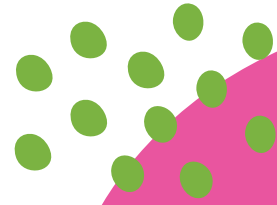


# Smooth Start

What to expect from  
early learning at ECMS





Acknowledgement of Country

ECMS acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples as the first inhabitants of the nation and the traditional custodians of the lands on which we live, learn, work, and play. Aboriginal people have a long tradition of teaching and learning through sharing their connections with country, community, language, and culture. They were the first teachers.

We recognise their continuing connection to the Country and pay respects to elders past and present.

ECMS operates on the lands of the Wurundjeri, Boonwurrung and Wadawurrung people.

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Welcome to ECMS

Thank you for choosing ECMS for your child’s early learning. We’re delighted to welcome your family to our diverse and multi-faceted community.

At ECMS we foster lifelong learning by providing high-quality early learning and care for Victoria’s children, families, and communities. We work with over 6500 children in our 76 kindergarten and long day care centres weekly.

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 services.

If you have questions about this book, contact the team at your child’s service. They’ll be happy to help.





# Early learning with us

## Meeting you where you are

We create endless opportunities for lifelong learning by meeting you and your children 'where you are.' What does this look like?

- Working in relationship, together
- Being respectful and responsive to the needs that are showing up
- Curiosity
- A program that each child and family can see and feel themselves in
- Making place and local context shine in everything we do
- Warmth, delight and joy in the magic of childhood
- Honouring moments that matter

Relationships sit at the heart of early childhood education. We want to know your child's interests, abilities, skills, and existing knowledge, because it's vital to a quality relationship.

## Teaching standards

All ECMS teachers, educators and services 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.

## Our place-based approach

At ECMS, the place in which a child learns and grows and who is with them in their learning is important to us. We know that every person comes from someplace and that someplace matters in the context of who they are and the relationships they are in.

Our vibrant early childhood education programs empower children to become active participants in their education by connecting them with their surroundings, and fostering a sense of identity and purpose in the process. We invite children to know who and where they are and encourage them to make their own meaning of the world around them.

Recognising that relationships matter includes more than just the relationships between people. It is also the relationship of place. The importance of place at ECMS means that we honour Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives and their connection to this land.

## Safeguarding children

At ECMS, the safety and wellbeing of children is at the centre of everything in our practice, policies and people.

We actively engage with families and communities to promote a culture of safety and respect and create a space where children are protected, supported, and empowered to thrive.

We are committed to upholding the National Principles and [Victorian Standards for Child Safe Organisations](#).

In practice this means:

- A rigorous framework to assess child safety matters and respond to complaints
- Continuous quality improvement through shared learning and analysis of child safety trends
- Creating culturally safe environments for children and families from every background
- Programs that are designed to promote children's agency and strong sense of self
- Valuing the unique needs of every child and providing specialist support for children and families experiencing risk or vulnerability
- Encouraging family participation at every service including Parent Helpers to support the delivery of our programs
- A dedicated child-safeguarding team that promotes child safe practice across all services
- Regular training on a wide range of child safety matters
- Promotion of physical and online safety through audits, risk management practices and vigilant screening of online content
- Regular review of policy and procedures
- Applying a strong child safe lens throughout all recruitment and training

## Working with families

Our responsibilities as a trusted provider of early learning for your child are to safeguard all children, foster the best learning outcomes, guided by the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) and the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF) and manage all the educational, compliance, industrial, financial and operational obligations required of early childhood service providers.

To do this well we work closely with families to understand the unique needs of each child, and we rely on families to bring a positive influence to our learning community and model supportive and respectful behaviour.

This includes:

- Treating everyone with respect, including the service team and other children
- Using social media positively
- Using the appropriate channels to address complaints or concerns

We encourage families to be involved in their child's learning. Planning of events within the learning program is part of our role, but there are opportunities for family involvement in targeted fundraising and family engagement activities outside normal operating hours at many of our services. These have a long tradition at our services, where there are many great ideas for fundraising and community partnerships, including food drives, tea towel decorating, plate designing, plant and seedling sales, welcome picnics and lantern nights.





## How we celebrate diversity and support inclusion

The wellbeing and safety of children is at the centre of everything we do, and part of that is ensuring children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds feel welcome and develop a sense of belonging.

### Celebrations

As a child safe organisation, we have an ongoing commitment to equity and inclusion. While we don't host gender-titled events, there are many different ways we celebrate families and special people in a child's life. Our place-based approach means those ways will be informed by the unique characteristics of your service's community.

### Supporting all children

We're committed to ensuring our services are accessible and meet the needs of all children. In some circumstances, additional support can be provided. This may be for short periods or ongoing. Please speak with your child's educator if you believe your family or child will require additional support. If you are already engaged with an allied health professional, your educators would be keen to support this work within the program.

### Our support team

As well as your child's educators, we have a support team that includes experienced leaders, teachers, coaches, and social workers who aim to help our teaching teams create inclusive environments that foster lifelong learning.

## The importance of play

Learning at ECMS happens through play. All our services operate in accordance with the National Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) and the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF). These frameworks have a strong emphasis on learning through play.

During play children learn life skills such as confidence, how to develop and sustain relationships, emotional regulation, problem-solving, empathy and resilience.

Our teaching teams create a safe and fun place for children to explore their environment and challenge themselves within play. Engaging in risky play helps children learn problem-solving, persistence and resilience.

Our teachers are experts in child development theories and early years play-based learning. They guide children's learning based on what they already know and can do, while introducing opportunities through play to stretch and grow children's skills and knowledge.



**Learning at ECMS  
happens through play.**

# Preparing for kindergarten or long day care

When your child begins kindergarten or long day care it can be challenging, whether it's your first time or not, and our educators support you at all times to make the experience feel comfortable. Here's a few things that might help you prepare.



Check our policies



## Orientation sessions and meeting your educators

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

Orientation includes a meet and greet with your educators at the service before your child starts and then further conversations once they start, depending on your child's specific needs, interests, likes and dislikes, and any concerns you may have.

Those conversations will be held at the beginning of term one at kindergarten services or at long day care when you start, whether in January or during the year.

Your educators will be able to offer advice and strategies to assist you in supporting your child's transition into early learning.

We will share dates and details for your child's orientation and first day.



## What to bring to kindergarten

- ✓ **A backpack/bag**
- ✓ **A complete change of clothing** (including extra clothing if your child is not yet independent in going to the toilet)
- ✓ **A wide-brimmed sun hat and sunglasses.** We also encourage the application of SPF 30 or higher sunscreen before attending. Further information on our Sun Protection Policy can be found at [ecms.org.au/policies-page](https://ecms.org.au/policies-page).
- ✓ **Nutritional food for the day, including lunch, and morning and afternoon snacks.**
- ✓ **A drink bottle filled with freshwater**
- ✓ If your child would like to **bring along a favourite toy from home** for emotional comfort, please let your educator know. We can't accept responsibility for toys brought from home.

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



## What to wear

We recommend comfortable clothing which allows for freedom of movement while being mindful of both the weather conditions and safe sleeping guidelines. Your child's clothing should be appropriate

for messy and active play, along with suitable, firm grip sole shoes that enclose their feet. Thongs and Crocs are not recommended.



## Eating nutritious food at kindergarten

As part of our program, we encourage eating habits that support children's wellbeing while at kindergarten, as well as supporting children to learn how to listen to their body and what it needs throughout each session.

At kindergarten, children will engage in routines that promote good nutrition so that they can be active participants in learning – nutritious food is the fuel our brains need for healthy development. We also know that sharing your family history and culture may happen through food and our teaching teams would love to hear about this as we build new relationships together.

You know your child and their eating habits best, so providing enough food for the kindergarten session is helpful and depending on the length of the session, you may want to have multiple containers for food (e.g. Morning, Lunch and Afternoon).

You can include nutritious foods that your child eats regularly at home in a lunch box or container that they can open and close easily, as well as a water bottle.

Children will be encouraged to listen to their cues about hunger and when they are full and won't be forced to eat food at kindergarten.

See [bit.ly/kindernutrition](https://bit.ly/kindernutrition) for more healthy eating information.



# How we can work together

## Ways to be part of your child’s early learning

We love your support, and your service will tell you how to get involved. It could be through commenting on learning documentation that the teaching team shares, or community experiences like working bees, collecting recycled materials or sharing your passions, culture and history with the children.

Anyone helping at a service must have a current Volunteer Working With Children Check to meet child safeguarding standards. There is no charge to get one, and you can find out more and apply at [bit.ly/work-and-volunteering-check](https://bit.ly/work-and-volunteering-check).

Your child may also bring home experiences and examples of what they are learning about. Exploring this learning together can be a great way for children to connect this learning to their world. You can help your child by making connections between what you notice they are learning and what you might do at home. This helps children to build on what they already know and make sense of new experiences.

## Legal arrangements

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

While we cannot mediate disputes between parents in relation to contact with children, our teams will always work with you to make sure that your particular circumstances are supported confidentially and according to law.

## Excursions and community visits

Learning can take place in many settings and excursions form a valuable part of our program. Risk assessments are conducted by our team prior to any excursion taking place and you’ll be required to sign written permission for your child to attend. You’ll get plenty of information in advance about excursions or visits, and have opportunities to ask questions.

We also encourage you to attend excursions to support children and educators. A Working with Children Check is required.

## Our team

We have an obligation to ensure a safe, harassment-free working environment for all, and our qualified educators deserve your respect and courtesy. It’s not acceptable to treat our team aggressively or threaten them face to face or via social or print media. Should you be unhappy with any aspect of your child’s education and care, please refer to our Complaints and Feedback Policy located at [ecms.org.au/policies-page](https://ecms.org.au/policies-page).

Please don’t engage our educators to care for your children outside the service, whether for payment or not. This can place the educator in a conflict of interest between their professional and personal boundaries. We also ask that you don’t make a connection request with your child’s educators on any social media platform.

# Health, safety and wellbeing



Check our policies

## ECMS policies

We’re committed to ensuring that all children receive high-quality play-based learning in a safe and inclusive environment. Policies relevant to our obligations as service provider and employer are available at [ecms.org.au/policies-page](https://ecms.org.au/policies-page).

### Medication

**Your child cannot start until everything is in place, including a medication action plan and medication if required.**

Whether it’s a one-off issue or requires ongoing care, talk to your educators if your child is on regular medication (including prescription, over-the-counter and homeopathic medications) or has food allergies or intolerances.

Our team will ask you for information from your doctor about how much your child takes and how often. Also, let them know when anything changes. They will set up a new plan to support you, including any necessary training.

### Allergies

The safety and wellbeing of children who are at risk of anaphylaxis, food allergies or food intolerances is paramount – and we’re committed to providing a safe and healthy environment in which children can participate fully in all aspects of the program. Our team will work collaboratively with you to individually assess risks and develop risk minimisation and risk management strategies if required.

## Immunisation

Australian Government legislation (‘No Jab, No Play’) requires every child to be fully vaccinated for their age to attend any early learning and care service.

Please complete your child’s immunisation details on their enrolment form and provide a current immunisation history statement, approved catch-up schedule or medical exemption form as soon as possible.

If your child is not yet vaccinated our educators will support you through the process outlined in the No Jab, No Play toolkit, however, **your child will not be able to attend an ECMS service until their records meet the requirements of the law.** You are required to provide the service with your child’s updated immunisation records after any new immunisations and/or every six months. For more information, please review our Immunisation Policy at [ecms.org.au/policies-page](https://ecms.org.au/policies-page) or consult with your child’s educators.

Your child’s Immunisation History Statement can be downloaded from your MyGov Account. Alternatively, visit your local Medicare office to download a copy from the Australian Immunisation Register, or ask your medical practitioner. For children vaccinated overseas, parents will need to consult with their medical practitioner who will transfer the information to the Australian Childhood Immunisation Register. Once these have been confirmed an Immunisation History Statement can be issued.

# Health, safety and wellbeing

## Illness and infectious disease

We follow legislated procedures to promote children's health and minimise the spread of infection. Please keep your child home for at least 24 hours if they show any of these symptoms:

- **38.0C 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 service, our team will make them comfortable and ask you to pick them up. If you're not available, they'll call one of the other emergency contacts listed on your enrolment form.

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

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 [bit.ly/school-exclusion-table](https://bit.ly/school-exclusion-table).

## Incidents and accidents

If your child is hurt at the service, we will comfort them, treat any minor injuries, and monitor how they're feeling. All our teachers hold current first aid qualifications. The service will call and let you know what's happened and, if necessary, ask you to pick them up.

We're required to inform the Department of Education about serious incidents and we'll need your signature on the report.

## Medical emergencies

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

- **Call an ambulance and follow paramedic instructions**
- **Administer first aid until the ambulance arrives**
- **Call you and keep you updated**

At enrolment you are required to sign an authority for educators to seek emergency medical or ambulance assistance if necessary.

## Medical management plans

If your child has a medical condition that requires particular treatment and is attending the service, tell your educator before they start. Our team will provide support and care so that your child can participate equally in all aspects of the program.

Under the Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011, Medical Management plans are required for any child who is at risk of:

- **Asthma**
- **An allergic reaction**
- **Anaphylaxis**
- **Eczema**
- **Allergic rhinitis (hay fever)**
- **Diabetes**
- **Epilepsy**

Please consult with your medical practitioner to obtain these plans if needed.

## Child safe environment

As a child-safe organisation, we rigorously follow Victorian Government standards. We foster a child-safe culture, putting the rights and interests of children first. We're committed to involving families and communities to keep children safe.

Use the QR code to report any concerns.



The most recent Child Safe Standards are at [bit.ly/early-childhood-child-safe-standards](https://bit.ly/early-childhood-child-safe-standards).

All ECMS educators and registered teachers have mandatory reporting responsibilities, and you can find further information on this at [bit.ly/protectionreporting](https://bit.ly/protectionreporting).

The ECMS Child Safety and Information Sharing Scheme Policies are available at your service or at [ecms.org.au/policies-page](https://ecms.org.au/policies-page).



# How we keep you up-to-date

## Storypark

One way we let you know about day-to-day happenings is Storypark. Storypark is a communication tool that helps you and your child’s educators record, share and extend your child’s learning.

It’s free, private and online, and you’ll be invited by your centre to join with an email link to set up your account. You can also download the Storypark app on your phone. You’ll be in control of who can see what and it belongs to you (you’ll also have access to it after your kindergarten years).

You can find out more about how Storypark works for your family on our website at [blogs.ecms.org.au](https://blogs.ecms.org.au)

## 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 of our team or visitors to take photographs or videos of children without your consent, including for marketing. Similarly, we ask that you inform us if you want to take a photo of your child at the centre during a special moment, such as a birthday, and if you want to share that photo on social media.

If you’re not sure what’s allowed, please ask our team.

## Your privacy

ECMS has a dedicated Privacy Policy which illustrates how we will collect use, disclose, manage and transfer personal information, including health information. This policy is available at [ecms.org.au/policies-page](https://ecms.org.au/policies-page).



# How to give feedback

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

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 service. You can tell us your name or remain unidentified if you wish.



All feedback submitted is reviewed and followed up.

## Fees, funding and operating hours

- All children in Victoria who are 3 and 4 years old can access two years of Free Kinder. This is available at sessional kindergartens and some early learning centres. Find out more about the Victorian State Government’s Best Start, Best Life program at [vic.gov.au/best-start-best-life-reforms](https://vic.gov.au/best-start-best-life-reforms)
- Our kindergarten services follow Victorian school term dates and public holidays
- Please check with your service to confirm specific operating hours and session times. These times are also on posters in your centre’s foyer and on [ecms.org.au](https://ecms.org.au) along with session times.

## Contact us

If you need help, contact your centre, call us on **03 8481 1100** or email [ecms@ecms.org.au](mailto:ecms@ecms.org.au)

[ecms.org.au](https://ecms.org.au)



