



GEELONG CHILDREN'S CENTRE KINDERGARTEN INFORMATION BOOKLET 2026

Artwork by Kinder Group 2025: Kinder children's imaginative drawings of their own planets.



KINDER INFORMATION FOR 2026

Geelong Children's Centre

Kindergarten Teachers:

Paula Collins (Lead Teacher 3- and 4-year-old)

Emma Trifilo (3-year-old)

We will be offering 3 and 4 year old kindergarten program Monday to Friday

2026 Session Times

3 and 4 year old Kindergarten

Monday (8:30am – 5:00pm)

Tuesday (8:30am – 5:00pm)

Wednesday (8:30am – 5:00pm)

Thursday (8:30am – 5:00pm)

Friday (8:30am – 5:00pm)

You have to enrol your child in 3 and 4 year old kindergarten for 15 hours of kindergarten per week to be eligible for funding.

During Terms 1, 2, 3, & 4

Four Year Old Kindergarten Program

Our funded 4 year old kinder program will be offered Monday to Friday. Children who turn four before the 30th of April 2026 are eligible for a government funded 4 year old kindergarten program. 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 decide based on your individual child's needs. Consider your child's social skills, independence and maturity in determining their readiness for kindergarten and school the following year. If you do choose to hold your child back and they turn six prior to beginning school, you will be required to fill in an Exemption from School Form for your child. It is responsibility of the parent to fill out the form.

Three Year Old Kindergarten Program

Our funded 3 year old kinder program will be offered Monday to Friday. Subsidies for three-year-old kindergarten programs will work the same way as they do for four-year-old kindergarten. The program will be run by a qualified Early Childhood Teacher and a Qualified Teacher Assistants. Children who turn three before the 30th of April 2026 are eligible for a government funded 3 year old kindergarten position.

Research shows that quality play-based learning is a powerful way to support children's learning and development. The benefits last into the school years and beyond.

Evidence also shows that two years are better than one when it comes to early learning. Taking part in a quality kindergarten program at an earlier age leads to positive effects on child development. It has even greater benefits for children who need extra support or are in vulnerable circumstances.

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 2025 as the government only funds one year of 4 year old kinder 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.

Families with children born between January and April can choose which year to start Three-Year-Old Kindergarten. These children can start in the same year they turn three, or in the year they turn four years of age. So, it is very important for families to think carefully as children will be young 3 year olds and will be young 4 year olds when they transition to kinder 4. . It is very 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

The maximum class size is 30 at our Centre and once we have reached its capacity there will be no more places available. Children must have already turned three by 30th April 2025 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.

Please copy or click the link to use the starting age calculator to enter your child's birth date to find out what year they can start Three- and Four-Year-Old Kindergarten <https://www.vic.gov.au/kinder-quick-guide-parents#when-to-start>

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.

Free Kinder

- Free Kinder is available (if your service is participating) for Three- and Four-Year-Old
- Kindergarten programs, and Pre-Prep in 2026.
- Free Kinder is for everyone – you don't need to be a permanent resident or Australian citizen
- to access a free kindergarten program.
- Free Kinder can only be accessed at one service at a time.

Long day care services

- Families with children enrolled in long day care kindergarten programs at participating long day care services will receive an annual fee offset.
- For children enrolled in a 15-hour kindergarten program in 2025 at our service, this is saving families up to \$2,101.
- If children access more than the set hours (e.g. 15 hours for Three- and Four-Year Old kindergarten), any additional hours are not covered by the offset.
- If families are eligible for the Commonwealth Childcare Subsidy (CCS), this will be applied first and then the Free Kinder offset. This means families only need to pay the remaining amount after CCS and the Free Kinder offset have been applied.

Pre-Prep

- Four-Year-Old Kindergarten is becoming Pre-Prep, with programs increasing from 15 to 30 hours each week by full roll-out which will be in 2032.
- Pre-Prep will be available at our service in 2026 – the Pre-Prep program will be for 15 hours each week.
- Pre-Prep offers a longer program in the year before school, which means there will be more time for children to deepen their learning and development.
- Pre-Prep is a play-based learning program led by qualified teachers. Like Four-Year-Old Kindergarten, Pre-Prep will follow the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework.

For more information about Pre-Prep, go to <https://www.vic.gov.au/preprep>

Three-Year-Old Kindergarten

- Three-Year-Old Kindergarten program hours will vary from service to service, providing families with between 5 and 15 hours each week. Our service will offer 15 hours each week in 2026.
- Starting a quality kindergarten program at an earlier age leads to positive effects on child development. Kindergarten is a safe place for children to build skills, become more independent, and make friends.
- Use the Starting Age Calculator on the Department of Education's website to enter your child's birth date to find out what year they can start Three- and Four-Year-Old Kindergarten.

For more information, go to:

[https://www.vic.gov.au/evidence-behind-three-year-old-kindergarten#:~:text=Read%20more%20about%20the%20evidence%20underpinning%20this%20reform%3A%20Two%20years%20of%20quality%20kindergarten%20\(PDF%2C%20405KB\).](https://www.vic.gov.au/evidence-behind-three-year-old-kindergarten#:~:text=Read%20more%20about%20the%20evidence%20underpinning%20this%20reform%3A%20Two%20years%20of%20quality%20kindergarten%20(PDF%2C%20405KB).)

<https://www.vic.gov.au/evidence-behind-three-year-old-kindergarten>

<https://www.vic.gov.au/three-year-old-kindergarten-victorians>

[https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/2026-sector-enrolment-pack-\(2025-2026-LGAs\).pdf](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/2026-sector-enrolment-pack-(2025-2026-LGAs).pdf)

Supporting high-quality early education

To help ensure Victoria's early childhood workforce is equipped with the skills, knowledge and educational resources to deliver high-quality programs for children attending Three-Year-Old Kindergarten, we are delivering a teaching toolkit to services.

The toolkit comprises:

- a collection of educational resources
- professional learning
- content designed to support high-quality practice.

The toolkit will help support professionals to deliver high-quality educational programs appropriate to the unique learning and development outcomes of children participating in three-year-old kindergarten programs, including in both single and multi-aged groups.

The toolkit will be informed by, and be consistent with, the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF).

The Early Years Assessment and Learning Tool (EYALT)

The Early Years Assessment and Learning Tool (EYALT) is a new online resource co-designed with early childhood teachers to help understand each child's unique strengths, interests, and abilities. Whether you're new or experienced, EYALT is a valuable tool for all early childhood professionals.

It helps by:

- documenting interactions to understand each child better
- showing how children progress in their learning over time
- integrating seamlessly with daily teaching practices
- generating evidence for informed discussions with school teachers
- improving observations and assessments for intentional teaching
- supporting continuity of learning during transitions to school.

How EYALT works

The EYALT contains 8 modules aligned with the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF) and the Victorian Curriculum. Each module focuses on different aspects of a child's development.

* 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 \$14.80 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 \$5.50. Ongoing fees for this service which parents will also meet the cost of are as follows:

Transactions from a Bank Account:	1.27c per transaction
Transactions from Visa/Mastercard:	2.07% 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. Centrelink requires that the child attends the Centre on the last day of the notice period otherwise you will lose your CCS and full fees will be payable from when the child last attended care.

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

days 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.

About Free Kinder

Free Kinder is available for children enrolled in funded:

Three-Year-Old Kindergarten programs

Four-Year-Old Kindergarten programs, including Pre-Prep

It's offered across Victoria at participating standalone (sessional) kinder services and long day care services.

No matter where your child goes to kinder, they'll take part in a quality program led by a qualified teacher.

If your child attends a long day care service participating in Free Kinder you will receive a fee offset.

Free Kinder funded hours can be different depending on the service your child attends (long day care or sessional kindergarten), and how old your child is.

Three-Year-Old Kindergarten: Between 5 to 15 hours, increasing to 15 hours by 2029.

Four-Year-Old Kindergarten: Currently 15 hours

For more information go to: <https://www.vic.gov.au/free-kinder>

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.

ADMISSION AND ENROLMENT POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Enrolment and orientation are an exciting and emotional time for children and families. It is important to manage this time with sensitivity and support, building partnerships between families and the Service. Such partnerships enable the Service and families to work toward the common goal of promoting consistent quality outcomes for individual children and the Service.

NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD (NQS)

QUALITY AREA 6: COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS		
6.1	Supportive relationships with families	Respectful relationships with families are developed and maintained and families are supported in their parenting role.
6.1.1	Engagement with the service	Families are supported from enrolment to be involved in their service and contribute to service decisions.
6.1.2	Parent views are respected	The expertise, culture, values and beliefs of families are respected, and families share in decision-making about their child's learning and wellbeing.
6.1.3	Families are supported	Current information is available to families about the service and relevant community services and resources to support parenting and family wellbeing.
6.2	Collaborative partnerships	Collaborative partnerships enhance children's inclusion, learning and wellbeing.
6.2.3	Community and engagement	The service builds relationships and engages with its community.

EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES NATIONAL REGULATIONS	
77	Health, hygiene and safe food practices
78	Food and beverages
79	Service providing food and beverages
80	Weekly menu
88	Infectious diseases
90	Medical conditions policy
92	Medication record
93	Administration of medication
97	Emergency and evacuation procedures

99	Children leaving the education and care service premises
100	Risk assessment must be conducted before excursion
101	Conduct of risk assessment for excursion
102	Authorisation for excursions
157	Access for parents
160	Child enrolment records to be kept by approved provider and family day care educator
161	Authorisations to be kept in enrolment record
162	Health information to be kept in enrolment record
168	Education and care service must have policies and procedures
173	Prescribed information is to be displayed
177	Prescribed enrolment and other documents to be kept by approved provider
181	Confidentiality of records kept by approved provider
183	Storage of records and other documents

PURPOSE

We aim to ensure children and families receive a positive and informative enrolment and orientation process that meets their individual needs. We strive to establish respectful and supportive relationships between families and the Service to promote positive outcomes for children whilst adhering to legislative requirements.

SCOPE

This policy applies to children, families, staff, management, and visitors of the Service.

ENROLMENT

According to the Child Care Provider Handbook (June 2019) 'enrolling children is a requirement under Family Assistance Law for all children who attend childcare (or have an arrangement for care) regardless of their parent's or guardian's eligibility for Child Care Subsidy. An enrolment links the child, the individual claiming the subsidy and the childcare service.' An enrolment notice is required for each child attending the service. This reflects the type of arrangement that is in place between the provider and the family/individual or organisation.

Children with disabilities will be enrolled, if in the opinion of management, the Service can meet the child's needs. Additional staff, resources and funding may be required through disability and inclusion programs.

IMPLEMENTATION

Our Service accepts enrolments of children aged between 6weeks- 5 years of age. Enrolments will be accepted providing:

- a) the maximum daily attendance does not exceed the licensed capacity of the Service
- b) a vacancy is available for the booking required

- c) the adult to child ratio is maintained in each room
- d) priority of access guidelines is adhered to.

When a family has indicated their interest in enrolling their child in our Service, we will organise a tour of the Service to share information.

- Families are taken on a tour by the Director and Deputy Director.
- Families will be provided with information on possible vacancies and availability of spots and start date.
- During the tour families will be provided with a range of information about the Service which may include: the service philosophy, inclusion, background of the service, programming methods based on the VEYLF curriculum, menu, incursions, excursions, fees, Child Care Subsidy, Centre policies and procedures, SunSmart requirements, regulations and the licensing and assessment process for our State, the National Quality Framework, educator qualifications, introduction of Room Coordinator/ kinder teacher or Room Leader in the room the child will be starting in.
- Families will be invited to ask questions and seek any further information they may require.
- After the tour families will be provided with an enrolment pack which consists of:
 - Enrolment Form
 - Family Handbook, which outlines the Service's operation, philosophy, certain policies and procedure
 - Child Care Subsidy (CCS) information
- Information about gap fees and absences will be discussed.
- When the client makes the decision to enroll, they fill out the enrolment form in a complete manner with a current immunisation history statement attached.
- Families will complete the enrolment form informing management of their child's allergies, medical management plans and individual needs.
- 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 orientation process is also explained in the enrolment package and is reiterated with the parent.
- Discussions are also held with the Director or Deputy and families regarding the orientation process that may suit the needs of the family and child. Families are informed of the Priority of Access Guidelines 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.
- After receiving the completed enrolment form, Room Coordinator / Kinder Teacher / in-charge staff member of the child's room will call the parent to explain the orientation process at length and will set times and dates for orientation with the parent/guardian.
- Any matters that are of a sensitive nature, such as discussing a child's medical needs, Court Orders, parenting plans or parenting orders, will be discussed privately with management. Families will be required to bring any documents required in relation to court orders, medical needs or plans.
- As per our Orientation Policy, families will bring their child into the service at a time that suits them so the child and family can familiarise themselves with the environment also so an educator can spend time with the parent. Families are expected to orient their child for minimum one week in the room before the starting date.
- On the first day of orientation parents will be made familiar with signing in and out procedure, room routines, and educator and parent communication strategies. The importance of

communication between parent and staff is emphasized. Families are invited to ask any questions they may have.

- 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 or we also offer external support through outside agencies.
- Before the child begins their first day, the Centre must have all required documentation for the child.
- It is a legal requirement that prior to the child starting at the Service we have all required documents including
 - the completed enrolment form
 - medical management plans (if relevant) completed by the child's general practitioner
 - a current Immunisation History Statement from the Australian Immunisation Register (AIR) showing the child is up to date with immunisations for their age and
 - details of any court orders, parenting orders or parenting plans
- It is a requirement of the Family Assistance Office that immunisation information held by the Service is kept current. Parents are reminded mid-way through the year to provide any immunisation updates to the Service in order to continue receiving childcare subsidy.
- It is the family's responsibility to keep the Service informed of any changes to the information recorded on the application form.

Other information about our service's enrolment procedure includes:

- We aim to accommodate family 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.

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.

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.

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 • family carer or legal guardian identifies the child as known to child protection or in out of home care and/or • referred by one of the following: <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: 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.

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

RELATED POLICIES

Respect for Children Policy Governance and Management of Service Staff Recruitment and Induction Policy Work Health Safety Policy Payment of Fees Policy Acceptance and Refusal of Authorisation Policy Health, Hygiene and Control of Infectious Disease Policy Child Immunisation Policy	Child Safe Environment Policy Safety and Supervision Policy Orientation Policy Confidentiality and Privacy Policy Staff Code of Conduct Record Keeping and Retention Policy Additional Medical Conditions Policy Communication with Families Policy Arrival and Departure Policy
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SOURCE:

Australian Children’s Education & Care Quality Authority. (2014).

Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment. (2019) Child Care Provider handbook
<https://www.education.gov.au/child-care-provider-handbook-0>

Kinder Funding Guide 2016 and key policy changes and updates

Australian Government Services Australia

<https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/individuals/services/medicare/australian-immunisation-register/how-get-immunisation-history-statement>

Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010. (Amended 2018).

[Education and Care Services National Regulations](#). (2011)

Guide to the Education and Care Services National Law and the Education and Care Services National Regulations. (2020)

Victoria State Government. Requirements for all early childhood services.

<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/providers/regulation/Pages/reqallservices.aspx>

Revised National Quality Standard. (2018).

Review

Policy Reviewed	Modifications	Next Review Date
May 2018	Updated the National Quality Standards references to comply with revised standards Education and Care Services National Amendment Regulations 2017	April 2020
September 2018	Minor terminology and grammatical adjustments.	April 2020
March 2021	Priority Access Guidelines for Kindergarten added minor editing changes sources checked for currency order changed for some items required for the enrolment of the child Additions to content of policy Updated information related to dates and times for 2023 - 2024 enrolments Regulations added Related policies section added Changed layout of the policy for better read Purpose and Implementation added	April 2023
April 2023	minor editing changes sources checked for currency	May 2025
June 2025	Updated information related to kindergarten priority of access criteria minor editing changes sources checked for currency	April 2027

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.

How to choose a quality early childhood service

Choosing the right child care can be difficult. Your decision will depend on your family's needs and the environment where you and your child feel most comfortable.

As well as providing care, child care services provide an opportunity for your child to develop social, emotional and learning skills.

Every family is different, so it's important to think about your own family needs when choosing child care for your child.

Things to consider

- How old child is your child?
- How much care will your child need each day?
- How many days a week will you need care?
- How far you do want to travel?

If you only require a few hours of child care each week, occasional care may suit you. If you work full time, you may need a long day care service.

What to look for

You should look for a child care service that:

- offers valuable play and learning experiences for your child
- makes sure there is a caring and consistent relationship between staff and your child
- allows children time to explore and learn new activities

- supports all aspects of your child’s development, including their social, emotional, physical and cognitive needs
- sets clear and reasonable expectations of behaviour
- works in partnership with your family.

The quality of early childhood services (like child care and kindergarten) is rated under a system called the National Quality Framework. Just like schools, quality child care and kindergarten is important because high quality early education sets young children up for life.

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 the link for more information on how to choose child care and kindergarten

<https://my.gov.au/en/services/raising-kids/toddlers-and-preschoolers/child-care/finding-child-care>

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 [startingblocks.gov.au](https://www.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.vic.gov.au/child-care>

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.vic.gov.au/sending-child-kinder>

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 engaged with children, playing and talking with them.

Information on display

The kindergarten should have information about their operations, policies and procedures on display and made available to you on request.

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 services education and activities program

- the contact details of the responsible Quality Assessment and Regulation 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 approach to behaviour management
- staff qualifications
- their children's service license or approval certificate.
- the name of the proprietor or approved provider.

Questions you can ask

To help decide if a kindergarten is suitable for you and your child, the following questions will be helpful:

- What is the quality rating?
- Are places available for the days and hours I need?
- Does kindergarten operate throughout the year or only during certain times, like school terms?
- Do they offer a funded kindergarten program?
- Does the service offer extended hours of care?
- What is the ratio of qualified staff?
- What are the staff's values and philosophies around caring and educating children?
- What are the fees?
- Is there a fee to be placed on the waiting list?
- Are there any other costs I'll be asked to pay over and above the fees?
- How does the program meet the different needs, interests and experiences of the children?
- How do they support children with additional needs?
- What happens if my child is unwell, upset, or unsettled?
- Will the same staff consistently care for my child?
- Can parents be involved and how?
- Can I visit at any time of the day?
- How are food and drink provided for children?
- What are the sleeping arrangements for the children?
- What is the process for administering 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. All kindergartens integrated as part of Long Day Care charge fees to help meet the cost of running kindergarten programs. The teacher-led kindergarten program may be integrated with additional hours of education and care. Kindergarten programs delivered in a long day care setting provide flexibility for parents and carers by offering childcare before and after the kindergarten program. 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.

What is the difference between a kindergarten program in a long day care (childcare) Centre and a standalone/ sessional kindergarten?

Children can attend a kinder program at either a long day care centre or at a standalone/ sessional kindergarten.

A long day care Centre can offer a full day of education and care, including a kinder program. The teacher-led kinder program is integrated with additional hours of education and care.

At a standalone service, a kinder program will only operate on certain days and at specific times. These days and hours are set by the kinder service.

No matter where your child goes to kindergarten, teachers and trained educators will lead the program.

Standalone/ sessional kindergarten - children attend kindergarten programming for set days and hours
Long day care services have two parts: kindergarten programs that children attend as part of their time in long day care, and education and care for children aged between 0 and 6 years.

Source: <https://www.vic.gov.au/sending-child-kinder>

Kindergarten programs may be offered in different settings



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 hours of kindergarten program free of charge at sessional kindergarten or 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. All eligible children are able to attend a funded kindergarten program of 15 hours per week for 40 weeks (or 600 hours) in the year before school.

For three year olds

Funded kindergarten

The Victorian government has rolled out a subsidised kindergarten for all three-year-olds. Kindergarten programs will be run in sessional kindergartens and long day care Centre's. They are available across the state from 2023. Some services already offer kindergarten for three-year-old children. In most cases, these programs will be subsidised.

In 2025, service providers can determine how many hours of funded Three-Year-Old Kindergarten they deliver per week, with a minimum of 5 hours and a maximum of 15 hours, within set parameters.

We will be offering Three-Year-Old program Monday to Friday so parents may have more choice in choosing the days they want their child to attend.

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
- be from a refugee or asylum seeker background
- 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 enroll 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 Centre's offer kindergarten for three year old children. These programs are subsidised by the government for 5 hours as of 2023.

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.vic.gov.au/koorie-kids-shine>

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?

During four-year-old kindergarten, your early childhood teacher will assess your child, plan for their move to school and identify any developmental areas that may need particular attention. There may be a small number of children for whom a second year of kindergarten is appropriate.

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

There are guidelines that early childhood teachers will follow to assess your child's eligibility for a second year of kindergarten. 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
- meet with you to discuss this assessment
- develop a Term 3 Learning and Development Plan for your child, if delays in your child's development are identified
- get the support of other early childhood development professionals as needed.

If the teacher believes your child has a developmental delay in two or more key areas and would benefit from a second year of kindergarten, they will talk to you about your options and if you agree, they will complete a Declaration of eligibility for a second year of funded kindergarten. They will send the declaration to the Department. You will also get a copy.

They will also complete a Second Year Statement with your help during Term 4.

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).

When should my child come to Kindergarten?

All children learn and develop in different ways. Some children may benefit from starting school at a younger age, while other children may benefit from starting later. It is important that children are ready to transition to school after their funded kindergarten year. Therefore, it is important that parents and guardians will need to carefully consider the best time for their child to start kindergarten.

Families of children with birth dates between 1 January and 30 April have a choice about whether their child will commence kindergarten in the year they turn four or the year they turn five. Parents and guardians will need to make an informed choice about which year their child attends their funded kindergarten program in the year before school.

Registration of Children outside the Eligible Age for Kindergarten Children who turn six during the kindergarten year

Children who turn six at any time during the kindergarten year need to be exempt from attending school. Parents/guardians must obtain an approved exemption before the child starts kindergarten by submitting an Exemption from school due to attendance in kindergarten program form to DET. We must sight the approved exemption form and note that it has been sighted on the child's registration.

Children less than four years of age

If a child is less than four years of age by 30 April in the year they are to attend a funded kindergarten program, the parents/guardians must first request approval for early school entry for their child to attend school in the following year. Applications for early school entry are not commonly approved. Please note that children granted early entry to kindergarten are not eligible to apply for another year of funded kindergarten in the following year if the child does not attend school.

A copy of the written request for early school entry must be provided to the Centre. We must sight this request and include a copy in the child's enrolment record. Further information regarding early entry to kindergarten is available at www.education.vic.gov.au.

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.

Parents and guardians are encouraged to provide details of any additional needs or medical requirements your child may have, in the relevant section on the Centre Enrolment Form. We can then work to ensure families and children have access to available assistance to ensure a smooth transition into kindergarten programs for every child.

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.

What you need to do

Parent and Guardians 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 <https://www.vic.gov.au/office-locations-department-education>

<https://www.vic.gov.au/going-kindergarten-if-your-child-six-years-old>

[Exemption from school due to attendance in a kindergarten program \(docx - 42 \(docx - 44.08kb\)\)](#)

Next steps

The Department will send you a letter once they 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.vic.gov.au/going-kindergarten-if-your-child-six-years-old>

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.vic.gov.au/starting-kindergarten>

Welcome to Geelong Children's Centre Kindergarten Program

At Geelong Children's Centre's 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.

For more information, go to:

<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 in Victoria 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. The VEYLD guides early childhood professionals to work together with families in support of their children, embracing and responding to the cultural and linguistic diversity of the Victorian community and diverse approaches to child rearing. 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 vision and purpose of the VEYLD is to guide early childhood professionals in a collective effort with families toward the achievement of the nationally agreed Early Years Learning Outcomes (Early Years Learning Framework for Australia, 2009) where:

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**).

For more information, go to:

<https://www.vic.gov.au/victorian-early-years-learning-development-framework-veyldf>

Child Protection in Early Childhood

At our Centre, your child's **safety and wellbeing** come first. All educators have a **legal and moral responsibility** to protect children from harm and to create a safe, caring environment.

Keeping Children Safe

Duty of Care: Educators act quickly if they have any concerns about a child's safety or wellbeing.

Mandatory Reporting: If we believe a child may be at risk of abuse or harm, we must report it to Child Protection or Victoria Police.

Reportable Conduct: Any concerns about a staff member's behaviour are reported to the Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP).

Information Sharing: Sometimes, we may share information with other services to help keep a child safe and supported.

Child Safe Standards

Our Centre follows the Child Safe Standards, which help us make sure every child:

- feels **safe, respected, and heard**,
- is **protected from abuse or harm**,
- is **included and treated fairly**, and
- is **supported to speak up** if something doesn't feel right.

We have clear policies, staff training, and daily practices that make child safety part of everything we do.

If you ever have concerns about a child's wellbeing, please speak with one of our educators or the Centre Director.

Learn more at: [vic.gov.au/child-protection-early-childhood-protect](https://www.vic.gov.au/child-protection-early-childhood-protect)

Safe Use of Digital Technologies in Early Childhood

At our Centre, we follow the **National Model Code for Safe Use of Digital Technologies** to protect children's privacy and safety.

Our Commitment: We use technology in ways that **respect every child's dignity, privacy, and wellbeing**. This includes taking and storing photos or videos of children safely and responsibly.

What Families Should Know

- Only **Centre-approved devices** are used to capture photos or videos of children.
- Staff **do not use personal phones or devices** when working directly with children.
- Images and videos are stored securely and used only for educational purposes or family communication (with consent).
- We ask families to **avoid sharing group photos of children online** to help protect everyone's privacy.
- Our policies follow the **Child Safe Standards** and **National Quality Framework** requirements.

We all play a part in keeping children safe both in person and online. Please speak with us if you have any questions about how we use technology at the Centre.

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 2026 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.

For more information, go to:

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

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

<https://www.vic.gov.au/give-your-child-the-best-start-in-life>

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 – Emma Trifilo

As an Early Childhood Teacher, I value the individuality amongst children. I understand that every child learns differently and at different times. I aim to adapt my teaching to suit the individual child and meet them at their level. I believe relationships are vital within the early years. The creation of a nurturing environment provides each child with a sense of belonging, allowing them to feel safe, secure and supported.

I believe that all children come to my program bringing a wealth of prior knowledge, emerging skills and interests. I see children as capable and competent; they are independent and build upon their skills by learning through play. Through interactions with nature, hands on experiences and collaboration with one another children develop the skills they need to be active learners. I value the voices of children and welcome their contributions. I aim to shape the kinder program upon the ideas, interests and wonders of children. Providing them with the space and time to engage in uninterrupted play where they can question, discover, explore and create.

To support children's readiness for formal learning and school, I aim to encourage the independence of children within my classroom. Providing them with opportunities, time and encouragement to try new things, persist and solve problems. I support the scaffolding and development of children's emotional, social and independence skills which is the foundation of their learning journey.

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

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

Vision:

To offer high quality care where respect, nurturing and wellbeing are the primary focus. Supporting and practicing inclusiveness while providing opportunities for all children to be successful, competent and capable learners.

Philosophy:

Our children: Building trusting and supportive relationships with children where their unique and individual needs and interests are celebrated, explored and promoted. Children's rights are upheld through providing a safe, supportive and nurturing environment.

Our Families and Community: Providing a welcoming and inclusive environment where all families are valued and supported. Connecting to our country and community by embedding cultural learning in our curriculum and promoting awareness, respect and understanding of the cultural diversity for all children.

Our Curriculum: Our holistic, innovative and emergent program focuses on stimulating, engaging and child led learning. Through play based learning children's imagination and creativeness is fostered. Educators support children's active participation and provide opportunities to children to be actively involved in their learning. Educators observe, recognise and assess children's learning on both individual and group settings with the VEYLDF guiding our practices.

Our team: Our team of quality Educators strive for excellence to provide the best early childhood education and care. Building and working in a diverse, supportive, professional, respectful and ethically strong team is the focus of all Educators. Continual professional and personal development in advancement of knowledge and skills.

Our Environment and World: Respecting and regenerating our environment through sustainable practices both within the learning and care setting and children's homes and community. Ensuring an environment that promotes wellbeing and mindfulness is offered through habitual yoga, exercise and meditation sessions. Maintaining community connections through incursions and excursions and centre focused celebrations.

What is an Emergent Curriculum?

Our philosophy of teaching embodies an Emergent Curriculum, with aspects of the Reggio Emilio approach, Vygotskys' scaffolding theory and Froebelian's slow pedagogy. Slow pedagogy involves finding ways to extend children's learning over time and involves children in planning and reflecting on their learning. Froebel advocated for the importance of childhood, not as a preparation for the next stage in life and he placed play centre stage.

We strive to support and nurture the varying learning styles of visual, auditory, sensory and 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 an inquiry-based approach that nurtures natural curiosity, encouraging children to ask questions, explore, and discover through hands-on experiences and investigations that 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 learning 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, curiosity, 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 the Learning Outcomes represented in the Victorian Early Years Framework.

What is slow pedagogy?

Slow pedagogy prioritises time for play, learning and relationships. It is relevant to a range of pedagogies that emphasize an unhurried approach to the relationship between children and adults and a valuing of care and creativity. Slow pedagogy isn't about being in 'slow motion'. It is a way of engaging that is attentive to children and context and can include different rhythms, for example in dancing, singing, running, reading and being still.

Slow pedagogy is all about:

- valuing the present moment
- being attentive to children's pace, rhythm and interests

- enabling children to revisit their ideas and creations, places and stories
- creating opportunities for children to go deeper in their learning
- supporting time for observation, listening, reflection and documentation
- encouraging unhurried everyday routines with time for wonder and care.

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, first aid food handling, child protection, health hygiene 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

For 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 squeezy yogurts; so we offer two weeks in which they can bring a lunchbox 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 large and strong enough to contain and 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 pulls 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.



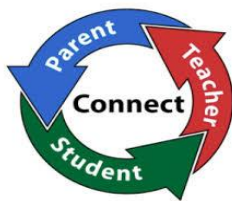
It is important to name items of clothing that children are likely to take off, jumpers, hats, coats etc.

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, fruits, food packaging or drinks, into the 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 documentation on learning and updates is shared with families. Please check regularly for important messages and see what your child has been learning.

Available on both desktop and smart phones, Educa will allow families to engage with their children's learning from anywhere in the world, providing valuable feedback to educators. Educa bridges the communication gap, strengthening relationships and promoting collaboration between 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.

- Learning stories (individual observation of children)
- Individual and Group goals
- 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'

Schemas

What are Play Schemas?

Have you ever wondered why your child purposely knocks over your block castle, hides in small boxes, throws their food, lines object up or collects rocks? These aren't 'bad behaviours' but rather natural developmental urges (called schemas) that suggest a healthy child.

These behaviours are not random. They are powerful clues about how your child is learning, growing, and making sense of the world.

A play schema is a repeated action or behaviour pattern that children engage in as they learn about the world around them. Think of it as the brain's way of testing out ideas through action.

Understanding play schemas is not just helpful, it is essential for truly connecting with your child, supporting their development, and responding to their needs with confidence and care.

The repetitive action of a schema allows a child to practice and construct meaning (building a stronger brain) until they have mastered the understanding of the schema. Being aware of play schemas helps in two ways:

- Schema's help educators to differentiate between 'behaviour' vs 'natural urges' which move past the belief that a child is just being 'difficult'
- It helps educators to plan learning environments that support the development and mastery of schemas.

Play schemas are NATURAL, UNCONTROLLABLE and totally NECESSARY urges that ALL children have at some point or another.

Play schemas are directly connected to child's brain development? From birth to around age 7, children's brains are making millions of connections every second. Repetitive play patterns like transporting, enveloping, or rotating help wire the brain for important cognitive skills like spatial awareness, memory, motor coordination, and even self-regulation.

When we allow children to repeat schematic play, we're supporting:

Neural wiring for problem-solving

Emotion regulation through predictability

Body-brain integration for gross and fine motor development

Common play schemas include:

Trajectory – Throwing, dropping, or watching things move through space

Enclosure/Enveloping – Hiding inside a box or wrapping toys in fabric

Transporting – Moving objects from one place to another (and filling pockets with rocks!)

Rotation – Spinning wheels, twirling around, or turning objects in circles

Each of these behaviours supports brain development by allowing children to explore physical concepts, spatial awareness, and emotional regulation.

For more information, click the link: <https://www.myteachingcupboard.com/blog/a-guide-to-play-schemas-in-early-childhood-education>

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.

Minimum period of exclusion from primary schools and children's services for infectious diseases cases and contacts

Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations 2019

Schedule 7

Column 1 Number	Column 2 Conditions	Column 3 Exclusion of cases	Column 4 Exclusion of Contacts
1	Chickenpox (Varicella)	Exclude until all blisters have dried. This is usually at least 5 days after the rash appears in unimmunised children, but may be less in previously immunised children	Any child with an immune deficiency (for example, leukaemia) or receiving chemotherapy should be excluded for their own protection. Otherwise not excluded
2	Campylobacter infection	Exclude until there has not been a loose bowel motion for 24 hours	Not excluded
3	Cryptosporidium	Exclude until there has not been a loose bowel motion for 24 hours	Not excluded
4	Conjunctivitis	Exclude until discharge from eyes has ceased unless a doctor has diagnosed non-infectious conjunctivitis	Not excluded
5	Cytomegalovirus (CMV) infection	Exclusion is not necessary	Not excluded
6	Diarrhoeal illness*	Exclude until there has not been vomiting or a loose bowel motion for 24 hours	Not excluded
7	Diphtheria	Exclude until medical certificate of recovery is received following at least two negative throat swabs, the first not less than 24 hours after finishing a course of antibiotics and the other 48 hours later	Exclude family/household contacts until cleared to return by the Chief Health Officer
8	Fungal infections of the skin or nails (e.g. ringworm, tinea)	Exclude until the day after starting appropriate antifungal treatment	Not excluded
9	Giardiasis	Exclude until there has not been a loose bowel motion for 24 hours	Not excluded
10	Glandular fever (Epstein-Barr Virus infection)	Exclusion is not necessary	Not excluded
11	Hand, Foot and Mouth disease	Exclude until all blisters have dried	Not excluded
12	Haemophilus influenzae type b (Hib)	Exclude until 48 hours after initiation of effective therapy	Not excluded
13	Hepatitis A	Exclude until a medical certificate of recovery is received, but not before 7 days after the onset of jaundice or illness	Not excluded
14	Hepatitis B	Exclusion is not necessary	Not excluded
15	Hepatitis C	Exclusion is not necessary	Not excluded
16	Herpes (cold sores)	Young children unable to comply with good hygiene practices should be excluded while the lesion is weeping. Lesions to be covered by dressing, where possible	Not excluded
17	Human immuno-deficiency virus infection (HIV)	Exclusion is not necessary	Not excluded
18	Hydatid disease	Not excluded	Not excluded
19	Human parvovirus B19 (fifth disease, erythema infectiosum, slapped cheek syndrome)	Not excluded	Not excluded
20	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
21	Listeriosis	Not excluded	Not excluded
22	Impetigo	Exclude until appropriate treatment has commenced. Sores on exposed surfaces must be covered with a watertight dressing	Not excluded
23	Influenza and influenza like illnesses	Exclude until well	Not excluded unless considered necessary by the Chief Health Officer
24	Leprosy	Exclude until approval to return has been given by the Chief Health Officer	Not excluded
25	Measles	Exclude for at least 4 days after onset of rash	Immunised contacts not excluded. Unimmunised contacts should be excluded until 14 days after the first day

Column 1 Number	Column 2 Conditions	Column 3 Exclusion of cases	Column 4 Exclusion of Contacts
			of appearance of rash in the last case. If unimmunised contacts are vaccinated within 72 hours of exposure with any infectious case, or received Normal Human Immunoglobulin (NHIG) within 144 hours of exposure of any infectious case, they may return to the facility
26	Meningitis (bacterial —other than meningococcal meningitis)	Exclude until well	Not excluded
27	Meningococcal infection	Exclude until adequate carrier eradication therapy has been completed	Not excluded if receiving carrier eradication therapy
28	Mumps	Exclude for 5 days or until swelling goes down (whichever is sooner)	Not excluded
29	Molluscum contagiosum	Exclusion is not necessary	Not excluded
30	Norovirus	Exclude until there has not been a loose bowel motion or vomiting for 48 hours	Not excluded
31	Pertussis (Whooping cough)	Exclude the child for 21 days after the onset of cough or until they have completed 5 days of a course of antibiotic treatment	Contacts aged less than 7 years in the same room as the case who have not received three effective doses of pertussis vaccine should be excluded for 14 days after the last exposure to the infectious case, or until they have taken 5 days of a course of effective antibiotic treatment
32	Poliovirus infection	Exclude for at least 14 days from onset. Re-admit after receiving medical certificate of recovery	Not excluded
33	Roseola	Not excluded	Not excluded
34	Ross River virus	Not excluded	Not excluded
35	Rotavirus infection	Exclude until there has not been a loose bowel motion or vomiting for 24 hours	Not excluded
36	Ringworm, scabies, pediculosis (head lice)	Not excluded	Not excluded
37	Rubella (German measles)	Exclude until fully recovered or for at least four days after the onset of rash	Not excluded
38	Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS)	Exclude until medical certificate of recovery is produced	Not excluded unless considered necessary by the Chief Health Officer
39	Shiga toxin or Verotoxin producing Escherichia coli (STEC or VTEC)	Exclude if required by the Chief Health Officer and only for the period specified by the Chief Health Officer	Not excluded
40	Salmonellosis	Exclude until there has not been a loose bowel motion for 24 hours	Not excluded
41	Scabies	Exclude until the day after starting appropriate treatment	Not excluded
42	Shigellosis	Exclude until there has not been a loose bowel motion for 24 hours	Not excluded
43	Streptococcal sore throat (including scarlet fever)	Exclude until the person has received antibiotic treatment for at least 24 hours and feels well	Not excluded
44	Typhoid fever (including paratyphoid fever)	Exclude until approval to return has been given by the Chief Health Officer	Not excluded unless considered necessary by the Chief Health Officer
45	Tuberculosis (excluding latent tuberculosis)	Exclude until receipt of a medical certificate from the treating physician stating that the child is not considered to be infectious	Not excluded
46	Viral gastroenteritis (viral diarrhoea)	Exclude until there has not been a loose bowel motion for 24 hours	Not excluded
47	Worms	Exclude if loose bowel motions are occurring. Exclusion is not necessary if treatment has occurred	Not excluded

Regulation 111

A person in charge of a primary school, education and care service premises or children's services centre must not allow a child to attend the primary school, education and care service premises or children's services centre

for the period or in the circumstances:

* specified in column 3 of the Table in Schedule 7 if the person in charge has been informed that the child is infected with an infectious disease listed in column 2 of that Table; or

* specified in column 4 of the Table in Schedule 7 if the person in charge has been informed that the child has been in contact with a person who is infected with an infectious disease listed in column 2 of that Table.

*Diarrhoeal illness includes instances where certain pathogens are identified including Amebiasis (*Entamoeba histolytica*), Campylobacter spp., Salmonella spp., Shigella spp. and intestinal worms, but is not limited to infection with these pathogens.

Further information

Please contact the Communicable Disease Prevention and Control Section on 1300 651 160

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.vic.gov.au/victorian-early-years-learning-development-framework-veyldf>



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 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 or 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 to school 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.

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 include information about your child's interests, skills and abilities. It will also include individual teaching strategies so that your child's Foundation 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 also be shared with the OSHC service. 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 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 TLDS is valuable. You will be invited to fill in a section of the TLDS. Filling in this section 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

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 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 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 (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 at early.years.transition@education.vic.gov.au.

Appropriate and safe information sharing ensures that Victorian education and care professionals have the knowledge and information needed to promote and respond to child wellbeing or safety needs and risks. Information about your child and family may be shared as required, including where sharing is necessary for the early childhood service to meet its duty of care, anti-discrimination, occupational health and safety and child wellbeing and safety obligations. For more information, visit <https://www.vic.gov.au/information-sharing-schemes-and-the-maram-framework>.

For more information

Please visit <https://www.vic.gov.au/moving-primary-school>

This document has been translated into a range of languages which are available at <https://www.vic.gov.au/transition-school-resources-families>

SCHOOL READINESS

What is school readiness?

School readiness refers to whether a child is ready to make an easy and successful transition into school. The term 'preschool readiness' might be used in the same manner in reference to beginning preschool (Kindergarten). School readiness can be actively facilitated with a little forward planning to ensure that children regularly participate in activities that develops the appropriate skills required to help optimal learning when they start school. While many people think of academics (e.g. writing their name, counting to 10, knowing the colors) as the important school readiness skills, school readiness actually refers to a much broader range of skills. In addition to some academic basics, school readiness skills also include self care (independent toileting and opening lunch boxes), attention and concentration, physical skills (e.g. having the endurance to sit upright for an entire school day), emotional regulation, language skills and play and social skills.



Why are school readiness skills important?

The development of school readiness skills allows school teachers to expand and further develop a child's skills in the specific areas of social interaction, play, language, emotional development, physical skills, literacy and fine motor skills. Without these basic skills already established upon entry to school, children can very quickly find themselves playing 'catch up' compared to their peers that are advancing more quickly. Students that begin school with the build block (or foundation) skills in place advance quickly as opposed to those that start school only to *then* begin the slow process of developing school readiness.

What are the building blocks necessary to develop school readiness?

- **Self Regulation:** The ability to obtain, maintain and change emotion, behaviour, attention and activity level appropriate for a task or situation.
- **Sensory processing:** Accurate processing of sensory stimulation in the environment as well as in one's own body that influences attention and learning that effects how you sit, hold a pencil and listen to the teacher.
- **Receptive language (understanding):** Comprehension of spoken language (e.g. the teachers instructions).
- **Expressive language (using language):** Producing speech or language that can be understood by others (e.g. talking to friends).
- **Articulation:** The ability to clearly pronounce individual sounds in words.
- **Executive functioning:** Higher order reasoning and thinking skills (e.g. What do I need to pack to take to school?).
- **Emotional development/regulation:** The ability to perceive emotion, integrate emotion to facilitate thought, understand emotions and regulate emotions (for a child's own responses to challenges).

- **Social skills:** Determined by the ability to engage in reciprocal interaction with others (either verbally or non-verbally), to compromise with others and to be able to recognise and follow social norms.
- **Planning and sequencing:** The sequential multi-step task/activity performance to achieve a well-defined result (e.g. a cut and paste task or a simple maths worksheet).

How can you tell if my child has problems with school readiness?

If a child has difficulties with school readiness they might:

- Get easily frustrated when expectations are placed upon them.
- Struggle to follow instructions in daily activities.
- Rely on parents to do self-care tasks, such as dressing.
- Not be toilet trained (day time).
- Struggle to attend to tasks as long as their peers (length varies according to tasks)
- Be socially immature (e.g. unable to share, be unable to shift with changing rules of a game in play).
- Have poor receptive and/or expressive language skills.
- Have difficulty understanding consequences of their behaviours.
- Not be interested in looking at books and/or doing sit down activities.
- Not interact well with their peers (either in or out of the classroom).
- Have limited play skills (and can't change their play to incorporate new play items or people).
- Be resistant to new activities and/or being guided about how to develop new skills.
- Be resistant to input from others in order to learn.

What other problems can occur when a child has difficulties with school readiness?

When a child has school readiness difficulties, they might also have difficulties with:

- **Self-regulation:** The ability to obtain, maintain and change one's emotion, behaviour, attention and activity level appropriate for a task or situation in a socially acceptable manner.
- **Receptive language (understanding):** Comprehension of language.
- **Expressive language (using language):** The use of language through speech, sign or alternative forms of communication to communicate wants, needs, thoughts and ideas.
- **Executive functioning:** Higher order reasoning and thinking skills.
- **Emotional development/regulation:** The ability to perceive emotion, integrate emotion to facilitate thought, understand emotions and to regulate emotions.
- **Social skills:** Determined by the ability to engage in reciprocal interaction with others (either verbally or non-verbally), to compromise with others, and be able to recognize and follow social norms.
- **Planning and sequencing:** The sequential multi-step task/activity performance to achieve a well-defined result.
- **Self care skills:** such as dressing and toileting independently.
- **Gross motor skills:** Whole body physical skills using the core strength muscles of the trunk, arms, legs such as running, skipping, jumping and ball skills.
- **Fine motor skills:** Finger and hand skills such as writing, cutting, opening lunch boxes, tying shoelaces.

What can be done to improve school readiness skills?

In the lead up to school start, the following activities can be helpful:

- **Parenting expectations:** Increase expectations of the child around self care tasks such as dressing, toileting, eating, and getting ready to leave the house. Provide only verbal rather than physical 'help' to complete the tasks where possible.
- **Social skills:** Encourage the child to develop relationships with other (unfamiliar) children of a similar age, and arrange suitable 'play dates' for social interaction practice where the adults actively facilitate this play practice.
- **Books:** Expose the child to books to prepare them for literacy so they learn to sit through the entirety of a book.
- **Early preparation:** Start preparing the child for school at the age of 4 by talking about expectations at school, appropriate behaviour, and regularly engaging in 'sit down' activities.
- **Collaboration:** Work with the child's preschool teacher to identify any signs of deficit or slow development so that these areas can be targeted *before* the child starts school.
- **Visual strategies:** Use visuals (such as picture schedules) to help the child understand the routine of their day both at home and at preschool (kindergarten). You could even make visuals for school in advance (note: many commercial books serve as a rough visual schedule as a starting point). Transition visits are a good time to ask the teacher what the rough schedule is likely to be, and ideally to take some relevant photos at the same time.
- **Outings:** Prepare the child for school excursions by going to places such as the library, the zoo, the shopping centre and help the child to understand appropriate behaviour in these environments. Visits to the school playground, toilet block and classroom door on the weekends or during school holidays before school start may also be helpful to familiarize the child with the new setting.
- **Fine motor skill development:** This is an area that will be a large part of the activities undertaken at school, so developing these skills will enable the child to participate in activities much more easily and willingly. This really means practice cutting, colouring, drawing, and writing their name.

Source: <https://childdevelopment.com.au/areas-of-concern/school-readiness/>



Australian Government



Learning potential

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:

<https://www.mother.ly/child/kindergarten-social-skills/>

Supporting Children with Anxiety – The Role of the Parent and Educator

Introduction

Anxiety is a general term for several disorders that cause nervousness, fear, apprehension, and worrying. These disorders affect how we feel and behave, and they can manifest real physical symptoms. Mild anxiety is vague and unsettling, while severe anxiety can be extremely debilitating, having a serious impact on daily life.

Anxiety in children is a normal part of childhood development – approximately 8-22% of children experience anxiety more intensely and more often than other children, stopping them from getting the most out of life. Helping children deal positively with anxiety requires an understanding of firstly what is a normal anxiety response and what is an actual anxiety disorder. If a child has an anxiety disorder they need to be referred to professional support. There are many parenting strategies to support a child who may be going through the normal range of anxiety responses.

In this fact sheet we define the difference between an anxiety disorder (clinical anxiety) and a normal anxiety response. We then unpack the variety of factors that can impact on a child's anxiety response.

The fact sheet finishes with some parenting strategies that may help all children deal with challenges in life in a positive and resilient way.

1. Anxiety disorder (Clinical Anxiety)

Most children have fears or worries of some kind, however if any of the following apply to your child it is suggested you seek professional support. Is your child's anxiety;

- Stopping him/her from doing things he/she wants to do - lifestyle inhibited, limiting?
- Interfering with his/her friendships, schoolwork or family life?
- Significantly different from that of other children of a similar age and stage of development?
- Causing extreme distress that is hard to settle?
- Leading to obsessive behaviour – eg washing hands?
- Resulting in long-term school refusal?
- Leading to pulling their hair out?
- Influence their toileting – eg withholding?
- Leading to repeatedly banging their head?
- Causing them to self-harm?

2. Characteristics Associated with Increased Anxiety

It is normal for all children (and adults) to experience anxiety, however some children are naturally more anxious than other children. This is generally a reflection of the following characteristics

Heredity

Some children have a genetic predisposition to being more anxious than others.

Temperament

Children who have an “intense” or a “slow to warm up” temperament (or personality) are more likely to find some situations more challenging than other children, which may lead to increased anxiety. Aim for a goodness of fit.

Resilience

Children who are more resilient, who are able to have another go, to try again, bounce back, deal with setbacks are more likely to deal with challenging situations without significant levels of anxiety.

Intrinsic motivation

Children who are intrinsically (rather than extrinsically) motivated, who are encouraged for their effort and understand the consequences of their actions are likely to have reduced anxiety when being faced with challenges.

2. Environmental factors associated with increased anxiety

A predisposition to being anxious does not mean that a child will necessarily experience severe anxiety. There are many things children experience in 21st Century living that can exacerbate their anxiety. These include:

“Push down” expectations

Increasingly children are expected to behave, understand and perform in ways that are beyond their years. Children are being thrust into a life of inappropriate expectations that set them up to fail, to worry and to become anxious. These include:

- Expectations that children behave, think and respond to situations like adults;
- Lack of differentiation in parenting and education according to a child's temperament and or stage of development;
- Children being rushed, hurried and over scheduled;
- The belief that giving children as many opportunities as possible, as early as possible is best

Other Issues

In addition to “push down’ expectations the following factors can result in children experiencing more severe anxiety

- Focus on academic achievement at the expense of social and emotional development; • Focus on extrinsic rather than intrinsic motivation;
- Family break down and distress;
- Children not being given the opportunity to practise being resilient;
- Focus on extrinsic rather than intrinsic motivation;
- Social and friendship issues (older children) – social media;

We are facing a modern day paradox – we want to give children everything but inadvertently we give them less by giving them everything.

Proactive parenting can lay a strong foundation for all children to feel safe, secure, build their resilience and concept of self. This philosophy to parenting is particularly important for children who are more likely to be anxious. The following presents firstly strategies parents can embed in daily family life (proactive parenting strategies), secondly strategies to use when things break down (Practical Strategies when things Break Down) and thirdly how the parent is an important model for children (The adult as the model).

1. Proactive Parenting Strategies

- Remember who is the parent and who is the child
- Consistent parenting between parents
- Never parent by mood
- Routine, consistency and predictability
- Slow the pace of life
- Appropriate expectations
- Encouragement more than praise
- Give lead time - Prepare the child for transition times
- Calm voice
- I wonder why?
- Eye contact
- Be direct and never change your mind
- Apologise when made a mistake
- Avoid battles – choose your battles
- Building relationships
- Empower all family members to have a voice: Family meetings
- Reflect and share their parenting with others
- Own your own stuff “I” messages
- Don’t need to be your child’s best friend

2. Practical Strategies When Things Break Down

- Take Five
 - Chill Out not Time Out
 - Don't buy into sibling rivalry
 - Never ask a question if there isn't a choice
 - Say less - act more
 - Don't make eating an issue
 - Always end the day well
 - Separate your child from their misdeeds and actions
 - Circuit Breakers
 - Choice (2 to 4 years)
 - Distraction (younger than 3 years)
 - Consequences (older than 3 years)
 - Reflective Listening

Ways to Support Children who Experience Significant Anxiety If your child shows signs of anxiety, there are several strategies to support them:

- Stay calm and model resilience, avoid being anxious about your child's anxiety
- Acknowledge your child's fear (reflective listening) – don't dismiss, try to rationalise or ignore
- Gently encourage your child to do things that they are anxious about – do not force or punish
- Keep low profile about the issues, avoid pre-empting an anxious behaviour
- Avoid labelling your child as 'shy' or 'anxious'.

Resources Fact sheets: www.earlylife.com.au

- Building resilience and self-concept
- Encouragement and not just praise
- Consequences; a positive and effective way of disciplining your child

Books by Kathy Walker

- Parenting
- Future proof your children

For more information click the below link:

<https://earlylife.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Fact-Sheet-Anxiety-PARENTS.pdf>

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**
Supporting the development, health and wellbeing of babies and young children through services, legislation and care.
<https://www.vic.gov.au/education-information-parents>

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au>
- **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**
<https://www.vic.gov.au/victorian-early-years-learning-development-framework-veyldf>
- **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://www.phoenix-support.com.au/admin-phoenix-support-com-au>