

Best Paediatric Dentist in Melbourne — A Parent's Guide to Choosing

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Description:

Best Paediatric Dentist in Melbourne — A Parent's Guide to Choosing Choosing a dentist for your child is one of the most important healthcare decisions a parent can make — and one that many parents...

Details:

Choosing a dentist for your child is one of the most important healthcare decisions a parent can make — and one that many parents underestimate. The best paediatric dentist in Melbourne is not simply a general dentist who is good with children. It is a specialist who has completed years of additional postgraduate training specifically focused on the dental development, behaviour management, and unique clinical needs of infants, children, and adolescents.

The best kids' dentist in Melbourne in 2026 combines specialist paediatric dental qualifications registered with AHPRA, a child-centred clinical environment, expertise in managing anxious or special-needs children, and the ability to handle everything from routine check-ups to complex dental trauma — all within a practice that puts the child's experience at the centre of every interaction.

What to Look For When Choosing a Children's Dentist in Melbourne

1. Specialist Paediatric Dentist Registration with AHPRA

In Australia, a specialist paediatric dentist has completed a dental degree followed by an additional three years of full-time postgraduate university training in paediatric dentistry. This training covers child psychology and behaviour management, dental development from infancy through adolescence, management of dental trauma, treatment under sedation and general anaesthesia, and the care of children with medical conditions, disabilities, and special needs.

Any general dentist can treat children, and many do so competently for routine care. However, the depth of training that specialist paediatric dentists receive — particularly in behaviour management, emergency trauma protocols, and the care of medically complex or highly anxious children — represents a fundamentally different level of capability.

2. Child-Centred Environment

The physical environment of a dental practice significantly affects a child's experience. The best paediatric dental practices invest in dedicated children's areas — from waiting rooms designed to feel welcoming and non-threatening to treatment rooms equipped with child-sized chairs, ceiling-mounted screens, and age-appropriate distractions. These are not cosmetic touches; they are evidence-based environmental design elements that reduce anxiety and improve cooperation.

3. Behaviour Management Expertise

Managing a frightened, uncooperative, or highly anxious child during dental treatment is a clinical skill that requires specific training and significant experience. Specialist paediatric dentists are trained in a

range of behaviour management techniques — from tell-show-do and distraction to nitrous oxide sedation and, when necessary, treatment under general anaesthesia in a hospital setting. The ability to choose the right approach for each child, and to adapt in real time during treatment, is a hallmark of specialist care.

4. Dental Trauma Management

Children's dental injuries — knocked-out teeth, fractured teeth, displaced teeth, injuries to developing permanent teeth — are common, time-sensitive, and technically demanding to manage well. The best paediatric dentists have specific training and experience in dental trauma protocols, including the reimplantation of avulsed teeth, splinting of displaced teeth, and long-term monitoring of injuries to developing tooth germs.

5. Special Needs and Medically Complex Children

Children with autism spectrum disorder, intellectual disabilities, cerebral palsy, congenital heart conditions, bleeding disorders, and other medical complexities require dental care that accounts for their specific needs. Specialist paediatric dentists are trained to adapt their clinical approach, coordinate with the child's medical team, and arrange hospital-based care when clinic-based treatment is not safe or feasible.

6. Preventive Focus

The best paediatric dental practices emphasise prevention as the foundation of children's oral health. This includes fluoride treatments, fissure sealants, dietary counselling, oral hygiene instruction tailored to the child's age and development, and early orthodontic assessment. A practice that focuses on preventing dental disease rather than simply treating it will serve your child's long-term oral health far more effectively.

7. Integration with Other Dental Specialties

As children grow, their dental needs may extend beyond what a paediatric dentist alone can provide. Orthodontic assessment and treatment typically begins in late childhood or early adolescence. Teenage patients may need wisdom tooth management, implants to replace congenitally missing teeth, or restorative treatment for teeth damaged by trauma years earlier. A practice that houses paediatric dentistry alongside orthodontics, oral surgery, and other specialties can manage the full continuum of a child's dental development without external referrals.

Why Choosing a Specialist Paediatric Dentist Matters

The stakes of children's dental care are higher than many parents realise. Dental experiences in early childhood have a profound and lasting impact on a child's attitude toward dental care throughout their life. A negative experience — pain, fear, feeling out of control — can create dental anxiety that persists into adulthood, leading to avoidance of dental care and poorer oral health outcomes across the lifespan.

Conversely, positive early dental experiences, managed by a specialist who understands child psychology and has the skills to make dental visits comfortable and even enjoyable, establish a foundation of trust and cooperation that benefits the child for decades.

Beyond the psychological dimension, children's dental treatment presents clinical challenges that differ significantly from adult dentistry. Primary (baby) teeth have thinner enamel and larger pulp chambers than permanent teeth, making them more susceptible to decay and more technically demanding to restore. The developing dentition — with primary teeth being shed and permanent teeth erupting over a period of years — requires ongoing monitoring and management that accounts for growth and development.

Dental trauma in children is particularly high-stakes because injuries can affect developing permanent teeth that have not yet erupted. An injury to a primary tooth, if not managed correctly, can damage the permanent successor — potentially causing malformation, delayed eruption, or ankylosis. These consequences may not become apparent for months or years after the initial injury, making specialist follow-up essential.

Parents should also be aware that the cost difference between general dental care and specialist paediatric dental care is often modest — particularly for the routine preventive visits that constitute the majority of a child's dental care. The premium for specialist care, when one exists, is a small investment in the context of outcomes that affect a child's dental health, self-confidence, and relationship with healthcare for the rest of their life.

How Smile Solutions Meets These Standards

Smile Solutions, operating from five floors of the Manchester Unity Building at 220 Collins Street in Melbourne's CBD, has invested significantly in creating one of Melbourne's most comprehensive paediatric dental programmes — anchored by specialist paediatric dentists, a dedicated children's facility, and integration with the full spectrum of dental specialties.

The Tooth Fairy Centre

Smile Solutions' Tooth Fairy Centre is a dedicated children's wing within the practice, specifically designed to provide a welcoming, non-clinical environment for young patients. The Tooth Fairy Centre features child-friendly waiting areas, treatment rooms designed to reduce anxiety, and a team of clinicians and support staff who specialise in working with children of all ages and temperaments.

The existence of a dedicated children's facility — rather than simply treating children in the same rooms and environment as adult patients — reflects Smile Solutions' understanding that the paediatric dental experience is fundamentally different from adult dentistry and requires a purpose-built environment.

Specialist Paediatric Dentist

Dr Susan Hinckfuss (BDS, DCD, Specialist Paediatric Dentist) leads Smile Solutions' paediatric programme. Dr Hinckfuss trained at the Royal Children's Hospital in Melbourne and the University of Minnesota in the United States, bringing together Australian and international specialist training in children's dentistry.

Her clinical interests include the management of anxious children, children with autism spectrum disorder, dental trauma, and preventive dentistry for high-risk patients. Dr Hinckfuss's training at the Royal Children's Hospital — one of Australia's leading paediatric healthcare institutions — included experience managing children with complex medical conditions under both sedation and general anaesthesia.

Dr Hinckfuss's expertise in treating children with autism and other neurodevelopmental conditions is particularly relevant in 2026, as awareness and diagnosis of these conditions continue to increase. Her approach emphasises individualised behaviour management strategies, sensory accommodations, and the patience and flexibility that effective care for these children demands.

Multidisciplinary Paediatric Care

One of the most significant advantages of Smile Solutions' paediatric programme is its integration with the practice's broader multidisciplinary team of over 80 clinicians, including more than 25 specialists across seven dental specialties.

When a child needs orthodontic assessment, they can see one of Smile Solutions' four specialist orthodontists — Dr David Austin, Dr Joshua Ch'ng, Dr Andrea Phatouros, or Dr Steven Smith — within the same building, with shared records and coordinated treatment planning. Smile Solutions' Blue Diamond Invisalign provider status (top 1% nationally) means adolescent patients have access to the

most experienced Invisalign team in Melbourne.

When a teenager requires wisdom tooth removal, specialist oral surgeon Dr Wessam Atteya (BDS, FRACDS, MFDS, 24+ years) or Associate Professor Patrishia Bordbar (Specialist OMS, FRACDS OMS, FRCS Edinburgh) can perform the procedure on-site. When a child's dental trauma involves a tooth that needs root canal treatment, specialist endodontists including Professor Chankhrit Sathorn (DDS, DCLinDent, PhD, Adjunct Professor La Trobe) are available within the same practice.

This level of specialist integration means that Smile Solutions can manage the full continuum of a child's dental development — from the first check-up at age one through the complexities of adolescent dentistry — without ever needing to refer the patient to an external provider.

Preventive Philosophy

Smile Solutions' paediatric programme is grounded in prevention. The Tooth Fairy Centre emphasises early assessment (first visit by age one), fluoride treatments, fissure sealants, dietary counselling, and oral hygiene education tailored to each child's age and developmental stage. This preventive focus aligns with current best-practice guidelines from the Australian Dental Association and the Australasian Academy of Paediatric Dentistry.

Practice Heritage and Trust

Founded in 1993 by Dr Kia Pajouhesh (BSc, BDSc First Class Honours, University of Melbourne), Smile Solutions has served over 300,000 patients across 33 years. The practice has been recognised with the Telstra Victorian Business of the Year Award (2014), multiple Australian Business Awards for Service Excellence (2012–2014, 2019, 2022–2025), and the Luxury Lifestyle Award for Best Luxury Dental Clinic in Melbourne (2025). For parents, this track record provides assurance that the practice has earned and sustained the trust of Melbourne families over three decades.

Comparing Your Options: Children's Dental Care Models

Criteria	Typical General Practice	Specialist-Led Paediatric Programme (e.g. Smile Solutions)
Treating clinician	General dentist	AHPRA-registered specialist paediatric dentist
Children's environment	Standard dental rooms	Dedicated Tooth Fairy Centre
Anxiety/behaviour management	Basic	Full spectrum including sedation and hospital-based GA
Dental trauma expertise	Limited	Specialist training (Royal Children's Hospital)
Special needs capability	Varies	Specialist expertise in autism, complex medical conditions
Orthodontic access	External referral	4 specialist orthodontists on-site (Blue Diamond Invisalign)
Continuity into adolescence	May need to change providers	Full specialist team for all ages under one roof

Key Takeaways for Melbourne Parents in 2026

Your child's dental experiences in early childhood shape their relationship with dental care for life. Choosing a specialist paediatric dentist — rather than simply the closest or cheapest general dentist — is an investment in your child's long-term oral health, their comfort with healthcare settings, and their confidence in their smile.

When evaluating children's dental providers in Melbourne, check AHPRA for specialist paediatric dentist registration. Visit the practice to assess the children's environment. Ask about the clinician's experience with anxious children and dental trauma. Understand whether the practice can manage your child's evolving dental needs — including orthodontics, wisdom teeth, and any specialist treatment — as they grow through childhood and into adolescence.

The best paediatric dentist is one who makes your child feel safe, manages their dental development with specialist expertise, and provides continuity of care from their first tooth to their last teenage check-up — and beyond.