



NSW Department of Education

# What is outside school hours care (OSHC)?

A guide for families in NSW











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This guide provides helpful information on outside school hours services (OSHC) in NSW for families who are already using or considering using OSHC services.



## What is OSHC?

Outside of school hours care (OSHC) services provide care, play and learning for primary school-age children before and after school, in school holidays and on Pupil Free Days. In NSW, some services may refer to themselves as out of school hours (OOSH) services. They are located within NSW public schools, private and independent schools as well as services based off school sites.

Operating hours vary depending on community needs and school hours and can range between:

- Before school care | 6:30am-9:30am
- After school care | 2:30pm-6:30pm
- Vacation care (during school holidays) | 6:30am-6:30pm





## The benefits of OSHC

OSHC enables families to work or study outside of school hours and the benefits of OSHC for children who attend these services are wide ranging.

OSHC:

- Builds children's social and emotional skills.
- Provides recreational leisure time in a safe and supportive setting.
- Allows children to make choices about their play in structured and unstructured environments that support their development. Learning through play is one of the most important ways children learn and develop.
- Supports children's growing sense of belonging, independence and self-help skills.
- Contributes towards meeting their physical activity and nutritional needs.

**“My son has been going to OSHC for two years now and he loves attending. He always has so much fun playing new games with his friends. The great range of activities and food offered keep the children interested and very happy.”**

Parent

## What will my child do at OSHC?

All OSHC services create their programs based on their children's interests and learning opportunities. Services use an approved learning framework called My Time, Our Place to guide their planning and delivery of play and for educational experiences to support children's learning. Children are able to choose between planned and spontaneous activities that may include a variety of:

- Creative Arts
- Reading
- Excursions
- Long and short term projects
- Imaginative play
- Self directed play
- STEM
- Dance
- Drama
- Cooking
- Games
- Sport
- Music
- Visitors to the service



## What if my child's school doesn't have an OSHC on site?

OSHC services will generally provide education and care to a number of schools in their area. Some OSHC services have a bus that collects children from school, educators may walk to collect children or they may use the school bus run. You can find your local OSHC here: [bascfinder.service.nsw.gov.au](https://bascfinder.service.nsw.gov.au).

## Who operates OSHC services?

OSHC is delivered by providers who have been approved by the Regulatory Authority. This includes:

- Parents in a school – not for profit service operated by a specifically formed parent-run management committee or through the school's P&C committee.
- A not for profit organisation or charity.
- Private approved providers which can be a small business owner or a large company.

## What is the role of an OSHC educator?

In NSW, the people who work in OSHC are called educators. Educators provide a fun and safe program and environment, designed to meet your children's needs and interests. The staffing ratio of 1 educator for every 15 children in OSHC must be maintained at all times. In order to be counted in this ratio, educators must be physically present and actively supervising children.

The person overseeing the daily operations of the service is known as the Nominated Supervisor, Coordinator or Director. A nominated 'responsible person' is required to be present at all times to ensure the safety and well-being of all children who are in attendance.

## How much does OSHC cost?

Although the cost of OSHC varies, families can typically expect to pay from \$20 to \$40 per session for before and after school care and approximately \$50+ for vacation care programs that operate all day. In accordance with the service's policies, there may be additional fees for late collection, failing to notify if your child isn't attending and excursions and special programs.

OSHC services typically offer two types of bookings, permanent and occasional care, fees will vary for these booking types.

The Commonwealth Government provides assistance through the Child Care Subsidy to reduce the fees associated with child care, with eligibility and amount of financial support dependant on a range of factors. Families can use the [Child Care Subsidy Calculator](#) for an estimate.

**“When my child moved from preschool to OSHC, the child care subsidy just transferred across too... I'm very grateful how this subsidy makes our after school and vacation care fees so much more affordable.”**

Parent





## Are there guidelines on how the OSHC should be operated?

OSHC services are operated under the Education and Care Services National Law and Regulations and the National Quality Standards.

This is overseen by the Regulatory Authority which in NSW is the Department of Education. All OSHC sites must be regulated and assessed by the Regulatory Authority to make sure they comply with the National Law and Regulations and are safe for children.

Services are required to have mandatory policies and procedures in place to ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of children. These policies must be followed by the service at all times and made available for families to access.

If you are interested in reading more about how the NSW Department of Education regulates services, visit [education.nsw.gov.au/early-childhood-education/information-for-parents-and-carers/our-role](https://education.nsw.gov.au/early-childhood-education/information-for-parents-and-carers/our-role).

## Support for children with additional needs in OSHC

OSHC services are eligible for funding support under the national [Inclusion Support Program](#). To access this, families of children with additional needs will be asked to complete two consent forms to allow the service to apply for the funding. This Inclusion Development Funding can be used to:

- increase the educator to child ratio to support inclusion of all children in centre-based care environments for a limited or longer-term period.

The subsidy cannot be used by services:

- for one to one support
- for respite care
- to provide therapy or early intervention supports
- to provide medical/nursing assistance.

If your child has additional needs, please speak to the person in charge at the OSHC service to discuss the service's capacity to meet your child's needs.

**“It’s become pretty common, that for students with additional needs, we’ll sit down with our OSHC educators and work it through with them... to make sure the same strategies are in place so that it is simply an extension of the student’s day with consistent expectations.”**

Principal





# Are services rated on their quality?

Services are assessed and rated against the National Quality Standard by Authorised Officers from the Department of Education.

The 7 Quality Areas OSHC services are rated against are:

<b>1</b> <b>Educational program and practice</b>	<b>2</b> <b>Children's health and safety</b>	<b>3</b> <b>Physical environment</b>	<b>4</b> <b>Staffing arrangements</b>
<b>5</b> <b>Relationships with children</b>	<b>6</b> <b>Collaborative partnerships with families and communities</b>	<b>7</b> <b>Governance and leadership</b>	

The ratings are ranked in the following order from highest to lowest:

	<b>Excellent:</b> By application from Exceeding rated services only. Service promotes exceptional education and care in all 7 Quality Areas.
	<b>Exceeding National Quality Standard:</b> Service goes above and beyond the standards in a number of Quality Areas.
	<b>Meeting National Quality Standard:</b> Service meets the standard in all 7 Quality Areas.
	<b>Working Towards National Quality Standard:</b> There are 1 or more areas identified for improvement.
	<b>Significant Improvement Required:</b> There is a significant risk to the safety, health and well-being of children and the department will take action.

In NSW, a service's quality rating is displayed on a certificate using a star graphic. The certificate must be visible at the service to give families important information about the overall rating of an OSHC service and their rating against each of the quality areas.





## How can I be involved in the OSHC service?

OSHC services love to have parents involved, whether it be providing feedback on a policy, giving suggestions on the menu or donating time to teach the children something new - have a chat to your OSHC educators about ways you can get involved!

OSHC services are also deeply invested in their school and wider communities and encourage children to be involved in community engagement programs.

## What can I expect in regards to orientation?

When considering enrolling in an OSHC service, it is a good idea to visit the service with your child and meet the educators and tour the service. If your child is beginning Kindergarten, the service may also recommend some ongoing visits to help your child feel comfortable. Speak to the educators about collection and drop off procedures so your child gets to and from OSHC safely.

## What if I have concerns about my child's OSHC service?

If you have concerns or your child reports an incident at OSHC, you can discuss this directly with the Nominated Supervisor, Director or Coordinator at the service. You can ask to see the service's policies and procedures on managing complaints, and ask questions to gain more information about your concern.

Each service should have a designated staff member to deal with escalated complaints. They should outline this information in their OSHC complaints policy. You could also consider speaking to the school's Principal about your concerns.

If you feel your concerns are not being addressed sufficiently and/or your concerns relate to the health, safety or wellbeing of a child at the service, please notify the Department of Education on 1800 619 113 or [ececd@det.nsw.edu.au](mailto:ececd@det.nsw.edu.au). Your call can remain anonymous if you wish.

Under the National Law and Regulations, services must notify the Regulatory Authority in the event of a serious incident, complaint or if the health, safety and well-being of children is compromised or when there is an incident or allegation of physical and/or sexual abuse.



# Important questions to ask your OSHC service

Do you provide Before and After School and Vacation Care?

How will my children get to the service?

What do I do if my child is absent?

What are your operating hours?

How can my child and family be involved in the service?

How does your service provide for inclusion?

What will my child be doing here? Can I see your program?

What will my child eat and drink here? Can I see your menu?

Where should my child meet you after school?

What is your current rating under the National Quality Framework?

Who should I speak to if I have a question or concern?

My child requires medication, how can you manage this at OSHC?

Can you help me understand my Child Care Subsidy?

My child has additional needs, how can these be supported?

What is your management structure?

What are your fees and how are they charged?

Where can I view your policies and procedures?

Which areas of the premises can children access?



## Resources for families of OSHC

A range of OSHC resources are available for families to access on the .Department of Education OSHC webpage to learn more about OSHC:

[education.nsw.gov.au/early-childhood-education/information-for-parents-and-carers/outside-school-hours-care](https://education.nsw.gov.au/early-childhood-education/information-for-parents-and-carers/outside-school-hours-care)

## Key Contacts

Organisation	Information
Department of Education - Information and Enquiries team	1800 619 113 <a href="mailto:ececd@det.nsw.edu.au">ececd@det.nsw.edu.au</a> <a href="https://education.nsw.gov.au/early-childhood-education">education.nsw.gov.au/early-childhood-education</a>
BASC Finder	<a href="https://bascfinder.service.nsw.gov.au">bascfinder.service.nsw.gov.au</a>
Vacation Care Finder	<a href="https://bascfinder.service.nsw.gov.au/vacationcare">bascfinder.service.nsw.gov.au/vacationcare</a>
Services Australia Child Care Subsidy	136 150 <a href="https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au">www.servicesaustralia.gov.au</a>
NSW/ACT Inclusion Agency	1800 703 382 <a href="mailto:inclusionagency@includeme.com.au">inclusionagency@includeme.com.au</a>
Network of Community Activities (NSW Peak Body for OSHC)	02 921 23244 <a href="mailto:network@networkofcommunityactivities.org.au">network@networkofcommunityactivities.org.au</a>
Outside School Hours Care Council of Australia	0410 417 173 <a href="mailto:info@oshca.org.au">info@oshca.org.au</a>



We acknowledge the homelands of all Aboriginal people and pay our respect to Country.

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