



# Abbotsleigh Early Learning Centre

## Family Information



ABBOTSLEIGH

# Early Learning Centre

Welcome to Abbotsleigh's Early Learning Centre, a warm and inviting space for boys and girls up to five years of age.

Situated on the Junior School campus, the Early Learning Centre is integrated with the rest of the School. The centre's policies and practices consistently reflect Abbotsleigh's core principles, including our Christian ethos, the pursuit of personal as well as academic excellence, respect for oneself and others, a will to serve, parental support and involvement, and a broad, well balanced education.

With a long history of providing education to the community, we understand the importance of early learning and the way in which it forms the foundation for future development. We also understand that the relationships we form with you have a significant impact on your child's happiness, wellbeing and success in learning. One of our primary aims is to work in partnership with parents so that we can better understand and respond to children's individual needs and interests.

The environment in our Early Learning Centre is a stimulating one where young children feel safe and supported in their explorations. Curiosity, initiative, creativity and imaginative play are all encouraged as children work together under the guidance of their educators and carers.

The wonder and joy of childhood are cherished and we feel honoured to share this time with you and your family.





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# Educational program

## Philosophy of the centre

Abbotsleigh's Early Learning Centre is a safe and nurturing environment that welcomes children and their families to share in one of the most important stages of life, the early childhood years. As part of an Anglican school, we acknowledge the significance of the Christian faith in the development of the child and honour diversity and individuality. Our philosophy recognises the uniqueness of the individual and the importance of the relationships that children bring into the learning environment and those that develop as children grow. We believe that education is a process of participation where meaningful links between educators, children, families and the community need to be fostered.

Drawing from a broad and holistic base, our emergent curriculum is informed by the Reggio Emilia approach and enriched by other leading early childhood philosophies. At the heart of our approach to learning is a commitment to fostering the sense of wonder, curiosity and creativity of each child. We aim to support the abundant potential of all children as they are given opportunities to question, play and explore, developing their creative confidence. Educators' observations of children enable them to guide and provoke thinking and problem solving. Our primary belief is that children of all ages bring to the learning experience their own skills and knowledge and this is valued and respected.

## Settling your child into the centre

Abbotsleigh's Early Learning Centre has a team of dedicated and enthusiastic staff who understand the pivotal role they play in the care and education of your children.

Our educators hold a range of early childhood degrees and

diplomas in accordance with State and Federal Government regulations.

We understand the importance of children settling quickly into the centre's routines. Hence, we work closely with families through the enrolment process and encourage staged visits to our centre. Initially, this will involve parents spending time with their child in the centre and will progress to short stays for children where they are interacting directly with the centre's staff.

## Curriculum

Our programs are based upon current research and development into early childhood education globally. Programs are influenced by the Reggio Emilia approach and reflect the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) for

Australia 'Belonging, Being and Becoming'. Strengthening children's learning dispositions and natural sense of curiosity while fostering creative and critical thinking, underpins our curriculum.

Educators work alongside children with the intention of nurturing lifelong learners. They recognise the potential of young children to question, reflect, problem solve, theorise, hypothesise, collaborate and express their findings using a range of mediums

Being located on Abbotsleigh's Junior School campus allows us to draw upon the teaching expertise of a wide range of specialist educators and also to share the excellent facilities such as the grounds, library and computer rooms.

## Program structure

Age group	Program
0-2	Nursery program
2-3	Toddler program
3-5	Pre-school programs





### **Nursery program**

Our program for children under two is relationship focused. It is shaped largely by the work of Marte Meo and Magda Gerber as well as current research around brain development. Educators are responsive and sensitive, utilizing the routines that have been established by families.

Natural daily rhythms are seen as opportunities for the children to learn from their surroundings and through their interactions with others. The children's innate curiosity and desire to explore is the foundation of learning where children are supported in making connections with the world around them.

### **Toddler program**

Our program for two year olds fosters an environment that respects the growing skills and independence of children of this age. The program recognises children as capable and competent learners whose input, along with that of the family, is valued.

The natural curiosity, excitement and wonder of two year olds, will be enhanced through opportunities to explore and share their thoughts,

ideas and feelings through a variety of mediums including art, music, movement, dance, imagination and role play.

### **Pre-school programs**

Our pre-school programs are inquiry based. The curriculum is integrated and subject matter is explored within a contextual holistic framework. Children express their understanding through a variety of artistic means including clay work, construction, drawing, painting, dramatisation, poetry, puppetry and music.





Children's learning is also enhanced through a wide range of indoor and outdoor activities, music and movement groups, language and story times, and opportunities to build social relationships and self confidence.

Staff reflection and critical thinking shape program progression. Programming and planning decisions acknowledge educators understanding of the class community as well as respecting a child's right to explore at their own pace. This empowers children to make choices which reflect their individuality and enhance their developing sense of autonomy.

As children move into the class for four year olds, educators nurture the skills and dispositions required for a smooth transition to formal school.

Our Centre has an abundance of stimulating books and mathematical equipment with the opportunity for children to explore the natural world

using imaginative play to develop their fine and gross motor skills. Additionally, educators are focused on highlighting experiences to extend mathematical and literacy development.

### Storypark

Children's learning and development is documented using the digital platform Storypark. Storypark is an ePortfolio that records and communicates as learning is happening. It includes observations of children, photographic depictions, descriptions of learning journeys, interpretation, analysis and reflection. Parents regularly receive email alerts to these postings.

Family contributions, via posts, are encouraged to add depth to our understanding of the children as active contributors to our learning community. Enabling children, staff and families to work collaboratively, supporting the best learning outcomes for children.

### Behaviour management

The centre aims to provide a secure, caring and stimulating environment which encourages children to cooperate, enhances their self esteem and fosters their ability to interact with others. Acceptable behaviour is promoted and modelled by our educators who set clear, consistent expectations, use positive, developmentally appropriate language and are sensitive to children's needs and backgrounds.

### Excursions

Subject to your prior written consent, children will have the opportunity to visit various places of educational interest. Throughout the year, we are able to use the many facilities on the Junior School campus.



# Caring for your child

## Meals, food and drinks including babies' bottles

Each day, our chef will provide nutritious and appetising meals for the children in the Early Learning Centre. This will include bottle formula for our youngest children.

Abbotsleigh's chef will be instrumental in developing menus which parents can view in the centre's dining room and online on Storypark.

If your child has allergies or specific dietary requirements that vary from the information provided at enrolment, the centre should be informed immediately.

Parents with babies who wish to provide an alternative to the milk formula offered by the centre are asked to provide either the formula in a labelled tin or bottles for the day, made up and clearly labelled.

When children begin to drink cows' milk we will happily provide this for you.

## Sleep and rest time

During the day children in each of the rooms will have sleep/rest time. This provides children with time to relax, to be calm, to stop and recharge.

Routines such as sleep/rest time are important for children's health and wellbeing. These routines can be a comforting and reassuring time for some children. The centre provides relaxed and unhurried routines for children, complementary to their home environment, so that stress is minimised and benefits are maximised.

The routines in all rooms provide opportunities for further one to one interactions, while soothing songs and music also make sleep/rest routines a pleasant experience.

As the centre caters for a wide age range of children, ensuring individual needs are met is important. In the year before school, the rest time for our four to five year old children focuses on 'Drop Everything and Read' (DEAR).

## Nappies and toilet training

The centre will provide disposable nappies. Toddlers who indicate their readiness to train will be encouraged to do so and given the opportunity to progress towards independence.

## Belongings from home: games, toys and valuables

Our Early Learning Centre is well equipped with a range of stimulating and age appropriate equipment. Therefore children are discouraged from bringing valuables, including toys, from home. Your child is welcome to bring a small blanket/comforter for rest time as well as mementos for 'show and tell'.

## Children's clothing needs

### Under 2s

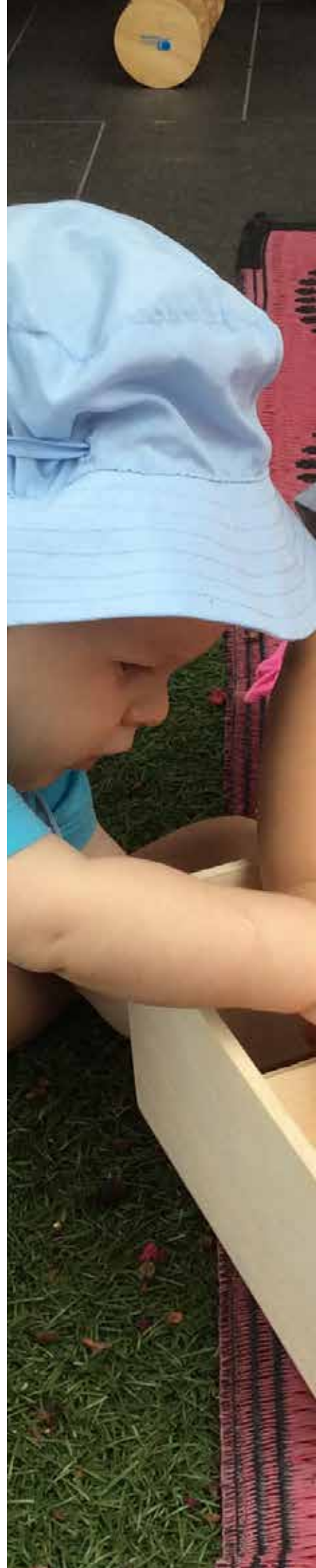
During the day we will take care of your child's needs including meals, sunscreen and nappies. Families need to equip each child with a bucket style hat and bag upon enrolment. Parents should provide changes of clothes and if necessary a pacifier with a cap or a container for safe storage.

### Over 2s

Your child needs to bring either a broad brimmed or bucket style hat and bag each day.

### For all children

Your child should be dressed in clothing that is suitable for the season and allows







for easy movement. A daily change of clothes should be provided. Please clearly label all your child's belongings. Appropriate, enclosed footwear should be worn at all times. Ballet slippers, croc style shoes and thongs are NOT appropriate for active play.

### **Birthdays and special events**

The centre will provide birthday cakes to help celebrate each child's special day. By cooking the cakes in our kitchen, we can ensure that we are catering for every child's dietary requirements.

We also welcome any information about your family, culture and specific celebrations.

### **Hygiene and infection control**

Our centre aims to encourage and maintain a high level of cleanliness and remains vigilant about limiting children's activities which could lead to cross infection.

We follow strict hygiene, health and safety procedures. Educators model and educate children about correct hand washing procedures. Staff will also discuss dental hygiene with children and parents.

The Director should be informed if your child has contracted or been exposed to any infectious disease. In such cases you may be asked to provide a clearance signed by your family doctor on return to the centre.

### **Immunisation**

The centre is required to keep records of each child's current immunisation status. A photocopy of your child's Immunisation History Statement must be provided each time it is updated. Immunisation History Statements are necessary for child care enrolment and are currently used by Medicare and Centrelink to determine eligibility for some family assistance payments.

Children who are not immunised will be excluded from care during outbreaks of some infectious diseases.

### **Caring for sick children**

For the health and wellbeing of all children at the centre, please keep your child at home if he or she is unwell. Symptoms might include a high temperature, excessive discharge from the eyes/ears/nose, a productive cough (bringing up mucus), or a throat infection.

If your child becomes unwell during the day, we will contact you as soon as possible to discuss arrangements for collection of your child.

### **Accidents and emergencies**

Our indoor and outdoor environments have been designed with your child's safety and needs in mind.

If, however, your child receives an injury, all of our staff have first aid training and will attend to him or her.

In the unlikely event of a serious injury, immediate steps will be taken to contact you and an ambulance will be called. A staff member will accompany your child at all times.

Our centre has an emergency evacuation procedure that is clearly displayed in each room. Evacuation drills are carried out regularly.

### **Medication**

If your child has been prescribed medication by a doctor, our staff will administer the appropriate dose as detailed on the label. Such medication must be given to our educators in its original packaging.

On arrival at the centre, parents should sign the appropriate permission slip and hand the medication, including asthma medication, to an educator for safe storage. Medication must not be stored in a child's locker.

### **Sun protection**

We promote sun smart behaviour and model and regularly discuss the need to protect ourselves from prolonged exposure to the sun.

Parents should apply sunscreen to their child before leaving home. We will reapply SPF 30+ sunscreen during the day as necessary.

Whilst playing outside, children must wear their own broad brimmed hat. The centre provides children with a hat for the day if they forget their own. These are laundered daily.

### **Smoke free environment**

The Early Learning Centre, like Abbotsleigh, is a smoke free environment. Staff, parents and visitors are not permitted to smoke inside buildings, in outdoor areas or car parks.

# Communicating with families

Relationships are an important facet of life at Abbotsleigh. We believe that it is important that children, educators and parents work together to build a community of inquiry between adults and children.

Our families are actively involved in meetings, conferences, celebrations and events. Parents also receive regular and ongoing feedback about the development of their child.

## Contacting the Early Learning Centre

We encourage regular and close communication between parents and staff in our Early Learning Centre. This interaction enables us to make informed decisions about each child's needs and includes:

- Daily interaction with the educators responsible for your child's care and wellbeing.
- Regular updates of your child's day are posted on Storypark
- *The Shuttle*, our weekly newsletter, is distributed every Friday via email and is an important source of information.
- Parent notices are emailed to families; posted on Storypark as a community post and displayed in the Centre reception and in individual rooms.

If you have a query or concern or simply wish to discuss any aspect of your child's development, email reception at [elc@abbotsleigh.nsw.edu.au](mailto:elc@abbotsleigh.nsw.edu.au) or phone 02 9473 7950.

In the first instance, we encourage you to speak with your child's educator. On occasion, matters may also be referred to the Director and/or Educational Leader.

## Change of information

Please provide the centre with written details of any changes to our records including address, phone numbers, email contacts, family circumstances, immunisation records and persons authorised to collect your child.

## Privacy policy

The Abbotsleigh Early Learning Centre respects privacy and confidentiality in all communication.

We comply with the Privacy Act 1988 (Commonwealth) and the associated National Privacy Principles when dealing with personal information and are committed to protecting personal information from misuse, loss, unauthorised access or modification.





# Centre organisation

## Hours of operation

The centre operates daily from 7.30 am to 6.30 pm, Monday to Friday, 49 weeks per year. The centre is closed for three weeks over the Christmas period. It is also closed on gazetted public holidays throughout the year.

## Staffing and age grouping

The centre is divided into a number of rooms each with a different staff to child ratio.

Age group	Children	Staff
0-2	14	4
2-3	15	3
3-4	20	2
4-5	20	2

We also have a dedicated team of Special Projects educators and specialist support staff who assist us on a daily basis.

## Dropping off and collecting children

The car park for the Early Learning Centre is located directly beneath the centre. Access from the car park is via the stairs or lift. You may also park in the surrounding streets. The ELC has 6 designated car spaces for drop off between 7.30-8.30 am and pick-up between 2.30-4 pm. If you have a meeting organised with an educator during these times, please find alternative parking and refrain from using these spaces to ensure access for all families.

Our team will greet you and your child each morning and we encourage you to share with us any information that may assist us in working with your child during the day.

Each child has a designated locker into which belongings should be placed.

It is a legal requirement that you sign your child into and out of the centre each day. Persons over the age of 18 years who are listed on the enrolment form as authorised persons may collect your child from the centre.

If you would like another person to collect your child, written details are required. We will verify identification before allowing your child to leave the centre.

## Family access

If you have custody arrangements for your child, we ask that you provide these details to the centre upon enrolment.

# Enrolment and fees

## Enrolment

Parents seeking their child's entry to the Early Learning Centre should complete the online Expression of Interest form available on Abbotsleigh's website ([www.abbotsleigh.nsw.edu.au](http://www.abbotsleigh.nsw.edu.au)). To discuss an enrolment application or to enquire about the specific fee range for different age groups, please phone the centre reception on 9473 7950 or email [elc@abbotsleigh.nsw.edu.au](mailto:elc@abbotsleigh.nsw.edu.au).

A \$220 application fee is required with each child's enrolment form. The equivalent of two weeks' full fees is required at offer of enrolment. This will be held until the end of the enrolment and will be applied against the four week notice period. Any changes to enrolment should be made in writing to the Director with at least four weeks' notice.

A significant fee applies if children are not collected by 6.30 pm.

Public holidays other than the period between Christmas Day and New Year's Day are subject to payment.

Abbotsleigh Early Learning Centre is registered as an Approved Care Provider. Parents may claim the Child Care Tax Rebate. A Child Care Benefit subsidy may also be available subject to a means test. Contact the Family Assistance Office on 13 61 50 for more details.

## Priority of access

Our Early Learning Centre complies with the Australian Government Priority Access Guidelines for allocating places.





# Frequently asked questions

## **What are the hours of operation?**

The centre is open Monday to Friday from 7.30 am-6.30 pm, 49 weeks per year. The centre is closed for three weeks over Christmas and on gazetted public holidays.

## **Must children attend for the whole day?**

Children can attend the centre for up to 11 hours a day. Specific arrival and departure times will depend upon individual needs. Children may attend for two or more days per week, depending on each family's needs.

## **What is the ratio of staff to children?**

The centre is divided into a number of rooms, each with a different staff to child ratio. For a breakdown see page 11.

## **Is the centre licensed and accredited?**

In NSW, it is a requirement that all children's services are licensed through the NSW Department of Education and Communities. We also operate under the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care.

## **Will I be able to access the Child Care Benefit and Child Care Tax Rebate?**

You may be entitled to child care benefits and tax rebates from the Federal Government depending upon your financial circumstances. It is each family's responsibility to contact the Family Assistance Office to establish their entitlements. Fact sheets are available at [www.familyassist.gov.au](http://www.familyassist.gov.au).

## **Are meals provided?**

In conjunction with Abbotsleigh's head chef, our centre chef provides nutritious and appetising meals for children. This includes bottle formula for our youngest children.

## **What is the fee schedule?**

A \$220 application fee is required with each child's enrolment form. The equivalent of two weeks' full fees is required at offer of enrolment. This will be held until the end of the enrolment and will be applied against the four week notice period referred to below.

Please contact reception on 9473 7950 for the specific fee range for different age groups.

Fees are payable fortnightly in advance. The minimum period of notice required to terminate enrolment is four weeks.

If your daughter moves into Kindergarten:  
– a \$1,500 non refundable acceptance fee is required when a place is offered and accepted  
– a \$2,500 non refundable entrance fee is payable two years prior to entry of new students

## **Will my daughter automatically proceed to Abbotsleigh Junior School?**

Girls in the four to five year old class will have priority, space permitting, to join our Kindergarten classes.







ABBOTSLEIGH

# Orientation

Dear \_\_\_\_\_

## Welcome to Abbotsleigh Early Learning Centre.

Your first orientation date is \_\_\_\_\_ time \_\_\_\_\_

### Please bring along the following items to be sighted and copied:

- Your child's birth Certificate, Passport or other identification
- The current Immunisation History Statement

### During the orientation visit our Centre Director will go through a checklist which includes:

- Ensuring all enrolment information is completed including:
  - Excursion and incursion authorisations
  - Contact and collection authorisations
  - Confirming contact information for emergency contact
- Centre routines including:
  - The Centre opening and closing times
  - Notification of absences due to illness or holidays
  - Parking and access to the building
  - Drop off and collection routine
- Centre policies and access will be highlighted. After the Orientation we will send you an email with a link to the policy area so that you are able to read at your convenience.
- Financial arrangements:
  - fee structure and payment details
  - procedures for claiming childcare benefits and rebates

Additionally, during this visit we are keen to hear from you about your child's background and needs so that we can be as responsive and nurturing as possible during these early years of learning. Please feel free to share information on the following topics:

- child's interest and preferences
- dietary needs
- medical background and medication
- developmental concerns

Please bring along any questions or queries you have to ensure we are best prepared to share in nurturing and educating your child.



### **Preparing for your child's first day**

If you're returning to work we would suggest starting your child at the centre prior to your return to work date. This way you and your child can have a relaxed and unhurried start to formal care and education. This also gives you the opportunity to stay with your child to settle them and enable them to have shorter days, so that the transition from home to the Centre is a positive experience. We feel it is very important for both you and your child to develop a strong bond with the educators.

To achieve this we encourage the following guidelines to ensure a smooth and happy start for your child:

- If possible, shorter days are recommended initially. Please be guided by the educators as to the best duration during this initial stage. The first few days are critical in laying the foundation for children feeling secure in this new environment. Fees remain unchanged during this period.
- The Director, educators and families work in partnership to implement a predictable, consistent drop off routine from the very first day. This is discussed in detail during the initial Orientation Meeting.
- Once the initial week of settling in has occurred, we recommend that upon arrival you confidently hand your child over to an educator. By keeping this hand over short, prolonged distress is obviated. Please be reassured that we are very happy to be in contact with you after your departure if you would find this reassurance beneficial. It is our experience that children quickly settle with the children and educators once parents are no longer in sight.

### **Drop off routine**

- To ensure supportive pastoral nurture is in place, we utilize the Circle of Security (COS) framework. We have found this program to be an excellent guide to parents in ensuring a confident, positive handover to educators. COS is an internationally renowned parenting methodology based on the attachment theory, it is shaped by extensive research into the wellbeing and mental health of young children.

An example of a supportive dialogue at drop off, which was formulated by the school counsellor.

1. *The parent brings their child to the educator who greets them by saying something to the child that includes the parent. "Hello Henry you've come with your Daddy." The educator looks from child to parent as he/she refers to the parent, so the parent feels included. Greeting the parent also goes a long way towards reassuring the child.*

2. *The parents and educator together make the handover explicit to reassure the child.*

*Dad to Henry: "Henry I am leaving now. Mary is here to look after you and help you have a fun day".*

*Dad to Mary: "Mary will you look after Henry today?"*

*Mary to Dad and Henry: "Yes, Henry, I'm pleased I am able to look after and play with you till Daddy returns. I'm always here when you need me."*

*Saying this out loud creates very clear expectations, and tells Henry that he is in the minds of two adults who care for him.*

3. *Parent hands child over to educator.*

- Educators will contact parents throughout the day via phone or email to discuss how their child is settling.
- Parents are encouraged to phone the centre at any time to speak with staff regarding their child's day.
- Parents are welcome to spend as much time as they wish at the centre in the afternoons. Being with the child at the end of the day supports their settling however does not impact negatively on initial separation.
- When a child is having ongoing difficulties separating and settling, staff and parents will meet to discuss possible strategies that may assist in this process.

**Additional orientation visits**

Your next orientation date is \_\_\_\_\_ time \_\_\_\_\_

Additional orientation days may be recommended by educators to enable a smooth transition from home to the Early Learning Centre.

**Commencement Date**

Your child's start date is \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_

**Additional Notes**

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We would like to acknowledge to the traditional custodians of this land, the Darug and Guringai peoples and pay our respects to the Elders both past, present and future for they hold the memories, the traditions, the culture and hopes of Aboriginal Australia. We must always remember that under the concrete and asphalt this land is, was and always will be traditional Aboriginal land.

Our Centre was once beautiful forest country, and home to the Aboriginal people of this region. We recognise their long history on this land and the care they gave to this land for thousands of years.

As we share our own knowledge, teaching, learning, and research practices within this school may we also pay respect to the knowledge embedded forever within the Aboriginal Custodianship of Country.

**Abbotsleigh**  
**Early Learning Centre**  
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Email [elc@abbotsleigh.nsw.edu.au](mailto:elc@abbotsleigh.nsw.edu.au)  
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