And why is nobody actually thinking about what is best for the children?

Centre Based Ratio Requirements: ***Ratios are calculated across the service (not by individual rooms) and are based on the youngest child in care. This gives providers the flexibility to respond to the needs of children.***

We *enjoyed* a spot check from our local department late last year, and they loved seeing Across the Service Ratios being put into practise correctly to benefit the children.
Kathy Walker suggests that if the children's needs come first all day every day like they should, then shouldn't services adapt their practices - I can guarantee that it is in every service philosophy in some way, shape or form. I have never read a philosophy that states "We aim to group children by their date of birth to provide quality care" or "It takes a Village to Raise a Child, but in this village thy siblings shall not meet..."

To all of those working with young children, we are now 7 years into the new regulations, regulations which were more favourable to the services who stuck through the "Trauma Years" (Thanks Michelle Scheu - my favourite line). We are in an era where services can now offer more freedom to children.

Milford Lodge is not usually one to promote trends, on account of usually 'walking to our own beat' - but if you are really passionate about quality care for children, and believe you advocate for their rights to play and to be happy - and for goodness sake, to spend their few short early years with their sibling then now is a good time to jump on that bandwagon. Get on it before it's gone.

The Next Best Thing…

~ Written by Nancy Andrews ~

♥

As an avid reader of books relating to childcare and education I was really looking forward to reading a Steve Biddulph book that I couldn't believe I hadn't yet read as I have gathered a large collection of his books over the years. We are slowly putting together a collection of reading materials for our family library at Milford Lodge and I really enjoy recommending books to families and following up on their thoughts regarding the content. The book in question which Molly found was titled

"***Raising Babies: should under 3s go to nursery***?"

This book was first published in the UK in 2006 hence the terminology of nursery as opposed to day care. Biddulph has very strong opinions on advocating for children under the age of 3 to be with their parent as opposed to spending their early days in group care. I actually found the book very depressing and judgemental. I remember saying to Molly afterwards "I'm not sure about including this book in our family library as I think the parents of our youngest babies will really be worried if they are causing long term damage to their child by using childcare"

I was quite torn by my feelings on this subject, as this was the area I choose to do my dissertation on whist studying my Bachelor of Early Childhood. At this time, I also held very strong beliefs about the harmful effects group care could have on young babies. Part of my role as Educational Leader now involves offering tours to families of sometimes very young infants and sharing our philosophy and practice. This is not something I could have confidently done twenty years ago, as I would have felt I was betraying my own personal beliefs. Half way through reading the book one particular sentence stood out for me in which Biddulph bluntly said if your child is in group care they are treated purely as a number and the strangers who work in these services won't care for them as much as you. A photo I had seen of Sharna and baby Lennox in our weekly news to families from Avocado Cottage immediately sprung to my mind counteracting this opinion.

The phrase 'a picture can speak a thousand words' springs to mind. I had witnessed firsthand the care and attention all our staff particularly in Avocado Cottage and School House put in to forming attachments and settling new children into Milford Lodge at the beginning of the year. This photo for me captures the complete joy and delight we derive from our relationships with every child who attends Milford. I actually sent Sharna a text message on a Saturday afternoon to say how much I loved the photo especially whilst reading such a negative book.

Having had the privilege of working in childcare for close to 30 years now it is safe to assume I have seen my fair share of both good and bad day-care services in many parts of the world. To be really honest, it was not until I began working at Milford Lodge almost 7 years ago now that I finally found a place that I would happily trust to care for my own children (if only they were still little!).

I thought I would share my own personal opinion of why and how my beliefs have changed since discovering this special place.

You may not know this but when Milford Lodge first opened in 1986 Margaretha chose to initially only offer care for children older than 3. However soon after opening, families began asking about the possibility of caring for a younger age group. Margaretha decided if she was going to offer care for 2 year olds and subsequently babies it was going to be of the highest quality. She opened a new service specifically for 0-2years (this service is now Art Nuvo). Molly's dad Frank built Avocado Cottage in 2004 and Margaretha ensured that babies had a slow transition into day care and only offered short hours to begin with.

We are very sensitive to the difficult decision parents make when they are choosing a day-care service for their most treasured possession. The research into neuroscience has greatly advanced in recent years and great emphasis has been placed on the importance of the first 1000 days in a child's life.

This is referring to conception to the age of approximately two and a half years. With this knowledge comes great responsibility to ensure we act with the greatest of integrity.

How do we do this you ask?

One phrase the literature uses over and over is "'the human brain is designed to be moulded by the environment it encounters". The environment is an extremely important element of a quality program, second only to the quality of staff. Margaretha acknowledged that young children would be spending a significant part of their childhoods here playing, learning, sleeping, eating, finding comfort, and making meaningful relationships with other children and new adults. Living in a group setting for up to 10 hours a day has the potential to create inevitable tensions and stresses. The home like environment we provide and all day access to a natural outdoor setting including caring for animals eases the stress that young children might otherwise feel. Extraordinary amount of detail has been put into ensuring that the environments are aesthetically pleasing, warm, inviting and nurturing spaces.

The furnishings are reminiscent of a home from an era long ago encompassing antique furniture, soft furnishings, beautiful rugs, curtains, comfy couches, indoor plants, op shop finds, items of beauty /quirkiness that encourage conversations and laughter rather than mass produced furniture purchased from a catalogue. Alaain de Botton (2006) calls all these little homely touches "visible signs of tenderness'' in his book: The architecture of Happiness. Childcare services with large groups of children and adults have the tendency to be noisy places. Children surrounded by loud noises all day become fatigued and irritated (and often damage their hearing) Margaretha thought of all these possibilities and ensured that softness was added to the environment with pin boards, curtains and rugs which absorb sound and help to make the rooms quieter. Because we have so much indoor and outdoor space Milford Lodge never feels "loud'', on the contrary most people mention how peaceful and tranquil it feels. Our Avocado Cottage and School House rooms where our youngest infants spend their happy days are far removed from the sterile, clinical environments many new "state of the art" services offer. Many a parent has relayed a familiar story of having a tour of one of these services and upon seeing a row of cots lined up have immediately decided that sort of place is not for them.

The required adult to child ratio under the National Regulations for 0-2 yrs. is 1:4. The ratio then changes to 1:5 for children 15months* -3 years and finally 1:11 for over 3's. Our decision to have 3 educators in each room in order to provide a better quality of care to not only our children but to the working conditions of our staff has greatly enabled us to offer small groupings all day every day which allow for rich relationships to develop. Social media childcare pages are inundated on a daily basis with posts from stressed and frustrated educators longing to spend quality time with the infants in their care but the demands of production line care and minimum staffing ratio's simply don't allow this to happen.

We make a conscious effort to only have 10 babies each day in Avocado Cottage. Particularly at the beginning of the year this low ratio is imperative to helping babies to settle in and form relationships with their carer. Every member of staff across the service understands the importance of this time and great consideration and respect is afforded to these infants for example if we are conducting a tour for an older child we explain to the families why we are not intruding on the babies' space and sense of security by walking a group of strangers around their room. It is always lovely to hear families comment on how nice it is to hear that our babies' emotional well-being and happiness comes before financial gain.

Staff in other rooms are always willing to give cuddles to unsettled infants as we know how the stress hormone cortisol increases when they hear other babies cry. It is easy to forget that as the only baby in a household they may have never heard the sound of another baby cry and anyone will agree it can be quite distressing. The staff in Avocado Cottage strive to have an unhurried, relaxed child led routine throughout the day. Babies eat and sleep when they need rather than following a strict timetabled day. This leaves plenty of time for one-one care throughout the day when we are not expecting 10 babies to eat and sleep at the same time. Only recently I happened to notice that Migi was still here long after she had officially finished her shift. When I asked why she was only too happy to tell me how she wanted to stay back and play with baby Theo who is 6 months old. We love that staff find their jobs so rewarding that instances like this are very common amongst our team.

A lot has to be said for our working conditions to which we have Molly and Justin to thank.

Another early childhood consultant's work that we greatly admire is Nathan Wallis from New Zealand. We recently shared a YouTube video of his at a staff catch up reminding staff about the importance of quality interactions. Wallis beliefs convey a much more reassuring and research-based message to families who use day care. He stresses that being in care will not ruin a child for life. It is but one risk factor and can easily be negated by other positives for the child. He mentions a very interesting statistic which you may well agree or disagree with-the eldest child in the family is more likely to be the most successful!

All because of one factor-the one on one relationship they have with their parents before their other siblings come along.

It was very interesting to hear a number of parents' mention how during the school holidays they are thoroughly enjoying spending time with their school age child whist the younger child attends Milford. They mention how special this time together is.

Another one of our families chooses to set aside one special day for each child whilst the other sibling attends Milford. What is so nice to hear is that the parents trust the child who is at Milford is having an equally amazing time.

I see and hear firsthand the amazing focussed time each family at Milford Lodge spends with their child/children before and after day care. Whether it's taking them to the beach of an early morning or late afternoon, spending time pottering in their gardens at home, reading stories together, bringing the family dog for a walk, cooking together or simply allowing their child to watch them work. Parents make no secret that spending time with their children and as a family is THE most important thing in the world. It is all these factors alongside choosing a place like Milford Lodge that will ensure your children are having the best childhood imaginable.

I am very happy to share how my views about very young children in day care have changed over the years mainly due to working in such a special environment alongside wonderful colleagues. We know that parents are the most influential and important role models in a child's life but whilst you are doing your other important job that you have studied/trained hard for and are making a difference in the world in your line of work please rest assured that Milford Lodge and our vision and practice in Early Childhood Education and Care is The Next Best Thing ☺

Revised Policies & Procedures

In line with our commitment to sustainability we have decided to cease leaving a Policy & Procedure Folder in the foyer for families. Instead we have displayed a USB on the notice board above the sign in sheets containing our current policies and procedures. Any family member can access a laptop to view these at any time and of course we will be happy to print out a copy if this is requested also.

We will continue to choose 3/4 polices to revise each term and attach these to our termly newsletter for you to read through and offer any feedback.

Our staff members have individual USB's containing all this information too and as we currently do with staff we will email any revised polices to families and update the Policy and Procedure USB in the foyer.

Queensland Fire and Emergency Services

We practised our first whole service evacuation drill on Wednesday 28th March.
We invited Bruce and Cameron along to observe and provide feedback.
They were very impressed that we were all out and safe in 3 minutes and 50 seconds.
We always love when they visit as they make the visit very special for the children, who were given the opportunity to look all around the fire truck and sit inside.

Our first Lockdown practise for the year took place during the Easter Holidays, with all children & staff safe and accounted for at 3½ minutes.

New Outings for Term Two

Now that we have settled into the year, our Kindergarten children (Library only) will be recommencing our monthly visits to Swimfit Buderim for swimming lessons.
Many of our children already attend lessons at Buderim, and so it is always nice to see them have the opportunity to share this with their friends.

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We have recently applied for a Teacher Library Account with Sunshine Coast Libraries to be able to take small group outings to the Mobile Library (a library on a truck! How awesome is that!!) which stops across from the Post Office in Buderim every Tuesday afternoon.
https://library.sunshinecoast.qld.gov.au/

Family Reviews

As the parents of two daughters and four grandchildren who have lived in many parts of the world we can claim some knowledge of the range of child care facilities available. Our family have been fortunate in enjoying many caring and enriching environments but Milford Lodge brings a quality that we had not encountered before. Spread over one and a half acres of gardens, with a wide array of buildings, shelters, canopies, cubby houses, pools, sheds, hutches, the Centre is a Lilliputian wonderland. At first glance the children appear to be the only residents of this toddler paradise. They have free access to all facilities and every area of the stimulating and inventive landscapes. Care and control is discreet with the staff often unseen as they sit in the middle of eager infants keen to join group activities. The result of this freedom is that the children learn to cooperate, care about their fellow "citizens", understand the constraints of living in a community and generally prepare themselves for life in the wider complex world. Learning and intellectual stimulation are subtly introduced with little distinction between play and "education". Perhaps the most notable characteristic is the invisible security in this happy, free living, borderless community. All credit to the family and the staff that have safely run this anarchic kiddie city for nearly thirty years.

~ Bob and Johnna Giles ~

We have found having siblings at the centre has not only helped the boys settle in but has really helped Alexis grow. Alexis appears more confident and has really taken on a nurturing role in helping to look after the boys. We get reports from Avocado cottage that she visits often & helps feed & look after the boys. From what we have heard & seen, she also appears to have bonded with other children who have younger siblings as a result of having the boys there.

We are lucky in that the boys have each other for comfort but it's even more fortunate to have a centre that encourages that relationship where the older sibling can be so involved. Alexis is always so excited when we answer "yes" when she asks if the boys are coming to school today.

It has also helped tremendously at home & significantly reduced jealousy. Alexis sees the boys more as "partners in crime" as opposed to competition and I believe that's largely to sharing days at school together.

~ Chris & Tegan Smith ~

Thank you to all of our families who constantly pass on their kind words x