



**Doncaster East
Pre-School**

4 Montgomery Street
Doncaster East VIC 3109
9842 1409 / 0490 059 225
doncaster.east.kin@kindergarten.vic.gov.au

Information Booklet

**4 Year Old Kindergarten
2024**

www.doncastereastpreschool.com.au

ABN: 29060607460 Incorp. No. A10153



Doncaster East Pre-School acknowledges the support of the Victorian Government

Welcome to Doncaster East Pre-School



4 Year Old Kindergarten

Kindergarten Session Times for 2024

Kangaroo Group

Monday	1.00pm - 5.00pm
Wednesday	8.30am - 2.00pm
Friday	8.30am - 2.00pm

Kindergarten Teacher	Carmen Lau
Educator	Suzie Berdenis
Educator	To be appointed

Term Dates 2024

Term 1	30 January - 28 March
Term 2	15 April - 28 June
Term 3	15 July - 20 September
Term 4	7 October - 20 December

(The final day for the children will be Monday 16 December)

Welcome to Kinder

Welcome to Doncaster East Pre-School. We hope that you and your child will enjoy your time at kinder with us. Four-year-old kindergarten is an important step in the early education process, offering numerous opportunities for children to refine their social skills and become increasingly independent. Our four year old kindergarten teaching staff aim to encourage children to experience wonder in their environment and develop a love of learning which will aid them both at school and throughout life.

Doncaster East Pre-School's philosophy is to create a warm and caring environment which is supportive of all children and families. We believe that children learn best through play and that early childhood is a time of rich play-based learning.

At Doncaster East Pre-School we offer a social learning environment and provide a mixture of child-initiated activities, supported play and learning, and intentional teaching. When planning activities for the children we believe that their needs, interests and enjoyment are just as important as the educational objectives. We offer a fun, but purposeful, kindergarten program which is planned with consideration to the developmental stages and backgrounds of each child.

We recognise that each child has their own preferred learning style and because of this we offer open-ended activities with a variety of tactile, visual and auditory experiences for the children to explore. Our play-based learning environment encourages children to discover, solve problems, communicate, think and create. We recognise children's individual strengths, interests and skills, and offer a program that encourages children to be curious and enthusiastic participants in their learning.

Our programming reflects all areas of the Early Years Learning and Development Framework, and is based on an ongoing cycle of observing, planning, documenting and evaluation. We consider children to be capable, curious and active contributors to their own learning and provide a holistic environment in which they can grow and develop.

At Doncaster East Pre-School we encourage children to strengthen their connections with nature. We offer an educational program which provides many opportunities for children to engage with natural resources and the outdoor environment including bush kinder. Children can experience seasonal changes, engage in physical play, explore our garden and the local parklands.

We promote sustainable practices and encourage children to tend to our vegetable garden, sort rubbish into landfill, worm food and recycling bins, look after our worm farm and reuse materials wherever possible. We also promote active and healthy lifestyles and this is supported through various policies such as our Sun Protection Policy, Nutrition, Oral Health and Active Play Policy, Road Safety Education and Safe Transport Policy, and our Water Safety Policy.

Within the pre-school environment every child is recognised as a unique individual with his or her own needs, abilities and interests. Our families are valued and always welcome in our centre. We strive to promote and develop positive relationships with families and the local community. We respect and encourage diversity, inclusion and equity, and recognise and embrace the multi-cultural society we live in. Above all we believe that all children are competent and capable learners and this is reflected across all aspects of our program.

If at any time during the year you have questions or concerns regarding your child's learning and development, or the program, please do not hesitate to contact your child's teacher.

Your Child at Kinder

PRE-SCHOOL AGE ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

Children can be placed on our waiting list at pre-school anytime after their first birthday. To attend four year old kindergarten children must turn 4 by April 30th in the year they attend, this is due to government regulations and funding requirements.

Similarly, to attend three year old kindergarten children must turn 3 by April 30th in the year they attend. Due to regulations and child-staff ratios children are unable to attend the program until their 3rd birthday.

SETTLING INTO KINDERGARTEN

Beginning four year old kindergarten is an exciting experience. It is a big milestone in family life, some children will have attended three year old kindergarten and/or childcare and for others it will be their first time away from their family.

To make the settling process easier on both you and your child, the size of the group during the information session and the length of time spent at the kindergarten during the first few weeks of term are both reduced. This allows for:

- Staff and children to get to know each other better.
- Each child to receive more one to one attention.
- A more relaxed environment for your child as they get used to their new teachers and friends and begin exploring their new environment.

The orientation process for children starting kinder outside of the first few weeks of term 1 follows a similar routine. Children will attend an orientation session with their parents so that they can meet their child's teacher and have the chance to explore the environment while we ensure we have all the necessary paperwork for the children to begin the program. Children who start later in the kinder year will attend for the last three hours of their first session. This will allow them to enter into a settled group and join in the play and activities being offered as well as join us for lunch and the end of session routine. The teacher will then organise to increase this time over the following few sessions in a manner that is appropriate to individual children and families.

As children begin four year old kindergarten you will notice that some children will settle into the program quickly, while others will need time to become familiar with their environment. It is normal for both children and parents to feel anxious at the beginning of the year. Some things you can do to help your child adjust into the kindergarten routine include:

- Upon arrival at the beginning of the session help settle your child into an activity of their interest.
- Once they have started a task, let them know that it is time for you to go, but that you'll be back later to pick them up. Please make sure that you say goodbye (sneaking off when your child's not watching will only unsettle them more).
- Make the goodbye period short, say goodbye once and then leave. Lots of goodbyes can be stressful for both you and your child.
- Look happy and be positive for your child, even if you're feeling sad.
- Parents are welcome to stay until their child is familiar with the room and the teacher. The teacher will suggest when it is suitable for parents to leave.

If your child is unsettled during the first few days, staff are happy for you to stay and play as your child becomes more familiar with their new environment. However, please do discuss with your child's teacher about how to begin the separation and settling process. As each child is individual and will respond differently we are flexible in our approaches of orientation and settling. During this process please keep in

mind that some children may cry when their parents leave, but often soon after the parent has left, the child will stop crying and enjoy their time at kinder.

If a child is distressed as parents leave the centre staff will contact parents to let them know when their child settles or whether they need to return early to collect their child. Likewise if a child becomes distressed during a session staff will ring parents to let them know.

Parents are encouraged to call the staff at the centre at any time if they have any concerns, questions or queries regarding their child.

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE

When dropping your child off at kinder you are required to sign them in on the attendance register. Due to child-staff ratios and regulatory requirements children cannot be left at kinder until the beginning of the session when staff will open the door and greet children and their families. Please ensure you do not sign your child in until the session time begins.

When you collect your child at the end of the session you are required to sign out your child on the attendance register. Please ensure to record the exact time even if you collect your child before the end of the session, or you are running late, as part of our regulatory requirements.

If you find you are running late to collect your child, please call us so we can reassure your child that you are on your way, otherwise it can be a very distressing time for your child.

Please note that the kindergarten does charge a Late Fee of \$1 per minute.

In the event of an emergency and you are unable to collect your child, please organise for an Authorised Emergency Contact (Authorised Nominee) to pick up your child. Staff are only employed to work ½ an hour after a session, if your child is not collected within this ½ hour the late fee increases to \$5 per minute and police will be notified to collect your child.

Only those authorised on your enrolment form to collect your child from kindergarten will be permitted to pick up your child at the end of a session. You are able to add Authorised Emergency Contacts (Authorised Nominees) to your child's enrolment information at any stage throughout the year.

In case of an emergency and you or an authorised person are unable to collect your child, please phone the kindergarten to give details of an authorised person to collect your child. A child cannot be collected by anyone under the age of 16 years.

WHAT DOES MY CHILD NEED TO BRING TO KINDER

A medium sized bag or backpack large enough to carry the following:

- A spare set of clothes including underpants and socks
- Additional clothing appropriate to weather conditions such as raincoat, gumboots.
- A lunch box containing a healthy snack and a healthy lunch, which includes fresh fruit and/or vegetables
- A drink bottle containing only water
- Please ensure all containers and drink bottles are clearly labelled with your child's name.

Doncaster East Pre-School is an **ALLERGY AWARE** pre-school. There are children attending with serious allergies many of which include nut allergies. Foods containing **NUTS** are **NOT** to be brought into the pre-school.

WHAT SHOULD MY CHILD WEAR TO KINDER

Please send your child in clothes that are appropriate and comfortable for playing in, and that your child can manage, i.e. that are easily removed by the child for toileting. Please ensure your child's clothing is clearly named. Alternatively, you can purchase our DEPS logo clothing (t-shirt and jumper) from eduthreads.com.au/collections/doncaster-east-pre-school.

In terms of footwear, thongs, crocs and slip on footwear are not allowed – they are dangerous and cumbersome for climbing and running around in. Closed toe shoes or sandals with straps are more suitable, and gumboots for those rainy wet days.

When the weather is cool, please send a warm waterproof coat/jacket with a hood or raincoat, and a winter hat, as we will be offering our outdoor program all year round. Even when it is raining children will be able to access our undercover outdoor areas so will need to be dressed appropriately.

BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS

The children's birthdays are acknowledged and celebrated at Doncaster East Pre-School. We understand that some families may wish to bring a treat to share with friends on their child's special day however as we have children with many different allergies staff and management have decided that cake sharing may not be appropriate. If you'd like to bring along a treat to share, we ask that you bring a plain chocolate frog for each child (children with allergies will be provided an alternative). Please note that there are 28 children in attendance during each kindergarten session.

We have a pretend cake with real candles that we will use to sing happy birthday to all children during the kindergarten session. If you would prefer us not to celebrate your child's birthday at kinder please speak to the kindergarten teacher.

EXCURSIONS, INCURSIONS AND SPECIAL EVENTS

Throughout the year, special experiences such as incursions/excursions and special days will be organised for the children. These enrich the learning program and involve the children directly in new experiences.

The cost of these special events are not included in the government funding for free kinder and families may be charged directly. Due dates and payment instructions will be provided to families on an invoice. Families are required to pay by the due date and no refunds will be given in the event your child is away on the day of a special event.

TOYS FROM HOME

It is recommended that children leave toys from home at home, so that they do not get lost or damaged. If children do bring in toys from home to kinder they will be asked to leave them in their bags. The kinder does not accept any responsibility for lost or broken toys that are brought into the centre from home.

Health and Safety at Kinder

SAFETY

For your child's safety, please ensure that the **front gate is shut securely immediately after** you and your child, or children in your care have entered or left the grounds. Whilst you are arriving or leaving, please be vigilant that other children do not exit the gate unattended by an adult.

Children who arrive early are welcome to play outdoors until the session begins. However, until such time, the responsibility for their safety is yours, and they should be supervised in their play at all times. Parents are not permitted to leave the pre-school until the designated starting time of the session and only after the children have been signed-in.

SNACK AND LUNCH TIMES AT KINDER

During our four year old kindergarten sessions we have both snack and lunch with the children, with the exception of Mondays (afternoon snack only). We will have progressive snack between 10-11am/2:30-3:30pm which allows children to eat snack as they become hungry without interrupting their play. Although there is flexibility around when snack is eaten, we will ensure that all children eat snack each session. On Wednesdays and Fridays, we will pack up for the day around 12.45pm and have lunch together as a group, generally between 1.00pm and 1.30pm.

When packing your child's lunch and snack each day please ensure that all containers are clearly labelled and can be easily opened by your child. They will need the following items:

Drink Bottle: Please bring a drink bottle filled with water. Your child will be able to access this at any stage throughout the kindergarten session.

Snack: Please bring a healthy snack which includes fresh fruit and/or vegetables and something small, for example cheese and crackers, yoghurt, rice cakes.

Lunch: Please bring a healthy lunch, some ideas for this might include a sandwich, wrap, sushi, rice or pasta. It is also a good idea to pack an additional piece of fruit in case your child is still hungry after eating their lunch.

When preparing your child's food for kinder we ask you to note that we do encourage healthy eating, and as per our policies and procedures foods which are high in sugar and/or fats, such as chips, lollies, roll-ups or anything containing chocolate, will be returned home uneaten with children at the end of the session. Please note we do not refrigerate or heat up foods at kinder.

We ask that you also keep in mind that we are an **ALLERGY AWARE** pre-school. This means that nuts or foods with traces of nuts are **NOT** to be brought to the pre-school at any time. We have children within the centre who are highly allergic to nuts, and if these children come into contact with nuts or nut products this could prove fatal. If your child eats nuts, or any other foods containing nuts or nut traces prior to their kinder session, please ensure that they wash their hands, teeth and face before attending pre-school on that day.

ILLNESS AND GENERAL HEALTH

Parents are requested to keep unwell children at home. Many viruses and infections are easily transmitted within groups of children. Naturally you are the best judge of whether your child is well enough to attend kindergarten, not your child. Children will often say "I'm ok" because they love coming to kinder but we ask that you base your decision on facts – if they have been unwell, are very tired, have a temperature etc please keep them home. Children will not enjoy their time at kinder if they are sick and we are sure that you would

prefer that sick children be kept away from your healthy child, so please offer other parents the same courtesy.

Please note that when it comes to illness we are required by law and regulations to follow the recommended minimum exclusion period. This is the period recommended by the Department of Health for excluding any person from attending a children's service to prevent the spread of infectious diseases through interpersonal contact. The exclusion period table, published by the Department of Health, can be viewed at the kinder or accessed at (<http://docs.health.vic.gov.au/docs/doc/Minimum-Period-of-Exclusion-from-Primary-Schools-and-Childrens-Services-Centres-for-Infectious-Diseases-Cases-and-Contacts>)

If a child becomes ill while they are at the pre-school, every effort is made to contact the parents so that they can arrange to pick up their child and take them home. If the child's parents cannot be contacted, the emergency contact or the child's own doctor will be sought.

For all children with asthma, allergies or other ongoing medical conditions that require medication it is a condition of enrolment that an 'Action Plan', written in consultation with your General Practitioner is provided to the centre prior to children attending the service. If you require a blank 'Action Plan' please refer to the respective Foundation via, www.asthmaaustralia.org.au or www.allergy.org.au. Please note your child cannot start kindergarten unless the kindergarten has been provided with **the original full colour action plan** signed by your GP.

BEING SUN SMART AT KINDER

Doncaster East Pre School is an accredited 'Sun-Smart Centre'. On enrolment each child is required to purchase a Doncaster East Pre-School sun smart hat. These hats will be clearly labelled and kept in individual pockets at kindergarten throughout the year and will be worn between the 1st of September and 30th of April as well as on days when the UV rating is over 3.

We will be going outside during all kindergarten sessions please ensure that you put sun screen on your child prior to attending kindergarten each day during September and April and when the UV rating is over 3. During the longer sessions we will reapply sunscreen once during the session.

EMERGENCY EVACUATIONS

We practice our emergency procedures with the children each term. In the case of an extreme emergency, such as a fire or gas leak etc, where it is necessary to evacuate the kindergarten premises, children will be evacuated either to the park beside the centre or to the McDonalds on the corner of Blackburn & Doncaster Roads. Please see the centre's Emergency Evacuation Plan, which can be viewed at the centre, for more details. In the case of an emergency evacuation parents will be notified via an SMS service and will then be able to collect their children from the evacuation point. It will still be necessary for parents to sign their children out in Storypark Kiosk or a physical hard copy of the attendance register if this is not available, which will be taken to the evacuation point by the kindergarten teacher.

LAUNDRY

As the kindergarten does not have its own laundry facility, you may be asked once or twice a year to take home a few items such as towels, art smocks and/or dress-ups to clean and return.

Enrolment and Fees

All families must complete an Enrolment Form for their kindergarten child in full and submit it to kinder before their child is able to begin attending the service. The enrolment form is accessible Xap (formerly Storypark Manage) Guardian Portal and contains contact details, information relating to children's allergies, immunisation and medical conditions as well as emergency contacts, etc. This information needs to be current at all times and can be updated online via the Storypark Manage Guardian Portal. Staff can assist with this if you are experiencing difficulties at any stage including providing hard copy forms.

Due to governing law and regulations children are not able to attend the Pre-school until the enrolment form is completed in full. This includes copies of up to date immunisation details (as specified in the governments "no jab no play" policy) and any medical condition actions plans as required. All children must also have at least two emergency contact people on their enrolment form, one of which must be local to ensure children can be picked up in a timely manner in case of an emergency. In the case of families not having an emergency contact, please use another kinder family whom you feel comfortable to ask to collect your child from the service.

All kindergarten records and collected information are kept confidential as per our Privacy Policy which can be viewed at the centre or on our website.

FEES

In 2024, the Victorian Government has committed to providing FREE KINDER to all eligible children enrolled in a funded kindergarten program, so no term fees will apply. Families may be charged incidental costs throughout the year including service events which are in addition to the program and act to enhance and complement children's learning and engagement such as excursions. Due dates and payment instructions will be provided to families on an invoice.

Please note that your child can only be funded for a kindergarten place at one service at any one time. Your child can be funded for only one year of four year kindergarten after which they will transition to primary school (unless your child is assessed as being eligible for a second funded year by your child's kindergarten teacher). A copy of our Fees Policy can be viewed at the centre or on our website.

PLEASE NOTE: Free Kinder funding is an additional payment to services to cover the parent fee component and will be paid on top of other kindergarten funding streams (excluding Kindergarten Fee Subsidy (KFS), KFS Ratio Supplement and Early Start Kindergarten (ESK)).

KINDERGARTEN FEE SUBSIDY FOR ELIGIBLE FAMILIES

Children attending a funded four year old kindergarten program may be eligible for a reduction in fees if they, or their parents/guardians, hold a current approved concession card. This is in line with government policy and funding requirements.

If the family is a holder of an approved concession card, they are responsible for ensuring the Nominated Supervisor/Director or their child's kindergarten teacher has sighted the original and also has a photocopy of the current concession card, prior to the start of term, in order to obtain a reduction in fees. For a list of applicable concession cards please see our Fees Policy on our website.

How We Communicate with Families

PARENT PARTICIPATION

Parent participation is essential for the pre-school to effectively operate each year. Regular interactions and sharing of information with our families is an integral part of the kindergarten program and building of the pre-school community.

Parents and family members are strongly encouraged to get involved and participate in the kindergarten events and activities. Some examples of how you can be involved:

- Become a member of the Committee of Management
- Assist with fundraising and social events (e.g. Bunnings BBQs)
- Parent helpers stay and play.
- Attending special events such as Mother's Day, Father's Day, Grandparents and Special Persons Day
- Sharing of cultural and religious celebrations
- Kindergarten maintenance (e.g. Working bees, assemble or repair equipment)
- Reviewing grant submissions, policies and procedures

COMMITTEE OF MANAGEMENT

The Committee of Management is made up of parent volunteers and is responsible for overseeing the running and management of the kindergarten.

A new Committee of Management is elected each year at the Annual General Meeting. The Committee of Management is made up of parents at the pre-school and consists of:

- President
- Vice President
- Secretary
- Treasurer
- Social Events Co-Coordinator
- Fundraising Co-Coordinator
- Policy Officer
- Grants Officer
- Maintenance and Working Bee Officer
- Kinder Kapers Editor
- Class Representatives
- General Members

At Doncaster East Pre-School we have many procedures in place to help the Committee of Management in their role. We have both a centre director and administration officer who help to ensure all the appropriate paperwork in relation to the running of the centre is completed and submitted in time, and that policies and procedures are in place to ensure the smooth running of the kindergarten. They also assist in managing kindergarten enrolments, the preparation of the budget and other legal requirements. As well as this, Doncaster East Pre-School is a member of the Early Learning Association Australia (ELAA) who provide support and guidance to committee members and are able to answer any question you may have about the running of the centre.

Please consider being part of our committee as there are many benefits in taking on a volunteer role including:

- Opportunities to contribute to what happens at the pre-school.
- Helping ensure the pre-school operates smoothly. Some examples of this including appointing and supporting staff, reviewing policies and procedures, maintaining budgets and records and keeping up to date with legislative and ethical requirements.
- Allowing you to develop or enhance skills in areas such as meeting skills, procedures, marketing etc.
- Opportunities to get to know other parents, which can help your child in forming friendships too.

STORYPARK

To document children's learning and aid communication between families and teachers, Doncaster East Pre-School uses Storypark which is a secure, private cloud-based software tool.

Main ways in which we use Storypark:

- To support parents to be a part of your child's day no matter where you are and extend your child's interest and learning
- For teachers to share photos, videos and learning stories and record children's learning and development for reflection, documenting and planning
- For teachers and group representatives to keep parents updated about special events, incursions, excursions and group social activities
- For the Pre-School committee to share information including about social events and fundraising activities for the whole kinder

Doncaster East Pre-School parents have enjoyed receiving photos and updates through Storypark about what their children do at pre-school, especially whilst at work or when faced with the usual 'I can't remember what we did today.' The app is also an important social tool, used for conversations amongst parents, social activities and arranging community events. Even more importantly, it enables our teachers to more efficiently and effectively document our children's learning and development at pre-school.

You will receive an email invitation to install and use Storypark for Families. You can use it on a computer, an iPhone, an Android device or a tablet. There is no charge or cost to you whatsoever. The app is secure and highly encrypted to ensure it is safe. To find out more visit www.storypark.com.au.

In 2023, to become a more sustainable centre, we introduced Xap (formerly Storypark Manage) to support the operations of the pre-school including waitlist applications, submission of enrolment forms, and the signing in/out of children.

The purposes of Xap are:

- For parents to submit waitlist applications and complete and maintain up to date enrolment information including authorised emergency contacts and immunisation records for their children through the Xap Guardian Portal
- For parents to digitally sign in and out their children for kinder sessions

NEWSLETTERS AND COMMUNICATION WITH FAMILIES

Your child's kindergarten teacher will send out newsletters and information via email and Storypark to let you know about the four year old kindergarten program and kinder events. We also invite you to have a look at our Facebook page to get regular updates and further insight into all the exciting things that are happening at Doncaster East Pre-School and within the local community.

As well as this a kindergarten newsletter entitled "Kinder Kapers" is published and distributed by the committee. The aim of this publication is to keep parents informed of activities at the centre, social events and news of events affecting pre-school education on a district or state wide basis.

BUSH KINDER

As part of our 4 year old kindergarten program we will be offering regular Bush Kinder sessions held at Zerbes Reserve, Doncaster East. During bush kinder sessions, children will have the opportunity to engage and play with whatever nature has provided. They will experience the daily and seasonal fluctuations of weather and seasons, and be supported to explore the natural environment, take risks and face challenges. These regular outings will take place on Mondays 1pm to 5pm from April to November. Children will be transported to and from the location by their parents/guardians.

Through play the children will connect with and respect the space. They will connect with their land in a way that cannot be done under a roof or within walls. To participate in bush kinder, parents will need to provide consent to the regular outing as well as agreeing to transport their child to and from the bush kinder site. Further information will be provided in a separate Bush Kinder Handbook to families.

STAY AND PLAY

Each term a "stay and play" roster is drawn up and all parents are invited to nominate a day, which is most suitable to them. Grandparents, aunts, uncles and caregivers are welcome to join us if parents are unable to attend.

Parent involvement enriches the program in many ways including participation in daily activities; the opportunity to observe your child within the pre-school program; increases scope for staff to work with individual children; and children feel proud to have their parents attend their kindergarten.

While you are here for the session, we may ask you to help out with an activity or to help prepare for snack time but mostly we will provide you with time to engage with the children and to see your child interacting within the group, to get to know their kinder friends and learn more about what we are doing at kinder and our daily routines.

If you are unable to help on your rostered day, it is most helpful if you can arrange a swap with another parent. If you are able to help in an emergency, or if you would just like to be parent helper more often, please let the staff know.

We hope that you enjoy your four year old kindergarten year at Doncaster East Pre-School and if you have any further questions in relation to the centre, the program or your child's development, please do not hesitate to talk to your child's kindergarten teacher.