

Kindergarten Parent Handbook



Latrobe City Council acknowledges that it operates on the traditional land of the Brayakaulung people of the Gunaikurnai nation and pays respect to their Elders past and present.



Table of contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Mission statement | 03 |
| Guiding principles | 03 |
| Welcome | 03 |
| Play-based learning and programming | 03 |
| Planning and supporting children's learning | 03 |
| Importants dates and information | 05 |
| Term dates | 05 |
| Public holidays | 05 |
| Fees | 05 |
| Concerns and complaints | 05 |
| Getting involved | 06 |
| Working with children check | 07 |
| Parent helper roster | 07 |
| Excursions | 07 |
| Starting kindergarten | 08 |
| What to expect in the first days/weeks | 08 |
| What to bring | 08 |
| Delivery and collection of children | 08 |
| Communication | 09 |
| Your child's health | 09 |
| Medications | 09 |
| Accidents and incidents | 09 |
| Emergency evacuation | 10 |
| Kindergarten readiness | 11 |
| 3 Year old specific | 11 |
| 4 Year old specific | 11 |
| Developmental considerations in relation to kindergarten readiness | 11 |
| Preschool contacts | 12 |
| Code of conduct | 13 |

Mission statement

Children are our primary focus, they are valued and supported to grow and develop in a safe and enriching environment.

Guiding principles

- Children are central to everything we do
- We partner with children, families and support services to support children's learning and development
- We engage with local communities to promote a safe community for all children and families

Welcome

This handbook contains important information about the kindergarten year and we ask parents to keep this booklet for reference throughout the year.

You and your family are the most important people in your child's life, we encourage you to become actively involved in their time at kindergarten. We are looking forward to working with both you and your child to make this year a thoroughly happy and enjoyable time.

Our Kindergarten program is delivered by a team of professional early childhood teachers, is flexible and designed to cater for individual abilities and interests.

Play-based learning and programming

We believe that the foundation of children's learning occurs through play. Early childhood professionals call this 'play-based learning'. When children play, they learn to develop social skills, they learn to take (safe) risks, learn to solve problems, use their imaginations and make sense of their world.

A play-based learning approach allows children to explore, identify, negotiate, take risks and create meaning of their world. Through play, children learn, develop and embed skills through experiences within the learning environment that they're naturally drawn to.

Our educators are highly trained professionals that are skilled at observing children's play and extending children's learning through open ended questioning, provocation discussions "I wonder what might happen if we ___?".

Our educational teams are intentional in their actions to support and extend each child's learning.

Learning in an early years setting looks very different to the 'traditional and formal' set up of a school classroom, but it doesn't make the learning any less valuable. In fact, 90% of a children's brain development occurs by the time they are 5 years old!! It's for this reason, we believe learning should be fun, engages their interests and is designed to support the individual needs of every child. There's no one size fits all when it comes to children's learning



Planning and supporting children's learning

The physical environment of the kindergarten:

the physical layout of the learning environment, the layout of space, furniture and resources – our educators ensure children's environments are arranged in provoking and inviting ways that encourages children's exploration, learning and enquiry.

The social and emotional environment:

we believe children thrive when they have secure, warm and trusting relationships so they can feel supported and confident in their explorations and risk taking. Our educators assist children to make connections with others, develop friendships and learn skills to self- regulate their behaviours. Together, children and adults set the emotional and social tone of the kindergarten environment.

The intellectual environment:

our educators are committed to supporting children to develop skills that set them up for life. There are times where educators leave children to play freely, to negotiate their place in play and with others, and there are times for intentional conversation, a well-placed question or query that will extend children's learning. Rich conversations shared between educators and children are the foundation of high quality educator/child interactions.

The temporal environment:

this is the way educators decide how to use the time available in the program. Each of our programs are different and designed to support, extend and sustain children's learning throughout the day. Children need large blocks of time to develop play themes and ideas, and this is considered when teachers plan the children's routines and curriculum.

Children's routines and curriculum delivery:

with intentional consideration of each child's needs (as individuals and as a group), each teaching team is well considered in their approach in how they deliver children's routines and curriculum to get the best outcomes for the children in their group. For example:

Some teachers may choose to plan a flexible '**indoor/outdoor**' curriculum where children have large blocks of time accessing all areas of the learning environment. This may include a 'progressive morning/afternoon tea where children make choices about when they eat their morning/afternoon tea'.

Other teachers may plan to offer a curriculum that fits a more **structured routine**, for example: set times for mat/group time, indoor play at activity tables, and separate outdoor play periods.

Meanwhile, other teachers chose to offer a curriculum that is **shared between a flexible indoor/outdoor approach and a structured routine** where periods of the day are set aside for set routines, and these periods are shared with flexible periods of play. For example, children might come together for lunch indoors, while large parts of the day the children make choices of where in the learning environment they play.

Much consideration and planning goes into the children's routines and curriculum delivery. Neither of the curriculum styles or approaches to routines (mentioned above) are better than the next, each are considered with intention and purpose to support and extend children's learning.

We encourage you to speak with your teacher about their teaching philosophy, and approach to curriculum delivery and routines.

Children's learning goals:

You can expect to have discussions with your child's teacher (formally and informally) throughout the year to discuss your child's learning goals. In order to develop a program that supports your child's learning from the beginning of the year, the parent/teacher interview is a great opportunity for teachers to learn about your hopes and dreams for your child's kindergarten year. While there will be many opportunities for parent/teacher discussions throughout the year, the Parent/teacher interview (at the beginning of the year) and the 'Mid-Year Parent/teacher catch up' enables uninterrupted time for parents and teachers to talk about your child's learning and progress at kindergarten. The Mid-Year catch up also offers opportunity to review, reflect and plan to support an extension of existing learning goals or establish new goals. These 'parent/teacher catch-ups' are informal and relaxed, and are a great opportunity to further support strong relationships between home and the kindergarten.

Important dates and information

Term dates

Victorian Kindergarten term dates:

www.vic.gov.au/school-term-dates-and-holidays-victoria

Public holidays

Victorian public holidays:

business.vic.gov.au/business-information/public-holidays/victorian-public-holidays-2025

Fees

The Victorian State Government has announced that from 2023 there will be no cost to families and therefore no fees will be applicable to either the 4 year old program or the 3 year old program.

Concerns and complaints

We aim to offer your child the best possible kindergarten experience, which can only be achieved in partnership with you.

If you have a concern or complaint about any aspect of the care, program, or facilities at the centre, please make a time to speak with your early childhood teacher.

If you are still concerned after speaking with the early childhood teacher, please phone the Team Leader Early Learning and Care at Latrobe City on 1300 367 700.

The Team Leader's role is to help resolve any issues that may arise. If the issue at the centre is serious, where it may affect the health and safety of the children at the centre, the Council is required to inform the Department of Education and Training (DET).

For more information, read the Latrobe City's Complaints Procedure available at your preschool.



Child safety

Latrobe City Council has zero-tolerance towards any form of child abuse and is committed to the safety, wellbeing and empowerment of children. We will create and maintain a child safe organisation where protecting children and preventing and responding to child abuse is embedded in the everyday thinking and practice of all employees, volunteers and contractors.

Latrobe City Council recognizes children as active citizens within the community and is committed to advocating for their rights.

We involve children when making decisions about matters that directly affect them.

We listen to their views and respect what they have to say.

Child Safety is all of our responsibility. If you are concerned for the safety of a child and you are unsure what to do, please speak with your teacher for advice or contact Child Protection. If you believe a child or young person to be in life threatening or immediate danger, contact the police immediately by calling 000.

The following policies can help you to understand what we do as a Child Safe Organisation to ensure that your child is safe with us. They are available to you at your Kindergarten for you to read or by asking your teacher.

- Child Safe Policy
- Child Safe Standards Operational Policy
- Code of Conduct
- Child Safe Code of Conduct
- Delivery and Collection of Children Operational Policy
- Interactions with Children Operational Policy
- Provide a Child Safe Environment Operational Policy
- Responding to and Reporting Child Abuse Employee Guidelines
- Supervision of Children Operational Policy

Getting involved

Talk to your teacher about volunteering your time at the service (including excursions). If you are wishing to help out as a parent of a child who attends the service, there are certain policies which you must read and adhere to. You will find the following policies at your kindergarten, or by talking to your child's teacher:

- Provide a Child Safe Environment Operational Policy
- Volunteers and Students Policy
- Visitors Policy
- Working with Children Checks Policy

Working with children check

The Working with Children Check aims to protect children from sexual or physical harm by checking a person's criminal history for neglect and abuse, serious sexual, serious violence and serious drug offences and findings.

All volunteers (parents/guardians/carers etc) who wish to participate in the Kindergarten services will be required to have a volunteer working with children check.

To apply for a Check, you must:

1. Fill in the application form and verify your identity online www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au/individuals/applicants/how-to-apply
2. Check your email inbox for an email from workingwithchildren@smarteform.com.au with instructions on how to finalise your application at Australia Post.
3. Attend your local post office to have your photo taken (at no charge to you)
4. Once completed provide your WWCC number and expiry date to your preschool. If you need assistance in obtaining a WWCC please contact us.

Parent helper roster

You are welcome to volunteer your time to participate in the preschool program. Children love to have someone special at kindergarten, so help is not limited to parents. Grandparents or other special people can help too. If you need to bring a younger sibling/child, please remember they are your responsibility.

Please speak to the educators to volunteer to help.

Excursions

We welcome your participation and engagement on excursions or other special occasions to make the experience safer and more valuable for all.

Read our Excursions and Routine Outings Procedure, available at your preschool.

Starting kindergarten

What to expect in the first days/weeks

We want your child to feel secure so they enjoy their initial kindergarten experience. To help in these early days, please discuss your child's needs with the early childhood teacher. These first weeks are an opportunity for educators to learn about your child, and for the child to learn about the staff, the routine and the other children.

It's also important to arrive on time to collect your child.

What to bring

Our Kindergartens are Sunsmart* and require all children to wear a sun hat (wide brim or legionnaire-style) for outdoor play. Without a hat, children will have to remain in shaded areas.

SPF 30+ sunscreen should be applied to all children before attending our centres. Sunscreen is available for staff and children's use at each centre.

*Read the Sun Protection Procedure, available at your preschool.

Please make sure that all your child's personal items, are clearly labelled with your child's name.

- A sun hat (wide brim or legionnaire-style) for outdoor play. Without a hat, children will have to remain in shaded areas.
- A large bag for artwork, parent notices and other items.
- A change of clothes (including underwear) every day. Even though your child may be toilet trained, sometimes other types of accidents happen.
- A snack/lunch, (dependant on session times). You can read more about healthy choices www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/healthy-eating-tips
- Drink bottle – Please bring along a labelled drink bottle for water only.
- Pack a coat for colder or wet weather

A smock is provided for art and other messy activities but we suggest your child wears easily laundered clothes.

No open toe shoes, long skirts or dresses or slippery-soled shoes, as these are dangerous for outside activities.

Delivery and collection of children

To keep your child, and others, safe, please:

- Take your child directly into the preschool environment. Children must not be left at the gate or outside the building.
- Shut the gate securely when entering and leaving the kindergarten.
- Ensure no child leaves the grounds without an adult.
- Sign in and out on the iPad on arrival and at the end of the session.
- Collect your child promptly at the end of each session.
- Let us know if you are going to be late, so we can reassure your child.
- Inform your early childhood teacher or other team member if someone else is collecting your child.
To collect a child the person must be authorised on the child's enrolment and be able to provide proof of identification.
- If you do not collect your child at the end of the session, educators will:
 - attempt to contact the guardians
 - attempt to contact authorised persons
 - have two adults in attendance until the child is collected
- After 30 minutes of the end of session, arrangements will be made for the care of your child as per the Delivery and Collection of Children Procedure, available at your preschool.

Communication

Throughout the year, we will keep you informed about the kindergarten program, excursions, special visitors, fundraising activities etc.

Communication will be made via service Facebook groups, emails, phone calls, or other social media platforms.

Your child's health

Regular attendance at kindergarten helps to set good habits for school next year. However, home is the place for a sick child. If your child is sick or is absent for any reason, please contact your preschool.

If your child becomes unwell at kindergarten, we will contact you or your nominated emergency contact to collect the child.

Medical management plans are required if your child is diagnosed with asthma, anaphylaxis, allergies or diabetes. Speak to your teacher if your child is diagnosed with a medical condition

Please read our Medical Management Policy, available at your preschool.

Children who have an infectious disease cannot attend kindergarten in accordance with regulations. The Infections & Communicable Diseases Procedure is available to read at your preschool.

Medications

Our educators are required by law to record all medication administered to children. For safety reasons, all medications must be given to staff. Staff must sign the Medication Record Book giving full details of medication, when administered and the person who checked the dose. The parent signs this to give permission for medication to be administered. All medication must be left in the original container and labelled.

The Medication Administration and Storage Procedure is available to read at your preschool.

Accidents and incidents

If there is a serious accident involving your child while they are attending kindergarten, you will be immediately phoned and if necessary, we will call an ambulance.

If, for any reason, we are unable to contact you, we will contact the emergency contact that you have provided.

If your child does sustain an injury while at kindergarten, you will be required to sign an incident report. The Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Procedure is available to read at your preschool.

Emergency evacuation

Written emergency evacuation procedures are on display at all times. Please familiarise yourself with these, as you may be involved in helping to implement them at any time.

We practice our emergency evacuation drills at each preschool, each term.



Kindergarten readiness

3 year old specific

Children are eligible to attend three year old kindergarten if they turn 3 years old by 30 April in the year they will attend. Children must be three years of age before they can commence at the service.

Children are eligible for one year of funded three year old kindergarten and will commence four year old preschool the following year. Children who withdraw from a kindergarten program once they commence are not eligible for a second year of funded kindergarten anywhere in Victoria. Therefore, it is important that families consider whether their child is ready for three year old funded kindergarten, prior to their child commencing in the program.

Developmental considerations in relation to three year old kindergarten readiness

As children begin three year old kindergarten, they are usually:

- Becoming increasingly comfortable separating from their family.
- Demonstrating awareness of and interest in playing alongside peers.
- Developing awareness of their bodily needs, including developing independence in toileting and at meal times.
- Requiring less rest through the day.

Four year old specific

Children are eligible to attend four year old kindergarten if they are turning 4 years old by 30 April in the year they will attend. Some families choose to wait an extra year especially if they feel their child is not yet socially or emotionally ready to attend.

Children who withdraw from a kindergarten program once they commence are not eligible for a second year of funded kindergarten anywhere in Victoria. Only children who meet the eligibility criteria and are deemed to have a developmental delay in at least two areas are able to attend a second year. Decisions regarding children attending a second year of funded kindergarten must be made no later than the end of Term 3 in the child's first year of kindergarten.

As each child is only eligible for one year of funded kindergarten it's extremely important to consider whether your child is ready for kindergarten. The conversation about if your child is ready for kindergarten needs to take place before the child begins their funded kindergarten year. Your local Maternal and Child Health Nurse and Kindergarten educators can answer any questions you may have.

Developmental considerations in relation to four year old kindergarten readiness

As children begin four year old kindergarten, they are usually:

- Separating comfortably from their family.
- Showing interest in playing alongside or with their peers.
- Showing awareness of waiting, sharing and talking turns
- Developing awareness of routine and expectations.
- Developing independence in dressing and toileting
- Beginning to take responsibility for their own belongings
- Showing increasing confidence and ability to bounce back in the face of challenges.

If you are unsure or have any questions, please contact our Family Services Team on 1300 367 700.

Children who turn six (compulsory school age) in the preschool year are required to seek approval for their participation in a funded kindergarten program from the Department of Education and Training. It is the responsibility of the child's parent/guardian to seek this approval via a School Exemption Application form. This must be completed prior to the child commencing preschool and evidence of this must be provided to Family Services for the child's record.

This form can be found at:

www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/school/principals/participation/schoolexemption.pdf



Preschool contacts

| Preschool location | Phone | Mobile |
|---------------------------------|-----------|--------------|
| Boolarra Preschool | 5120 3854 | 0498 604 708 |
| Cameron Street Preschool | 5176 3349 | 0448 552 149 |
| Carinya Early Learning Centre | 5128 5722 | 0498 620 407 |
| Churchill Hub Preschool | 5120 3844 | 0487 091 891 |
| Cumberland Park Preschool | 5176 3347 | 0498 617 442 |
| East Newborough Preschool | 5135 8562 | 0487 002 852 |
| Elizabeth Wilmot Preschool | 5128 6561 | 0498 637 141 |
| Glendonald Park Preschool | 5120 3855 | 0498 638 140 |
| Glengarry Preschool | 5176 3316 | 0498 647 813 |
| Kay Street Preschool | 5176 3348 | 0498 608 751 |
| Maryvale Cres Preschool | 5128 6540 | 0498 614 175 |
| Moe Early Learning Centre | 5135 8550 | |
| Moe Heights Preschool | 5135 8561 | 0498 633 903 |
| Moore St Preschool | 5135 8558 | 0498 622 943 |
| Morwell Park Preschool | 5128 5404 | 0403 636 032 |
| Murray Road Preschool | 5135 8504 | 0498 587 529 |
| Park Lane Preschool | 5176 3345 | 0498 574 489 |
| Parklands Preschool | 5128 6560 | 0498 658 434 |
| Pax Hill Preschool | 5176 3346 | 0498 638 542 |
| Sara Court Preschool | 5176 3350 | 0498 614 691 |
| Traralgon Early Learning Centre | 5176 3360 | |
| Traralgon South Preschool | 5176 3317 | 0498 651 695 |
| Tyers Preschool | 5176 3336 | 0498 574 078 |
| Yallourn North Preschool | 5135 8514 | 0498 653 132 |
| Yinnar Preschool | 5120 3852 | 0498 669 110 |

Code of conduct

Families and visitors

At Latrobe City Council's Kindergartens, we aim to provide welcoming, inclusive, and safe environments for all. We believe all parents, guardians, family members and visitors play a valuable role in the effective operation of our services.

Purpose

The purpose of the Code of Conduct is to establish clear expectations regarding the behaviour of parents, guardians, family members and visitors towards, with and in the presence of children, educators, and staff.

Scope

This code of conduct has been prepared in accordance with Child Safety Standards and National Quality Standards and applies to all parents, guardians, authorised contacts, visitors and family members of children enrolled in our service to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all.

Everyone has the right to:

- Be treated with respects and dignity.
- Be treated with professionalism.
- Be listened to and clearly communicated with.
- Have their cultural identity valued by others.
- Be consulted on issues that affect them or their children.
- Ask for and receive appropriate supports.
- Privacy and confidentiality.

All parents, guardians and visitors attending our services are responsible for supporting the safety, participation, wellbeing, and empowerment of children. In relation to children, parents/guardians, family members and visitors will:

- ✓ Behave as a positive role model for all children.
- ✓ Always ensure the health, safety, and wellbeing of all children.
- ✓ Respect the privacy and dignity of all children.
- ✓ Take all reasonable steps to protect children from abuse and harm.
- ✓ Refrain from the use of violence, bullying, teasing, threatening, racist or discriminatory remarks about or in the presence of children.

In relation to children, parents/guardians, family members and visitors will not:

- ✗ Physically, sexually or emotionally abuse children, this may include:
 - Having purposeful contact with a child with the intention of grooming that child.
 - Hitting, or physically assaulting a child.
 - Engaging in an intimate relationship with a child
 - Shouting, yelling or speaking to a child in an angry, intimidating, or threatening manner.

- ✗ Kissing, cuddling or holding children unknown to you.
- ✗ Engaging in open discussions or actions of a mature or adult nature in the presence of a child.
- ✗ Using inappropriate, offensive, humiliating, or discriminatory language in the presence of a child.
- ✗ Misusing images of children taken at Council's services.

In relation to other adults and educators, parents/guardians, family members and visitors will:

- ✓ Treat everyone with respect and dignity.
- ✓ Respect the rights of others.
- ✓ Use non-discriminatory, considerate, and non-judgmental language.
- ✓ Not use inappropriate language or threatening behaviour.
- ✓ Refrain from public criticism through social media and online content and images of children and adults at the service.
- ✓ Follow the services grievance procedure (located in the foyer of the service). Under no circumstances is a child, parent, guardian, or educator to be approached directly in a confrontational manner.
- ✓ Respect the privacy of others.
- ✓ Not contact an educator after hours or on their personal mobile phone, social media, or email.

Breach of the code of conduct

Parents, guardians, family members and visitors are responsible for supporting the efforts of Latrobe City Council's Kindergartens in maintaining a safe and respectful environment for all children, employees, and volunteers.

Violent, abusive, or threatening behaviour will not be tolerated.

Latrobe City Council aims to ensure children, employees and volunteers feel safe and supported. Under our Preventing and Responding to Occupational Violence procedure a warning or exclusion from services letter can be sent to service users who display behaviour that impacts the health, safety or security of children or adults accessing the services.



Phone 1300 367 700

Post PO Box 264, Morwell 3840

Email latrobe@latrobe.vic.gov.au

www.latrobe.vic.gov.au

Service Centres & Libraries

Morwell

Corporate Headquarters

141 Commercial Road, Morwell

Morwell Library

63-65 Elgin Street, Morwell

Moe

Moe Service Centre and Library

1-29 George Street, Moe

Traralgon

Traralgon Service Centre and Library

34-38 Kay Street, Traralgon

Churchill

Churchill Community Hub

9-11 Philip Parade, Churchill

To obtain this information in languages other than English, or in other formats, please contact Latrobe City Council on 1300 367 700.