

Checklist

FOR PARENTS & GUARDIANS

Choosing an early education provider is one of the most important decisions you'll make.

This checklist was developed by St Joseph's Family Services, operated by St Agnes' Catholic Parish, as part of our commitment to child safety and high-quality care. Whether you're considering one of our early education centres in Port Macquarie or exploring other options, we hope this resource helps you feel confident, informed, and empowered in your decision.

SAFETY AND SUPERVISION

How do you ensure children are safe at all times? Ask about:

- ☐ Staff-to-child ratios at different times of day
- ☐ How children are supervised in nappy change areas, sleep rooms, and outdoor spaces
- ☐ Visibility: are rooms and play areas open and observable?

WHAT YOU WANT TO HEAR:

Supervision is active, not passive. Educators are positioned with intent, rooms are visible, and safety is non-negotiable.

STAFFING AND RECRUITMENT

What are your recruitment and screening processes? At a minimum, all educators must have:

- ☐ A current Working With Children Check (WWCC)
- ☐ Verified references (ideally from previous education roles)
- ☐ A thorough induction process

WHAT TO LOOK FOR:

Do they mention behaviour-based interviews? Trial shifts under supervision? Ongoing probation reviews?

COMMUNICATION AND COMPLAINTS

How can parents, children, or staff raise concerns? Good services will have:

- ☐ A documented complaints process
- ☐ Anonymous feedback options
- ☐ Open-door leadership that encourages feedback and listens

RED FLAG:

If a provider seems defensive or vague about how issues are managed, take it seriously.

CULTURE AND EDUCATOR INTERACTIONS

Can I see how educators interact with children? Great services welcome observation. Watch for:

- ☐ Respectful, gentle language
- ☐ Positive behaviour support (not shaming or abrupt discipline)
- ☐ Staff genuinely engaging in play, routines, and learning

TRUST YOUR INSTINCTS!

Do the children seem comfortable and happy? Are staff warm and confident?

STAFF TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

What kind of training do staff receive — and how often? You're looking for:

- ☐ Annual or biannual child protection and safeguarding training
- ☐ Training in behaviour guidance, first aid, and supervision
- ☐ Opportunities for professional growth and accountability

BONUS:

Ask who delivers their training — in-house or external experts?

POLICIES AND TRANSPARENCY

Are key policies available to parents? You should be able to access:

- ☐ Child Protection Policy
- ☐ Behaviour Guidance Policy
- ☐ Complaints and Grievances Policy
- ☐ Supervision Policy

RED FLAG:

If they're reluctant to share or explain these, consider it a red flag.

DAILY PRACTICES AND REPORTING

How do you communicate with families about the day? Ask about:

- ☐ Daily updates (via app or paper)
- ☐ Incident reports and how they're handled
- ☐ Transparency around accidents or behavioural issues

OPEN COMMUNICATION BUILDS TRUST

— you should never feel in the dark.

RATINGS AND ACCREDITATION

How is the service rated under the National Quality Standard (NQS)? Each service in Australia is assessed and rated. Look for:

- ☐ "Meeting" or "Exceeding" ratings across quality areas
- ☐ Evidence that they're actively improving or reflecting on past results

FINAL TIP:

If a provider seems defensive, vague, or dismissive – trust your gut. You deserve a provider that is proud to show how they protect and support your child.