



Centre

Information

KINDERGARTEN INFORMATION BOOKLET

thefernelc.com.au



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Fern Early Learning Centre acknowledges the traditional custodians of all lands across Australia. We recognise and celebrate the contributions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First Australians, including their role in the education and care of children.

“No significant learning occurs without a significant relationship.”

James Comer



Philosophy

The Fern Philosophy

The Fern Early Learning Centre (ELC) provides the highest quality of care for all our children. We believe every child is unique and has distinctive aptitude, ability, and talent. Early years positive experiences lay a solid foundation for rest of their life. Our commitment is to provide them a creative, stimulating, safe and intrinsically motivating environment to unleash their unique potential and raise them as a valuable contribution to the future society.

The Fern ELC quality play-based program furnishes endless opportunities to learn and practice progressive exploration, critical thinking, life skills for interaction, sharing and resolution, to shape a positive self-image.

Children are invigorated to learn independently, explore in their own-ways, and make choices of objects and natural materials from their environment. We embrace the concept that young children are swift, imaginative, creative, and enthusiastic learners. Children own a natural faculty to control their own learning patterns. Our experienced and professionally qualified educators facilitate, guide, and extend these learning patterns in their educational program for children to become confident learners. We believe that by providing an effective and positive

transition to school, we lay a strong foundation for children's future learning. Sustainable practices are embedded in our daily program to promote respect for the environment and sense of responsibility amongst our children.

We always emphasize the importance of family input, participation, and involvement in our program. Our team makes every effort to establish an open, positive, and trusting relationship with our families.

We believe children and families have the right to be treated unbiased and equally. We respect and positively acknowledge each child's needs regardless of race, culture, gender, class, disability, and age. We embrace cultural diversity and encourage children to respect and value differences in others and themselves.

Our Educators endeavour relentlessly to maintain excellence in their role as learned educator, compassionate role-model and caring nurturer of children's learning and development.

“Happy and secure children are ready to take on the next new stage of life.”



General Details

Operation Hours

- Our Kindergarten hours are 9:30am until 4:30pm.
- Our Kindergarten Program operates 52 weeks per year.

Session Time

The Kinder teacher time is divided between contact time and non-contact time.

During contact time the Early childhood teacher will engage

and interact with the children, implement the program, support children's development, and extend children's learning by working towards meeting the children's planned learning outcomes.

Non-contact time is allocated for preparing children's learning documentation. This time is used for planning and reflecting on the educational program and practices, documenting individual and group learning outcomes and observations.

Types of Kindergarten

The Fern ELC offers both long day care and sessional kindergarten options for children to support their participation in our Kindergarten Program. Children can attend more than one Kindergarten Program however, only one Kindergarten can claim 'Kindergarten Funding' on behalf of your child. Written acceptance to claim funding on behalf of your child is required by the Kindergarten prior to commencing enrolment into our Kindergarten program. Children who select another service for Kindergarten funding will still be eligible to attend our Kindergarten Program as a non-funded child.

Non-funded Kindergarten children attending our Kindergarten Program will have the same opportunities and development outcomes provided as funded Kindergarten children. There may be charges for extracurricular activities for non-funded children.

Four-Year-Old Kindergarten

Our Kindergarten program is government funded and guided by the National Quality Frameworks. Our Program is delivered by a registered Early Childhood Teacher and qualified assistants. In Victoria, preschool or kindergarten is the year before school entry according to the eligibility guidelines set out by the Department of Education and Training (DET). Children are eligible to attend kindergarten if they turn four years of age on or before 30 April in the year of attendance. If your child's birthday falls before 30 April in the calendar year, you may request to hold your child's Kindergarten start date until the following year.

Eligible children are entitled to 15 hours of funded kindergarten per week in the year before they attend school. Our Kindergarten Program allows flexibility for children to attend up to 5 days per week. To be eligible as a funded Kindergarten child a minimum of 2 days (600 hours during the year) of attendance during the times our qualified early childhood teacher (ECT) is in attendance is required.

Our Kindergarten program is evidence based and provides a structured and stimulating learning environment. The program focuses on play-based learning that develops children's social and emotional wellbeing and prepares them for a smooth transition to school.

Three-Year-Old Kindergarten

Our three-year Kindergarten Program helps children to have stronger foundation which greatly benefit in school years and beyond. We believe that participating in our quality Kindergarten Program at an earlier age leads to positive effects on child development.

Integrated Kindergarten Program

Our Kindergarten Program is integrated into the long day-care program and delivered by a fully qualified kindergarten teacher supporting children's learning throughout the day. Kindergarten Programs are integrated with our long day care to assist families who are unable to attend a sessional kindergarten program.

Our integrated Kindergarten Program provides families with greater flexibility and convenience of drop off and pick up times. Children are able to participate in the set kindergarten routines and experience for the full day, assisting in better preparing children for the longer days when they start school. The Kindergarten Program runs all year, except over the Christmas and New Year period.

Sessional Kindergarten

Our Government Funded Sessional Kindergarten Program is offered at specific early learning centres according to community needs and requirements. The Sessional Kindergarten Program is designed to cater for the families who require short sessions of care and only want their child to attend from 9:30am - 4:30pm. This option is available to assist families who have flexible work arrangements and do not require care before and after the kindergarten session.

Early entry To Kindergarten

To apply for early entry to kindergarten your child must be at least three years and six months old by 30 April in the year, to commence our four-year-old funded kindergarten.

If you are planning for your child to go to a government school, you will need to send a written request to the area director at your closest regional office. If you are planning for your child to go to a non-government school,

you will need to send a written request to the principal of the school. You will need to provide us with the written response, you receive from school. It is important to think carefully about which year your child will start school as being granted early entry into kindergarten does not guarantee an early school entry. Most children who start kindergarten early are not accepted to start school early. Applications for early entry to school are determined in term 4 of the year before the requested entry.

To start school early your child must:

- have a formal cognitive assessment that happens when they are four years old. Parents pay for this test.
- be assessed as exceptionally gifted (WPPSI-IV results of at least 130 FSIQ)
- be considered at risk of long-term educational disadvantage if they do not start school.

Second year Of Kindergarten

A second year of funded Kindergarten may be considered when a child shows delays in key outcomes of learning and development. To be considered for a second year of Kindergarten an assessment is carried out by the Early childhood teachers.

If your child will turn six before or while they are in their first or second year of funded kindergarten, you must get an exemption from starting school and provide us with a copy before your child can start Kindergarten. The form confirms your child has a developmental delay in two or more key areas that kindergartens teach in.

Kindergarten Funding

Subsidised Kindergarten Hours

Families who do not meet and are not exempt from the activity test and have a preschool aged child who attends preschool at a centre-based day care service may be entitled to 36 hours of subsidised care per fortnight. This only applies to the preschool aged child or children in the family. To receive this entitlement, the child needs to be in the year two years before grade one of school based on information provided in the family's claim and attending an appropriate preschool program at a centre-based day care service as reported by the family's child care service.

Kindergarten Fee Subsidy (KFS)

Your child may be eligible for free or low-cost kindergarten as part of the Victorian Government's commitment to provide all children with access to a high-quality Kindergarten Program in the year before starting school. The kindergarten fee subsidy provides eligible four-year old children with access to a Kindergarten Program for up to 15 hours per week. Please contact our Centre Director for more information regarding KFS. Kindergarten Fee Subsidy does not apply for Child Care Subsidy add support offered.

Early Start Kindergarten (ESK)

Early Start Kindergarten (ESK) is a grant funded by the Department of Education and Training that provides eligible three-year-old children with access to 15 hours of Kindergarten per week at a reduced cost. ESK enables three-year-old children experiencing vulnerability to have two years of high-quality early education and care. This impacts directly on their social, cognitive, academic, and emotional development.

ESK is available to children who are at least three years old by 30 April in the year they are enrolled to attend the program and are:

- Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, or
- known to Child Protection, or referred to Child FIRST from

Child Protection

The ESK extension grant is only for children who are not eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy. The ESK extension grant is available for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who previously accessed an Early Start Kindergarten grant or participated in an Access to Early Learning program. The ESK extension grant is paid in addition to the Kindergarten per capita grant for eligible children.

The Kindergarten Inclusion Support Program (KIS)

Children with additional needs or a diagnosed disability may be eligible for The KIS program to ensure that every child is given the opportunity to engage in learning and is able to meet the education and participation requirements. The Kindergarten Inclusion Support Program (KIS) is designed to contribute to the delivery of quality Kindergarten programs in line with the National Quality Framework and the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework.

- provide assistance to complement early childhood teacher knowledge and skills, while acknowledging their expertise in supporting children's learning and development
- supports early childhood teachers to build their capacity to develop and implement an inclusive program
- supports early childhood teachers to contribute to positive outcomes for children, as defined in the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework
- responds to the child's abilities and strengths, as well as their needs by supporting the Kindergarten to enhance their learning and development.

Inclusive programs encourage and allow all children genuine opportunities to access and participate in Kindergarten Programs.

Kindergarten Program Information

The Fern Pedagogy

Our teaching strategy revolves around the belief that children are capable and competent learners. Our pedagogy helps in reflecting our teaching practice and making professional decisions to create a continuum of learning based on children interest and strengths. Our Pedagogy scaffold children through activities that intrigue and promote curiosities by providing stimulating environment and experiences.

Emergent Program

We provide diverse learning environments tailored to meet each child's individual developmental need. Children thrive in environments that are based on their interests. Our emergent curriculum is guided by families and children's input, children voices and ideas. Educators look for opportunities to extend on children's cues and to create meaningful spontaneous learning experiences.

Inquiry base learning

Inquiry base learning is a form of active learning, that encourages children to ask questions and participate in conversations with their peers and educators that assist children to reason and think critically. Educators support children to follow and investigate their own ideas, that enable children to exercise their growing sense of agency and autonomy and promote inquiry, curiosity, and exploration as valuable approaches to lifelong learning.

Intentional teaching

EYLF defines intentional teaching as educators being deliberate purposeful and thoughtful in their decision and actions. Intentional teaching is a powerful tool to enhance and scaffold children's emotional, social, physical, and cognitive development. Educators have an important role to play in facilitating children's

learning and development by incorporating challenging and achievable goals in all activities, daily routines, and interactions.

Environment as a third teacher

We promote the environment as a tool to support children's day to day learning. The environment is viewed as a place that is safe, welcoming, and aesthetically pleasing, where children can explore, discover, connect, and learn from the world around them. The materials and resources found in our rooms are culturally diverse, natural, and open ended. We deliberately organise equipment and materials in a meaningful and interactive setting that is responsive to the needs and interests of the children.

Pedagogical documentation

Documentation is a tangible and evident display of a child's learning process that engages educators to understand a child's learning journey. This process entails thoughtful reflection and analysis to makes each stage of a child's learning visible. The documentation should frame how the learning happened? By reflecting Why? When? Who? What? Where? How?

Reflective Practices

Reflective practices are an ongoing process to identify and assess our practices to drive children's learning and development. Reflection guides the decision making to develop and improve the program in response to children's interest and needs.



“Teaching is everything you do every word, action and experience.”

Kylie Kinnell

Our Kindergarten Curriculum

Our Kindergarten curriculum is designed to promote children's learning and school readiness. Our qualified Kindergarten teacher delivers a high-quality Kindergarten Program underpinned by the National Quality Framework, The Early Years Learning Framework and The Victorian Early Years Learning Framework.

Our Kindergarten curriculum is a play-based program that strongly values the importance of child led play. Our inquiry-based learning guides children to investigate, think critically, make plans, and follow through on their ideas. This helps children to not only learn academic content, but importantly, they begin to better understand themselves and the world around them as confident learners.

The curriculum holistic approach follows the children's emerging interests, spontaneous intentional teaching, and scaffolding to help build the child's knowledge by providing a wide range of real-world experiences that set them up for lifelong learning. Our curriculum promotes literacy, numeracy, science, music, art, sensory play, throughout the Kindergarten Program. Our approach encompasses a wide range of teaching goals and disposition of learning for children that helps them to have a smooth and positive transition to school.

We believe a natural outdoor environment provides children with strong connections to nature. Our thoughtfully culturally diverse environment promotes choices, independence, inquiry, self-esteem, communication, and peer interaction in a nurturing and supportive manner. The materials and resources found in our rooms are derived from the natural world and the environment is looked upon as the third teacher.

Excursions and incursions are part of the Kindergarten curriculum. Children become involved learners and gain knowledge of the broader community around them and how it functions.

We encourage environmental awareness through sustainable practices within the centre and throughout the development and implementation of the program. Our curriculum promotes sustainable practices and make children think like a responsible citizen. Educators and children critically reflect on their sustainable thinking, their ways of being, and their ways of acting to protect the environment around them.



**“A good education
is a foundation for a
better future.”**

Elizabeth Warren

School Readiness Program Highlights

Kinder Start Pack

We provide a kindergarten start pack at the time of enrolment to the funded Kindergarten children. The pack includes branded shirt, hat, and water bottle.

Kinder Buddy Adventure

At The Fern ELC we introduce 'Buddy Bear program' at the beginning of the year, every child participates and has the opportunity to take the buddy bear or pet home and write about the adventures they want to share with their peers. This learning experience helps to build relationships with families and allows educators to get to know the child's interests outside the Kindergarten setting.

Reciprocal Visit to Local School

A visit to a local school is organised as off-site excursions where children are taken to see a local school's environment. Activities are planned to allow time for children to interact with school children. The school tour provides opportunities for children to experience the new environment and reduces their anxiety and stress.

Families Involvement

We plan various activities throughout the year to promote family's involvement in the services that includes i.e. family fun days, meet, and greet evenings, family photo day, Kindergarten information nights etc. We also encourage and welcome families to voluntarily join children for experiences such as incursions, excursions, reading stories or sharing their special skills.

Stay Healthy - Lunch Box

In term 4, we encourage children to bring their empty lunch boxes from home and children will be given opportunity to prepare their own lunches from a selection of healthy choices provided by the centre. Stay Healthy – lunchbox not only promotes healthy eating but also learn to make nutritious food choices. Children gain an understanding of the difference between 'recess' and 'lunchtime'. Children learn importance of independence, responsibility, and dietary restriction of other children by not sharing food.

Group Times

Kindergarten Program will start at 9:30am commencing with a group time acknowledging each child presence. Group time allows children to get ready for learning in a setting which is familiar to school. Group times are very well thought and focus on developing important skills such as 'whole body listening', increased concentration and active listening. We engage children during group time by encouraging them to participate in show & tell, singing songs, and reading stories.

Kinder Excursions

The centre provides a variety of planned excursions to assist in your child's learning of the world around them. We organise visits to the local nursery, library, supermarket & school. Parent or guardian consent must be given prior to taking children on an excursion. We conduct a risk assessment to ensure the safety of children prior to the excursion. Parents are also invited and encouraged to participate voluntarily.

Kinder Incursions

Incursions provide children with the opportunity to learn through new experiences. We encourage children to participate in experiences and activities within the broader community. Incursions also further develop a child's knowledge and understanding through first-hand experiences. We organise frequent incursions throughout the year i.e. dentist, road safety, CFA, police, wildlife, life cycle of butterfly, African drums etc.

Numeracy & Literacy

Children's language and literacy development takes place in everyday activities are extended by introduction of new vocabulary words and mathematical concepts. We recognise that there are multiple ways to teach children literacy and numeracy. Children learn by seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, smelling, and doing. We provide regular, planned opportunities to enhance children's numeracy and literacy skills. We intentionally scaffold children's spontaneous learning to establish knowledge and positive dispositions which enables them to apply their understanding in practical and meaningful contexts.

Music Program

At the centre children participate weekly music classes. This program helps children to develop language, social, and physical skills. Children have lots of fun by singing, dancing, and playing with musical instruments. Musical games help children to use imagination and creativity and introduce musical concepts such as beat and rhythm etc.

Sports Program

Our Sports program consists of fun-filled age appropriate sports activities using bean bags, tennis balls, soccer balls, footballs, basketballs and more! Children develop hand-eye coordination, balancing and gross motor skills by jumping, bouncing, catching, throwing etc.

Transition Learning & Development Statement

A child's transition learning and development statement (TLDS) summarizes abilities of all Kindergarten children as they start school and identifies their individual approaches to learning. The information in the TLDS helps teachers get to know the children entering their classes, and to plan appropriate learning and

teaching programs. A TLDS will be completed for all children enrolled in our funded Kindergarten Program.

Graduation Ceremony

We celebrate and cherish our Kindergarten children moving on to school. We share with the families their children's wonderful discoveries, endearing friendships, and ever lasting memories. Throughout the year, children participate and prepare songs and props to present on Graduation day. At the Graduation Ceremony, we present precious memories, pictures,

videos, and their memorable moments. Graduating students receive Graduation certificate and a memento of their time at the centre.

School Starter Pack

Starting school is a significant milestone. Our School Starter Bundle is prepared for all our 4-year-old Kinder funded children starting school. This pack is designed to have basic essentials for starting school and to assist in creating last memories as they transition from Kindergarten to School.

A POSITIVE START TO SCHOOL

Transition to formal schooling is one of the most significant milestones. Our service plays a significant role in supporting a successful transition to school. We respect children and families in the transition process by acknowledging, valuing their input and understanding their individual needs to ensure the transition process is positive and effective.

Our School Readiness Program is focused on developing children's social and emotional skills. These attributes are strong foundation for child's lifelong learning and play a vital role in settling child in early years of school.

Problem Solving

Problem solving is an important life skill that every child needs to build resilience and confidence. Problem solving skills support children in establishing a strong sense of wellbeing and positive self-esteem. Our program helps children to learn how to be part of a group, cooperation with others and how to express their emotions and feelings.

Self-Regulation

Self-regulation is a critical skill that develops in early years and underpins all future learning and wellbeing. It helps the children to manage their emotions and

behaviour, when coping with difficult situation. To promote self-regulation, we use behaviour management strategies, teacher scaffolds children learning to become independent and self-regulating learners. We guide children to use their language to deal with situations and teach them how interact with others with care, empathy, and respect.

Responsibility

We teach children to take responsibility for their choices and their impact in the community. To develop a sense of responsibility we encourage children to keep their room tidy and be responsible for their own belongings. We engage children as room helpers to complete daily tasks such as helping with setting up tables for mealtimes, resetting indoor and outdoor play spaces and looking after our environment.

Confident Learner

Our inquiry-based program offers children opportunities to make their own learning choices. Children are encouraged to explore, imagine, and investigates their surroundings and the world around them. Children are prompted to ask questions to assist them to become confident, curious, and enthusiastic participants in their own learning. Active involvement in learning builds

**“Play is the
highest form
of research.”**

Albert Einstein



children's understandings of concepts and creative thinking that is necessary for lifelong learning.

Independence

We advocate child's agency and believe that children are competent and capable learners with the ability to care for themselves. We provide a wide range of experiences and activities for children that encourage independence. We assist and guide children to learn lifelong skills, such as dressing, washing their hands, going to the toilet, unwrapping their food, and looking after basic hygiene practices.

Persistence

Young children often give up when a task becomes too difficult. Our educators plan individual and group goals carefully according to each child's strength and encourage children to start with a familiar task that they can achieve, then build upon something that is more challenging to extend their current knowledge and skills.

Eligibility

Priority of Access Guidelines

When there is a waiting list for a place at our Kindergarten and to ensure the system is fair, the Australian Government has **Priority of Access Guideline** for allocating places in these circumstances. They are used when there is a waiting list or when several parents are applying for a limited number of vacant places.

Under the Priority of Access Guidelines, the service can vacate a child if

- the person liable for the payment of the childcare fees was notified when the child first entered care that the service followed this policy, and
- the service will give the parent at least 14 days' notice of the requirement for the child to vacate the place.

Priorities

Children at risk of abuse or neglect, including children in Out-of-Home Care. The child is:

- attending a three-year-old kindergarten program through Early Start Kindergarten or Access to Early Learning, or are referred by:
 - » Child Protection
 - » Child and family services (family services referral and support team, Child FIRST/integrated family services/ Services Connect case worker)
 - » Maternal and Child Health nurse, or
 - » Out-of-Home Care provider.
- Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children
- Asylum seeker and refugee children
- Children with additional needs, defined as children who:
 - » require additional assistance in order to fully participate in the kindergarten program
 - » require a combination of services which are individually planned
 - » have an identified specific disability or developmental delay

FAQ

Does your service offer sessional kinder program?

Our Government Funded Sessional Kindergarten Program is offered at specific early learning centres according to community needs and requirements. The Sessional Kindergarten Program is designed to cater for the families who require short sessions of care and only want their child to attend from 9:30am - 4:30pm. This option is available to assist families who have flexible work arrangements and do not require care before and after the kindergarten session. Please contact Centre Director for further information.

Can my child attend two years of 4-year-old kindergarten?

A second year of funded Kindergarten may be considered when a child shows delays in key outcomes of learning and development. To be considered for a second year of Kindergarten an assessment is carried out by the Early childhood teachers. If your child will turn six before or while they are in their first or second year of funded Kindergarten, you must get an exemption from starting school and provide us with a copy before your child can start Kindergarten.

What is Early Start Kindergarten funding?

Early Start Kindergarten funding enables vulnerable children i.e. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander or known to Child Protection or referred to Child FIRST. Please see the centre director for further information.

My child is currently attending 3-years old kindergarten at your service. Do I still need to register for 4-year-old KINDERGARTEN?

Yes, and you need to notify the service so that your child will be given priority provided the service is your first preference for

kindergarten and your child continues at the same service in the year of kindergarten attendance.

How your service supports children with additional need and disability?

Our dedicated staff work closely with families to understand children's specific developmental or medical needs. Children with additional needs or a diagnosed disability may be eligible for the 'KIS' program. Early intervention supports children to work toward meeting their developmental milestone. We prepare a KIS support plan by consulting with families and health care professional to help everyone understand your child's needs and plan for their inclusion. Inclusive programs encourage and allow all children to access genuine learning opportunities and participate in Kindergarten Programs. Extra support will help to meet child's individual needs.

How many days my child needs to attend Kindergarten program?

Every child must attend 600 hrs of funded kindergarten program before starting school. Our Kindergarten Program runs 9:30am - 4:30 pm every day. To be eligible as a funded Kindergarten child a minimum of 2 days (600 hours during the year) of attendance during the times our qualified early childhood teacher (ECT) is in attendance is required.

What is a NON-FUNDED kindergarten place, and can I access a place for my child?

Children can attend more than one Kindergarten Program however, only one Kindergarten can claim 'Kindergarten Funding' on behalf of your child. Children who select another service for Kindergarten funding will still be eligible to attend our

Kindergarten Program as a non-funded child.

Non-funded Kindergarten children attending our Kindergarten Program will have the same opportunities and development outcomes provided as funded Kindergarten children. There may be charges for extracurricular activities for non-funded children.

Is my Child Ready for Kindergarten?

Our qualified Teachers know what to carefully look for and observe children significant social, emotional and academic milestones if we are concerned about their readiness, we will discuss this with parent and organise one to one meeting to find out how can we support and assist the child while working in collaboration with families to achieve best outcome for children.

How we help prepare your child for school?

Our program holistic approach aims to develop children socially, emotionally, and academically sets a strong foundation for a positive start to child's school first year. Our qualified Teachers and passionate educators support and guide children to become confident and involved learner. We observe and support the behaviours that are key indicators for a successful transition to school.



**“Development
is a series of
rebirths.”**

Maria Montessori





Thank you

We are pleased to welcome you and look forward to developing a supportive and friendly relationship to provide the best quality care and education for your child.