

# 2016 Family Handbook: Kindergarten

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# Welcome to Early Childhood Management Services (ECMS)



Dear families and carers,

Welcome to ECMS.

For nearly twenty years we have been providing early childhood education and care for children, parents, families and communities across Melbourne.

As a not-for-profit community enterprise, our early learning services touch the lives of 6500 children and families in kindergartens, early learning centres, family day care schemes and 3+ activity groups.

## Our mission

To create opportunities for children, parents and communities to discover and realise their potential.

## Our values

We have created a set of core values that allow us to live out our vision every day:

- Respect
- Inclusion
- Learning and Enrichment
- Connectedness
- Responsiveness
- Trust

## One community

ECMS are connected to the children and families we serve, and take the lead in delivering early childhood services that respond to the specific needs of each community.

We are trusted and valued for the role we play, ensuring the services we provide are sustainable and accessible to everyone. In embracing equal learning opportunities we create environments that are understanding and empowering for each child and their family.

## Your child's early years

We partner with you to provide a safe, quality, family-centred learning environment where every child is respected and nurtured. We will continually develop our skills and explore new ways to enrich your child's early learning experience.

We respect parents as a child's primary educator and we will work alongside you on your child's early learning journey.

We are looking forward to sharing your child's early learning experience and working with you in the year ahead.

Kind regards,



Bernie Nott, CEO

# The role of ECMS

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ECMS partners with families and communities to deliver quality early learning programs throughout Melbourne. Our educators will seek your involvement to ensure our services are family-centred, inclusive and constantly exploring new and innovative ways to provide the best quality early childhood education and care for your child.

ECMS is privileged to impact the lives of thousands of children and families each day. We acknowledge international research that confirms a child's early learning and education has a direct effect on their cognitive, social and emotional development

as well as their lifelong learning. For this reason, our organisation is committed to advocating on behalf of children and families to all levels in government to ensure all children have access to the best possible opportunities in life.

ECMS provides sustainable early childhood services that meet all legislative and legal obligations, creating safe and supportive environments for children and staff, as well as offering opportunities for personal and professional growth. We invite you to find out more about ECMS by visiting our website [www.ecms.org.au](http://www.ecms.org.au).

# The Early Years Learning Framework

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All ECMS services operate in accordance with the National Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) and the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF). Developed in 2009, these frameworks provide the foundation for professional practice for early childhood professionals working with children from birth to eight years.

The frameworks describe the principles, practice and outcomes essential to support and enhance young children's learning, with a strong emphasis on play-based learning.

## The importance of play

Play is the best vehicle for young children's learning, providing the most appropriate stimulus for brain development. The EYLF also recognises the importance of communication and language (including early literacy and numeracy) and social and emotional development.

The framework conveys the highest expectations for all children's learning from birth to five years and through the transition to school. It communicates these expectations through the following five learning outcomes:

1. Children have a strong sense of identity.

## The importance of play (cont)

2. Children are connected with and contribute to their world.
3. Children have a strong sense of wellbeing.
4. Children are confident and involved learners.
5. Children are effective communicators.

Play provides the means for children to organise and make sense of their social worlds, as they engage actively with people, objects and representations. Children play to learn, not learn to play.

Play is a context for learning that:

- Allows for the expression of personality and uniqueness.
- Enhances dispositions such as

curiosity and creativity.

- Enables children to make connections between prior experiences and new learning.
- Assists children to develop relationships and concepts that are essential stepping stones to the more formal reading and writing learning that happens at school.
- Stimulates a sense of wellbeing.

All ECMS educators use these frameworks to guide their decisions around the play-based learning program that is provided to the children in our services. Our programs are developed based on children's individual needs and interests.



# Preparing for Kindergarten

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Once you have enrolled in kindergarten, there are a few things you should know:

## Kindergarten fee subsidy

You may not have to pay fees if you are eligible for kindergarten fee subsidy. The ECMS Fees Policy section of this handbook explains more, please refer to page 14.

## Meeting your kindergarten educator

Before you start the kindergarten journey with your child, the kindergarten educator will spend some time with you. This is a great opportunity to share your child's likes and dislikes, and to ask any

questions that you may have. During the induction process you will be provided with detailed information about what needs to be brought to kindergarten.

## Enrolment form

Make sure your enrolment form is fully completed before your child starts kindergarten. Your child will not be able to start at the service until this is received, (this is a regulatory requirement).

## Prepare your child for kindergarten

Kindergarten is an important time for both children and parents. To make a smooth and successful transition to kindergarten it is

## Preparing for kindergarten (cont)

helpful to talk to your child about kindergarten, and what to expect, such as: session duration, the names of their educators and the types of activities they can look forward to.

### Inclusion support

ECMS is committed to ensuring that our services are accessible to and meet the needs of all children. We strive to create learning communities that are rich in diversity and where all children are given opportunities to reach their full potential. Research indicates that participation in a quality early childhood setting has strong links to better outcomes in adult life.

We recognise that each family and child is unique, and work in partnership with families to identify children's strengths and needs, ensuring every child is included in our play-based learning programs. We plan learning experiences and environments that best support your child's interests, needs, abilities, disabilities, culture, communication strengths and learning style.

In some circumstances additional support can be provided. This may be ongoing or for short periods of time.

If you believe your family and/or child will require additional support to fully access the kindergarten program, it is important that you speak with your child's educator who is best placed to guide you through a successful transition.

If you require further advice or support we encourage you to contact the ECMS Early Years Advisor for your area or the Social Inclusion Consultants at ECMS on **8481 1100**.

### Priority of access

ECMS operates a priority of access process in all our services. This ensures that children at risk, children with additional needs, and vulnerable children will be given priority. To review the full process please refer to the ECMS Enrolment Policy, at your service or online at **[www.ecms.org.au/policies](http://www.ecms.org.au/policies)**.

# Involving our families

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## Family participation

ECMS believes that volunteering develops strong partnerships between our services, families, volunteers, community services and the broader community. These partnerships contribute to each child's development and learning.

Family members are invited, encouraged and actively supported to be a family helper on a regular, occasional or ad hoc basis. It is a requirement of the Education and Care Services Law and Regulations that the service maintain records of family helpers participating in the program. Educators will ask you to complete a family helper record/visitor's book, to meet this

legal requirement.

Other ways you can be involved in your child's kindergarten include:

- Volunteering to be involved in a parent advisory group or committee to support the service and enhance the experience of your child and children for years to come.
- Providing feedback regularly and participating in our Annual Parent Survey conducted in Term Two.
- Supporting fundraising and working bee initiatives.
- Attending events and parent information evenings.

## Involving our families (cont)

- Participating in the review of the service's philosophy. Speak to your child's educator about other ways you can become involved in the centre.
- Participating in the development and review of the service's quality improvement plan.



## Compliments and concerns

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ECMS actively encourages parent/guardian feedback about our services and your experience. If you have a concern regarding your child's education or care, please raise the issue with your child's educator in the first instance, then the Nominated Supervisor if necessary.

If after these discussions you are not satisfied with the outcome, you are encouraged to contact the Early Years Advisor (the name and contact details of this person are listed in your welcome to ECMS letter and on the compliments and concerns poster on display at your centre).

Should you need to take this matter further, please contact the ECMS Regional Manager, (the name and contact details of this person can also be found in your welcome to ECMS letter and on compliments and concerns poster on display at your centre).

For a full outline of the *Complaints Procedure Policy*, please review the ECMS Operational Policy & Procedures Manual available at your service or online at [www.ecms.org.au/policies](http://www.ecms.org.au/policies).

# When we are opened and closed



## Operating hours and session times

Please check with your children's service to confirm specific operating hours and session times.

These times are also published on the ECMS website at [www.ecms.org.au](http://www.ecms.org.au).

## Professional development days - additional closures

ECMS is committed to delivering ongoing support and training for our educators.

Our centres are closed for three days each year, to offer ECMS educators the opportunity to participate in training and

development. These days enhance educator's skills and knowledge, which benefits all children, families and the wider community.

Families will be notified of the professional development closure days well in advance.

### Professional Development 2016 All kindergartens are closed

Term 2	Date to be advised
Term 3	Friday 19th August Beyond Tomorrow Conference
Term 4	Date to be advised

## Other important dates

Public Holidays 2016	
New Years Day	Friday 1 January
Australia Day	Tuesday 26 January
Labour Day	Monday 14 March
Good Friday	Friday 25 March
Easter Monday	Monday 28 March
ANZAC Day	Monday 25 April
Queen's Birthday	Monday 13 June
Grand Final Eve	Date TBC
Melbourne Cup Day	Tuesday 1 November
Christmas Day Holiday	Tuesday 27 December (in lieu of Sun 25 Dec)
Boxing Day	Monday 26 December

*All ECMS children's services are closed on public holidays.*

Term dates 2016	
Term 1	28 January to 24 March (Staff commence 27 January)
Term 2	11 April to 24 June
Term 3	11 July to 16 September
Term 4	3 October to 20 December



# Fees Policy

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ECMS aims to ensure our services are affordable, offer quality and value for money and remain sustainable for future children and families.

The Department of Education and Training (DET) provides some funding towards the costs of four-year-old kindergarten programs. In order to provide sustainable and high quality early learning centres, additional income is required, and this is collected as kindergarten term fees, which are issued each term (for details refer to page 16). There is limited government funding for three-year-old programs (see Early Start Kindergarten on the next page).

## Kindergarten fee subsidies for four-year-old kindergarten

In addition, the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy enables eligible families to attend a 15 hours, four-year-old kindergarten program at minimal or no cost. At least one of the following criteria needs to be met to be eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy.

Subsidy Criteria:

- The child is identified by a parent, carer or legal guardian as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.
- The child individually holds, or has a parent or guardian who holds one of the following:

## Fees Policy (cont)

- A Commonwealth Health Care Card
  - A Commonwealth Pensioner Concession Card
  - A Department of Veterans' Affairs Gold Card or White Card
  - Refugee visa (subclass 200)
  - In-country Special Humanitarian visa (subclass 201)
  - Global Special Humanitarian visa (subclass 202)
  - Temporary Humanitarian Concern visa (subclass 786)
  - Protection visa (subclass 866)
  - Emergency Rescue visa (subclass 203)
  - Woman at risk visa (subclass 204)
  - Bridging visas A-E
  - ImmiCard
- The child is identified on their birth certificate as being a multiple birth child (triplets or more)

To be eligible for this funding you must complete the ECMS kindergarten subsidy form supplied in your welcome pack. If you require

another copy please contact the Fees Department on **8481 1110**.

### Kindergarten fee subsidies for three-year-old kindergarten (Early Start Kindergarten)

DET also funds eligible three-year-old Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, and children known to Child Protection, to access the Early Start Kindergarten program. We encourage any eligible families to either talk to their educator or contact our Social Inclusion Consultants for further information.

### Paying fees

ECMS accepts payment via BPay, cheque, money order or credit card. ECMS does not accept AMEX. You can call the Fees Department or visit our website **[www.ecms.org.au](http://www.ecms.org.au)** to pay by credit card. ECMS kindergartens do not accept cash payment.

### Late fees

If your fees are not paid by the due date on the invoice, we will make sure you receive a reminder. If fees remain unpaid for an extended period of time with no communication from you, ECMS will

## Fees Policy (cont)

engage a debt collection agency. If fees remain unpaid, legal action will be taken.

### Payment plans

Kindergarten fee payment plans are available to all families. If you would like to take advantage of this system please contact our Fees Department by calling **8481 1110** or email **fees@ecms.org.au** to discuss your requirements.

The full *Kindergarten Fees* policy is available for your review at your child's service or online at [www.ecms.org.au/policies](http://www.ecms.org.au/policies).

## Fees Invoicing Schedule

2016 kindergarten invoices will be sent to families for each term as per the dates below.

Invoice issue & payment dates 2016		
Terms	Invoices Issued	Payments Due
Term 1	14 March	4 April
Term 2	14 May	4 June
Term 3	14 July	4 August
Term 4	14 September	4 October

# The Importance of safety

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## Building and playground safety

ECMS children's services staff conduct daily safety inspections of the indoor and outdoor environments. Any hazards are removed or made inaccessible to children and reported to management/local council for further action. The Australian Standards for Playgrounds are used to guide all outdoor equipment purchases. Please refer to the ECMS Building Safety Checks and Maintenance of Buildings and Equipment Policy which is available at your children's service or online at [www.ecms.org.au/policies](http://www.ecms.org.au/policies).

## Emergency procedures and equipment

Fire extinguishers and first aid kits are located at each children's service and are regularly maintained. Emergency evacuation procedures are clearly displayed at each children's service. Educators are required to practice emergency evacuation procedures with the children each term. In the event of an emergency evacuation, the procedures outlined in the displayed information will be followed. Parents will be notified as soon as feasible to collect their child.

## The importance of safety (cont)

### Visitor's book

All visitors must sign in and out in the service's visitor's book. This is a regulatory requirement and is important for the security of children, parents and educators. Visitors include any maintenance personnel, local council employees,

government representatives, ECMS representatives, specialists, parents assisting for the day, etc. The visitor's book provides a record of visitors on the premises in the event of an emergency evacuation.



# Your child's health and wellbeing

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## ECMS policies

Your child's health and wellbeing are important to us. We have a range of policies that cover all aspects of operation and quality of our children's services. We invite you to review these policies, to discuss them with your educators and to provide feedback. Policies are available at your child's service and on the ECMS website [www.ecms.org.au/policies](http://www.ecms.org.au/policies).

## Medication

Administering medication to children at the request of their parents is a task that requires attention to detail, strict record keeping, team work and

communication with children and families. Medication (including prescription, over-the-counter and homeopathic medications) will not be administered to a child without authorisation by a parent or person with the authority to consent to administration of medical attention to the child.

Parent/guardians are required to:

- Authorise medication administration and hand medication directly to an educator.
- Complete all necessary documentation required under the Education and Care Service law and regulations. (Speak to

## Your child's health and wellbeing (cont)

the educator at your centre).

- Notify the service of any special medical treatment or consideration required for their child, and where necessary, in consultation with educators, develop an appropriate medical management plan and risk minimisation plan.

Medication will only be administered:

- From its original container (whether prescribed or non-prescribed) before the expiry or use-by date.
- In accordance with any instructions attached to the medication or provided by a registered medical practitioner.
- For prescribed medications, from a container that bears the original label with the name of the child to whom it is prescribed.
- Non-prescription medication will be administered for a maximum of three days. After this time a letter with instructions from a medical practitioner will be required to continue administering the medication.

## Illness and infectious disease

ECMS follows legislated procedures to promote children's health and minimise the spread of infection. Please keep your child at home if he/she is unwell. ECMS requires that children with the following symptoms or illness must be kept at home until they are completely well:

- High temperature (38° C or above)
- Vomiting (24hrs after last episode)
- Loose bowel motions (24hrs after last episode)
- Rashes – any irritation that cannot be identified
- Red, swollen or discharging eyes
- If a child seems sick without obvious symptoms, for example unusually tired, irritable, lethargic, not eating or drinking
- Any of the infectious diseases listed in the Children's Service Centre's exclusion table that can be accessed at [www.ecms.org.au/policies](http://www.ecms.org.au/policies).

Parents/guardians will be asked to collect their child if the child shows any of the aforementioned symptoms of the illnesses or

## Your child's health and wellbeing (cont)

infectious diseases. Please refer to Child's Services Centre's Exclusion Table for minimum exclusion periods. A link to this document is available on our website [www.ecms.org.au/policies](http://www.ecms.org.au/policies).

An ill child will be kept comfortable and under observation until the parent/guardian, or authorised person collects the child from the service.

Educators will complete the details of your child's illness in the Illness Record. You will be required to read and sign this record.

Please inform staff as soon as possible if your child is diagnosed with an infectious illness.

Educators are required to alert all families at the children's service. Confidentiality will be respected at all times.

### Immunisation

Please complete your child's immunisation details on their enrolment form and provide staff with details of any changes to your child's immunisation. In the event of an outbreak of an infectious disease, a child or staff member who has not been immunised in accordance with the National Immunisation Schedule will be excluded from the children's

service for the recommended period of exclusion. Please refer to the *ECMS Immunisation Policy* available at your children's service, and online at [www.ecms.org.au/policies](http://www.ecms.org.au/policies).

### Health conditions

If your child has a medical condition that requires particular treatment and is attending the centre, educators will provide support and care so that your child can participate equally in all aspects of the program.

Please inform the children's services educators of your child's health condition. Educators will work with families to develop procedures for the safe and effective management of these matters.

This will include developing:

- A Medical Management Plan
- A Risk Minimisation Plan
- A Communication Plan
- An understanding of how to keep your child well
- An understanding of the signs and symptoms of the medical condition and requirements for attention or treatment

## Your child's health and wellbeing (cont)

- A strategy of how to respond if the child shows any signs or symptoms.

### Accidents and injuries

Under the regulations, ECMS is required to follow specific procedures in the event of a child sustaining an injury. All educators hold current first aid qualifications. At enrolment, parents are required to sign an authority for educators to seek emergency medical or ambulance assistance if necessary.

### Incidents

If your child is involved in a minor incident (e.g. tripping over), educators will comfort your child, assess their condition, apply basic first aid and monitor their wellbeing. Educators will record the details of the incident in the Accident and Injury Book and discuss the incident with you at pick-up time. You will be asked to read and sign the accident record. Please inform the educator if your child's condition changes or if medical advice was sought.

### Accidents

If your child is involved in a more serious accident (e.g. bumping their head), educators will comfort your child, assess their condition,

administer first aid as required and monitor their wellbeing. Educators will contact you by phone to inform you of the accident. You may be required to collect your child and seek medical advice. Educators will record the details of the accident in the Accident and Injury Book and further discuss the accident with you when you collect your child.

You are required to read and sign the accident record.

### Medical emergencies

Your child's wellbeing is our priority. If your child is involved in a medical emergency staff will administer first aid as required, call emergency services and contact you. Educators will be directed by paramedics. We will endeavour to keep you informed of all actions until you are with your child. Parents/guardians are responsible for any initial and subsequent medical costs (including all ambulance costs) associated with their child's accident/injury.

### Child protection

ECMS as an organisation and our early childhood educators, employees and volunteers have a duty of care and ethical responsibility to protect children

## Your child's health and wellbeing (cont)

from any form of physical or emotional abuse, risk of abuse, and/or neglect.

A referral to Child FIRST or a report to Child Protection will be made whenever there are reasonable grounds to believe that a child has, or is likely to suffer significant harm or the child's safety and/or wellbeing is at risk.

Actions and decisions taken under this policy will consider the importance of maintaining respectful and collaborative relationships with children and their family.

Please refer to the ECMS *Child Protection Policy* available at your children's service, or online at [www.ecms.org.au/policies](http://www.ecms.org.au/policies).



## Please contact us

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If at any time you have a query or concern, please don't hesitate to speak with your educators or contact the ECMS team at our Northcote office.

**Email:** [community@ecms.org.au](mailto:community@ecms.org.au)

**Phone:** 8481 1100

**Postal address:** PO Box 182, Northcote 3070

**Street address:** 192 High St, Northcote 3070

### Connect with ECMS

You can find the latest ECMS information and news on:



[www.ecms.org.au](http://www.ecms.org.au)



[www.facebook.com/ecmschildren](http://www.facebook.com/ecmschildren)



[www.twitter.com/ecms\\_childhood](http://www.twitter.com/ecms_childhood)



[www.linkedin.com/company/early-childhood-management-services](http://www.linkedin.com/company/early-childhood-management-services)

# Early Childhood Management Services

## Our vision

A community where every child has the opportunity to be their best and every parent and community is enriched by the experience of their child's learning.

## Our mission

To create opportunities for children, parents and communities to discover and realise their potential.

## Our values

Respect  
Inclusion  
Learning and enrichment  
Connectedness  
Responsiveness  
Trust



## Discover ECMS

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