Smooth Start

What early childhood education looks like at ECMS



Acknowledgement of Country

ECMS acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples as the first inhabitants of this nation and the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which we live, learn, work and play. Aboriginal peoples have always taught through their deep connections to Country, community, language and culture.

We recognise their continuing connection to Country and pay our respects to Elders past and present. We honour the wisdom held in culture, community and Country, and the way these strengthen children's belonging, being and becoming.

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



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Welcome to ECMS

Thank you for choosing ECMS for your child's early childhood education. We're happy to welcome you and your family to our ECMS community.

At ECMS, we believe every child should have the opportunity to learn, grow and feel a sense of belonging. We provide high-quality early childhood education and care for children and families across Victoria.

This guide has important information to help you and your child get started. It explains what you can expect at your service, how we will keep in touch with you, and how we support your child's health, safety and wellbeing.

If you have any questions, please speak to the team at your service. They'll be happy to help.



Early learning with us

Getting to know your child

Every child and family is different. We take time to get to know your child – what they enjoy, what they can do and what they need. We also learn about your family, culture and what is important to you.

Getting to know you and your child helps us understand how they learn, what interests them and how we can support them. We use what we learn to connect their experiences at kindergarten with their family, culture and local community.

Early childhood education standards

All ECMS teachers, educators and services follow the requirements for early childhood education and care in Victoria. These requirements are set by the Victorian Department of Education and the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA).

Our teachers are registered with the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT). They follow professional teaching and child safe standards, learning and development frameworks, and relevant laws. ECMS also supports the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Our place-based approach

At ECMS, we believe the place where a child learns and grows, and the people around them, are important. Where we come from and where we live help shape who we are, our relationships and where we feel we belong.

Our early childhood programs connect children with the people, places and community around them. We support children to explore the world around them and learn more about who they are and where they belong.

Relationships are not only with people. Our connection to place is important too. At ECMS, this means we honour Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives and their connection to Country.

Early learning with us

Keeping children safe

At ECMS, the safety and wellbeing of children is at the centre of everything we do.

We work with families and communities to create safe and respectful environments where children feel supported and able to learn and grow.

We follow the National Principles and Victorian Child Safe Standards. This means we:

- **support children to have a voice, make choices and build a strong sense of who they are.**
- **create culturally safe environments for children and families from all backgrounds.**
- **understand each child's needs and provide extra or specialist support when needed.**
- **have clear ways to respond to child safety concerns and complaints.**
- **train our teams in child safety and make child safety an important part of recruitment.**
- **take steps to keep children safe in person and online.**

Working with families

As the provider of your child's early childhood education and care, we are responsible for running our kindergartens and early learning centres. We keep children safe and support their learning and development. Our teachers and educators follow the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) and the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF).

We work closely with families to understand each child and what they need. We ask families to:

- **treat our team, children and other families with respect.**
- **use social media in a positive and respectful way.**
- **use the right channels to raise a concern or make a complaint.**

We encourage families to be involved in their child's learning. Your service will let you know about events and ways you can take part in activities.

How we celebrate diversity and support inclusion

We celebrate and support the different cultures, languages and backgrounds of children and families in our services.

Celebrations

While we don't celebrate gender-titled events, there are many different ways we celebrate families and special people in a child's life. Our place-based approach means we celebrate in ways that are meaningful to each service and its local 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 need additional support. If your child is already working with an allied health professional, your educators can support this work as part of the program.

Our support team

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

Learning through play

Play is one of the most important ways children learn. Through play, children explore ideas, build relationships and learn about themselves, others and the world around them.

Children have time and space to follow their interests, explore, imagine, create and try new things. Our educators carefully observe children and know when to join in, ask a question, introduce something new or offer support to help your child's learning.

Strong relationships are an important part of this. When children feel safe, known and connected, they are more confident to explore, communicate, keep trying and take on new challenges. Getting to know each child also helps educators understand what interests them, what they can do and what they may be ready to learn next.

This is intentional play-based learning. Educators use their professional knowledge, the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF) and what they know about each child to plan learning experiences and decide what comes next.

Through play, children develop skills in areas such as language, thinking, problem-solving, relationships, emotions, literacy, numeracy, creativity and movement.

Preparing to start kindergarten

Starting kindergarten or in a new group is an exciting time. We know that every child adjusts differently. Our educators will work with you and your child to help them feel comfortable and settle in.

Here are a few things that can help you prepare.

Check our policies

Orientation sessions and meeting your educators

Every child's transition and how they settle in is different. Our approach aims to help children and families feel welcome, confident and connected.

Before your child starts their kindergarten group, you'll be invited to a Meet & Greet with the teaching team. You and your child will also attend an Orientation session.

This gives your child time to get to know their educators, their group and the kindergarten spaces. It also gives you time to talk with the team about your child's interests, routines, strengths and needs.

As your child settles in, educators will work closely with you and support them at their own pace.

Your service will send you information about Meet & Greet and Orientation before your child starts.

What to bring to kindergarten

- **A backpack/bag**
- **A complete change of clothing** (make sure to pack extra clothing if your child is still learning to use the toilet on their own.)
- **A wide-brimmed sun hat and sunglasses.** We also encourage you to apply sunscreen (SPF 30 or higher) before arrival. You can find more information on our Sun Protection Policy at *ecms.org.au/policies-page*.
- **Enough food for your child's day, including lunch and snacks**
- **A drink bottle filled with fresh water**
- If your child would like to **bring along a favourite toy or comfort item**, please let your educator know. We can't accept responsibility for toys brought from home.

Please label everything your child brings with their name, even their favourite toy, as it's easy for things to go missing.

What to wear

We recommend comfortable clothing that allows your child to move freely and is suitable for the weather and safe sleeping. Children can get messy during active play, so please choose clothes that are suitable for play. Shoes should fit securely, have a good grip and cover your child's feet. Thongs and Crocs are not recommended.

Eating well at kindergarten

Food gives children the energy they need to learn, play and grow. It can also be an important part of your family's culture and traditions, and our teaching teams would love to learn about the foods that are important to your family.

If your child needs to bring their own food, we encourage you to pack a variety of healthy foods your child knows and enjoys.

Please make sure to pack enough food. You know your child and their eating habits best.

For longer sessions, it may help to use separate containers for morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea.

Please pack food in a lunch box or container your child can open and close easily, as well as a water bottle.

We encourage children to listen to their bodies and recognise when they are hungry or full. Children will never be forced to eat at kindergarten.

See *bit.ly/kindernutrition* for more healthy eating information.

How we can work together

Being part of your child's early childhood education

We encourage families to be part of their child's learning. Your service will let you know about different ways you can get involved. You might help with activities at the service, collect recycled materials, share your interests, culture or history with the children, or respond to learning shared by the teaching team.

If you volunteer at the service, you will need a current Volunteer Working with Children Check. This check is free. Find out more and apply at *bit.ly/work-and-volunteering-check*.

Your child may bring home examples of what they have been learning or talk about their day at kindergarten. Talking together about what your child has learned or experienced, and connecting it with things you do at home, can help build on their learning.

Excursions and community visits

Children learn in many different places. Excursions and community visits give children opportunities to explore places outside the service and connect what they are learning with the world around them.

Before an excursion, we complete a risk assessment and give you information about where your child is going and what they will be doing. You will need to give written permission for your child to attend.

Families are also welcome to join excursions. You will need a current Working with Children Check to take part. If you would like to volunteer or join excursions regularly, you will also need to have Foundations of Child Safety & Mandatory Reporting certificates.

Legal arrangements

If you have any legal arrangements relating to your child, please let your Nominated Supervisor or Centre Director know.

We cannot resolve disputes between parents about contact with children, but we will work with you to support your family's circumstances confidentially and in line with the law.

Keeping our team safe

We ask families to treat our team with respect. Aggressive or threatening behaviour towards our team is not acceptable, whether in person, online or in writing.

Please don't ask our educators to care for your child outside the service, whether paid or unpaid. Educators need to keep their work and personal relationships separate. We also ask that you don't send social media connection requests to your child's educators.

Health, safety and wellbeing

Check our policies

ECMS policies

We work to make sure all children receive high-quality education in a safe and inclusive environment. You can find our policies about how we run our services and keep children and our team safe at *ecms.org.au/policies-page*.

Medication

If your child needs medication while at the service, please talk to your educators. This includes prescription, over the counter and homeopathic medication.

Depending on the medication, we may need a medication action plan, the medication your child needs or both. Our team will let you know what information we need from your doctor or GP and put a plan in place to support your child, including any training our team may need.

Please also let us know if your child's medication or needs change.

Allergies

If your child has an allergy or food intolerance, or is at risk of anaphylaxis, please let us know. We will work with you to understand what your child needs and put steps in place to keep them safe and help them take part in all activities.

Medical management plan

If your child has a medical condition that needs care or treatment, please tell your educators before your child starts. We will work with you to make sure your child gets the care and support they need.

Under the Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011, we need a Medical Management Plan if your child is at risk of:

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

Please speak with your doctor or GP to get a plan if needed.

Health, safety and wellbeing

Immunisation

Under Victoria's No Jab, No Play laws, children need to have the required immunisations for their age before they can attend kindergarten or an early learning centre.

When you enrol, you will need to share your child's immunisation details. You will also need to share a current Immunisation History Statement, approved catch-up schedule or medical exemption form.

If your child is not yet vaccinated for their age, we can help you understand what you need to do. Your child cannot attend until they have the required immunisations, are on an approved catch-up schedule or have a medical exemption.

Please share updated immunisation records with your service after your child has any new immunisations and every six months.

You can download your child's Immunisation History Statement from myGov. If you need help, speak with your doctor or GP or visit a Medicare service centre.

If your child was vaccinated overseas, speak with your doctor or GP. They can add your child's vaccination information to the Australian Immunisation Register so you can get an Immunisation History Statement.

For more information, see our Immunisation Policy at *ecms.org.au/policies-page*.

Illness and infectious disease

Keeping children home when they are unwell helps protect the health of all children and our team.

Please keep your child at home for at least 24 hours if they have any of these symptoms:

- **A temperature of 38°C or higher**
- **Vomiting or diarrhoea**
- **A rash that can't be explained**
- **Red, swollen or discharging eyes**
- **Being unusually tired or irritable or not eating or drinking.**

If your child becomes unwell while at the service, we will make them comfortable and ask you to pick them up. If we can't reach you, we will call one of the other emergency contacts on your enrolment form.

Your child can return when they are feeling better and have had no symptoms for 24 hours.

If your child has an infectious disease, please keep them at home and let us know straight away. Any information you share with us will be kept confidential.

See the list of infectious diseases at *bit.ly/school-exclusion-table*.

Incidents and accidents

If your child is hurt at the service, we will comfort them, provide first aid and check how they're feeling. We will let you know what happened and, if needed, ask you to pick them up.

All our teachers hold current first aid qualifications.

If a serious incident happens, we have to inform the Department of Education and the independent regulator. We will also complete an incident report, share it with you and ask you to sign it.

Medical emergencies

If your child has a medical emergency, we will:

- **call an ambulance and follow the paramedics' instructions**
- **provide first aid until the ambulance arrives**
- **call you and keep you updated**

When you enrol, you will need to give us permission to call an ambulance or get other medical help for your child in an emergency.

Reporting a child safety concern

If you have a concern about a child's safety, please let us know. You can use the QR code below to report a concern.

All ECMS educators and registered teachers must report certain child safety concerns.

You can find more information about the Victorian Child Safe Standards at *bit.ly/early-childhood-child-safe-standards* and mandatory reporting at *bit.ly/protectionreporting*.

Our Child Safety and Information Sharing Scheme Policies are available at your service or at *ecms.org.au/policies-page*.

How we keep you up-to-date

Storypark

We use Storypark to share day-to-day updates about your child's learning and experiences at the service. You can also use Storypark to respond and share information with your child's educators.

Storypark is free, private and online. Your service will send you an email with a link to set up your account. You can also download the Storypark app on your phone.

You control who can see what is shared, and your account belongs to you. You can continue to access it after your child finishes kindergarten.

You can find out more about how Storypark works for your family at *bit.ly/kidsoftblog*

Photos and videos

We don't allow our team or visitors to take photos or videos of children without your consent, including for marketing.

If you would like to take a photo or video of your child at the service, or share it on social media, please check with our team first. This helps us protect the privacy of other children.

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

Other ways we keep in touch

We also keep you up-to-date through:

- **displays at the service showing what children are learning**
- **a transition statement for school about your child's abilities and how they learn**
- **email, sms and phone calls**
- **posters and general announcements at your service**

Your privacy

ECMS has a Privacy Policy that explains how we collect, use, share and manage personal information, including health information.

You can find our Privacy Policy at *ecms.org.au/policies-page*.



How to give feedback

We welcome your feedback. You can speak to your Nominated Supervisor or Centre Director if you have a compliment, concern or complaint.

You can also scan the QR code to use 1Place, our feedback platform. You can share a compliment or complaint and choose whether or not to share your name.

We review and follow up all feedback.

Fees, funding and operating hours

Free Kinder is available for three and four year old children in Victoria at sessional kindergartens and Free Kinder Funding is available at participating early learning centres. Find out more about Free Kinder and Best Start, Best Life at *vic.gov.au/best-start-best-life-reforms*.

Our kindergarten services follow Victorian school term dates and public holidays. This means that kindergartens are closed during the Victorian school holidays.

During the school holidays, the Free Kinder funding discount won't be applied. This means that you will pay your regular daily fee on the days your child would normally attend the integrated kindergarten program.

Operating hours and session times are different at each service. Please check with your service or visit *ecms.org.au* for details.

Contact us

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

You can also visit our website **ecms.org.au**



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ecms.org.au