

Frequently Asked Questions about Huntly Kindergarten

We really value:

- Respectful relationships
- Nature play and bush kinder
- Learning through play
- Children as competent and capable learners
- Independence and life skills
- Partnerships with families and community involvement
- Diversity and inclusion

Educators strive to:

- Form meaningful relationships with children and families
- Continually improve our practice
- Have high expectations of children's capabilities
- Provide a stimulating environment for children's learning
- Bring out the best in each child

Our Educational Program is shared with families in many ways, here are some of them:

- Program on display in each room
- Storypark is used for communicating learning to families as well as private conversations with families and the educator.
- Conversations with families
- Interviews at the start of the year and twice during the year
- Emails to families

Our program provides opportunities for each child's social, cognitive, physical, emotional and environmental learning to ensure they become confident and capable. A normal day at our centre usually looks like this:

- We welcome families in each room on arrival.
- Children have arrival jobs to do; unpacking their bags, washing hands etc.
- Our 'gathering' is next where we greet each other and talk about the session ahead.
- Children enjoy play indoors with staff assisting with social interactions and scaffolding of concepts. We pack up, enjoy a story and eat snack.
- After snack we head outdoors into our yard for opportunities to engage in gross motor play. Sometimes we allow indoor/outdoor play to provide freedom of choice for children.
- We break for lunch then enjoy relaxation for some quiet time.
- We move into a rotation of small group activities after lunch for intentional teaching time. Shorter sessions conclude after children pack their bag.
- Longer sessions break for afternoon tea then children pack their own bags and we finish on the mat, singing our goodbye song together before the children are dismissed.

In terms 2, 3 and 4 all Kindergarten children participate in Bush Kinder for a 3-5hr session per week:

Bush Kinder is kindergarten that is held outdoors in the bush. Children are encouraged to take the lead in playing, exploring and learning in a natural environment. No toys, no art supplies. Our Bush Kinder site is located between Brunel St and the Midland Highway on land owned by Huntly Primary School. It is a lovely piece of bushland in the middle of Huntly within walking distance of Kinder.

The goals of Bush Kinder are:

- To provide opportunities for explorative, creative, unstructured and uninterrupted play for children in a natural setting.
- To connect children and families to their wider community through the bush setting that exists in Huntly.
- To foster a generation of children who are socially and environmentally responsible
- To encourage qualities of confidence, persistence and resilience in children and families.
- To provide freedom for children to play imaginatively without additional artificial props.
- To provide the opportunity for learning, discovery and wonder
- To adopt an approach to play that encourages self-assessment of risk
- To provide opportunities for children to challenge themselves physically, mentally and emotionally through the practice of gross motor skills, thinking strategies, scientific understandings and emotional skills.
- To encourage social interaction, team work and cooperation.
- To enhance physical and mental health in children.
- To provide environmental knowledge and skills to equip children to become custodians of their local natural environment, now and into the future.

Families share in decision making about their child's learning and wellbeing. This occurs in the following ways:

- Parent Advisory Group involvement
- Bush Kinder sub-committee
- We have an open door policy so parents are welcome to come in whenever they are free to share their area of expertise with the children. We have had parents cook with us, share about their disability, plant gardens with us, teach us about their Aboriginal culture, teach us clay techniques, etc.
- We encourage families to be involved in any way they would like to be involved. (As covid restrictions allow)

Each child's learning and development is assessed as part of an ongoing cycle of planning, documenting and evaluation, we share this with families and seek their involvement by:

- Orientation interviews and an Individual Education Program at enrolment help us get to know families
- Mid-year interviews
- Parents are welcome to make an appointment anytime to speak with educators

We build relationships and engage with the local community in the following ways:

- We go to the local bakery for an excursion in term 1 to see how hot cross buns are made.
- We plant trees at bush kinder with the local Landcare group.

- We work closely with Huntly Primary School, Epsom Primary School and Holy Rosary White Hills. Foundation/Gr 1 students visit to play with us at bush kinder and Grade 5's visit in Term 3 to form buddy relationships.
- CFA visit us for a fire safety talk each year.
- We use public transport (buses) for excursions into Bendigo.

Families have opportunities to be involved in our service:

When covid restrictions allow:

- We don't have "parent duty" – rather we prefer families to come when they are free to simply play with their child. Life is so busy and families are pushed for time, so it is nice when parents (and grandparents / special friends) can come along for uninterrupted time to play together.
- Working bees
- Volunteer parent committee and bush kinder sub-committee
- Volunteer at bush kinder sessions
- Come along to excursions and incursions
- Picnic teas twice a year
- Social nights and morning teas – a great way for parents to get to know one another and form lifelong friendships.

We don't teach Prep curriculum. We prepare children for lifelong learning by teaching the dispositions of learning so that children are well-equipped for formal education:

- Independence
- Persistence
- Resilience
- Curiosity
- Cooperation
- Confidence
- Risk Taking
- Imagination
- Patience
- Social Skills
- Gross and fine motor skills

These dispositions are essential as the basis for learning all other things throughout life. Literacy and Numeracy is taught naturally, in a play based program, focused on hearing the sounds in words (phonemic awareness) and the use of letters and numbers in our everyday environment.

Concepts are developed through daily discussions with children and in the context of their play. For example, we discuss weight, volume and equal sharing as children cook in the mud kitchen; we discuss time, speed and height as children swing on the swings; we discuss shape, size and direction as children complete jigsaw puzzles and we discuss pictures, shapes, numbers and letters as we read, draw, paint and play games.