

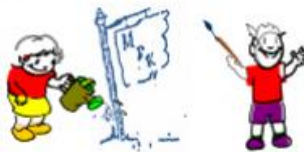


Making Early Years Matter

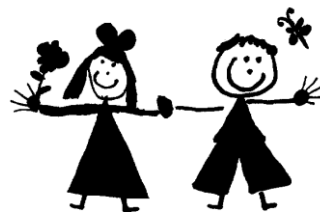
# KINDERGARTEN FAMILY HANDBOOK



Moomba Park Kindergarten



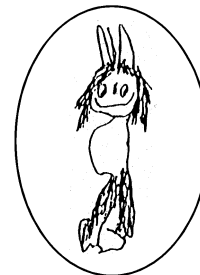
4 Stepping Stone to the Future



Newlands Preschool



Oak Park Kindergarten



Turner Street Kindergarten

**MEYM Vision: MEYM is a thriving, diverse organisation where innovative educators deliver the best kindergarten programs and children and families are at the centre of everything we d**

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## Welcome to Merri-bek Early Years Management (MEYM)

Merri-bek Early Years Management Incorporated (MEYM) is a not-for-profit Early Years Management organisation, servicing the Merri-bek municipality. MEYM is governed by a Board of Management, with a General Manager and an MEYM administrative team responsible for the operational management of the six early years services we currently manage.

MEYM was created in response to a desire in the community for a locally based, responsive and collaborative early years manager. Merri-bek is a diverse and ever-growing community and through our partnerships within the community, MEYM is growing with you and your family. MEYM's values of respect, collaboration, integrity and diversity are reflected in our interactions within the community and shared by our staff.

We recognise that the early years is a period of rapid growth and development and MEYM implements contemporary and innovative modes of practice and programs to engage and educate children.

A new kindergarten year means change and new beginnings, bringing opportunities to meet and reconnect with others. Change can also mean anxiety for parents and children, especially if this is your child's first time away from family. We are delighted that you have chosen an MEYM service in which to enrol your child!

We hope that through the AGM, information/orientation sessions and the opportunity to talk to teachers, staff and other parents, you will reaffirm your decision to enrol your child with us, and enjoy the welcoming and supportive environment at your chosen kindergarten. Several MEYM Board Members have already seen their children thrive at MEYM services, so we also share your nerves and excitement!

We have recently acquired St Linus Kindergarten and we look forward to working with this new Kindergarten community to continue to provide a wonderful local kindergarten program. MEYM also looks forward to another busy yet rewarding kindergarten year, with the opportunity to build upon our successes and provide real and positive impacts on the running and future of our kindergarten services.

For programming and information related to your child please speak with your teacher in the first instance. For organisation feedback or issues – please contact the General Managers on [gm@meym.org.au](mailto:gm@meym.org.au). For Administration or Enrolment contact [enrolments@meym.org.au](mailto:enrolments@meym.org.au)

Please also visit our website [www.meym.org.au](http://www.meym.org.au) and our [Facebook page](#).

All the best for a wonderful year ahead!



Sarah Vallance  
General Manager

## Welcome to families

We have much pleasure in welcoming you and your child to an MEYM Kindergarten.

Kindergarten is your child's first step towards independence and a journey of lifelong learning. To help your child take this step as confidently as possible, kindergarten provides the experiences of playing with other children, meeting new challenges in play situations, and relating to adults, who are not immediate family or friends, through a planned, child-related and interest-based program in a friendly, caring and safe environment. We hope your child has a memorable and positive experience exploring, experimenting, discovering, imagining, learning, building relationships, creating, expressing feelings and ideas and becoming confident, competent individuals.

Our educators have tertiary qualifications in teaching, specialising in Early Childhood Education, while our co-educators each hold a Diploma of Education and/or a Certificate III in Children's Services. Our educators work collaboratively with families and communities and seek to promote each child's learning journey, developing their skills and independence along the way. Our educators continuously seek to build upon their own professional development to provide the best kindergarten experience for all our children.

This Family Handbook outlines the operations and functions of an MEYM kindergarten. Please take the time to read this booklet and keep it in a safe place for future reference. Please also take a look at our website [www.meym.org.au](http://www.meym.org.au) and at our [Facebook page](#) and [Instagram](#).

We wish you and your child a happy and rewarding year.

## Acknowledgement

MEYM would like to acknowledge Aboriginal people as the traditional custodians of the land. We pay our respects to them and their cultures and to the Elders past present and emerging.

MEYM acknowledges and respects cultural diversity and maintains a practice of cultural safety where all children's value and traditions are respected and celebrated and represented in all the service curriculums using the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework as a guide. MEYM has a Reconciliation Action Plan which promotes our service's commitment to valuing and respecting each child's cultural and family values and practice.

## Why choose MEYM?

- We ensure a positive learning experience in a safe environment for your child at kindergarten. Children and families are at the forefront of everything we do and their best interests are taken into account at every stage.
- We support and invest in our Educators to ensure the best quality programs are provided.
- Our Area Manager and Pedagogical leader create a benchmark of practice that is of the highest standard by constructing a model of continuous improvement ensuring that a meaningful curriculum is developed for children.
- Our ongoing communication with our families ensures they are provided with information regarding their child's year at kinder including opportunities on how to become involved.
- Our programs are reviewed taking into account parental feedback.
- We undertake administrative, financial, compliance and employer responsibilities leaving the Parent Fundraising Group to concentrate on fundraising activities, working bees and activities that directly benefit the children.

## Kinder Tick



MEYM operates under the Kinder Tick. When you see the Kinder Tick, you can be confident that the program will be led by a qualified teacher; the children will benefit from play-based learning; the kindergarten program is funded and approved by the Victorian Government and the program complies with government guidelines and the National Quality Framework.

## MEYM Values

Respect  
Collaboration  
Integrity  
Diversity

## MEYM Vision Statement

MEYM is a thriving, diverse organisation where innovative educators deliver the best kindergarten programs and children and families are at the centre of everything we do.

## MEYM Identity

Our logo highlights what is core to Merri-bek Early Years Management, namely our community (the environment), our partnership (collaboration) and family (our relationships).

We've taken this simplified representation and highlighted it in strong, vibrant colours — an invitation to our audience, the families and broader community of Merri-bek to feel comfortable and at home.

## MEYM Educators

Experienced kindergarten Teachers and Co-educators conduct each group. The teacher to child ratios is stipulated in the National Regulations and the current ratio for children aged 3 to 5 years is 1:11. Our educators are warm, enthusiastic, caring and nurturing and develop many innovative ways to keep children engaged in their learning. They are committed to building connections children and families and provide experiences for children to connect with each other. They have a passion for teaching and are dedicated to helping children adapt, learn and grow.

## Staff Professional Development

All staff participate in professional development. As an organisation that values its staff and considers its staff to be the most important asset, all staff attend Professional Development throughout the year which is linked to performance Development Reviews, School Readiness funding and of course staff passions.

All Educators have current First Aid (Level 2) certificates, Asthma Management and Anaphylaxis Certificates.

Each year MEYM nominates two days where services are closed where all staff across MEYM services will be engaged in joint professional development sessions. There will be no kindergarten on these days. These days will be confirmed early in the year. For 2024 they are likely to be 28 March and November 4<sup>th</sup>.

## 3 and 4-year-old funded kindergarten

Both 3 & 4yo kindergarten is free. Free kinder means more Victorian children can have the best start in life, no matter where they live. MEYM will receive funding directly from the Victorian Government so families are not out of pocket.

3-year-old children will be entitled to access *one* year of funded kindergarten prior to moving to 4-year-old kindergarten. Children must be 3 years old on or before the 30<sup>th</sup> April to attend our 3-year-old funded kindergarten programs and cannot commence in the program until on or after their 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday. This requirement is reflective of the staff: child ratios as stipulated in the National Regulations. The ratio for children under 3 years of age is 1:4 as compared to the ratio of 1:11 for children aged 3 to 5. Please note that it is not sufficient for a parent to attend with a child until they turn 3, as this does not meet the ratio requirements or satisfy current Departmental or MEYM policy standards.

Children who attend our 3-year-old program will be rolled into the 4yo program at the same kindergarten and will not be required to complete a new registration form unless the child leaves the 3yo program or wishes to attend a different kinder for 4yo. Places are determined by meeting relevant criteria; for more information, see <https://www.Merri-bek.vic.gov.au/community-health/children-and-families/kindergartens/four-year-old-kindergarten/>

4yo children will be entitled to access one year of funded kindergarten before going on to school. Children must be 4 years old on or before 30 April to attend our 4yo funded kindergarten programs.

A second year of funded 4yo kindergarten MAY be considered and children will only be eligible to receive a second year if they are assessed by a qualified Teacher/Preschool Field Officer as having at least two areas of significant developmental delay that are not age related. If the child is exhibiting behaviour/s that is/are deemed consistent for their "young" age they will not fit the funding criteria.

## Fees

The Victorian Government has committed \$9 billion to expand kindergarten programs across the state. This means that from 2023, free kindergarten programs will be available for 3 & 4yo children at a Merri-bek Early Years Management service and therefore kindergarten enrolment fee and program fees will not be charged to families.

For full information pertaining to fees and charges and a copy of the Fees Policy please visit our website [www.meym.org.au](http://www.meym.org.au)

## Kindergarten Programs at MEYM Services

Our programs offer children opportunities to learn through hands-on experiences. We encourage children to explore their environment, which is rich in learning experiences and fosters creativity, imagination and collaboration. We recognise and value children, for who they are and provide an environment and opportunities where children are able to tell and share stories, reflect through play and express their ideas.

We take a holistic view of children's learning and development and embrace the view of children's lives being characterised by belonging, being and becoming, the three inter-related elements contained in the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF). Our programs draw on the VEYLDF and reflect experiences that support children to work towards the five learning outcomes: Identity, Community, Wellbeing, Learning and Communication. Below we have outlined some of the aspects of each outcome:

### **Identity - to assist children to develop a strong sense of identity**

This is evident when children:

- have a strong sense of belonging
- openly express their feelings and ideas in their interactions with others
- initiate and join in play
- are open to new challenges and make new discoveries
- increasingly cooperate and work collaboratively with others
- celebrate and share their contributions and achievements with others
- show interest in other children and being part of a group
- reflect on their actions and consider consequences for others



## **Community – to support children with connecting and contributing to their world**

This is evident when children:

- understand different ways of contributing through play and projects
- cooperate with others and negotiate roles and relationships in play episodes and group experiences
- listen to others' ideas and respect different ways of being and doing
- begin to think critically about fair and unfair behaviour
- participate with others to solve problems and contribute to group outcomes

## **Wellbeing – to support children with developing a strong sense of wellbeing**

This is evident when children:

- assert their capabilities and independence while demonstrating increasing awareness of the needs and rights of others
- share humour, happiness and satisfaction
- make choices, accept challenges, take considered risks, manage change and cope with frustrations and the unexpected
- combine gross and fine motor movement and balance to achieve increasingly complex patterns of activity including, dance, creative movement and drama
- show increasing independence and competence in personal hygiene, care and safety for themselves and others

## **Learning – to encourage and assist children with becoming confident and involved learners**

This is evident when children:

- are curious and enthusiastic participants in their learning
- follow and extend their own interests with enthusiasm, energy and concentration
- initiate and contribute to play experiences emerging from their own ideas
- use reflective thinking to consider why things happen and what can be learnt
- try out strategies that were effective to solve problems in one situation in a new context
- transfer knowledge from one setting to another
- experience the benefits and pleasures of shared learning exploration

## **Communication – to encourage and assist children in becoming effective communicators**

This is evident when children:

- respond verbally and non-verbally to what they see, hear, touch, feel and taste
- contribute their ideas and experiences in play, small and large group discussion
- interact with others to explore ideas and concepts, clarify and challenge thinking, negotiate and share new understandings
- sing and chant rhymes, jingles and songs
- share the stories and symbols of their own culture and re-enact well-known stories

## Cultural Diversity

Our programs provide opportunities for teachers and educators to celebrate and embrace the richness and diversity of cultures and heritages that children and their families bring to our community. This includes making connections between aspects of Indigenous Australian culture and children's personal cultural heritages.

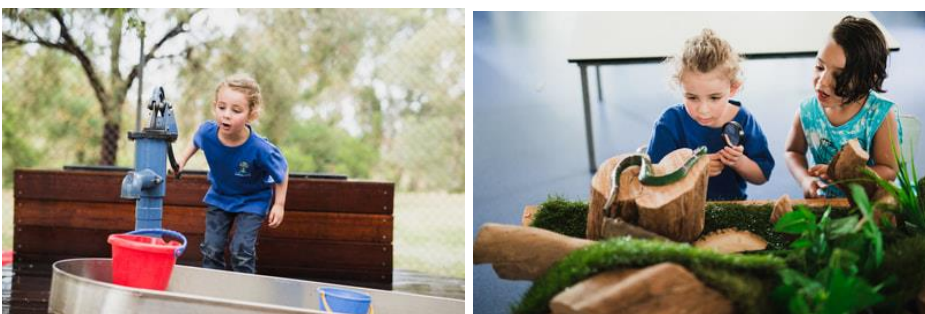
### The importance of Learning through Play- what will my child learn?

Play is central to your child's learning and development. Play enables your child to explore, imagine, wonder, discover, develop social skills, learn how to share with others, make choices and decisions, learn about feelings, empathy, learn about the environment, problem solving, resilience and build self-esteem.

Our Educators encourage children's learning through play by creative supportive environment and resources that reflect their interests, ages, abilities and culture. Programs that are offered foster imagination, creativity and open-ended play. Our educators plan play experiences based on the assessment of children's individual interests and observe children as they play so that they can understand what skills and understanding they demonstrate and what activities can strengthen their skills in play. They will join in children's play to extend the child's learning and to model skills such as reasoning, appropriate language, and positive behaviours. Through a play-based curriculum children have the opportunity to problem solve socially, take reasonable risks, develop a positive sense of self, let their imagination run wild and nurture their creativity, develop resilience and develop their communication skills.

## Learning Environment

Our kindergartens promote both indoor and outdoor play experiences.



Our spacious indoor areas provide a variety of learning areas for the children to work and play in, independently or in groups, create and build, investigate, engage in imaginative play, use a range of materials, learn through play and enjoy the wide range of learning opportunities offered. The experiences are intended to develop the children's independence and problem-solving skills. Children are provided with many opportunities and support if required, to independently self-select activities to engage in, whilst at other times are invited to work in smaller or larger group settings on a focused learning outcome.

## Additional Needs

All children with additional needs will have access to our service and the program will be designed to accommodate the needs of the child. Specialist services will be accessed to help the child achieve their full potential. Parent participation is encouraged and vital in achieving the specific program objectives developed for the child.

## Family-Child Services in Merri-bek

Your child's teacher has access to comprehensive resources to assist families in referring children to other services that can provide specialist advice and support. Waiting lists for public services can be long, and teachers are mindful of this when seeking advice from other specialist services. Educators can also provide private specialist information.

Merri-bek City Council employs Preschool Field Officers (PSFO) that are available to visit the kindergarten, observe a child, and offer additional advice. Your child's kindergarten educators may suggest such a visit, you may arrange a visit directly, or you can ask the educator to arrange for a PSFO to attend the service to observe your child. A PSFO is available to liaise with families and educators, suggesting strategies, possible courses of action, and follow up review visits.

If your child's educator requests that you consider a PSFO visit, you will need to indicate your permission by signing a consent form. A visit will not take place without parental permission. A PSFO will arrange a mutually convenient time to discuss observations with you following an observational visit.

## Environmental Sustainability

MEYM takes an active role in caring for the environment, and promoting and contributing to a sustainable future.



We are committed to:

- Promoting respect for, and an appreciation of, the natural environment among all at the service;
- Fostering children's capacity to understand and respect the natural environment, and the interdependence between people, plants, animals and the land;
- Supporting the development of positive attitudes and values in line with sustainable practices;
- Ensuring that educators and other staff engage in and give consideration to sustainable practices during the operation of the service and when ordering new equipment and consumables.

## Communication

Open communication with educators is paramount. All staff are happy to discuss your child's progress at any time, although appointments need to be arranged for more detailed discussions. We are also open to any suggestions or comments you may have, as well as the sharing of information to improve and enrich your child's learning environment.

Please feel welcome to share significant events or occasions that are happening in your child's life. It is important for teachers to have an understanding of issues particular to your child or any changes in your child's life (such as moving house, the birth of a new sibling or an illness). This helps us plan an appropriate and supportive program for your child.

Communication with families may be via email, phone conversations, parent pockets, notice boards, newsletters, our website and Facebook group, informal chats and formal organised meetings.

If families are concerned with how their child is settling in, wish to notify the kindergarten of any absenteeism, or if they are running late, please call the kindergarten.

## Policies & Quality Improvement Plan

MEYM has a suite of policies and procedures that support the organisation in the day-to-day operations of its kindergarten services. Our policies and procedures are regularly reviewed and updated in line with relevant changes to legislation and regulations. Our policies are available to view on our website [www.meym.org.au](http://www.meym.org.au)

Each kindergarten has a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) which reflects the centre's goals and performance in delivering quality education and care that contributes towards improved learning outcomes for children. It is a requirement under the National Quality Framework to have a QIP in place that evolves and changes as feedback is received and goals are either identified or achieved.

## Compliments and Concerns

MEYM welcomes any feedback as an opportunity to improve upon the programs we offer. Suggestions for improvements may be made in writing to the General Managers.

Parents are strongly encouraged to discuss any concerns they may have in regards to their child with the child's teacher first. An appropriate time will be arranged to ensure the concerns are addressed immediately.

If your concern has not been addressed to your satisfaction the matter may be directed to the General Manager at Merri-bek Early Years Management, via email [gm@meym.org.au](mailto:gm@meym.org.au)

Alternatively, you are also able to contact the Department of Education if you are not satisfied with the outcome.

## Family Involvement

We encourage parents and carers to become involved in our MEYM kindergarten community. We all have skills and ideas to contribute to the social life of our kindergarten. Participation can be through:

### Kinder duty

Parents can assist during their child's session times as volunteer helpers. Spending time at the kindergarten provides a wonderful opportunity for you to engage in your child's learning with other children and educators. Research highlights that there are increased gains for children's learning and outcomes when families are engaged in their child's kindergarten program.

Kinder duty involves assisting children and teachers during activities, helping to clean up after activities and snack times. We ask that parent helpers sign the attendance book for the session they attend.

The kindergarten environments are structured to challenge four to five-year-old and three to four-year-old children, therefore families will need to be aware of the supervision issues surrounding the presence of a younger child. Younger children must always be supervised, indoors and out, by the parent/carer responsible for the care of the younger child at kindergarten. The kindergarten educators will be educating and caring for kindergarten children attending the program and are unable to be responsible for other children present at the service.

### Parent Fundraising Group (PFG)

MEYM Kindergartens have a Parent Fundraising Group, its members being parents/guardians of currently enrolled children or those with a recent association with a service of MEYM.

Fundraising is an important and vital source of money for the kindergarten. The fees and government grants cover the salaries of teachers and some running costs of the kindergarten and it is necessary to raise funds throughout the year to update and purchase equipment. This enables our children to be exposed to as many experiences as possible. Your assistance in this area is important and always appreciated.

The Parent Fundraising Group actively engages with MEYM to enhance their children's kindergarten experiences and wider connections with Merri-bek community. Being part of the Parent Fundraising Group also gives parents and carers opportunities to meet new people within the local area.

### Maintenance

Families can also engage in small maintenance jobs such as working bees, which helps the kinder run smoothly and keeps the costs down.

Working Bees may be arranged by the PFG, in consultation with MEYM, to maintain gardens, renew and spread tan bark, repair equipment, etc. The kindergarten staff and MEYM appreciate the assistance and support of families to maintain the environment and instigate new outdoor projects.

## Laundry

A roster is established for parents to assist in the laundering of smocks hand towels and other items used in the kindergarten which are to be returned to kinder at your next session. Your assistance is greatly appreciated.

## Respecting our kindergarten community

MEYM embeds a culture of respect and equality across our kindergartens. Our educators support children to build healthy relationships, resilience and confidence. We ask that all persons entering an MEYM kindergarten treat everyone with respect and dignity and demonstrate positive behaviour and integrity at all times.

## First Days of Kindergarten

Starting kindergarten is a big step in a young child's life. The first few weeks are busy and tiring as children become familiar with routine and basic rules, the staff and the large group of children of which they are now a part. This experience, combined with the separation from family may be overwhelming. Children can be assisted in their adjustment by receiving calm assurance, patience and understanding from both parents and staff, and being given plenty of time to adjust and adapt.

It is important to support your child and help them to gradually settle into their new surroundings. Your child may initially insist that you stay with them. Here are a few strategies that may encourage a smooth and happy transition for you and your child:

- Come into the kindergarten and help them settle into an activity
- If your child would like you to stay a while, please feel free to do so
- It is most important that you say goodbye to your child as this promotes a sense of trust and security for your child
- Once you have said goodbye to your child and the kindergarten staff, it is important that you leave promptly. If your child is insecure they may become more upset if you hesitate
- If you are concerned about your child, please feel free to telephone the centre when you arrive home or at any time during the session

Generally, children will settle in well as soon as their parent/caregiver is out of sight. Some children take a little longer to settle in than others - we are all different. When ongoing settling and separation difficulties occur, please make an appointment to discuss this with your child's teacher.

## Orientation and transition to kindergarten

Before your child commences kindergarten you and your child will have an orientation where you will meet your teacher. At orientation you may like to discuss your child's interests and ask questions and your teacher may provide you with further information about the kindergarten. Before your child starts you may wish to read your child stories about kindergarten, remind them of their teacher's name, talk about the activities there and all the lovely friends they will make. Please bring along your "Getting to know your child" form along with your child's up to date Immunisation History

Statement, Medical Action Plans (if applicable) and a photo of your child. Orientation information including start dates will be posted on to our website in Term 4.

## What to wear and bring to kindergarten

Children should wear safe, comfortable and sensible shoes and clothing. No thongs, slip-ons or "best" clothes. Children need to be able to move freely and safely, go to the toilet independently and participate in activities that can be messy, such as painting or water play.

All clothing that a child may take off during a session – jumpers, jackets and bags – must be clearly marked with his / her name. Please ensure clothing is weather appropriate, such as a warm jacket for outside play during cooler weather.

What your child needs to bring to kindergarten:

- A bag that is large enough to keep belongings in and children can easily handle and pack independently
- Healthy (preferably nude/rubbish-free) light lunch and/or snack in a container that children can open and close independently e.g., sandwich, sushi, fruit or vegetables
- Drink bottle that children can open and close independently, containing water only (no fruit juice or cordial)
- Warm jacket, rain jacket, beanie and gloves; we play outside rain or shine. On cold or rainy days please pack your child a rain jacket or warm jacket. Most children look forward to the outdoor sessions and it is often an area they speak about and remember enthusiastically and where some children do their most engaged learning. Sending appropriate clothing means children can participate in all the learning areas planned for the day.

Please ensure all belongings are clearly marked with your child's name. Any items that are unnamed will be placed in the lost property box located in the entrance foyer.

## Arrival and Collection of Children

On arrival:

1. Sign your child into the kindergarten in the Attendance Book located in the kindergarten entrance. Please ensure the following details are entered into the Attendance Book – the exact time of arrival, sign your name and print the person's name that will be collecting your child after the session.
2. Assist your child to place their belongings in the pigeon holes provided in the foyer area, place their lunchboxes and water bottle on the Drinks Station table just inside the room, and have your child wash their hands in the bathroom prior to your child joining the group. These form part of the children's routines, which the Centre is keen to encourage and foster.

On collection:



1. When collecting your child, sign your child out in the Attendance Book, and note the time of pick up. All children must be collected by an adult who is known to them, and is at least 18 years of age
2. MEYM Policy is that no child can leave the kindergarten with another adult without the written consent of a parent or guardian. On the child's online enrolment record form, there is a section for Authorised nominees, which allows for nominated authorised people to collect your child. Should you wish to add/change an authorised nominee please email the Enrolment Officer at [enrolments@meym.org.au](mailto:enrolments@meym.org.au) Please note that formal ID may be required.
3. Families are requested to collect their child/ren punctually at the end of the session. Late pickup can result in a late collection charge as stipulated in the MEYM Fees Policy, as educators will be unable to engage in other duties required of them when there are children present who must be supervised.
4. Please ensure on all occasions that the door you enter or exit is securely closed behind you. At some kindergartens parents/guardians will be provided with a PIN code. Please treat this PIN as confidential to prevent unauthorised access to the children's program.

## Late Collection of Children

National Law states that two educators must remain on duty whilst a child is at the Centre. If you know that you will be late collecting your child, please contact your centre as soon as possible. If a parent is regularly late in picking up a child, warnings may be given and if unheeded, a late collection fee may be charged.

If the child is not collected at all, the police or protective services will be contacted.

## Excursions and Incursions

Excursions and incursions are planned to extend on the children's educational program and current interests and abilities. Activities that are organised onsite are selected by staff to enrich the current program.



It is the aim of these activities to:

1. Increase the experience of the children through exposure to real life/wider situations.
2. Provide a varied and interesting program with as many first-hand learning opportunities as possible.
3. Reinforce ideas and behaviours dealt with during the centre-based programs.



#### 4. Involve the wider community in the kindergarten experience.

Families will be made aware of excursions prior to the event. Permission is gained at the time of online enrolment for some of our kindergartens and for others families will be given an excursion permission form directly by the kindergarten prior to the event. Due to staff/student ratio requirements set out by the Department of Education, these excursions will only be possible if all parents provide permission. Supervision standards will be maintained at all times (with a minimum of a 1:11 ratio) and a risk assessment conducted of the proposed destinations.

Parents/guardians are encouraged to attend excursions with their child. Where a particular excursion does not get enough volunteer parent/guardian attendance, the excursion will not be able to go ahead. If you are interested in coming along as a family volunteer, we will require you to obtain a volunteer working with children's check by following the link below. Volunteer checks are free of charge. <https://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au/>

Incursions may include a special activity, visitor or entertainment usually conducted during session time at the centre. It might be a visit from a police officer or vet, a puppet show, or mini-beasts experience. If the incursion occurs outside of the child's normal session time, then the parent/guardian is required to attend and remain for the duration of the incursion. If a parent/guardian does not wish their child to attend the incursion session that is occurring in their session time, please ensure you notify our Educators in advance.

### Food and Nutrition

We are committed to educating children and parents/guardian about healthy food and healthy eating habits. Our Kindergartens promotes healthy eating, regular meals/snacks and encourages children to drink plenty of water.

Parents are required to provide all food for their child to consume at kindergarten. If your child is attending longer days then a lunch may be required. Please pack snacks and lunches in lunch boxes or containers that are easy for your child to open and close. Please aim to provide minimal packaging as we are encouraging children in caring for their environment therefore any packaging will be returned in their lunchbox to take home for your disposal.

An ice brick (or similar) in their lunch box will help to keep your child's food cool and safe. Refillable drinking bottles for water are also needed.

The handling and distribution of food will be in accordance with the National Regulations. Due to the possibility of having children who attend having allergies we ask that you refrain from bringing nut products into kindergarten due to the high risk these foods can pose for children susceptible to allergic reactions.



We also ask that all "fun food", such as processed and packaged foods like chocolate or chips, is kept at home for the time appropriate for your family.

Children may sit together to eat their lunch. We recommend a healthy lunch, such as a sandwich, roll or wrap along with their water bottle. Other

healthy eating options may include cucumber, celery, carrot and dip, crackers, savoury muffins, cheese and fruit.

## **Dietary Requirements**

Children's individual dietary needs are respected and accommodated. Any special needs or known food allergies, including treatment - and provision of any medicines, such as an EpiPen - should be noted on the enrolment form and communicated to the staff. This includes keeping us updated on new allergies as well. The staff will document this in the child's file. A photo with the child's name, allergy and reactions will be displayed prominently in the playroom.

If children have food allergies, a list of foods unsuitable to bring for lunch and/or snacks will be established annually, and will be displayed at the kindergarten and communicated to all parents.

## **Health and Safety**

### **Child Safe Environment**

MEYM strives to ensure an environment for all children that ensures their safety, health and wellbeing and promotes the cultural safety of all children. Our educators listen to children, give them agency and incorporate their views about how to provide a safe environment. We promote inclusion through our philosophy, policies and practices and in complying with the Child Safe Standards we ensure the cultural safety of children from cultural and linguistically diverse backgrounds, the cultural safety of Aboriginal children and the safety of children with a disability.

### **Covid Safe Plan**

Our Kindergartens have a COVID plan. When required and directed by state authorities the service will adhere to restrictions and or closures. Parents will be kept well informed about any changes to the programs in relation to COVID-19. Please visit [www.meym.org.au](http://www.meym.org.au) for details of the MEYM COVID-19 response.

### **Unwell Children**

We encourage all families to please keep unwell children at home. In the current climate where all communities and families are dealing with the effects of the COVID pandemic we are focused on keeping each other safe and healthy. Staff cannot ensure your child's health and safety health if children are brought to the service when they are not at their optimum health. This impacts directly on the sick child who may find it extremely difficult to function as part of group and learn effectively. It also puts our staff at risk of becoming unwell. We understand this impacts on families however our focus is your child's health and wellbeing. If children become unwell while attending the service staff will call families to collect the child to limit the potential for cross infection. In the event that your child becomes ill during the kindergarten session we will contact you to collect your child whilst keeping them comfortable and under observation until your child is collected. Educators will complete details of your child's illness in an Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Record document and you will be required to sign this upon collection of your child.

## Immunisations - No Jab, No Play Legislation

The 'No Jab, No Play' legislation commenced in 2016. Children who are not immunised require an approved medical exemption to be able to attend the kindergarten. Children who do not provide proof of immunisation at the time of enrolment will not be able to participate in the kindergarten program until we have a copy of your child's immunisation records on file. More information can be found on <https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/campaigns/no-jab-no-play>

Prior to your child commencing in an MEYM kindergarten programs parents must provide (at time of enrolment) an **up-to-date Immunisation History Statement** from the Australian Immunisation Register (AIR). This is the ONLY form of documentation accepted.

You can obtain the Immunisation History Statement from your [myGov](#) account or by calling the AIR on 1800 653 809. You can also visit a Medicare or Centrelink Office. Your statement must show that your child is up to date with all the vaccinations they are able to receive.

You can get overseas immunisations added to the AIR. You need to take a translated copy of your child's overseas immunisation history to your Australian immunisation provider. They will check the vaccines your child has had and tell you if any additional ones are required. They will update the AIR with immunisations given overseas as well as any new ones.

A translating and interpreting service is available by calling 131 450, Monday to Friday from 8.30am to 4.45pm.

## Absence from kinder

If your child will be absent from the program due to illness, please email your teacher.

Absences in excess of 14 days must be declared in writing to The Enrolment Officer at [enrolments@meym.org.au](mailto:enrolments@meym.org.au)

## Medication and Allergies

Medication of any type will not be administered to a child at a service unless the authorisation of a parent/guardian or person with the lawful authority to consent to the administration of medical attention to the child has been obtained.

If it is necessary for your child to take medication while at kindergarten, please inform the teacher and/or educators. **Medications will only be administered for prescription medicines provided in their original container with the child's name on the prescription label and within the use by date.**

Prior to commencement in a kindergarten program, parents of children with **asthma** must fill out an **Asthma Management Plan**, signed by a doctor, which is then kept at the centre. It is the **parent's responsibility** to keep the information on the Plan updated and current and to provide in-date medication for the child at the kindergarten.

Parents of children with **Anaphylaxis** diagnosed by a doctor must provide an **Anaphylaxis Plan** and **auto-immune device** for a child to commence kindergarten. The auto-immune device provided must be current stock (i.e., within the use by date) and must be replaced prior to the use by date.

Families are responsible for ensuring that a current (within use by date) auto-immune device is always available for the child whilst he/she is in the kindergarten service. Without a current (within use by date) auto-immune device and/or Anaphylaxis Plan a child cannot attend the kindergarten.

Parents of children with **allergies, diabetes** and any other medical condition diagnosed by a doctor, must also complete **Management Plans** with all medications recorded and labelled. Please discuss with the educators. If children have food allergies, a list of foods unsuitable to bring for lunch and/or snacks will be established annually, and will be displayed and communicated to parents.

Medication is stored securely by educators and must be given to the child's educator for this purpose. **Under no circumstances should medication be left in a child's bag.**

### Serious Injury or Medical Emergency

If a serious injury or medical emergency occurs at the kindergarten, staff will administer first aid and call an ambulance. Parents/guardians will be contacted at the same time.

As per Regulation 33, parents/guardians must give authorisation for an ambulance and/or a medical/hospital service to be sought by the centre in the case of an emergency. Parents/guardians will sign a Confidential Information form upon enrolment at the centre, which gives this authorisation. The kindergarten cannot accept a child without this form being signed by the legal guardian.

All costs associated with an ambulance service will be the parent or guardians' responsibility.

### National Regulation 88 – Infectious Diseases

It is our obligation to ensure that all children and staff are in a safe and healthy environment while at the kindergarten. To fulfil this obligation, each centre must abide by the National Regulations and the Occupational Health and Safety Act.

The containment of infectious diseases also means that children who have an infectious disease may be excluded from the centre. A copy of the list of excludable diseases is posted at the kindergarten and parents will be provided a copy and be asked to adhere to the list.

The kindergarten does not have the facilities to care for sick children, therefore if a child shows symptoms listed below, they must be kept at home:

- a) Vomiting – exclude until there has been no vomiting for 24 hours
- b) Diarrhoea - exclude until there has not been a loose bowel motion for 24 hours
- c) Antibiotics - exclude until 24 hours after the commencement
- d) Conjunctivitis - exclude until the discharge from the eyes has stopped unless doctor has diagnosed a non-infectious conjunctivitis and treatment started
- e) Respiratory Infection – more than just the common cold
- f) Hand, Foot & Mouth diseases – when weeping blisters are present.

If the child shows signs of any of the above illnesses while at kindergarten, the parents will be contacted and arrangements made for the child to either be collected as soon as possible or isolated from the other children until the child can be collected. An ill child will be kept comfortable and under supervision at all times.

Parents will be notified of an outbreak of an infectious disease within the centre by a notice being displayed on the notice board.

### Head Lice

Head Lice (Pediculosis) is not a notifiable condition and head lice do not transmit any infectious diseases. Head lice are transmitted by having head-to-head contact with someone who has head lice (Department of Health 2015).

If Teachers and educators at the service suspect your child has head lice, they will contact you. Children do not have to be sent home immediately from an education and care service if head lice are detected.

#### Prevention and treatment of head lice

- The service will inform all families if any case of head lice has occurred and encourage parents to check their child's hair.
- The child may return to the service after effective treatment of head lice has commenced.
- Families to inform the service immediately if their child has head lice or has recently been treated for head lice.
- Families to regularly check their child for head lice.

### **Safety checks at kindergarten**

Daily OHS checks of the indoor and outdoor spaces and play equipment are completed by the kindergarten. Should you become aware of an area of our service which you believe to be unsafe, please advise the Service Co-ordinator or staff member as soon as possible.

### **Accidents & Incident Reporting**

We endeavour to provide a safe environment for all children to enjoy. However, in the case of an accident occurring, full details of the incident will be recorded in the incident book and the parent/guardians will be informed of the event. Emergency medical, hospital or ambulance service will be sought where deemed necessary.

The parent/guardian/caregiver is required to sign a written record of each such incident and MEYM and the Department of Education and Training will be advised as per National Law.

### **Sun Smart Policy**

We have a duty of care to protect children from skin damage caused by the harmful UV rays of the sun. Our Sun Smart policy has been developed to ensure that all children attending kindergarten

are protected from this. It is implemented throughout the year, but with emphasis from the beginning of September to the end of April. Parents are asked to apply sunscreen onto their children before the kindergarten session.

As part of our general Sun Smart strategies:

1. The kindergarten will require children to wear hats that protect the face, neck and ears when they are outside. Parents are to supply these hats; we have some you can purchase.
2. Children will be encouraged to use available areas of shade for outdoor play activity.
3. We will ensure there are sufficient number of shelters and trees providing shade in the Centre grounds.
4. Outdoor activities will be scheduled before 11am and after 3pm daylight savings time whenever possible.
5. Staff will act as role models by:
  - Wearing appropriate hats and clothing outdoors
  - Encouraging parents or caregivers to use 30+ sunscreen for skin protection prior to the session
  - Seeking shade wherever possible
6. SPF 30+, broad-spectrum water-resistant sunscreen will be provided for staff to use as necessary.
7. Teaching about skin and ways to protect skin from the sun will be incorporated into the curriculum and programmed activities.
8. The Sun Smart Policy will be reinforced in a positive way through parent newsletters, noticeboards and meetings.
9. Staff and parents will be provided with educational material on sun protection.

When enrolling their child, parents will be:

1. Informed of the Sun Smart Policy.
2. Reminded that hats are always required to be in their child's bag. Spare hats are available if needed.
3. Asked to apply SPF 30+, broad-spectrum, water-resistant sunscreen before the commencement of the session.
4. Encouraged to practice Sun Smart behaviours themselves.

## **Emergency Evacuation**

Fire extinguishers and first aid kits are located at each kindergarten and are regularly maintained. Our kindergartens have detailed emergency evacuation plans that detail safe exit points and emergency assembly points. The plan is displayed in various areas around the kindergarten room. The staff practise an emergency evacuation drill with the children once a term. In the unlikely event

of an emergency evacuation, the procedures outlined in the displayed information will be followed. Parents will be notified to collect their child as soon as possible by phone, text message or email.

## Privacy and Confidentiality

MEYM has a privacy and confidentiality policy. The purpose of this policy is to provide guidelines for the collection, storage, use, disclosure and disposal of personal information, including photos, videos and health information at MEYM and to ensure compliance with privacy legislation.

MEYM is committed to:

- Responsible and secure collection and handling of personal information;
- Protecting the privacy of each individual's personal information;
- Ensuring individuals are fully informed regarding the collection, storage, use, disclosure and disposal of their personal information, and their access to that information.

## Visitors

The kindergarten maintains a Visitor's Book. It is a regulatory requirement that all visitors (except those authorised persons or parents who regularly collect children) must sign in and out of the book. This is important for the security of children, parents and educators. Visitors could include council employees, maintenance workers, specialists or parents assisting at kindergarten. Visitors must have a Victorian Working with Children Check which should be verified upon sign in. The visitors book provides a record of visitors on the premises in the event of an emergency evacuation.

## Toilet Training

It is encouraged that children be toilet trained before attending the kindergarten, as this is associated with preschool readiness, however should your child soil themselves, staff will attend to your child's hygiene needs as soon as practicable. In the event that your child is not fully toilet-trained, pull-ups and a change of clothing must be supplied.

## Toys

Children are not encouraged to bring toys from home to kindergarten. They may be lost or broken, other children may want to play with the toy, or the child may not be interested in playing with anything else, therefore missing out on the program being implemented by the staff. The exceptions are if a child is finding it difficult to separate or settle in and needs a 'security blanket' or if the child has a special item to show us e.g., a bird's nest or something similar. Please note some classes may do 'show and tell' and so children can bring things for this, but you will be notified if this is happening.

## Birthdays

To avoid any circumstance where a child may suffer an allergic reaction to certain foods such as dairy products and nuts, our policy is no cakes from home to eat. No lollies, chocolates or party bags either, to honour our healthy eating practices. However, to enable children to celebrate their special day, we use a pretend birthday cake and sing Happy Birthday.

We do celebrate at kindergarten and have a happy time together. In this way issues such as allergies, medical conditions and cultural traditions are respected.

### **Cancellation from the kindergarten program**

Cancellations must be made giving 14 days' notice in writing to The Enrolment Officer at [enrolments@meym.org.au](mailto:enrolments@meym.org.au)

Thank you for taking the time to read through this Handbook and we would like to wish your child a wonderful year ahead!

### **Our Services**

MEYM Gowanbrae Children's Centre  
2A Marigold Crescent  
Gowanbrae 3043  
Tel: 93304667

MEYM Newlands Preschool  
20 Murray Road  
Coburg North 3058  
Tel: 93543293

MEYM Lake Park Kindergarten  
20B Carr Street  
Coburg North  
Tel: 93501552

MEYM Oak Park Kindergarten  
1A Short Ave  
Oak Park 3046  
Tel: 93066200

MEYM Moomba Park Kindergarten  
65 Alec Crescent  
Fawkner 3060  
Tel: 93596204

MEYM Turner Street Kindergarten  
38 Turner Street  
Pascoe Vale 3044  
Tel: 93501902

St Linus Kindergarten  
13 Delta Ave  
Coburg North 3058  
93546276

### **Merri-bek Early Years Management Inc.**

ABN: 641 737 91072 | Approved Provider: 22191

2a Marigold Crescent  
Gowanbrae 3043

**Phone:** 03 9081 6986 | 03 9081 8106