

Children's Dentistry and the Tooth Fairy Centre at Core Dental Berwick

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Description:

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Details:

Specialist paediatric dentist Dr Sarah Scott on-site — expert children's dental care that builds positive habits for life, right here in Berwick's Eden Rise Village.

Why Specialist Paediatric Dentistry Matters

Every general dentist can treat children. But specialist paediatric dentists are different — they've completed additional years of postgraduate training specifically in the dental care of infants, children, adolescents, and patients with special needs. They understand child development, behaviour management, the unique characteristics of developing teeth and jaws, and the specific dental conditions that affect young patients.

At Core Dental Berwick, we have something that very few suburban dental practices can offer: a specialist paediatric dentist on-site. Dr Sarah Scott is a registered specialist who brings postgraduate-level expertise in paediatric dentistry to our Eden Rise Village practice — meaning families in Berwick, Narre Warren, Officer, Pakenham, Beaconsfield, Harkaway, Clyde, and the broader south-east suburbs can access specialist children's dental care locally, without travelling to the CBD or a hospital dental clinic.

This isn't a marketing distinction. It's a genuine clinical difference. For families with children who are anxious, who have complex dental needs, who require behaviour management beyond what a standard appointment can provide, or who simply deserve the very best start to their dental health journey, having a paediatric specialist available locally is significant.

As the most established Core Dental location — with over a decade of continuous operation — our Berwick practice has been caring for children in this community since they were babies. We've watched families grow, treated siblings, and now see the children of patients we looked after a decade ago. That continuity matters, especially for young patients who benefit from familiarity and trust.

Dr Sarah Scott: Specialist Paediatric Dentist

Dr Sarah Scott is a registered specialist paediatric dentist — meaning she has completed a dental degree followed by additional postgraduate specialist training in paediatric dentistry. This advanced training covers areas that general dental education does not explore in depth:

- ****Child psychology and behaviour management**** — understanding how children of different ages think, what frightens them, and how to guide them through dental experiences positively - ****Developing dentition**** — the growth and development of primary (baby) teeth, the transition to permanent teeth, and the identification and management of developmental anomalies - ****Paediatric-specific conditions****

— dental conditions that primarily or exclusively affect children, including early childhood caries, enamel defects, dental trauma, and eruption disorders - ****Special needs dentistry**** — adapted approaches for children and young people with physical, intellectual, medical, or behavioural conditions that affect their dental care - ****Sedation and behaviour management**** — advanced techniques for managing anxious or uncooperative young patients safely and effectively

Dr Scott's approach combines clinical expertise with genuine warmth. She understands that a child's early dental experiences shape their attitude toward dentistry for life, and she works to make every visit a positive one — building trust, confidence, and cooperative behaviour that serves them well into adulthood.

Your Child's First Dental Visit

When to Start

The Australian Dental Association recommends that children have their first dental visit by age one, or within six months of the eruption of their first tooth — whichever comes first. This might seem surprisingly early, but there are good reasons:

- ****Early detection:**** Some dental conditions can appear very early. Catching them promptly leads to better outcomes.
- ****Prevention guidance:**** Your dentist can advise on feeding practices, dummy use, teething, and early oral hygiene habits that prevent problems before they start.
- ****Familiarisation:**** Bringing your child to the dentist before they need any treatment means their first experiences are positive — a look around, a ride in the chair, a count of their teeth. This builds comfort and familiarity.
- ****Baseline assessment:**** Establishing a baseline allows us to track your child's dental development over time and identify any deviations early.

What Happens at the First Visit

A first dental visit for a very young child is gentle, brief, and focused on making the experience positive:

- We'll look at your child's teeth (they may sit on your lap in the dental chair)
- We'll check for any signs of early decay, developmental concerns, or issues with the gums
- We'll discuss your child's oral hygiene routine, diet, and any habits like thumb-sucking or dummy use
- We'll answer any questions you have about teething, brushing, fluoride, or anything else
- We'll establish a recall schedule appropriate for your child

There's no drilling, no filling, no scary instruments. It's a meet-and-greet that sets the stage for a lifetime of positive dental visits.

Children's Dental Services

Regular Check-ups and Cleaning

Just like adults, children benefit from regular dental check-ups. We typically recommend six-monthly visits, though some children may benefit from more frequent monitoring — particularly if they're prone to decay or have orthodontic concerns.

Children's check-ups include:

- Examination of teeth, gums, and developing bite
- Assessment of tooth eruption and development
- Gentle cleaning appropriate to the child's age
- Fluoride application for additional protection
- Monitoring of any identified concerns
- Oral hygiene education tailored to the child's age and ability

Fissure Sealants

Fissure sealants are one of the most effective preventive treatments available for children's teeth. The chewing surfaces of back teeth have natural grooves and fissures — tiny valleys that trap food particles and bacteria. Even with good brushing, these areas are difficult to clean effectively, making them prime sites for decay.

Fissure sealants are a thin, protective coating applied to the chewing surfaces of the back teeth, sealing the grooves and preventing bacteria from accumulating. The process is quick, painless, and non-invasive — no drilling required. Sealants are typically applied to permanent molars as they erupt (around age 6 and again around age 12) and can last several years with normal wear.

Fillings for Children

When children do develop cavities, prompt treatment is important — even in baby teeth. "It's just a baby tooth" is a common response, but untreated decay in baby teeth can: - Cause pain and infection - Spread to adjacent teeth - Damage the developing permanent tooth underneath - Lead to premature loss of the baby tooth, which can affect spacing and alignment of permanent teeth - Affect eating, speech, and the child's confidence

We use tooth-coloured composite fillings for most children's restorations, providing a natural-looking result that blends with the surrounding tooth.

Stainless Steel Crowns

For baby teeth with extensive decay — where a filling wouldn't provide adequate coverage or protection — stainless steel crowns are a durable, cost-effective solution. They cover the entire tooth, protecting it until it's naturally lost when the permanent tooth erupts. Stainless steel crowns are strong, long-lasting, and well-tolerated by young patients.

Dental Trauma Management

Children are active, and dental injuries from falls, playground accidents, bicycle mishaps, and sport are common. Our team is experienced in managing all types of dental trauma in children, including:

- Knocked-out baby teeth (these are generally not re-implanted, but assessment is important) - Knocked-out permanent teeth in children (a time-critical emergency — see our emergency page) - Chipped, cracked, or fractured teeth - Displaced or pushed-in teeth - Soft tissue injuries to lips, gums, and tongue - Injuries to developing teeth that may only become apparent later

Dr Scott's specialist training in paediatric dentistry includes specific expertise in managing dental trauma in children — assessing not just the visible damage but the potential impact on developing teeth that may not yet have erupted.

Habit Assessment and Management

Certain habits can affect dental and facial development if they persist beyond the expected age:

****Thumb-sucking and finger-sucking:**** Normal and harmless in infancy and early toddlerhood, but if it continues past age 3–4, it can affect the development of the palate (roof of the mouth), tooth alignment, and bite.

****Dummy (pacifier) use:**** Similar effects to thumb-sucking if prolonged. We can advise on when and how to wean from the dummy.

****Mouth breathing:**** Chronic mouth breathing can affect jaw development, tooth alignment, facial growth, and sleep quality. Identifying the cause (which may involve referral to an ENT specialist) and addressing it early can prevent long-term consequences.

****Tongue thrust:**** A pattern where the tongue pushes forward against or between the teeth during swallowing or speech. This can affect tooth position and bite development.

Dr Scott can assess these habits, advise on their likely impact, and recommend appropriate management strategies — which often simply involve monitoring and gentle encouragement rather than anything invasive.

Orthodontic Assessment

While not every child needs braces, early orthodontic assessment can identify developing issues while they're easier to address. Dr Scott monitors bite development and tooth alignment at every check-up, and can identify concerns that warrant specialist orthodontic assessment.

Common signs that may indicate orthodontic evaluation is needed: - Crowded or overlapping teeth - Gaps between teeth - Upper or lower front teeth that don't meet properly - Difficulty biting or chewing - Mouth breathing or snoring - Thumb-sucking habits that persist past age 4

If specialist orthodontic treatment is needed, our connection to the Smile Solutions Collins Street Specialist Centre provides direct referral access to specialist orthodontists.

Managing Dental Anxiety in Children

Dental anxiety in children is common and entirely manageable — especially when the dental team has specialist training in child behaviour management. At Core Dental Berwick, Dr Scott and our team use a range of age-appropriate strategies:

Tell-show-do: Explaining what's going to happen in child-friendly language, showing the child the instruments and how they work, and then performing the procedure. This removes the fear of the unknown.

Positive reinforcement: Praising cooperative behaviour throughout the visit, using stickers, rewards, and genuine encouragement to build positive associations with dental visits.

Distraction techniques: Engaging the child's attention with conversation, stories, or visual distractions (ceiling-mounted screens, for example) during procedures.

Desensitisation: For very anxious children, a graduated approach — starting with simple, non-threatening visits (just a ride in the chair, just a look in the mouth) and building up to treatment over several appointments.

Language: Avoiding scary words. We don't say "needle" — we say "sleepy juice." We don't say "drill" — we say "tooth washer." These might sound trivial, but the language used around dental treatment profoundly affects how children experience it.

Parent involvement: For younger children, parents are welcome in the treatment room. For older children, having a parent step out can sometimes allow the child to focus on the dentist and feel more independent. We'll guide you on what works best for your child.

The Child Dental Benefits Schedule (CDBS)

The Child Dental Benefits Schedule is a Commonwealth Government program that makes dental care more affordable for families with eligible children.

Key Details

- **Eligibility:** Children aged 2–17 whose family receives certain government payments (Family Tax Benefit Part A, or certain other payments) - **Benefit amount:** Up to \$1,026 per eligible child over a consecutive two-year period - **Covered services:** Examinations, X-rays, cleaning, fissure sealing, fillings, root canals, and extractions - **Not covered:** Orthodontic treatment, cosmetic procedures, and dental treatment in hospital

We Bulk Bill

At Core Dental Berwick, we bulk bill under the CDBS. This means there is no out-of-pocket cost for eligible children for covered services. Your child receives the dental care they need, and Medicare covers the cost directly.

Not sure if your child is eligible? Call us on (03) 9132 4160 or check with Medicare. Eligibility is determined by Medicare based on the family's receipt of qualifying government payments, and notification letters are typically sent at the beginning of each calendar year.

Tips for Parents: Building Good Dental Habits

At Home

****Start early:**** Begin cleaning your baby's gums with a soft, damp cloth before teeth even appear. Once teeth erupt, use a small, soft-bristled toothbrush with a tiny smear of low-fluoride children's toothpaste.

****Supervise brushing until age 8:**** Children under eight generally don't have the manual dexterity to brush effectively on their own. They need adult supervision and often adult assistance, particularly with the back teeth.

****Make it routine:**** Brush twice daily — morning and before bed — at the same times. Routine removes negotiation. It's just what happens before stories and sleep.

****Limit sugary and acidic foods and drinks:**** It's not just lollies. Fruit juice, dried fruit, muesli bars, flavoured milk, and sports drinks are all significant contributors to childhood tooth decay. Water and plain milk are the best choices for teeth.

****Don't put babies to bed with a bottle of milk or juice:**** The sugars pool around the teeth while the baby sleeps, causing a pattern of decay known as "baby bottle tooth decay" or "early childhood caries."

Before a Dental Visit

- Talk about the visit positively — avoid words like "hurt," "pain," "needle," or "scary" - Read books or watch age-appropriate videos about visiting the dentist - Don't project your own dental anxiety onto your child — if you're anxious about dental visits, your child will pick up on it - Don't make promises you can't keep ("it won't hurt at all") — instead, acknowledge that some parts might feel strange or uncomfortable, and reassure them that the dentist will help - Don't use dental visits as a threat ("if you don't brush, the dentist will give you a needle") — this creates negative associations

Custom Mouthguards for Active Kids

Children and teenagers involved in sport should wear a custom-fitted mouthguard for any activity with a risk of contact or falls. This includes AFL, rugby, basketball, soccer, hockey, netball, cricket, martial arts, and even cycling and skateboarding.

A custom mouthguard made by your dentist is: - Moulded precisely to your child's teeth for a comfortable, secure fit - Significantly more protective than over-the-counter boil-and-bite alternatives - Easier to speak and breathe through, so your child will actually wear it - Adjusted for growing mouths — we recommend replacing mouthguards annually or as the child's teeth change

We've seen too many dental emergencies from sporting injuries that could have been prevented with a proper mouthguard. It's one of the simplest, most effective investments you can make in your child's dental health.

Why Choose Core Dental Berwick for Your Child?

****Specialist paediatric dentist on-site:**** Dr Sarah Scott provides specialist-level children's dental care — right here in Berwick. No city trips, no hospital waits, no unfamiliar environments. Your child sees a specialist who knows them, in a practice they're comfortable with.

****Over a decade of family care:**** We've been looking after Berwick's families for more than ten years. We know this community, and we know how to make dental visits work for children of all ages and temperaments.

****CDBS bulk billing.**** Eligible children receive covered dental services at no out-of-pocket cost.

****Complete family care.**** Mum, Dad, and the kids can all be seen at the same practice. Book back-to-back appointments and get everyone's dental care done in a single trip.

****Convenient location.**** Eden Rise Village — ample parking, familiar surroundings, and the ability to combine dental visits with everyday errands.

****Specialist referral access.**** For complex paediatric dental needs or orthodontic concerns, we have direct referral access to the Smile Solutions Collins Street Specialist Centre.

Book Your Child's Appointment

Whether it's your baby's first dental visit, your child's six-monthly check-up, or a dental concern that needs specialist attention, we're here to help.

****Core Dental Berwick**** Shop 29, 1 O'Shea Rd, Berwick VIC 3806 Phone: (03) 9132 4160 National: 13 13 16 Email: berwick@coredental.com.au

Monday – Friday: 8:00 am – 6:00 pm Saturday: 8:00 am – 1:30 pm Sunday: Closed

No referral is needed to see Dr Sarah Scott. Book directly with our reception team.