



Checklist: How To Choose a Great Childcare Centre

Name of Service:

Address:

Contact name:

Phone:

Hours of operation:

When introduced to the service where you told about:

- How you can participate in decisions that affect you & your child
- How your child's day will be organised
- How your child's individual needs are met
- About policies of the services such as:
 - what happens when your child is sick or an accident occurs
 - who has a current first aid certificate on staff
 - what happens when you go on holidays
 - what you can do if you have concerns about the service
 - are trying to improve the quality of service
 - when staff change groups and how this happens
 - holiday closures
 - child free days
 - fee payments and late fees
- Funding arrangements - profit vs community funded?
- Are there parents on the management committee?
- Is there a waiting list for the centre? (If yes, how long)
- Is there any fee for placement on the waiting list?
- What is the teacher/child ratio?
- How many kids are in each room?
- How the kids are grouped (ages or families or other)?
- What qualifications do the caregivers have?
- What is the staff turnover?
- What meals are provided? (Take a look at a menu)
- Does the service provide nappies?
- Does the service provide formula?
- How the service works with you when introducing solids.
- How the service works with you when potty training.
- Are you welcome to pop in at any time or do you need to make an appointment?

When talking to staff do they:

- Make you feel welcome and answer your questions willingly
- Try to find out how to best care for your child by talking to you about your child
- Involve you in the planning of your child's day at the service
- Discuss ways that you may be involved in the service

When looking at the play space check:

- The indoor and outdoor areas and equipment are clean and well maintained?
- Are toys safe and in good repair with all the parts (no missing jigsaw bits etc)?
- Are there enough play materials? Are they made available daily such as paint, dough, puzzles, books?
- Are toys age appropriate?
- Are toys within the children's reach?
- Is there a balance between indoor and outdoor play?
- Are songs, fingerplays and books an integral part of the child's days?
- Are fences and gates well repaired and childproof?
- Smoke detectors and fire extinguishers apparent and in good repair?
- Is the centre clean?
- Are hazardous chemicals out of reach?
- Your child will have a choice of things to do that will encourage them to try new things and still be safe?
- Equipment can be moved and changed to give your child variety in their day?
- Is there space for your child to talk and play with other children, space for running and being noisy, space for trikes, as well as spaces for quiet play?
- Pictures and photos of real life images as well as child's creations are displayed?
- Are the pictures at the children's eye level?



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When watching staff with the children do they:

- Spend most of their time talking to and being with the children
- Join in with the children and their play
- Use each child's name, ask questions and respond to each child's answers warmly and positively
- Encourage children to ask questions, make choices and solve their own problems
- Help children learn about themselves, other people and the world around them
- Provide opportunities for children to participate in activities where they can explore everyday life, like assisting in preparing meals or helping to tidy up
- Allow children to make decisions about what they would like to do next
- Ensure regular times for children's meals, rest and relaxation
- Use a positive approach to guide children's behaviour
- Use satisfactory hygiene practices such as washing hands after changing nappies, use of gloves, disinfect toilet seats after use, baby change mats
- Discipline consistently, positive and clearly (no physical/verbal abuse, angry scolding, physical restraint, isolations without supervision, shaming)
- Integrate of kids with disabilities not just speak about integration
- Show respect for different cultures shown in pictures, toys, foods etc
- Encourage children to wash hands after toilets and before meals
- Encourage children to sit down while eating
- Attend to babies when they cry

Check also:

- Are children busy, relaxed and happy
- Is the noise a pleasant hum or a loud piercing din
- How they deal with transitions from one activity to the next (this can be stressful for children)
- How they deal with differences with development within their groups - advanced and slower development
- How you will be notified of what the child has done that day and how they are progressing

Final tips:

Try and observe the centre when the kids are likely to be difficult - before naps or just on arrival and children may be upset and you get a picture of how the centre deals with this.

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