



GEELONG CHILDREN'S CENTRE KINDERGARTEN INFORMATION BOOKLET

2021





KINDER INFORMATION FOR 2021

Geelong Children's Centre

Kindergarten Teachers: Paula Collins and Jenny Hill

2021 Session Times

4 year old Kindergarten

Monday (8:30am – 4:30pm)

Tuesday (8:30am – 4:30pm)

Wednesday (8:30am – 4:30pm)

Thursday (8:30am – 4:30pm)

You have to enrol your child in 4 year old kindergarten for 15 hours of kindergarten per week to be eligible for funding.

3 year old Kindergarten

Friday (8:30am – 4:30pm)

During Terms 1,2,3, & 4

FEES – Normal Childcare fees apply: there are no additional fees if your child is enrolled in the 3 or 4 year old kindergarten program.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE – Children who turn four before the 30th of April 2021 are eligible for a government funded 4 year old kindergarten position. However, not all children are ready for this experience even if they are eligible to attend. It is important to look at your child's development so you can make a decision based on your individual child's needs. Consider your child's social skills, independence and maturity, in particular, in determining their readiness for kindergarten and school the following year. If you do choose to hold your child back & they turn six prior to beginning school, you will be required to fill an Exemption from School Form for your child. It is responsibility of the parent to fill out the form.

On your enrolment form you will be asked to indicate if you will be enrolling your child in Geelong Children's Centre's Kindergarten program. If you indicate that you will be enrolling your child in the kindergarten program then you will automatically be enrolled for the days in which your child attends the Centre, and the kindergarten program is operating. Your child is only able to access one kindergarten program so if your child will be attending another kindergarten program such as an outside sessional kindergarten then they will not be able to access the kindergarten program at Geelong Children's Centre.

It is important at this stage for you to decide whether you will be sending your child to school especially if your child is turning four in the time period of January to April in 2021 as the government only funds one year of pre-school education for children, unless your child has a developmental delay in two areas of their development. Your child will not be funded for a second year of kindergarten even if you feel they are not ready. If your child is not doing the funded 4 year old kindergarten program here at Geelong Children's Centre, they will be placed in 3 -5 year old room.

3 Year Old Kindergarten Program

Our 3 Year Old Education Program will run every week on a Friday per term. During School Holidays children will be provided with integrated holiday program. The program will be run by a qualified Early Childhood Teacher and a Qualified Teacher Assistants.

The maximum class size is 30 and once we have reached its capacity there will be no more places available. Children must have already turned three by 30th April 2021 and preferably be fully toilet trained. Children that turn three later in the year can be placed on a waiting list and will be notified of place availability once they have turned three.

POLICIES/PROCEDURES – For all other policies and procedures please refer to Geelong Children's Centre Parent Information booklet as the Kindergarten Program operates as part of the integrated Long Daycare program within the Centre.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Should you require further information please see Jane or Payal or administration staff who can provide you the information or we can arrange a meeting with the Geelong Children's Centre Kindergarten Teachers.

Email: kinder@geelongchildrenscentre.com.au

Kindergarten Program Contact Details

Paula Collins

4 year old Kindergarten teacher

Mon, Tue, Wed, Thurs

Available: Friday

Jenny Hill

3 year old Kindergarten teacher

Friday

Available: Thursday

Geelong Children's Centre

21A Lomond Terrace

East Geelong, VIC, 3219

Ph: (03) 5229 1326

Fax: (03) 5229 1424

Email: kinder@geelongchildrenscentre.com.au

FEE STRUCTURE POLICY

Daily/Weekly fees are charged for **50 weeks** of the year, **including public holidays**. This fee structure policy applies to Geelong Children's Centre kindergarten as well.

You are required to pay fees for all days you enrol your children in, even if your **child is absent due to illness, holidays or any other** days off. Fees are charged at full days only (no matter what the attendance hours are).

Weekly Fees	\$ 540
Daily Fees	\$125.00

Centre Business Hours 7:00 am – 6:00 pm

* The Board of Management reserves the right to alter fees during the year. Families will be given adequate notice in writing of any fee changes.

WHEN YOU SHOULD PAY YOUR FEES

Fees will be directly debited from your nominated account fortnightly in advance through Ezidebit. You are required to complete an Ezidebit Direct Debit Request form with your enrolment form.

Statements will be sent electronically.

Please read carefully the Ezidebit service agreement and the frequently asked questions to ensure you understand your commitment.

Clients who default on a payment will incur an administrative fee of \$9.90 with Ezidebit.

Please contact the Director immediately if you know in advance that you will be unable to meet your direct debit requirements to enable discussion to take place. We will be able to offer a payment plan to support families who are unable to pay fees due to changed circumstances.

If fees continue to be unpaid for two weeks, and you have not contacted the Director, your **child's position at the Centre will be cancelled**. Any clients with concerns with this arrangement must put these concerns in writing to the Board of Management.

Ezidebit Fees

There is a once off set up fee for this service which parents are to meet the cost of which is \$5.20. Ongoing fees for this service which parents will also meet the cost of are as follows:

Transactions from a Bank Account:	0.88c per transaction
Transactions from Visa/Mastercard:	1.87% of transaction
Transactions from AMEX/Diners:	4.4% of transaction
Dishonour fee	\$14.80 per transaction

Withdrawing your child from the Centre

If you wish to withdraw your child from the Centre, **two weeks' notice** must be given to the Director. Fees will be charged for the two weeks of notice period.

Childcare Benefit for Absences from Childcare

If your child is away on holidays or sick for any length of time, every effort will be made to sell your days to other clients requiring extra days of care. This facility is offered subject to your

child's room being at full capacity at the time. Please always advise the Director or the Administration Staff when your child will be away from care.

Holidays / Days Off / Sickness

Childcare Benefit is paid for a child's absences from care up to 42 **days per year** commencing every financial year. These absence days may be taken for any reason, and do not require supporting documentation, e.g. medical certificate. Public Holidays are counted as an absence day, and therefore are included in the 42 days. Childcare Benefit is not available if you exceed 42 absent days and, therefore, **full fees are charged to parents for any absent days over the 42 day limit**. Once the 42 day absence limit is reached, documentation is required for childcare benefit to be paid on any absences.

Selling Days

We **may** be able to sell your child's day of care if they will not be attending on a certain day. To do this, either contact the Centre early in the morning of the day of care, or you can also speak to the Administrative staff and complete a form advising which days your child will not be attending. Any fee adjustments will be made in the next billing period through the Ezidebit system.

Arriving late for care

Please also advise us if your child will not be arriving at the Centre until later in the morning and you require their lunch to be saved.

COMMONWEALTH CHILDCARE SUBSIDY

The Child Care Subsidy assists parents or guardians who are working, studying or training with their out of pocket child care costs.

There are 3 factors that determine a family's level of Child Care Subsidy. These are:

1. combined annual family income
2. Activity test – the activity level of both parents
3. Service type – type of child care service

How is the Child Care Rebate paid?

The Child Care Subsidy is paid directly to service providers, to be passed on to families as a fee reduction. Families make a co-contribution to their childcare fees and pay the provider the difference between the fee charged and the subsidy amount.

Registered Childcare and Ceiling on hours

It is the parent's responsibility to notify the Director or Administration Staff if they have other children who receive approved and registered care elsewhere, or children who are enrolled with approved and registered providers of Before and After School and Vacation care.

The ceiling on the number of hours you can claim for Childcare Subsidy is 50 hours per week (which equates to full time care). The Centre may allow 1 day of care for non- working/studying parents but this is only if there is a vacancy under the Commonwealth Priority of Access Guidelines.

Source: In consultation with families, staff and Board of Management, Kinder Funding Guide, Education and Care Services National Regulations: Regulations 168(2)(n)
The Business of Child Care

GEE LONG CHILDREN'S CENTRE
POLICY ON ADMISSION AND ENROLMENT PROCEDURE

- Clients come and look at the Centre and state their child care needs to staff/ Director/Deputy Director.
- When the client makes the decision to enrol, they fill out the enrolment form in a complete manner with a current immunisation history statement attached.
- The enrolment form is returned to the Centre as soon as possible, and the position of care is allocated if available and if not available child goes on the waiting list.
- The process of orientation is discussed with the parent and the Room Coordinator / Kinder Teacher / in-charge staff member of the booked room.
- The orientation process is also explained in the enrolment package and is reiterated with the parent.

When a family has indicated their interest in enrolling their child, the following will occur:

- A tour of the Centre. During this tour, the Nominated Supervisor/ Deputy Director or the Room Coordinator will be conducting the tour and will give the family information about the background of the service including programming methods based on the VEYLF curriculum, meals, incursions, excursions, inclusion, policies, procedures, our status as a Sun Smart service, National Law and Regulations and the licensing and assessment process based on the National Quality Standards. Signing upon arrival and departure of the Centre is explained, room routines, educator qualifications, staff will be introduced to the parent of the child. The importance of communication between parent and staff is emphasized. Families are invited to ask any questions they may have.
- Families are given a copy of the Parent Information Handbook to read
- Discussions are held with the Director or Deputy and families regarding availability of days, a start date and the tailoring of the orientation process that may suit the needs of the family and child. Families are informed of the Priority of Access Policy and Kindergarten Priority of Access Criteria and have their position assessed as to whether they have obtained a position or be placed on the waiting list. Other matters such as child's medical needs, dietary requirements, Court Orders will be discussed privately with the Director at this time.
- Should a child use English as a second language, or speak another language at home, we request that families provide us with some key words in their language when the child commences care, we also offer external support through outside agencies.
- As per our Orientation Policy, families will be invited to bring their child into the service at a time that suits them so the child and family can familiarise themselves with the environment. Families are expected to orient their child for minimum one week in the room before the starting date.

- Before the child begins their first day, the Centre must have all required documentation for the child.
- Service will ensure that financial support (payment plan or other means of support) will be offered to vulnerable and disadvantaged families to access the kindergarten program including those who face barriers to participation.

Other information about our service's enrolment procedure includes:

- We aim to accommodate family's needs with other siblings under five so that children from the same family can attend our service.
- We encourage all families to immunize their children as required. Please see our Immunisation Policy for further information.
- In accordance with the National Law and Regulations, our educators will actively support each child to manage their own behaviour, respond appropriately to the behaviour of other children and communicate effectively with parents to resolve conflicts. We will work with each child's family to support children with diagnosed behaviour or social difficulties. A child's enrolment at this Centre may be terminated if the Director/ Deputy decides that the child's behaviour threatens the safety, health or wellbeing of any other child at the service.

KINDERGARTEN PRIORITY OF ACCESS CRITERIA

The Government has determined priority of access guidelines that applies for allocating places when families are enrolling their children in a funded Kindergarten.

In instances where more eligible children apply for a place at a kindergarten service than there are places available, Centre will:

- prioritise children based on the criteria listed below
- work with other local kindergarten services and the regional Department office to ensure all eligible children have access to a kindergarten place.

This criteria will be used by the Centre when prioritising enrolments. Information on funding guidance is available for families if required.

High priority children	Process that could be used to verify need(s)
Children at risk of abuse or neglect, including children in Out-of-Home Care	<p>The child is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • attending a three year old kindergarten program through Early Start Kindergarten or Access to Early Learning, or is • referred by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Child Protection – Child and family services (family services referral and support team, Child FIRST/integrated family services/Services Connect case worker) – Maternal and Child Health nurse, or – Out-of-Home Care provider.

Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children	As part of the enrolment process, service providers must respectfully ask families 'is your child Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander?' and record this information in KIM.
Asylum seeker and refugee children	An appropriate visa identifies the child and/or parents as a refugee or asylum seeker.
Children eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – A child or parent holds a Commonwealth Health Care Card, Pensioner Concession Card, Veteran's Affairs Card, or – multiple birth children (triplets, quadruplets).
Children with additional needs, defined as children who: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - require additional assistance in order to fully participate in the kindergarten program require a combination of services which are individually planned have an identified specific disability or developmental delay 	<p>The child:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is assessed as having delays in two or more areas and is declared eligible for a second funded year of kindergarten • holds a Child Disability Health Care Card • has previously been approved for Kindergarten Inclusion Support Package, or referred by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the National Disability Insurance Scheme – Early Childhood Intervention Service – Preschool Field Officer, or – Maternal and Child Health nurse.

COMMONWEALTH PRIORITY OF ACCESS GUIDELINES

The Australian Government has determined guidelines for allocating places to those families with the greatest need for childcare support.

These guidelines are strictly adhered to by the Management of the Centre.

These guidelines are used when there is a waiting list at the Centre and a number of parents are applying for a limited number of vacant places, or if the Centre is full and a Priority 1 or 2 child requires child care.

First Priority

Children at serious risk of abuse or neglect.

Second Priority

A child/children of a single parent or parents who satisfy, the WORK / TRAINING / STUDY test (under section 14 of the 'A New Tax System (Family Assistance) Act 1999').

Third Priority

Any other child.

Please Note

If you are a non-working/studying parent or a priority 3 parent, you may be restricted to one day of care per week. Should a parent from higher priority group requires care, you will have to vacate your spot, every effort will be made to offer you an alternative day. If this is not available, you will be given 2 weeks written notice to withdraw your child to make way for a higher priority child.

Clear and transparent kindergarten enrolment processes

Services must ensure their application and enrolment policies:

- promote fair and equitable access to kindergarten programs
- adhere to the Department's priority of access requirements (as above)
- support all eligible children to access a kindergarten program including those who face barriers to participation
- do not inadvertently present barriers to participation, especially for vulnerable and disadvantaged children
- ensure early entry applicants (children younger than 4 years old on 30 April in the year they will attend kindergarten) are given equal access to enrolment.

In order to achieve these objectives, enrolment policies must:

- comply with Victorian and national legislation, including disability discrimination, anti-discrimination and human rights laws
- be developed on the basis of local need, determined through consultation with the local community and key stakeholders such as local government
- support children who are experiencing disadvantage
- address issues of eligibility for funded places
- outline how waiting lists will be prioritised
- be effectively communicated to families and the local community.

Welcome to Geelong Children's Centre Kindergarten

Geelong Children's Centre Kindergarten educators and management work in partnership to provide early childhood programs which engage children in quality learning experiences, in a community and centre based environment.

We believe that culture and community plays an important role in the development of positive, happy children. Through collaborative partnerships, we are able to develop an understanding of each family's expectations and can address any concerns in an open and supportive way. The best learning outcomes occur when families and educators work together. Participation in our programs, give parents and families the opportunity to be a part of a community and focus on children's well-being. The programs provide a platform for parents to get to know other families and to share perspectives and information with early childhood professionals.

As an inclusive centre, we strive to:

- Encourage the involvement of our families in developing plans to meet the needs of their children
- Recognise the valuable resources parents possess and invite them to share their skills and knowledge with our kindergarten
- Encourage the involvement of parents and extended family in our daily sessions, either through parent participation rosters, planned events or incidental visits
- Welcome children with additional needs and their families. Help to identify children who may require extra support for their development and offer links to targeted support services to ensure that children receive this assistance as early as possible

The collaborative partnership between the management, educators and wider parent community ensures the daily management and operation of the kindergarten is in accordance with all regulatory requirements.

The National Quality Framework

The National Quality Framework is a government initiative is to set standards in early childhood services, drive continuous improvement and achieve consistency in education and care services throughout Australia. An integral part of the NQF has been the introduction of new National Laws and National Regulations, as well as a National Quality Standard.

<http://www.acecqa.gov.au/national-quality-framework/the-national-quality-standard>

Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework:

Since 2010 all early childhood centres have been implementing The Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework. This curriculum has been designed to assist families and early childhood professionals to guide children's learning and development in the first eight years of life. These years are a critical time for learning and development, when children acquire essential foundation skills and knowledge and when brain development is at its peak. The framework recognises that children's first and most important learning happens with their family. It supports a partnership between families and all professionals who support their learning and development throughout this period.

The Victorian Framework uses five outcomes to describe the key elements of children's learning and development. These are:

1. Children have a strong sense of identity (**Identity**).
2. Children are connected with and contribute to their world (**Community**).
3. Children have a strong sense of wellbeing (**Wellbeing**).
4. Children are confident and involved learners (**Learning**).
5. Children are effective communicators (**Communication**).

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/providers/edcare/Pages/veyladf.aspx>

We believe that children thrive best when the learning environment:

- Has agreed boundaries, limits and consequences
- Has familiar routines and expectations
- Encourages children to participate in both planned and self-initiated learning experiences
- Provides rich literacy and numeracy experiences daily during teacher/child interactions
- Provides opportunities to enjoy special days and events at kindergarten with peers and family
- Introduces children to a wide range of individuals or groups working within our community
- Promotes and values teachers, children and their families as lifelong learners and researchers

Children in our kindergarten benefit from developing and extending their communication skills, beginning to understand social studies and science, using technology, developing skills that assist with reading, writing and mathematics, building confidence, learning to be creative and, most importantly, learning to be an engaged and effective learner – skills that are important in school, work and life.

These are just some of those examples.

- They are modelling behaviours they have already seen in their community and building upon them.
- Showing respect and caring for others
- Respecting the rights of others
- Learning to see beyond differences to similarities
- Developing and demonstrating self-control
- They are strengthening their social skills, and their communication skills.
- They are becoming effective communicators, learning to express themselves through a variety of ways.
- Identifying and expressing emotions appropriately
- Being increasingly independent and giving and seeking help from others
- Balancing his/her own needs, rights and responsibilities with those of others
- Resolving conflicts in peaceful and constructive ways
- Working with others and learning to appreciate that collaboration is a great way to get things done
- They are building resilience and negotiation skills
- They are developing their physical skills
- Learning to regulate their own behaviours
- Learning how to participate in a social group
- Building their understanding about Literacy and Numeracy concepts
- Having fun through shared play with friends
- Learning to apply these skills effectively

How do I know if my child is ready for 3 year old kindergarten?

All children who turn 3 years of age before the 30th April 2021 are eligible for 3 year old kindergarten

- We expect that they will need to learn to belong to a group of maximum 28 - 30 children
- They will need to interact positively with peers and educators
- They will begin to share resources, spaces and their ideas
- Follow a routine
- Pay attention for short periods of time and start to complete small tasks
- Begin to feel more comfortable and confident separating from parents
- Begin to become more independent in decision making, self-help skills and physical skills such as dressing, toileting and feeding
- Begin to control their behaviour and emotions
- Become more confident in verbally expressing their needs and wants

When considering all of these points it is very important that families carefully assess whether or not their child is ready for the start of their kinder journey.

http://patricia_f.tripod.com/prek.html

<https://www.startingblocks.gov.au/your-childs-development/3-to-5-years/>

How do I know if my child is ready for Kinder 4, and what is the difference between Kinder 3 readiness and Kinder 4 readiness?

Our goal in the Kindergarten program is not to teach “formal learning” but to provide them with a solid foundation so that they can carry these skills and tools with them for the future.

- Children should be able to separate, manage and function in a large kinder group (approximately 30 children) – sharing resources, spaces and ideas.
- They will need to follow a structured routine that incorporates small and large group times, progressive lunches and intentional teaching opportunities. We would expect that the children learn and participate in the kinder routines effectively and without little fuss.
- They will need to attend the Kinder 4 program minimum for 2 days to make up the required 15 hours of funding criteria for 4 year old kindergarten.
- They will need to have the skills to be able to follow instructions, follow general kinder rules and guideline and be respectful to peers and educators.
- Children should be able to start to focus their attention and display independence in completing tasks satisfactorily on their own.
- Become more confident at being an independent learner and decision maker. This also includes being independent in self-care tasks such as washing hands, feeding, toileting, putting on own sunscreen, wiping nose, serving own food and drinks, looking after belongings, dressing and undressing to name a few.
- We also expect that the children take a deep responsibility and care for their kinder environment through assisting with packing up after themselves, and helping others when required.
- The children have some level of control over their behaviour and emotions, and can learn to self-regulate their different feeling and responses.
- We would expect that the children are able to verbally communicate with peers and educators to express their feelings, emotions and ideas.

These Kinder 3 and Kinder 4 expectations is a guide only, but they assist us in recognising some of the points that we need to consider when thinking about their placement for next year. Our program is inclusive and takes into account the range and diversity of children’s development and learning styles.

If there are concerns about your child’s readiness for school, we can access external support services to assist in making this decision with you. However, to be eligible the child will need to be deemed as having two area of significant delay in two or more developmental areas. Unfortunately, immaturity is not classified as a developmental delay, and so this is why it is important to consider all of the options before enrolment. We want to see children thrive in their year before school and be confident that they are ready to start learning in a more formal educational environment the year after. From our professional experience we have seen children commence 3 year old kinder too early, then move into four year old kinder younger and more immature than their peers and barely cope with the environment, program and expectations.

Geelong Children's Centre Kinder Program Philosophy

At Geelong Children's Centre we provide a child and family centred practice. We endeavour to provide a welcoming, caring, inclusive and supportive environment to all children and their families. We embrace and support children of all skills, abilities and cultures; acknowledging children's personal, family and cultural histories shape their learning for development. We view the whole child as an active citizen, capable of learning and contributing to their world.

Our program is based on the significance of play. Play is an important medium in children's learning. It helps children to make sense of their lives and wider world and supports children's creativity, self-expression, problem solving skills, language development, concentration and independence. We offer an educational program, both indoors and outdoors, which includes routines and is organised in ways that maximise opportunities for each child's learning. We promote each child's agency, enabling them to make choices and decisions. Educators believe in the importance of modelling appropriate behaviours and guiding children where necessary, as they assume responsibility for their choices and develop respect for their communities and environment.

We believe every child has a fundamental right to high quality education and care. Both the National Curriculum (Being Becoming Belonging) and the Victorian Curriculum frameworks (Victorian Early Years Learning & Development Framework) are integral to our program. To enable each child to reach their full potential an ongoing cycle of planning, documenting and evaluating informs our program. Educators respond to children's ideas and play, and use intentional teaching to scaffold and extend each child's learning, which is recorded in individual learning plans. We recognise and support the varied learning styles of individual children. Reflective practice maximises opportunities for children to grow both as individuals and as a group.

We strive to develop positive partnerships with parents and families through welcoming parent participation and contribution into our program, as well as collaboration between staff and families related to family values and goals for children's learning. We encourage open communication to support and monitor children's achievements and progress.

The Code of Ethics 2016 (Early Childhood Australia) is embedded in our practice and informs our relationships with the children, families and each other. Our staff are dedicated Early Childhood Professionals who work together to create a supportive and positive kindergarten environment. Each staff member is recognised for their skills and ideas that they contribute to our kindergarten and wider community. The kindergarten promotes professional enquiry and development. Educators collaborate with other organisations and service providers to enhance children's learning and wellbeing.

We feel that the kindergarten year is a very special time in a child's life. At Geelong Children's Centre we offer children and their families a rich and rewarding pre-school experience based on the beliefs and principles outlined above. We pride ourselves on working together with our community to establish strong foundations for children's lifelong learning and for them to feel safe, valued and proud of their efforts and achievements.

Teaching Philosophy – Jenny Hill

My philosophy in Early Childhood Education is based on the belief that each child is unique in their own way. I believe that respectful and caring bonds with children and their families set the foundation for the child's learning. My philosophy in teaching is to provide an environment that is safe, supportive and inclusive, as well as flexible and responsive to the interests and strengths of each child and their individual learning styles.

I believe that each child deserves to feel a sense of belonging within a group, and feel that their contributions are valued and respected. My aim is to nurture the 'whole' child so that they can aim to reach their natural potential. I believe that kindergarten is the year where your child can actively learn through observations, engagement and participation in play, and the meaningful relationships they share with others.

I believe that the children themselves play an integral part in their own learning. Through the interactions with others, the time to experience and resources to discover, the children can begin to find a sense of self and what it is that motivates them to learn. The program is underpinned by an emergent approach to learning which incorporates opportunities for spontaneous, natural play and intentional teaching. This ultimately provides them with a solid foundation for formal learning when they make their progression to school.

Teaching Philosophy – Paula Collins

I believe children come to my program with a wealth of knowledge, emerging skills and interests. It is my belief that children are both capable and competent in themselves. It is these things that will engage children in learning and to become active, knowledgeable thinkers. The children's primary source of knowledge is the family and the communities they are involved in.

I plan the learning environment to promote wonderment, friendships, cooperation and collaboration, as well as discovery. It is full of beauty and magic, light and shade, rainbows dancing and wind chimes tinkling. It is a place that encourages all who enter to stay awhile and share experiences with our community of learners. I aim to have a visible presence of each family and culture within the environment, helping each child to feel connected with their family.

Children's voices, those of their family, their educators and culture will be heard and celebrated as children learn and develop so all can contribute in a meaningful way to this process. It is my belief that within a rich and stimulating learning environment, children and educators become co-constructors of knowledge.

Children need time to pursue their questions, theories and ideas, to watch clouds float by, to feel and enjoy all of the different seasons in nature, to invent and explore as they play.

Geelong Children's Centre

Philosophy

We acknowledge the original custodians of this land, the Wathaurong people and their language and all the indigenous people in the Geelong community.

Children

We value providing a warm and welcoming environment that assists children to feel safe and secure. We believe developing trusting respectful relationships between children and educators is of utmost importance in children to reach their full potential to learn and develop according to their needs. This enables children to feel supported to explore, learn and take risks in their learning environment.

Children are social learners, co-constructing their understanding of the World around them and themselves through interacting with peers and adults alike. Through social interaction, children's learning is facilitated and scaffolded by more capable others, whilst the child remains an active participant in their learning. Through providing an environment and program that encourages and supports social interaction children are enabled to develop reciprocal relationships and develop a sense of Community with their peers and teachers (Arthur, Beecher, Death, Dockett, & Farmer, 2012). Children are also provided with consistent opportunities to resource their own learning and initiate their own play experiences. Through this discovery child further develop their sense of agency within our service.

Families & Community

We acknowledge the importance of developing a sense of Community within the Geelong Children's Centre and the importance of involving families in their child's learning journey. We value and respect the contributions that families make, as it is through family involvement that children feel their learning is valued and recognised. Family involvement also enables the curriculum to reflect the diversity of the community. By building trusting and reciprocal relationships between home and the learning environment we aim to positively contribute to children's holistic wellbeing and development, allowing us to focus on the 'whole child' including individual culture, heritage and family values. We endeavour to connect with the local community services, groups and events including maternal health services, local schools, sport groups, library and community Festivals and events.

Curriculum & Learning

We believe children learn best when they are provided rich opportunities to make independent choices to guide their learning. Through engagement in a play based program, children's learning is fostered to meet the diverse range of learning intelligences. We also aim to provide programs which support children in developing knowledge, skills and attitudes that will assist them in becoming environmentally responsible. We value providing developmentally appropriate, open ended play experiences that are meaningful to children. This is provided through an emergent curriculum that is planned in response to children's developmental needs

and interests. Curriculum decision making promotes inclusive practices by building on children's strengths interest and abilities in both planned and spontaneous learning experiences. Gender equality create opportunities for children to engage in social and educational learning. We believe that through these experiences children are supported to develop the skills and concepts that enable them to become lifelong learners. Children develop early literacy, numeracy and scientific concepts and knowledge as well as social, emotional and physical skills through actively participating in play based experiences. Each child develops and learns in their own unique way and rate. By providing a combination of teacher-initiated and child-initiated learning experiences, all children are able to positively participate in the program at their own level and reach their individual potential.

Educators and Management

The management promotes professional enquiry and development for all teachers and educators to enhance their knowledge. Code of ethics is embedded in our practice and informs our relationships with the children, families and each other. We aim to have constant reflection in all areas of our work and will remain committed to Early Childhood Education and the broader Community. Educators collaborate with variety of organisations and service providers to enhance children's learning and wellbeing.

Our educators are dedicated Early Childhood Professionals who work together to create a supportive and positive environment. Each teacher and educator is recognised for their skills and ideas that they contribute to our service and wider community. The board of management supports the management team, staff, teachers and educators to effectively manage the service with a shared sense of purpose, providing direction and leadership and dealing with collective responsibility.

Works Cited

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What is an Emergent Curriculum?

Our philosophy of teaching embodies an Emergent Curriculum, with aspects of the Reggio Emilio approach and Vygotskys' scaffolding theory. We strive to support and nurture the varying learning styles of visual, auditory, sensory, verbal in gender and culturally sensitive ways. We aim to deliver a high quality educational program that enables every child the right to learn, grow and develop in a caring and supportive environment. Our goal is to provide a program that openly shares child initiated and intentional teaching practices, and that each child and their family is highly valued and supported to optimise each child's individuality and their developmental outcomes.

Understanding Emergent Curriculum in Practice

Emergent curriculum describes a curriculum that develops from exploring what is relevant, interesting and personally meaningful to children. An Emergent Curriculum constantly evolves in the response to children's changing needs and interests, parental and community interests and concerns, and teacher's priorities. Each of these key elements shapes the direction of the program for future learning.

An Emergent Curriculum is flexible and responsive, it is collaborative, it builds on strengths, interests and needs of the children, and it provides opportunities for adults and children to contribute to the decision making process. An Emergent Curriculum makes children's learning and teacher's thinking visible through the process of documentation. Documentation occurs in a variety of ways, and through this process learning not only becomes visible, but allows discussion and reflection to occur between all involved.

The benefits of this approach enable the program to be organised based on the children's budding interests, passions, strengths and needs. The topics of interest that emerge are often linked to children's play, their experiences at home, a community event, and priorities that emerge from conversations between children, children and teachers, children and parents, and parents and teachers etc. These interactions and observations are important as part of the teacher's intentional teaching practices.

The Emergent Curriculum strives to encompass all of the Learning Outcomes represented in the Victorian Early Years Framework.

What are we learning at different play spaces?

Learning areas are physical areas in our kinder room that focus on developing children's different interests and skills. They are set up regularly for children and allow them to gain new skills and give them a sense of accomplishment.

We believe that it is the **PROCESS OF PLAY** and not the end product that is vital in a child's growth and development.

Dramatic Play

- Exploring roles
- To BELONG
- Be flexible in their thinking
- Express themselves in sentences
- To sort and organize things
- Decision making
- To improvise and use things in a symbolic way
- To carry out ideas with the cooperation of others.



Block/Construction

- Concepts of shape, size, length, location, space and angles
- To create and repeat patterns
- To cooperate with others
- To solve problems
- To make a plan and implement it.
- Classify, count, balance, sequence
- Develop hand eye coordination.



Sand/Water

- Hand eye coordination
- That some things sink and some things float
- About wet, dry and evaporation
- Capacity of different sized containers.
- That sand texture changes from dry to wet.
- Planning, implementing and building.
- Tactile awareness



Art and Craft

- To express imagination and creativity
- Develop fine motor skills
- Concepts of shape, size and location
- Explore tools of art
- To distinguish shapes and to purposefully create shapes
- The names of colours and how to make new colours



Music and Movement

- Rhythm, rhyme and beat
- Gross motor skills such as jumping, running, skipping
- Enjoyment of movement/actions.
- Memory



Science/Maths

- Science vocabulary
- To group objects into categories
- To observe likeness and differences
- To appreciate nature.
- To notice details and likenesses and differences in objects
- Concepts of colour, size and shape
- Numerical concepts of more than and less than
- Concepts of groups or sets
- Logical reasoning.
- Mathematics vocabulary
- Counting
- Pattern
- Measurement concepts.



Sensory - Play dough/Clay/Goop etc.

- Helps to strengthen little fingers, hands and wrists.
- Develop social skills
- Allows children to experiment with vocabulary
- Foster children's imagination
- Allow for creativity
- It helps children develop self-esteem -there is no right or wrong and the child has the opportunity to gain mastery over their environment.
- It is a great release for tension or angry feelings - squeezing, punching, poking are all acceptable if done to play dough.
- Plan, create and mould.



Reading Area

- Make believe and imagination
- Listen, concentrate and remember
- Awareness and concepts of print
- Reading for enjoyment
- Comfortable and relaxing experience



Classroom Management

Our focus is on encouragement and positive reinforcement. Children will be assisted to problem solve and find a solution when there is an altercation. However, children must be provided a safe environment so children will be redirected to other play experiences if necessary.

- We listen when the teacher or someone else is talking.
- At group time we keep our hands to ourselves.
- We use our inside voices when inside.
- We are kind and gentle with our friends and use our manners.
- We help to pack away.
- We use our equipment and resources respectfully.

Staff

Staff Qualifications and Experience

Our Kindergarten educators are a team who challenges and supports each other's strengths and beliefs. We are extremely fortunate to have highly qualified and experienced teachers who view their professional development and growth as paramount in understanding how our Kindergarten can continue to represent the best practices in early childhood education to date. Each year all educators attend professional development and training sessions regarding early education, child protection, health and safety, including allergies, asthma and anaphylaxis. We are always keen to share and reflect on the practices we believe, to ensure a genuinely successful and happy learning environment for our children and their families.

Staff – Professional Development Days

During the year there will be Professional Development Days for the kinder teachers to support them in learning new knowledge and skills to improve their instructional and intervention practices to provide better outcomes for the children. There will be **no kinder** sessions running on these days but the children will be participating in the day care program with the qualified educator. Families will be notified as soon as possible of these dates.

Special Occasions



We love to celebrate birthdays and other special occasions/celebrations at kindergarten. Children are made to feel special on their day, but please be advised that cakes, ice creams, lollies, chocolates and plastic toys are not permitted at kindergarten but you can bring bubbles, party hats or similar sustainable toys for the kinder children. Please check with the kinder teacher before bringing any gift items.

Excursions / Incursions

The children may be taken on excursions throughout the year. A note will be sent home to parents / guardians prior to the excursion with information and authorisation forms for your child to participate. These authorisation forms must be signed and returned to staff. Excursions that occur throughout the year generally co-inside with what the children may have been learning. A Comprehensive Risk Assessment is always undertaken by the teacher prior to the excursion taking place. Some examples of excursions have been Geelong Play Space, Geelong Hospital, Newcomb Library and Narana Aboriginal Centre.

In addition, we also like to enrich kindergarten program with a variety of incursions throughout the year. This is where an outside source comes in and shares their experience, talent or knowledge with the kindergarten group. Incursions can involve parents sharing their talents/skills with the group, organisations from the community or a Performing Arts Group. Some examples of incursions could be silk worm/stick insect lifecycles, Responsible Pet Program, baby having a bath, hairdresser, musicians etc.

Transition to School Activities

In order for the children to become familiar with a school environment we have established community connections with some of the local schools, which we have visits to and have students from visiting us regularly during the year. By doing this it is our aim to show the children that school is not such a daunting place as they enter their Foundation (Prep) year. From the start of the year Kinder 4 children can bring in a water drink bottle labelled with child's name to get the children use to this before the following year. Towards the end of Term Four we also offer a lunch-box program. As we provide the children with all the meals during the day, they do not get to practice the skills that are needed to, undo containers, Glad-wrap, fruit or squeeze yogurts; so we offer two weeks in which they can bring a lunch-box to kinder. This also allows us to teach the children about what to eat and when to eat it. During Term 4 on the allocated weeks, Kindergarten teachers will give you a list of food items that children can bring in their lunch box as some children have allergies to certain food groups.

What to bring to Kindergarten

A Bag

A bag is needed for your child to carry his/her belongings to and from Kindergarten. Any kind will do as long as it is large and strong enough to contain an assortment of personal treasures, extra clothing and art work. Please ensure your child's bag is named. Remember to encourage your child to be independent in carrying and packing their own bag.



Clothing

- Please dress your child in play clothes – clothes which your child can move in easily, clothes that wash easily, as it is not possible for them to stay clean at all times. We will do our best to protect children's clothing by providing smocks when they paint, play with clay etc.
- Please ensure children are dressed in clothes they can manage themselves. For example, trousers that pull down easily when they go to the toilet. Thongs, "croc" shoes and long dresses are not suitable for kindergarten.
- In winter, children will need a **named** coat and beanie as we have an outdoor session – even when it is cold.
- As part of our sun smart policy, children are required to wear broad-brimmed or legionnaire style hats to kinder from **September to April** in line with the Cancer Council's recommendations. Please provide a **named** sunhat and also protect your child's skin with sunscreen **before** they come to kinder.



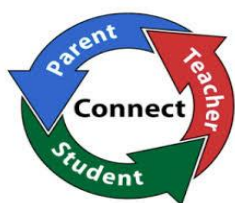
It is important to name items of clothing that children are likely to take off, jumpers, hats, coats etc.

Personal toys

We have an array of toys in the kinder room so please **do not** send toys with your child, as loss or accidental damage to them is upsetting for the child. Comforters to settle your child is okay. Your cooperation in this matter is most appreciated.



Communication with Families



There will be a variety of methods by which staff will communicate your child's progress throughout the year including, parent/teacher interviews, electronic portfolios, reflections, newsletters each term, individual meetings on request & emails.

Other relevant news and information will be placed on the sign in table or noticeboard near your child's room. Regular newsletters will inform you of what is happening within the centre. If you have any questions/comments relating to the day to day running of the kindergarten, don't hesitate to approach either an educator or the Director.

Sun-Smart

As part of our sun smart policy, children are required to wear broad-brimmed or legionnaire style hats to kinder when the UV reaches 3 or above in line with the Cancer Council's recommendations. Children are also required to wear suitable clothing to provide as much protection as possible. Therefore, singlet tops or strappy dresses, which do not cover shoulders and the back, are **inappropriate** for kindergarten. Please apply sunscreen upon arrival and tick your child from the sunscreen list that is available. If you haven't applied sunscreen please inform educators. Sunscreen is supplied by the Centre but if your child has a sensitivity then you are required to provide your own sunscreen.



Accidents

Children who receive minor injuries at kinder will receive basic first aid techniques. The details of the accident treatment will be recorded in a specific accident register and parents will be informed and asked to sign at the end of the session. In case of more serious injury, parents will be immediately informed and medical assistance will be sought therefore it is essential that home/mobile phone and emergency contact numbers are up to date. In line with our child protection policy, any injuries noticed when children arrive at kindergarten will also be documented by staff.



Allergies

Geelong Children's Centre implements an "Anaphylaxis Policy" as a response to the growing number of children in our community with life threatening allergies. Each year all educators are trained in the treatment of anaphylaxis. As part of our 'risk minimization plan', we are asking families not to bring **ANY** nut products or any other food, food packaging or drinks, into the centre.

We are a NUT free Centre.

Illnesses

During the year it is quite probable that your child may contract any of the usual children's illnesses – colds, flu, gastric problems, chicken pox, measles, school sores, hand foot and mouth, any unexplained rash, conjunctivitis etc. **If your child has had temperature, vomiting or had diarrhoea in the past 24 hours please do not bring him/her to kindergarten.** If your child has a temperature, please keep them at home to help reduce the risk of spreading infection to others. Please read centre illness policy for details.



A list of childhood communicable diseases and the Department of Education & Training recommendations of length of time the child is to be excluded from kinder is attached to this booklet. Please read this and keep it for your reference. Please remember to ring to let us know if your child will be away for more than a few days, due to illness or if going on holidays.

Please see attached Communicable Diseases Chart in Appendices.

Recyclable Materials



Early learning centres are the world's best recyclers! If you have access to various items which you think we might be able to use, please let us know. Please ensure items are clean and dry.

Some suggestions for everyday items include: plastic ice cream, yoghurt and butter containers, used greetings cards, wrapping paper, crepe paper, tissue paper, old calendars, old envelopes, glad wrap and Christmas wrapping rolls, paper or card off cuts, boxes, egg cartons, plastic, buttons, corks, bottle tops, bubble wrap, old electrical appliances (not working), old clothes, old handbags, fabric scraps, ribbons, lace, feathers, scraps of foam, rubber, vinyl, pieces of garden hose, off cuts of plastic hose/pipes, old jewellery, wallpaper pieces, contact, velcro, shells, assorted seeds, old unused kitchen or cooking utensils, dolls and toys (in good condition), artificial/dried flowers, artificial fruit, old posters/pictures, second-hand children's books (in good condition) and any other valuable junk you feel we might be able to use in the kindergarten. **Due to health regulations and allergies we are unable to use milk and juice cartons, toilet rolls, used egg cartons or nut bar boxes.** Please check with your child's teacher regarding specific needs of the kinder group.

Documentation

We use planning books to demonstrate the children's learning and the teacher's intentions. Individual and group documentation is through an online education program called EDUCA which enables families to access their children's learning, at times that are convenient for them. Parents are encouraged to provide feedback and have an input into the kinder program to support and participate in their child's learning journey. Please make the time to regularly log on to EDUCA, important communications/messages are posted on here also.

Educa

At Geelong Children's centre we use a digital software program called Educa which provides the early childhood professionals with a secure, simple and fast way to document and share learning. Using Educa, we create an ePortfolio for each child where learning stories, observations and updates are shared with families. Please check regularly for important messages and also to see what your child has been learning.

Available on both desktop and smart phones, Educa will allow families to engage with their child's learning from anywhere in the world, providing valuable feedback to educators. Educa bridges the communication gap, strengthening relationships and promoting collaboration between the families and the educators. Parents have easy, instant access to their children's learning stories from anywhere and can be involved in their education and learning. Educa is safe to and easy to use as only you, your child's teachers and the people you invite have access to your Educa account. All content related to your child is owned by you.

- Individual frozen moments (observations of your children)
- Term 1, 2, 3 Narratives
- Individual and Group goals
- Weekly / Monthly Reflections
- Dashboard Messages
- Term 4 Summative Assessments except for Kinder that will require School Transition Statements

You can create your child's hardcopy portfolio by printing your child's work.

Dispositions

As part of our programming and documentation we are emphasising the role of dispositions to plan learning experiences and assess children's learning. Dispositions are combinations of children's emerging knowledge, skills and attitudes to learning. Positive dispositions for learning include courage and curiosity, trust and playfulness, perseverance, confidence and responsibility. Dispositions for learning have been discussed in the early years' context for some time but have recently been considered with more significance. It has been acknowledged that positive dispositions are essential to children being confident and capable learners. It is also important that educators attend to practices and environments that create the right conditions to enable the development of positive dispositions.

The Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) specifically refers to positive dispositions, recognising their significance as a learning outcome. In doing so it demonstrates the importance of their development and a shift away from an emphasis solely on more recognised areas such as knowledge and skills. It is a very different type of learning and includes tendencies to respond to situations in certain ways. By intentionally 'placing dispositions in the list of educational goals (educators) are likely to pay more deliberate attention to ways in which desirable ones can be strengthened.'

Dispositions have also been described as an 'accumulation of motivation, situation and skill'. In this way children are able to approach a situation or circumstances in an intelligent manner, applying positive learning dispositions that have progressively developed over time in a supportive environment to the point where they appear to happen naturally.

Margaret Carr describes the eagerness of learners as 'being ready, willing and able to participate in various ways' as outlined below –

Being ready – seeing themselves as a participating learner

Being willing – recognising that this place is (or is not) a place for learning

Being able – having the abilities and funds of knowledge that will contribute to being ready and willing

The educator then assists children with whatever the next step might be and scaffolds their involvement until they are able to gradually withdraw as the child becomes more capable on their own. Carr then identifies particular domains of learning within which children can be ready, willing and able –

- Taking an interest
- Being involved
- Persisting with difficulty or uncertainty
- Communicating with others
- Taking responsibility

Adapted from 'A Framework for Teaching Learning: the dynamics of disposition'

Concerns

Please do not hesitate to make an appointment to see your child's teacher if you wish to discuss any matters concerning your child's progress, the programme content or any other general queries or concerns. Kinder teachers are available every **Thursday (Kinder 3)** or **Friday (Kinder 4)** to discuss any concerns or issues you may have regarding your child. As the parent/guardian you have a vital role in the education of your child. We believe that, with the contribution of your skills and experiences, together we can form a vibrant and productive partnership that benefits your child.



We look forward to having your child with us at Geelong Children's Centre and hope your child's time with us will be happy and enriching.

Thank you for choosing to be a part of Geelong Children's Centre Kindergarten. We look forward to sharing a very special year with you and your child.



APPENDICES

Communicable Diseases

Minimum period of exclusion from schools and children's services centres for infectious diseases cases and contacts (adapted from staying healthy | 5th edition | updated June 2013)

Condition	Exclusion of case	Exclusion of contacts
Campylobacter infection	Exclude until there has not been a loose bowel motion for 24 hours	Not excluded
Candidiasis (thrush)	Not excluded	Not excluded
Cytomegalovirus (CMV) infection	Not excluded	Not excluded
Conjunctivitis	Exclude until discharge from the eyes has stopped, unless a doctor has diagnosed non-infectious conjunctivitis	Not excluded
Cryptosporidium	Exclude until there has not been a loose bowel motion for 24 hours	Not excluded
Diarrhoea (No organism identified)	Exclude until there has not been a loose bowel motion for 24 hours	Not excluded
Fungal infections of the skin or nails (e.g. ringworm, tinea)	Exclude until the day after starting appropriate antifungal treatment	Not excluded
Giardiasis	Exclude until there has not been a loose bowel motion for 24 hours	Not excluded
Glandular fever (mononucleosis, Epstein Barr virus [EBV] infection)	Not excluded	Not excluded
Hand, foot and mouth disease	Exclude until all blisters have dried	Not excluded
Haemophilus influenzae type b (Hib)	Exclude until the person has received appropriate antibiotic treatment for at least 4 days	Not excluded. Contact a public health unit for specialist advice
Head lice (pediculosis)	Not excluded if effective treatment begins before the next day at the education and care service. The child does not need to be sent home immediately if head lice are detected	Not excluded
Hepatitis A	Exclude until a medical certificate of recovery is received and until at least 7 days after the onset of jaundice	Not excluded. Contact a public health unit for specialist advice about vaccinating or treating children in the same room or group
Hepatitis B	Not excluded	Not excluded
Hepatitis B	Not excluded	Not excluded
Herpes simplex (cold sores, fever blisters)	Not excluded if the person can maintain hygiene practices to minimise the risk of transmission. If the person cannot comply with these practices (e.g. because they are too young), they should be excluded until the sores are dry. Sores should be covered with a dressing, where possible	Not excluded
Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV)	Not excluded. If the person is severely immune compromised, they will be vulnerable to other people's illnesses	Not excluded
Human parvovirus B19 (fifth disease, erythema infectiosum, slapped cheek syndrome)	Not excluded	Not excluded
Hydatid disease	Not excluded	Not excluded
Impetigo	Exclude until appropriate antibiotic treatment has started. Any sores on exposed skin should be covered with a watertight dressing	Not excluded
Influenza and influenza-like illnesses	Exclude until person is well	Not excluded
Listeriosis	Not excluded	Not excluded
Measles	Exclude for 4 days after the onset of the rash	Immunised and immune contacts are not excluded For non-immunised contacts, contact a public health unit for specialist advice. All immunocompromised children should be excluded until 14 days

		after the appearance of the rash in the last case
Meningitis (viral)	Exclude until person is well	Not excluded
Meningococcal infection	Exclude until appropriate antibiotic treatment has been completed	Not excluded. Contact a public health unit for specialist advice about antibiotics and/or vaccination for people who were in the same room as the case
Molluscum contagiosum	Not excluded	Not excluded
Mumps	Exclude for 9 days or until swelling goes down (whichever is sooner)	Not excluded
Norovirus	Exclude until there has not been a loose bowel motion or vomiting for 48 hours	Not excluded
Pertussis (whooping cough)	Exclude until 5 days after starting appropriate antibiotic treatment, or for 21 days from the onset of coughing	Contact a public health unit for specialist advice about excluding non-vaccinated and incompletely vaccinated contacts, or antibiotics
Pneumococcal disease	Exclude until person is well	Not excluded
Roseola	Not excluded	Not excluded
Ross River virus	Not excluded	Not excluded
Rotavirus infection	Exclude until there has not been a loose bowel motion or vomiting for 24 hours	Not excluded
Rubella (German measles)	Exclude until fully recovered or for at least 4 days after the onset of the rash	Not excluded
Salmonellosis	Exclude until there has not been a loose bowel motion for 24 hours	Not excluded
Scabies	Exclude until the day after starting appropriate treatment	Not excluded
Shigellosis	Exclude until there has not been a loose bowel motion for 24 hours	Not excluded
Streptococcal sore throat (including scarlet fever)	Exclude until the person has received antibiotic treatment for at least 24 hours and feels well	Not excluded
Toxoplasmosis	Not excluded	Not excluded
Tuberculosis (TB)	Exclude until medical certificate is produced from the appropriate health authority	Not excluded. Contact a public health unit for specialist advice about screening, antibiotics or specialist TB clinics
Varicella (chickenpox)	Exclude until all blisters have dried—this is usually at least 5 days after the rash first appeared in non-immunised children, and less in immunised children	Any child with an immune deficiency (for example, leukaemia) or receiving Chemotherapy should be excluded for their own protection. Otherwise, not excluded
Viral gastroenteritis (viral diarrhoea)	Exclude until there has not been a loose bowel motion for 24 hours	Not excluded
Worms	Exclude if loose bowel motions are occurring. Exclusion is not necessary if treatment has occurred	Not excluded

How to choose a quality early childhood service

The quality of early childhood services (like child care and kindergarten) is rated under a system called the National Quality Framework.

The National Quality Framework is designed to raise the quality of early childhood services. A big focus of the framework is measuring the quality of services. This information is given to families to help them choose early education and care.

There are lots of things you can do to help choose a good early childhood service. You can look up the service's quality ratings and you can visit the service and ask questions.

Go to [My Child](#) for more information on how to choose child care and kindergarten.

How early childhood services are rated

The quality of early childhood services is measured against seven quality areas. The table below is from the Commonwealth Government's [Starting Blocks](#) website and explains what the standards are and what they mean.

The standards are based on what the research shows are the most important parts of a quality early education and care service.

Quality areas	What this area is about
Educational program and practice	Your child is supported to participate in play and learning
Children's health and safety	Your child is protected from illness and hazards
Physical environment	Your child plays in a safe and well maintained environment
Staffing arrangements	There are enough qualified staff to give your child the attention they need
Relationships with children	Your child is made to feel supported and welcomed
Collaborative partnerships with families and communities	Local community involvement and respect for the beliefs and values of families
Leadership and service management	Your child is educated in a positive and well managed environment

For more information about these quality areas, please visit the Department's pages about the [National Quality Framework and early child hood services](#).

What are the ratings?

Services receive a rating for each of the quality areas and an overall rating based on these results.

Most services will receive one of the following ratings:

- Significant improvement required
- Working towards the National Quality Standard
- Meeting the National Quality Standard
- Exceeding the National Quality Standard
- Excellent.

How do services get rated?

Services are assessed and rated regularly by authorised officers from the Victorian Department of Education and Training.

When visiting the service, the authorised officer will:

- Observe – what children, families, educators, coordinators and staff members are doing (for example, engaging in caring, friendly and respectful interactions).
- Discuss – why and how particular practices occur at the service, with the approved provider and educators at the service.
- Sight – documentation provided as evidence to support particular practices at the service (for example, records of attendance, enrolment records, policies and procedures, meeting minutes, safety checklists, newsletters, photos, collections of children's work and documentation of child assessments or evaluations).

Each service is unique and the ways in which the elements and standards are met will be determined by the service context, including the service environment; the needs, interests and abilities of the children attending the service; and the needs of families and the wider community.

How do I find out quality ratings?

The mychild.gov.au and the startingblocks.gov.au websites help you find out the quality ratings of early childhood services and also have information on various Child care and kindergarten websites.

For more information, go to:

<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/parents/child-care-kindergarten/Pages/choose-quality-child-care.aspx>

Benefits of kindergarten

Kindergarten is an important step for young children. We strongly recommended all children go to kindergarten.

Research has shown that:

- early education helps set children up for a bright future
- attending two years of quality kindergarten has even greater benefits
- at kindergarten children learn skills that they'll take with them throughout their life.

Kindergarten improves children's health and wellbeing, helps them to develop strong social skills and encourages a love of learning.

Children who go to kindergarten are more independent and confident and are more likely to make a smooth move to primary school.

What your child learns

Kindergarten programs are delivered by a qualified early childhood teacher. They're designed to improve your child's development in:

- social skills, like how to play with other children in a calm, sharing and rewarding way
- self-awareness and respect for others
- emotional skills, for example understanding their feelings
- language, literacy and numeracy skills, such as reading stories and counting objects
- a joy for learning and group activities, such as talking, drawing and making things together with other children their own age
- ability to make new friends
- exposure to new ideas and concepts.

Kindergarten also gives families:

- opportunities to meet other families and make community connections
- access to support for children with special needs
- access to other community services.

For more information, please go to

<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/parents/child-care-kindergarten/Pages/when-start-kindergarten.aspx>

Choosing a kindergarten program

Most kindergartens welcome enquiries and will organise a time for you to visit. You can see the Centre, its staff and the children attending it.

If your child already goes to child care, you should go to any information sessions they run. They may also have a kindergarten program.

You can tell if your child care has a kindergarten program because they will have a current certificate on display.

What to look for when you visit:

When you first enter you will be able to tell if the kindergarten's atmosphere is inviting or cold, relaxed or frantic.

It should be a safe and comfortable place and the children should have a choice of fun and challenging activities. You should see the teacher and other educators working confidently with the children and enjoying their company.

Information on display

The kindergarten should have information about their operations, policies and procedures on display. You can also ask them to give you a copy.

These policies should be child and family focused. They should also be sensitive to each family's cultural and social background, lifestyle and child-rearing practices.

The available information should include:

- the education and activities program
- the contact details of the responsible regional department office
- the fees charged
- the name and telephone number of the person you can contact if you have any complaints or concerns
- their behaviour management policy
- staff qualifications
- their children's service license.

Questions you can ask

To help decide if a kindergarten is suitable, ask these questions:

- What is the quality rating?
- Are places available for the days and hours I need?
- Does the kindergarten operate throughout the year or only during certain times, like school terms?
- Do they offer a funded kindergarten program?

- What are the fees?
- Are there any other costs on top of the fees?
- Is there a fee to be placed on the waiting list?
- Do they offer extended care?
- How do they support children with additional needs?
- What happens if my child is unwell, upset, or unsettled?
- How are food and drink given to the children?
- How do they give medication?

When to start kindergarten

Most children start kindergarten in the year before school, usually when they are four years old.

This is sometimes called a "15-hour program" or "subsidised kindergarten". The government will help the kindergarten with the cost of your child attending for 15 hours each week.

Most kindergarten program fees are partly paid by the Victorian government directly to the kindergarten (except for three-year-old kinder). All kindergartens integrated as part of Long Day Care charge fees to help meet the cost of running kindergarten programs. Fees are set by the Long Day Care Service and depends on things like how many hours your child attends and whether there are extra costs such as excursions, food etc.

Contact the kindergarten you are interested in for their schedule of fees. Some kindergartens have programs that are not funded by the Department, which sometimes attract fees.

Subsidised kindergarten can be in:

- children's center's
- long day care center's
- community kindergartens
- independent schools
- some government schools.

Kindergarten Fee Subsidy in long day care services

A child enrolled in a long day care service is not eligible for a Kindergarten Fee Subsidy where approved Child Care Benefit (a Commonwealth Government subsidy) is applied to the fee charged for the time spent in the kindergarten program. Families of children eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy are able to access a 15 hour kindergarten program free of charge at another service.

Types of kindergarten programs

There are different types of kindergarten programs your child can go to.

For four year olds

This is also called 'funded kindergarten'. The government will help the kindergarten with the cost of your child attending for 15 hours each week. It's the most common type of kindergarten program. It's usually for children who are in the year before they start school.

For three year olds

Funded kindergarten

The Victorian government is rolling out a subsidised kindergarten for all three-year-olds. Kindergarten programs will be run in sessional kindergartens and long day care Centres. They will be available in certain areas from 2020, and across the state from 2022. Some services already offer kindergarten for three-year-old children. In most cases, these programs are not subsidised and incur fees.

Early Start Kindergarten

Early Start Kindergarten gives eligible children 15 hours of free or low-cost kindergarten a week.

To be eligible, your child must be three by 30 April in the year they'll start kindergarten, and:

- your child is Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
- your family has had contact with Child Protection (or been referred to Child FIRST).
- Gifted children may also start kindergarten early.

There are two types of Early Start Kindergarten grants:

- Aboriginal Early Start Kindergarten Grant
- Early Start Kindergarten grant for children known to Child Protection.

You can enrol your child by contacting a kindergarten near you. Ask to access Early Start. You can also contact the Department of Education and training or contact your local council.

If your child has used Early Start they can get free or low cost four-year-old kindergarten as well.

Aboriginal Early Start Kindergarten grant

Service providers can apply if the child is three years old by 30 April in the year in which they are enrolled to attend the funded kindergarten program, and has been identified as being Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. This may be verified from a parent or carer verbally or a written referral/verification from a professional such as a Koorie Engagement Support Officer (KESO).

Parents or guardians who identify a child as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander should not be asked to provide verification of this.

Early Start Kindergarten grant for children known to Child Protection

Service providers can apply if the child is three years old by 30 April in the year in which they are enrolled to attend the funded kindergarten program, and the child is known to Child Protection.

A child known to Child Protection means:

- a child who has a current, or a history of, involvement with Child Protection, including those in out-of-home care, or
- a child who has been referred by Child Protection, Child FIRST, Integrated Family Services or Services Connect.

A child's eligibility can be advised by:

- a parent or carer who verbally identifies their child is currently supported by Child Protection or Child FIRST services or has been supported in the past, or
- written referral/verification from a Child Protection, Child FIRST, Integrated Family Services or Services Connect professional.

For both types of Early Start Kindergarten Grants, service providers are required to:

- document and maintain Early Start Kindergarten eligibility in the child's enrolment records
- provide up to 15 hours in a kindergarten program free of charge
- avoid imposing financial barriers to families seeking access: providers are strongly encouraged to waive any refundable deposit or other charges required upon confirming acceptance/waiting list entry.

Early Start Kindergarten extension grants

Early Start Kindergarten extension grants are available to assist vulnerable and Aboriginal children who are not eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy to access a free kindergarten program in the year before school.

The child must meet one of the following criteria:

- previously accessed an Early Start Kindergarten grant
- participated in an Access to Early Learning program, or
- identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

Where children have accessed Early Start Kindergarten at another service, the following people may advise of the child's eligibility:

- the child's parent/guardian or carer
- a Child Protection professional
- a Child FIRST professional
- a Koorie Engagement Support Officer
- a central enrolment officer
- Department of Education and Training staff.

Service providers are required to document the date and source of advice of eligibility in the child's enrolment records.

Service provider requirements

Service providers are encouraged to waive any payment required upon confirming acceptance/waiting list entry to minimise financial barriers to participation and must not set fees for eligible families that are higher than for other families.

With the exception of alternative kindergarten services (see below), service providers are required to:

- provide eligible families with the first 15 hours per week (or 600 hours per year) of the program free of charge when charging annual fees greater than the Early Start Kindergarten extension grant, and
- charge no more than the average hourly rate (for that service) for any additional hours provided.

Service providers offering more than 15 hours (such as integrated long day care settings) should:

- consider ways of providing the entire program to eligible children free of charge
- ensure that any fees normally charged for additional hours do not present a financial barrier to families seeking access to Early Start Kindergarten
- if charging for additional hours, inform families that they may be able to access 15 hours per week/600 hours per year for free at another service
- use the Early Start Kindergarten extension grant in combination with CCB to reduce costs to parents and carers
- explore all avenues for funding to reduce fees, including Commonwealth Special Child Care Benefit where appropriate.

Other kindergarten programs for three year olds

Many councils, community groups and some long day care centres offer kindergarten for three year old children. These programs will become subsidised by the government over time.

Check your local council's website or search for a kindergarten near you.

Generally, these programs are not funded by the government if they aren't part of Early Start.

Koorie Kids Shine at Kindergarten

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children can also access free kindergarten through the Koorie Kids Shine program.

For more information, go to:

<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/parents/child-care-kindergarten/Pages/kindergarten-programs.aspx>

Can my child go to kindergarten for more than one year?

Children who are:

- Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, or
- known to Child Protection, or referred Child Protection to Child FIRST

can go to kindergarten for free or at low cost for two years before they start primary school, usually starting when they are three years old.

Some children with developmental delays who complete four-year-old kindergarten may benefit from completing a second year of funded kindergarten before going on to school.

Does my child need a second year of kindergarten?

Your child is eligible for a second year of kindergarten if:

- your child's teacher has found they have developmental delays in at least two key areas of development, and
- your child will have better outcomes at kindergarten rather than going to school.

Your child's assessment

During the school year the early childhood teacher will assess your child and plan for their move to school.

There are guidelines that the early childhood teacher will follow to assess your child. These guidelines help the teacher identify your child's needs and goals.

The areas assessed by the early childhood teacher include:

- self-care (your child's ability to look after themselves sufficiently)
- ability to speak and/or understand language
- cognitive (intellectual) development
- social development – how your child interacts with other children
- emotional development
- other factors may also be considered.

Your involvement

It's important that you and the teacher work together to achieve the best outcome for your child.

With your consent, the teacher will:

- complete the assessment of your child
- get the support of other early childhood development professionals as needed.

If the teacher believes your child has a developmental delay, they will recommend a second year of kindergarten. They will also send a declaration to the Department and talk to you about your options.

Meet with the principal or a teacher at the school that your child is likely to attend. Talk about the best time for your child to start Prep. Find out how the Prep program can support your child.

As well, you can talk with your child's Maternal and Child Health nurse, family doctor and any other professionals your child sees (for example, speech therapist, psychologist, physiotherapist or pediatrician).

Going to kindergarten if your child is six years old

Children can go to kindergarten when they're six years old if they have a disability, developmental delay or it's a special situation.

If your child will turn six before or while they're in their first or second year of funded kindergarten, you must get an exemption from starting school.

If your child is in their first year of kindergarten

You can apply for an exemption from school if one or more of these circumstances apply:

- Your family has moved from interstate or overseas where the school entry age is different to Victoria.
- Your child's early education has been delayed due to chronic illness, disability or developmental delay.
- Your child is a refugee or asylum seeker who has suffered trauma and would benefit from a year of kindergarten before starting school.
- Your child has not been able to access kindergarten because of transient family circumstances.
- Other special considerations.

You need to get written confirmation from a professional (such as a kindergarten teacher, doctor or an allied health professional) to confirm the circumstance. The professional must also explain why it's best for your child to go to kindergarten instead of starting school.

If your child is in their second year of kindergarten

You can apply for an exemption from school if a declaration form has been filled in by your child's teacher and sent to us.

The form confirms your child has a developmental delay in two or more key areas that kindergartens teach in.

You should check with your child's kindergarten service that the form has been submitted.

You are responsible for getting an exemption. You must complete an exemption form and attach any written evidence with it. Send the form to the Department of Education and Training by 1st November in the year before your child turns six. Address it to the Area Executive Director, and post it to your closest Department regional office.

Next steps

We'll send you a letter once we have reviewed your request.

Give a copy of the letter to your child's kindergarten to confirm their eligibility.

You have the option to withdraw your request at any time.

For more information go to:

<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/parents/childcarekindergarten/Pages/kindergarten-school-age.aspx>

Early entry to kindergarten

Early entry to kindergarten may be appropriate for some gifted children where families are seeking an early entry to school for their child. However, it is important to note that most children who enrol early in kindergarten are not accepted for early entry into school, and the decision regarding early entry should be discussed with parents and take into account the following:

- children are not guaranteed early school entry as a result of being enrolled to attend kindergarten early
- early entry to school requires a formal cognitive assessment that can only be undertaken once the child has turned four years of age and where the cost is met by parents. A child must be assessed as exceptionally gifted (WPPSI-IV results of at least 130 FSIQ) and considered at risk of long-term educational disadvantage if they do not commence school.
- applications for early entry to school are usually not determined until Term 4 of the year prior to the requested early entry to school
- children are eligible for only one year of funded kindergarten, so careful consideration should be made as to which year families enrol their child in kindergarten.

Should parents decide to request early entry to kindergarten for their child, the following requirements must be met:

- the child must be at least 3 years and six months on or before 30 April in the year they attend the funded kindergarten program
- parents must make a written request for early entry to school to either the Regional Director of the appropriate Regional Office or directly to the principal of a non-government school dependent on whether the child is intending to attend a government or non-government school
- parents must provide the kindergarten service provider with a written response from the Department or the non-government school acknowledging the family has requested early entry to school
- the kindergarten service provider must keep a copy of the written response from the Department or non-government school with the child's kindergarten enrolment records and upload a copy on KIM.

No Jab, No Play

The 'No Jab, No Play' legislation aims to reduce the risk of vaccine-preventable diseases through increased immunisation rates in the community.

The legislation requires all children enrolling in early childhood education and care services to be up to date with their vaccinations or to meet the criteria for exemption at the point of enrolment. Services can obtain an up to date immunisation status from families up to two months prior to the first day of attendance at kindergarten in order to confirm kindergarten enrolment. The legislation does not require services to monitor or document the ongoing immunisation status of children following enrolment.

Prior to confirming enrolment, service providers must obtain evidence that the child:

- is fully vaccinated for their age (via an immunisation status certificate), or
- is immunised in accordance with a recognised catch-up schedule if the child has fallen behind with their vaccinations, or
- has a medical reason not to be vaccinated.

Service providers:

- may give eligible children experiencing vulnerability and disadvantage a 16 week grace

period to produce proof of up-to-date immunisation and

- should provide information and assistance to families about the immunisation process and
- must keep immunisation documentation with the child's enrolment record in accordance with the applicable regulations.

Tips for starting kindergarten

There are lots of things you can do to prepare your child for kindergarten.

Over the summer holidays

- Be positive - talk to your child about what they will do at kindergarten.
- Borrow library books about kindergarten to read together.
- Encourage your child to dress themselves, so they can manage tasks like taking their jumper on and off.
- Visit the kindergarten or travel past it on your route home.
- Label all belongings that your child will take to kinder.
- Read over the family information the kindergarten provided to ensure everything is prepared.
- Talk to your child and establish a good bye routine together.
- Establish a routine for kindergarten mornings – this could include a chart with pictures outlining the different steps for getting ready.
- Organise holiday play dates with friends or children who will be going to the kindergarten.
- Create a routine around sleep - five-year-olds need 10 to 12 hours sleep each night. Practice sticking to bedtime and wake up schedules in the weeks leading up to the start of kinder.

On the first day of kindergarten

- Talk to your child about what to expect and when you will pick them up.
- Follow the kindergarten's instructions about what to bring (e.g. sun hat, spare clothes).
- Prepare the night before, lay out clothing you both agree on and pack their bag together.
- Encourage your child to follow your morning routine and remind them of next steps.
- Talk to the kindergarten teacher about how you would like to settle your child in (e.g. you may want to stay for a while.)
- If you are having trouble separating from your child, ask the kindergarten teacher or educators to help you.
- Make sure you say good bye – disappearing quietly can cause greater distress and mistrust.
- Ensure you are on time at the end of the session to pick up your child.

- Be enthusiastic and positive.
- At the end of the day talk to your child about what happened during the day.

For more information, go to

<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/parents/child-care-kindergarten/Pages/tips-starting-kindergarten.aspx>

Why do we let children play with mud, sticks, be superheroes, climb trees, jump from the highest rung on the climbing frame, experience the fire pit?

Simply because children will spend more of their lives as adults than they do being children and play equips children with skills for life.

But how does playing with sticks equip you for life??

When children play they will make mistakes and poor decisions – they will learn the rules, the expectations and will begin to understand their impact on others. They will learn to begin to take responsibility for their actions. They will learn they have a voice and how to use their voice with their peers and the courage this can take. Children are supported by teachers and educators who know them deeply and who guide them with the skill and expertise of their profession. Children are given the time they need to practice, practice and re practice these skills at the pace that is right for them. They have the opportunity to develop their competence in assessing and managing risk.

The result is children develop their emerging autonomy, interdependence, resilience and sense of agency when they take considered risks in their decision-making and learn to cope with the unexpected. When adults view this play through an adult lens, while it may create turmoil within ourselves, to remove risk from children's lives is to remove the opportunity for children to develop some very basic life skills.

The Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework reflects this understanding of children's learning and I would encourage you to visit the Victorian Department of Education website to find out more.

<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/professionals/learning/Pages/veyldf.aspx?Redirect=2>



TRANSITION: A POSITIVE START TO SCHOOL

Information sheet for families

As you and your child settle into this year, starting school seems a long way off. Starting school can be both challenging and exciting, and this information sheet offers some information on how your child's early childhood program will support you and your child's to transition to school as the year progresses.

Your child has already experienced many small and large transitions in life. How your child reacts to new/less familiar environments (for example, when you go on holiday, starting child care or kindergarten, going on playdates, even transitioning from one activity or routine to the next) provides a picture of how your child reacts to new situations and how best to support them.

why is a positive start to school important?

A positive start to school leads to better learning and wellbeing outcomes for your child both during the transition and beyond. It helps to support your child's continuity of learning and development and supports them to feel secure, confident and connected to new people and places.

Enrolling your child in school

Most primary schools begin their enrolment processes in May, the year before children start school. When you enrol your child in school, you can maximise the opportunities to get to know the school through transition to school programs and activities. The most effective transitions start well before the end of the year and extend well beyond the first few days of school.

Transition to school programs and activities

Participating in transition to school programs and activities will help you and your child get a better understanding of what school will be like and to establish friendships with other children and families who will be attending the school.

Transition Learning and Development Statement

Your child's early childhood teacher will write a Transition Learning and Development Statement (TLDS). This TLDS will summarise your child's interests, skills and abilities. It will also identify individual approaches and teaching strategies so that your child's school and prep teacher can quickly get to know your child and plan appropriate learning and teaching programs.

If you are planning to send your child to an Outside School Hours Care (OSHC) service, the TLDS can be shared with the OSHC service too. The TLDS helps OSHC educators plan for your child's interests and support the continuity between early childhood, school and OSHC.

The TLDS can help you to understand, support, communicate about and advocate for your child's learning as they transition to school. You will be provided with a copy of your child's completed TLDS.

Your child's TLDS contains some personal information about your child, including your child's name, date of birth and photo, plus your name and contact details. When it is relevant, it will also contain the name and contact details of other early childhood professionals who are supporting your child.

TLDSs are usually written in Term 4, but if your child has a disability or developmental delay, your child's early childhood educator may write an early TLDS around June/July as a conversation starter with you and your child's chosen school about required inclusion supports.

Because you know so much about your child, your contribution to the statement is valuable. You will be invited to fill in a section of the TLDS. Filling in this section of the TLDS will help the school get to know how they can help you and your child so you can both have a great start to school.

There is also a section for your child to fill in (with the help of an adult, which could be you or the early childhood teacher). This section usually includes a drawing and records what your child is curious about school and what they think about starting school.

How information is shared with your child's school

From 2018, the TLDS will be completed, shared and stored using an online tool hosted on the *Insight Assessment Platform*. All information hosted on the *Insight Assessment Platform* is stored securely within Australia.

The *Insight Assessment Platform* is already in use in all Victorian government schools and allows schools to create an enduring record of your child's learning and development. Some Catholic and Independent schools may also receive your child's TLDS via the *Insight Assessment Platform* or they will receive a paper-based or electronic copy from your child's early childhood service.

The Department of Education and Training (the Department) contracts some of its functions to external service providers. Where this occurs, data security measures are required by the Department as part of the contracting process. The Department has conducted a privacy impact assessment of the *Insight Assessment Platform* to ensure compliance with the Department's Information Privacy Policy www.education.vic.gov.au/Pages/privacypolicy.

Information from the TLDS, and some school enrolment data may be used by the Department for monitoring and research purposes. This information would be presented in a statistical form (e.g. numbers and graphs) and would **not** name individual children.

For more information about the *Insight Assessment Platform*, contact the Department of Education and Training at psts@edumail.vic.gov.au.

For more information

Please visit www.education.vic.gov.au/transitiontoschool

<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/parents/Pages/default.aspx>

This document has been translated into a range of languages which are available at

<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Pages/translation.aspx>



School readiness – Is your child ready for big school?



Are you thinking of enrolling your child into primary school next year? Starting school is a big step for little kids. You might have heard the term ‘school readiness’ – but what does it really mean? Find out all about school readiness and how you can help your child prepare for big school!

What is ‘school readiness’?

‘School readiness’ is a measure of the knowledge, skills and behaviours that enable children to participate and succeed in school. Parents sometimes think that school readiness means being able to read, write and do basic maths before starting school. But this isn’t the case! School readiness is about the development of the whole child – their social and emotional skills, physical skills, communication skills and cognitive skills. Children cannot thrive at school if they haven’t developed the skills to manage things like getting along with other children, following instructions, and communicating their needs.

Research shows that children who start school when developmentally ready to learn tend to do better in school – and it sets them up for further success later in life.

Ready for school – how can you tell?

‘School readiness’ in children includes many different skills and behaviours, such as:

Social skill

Being able to get along with other children, demonstrate basic manners, assert themselves, and being able to play independently as well as with other children.

Emotional maturity

Being able to manage their emotions, cope with minimal adult contact in large groups, focus on tasks, follow directions and instructions from teachers, cope with the stress of the new school environment, and understand the rules.

Language skills

Being able to talk and listen to adults and other children, speak clearly, communicate needs, understand stories, and begin to identify some letters and sounds.

Cognitive Skills

Basic number sense, basic thinking skills, being able to wait and take turns.

Physical health and coordination

Basic health, fine motor skills (such as being able to grip a pencil and turn pages in a book) and physical coordination (being able to run, jump, climb, and play ball).

Independence

Basic skills to manage their needs without adult supervision, such as going to the toilet, dressing, unwrapping their lunch and managing their belongings.

If you are not sure whether your child is ready to start big school, talk to your child's preschool/ kindergarten teacher or early childhood educator – they will be able to help you with assessing your child's development and readiness for school.

What can you do to help?

While there has been a rise in popularity for commercial 'school readiness' programs for preschoolers – these are not usually necessary, and little kids learn best through play! Here are some easy things you can do to help your little one get ready for starting school:

- Try to arrange play dates with other children starting at the same school. This gives your little one the chance to develop their social skills – and will give them the confidence that they will have a friend to talk to when they start school.
- Let your child practise drawing with a range of different materials, such as pencils, crayons and textas, to help develop their fine motor skills – and remember to praise their efforts
- Encourage your little one to dress and undress themselves, and use the toilet independently.
- Encourage your little one to have conversations with you – ask them questions, listen to their answers, and encourage them to talk about what they think and feel so they can express themselves with new friends and teachers.
- Read with your child as often as possible. If your little one has some reading skills already, that's great! But if not, don't worry – they will be taught how to read at school. Just enjoying books with

you develops early literacy skills and helps encourage a love of reading. When reading with your little one, talk to them about the story, point out new words, and ask questions – this will help with their comprehension, vocabulary and language skills.

- Help your child develop a basic awareness of numbers by helping out around the house – they could set the table and count the plates, match socks from the washing line, or measure the ingredients for some baking.
- Play games with your little one – simple board games (like snakes and ladders) and card games (like snap and go fish) are great for practising turn-taking, sharing, waiting and learning to cope with not winning!

Remember, every child develops at their own pace and has their own strengths, interests, temperament and approach to learning – so don't worry if your child doesn't demonstrate all of the 'school readiness' skills and behaviours described above. If you feel at all concerned with your little one's development, talk to their teacher/early childhood educator or your GP – they will be able to provide assessment and advice

For more information, go to: <https://www.learningpotential.gov.au/is-your-child-ready-for-big-school>

Your child's social skills in kindergarten are more important than their academics

By: Amanda Morgan

Parents of young children tend to worry a lot about whether or not their kids are making adequate gains as they launch into their academic careers.

"Can Johnny read the list of 100 high-frequency words?"

"Does Betty know how to count to 500?"

"Is Tom doing quantum physics yet?"

While early education creates an important foundation for academic skills, many parents would be surprised to know that social skills are actually far more predictive of outcomes into adulthood than early academics.

For example, a study published in 2015 showed that even while controlling for family demographics and early academic ability, the social skills observed in kindergarten showed significant correlation with well-being at age 25.

That's a lot of staying power!

Regardless of how advanced of a reader they were or how much money their parents made, kindergarteners who demonstrated social competence were more likely to graduate from high school, go to college, get a job, and stay out of jail than those who showed a lower level of social competence.

So while many parents and schools may be feeling the pressure to cut back on play and social interaction in order to get more "hard skill" instruction time in, it's actually those "soft skills" that are most predictive of long-term success

Here are five important social competencies you can foster in your child.

1. How to play well with others

Play is a powerful catalyst for development in the early years. By playing with others, children learn to negotiate, problem solve, take turns, share and experiment. You can help your child build these skills by making time for free play with other children. While dance class, soccer practice and choreographed play dates may have their own value, children need plenty of time engaging in unstructured play with other children, where they may be supervised—but not instructed—by the adults around them.

2. How to problem-solve

It is tempting to swoop in at the first disgruntled squawk and make everything right again. We confiscate the object of the argument, set timers, or send children to play in different areas. We're good at problem-solving because we get SO MUCH practice as parents! And while some of this may be necessary for survival, our kids need some of that practice too.

So the next time your child has a problem, invite them to take part in that problem-solving process. Ask your child to describe what's going on, brainstorm solutions and try one out. You're still an active player, supporting your child through the process, but rather than doing all the solving yourself, let your child own the problem by asking, "What do you think you could do about that?"

Teaching a child to be a problem solver also means that we teach them how to fail and try again, which is another critical "soft skill." When we ask children how their solution is working out, we give them an opportunity to evaluate their experience and make improvements when necessary. We're teaching them that mistakes help us learn and move forward.

3. How to label and recognize feelings

Children who are perceptive to the emotions around them are also better able to get along well with others. You can foster this skill by calling attention to emotional cues and naming emotions. You can do this not only in your home ("I'm looking at your brother's face right now, and I don't think he's having fun." "You looked so happy when you won, your smile was like a laser beam!") but by also talking about the emotions in stories as well. ("How do you think he felt when that happened?")

Storybooks are FULL of conflict and emotion—it's often what drives the plot. These conversations about observed emotions are often easier because your child isn't tied up in the turbulent emotions themselves. From this comfortable vantage point, they're able to be more thoughtful about the emotions on the page and then apply their understanding in real life.

Another thing to keep in mind is that research has shown that excessive screen use may interfere with a child's ability to recognize emotions in others. So make sure that your kids get plenty of time playing and interacting face to face with other humans, rather than with pixels and lights on a screen.

4. How to be helpful

Being helpful to others requires children to look beyond themselves and recognize the needs of others. By noticing and complimenting your child when you notice helpful behaviors, you encourage them to continue.

Give your child simple opportunities to help within your family—putting away groceries, getting the baby's fresh diaper ready, or helping a sibling to get dressed—and then be generous with your gratitude afterward.

Point out the helpers around you and show gratitude together to instill a value of service. This may be as simple as thanking the bagger at the grocery store or taking cookies to the fire station. It can also take a fanciful twist. For my own superhero-obsessed boys, I found that equating heroes to helpers made them feel like Batman just by helping with simple tasks around our home.

5. How to control their impulses

Impulse control is a part of the executive functions directed by the prefrontal cortex of the brain. This area doesn't completely develop until well into early adulthood, but some of the most rapid development happens in the early childhood years. That's why children need opportunities to practice this growing skill.

That may look like the infamous marshmallow study, where a child must delay gratification and wait before consuming a treat, but it can also look like play time! Movement games that require a child to stop and go like Red Light/Green Light, Dance and Freeze, and Simon Says give kids practice quickly shifting gears and controlling their impulses to move.

Pretend play is also a great way to build these skills. By taking on a new character and an imaginative storyline, children have to plan before acting, take turns and make rules to follow. They also practice thinking outside of their own perspective and act as they think another would, rather than simply following their own impulses.

Our fast-paced society may give you the impression that your child needs to learn more academic skills—and sooner than ever before. However, the reality is that the "soft" social skills they gain in early childhood—through the slow, simple processes of playing and interacting, engaging with their families, and paying attention to the world around them—will serve them much better and for much longer.

For more information, go to:

www.mother.ly/child/your-childs-social-skills-in-kindergarten-are-more-important-than-their-academics?rebelltitem=4#rebelltitem4

Some Useful Links.....

- **Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA)**
The National Quality Standard encourages continuous improvement in children's education and care services quality across the country. ACECQA supports the regulatory authorities that implement and administer the National Quality Framework. ACECQA also works with many professional bodies to support quality reforms.
<http://www.acecqa.gov.au>
- **Starting Blocks**
<https://www.startingblocks.gov.au/>
- **Department of Education and Training**
Supporting the development, health and wellbeing of babies and young children through services, legislation and care.
<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/Pages/default.aspx>
<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/parents/kindergarten/Pages/default.aspx>
- **Australian Government – Learning Potential**
<https://www.learningpotential.gov.au/>
- **Early Life Foundation – Kathy Walker**
The Early Life Foundations team includes many experienced professionals and consultants with particular expertise in early childhood development, psychology, parenting and education.
<http://earlylife.com.au/info/fact-sheets>
- **Louise Porter**
Louise Porter is a Child Psychologist working with children and adolescents with developmental, emotional or behavioural difficulties and also works as a consultant supporting parents, educators and other professionals.
<http://www.louiseporter.com.au/faq/>
- **Victorian Early Years Development Framework**
<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/childhood/providers/edcare/veyldframework.pdf>
- **The Australian parenting website with expert health and parenting information**
www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au
www.developingchild.harvard.edu
<http://raisingchildren.net.au/preschoolers/preschoolers.html>
www.natureplaywa.org.au
- **Excellent information on brain development in the early years**
www.maggiedent.com
- **The Royal Children's Hospital**
<http://www.rch.org.au/kidsinfo/#tab>
- **Sandi Phoenix**
<https://phoenix-support.com.au/resources>