

earlybird

educare@Barlow Park



Family Handbook - 2025

Welcome Message!

Dear Parent or Guardian,

We are delighted that you are considering becoming part of the Earlybird family. Our program is built on the foundation of nurturing young minds and fostering a love for learning from the very beginning. We understand how crucial the early years are in a child's development, and we are committed to providing a warm, supportive environment where your child can thrive.

Enclosed in this introductory pack is essential information to help guide you through what to expect at Earlybird. It covers our educational philosophy, daily routines, and how we collaborate with families to ensure your child receives the best start on their learning journey. We believe that education is a partnership, and we look forward to working together to create enriching experiences for your child.

If you have any questions or need further clarification, please don't hesitate to contact us at barlowpark@earlybirdeducare.co.za or give us a call at **079 091 0013**. Our dedicated team is here to support you every step of the way and ensure your child is ready for the exciting adventures ahead!

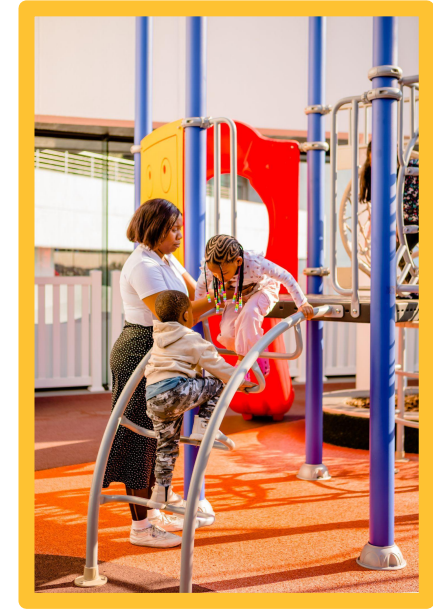


Meg and The Earlybird Team



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2025 Fees

Our fees are structured as follows:

- **Registration Fee:** is once-off payment that includes one Earlybird t-shirt, a backpack, and a set of personal Earlybird bedding for use at nap time. After the first child in a family has registered, the subsequent siblings will not be required to pay the standard registration fee. The registration fee and the first month's school fee must be paid in advance of the child's first day starting at the educare centre.
- **Yearly Levy:** this covers all stationary, cutlery, and educational resources your child will need for the year.
- **Monthly Fee:** This covers our full-day educare offering (from 06:30 to 16:30), five days a week, including a nutritious breakfast and lunch meal prepared fresh in our on-site kitchen daily. We do offer an aftercare programme that runs from 16:30-18:00. This can either be paid for weekly or monthly.
- Fees are subject to **annual increases** in line with any increases in our cost of provision.
- **Up-front payment discounts** are available at roughly -8% for annual and -4% for biannual lump-sum fee payments.
- A **half-day attendance option** is available at 75% of the standard monthly fee. Half-day pick-up times vary by age group as follows: Blue Group: 12:00; Green Group: 12:15; Yellow Group: 12:30; Red Group: 12:45; Orange Group: 13:00.
- **Paused enrolment:** families may pause enrolment for their child for up to a maximum of 3 months. A space-retainer fee of 75% of the standard monthly fee is required to hold the child's spot open over the paused enrolment period.
- **One calendar month's notice is required for dis-enrolment**, and families who wish to re-enrol their child after a period of disenrollment will need to pay the registration fee again in order to re-enrol.



Earlybird's Enrolment Process



o STEP 1:

Book an appointment to talk to us using the ["schedule a visit" button on our website.](#)

o STEP 2:

[Complete our online enrolment form](#) (you need to fill out and submit one full form for each child you wish to enrol). Doing so constitutes an 'expression of interest' and does not entail any kind of binding commitment on your part. Your Human Capital Business Partner will confirm your eligibility once your application has been received.

o STEP 3:

You will be invited to schedule an appointment/tour: If you are satisfied after you have had a chance to talk with the centre's principal and your child's prospective teacher, you can sign our enrolment contract and upload the required documents for your child (birth certificate and clinic / vaccination card).

o STEP 4:

Activate the debit order mandate for the monthly fee and settle the registration and first month's fee invoices which you will receive via email (these payments can be made via EFT).

o STEP 5:

Join the family WhatsApp group for your child's class and find a time to talk to your child's teacher or the centre principal about preparing your little one for their first day.

Please note that no child may start until all the required steps of enrolment have been completed.



Key Dates: (Google calendar link)

- 15 January - 4 April Block 1: All about me
- 27 - 31 January "I can" Observational Assessment Week
- 1-14 February Parent Information and Introduction Evenings
- 31 March - 4 April Parent-Teacher Conferences
- 08 April – 27 June Block 2: My Home and Community
- 5 - 9 May "I can" Observational Assessment Week
- 23-27 June Mid-Year Report Handout.
- 22 July - 3 October Block 3: Our Big Wide World
- 4-8 August "I can" Observational Assessment Week
- 22 - 26 September Parent-teacher Conferences
- 13 October- 12 December Block 4: Animals and Their Homes
- 13 - 17 October "I can" Observational Assessment Week
- 8 - 12 December End of Year Reports

Earlybird Educare Centres are intended to serve working parents, and as such, they are open throughout the year and do not close during standard school holidays. We only close on public holidays and over the December Builders' Break. We kindly ask that you ensure your child attends school as regularly as possible.

This year, Earlybird Educare will close for the annual break at 17:00 on the afternoon of **Friday, the 12th of December 2025**, and will reopen on **Monday the 12th of January 2026**.

PLEASE NOTE:

Public holidays and closures in the year:

21 March: Human Rights Day (Friday)

18 - 21 April: Easter weekend (Friday to Monday)

28 April: Freedom Day Observed

1 May: Workers' Day

2 May: Special school holiday

16 June: Youth Day (Monday)

24 September: Heritage Day (Wednesday)

Please look at our online calendar for more event information.



Contact details

The parent's first point of contact will most likely be the class teacher. It is the responsibility of the teacher to report all concerns and queries to the Principal. By reporting each incident, the Principal has more background knowledge should the incident need escalation. If a teacher is unable to handle a situation, the Principal will be involved in order for there to be a resolution as soon as possible. In cases where the Principal cannot handle the incident, Earlybird management must be informed in order for a resolution to be found.

- In Centre:

- Principal Phone: 079 091 0013 or barlowpark@earlybirdeducare.co.za
- Blue Group Tablet Number: 079 308 6909 or greengroupbpark@gmail.com
- Green Group Tablet Number: 079 308 6909 or greengroupbpark@gmail.com
- Yellow Group Tablet Number: 077 391 4940 or yellowgroupbp@gmail.com
- Red Group Tablet Number: 077 380 3708 or redgroupbp@gmail.com
- Orange Group Tablet Number: 079 774 6160 or orangegroupbp@gmail.com

- Central Support:

- Bernice (Education Manager): bernice@earlybirdeducare.co.za
- Mpho (Head of HR and Operations) mpho@earlybirdeducare.co.za
- Hlaka (Customer Accounts Manager): hlaka@earlybirdeducare.co.za

After Hours Emergencies:

083 566 2047

We would like to gently remind you that the emergency contact number provided is a **personal line**. We kindly ask that it only be used in true emergencies - situations that require and involve an immediate and urgent response and cannot wait until business hours.

For all other communication, please direct your queries to the Principal during school operating hours, where they will be able to assist you.



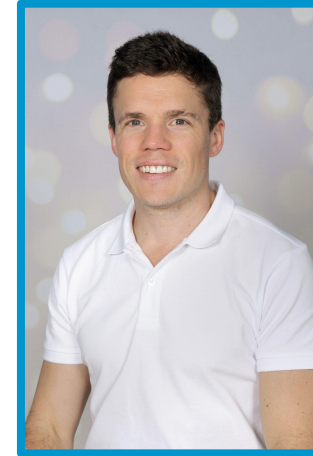
Our Central Support Team

We're here for you!

Megan Blair
CEO



James Munnik
FCO



Bernice McKee
Head of Education



Mpho Mlanegni
Head of HR and Ops



Tshego Mokgobo
Finance Manager



Hlaka Zungu
Customer Accounts Manager



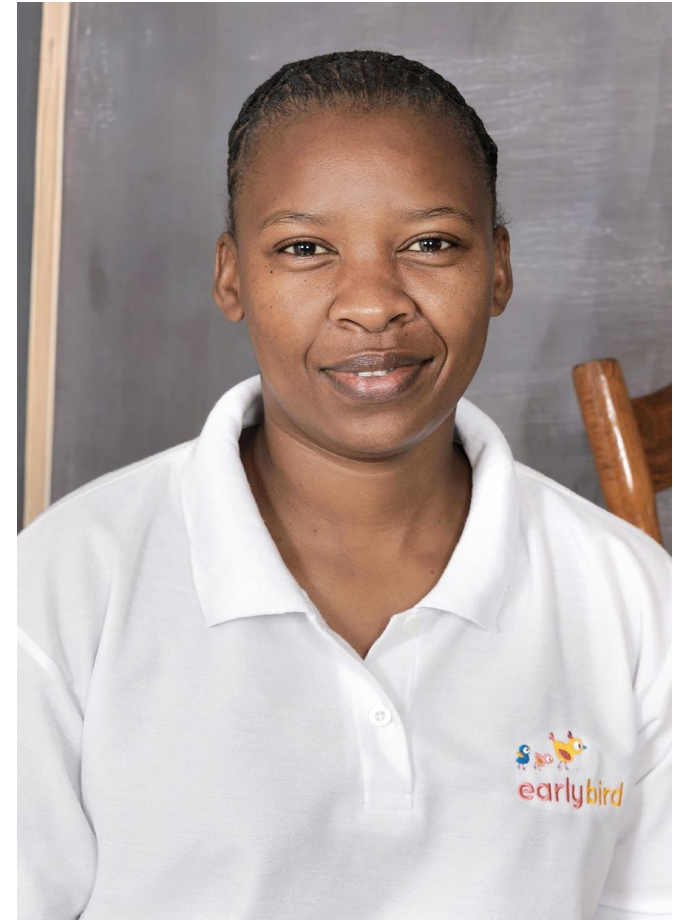
Centre staff

Let's Meet the Team



Principal Jackie

Custodian Phila



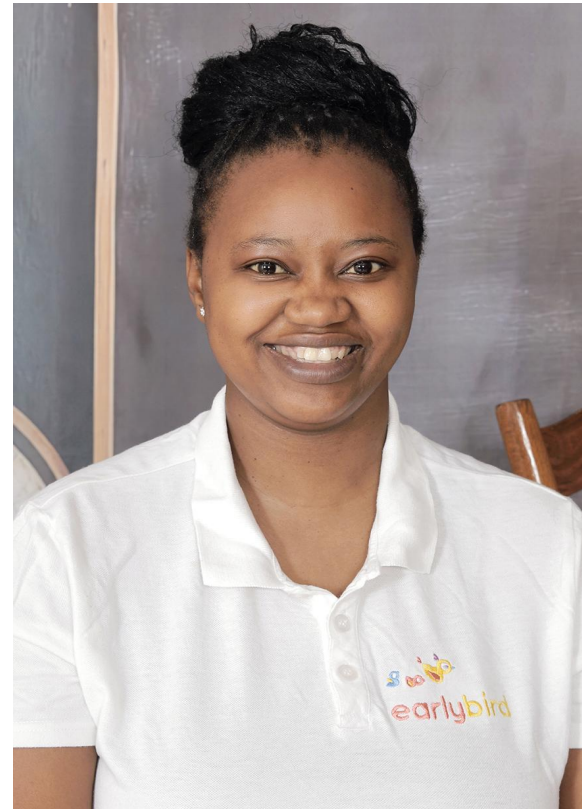
Blue Group

Let's meet the team!

Teacher Basani

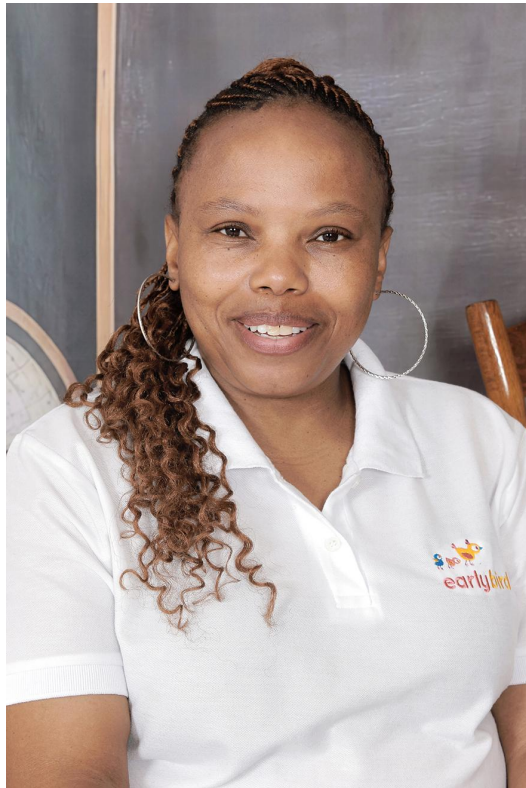


Teacher Khanyi



Green Group

Let's meet the team!

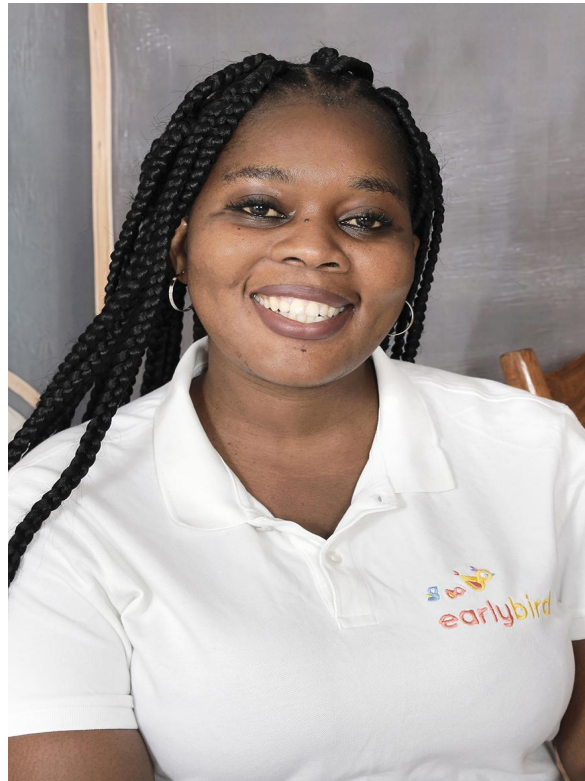


Teacher Busi



Yellow Group

Let's meet the team!

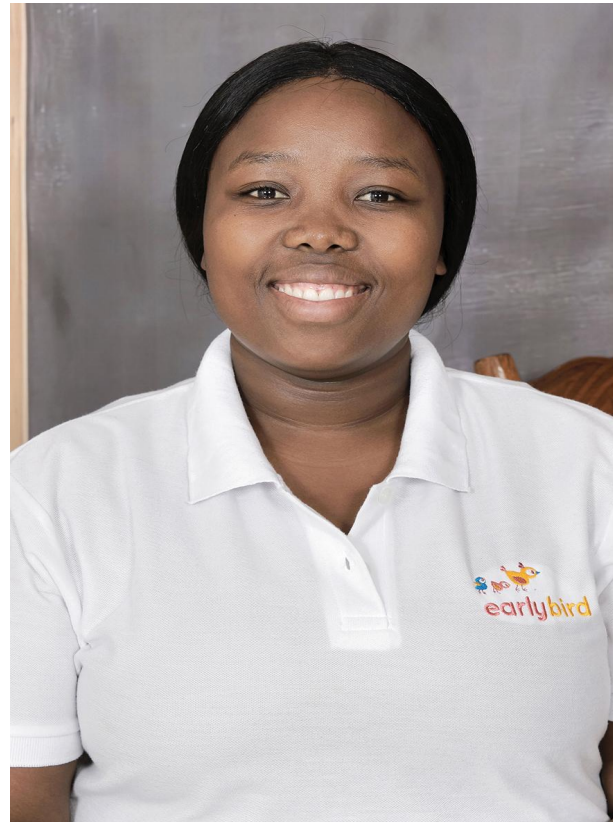


Teacher Hope



Red and Orange Group

Let's meet the team!



Teacher Luh



Teacher and Classroom Information

- **Class capacity**

Each class can accommodate up to 24 children in the older classes.

- **Teacher/child ratios**

Blue Group: 1 teacher per 4 children.

Green Group: 1 teacher per 8 children.

Yellow Group: 1 teacher per 12 children.

Red Group: 1 teacher per 12 children.

Orange Group: 1 teacher per 12 children.

- **Teacher leave**

Teachers may take annual, study, maternity, or sick leave throughout the year.

Substitute teachers are provided as needed.

- **Working shifts**

Our Teaching staff work on rotating shifts. Each class has one teacher covering either the 6:30 AM to 3:30 PM shift, 7:00 AM to 4:00 PM shift, 7:30AM to 4:30 shift or the 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM shift. From then on we have a teacher that covers our aftercare that starts at 4:30PM and ends promptly at 6:00PM



What to pack

Blue and Green Groups

- Enough nappies for the week (if your little one isn't potty trained yet)
- Preferred wet wipes and baby bum cream
- 2-3 extra sets of clothes
- Sun hat
- Sunscreen
- Bottles with pre-measured formula (if needed)
- 2 healthy snacks (one morning and one afternoon)
- Water bottle or sippy cup
- Plastic packets for dirty clothes (nappy bags are ideal)
- A painting shirt (An old oversized T-shirt)
- A3 flip file for their beautiful art
- A set of linen for the Blue Groupers

Yellow, Red and Orange Groups

Yellow Group

- Enough nappies for the week (if your little one isn't potty trained yet)
- Preferred wet wipes and baby bum cream

Yellow, Red and Orange Group

- 2-3 extra sets of clothes and underwear
- Sun hat
- Sunscreen
- 2 healthy snacks (one morning and one afternoon)
- Water bottle or sippy cup
- Plastic packets for dirty clothes (nappy bags are ideal)
- A painting shirt (An old oversized T-shirt)
- A3 flip file for their beautiful art

Please Label EVERYTHING!



Parent Communication

Strong relationships require effective communication. A positive, trusting collaboration that benefits your child requires open, respectful communication between home and the centre. It prevents misunderstandings, fosters respect, and clarifies expectations. This eases the transition between home and care, gives your child confidence and belonging, and teaches them respect. Communication styles at our centres:

- **Face-to-face communication (Open door policy)**
 - The teachers are available for daily verbal interactions in the morning during drop-off or in the afternoon during collection.
- **Blue Group Communication Books**
 - Parents provide evening updates, and teachers will share details about the child's day. This exchange is critical for monitoring developments and needs. ***This plays a vital role in tracking a child's mood, health, and daily interactions.***
- **WhatsApp Class Group (Broadcast Only)**
 - Used for activity updates and photo collages.
 - Unit Introduction Message: Sent every two weeks to outline the unit, key concepts, and vocabulary introduced to your child.
 - Important reminders.
 - Please note and respect others privacy when sharing photos on social media. (other children in the background) Refer to your enrolment contract for more.
- Teachers are only available to communicate on their tablets from **12:00 PM to 2:00 PM** during nap time. For urgent matters, please contact the principal.
- Tablets are not taken home; kindly **avoid messaging outside work hours. (Centre Hours)**
- The Central Line is available after hours for **EMERGENCIES ONLY**.

For regular updates on happenings at our educare centres, follow us on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/EarlybirdEducare/>



Our learning approach

- **Child-Centred Learning**

We begin with the child, focusing on where they belong, and gradually expand to explore the world around them.

- **Core Fundamentals**

Our main focus areas include:

- **Shapes**
- **Numbers**
- **Colours**
- **Sounds**

- **Activity Design: Scaffolding & Extension**

Every activity is thoughtfully designed with two components:

- **Scaffolding:** supporting the development of specific skills, concepts, or knowledge.
- **Extension:** deepening and refining skills or concepts for further learning.

- **Daily Activities**

On average, we complete 3 activities per day plus class discussions.

Morning rings (class discussions) are a vital part of our routine, while reinforcement at home helps consolidate learning.

- **Group Focus Areas**

- **Blue & Green Groups:** Creative Sensory & Movement Activities.
- **Yellow, Red, & Orange Groups:** STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, Mathematics) alongside Creative Expression, Drama, Movement, and Music.

- **Sustainability in Action**

We prioritise recycling in our activities, using materials such as egg cartons, yoghurt tubs, ice cream tubs, boxes, lids, tins, bottles, and newspapers.



Daily Routines

Earlybird@8MP will operate from 7 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

Our daily routine varies by age group, but the graphic below gives you a sense of the general flow of each day:



Unstructured learning experiences each day:

- **Free Choice** the “Plan, Do, Review” technique is used to build children’s autonomy and executive functions during this play-based learning period in the day.
- **Outdoor Play** is a time for gross motor development, exploration and boisterous, messy fun.

Semi-structured learning experiences each day:

- **Morning Circle** provides a time for social-emotional check-in.
- **Sensory / Imaginary Play** is an opportunity for fantasy and role play, drama games, open-ended scenarios.
- **Wrap-up and Home Time** is a window for reflection on today’s events and preparation for tomorrow.

Structured learning experiences each day:

- **Story Fun** is our main vehicle for language and emergent literacy development.
- **Hands-on STEM** is an opportunity to encourage curiosity, building, reasoning and foundational mathematical skills through carefully designed activities and games.
- **Expression Session** is all about creativity and getting kids to express themselves in lots of different ways.



Our Educational Programme

Language, Literacy and Creative Expression

- Creative Expression -

1. Engages in music, art, and dramatic play

- Oral Language Development -

2. Receptive and expressive vocabulary development
3. Coherent expression of personal ideas, thoughts, and feelings

- Emergent Literacy -

4. Response to text
5. Phonological Awareness
6. Phoneme-grapheme correspondence

- Emergent Writing -

7. Print awareness / concepts
8. Tracing, transcription and writing

Early Maths and Scientific Reasoning

- Quantitative Concepts -

9. Estimation
10. Verbal and object counting
11. Numeral recognition, depiction and quantity correspondence
12. Relative magnitude and Measurement

- Geometry and Spatial Relationships -

13. Shape recognition and manipulation
14. Position, Directions and Time

- Reasoning -

15. Classification
16. Planning
17. Hypothesis Formation

Physical and Social Emotional Wellbeing

- Social Emotional Development -

18. Self regulation
19. Response to expectations
20. Positive sense of self and cultural identity
21. Persistence in the face of challenges

- Physical Development -

22. Gross motor coordination
23. Fine motor coordination



Getting ready for 'big school'....

Our curriculum is underpinned by 23 Objectives for Development and Learning (ODLs) which are mapped to the National Curriculum Framework (NCF). All of our 23 ODLs have been demonstrated by research as foundational to children's successful transition to and functioning in primary school and beyond.

Each ODL has been broken down into a series of 'steps' that a child is expected to progress through on their way to mastering that particular objective. All activities and games on our teaching guide, Bird Seed, which take place during the three structured learning periods in the day (Hands-on STEM, Expression Session, and Story Fun), are mapped to a particular learning and development 'step.'

We conduct regular observational assessments to track children's development and learning and keep open lines of communication with families regarding each child's progress and achievements. We are available to discuss your child's individual needs at any stage.

Read more at:

<https://earlybirdeducare.co.za/learning-programmes/>



I cans, PBL, ODLs and Reports

Observations

We use an ongoing formative assessment to meet each child where they are at. This means that our teachers continuously observe and update their records.

We do not evaluate a child's ability based on a single situation or activity.

We set aside time every three months to collect targeted observations during our "I can" week in order to provide feedback and reports.

"I can" weeks

We assemble information into a student/child portfolio of proof that showcases your child's skills in painting, colouring, drawing, matching, identifying shapes and colours, and cutting, to name a few. These are critical weeks; otherwise, your child will miss out on the skill revision. This takes place four times per year.

ODLs

We have 23 Outcomes for Development and Learning.

These map the developmental milestones of your children in our care.

Reports

Twice per year (June/July and

November/December)

Teacher feedback

Meetings in March and September.

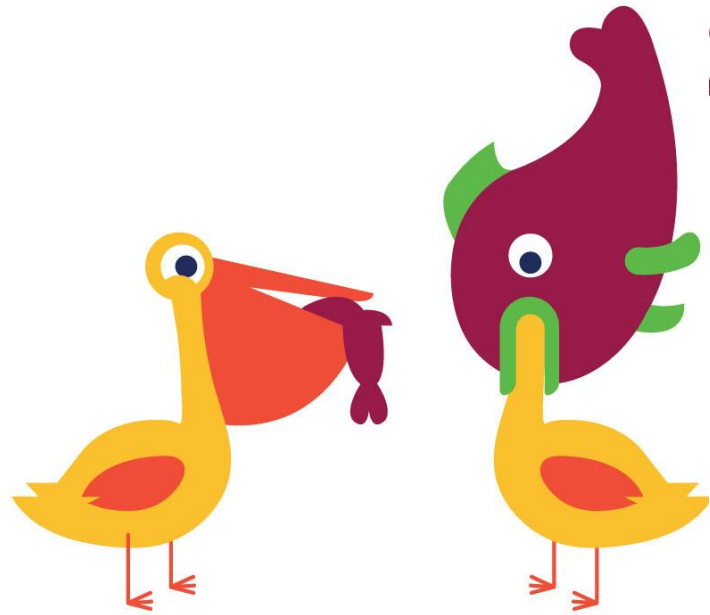
PBL

Project Based Learning

The value of PBL is that it builds children's creative capacity to collaboratively work through problems and projects.



Earlybird's PeliCAN'T (yet) Process



Our Pelican't (yet) process is an educational support program that assists our young learners that need a little more time or encouragement in meeting their developmental milestones.

A **PeliCAN'T (yet)** is a developmental milestone (or milestones) that a child has not mastered YET. We use these PeliCAN'T (yet) statements to describe a concerning, unusual, or uncommon recurring set or series of behaviours that we, as teachers, will need to identify and observe in order to implement support, as we aim to create an Inclusive Education environment.

These PeliCAN'T (yet) statements are a guideline of behaviour, skills, and developmental milestones that we feel children should have developed by a certain age. These milestones are at the late end of the scale and are not set in stone, as we recognise all children have a unique pace in which they meet their milestones. We understand that some children take longer to do so or might need more support than their classmates.

Our responsibility as teachers is to ensure we are aware of the unique needs of our little ones and to meet them where they are in order for them to fulfil their full potential while in our care.

We do this through biweekly, targeted classroom observations, regular check-in meetings with Central Support and parents, purposeful classroom and at-home interventions, and, when needed, the use of specialised therapists.



Morning Ring: The foundation of our day

Please arrive by no later than 8:30 AM

Morning Ring is our gathering time, where we focus on:

- Greetings
- Calendar Time
- Sharing news and thoughts
- Introduction to the Unit
- Group activities, new songs and rhymes

How Morning Ring Benefits Children:

- **Routine & Predictability**
 - Establishes a consistent routine, offering security and predictability, which supports emotional well-being.
- **Community Building**
 - Encourages interaction with peers, fostering a sense of belonging and developing social skills.
- **Language Development**
 - Songs, rhymes, and discussions promote vocabulary growth, communication, and listening skills.
- **Introduction to Concepts**
 - Engages children in fun and interactive ways to introduce educational concepts through calendar time and group activities.
- **Smooth Transition**
 - Helps ease the transition from home to school, setting a positive tone for the day.



The Importance of Punctuality in Preschool



- **Establishes Routine and Consistency**
 - Arriving on time helps children understand the value of routines.
 - This creates a sense of security, making them feel more confident and comfortable in their environment.
- **Supports Learning and Participation**
 - Key activities like morning circle time happen at the start of the day.
 - Punctuality ensures children can fully engage in these activities, promoting social, emotional, and cognitive development.
- **Promotes Responsibility and Discipline**
 - Being on time fosters responsibility and self-discipline.
 - Children learn the importance of valuing time, schedules, and commitments.
- **Minimises Classroom Disruption**
 - Late arrivals can interrupt the learning experience for others.
 - Punctuality helps maintain a smooth, focused classroom environment.
- **Enhances Social Connections**
 - Being on time allows children to start the day with their peers, helping them build friendships and feel included.
 - This promotes social development and a sense of belonging.

Late Drop-off and Collections

All late drop-offs and collections will require signing a roster. If this occurs three times, the principal or CEO will contact you to arrange a counselling session. It could also result in termination of contract (disenrollment)



Nap Times and Routine as a whole

Napping is a necessary part of the preschool day, and we work hard to ensure sleep routines are kept consistent.

For children under 12-months, Earlybird supplies cots with slotted panels to ensure no visual impediments to baby monitoring. Custom-fit, covered mattresses are also provided. Any external bedding or sleep toys provided by families will be vetted by teachers to ensure it does not pose a SIDS risk.

Age-determined day naps are dictated by a baby's ultradian rhythms, which are experienced roughly every few hours. Once night feeds are no longer required (around 6 months of age), a baby's natural rhythm is typically to sleep for about 10-12 hours at night in addition to regular day naps. Babies are more sensitive to sensory input because they have an immature nervous system. Strategies to soothe babies and help them get to sleep include rocking, walking in a pram, making soft white noise, and swaddling. Establishing a daytime sleep routine is key; between 6 and 9 months, most babies are having two to three short naps.

- **NAP TIMES for Blue Group: 09:00 – 09:45 (optional) ; 12:00 – 14:00 ; 15:15 – 16:00 (optional)**
- **NAP TIME for Green Group: 12:00 – 14:00**
- **NAP TIME for Yellow Group: 12:00 – 14:00**
- **NAP TIME for Red Group: 12:00 – 14:00**
- **NAP TIME for Orange Group: 12:30 – 14:00**

We provide individually labelled bedding for each child (which is issued upon payment of the registration fee) and are very strict about the weekly washing of bedding on-site.



Meals

Breakfast and Lunch are included as part of our monthly school fees.

We have partnered with a registered dietician to design seasonal, nutritious weekly meal plans which are age-appropriate and delicious!

- You can view an example of our summer menu on our website or ask your teacher to share.
- Families of enrolled children are expected to supply two healthy snacks for their children to eat during the morning and afternoon snack-time sessions
- Families of enrolled children in Blue Group will receive detailed updates on their child's feeding, nappy-changing, and sleep patterns from their class teacher on a daily basis via a dedicated "message book."
- Families of enrolled children in Green, Yellow, Red, and Orange Groups will receive daily updates via the class WhatsApp groups.

Snacks and how to pack

- Please pack healthy and easy-to-eat foods.
- Make sure it is accessible for children to eat independently.
- Please pack all snacks separately to prevent sogginess, and please cut grapes in half as they are a choking hazard.
- Rather pack more than less; add a small variety and lots of texture.

Eating Habits we need help with

- Manners: saying please and thank you.
- Sitting at the table with both feet in front. Try eat as a family and set the example.
- Talking with their mouths full, please reiterate that we need to swallow before talking.
- Exposure to different textures; this will assist your child with their speech development.



Health and Safety @Earlybird

The health and safety of children is of paramount importance at all Earlybird Educare Centres. We work hard every day to ensure that our Educare Centres are safe and healthy places for children, their families, our staff, visitors, and volunteers. We take a 'prevention-first' approach by identifying key-concern risks and making everyone at our Educare Centres aware of the associated health and safety issues and prevention measures.

We ask that all families of enrolled children partner with us in our health and safety efforts by:

- Meeting with your child's Principal and Teachers to *provide details of any allergies, sensitivities, or medical conditions* your child may have.
- Ensuring all health insurance, GP, and other *medical information relating to your child is up-to- date* in the educare centre's records.
- Ensuring strict adherence to the educare centre's *child drop-off and pick-up procedures*.
- Engaging with all communications shared by the educare centre staff and Earlybird central team.
- Reading through Earlybird's [Health and Safety Policy Document](#)
- Logging any medication brought to the centre for your child with your child's teacher. Please request the link from your principal. Medication must be sealed, labelled, and handed to the teacher or principal on duty.
- Talking to your child about road safety, water safety, and fire safety.
- Encouraging the development of [A strong sense of bodily autonomy](#) in your child.
- Reading through Earlybird's [Child Protection Policy Document](#)
- Responding rapidly to any emergency evacuation (SMS-based) notification sent to you by the educare centre.



If your child is sick:

Please keep your child home if they have any of the following symptoms:

- Fever of **38 degrees** and above.
- Fever is accompanied by **sore throat, rash, vomiting, diarrhoea, earache, irritability, or confusion.**
- **Diarrhoea:** two or more loose stools within a 4-hour period.
- **Vomiting:** two or more times within a 24-hour period.
- **Breathing trouble, sore throat, swollen glands, loss of voice, continuous coughing.**
- **Thick yellow or green discharge from the nose.** Allergies are generally clear.
- Headaches.
- **Frequent scratching** of the body or scalp due to lice, rash, ringworm, or any suspicious spots.
- Any form of **eye irritation.**

When may your child return to school:

- When they are not contagious.
- Medical certificate for serious infectious disease.
- 48 hours after the last known symptoms.
- If your child needs general medication, please ensure you fill out the medication form available from the principal or the class teacher.
- This provides us with the necessary information and permission to administer. When sending medication to school, please ensure it is in a sealed and labelled Ziploc bag and handed to the teacher on duty in the morning.



Earlybird Educare

At Earlybird, we are more than just an educational centre—we are a community built on love, care, and a shared commitment to nurturing young minds. Our mission is to provide an accessible, high-quality early education where every child feels safe, valued, and inspired to grow. We believe in creating an environment where children not only learn but also experience the joy of discovery, the warmth of care, and the confidence to take their first steps into the world.

Together, we prepare your child for life's adventures, ensuring they feel loved, supported, and ready to soar.

Laying the foundation of a lifetime!

