

KINDERGARTEN

# Parent Handbook



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## Mission Statement

Children are our primary focus, they are valued and supported to grow and develop in a safe and enriching environment.

## Guiding Principles

- Children are central to everything we do
- We partner with children, families and support services to support children's learning and development
- We engage with local communities to promote a safe community for all children and families

## Welcome

This handbook contains important information about the kindergarten year and we ask parents to keep this booklet for reference throughout the year.

You and your family are the most important people in your child's life, we encourage you to become actively involved in their time at kindergarten. We are looking forward to working with both you and your child to make this year a thoroughly happy and enjoyable time.

Our Kindergarten program is delivered by a team of professional early childhood teachers, is flexible and designed to cater for individual abilities and interests.

## Play-Based Learning

We believe that the foundation of children's learning occurs through play. Early childhood professionals call this 'play-based learning'. When children play, they learn to develop social skills, they learn to take (safe) risks, learn to solve problems, use their imaginations and make sense of their world.

A *play-based learning* approach allows children to explore, identify, negotiate, take risks and create meaning of their world. Through play, children learn, develop and embed skills through experiences within the learning environment that they're naturally drawn to.

Our educators are highly trained professionals that are skilled at observing children's play and extending children's learning through open ended questioning, provocation discussions "I wonder what might happen if we \_\_\_\_\_?".

Our educational teams are intentional in their actions to support and extend each child's learning.

Learning in an early years setting looks very different to the 'traditional and formal' set up of a school classroom, but it doesn't make the learning any less valuable. In fact, 90% of a children's brain development occurs by the time they are 5 years old!! It's for this reason, we believe learning should be fun, engages their interests and is designed to support the individual needs of every child. There's no *one size fits all* when it comes to children's learning

## Planning and Supporting Children's Learning

**The physical environment of the kindergarten:** the physical layout of the learning environment, the layout of space, furniture and resources – our educators ensure children's environments are arranged in provoking and inviting ways that encourages children's exploration, learning and enquiry.

**The social and emotional environment:** we believe children thrive when they have secure, warm and trusting relationships so they can feel supported and confident in their explorations and risk taking. Our educators assist children to make connections with others, develop friendships and learn skills to self-regulate their behaviours. Together, children and adults set the emotional and social tone of the kindergarten environment.

**The intellectual environment:** our educators are committed to supporting children to develop skills that set them up for life. There are times where educators leave children to play freely, to negotiate their place in play and with others, and there are times for intentional conversation, a well-placed question or query that will extend children's learning. Rich conversations shared between educators and children are the foundation of high quality educator/child interactions.

**The temporal environment:** this is the way educators decide how to use the time available in the program. Each of our programs are different and designed to support, extend and sustain children's learning throughout the day. Children need large blocks of time to develop play themes and ideas, and this is considered when teachers plan the children's routines and curriculum.

**Children's routines and curriculum delivery:** with intentional consideration of each child's needs (as individuals and as a group), each teaching team is well considered in their approach in how they deliver children's routines and curriculum to get the best outcomes for the children in their group. For example:

Some teachers may choose to plan a **flexible 'indoor/outdoor' curriculum** where children have large blocks of time accessing all areas of the learning environment. This may include a 'progressive morning/afternoon tea where children make choices about when they eat their morning/afternoon tea'.

Other teachers may plan to offer a curriculum that fits a more **structured routine**, for example: set times for mat/group time, indoor play at activity tables, and separate outdoor play periods.

Meanwhile, other teachers chose to offer a curriculum that is **shared between a flexible indoor/outdoor approach and a structured routine** where periods of the day are set aside for set routines, and these periods are shared with flexible periods of play. For example, children might come together for lunch indoors, while large parts of the day the children make choices of where in the learning environment they play.

Much consideration and planning goes into the children's routines and curriculum delivery. Neither of the curriculum styles or approaches to routines (mentioned above) are better than the next, each are considered with intention and purpose to support and extend children's learning.

We encourage you to speak with your teacher about their teaching philosophy, and approach to curriculum delivery and routines.

### **Children's Learning Goals:**

You can expect to have discussions with your child's teacher (formally and informally) throughout the year to discuss your child's learning goals. In order to develop a program that supports your child's learning from the beginning of the year, the parent/teacher interview is a great opportunity for teachers to learn about your hopes and dreams for your child's kindergarten year. While there will be many opportunities for parent/teacher discussions throughout the year, the Parent/teacher interview (at the beginning of the year) and the 'Mid-Year Parent/teacher catch up' enables uninterrupted time for parents and teachers to talk about your child's learning and progress at kindergarten. The Mid-Year catch up also offers opportunity to review, reflect and plan to support an extension of existing learning goals or establish new goals. These 'parent/teacher catch-ups' are informal and relaxed, and are a great opportunity to further support strong relationships between home and the kindergarten.

### **Term Dates**

Victorian Kindergarten term dates:

<https://www.vic.gov.au/school-term-dates-and-holidays-victoria>

### **Public Holidays**

Victorian public holidays:

<https://business.vic.gov.au/business-information/public-holidays/victorian-public-holidays-2023>

### **Fees**

The Victorian State Government has announced that from 2023 there will be no cost to families and therefore no fees will be applicable to either the 4 year old program or the 3 year old program.

### **Concerns and Complaints**

We aim to offer your child the best possible kindergarten experience, which can only be achieved in partnership with you.

If you have a concern or complaint about any aspect of the care, program, or facilities at the centre, please make a time to speak with your early childhood teacher.

If you are still concerned after speaking with the early childhood teacher, please phone the Team Leader Early Learning and Care at Latrobe City on 1300 367 700.

The Team Leader's role is to help resolve any issues that may arise. If the issue at the centre is serious, where it may affect the health and safety of the children at the centre, the Council is required to inform the Department of Education and Training (DET).

For more information, read the Latrobe City's Complaints Procedure available at your preschool.

## COVID-19

Latrobe City Council follows direction from the Department of Education and Training and the Chief Health Officer regarding all COVID-19 related restrictions, lockdowns and health measures.

Each directive may change based on the information received, which may result in the way the preschool is required to operate. You will be notified and advised of all changes including restrictions as the information becomes available.

## Child Safety

Latrobe City Council has a zero tolerance to any form of child abuse and is committed to the safety, wellbeing and empowerment of children. We are creating and maintaining a child safe organisation where protecting children and preventing and responding to child abuse is embedded in the everyday thinking and practice of all employees, volunteers and contractors.

Child Safety is all of our responsibility. If you are concerned for the safety of a child and you are unsure what to do, please speak with your teacher for advice or contact Child Protection. If you believe a child or young person to be in life threatening or immediate danger, contact the police immediately by calling 000.

The following policies can help you to understand what we do as a Child Safe Organisation to ensure that your child is safe with us. They are available to you at your Kindergarten for you to read or by asking your teacher.

- Child Safe Policy
- Child Safe Standards Operational Policy
- Code of Conduct
- Child Safe Code of Conduct
- Delivery and Collection of Children Operational Policy
- Interactions with Children Operational Policy
- Provide a Child Safe Environment Operational Policy
- Responding to and Reporting Child Abuse Employee Guidelines
- Supervision of Children Operational Policy

## Getting Involved

Talk to your teacher about volunteering your time at the service (including excursions). If you are wishing to help out as a parent of a child who attends the service, there are certain policies which you must read and adhere to. You will find the following policies at your kindergarten, or by talking to your child's teacher:

- Provide a Child Safe Environment Operational Policy
- Volunteers and Students Policy
- Visitors Policy
- Working with Children Checks Policy

## Working with Children Check

The Working with Children Check aims to protect children from sexual or physical harm by checking a person's criminal history for neglect and abuse, serious sexual, serious violence and serious drug offences and findings.

All volunteers (parents/guardians/carers etc) who wish to participate in the Kindergarten services will be required to have a volunteer working with children check.

To apply for a Check, you must:

1. Fill in the application form and verify your identity online <https://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au/individuals/applicants/how-to-apply>
2. Check your email inbox for an email from [workingwithchildren@smarteform.com.au](mailto:workingwithchildren@smarteform.com.au) with instructions on how to finalise your application at Australia Post.
3. Attend your local post office to have your photo taken (at no charge to you)
4. Once completed provide your WWCC number and expiry date to your preschool.

If you need assistance in obtaining a WWCC please contact us.

## Parent Helper Roster

You are welcome to volunteer your time to participate in the preschool program. Children love to have someone special at kindergarten, so help is not limited to parents. Grandparents or other special people can help too. If you need to bring a younger sibling/child, please remember they are your responsibility.

Please speak to the educators to volunteer to help.

## Excursions

We welcome your participation and engagement on excursions or other special occasions to make the experience safer and more valuable for all.

Read our Excursions and Routine Outings Procedure, available at your preschool.

## Starting Kindergarten

### What to Expect in the First Days/Weeks

We want your child to feel secure so they enjoy their initial kindergarten experience. To help in these early days, please discuss your child's needs with the early childhood teacher. These first weeks are an opportunity for educators to learn about your child, and for the child to learn about the staff, the routine and the other children.

It's also important to arrive on time to collect your child.

### What to Bring

Our Kindergartens are Sunsmart\* and require all children to wear a sun hat (wide brim or legionnaire-style) for outdoor play. Without a hat, children will have to remain in shaded areas.

SPF 30+ sunscreen should be applied to all children before attending our centres. Sunscreen is available for staff and children's use at each centre.

\*Read the Sun Protection Procedure, available at your preschool.

Please make sure that all your child's personal items, are clearly labelled with your child's name.

- A sun hat (wide brim or legionnaire-style) for outdoor play. Without a hat, children will have to remain in shaded areas.
- A large bag for artwork, parent notices and other items.
- A change of clothes (including underwear) every day. Even though your child may be toilet trained, sometimes other types of accidents happen.
- A snack/lunch, (dependant on session times). You can read more about healthy choices <https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/healthy-eating-tips>
- Drink bottle – Please bring along a labelled drink bottle for water only.
- Pack a coat for colder or wet weather

A smock is provided for art and other messy activities but we suggest your child wears easily laundered clothes.

No open toe shoes, long skirts or dresses or slippery-soled shoes, as these are dangerous for outside activities.

## Delivery and Collection of Children

To keep your child, and others, safe, please:

- Take your child directly into the preschool environment. Children must not be left at the gate or outside the building.
- Shut the gate securely when entering and leaving the kindergarten.
- Ensure no child leaves the grounds without an adult.
- Sign in and out on the iPad on arrival and at the end of the session.
- Collect your child promptly at the end of each session.
- Let us know if you are going to be late, so we can reassure your child.



- Inform your early childhood teacher or other team member if someone else is collecting your child. To collect a child the person must be authorised on the child's enrolment and be able to provide proof of identification.
- If you do not collect your child at the end of the session, educators will:
  - attempt to contact the guardians
  - attempt to contact authorised persons
  - have two adults in attendance until the child is collected
- After 30 minutes of the end of session, arrangements will be made for the care of your child as per the Delivery and Collection of Children Procedure, available at your preschool.
- Please note due to COVID-19, the delivery and collection of children may vary based on the restrictions. Please follow direction of the educators at the service.

## Communication

Throughout the year, we will keep you informed about the kindergarten program, excursions, special visitors, fundraising activities etc.

Communication will be made via service Facebook groups, emails, phone calls, or other social media platforms.

## Your Child's Health

Regular attendance at kindergarten helps to set good habits for school next year. However, home is the place for a sick child. If your child is sick or is absent for any reason, please contact your preschool.

If your child becomes unwell at kindergarten, we will contact you or your nominated emergency contact to collect the child.

Medical management plans are required if your child is diagnosed with asthma, anaphylaxis, allergies or diabetes. Speak to your teacher if your child is diagnosed with a medical condition

Please read our Medical Management Policy, available at your preschool.

Children who have an infectious disease cannot attend kindergarten in accordance with regulations.

The Infections & Communicable Diseases Procedure is available to read at your preschool.

## Medications

Our educators are required by law to record all medication administered to children. For safety reasons, all medications must be given to staff. Staff must sign the Medication Record Book giving full details of medication, when administered and the person who checked the dose. The parent signs this to give permission for medication to be administered. All medication must be left in the original container and labelled.

The Medication Administration and Storage Procedure is available to read at your preschool.

## Accidents and Incidents

If there is a serious accident involving your child while they are attending kindergarten, you will be immediately phoned and if necessary, we will call an ambulance.

If, for any reason, we are unable to contact you, we will contact the emergency contact that you have provided.

If your child does sustain an injury while at kindergarten, you will be required to sign an incident report.

The Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Procedure is available to read at your preschool.

## **Emergency Evacuation**

Written emergency evacuation procedures are on display at all times. Please familiarise yourself with these, as you may be involved in helping to implement them at any time.

We practise our emergency evacuation drills at each preschool, each term.

## Kindergarten Readiness

### 3 year old specific

Children are eligible to attend three year old kindergarten if they turn 3 years old by 30 April in the year they will attend. Children must be three years of age before they can commence at the service.

Children are eligible for one year of funded three year old kindergarten and will commence four year old preschool the following year. Children who withdraw from a kindergarten program once they commence are not eligible for a second year of funded kindergarten anywhere in Victoria. Therefore, it is important that families consider whether their child is ready for three year old funded kindergarten, prior to their child commencing in the program.

### Developmental considerations in relation to three year old kindergarten readiness

As children begin three year old kindergarten, they are usually:

- Becoming increasingly comfortable separating from their family.
- Demonstrating awareness of and interest in playing alongside peers.
- Developing awareness of their bodily needs, including developing independence in toileting and at meal times.
- Requiring less rest through the day.

### 4 year old specific

Children are eligible to attend four year old kindergarten if they are turning 4 years old by 30 April in the year they will attend. Some families choose to wait an extra year especially if they feel their child is not yet socially or emotionally ready to attend.

Children who withdraw from a kindergarten program once they commence are not eligible for a second year of funded kindergarten anywhere in Victoria. Only children who meet the eligibility criteria and are deemed to have a developmental delay in at least two areas are able to attend a second year. Decisions regarding children attending a second year of funded kindergarten must be made no later than the end of Term 3 in the child's first year of kindergarten.

As each child is only eligible for one year of funded kindergarten it's extremely important to consider whether your child is ready for kindergarten. The conversation about if your child is ready for kindergarten needs to take place before the child begins their funded kindergarten year. Your local Maternal and Child Health Nurse and Kindergarten educators can answer any questions you may have.

### Developmental considerations in relation to four year old kindergarten readiness

As children begin four year old kindergarten, they are usually:

- Separating comfortably from their family.
- Showing interest in playing alongside or with their peers.
- Showing awareness of waiting, sharing and talking turns
- Developing awareness of routine and expectations.
- Developing independence in dressing and toileting
- Beginning to take responsibility for their own belongings
- Showing increasing confidence and ability to bounce back in the face of challenges.

If you are unsure or have any questions, please contact our Family Services Team on 1300 367 700.

Children who turn six (compulsory school age) in the preschool year are required to seek approval for their participation in a funded kindergarten program from the Department of Education and Training. It is the responsibility of the child's parent/guardian to seek this approval via a School Exemption Application form. This must be completed prior to the child commencing preschool and evidence of this must be provided to Family Services for the child's record. This form can be found at:

<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/school/principals/participation/schoolexemption.pdf>

## Preschool Contacts

Boolarra Preschool	5120 3854 or 0498 604 708
Cameron Street Preschool	5176 3349 or 0448 552 149
Carinya Early Learning Centre	5128 5722 or 0498 620 407
Churchill Hub Preschool	5120 3844 or 0487 091 891
Cumberland Park Preschool	5176 3347 or 0498 617 442
East Newborough Preschool	5135 8562 or 0487 002 852
Elizabeth Wilmot Preschool	5128 6561 or 0498 637 141
Glendonald Park Preschool	5120 3855 Or 0498 638 140
Glengarry Preschool	5176 3316 or 0498 647 813
Kay Street Preschool	5176 3348 or 0498 608 751
Maryvale Cres Preschool	5128 6540 or 0498 614 175
Moe Early Learning Centre	5135 8550
Moe Heights Preschool	5135 8561 or 0498 633 903
Moore St Preschool	5135 8558 or 0498 622 943
Morwell Park Preschool	51 285645 Or 5128 5632
Murray Road Preschool	5135 8504 or 0498 587 529
Park Lane Preschool	5176 3345 or 0498 574 489
Parklands Preschool	5128 6560 or 0498 658 434
Pax Hill Preschool	5176 3346 or 0498 638 542
Sara Court Preschool	5176 3350 or 0498 614 691
Traralgon Early Learning Centre	5176 3360
Traralgon South Preschool	5176 3317 or 0498 651 695
Tyers Preschool	5176 3336 or 0498 574 078
Yallourn North Preschool	5135 8514 or 0498 653 132
Yinnar Preschool	5120 3852 or 0498 669 110