

**What you need
to know about
your kindergarten
and early learning
centre.**

*Getting
Started*



We would like to say thank you to the Aboriginal People of the Kulin Nation for letting us share your land. We promise to look after it, the plants, animals and people too.

Oakhill Children's Centre, Possum Group

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If you need help, contact your centre,
call us on 03 8481 1100
or email ecms@ecms.org.au

ecms.org.au



Hello

mrhban مرحباً

Sata srī akāla ਸਤ ਸ੍ਰੀ ਅਕਾਲ

Kutbengthawng

Nǐ hǎo 你好

Xin chào

Wominjeka

Thank you for choosing us for your child's early learning. We are happy you're joining our diverse and multi-faceted community, and we look forward to getting to know your family.

Greater Melbourne is home to people from more than 200 countries who speak over 230 languages and follow different beliefs and ways of life.

Our educators are privileged to impact the lives of 5,500 children from those different backgrounds. At over 60 early learning centres and kindergartens every week.

And your child is now a treasured part of our story.

This guide gives you practical information about what to expect and things you need to know. It also outlines how we communicate with you and covers your child's health and safety at our centres.

Throughout this book, when we say 'centres', we are referring to both early learning centres and kindergartens unless we note them separately.

If you have questions about this book, contact the team at your child's centre. They are happy to help.

Let's get started.



A few things you need to know

Your centre is the best place to get the right information about daily activities and routines.

When we're open

Opening hours and closures are on posters in your centre's foyer and on ecms.org.au along with session times.

Our centres follow Victorian school term dates and public holidays. We also close two days each year so your child's teachers can attend professional development and training.

Your centre will notify you about those dates 4 weeks beforehand.

First day

Starting kindergarten and early learning is an exciting time for children and families. Nerves are also normal, and your teachers are there to help make the transition smooth for everyone.

Orientation sessions

On-site orientation is a great way to help your child feel confident and happy in their new environment and meet new friends. Whether it's your first year or you're returning, all families are welcome to orientation.

You'll meet teachers, experience daily routines and learning, get to ask questions and tell the team more about your child. For example, what they like and dislike, their interests and any concerns you have.

Centres hold kindergarten orientation at the beginning of term one. For early learning centres, it happens when you start, whether in January or during the year.

Your centre will email dates and details for your child's session.

Things your child needs to bring



backpack
or bag



refillable
water bottle



change of
clothes



wide-brim
sun hat



lunch and
snacks
(kindergarten)



favourite
toy

We'll always comfort your child if they're upset. And having a favourite toy from home can help them settle.

What to wear

Clothes children can easily move in and get messy, which suit the weather. Shoes must be fully enclosed and have a firm grip. No flip-flops or Crocs.

Centres are busy, and it's easy for things to go missing, so please label anything your child brings, even the favourite toy.

What to eat (kindergarten only)

Pack enough food to keep your child fuelled for the day. You know what they like to eat, so pack what's best for them.

The Health Eating Advisory Service has some excellent tips and resources. Visit heas.health.vic.gov.au

Working together

We value our families and teaching teams and expect everyone to behave respectfully.

Please don't ask your teachers to work for you outside the centre. It creates a professional and personal conflict of interest for them.

How we keep you up-to-date

Talking with the teaching team is always the best way to discover what's happening, how your child is doing and to let us know any changes at home that might affect them.

Storypark

One way we let you know about day-to-day happenings is Storypark. It's a secure online platform most centres use to share information about your child's learning, updates and alerts.

If your centre uses Storypark, they will email instructions to set up your account when you enrol. Then you're in control of who can see what. Best of all, you can still access your child's archive after they leave.

Learn more at storypark.com

Other ways we keep in touch

- Wall displays showing what children are learning
- A transition statement for schools about their capabilities and how they learn
- Email, SMS and phone calls. If something is urgent, we'll send an SMS
- Posters and other general announcements in the foyer

We don't allow any staff or visitors to take photographs or videos of children without your consent, including for social media. If you're not sure what's allowed, please ask your teachers.

Ways to be part of your child's early learning

We love your support, and your centre will tell you how to get involved. It could be through community activities like working bees, or a Parent Activity Group if the centre has one.

Anyone helping at a centre must have a current Volunteer Working With Children Check. There is no charge to get one, learn more and apply at service.vic.gov.au/find-services/work-and-volunteering

Excursions

Children love excursions and visits. Experiencing different environments and groups of people helps them learn.

You'll get plenty of information in advance, and have opportunities to ask questions. The centre will also get your written permission, before your child can take part.

How to give feedback

Feedback is always welcome and the different ways to share it with us are displayed in the foyer of your centre.

The best people to share complaints with are your Nominated Supervisor, Centre Director or Area Manager.



Alternatively, scan the QR code. It links you to our feedback platform 1Place. It's where you can share compliments or complaints about a centre, in person or anonymously.

All feedback submitted is reviewed and followed up.

Where to find policies

Policies relevant to our obligations as service provider and employer are at ecms.org.au/policies.

Fees and funding

All children in Victoria who are 3 and 4 years old can access Free Kinder. This is available at sessional kindergartens and early learning centres. If you're not sure about the policies and payments, please check with your centre.

Find out more about the Victorian State Government's Best Start, Best Life program at vic.gov.au/best-start-best-life-reforms



**Health,
safety
and
wellbeing**

When do I need to keep my child home?

Germ spread quickly, and home is the best place when we're unwell. Please keep your child home for at least 24 hours if they show any of these symptoms.

- 38C and higher temperature
- Vomiting or diarrhoea
- Rashes that can't be explained
- Red, swollen and discharging eyes
- Unusually lethargic, irritable or not eating and drinking

If your child becomes unwell while at the centre, teachers will make them comfortable and ask you to pick them up. If you're not available, they'll call one of the other contacts listed on your enrolment form.

When your child is feeling better with no symptoms for 24 hours, they're welcome to return.

Infectious diseases

If your child has an infectious disease, please keep them at home and let us know straight away. Whatever you tell us is confidential.

See the list of infectious diseases at health.vic.gov.au/infectious-diseases/school-exclusion-table

How do you handle medication and allergies?

Whether it's a one-off issue or requires ongoing care, talk to your teachers if your child is on regular medication or has food allergies or intolerances.

The team is there to support your family, and the more you can tell them, the better they can help. They will ask you for information from your doctor about how much your child takes and how often.

Also, let the team know when anything changes. They will set up a new plan to support you, including any necessary training.

What if my child gets hurt?

If your child is hurt at the centre, we will comfort them, treat any minor injuries, and monitor how they're feeling. All our teachers hold current first aid qualifications.

The centre will call and let you know what's happened and, if necessary, ask you to pick them up.

We are required to tell the Department of Education about any injury and will need your signature on the report.

If your child has a medical emergency, the centre will:

- call an ambulance and follow paramedic instructions
- administer first aid until the ambulance arrives
- call you immediately and keep you updated

Will they be safe?

Risky and messy play is vital to how children learn. Teachers are trained to help children explore their environment, challenge themselves and feel safe. They also think carefully about your child's right to bodily privacy. For example, when going to the toilet.

We rigorously follow the child-safe standards set out by the Department of Education and have zero tolerance for bullying, harassment, discrimination and abuse of any kind.

Use the QR code on page 6 to report any concerns.

The most recent Child Safe Standards are at www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/child-safe-standards/policy

How will the centre manage my family's legal arrangements?

If you have any legal arrangements in place, please let your Nominated Supervisor or Centre Director know.

Families have different needs and our teams will always work with you to make sure that your particular circumstances are supported confidentially and according to law.



Why early learning is essential

The first five years of a child's brain development are magical, matter, and last a lifetime. They're learning and growing connections at an astounding rate. This is why the years from birth to five are crucial to their development.

Using play to create a place and space, early childhood education cultivates patterns of learning to help each child flourish.

Our inclusive environments and skilled teachers embrace children as capable and confident, providing them with the support and opportunities they need to become lifelong learners.

Learning in their own way

If community provides the landscape that shapes learning, place is the bedrock. Our richly vibrant early childhood education programs invite children to know who and where they are and encourage them to make their own meaning of the world around them.

No child learns the same or has the same skills, knowledge and abilities. Our teaching teams encourage them to learn their way and are always the best people to talk to about your child's needs.

Celebrate diversity

We value and celebrate each child's uniqueness and fully commit to recognising and appreciating them, their family and caregivers.

Teaching standards

All ECMS teachers and centres work within the Department of Education, overseen by the national regulator, the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA).

Our teachers are registered with the Victorian Institute of Teaching. They follow all professional teaching and child-safe standards, development frameworks and related legislation, and fully support the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Lastly, a bit about us

Early learning happens best when led by vibrant relationships with children and families. Helping cultivate those connections is the heart of what we've been doing since 1998.

As lifelong learners, ECMS's people are deliberately curious and relentlessly focused on putting the needs of your child and community front and centre.

We deliver consistently good learning outcomes and seek ways to propel our teaching practices, partnering with leading early years researchers, including the University of Melbourne and Deakin University.

Our teams welcome people's diverse, multi-faceted lives, embrace learning, reflect and seek growth, and honour their relationships and agreements.

First and always, we're people who care about children, families and each other.

Together
may we give
children the
roots to
grow and the
wings to fly.

Anonymous

and again,
thank you.

**Enjoy the year
of kinder and
early learning.**

