



Family Information Booklet 2024

Enriching children's
lives through learning

ecka.org.au  

A member of





ECKA acknowledges Wadawurrung and Dja Dja Wurrung as the Traditional Owners of the land, water and resources of the countries that ECKA resides upon. We thank them for sharing their connections and pay respect to their elders past, present and emerging. ECKA pays respect to the central place in education that Aboriginal culture holds and says thank you.



Indigenous Preschool Advancement Strategy (IPAS) Artwork “Cared for”

Painting created by Albert Fagan, Wadawurrung Traditional Owner

Painting description:

The lines within the painting represent the individual journey the children and teachers have taken to get here today. In the middle of the painting is a camp fire where the teachers provide food and water for the children. The symbols on either side represent the teachers and the learning that occurs with the children

WELCOME TO BALLARAT FIDELITY CLUB KINDERGARTEN

This information booklet has been compiled so you may have a better understanding of your Kindergarten - the how's and why's of its operation. We hope your association with the kindergarten will be a happy and rewarding one. You will soon become aware that your Kindergarten is not just a centre that your child attends, but more so a unique combination of interested staff and families, all working together with the common goal of producing happy, confident and well-adjusted children.

Please take the time to read through this information booklet. If you have any questions, through-out the year, please feel free to discuss these with your child's teacher. We encourage you to be involved in the kindergarten and to spend time visiting and observing your child in their learning environment.



Our Kindergarten is proudly managed by ECKA Inc. ECKA is called the Approved Provider and is responsible for all aspects of the management of the preschool including employment of staff. Information about ECKA can be found at www.ecka.org.au and you will receive an ECKA policy and procedure booklet when you commence.

ECKA is a not-for-profit community based Early Years Management Service for kindergartens and early childhood care services in Ballarat and surrounding areas, proudly managing 29 services. While all kindergartens operate within Legislative guidelines, each kindergarten operate an individual program to meet the needs of the children and families attending their service. ECKA values the role the kindergarten in building local support networks with families, often contributing to lifelong friendships between the families and children who have shared their kinder years together.

Our Purpose

Enriching children's lives through learning.

Our Values

Respect • Courage • Collaboration • Compassion

Our Guiding Principle

In order to deliver on 'Our Purpose', ECKA is committed to being a sustainable organisation that maximises its impact on the lives of children.

We commit to:

- Provision of high-quality education and care services that enhance the learning and development of all children
- Advocating for children and the early education and care sector – being an influential voice for high quality early years services
- Planning and partnering for effective, sustainable and supported early years services both now and in the future.

CONTACT INFORMATION



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TERM DATES FOR 2024

2024	Start Date	Finish Date	Public Holidays
Term 1	5 th February *	28 March	Labour day 11 th March
Term 2	15 April	28 June	ANZAC Day 25 th April Kings Birthday 10 th June
Term 3	15 July	20 September	
Term 4	7 October	19 December	Melbourne Cup 5 th November

* Children commence after the meet and greet interview in early February. Start times can vary so please check Storypark for details on your child's starting date and times.

SESSION TIMES FOR 2024

2nd Years (4yo groups)

Group	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Yellow	8:30 – 4:00	8:30 – 4:00			
Blue			9:00 – 2:00	9:00 – 2:00	9:00 – 2:00

2024 KINDER STAFF

Teacher & Service Leader – Sharee

Teacher - Cate

Co-Educators – Mary & Fiona

KEY DATES FOR 2024

30 th January	ECKA Staff professional development.
31 st January	Set up/planning
1 st February	Yellow interviews
2 nd February	Blue interviews
5 th February- 9 th February	Staggered sessions as per Storypark information
12 th Feb – 28 th March	Normal sessions

"A sense of security and sound wellbeing gives children the confidence to experiment and explore and to try out new ideas, thus developing their competence and becoming active and involved participants in learning. Children are more likely to be confident and involved learners when their family and community experiences and understandings are recognised and included in the early childhood setting. This assists them to make connections and to make sense of new experiences."

(Belonging, Being & Becoming, the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia)



OUR PHILOSOPHY

As you venture along Ripon street you will find, tucked away between the Pleasant street oval, Food is Free Green Space and the Ballarat Croquet Club, the Ballarat Fidelity Club Kindergarten.

We believe- in developing a love of life-long learning and offer a program that supports each child's needs. Our service fosters children's sense of agency, resilience, belonging and self-worth. We provide a safe and inviting environment which provides many opportunities to explore varying interests, emergent ideas and acknowledges that children learn best when they are comfortable and empowered to have a voice in their learning environment.

For this to occur we place importance on

Community and History

Connections between the children, educators, families and wider community is apparent as soon as you are welcomed into our foyer. We acknowledge the learnings of the past, as we meet on the soils of the Wadawurrung people, learn about the world and care for the land. We support each family to be involved in our program, and together extend our knowledge to celebrate diverse cultures. Relationships are seen as the utmost importance. Our families, some who have chosen us for generations, attest to the collective knowledge and joy of learning that our service offers the



children. Embracing the concept that it takes a village to raise a child, our community of learners support each other with hands on, authentic experiences. We work together with children and their families to build trusting, supportive, inclusive, respectful relationships. We will passionately advocate for the children and their families who attend our service before, during and after the time they spend with us.

Beautiful environments and sustainability

Sustainability is explored in our environment. Under the shade of an aged English Elm tree, we watch the seasons come and go. Hiding under broadbrimmed hats we chase the moving shade in the yard to stay cool in the summer, we soak the parched soil with water from our tank and know that when the clouds come over they may carry rain if we are lucky. We carefully turn the tap off and hope the tank won't go dry as we care for the plants. All too soon, we are gathering mountains of leaves as they fall from the tree and the days shorten. We wear our raincoats, jump in puddles and make a dash to undercover when the rain suddenly buckets. It's not long until the chilly mornings, filled with crunching frost, lead us into sprinkling of sun. The small magpie family, who visits us during the year, shares the leftover crumbs of the spring picnics we enjoy together. Our garden thrives with beds of green, we feed the worms and explore the interconnection of the world. We learn about respect for each other and our environment and place an importance on maintaining welcoming learning environments both inside and out.



Children's voices, uninterrupted time and opened ended curriculum

The strength of our quality program is underpinned by the ECKA Values of Respect, Courage, Collaboration and Compassion, the Early Years Learning and Development Frameworks and a range of learning theories that inform our educational practise including:

Attachment theory - Developing connections with educators and peers is seen as the upmost importance and allows the children to feel a sense of familiarity, reduces anxiety and supports each child to engage their frontal lobe, maintaining a positive environment to process information and support learning.

Socio-Cultural Theory -where the environment supports optimum learning for individual children and affirms the power of learning with others. Flexible, but predictable, routines break up our day as the children follow their own ideas developing unhurried play. Detailed individual and group observations guide our interest, and play-based, program.



Theory of proximal development- We understand a certain amount of learning happens automatically as children mature, but also that children must engage in social interaction with "more knowledgeable others." Every child is supported to problem solve, question, explore and develop at their own pace, with educators engaging in intentional teaching and planning activities that allows each child to face small challenges.

Our educators explore intentional teaching opportunities, we know the value of supporting the children to become critical thinkers, to understand that it is ok to make mistakes and strive for each child to leaves our program with the confidence to have a go at new experiences, meet challenges and develop a sense of worth that allows them ongoing achievement.

The zone of proximal development is the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by a child's independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers.

WHAT TO BRING

Each session your child will need to bring with them:

- A named backpack.
- A named sunhat which can remain in your child's locker.
- A piece of fruit (fresh or dried) or a raw vegetable for morning tea.
- A named drink bottle (filled with water only).
- A healthy lunch, preferably in nude food containers.
- A small, healthy snack for afternoon tea (Yellow group)
- In winter your child will also need a warm (named) coat.
- A change of clothes.



FEES

As part of the Victorian Government's Best Start, Best Life reform 3yo & 4yo Kindergarten programs will be free in 2024. This means there will be no fees payable by parents. For more information on the Best Start, Best Life reform please visit <https://www.vic.gov.au/kinder>

WHAT KINDERGARTEN OFFERS YOUR CHILD

The Kindergarten offers your child new experiences within a group outside the family.

It provides an atmosphere where he/she is free to explore and find out for him/herself. In this setting he/she is able to become independent while the staff are there to offer assistance, guidance, support and encouragement.

Each child is given the opportunity to creatively express his/her feelings and ideas, is learning to play with others, is encouraged to be a confident, involved learner and an effective communicator.



This Kindergarten follows a play based curriculum planned from observations of each individual's needs and interests, as well as many intentional learning experiences. A detail of the curriculum is displayed in the foyer. Parents access and contribute to their child's learning goals via Storypark feedback, term 2 parent teacher conferences and involvement in the program.

ENROLMENT

Enrolment applications for 3 & 4yo Kindergarten will be accepted at the City of Ballarat from the 1st of January the year your child turns two. Offers of places are given through the City of Ballarat in August of the year prior to your child beginning at kindergarten.

"We have to look after the worms. We give them fruit, but not oranges. We don't give them meat." – Luka

CLOTHING

We will do our best to protect children's clothing, however, it is preferable children do not have to worry about keeping clean – this allows them the freedom to fully enjoy the learning experience. Please send your child in clothes that are easily laundered and that he/she can manage on his/her own. Tracksuit pants are ideal for children to wear to kindergarten. Please send your child to kindergarten in sensible shoes that allow him/her to run, jump and climb. Thongs and 'Crocs' are not suitable footwear for kindergarten. A sunhat is essential for outside as we follow the UV rating and sunscreen and wear hats in line with our sunsmart policy. Please send a named hat with your child each day. In winter we venture outside every day, unless it is raining, your child will need a suitable coat and hat in the colder months.



KINDERGARTEN POLICIES

Policies ensure the efficient and effective operation of our kindergarten and ensure quality care and conditions for staff, parents and most importantly our children. Our policy handbook is accessible to all parents. The policies are frequently revised and new ones adopted by ECKA as the need arises. A copy of the policies may be found on the ECKA website. All of the policies are in line with the National Quality Standard.

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE

To comply with the National Quality Standard, all parents leaving their children at Kindergarten must sign the daily attendance book. Again, when departing, the attendance book must be signed by the person collecting your child.

Staff must be notified if someone else is to pick up your child. That person's name must be included on your enrolment form as a person authorised to collect your child from Kindergarten.

If you are going to be late, please call us so that we may reassure your child. Whilst we have an open door policy and all family members are welcome at Kindergarten, we request that at collection time, parents, siblings and carers wait quietly in the foyer until the children are dismissed.

FRUIT SNACK

Each child is required to bring a piece of fruit (fresh or dried), a raw vegetable (such as carrot, celery, etc.) to Kindergarten each day in a separate container from their lunch. The children are also required to bring along a named drink bottle containing water.

A parent duty roster will be available on Storypark and parents are encouraged to choose a day that suits them to come in and participate in their child's Kindergarten experience. You will have the chance to see your child at play, and watch the developing relationships they have with their peers. It is also a good opportunity to get to know the staff. Children enjoy having a parent participate and we also appreciate your assistance.



LUNCH & AFTERNOON TEA

The children will need to bring lunch to Kindergarten each day. Please provide them with a healthy lunch, such as a sandwich, fruit and a small snack. We are encouraging healthy eating at our Kindergarten, so please do not send lollies, chips, etc. We are also promoting an environmentally sustainable setting and we suggest the use of reusable containers rather than food wrappers. We aim to be a 'nude food' Kindergarten. Yellow group children will also need to bring a healthy snack for afternoon tea.

Due to increased incidence of allergies/severe allergies, please note we are a nut free zone.



"We sing songs, we read stories, we dance and we talk." – Tia

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Each year we are asked by families how they can help support the kindergarten and contribute to both our community and the educational programs we provide to the children.

There are many different ways that families may contribute in and out of kindergarten sessions. Some of the activities in the kindergarten session may include; attending an excursion, sharing your career, helping the children plant in our vegetable garden, coming in to read a story, or supporting social events and providing your feedback and ideas.



If you are interested in volunteering some time to help, please speak directly with the educators or fill in the parent involvement flyer and educators will be in touch.

Our parent volunteers do not need a working with children's check provided that the volunteering is in the group with your own child. Staff will fully supervise all volunteers in accordance with our volunteer and visitor policies.

EXCURSIONS AND ENTERTAINERS

In order to enrich the children's experiences in the community, we have excursions and incursions throughout the year. These may include going on an excursions in our local community.

Parent permission forms must be signed before a child can be taken on any excursion outside the kindergarten (apart from the general form that allows us to visit the food is free area and oval). These forms, details of forthcoming excursions and risk assessments will be available prior to the event.

"We love playing outside!" – Max

BIRTHDAYS

We love birthdays at kindergarten and celebrate by lighting a candle and singing birthday songs. Parents are welcome to supply a shop bought cake (small cupcakes are ideal, please no cream) or small treat such as a lolly pop for children to take home to celebrate their child's birthday with their kindergarten group. We ask that you purchase a cake with the ingredients listed on the wrapping (e.g. Safeway or Coles). This helps when we have a child who has an allergy or food restrictions.



Parents of children with allergies may like to leave something 'special' at kindergarten for their child on days that we have birthday cake. Please see staff if you have any queries.

PARENT INFORMATION

Storypark- Please regularly check Storypark as the staff, and ECKA, use this as the primary source to share information. We also post a range of resources regarding allied health, school readiness and general helpful tips that you may find interesting.

Books- A collection of books which may be of interest to you is available for borrowing. These books are on display in the kindergarten foyer. Please write your name and the title of the book you are borrowing in the book provided and mark it off when you return it.

STORYPARK, NEWSLETTERS AND NOTICES



Storypark is our main way of sharing information with families. Keep an eye on your child's Storypark for individual observations and goals, group activities, newsletters, special days and it is also a way that families can share their family activity with the kindergarten. If you need to speak with staff urgently it is always best to call (0353326520) but for any non-urgent matters you are welcome to create a private message.

Storypark is a private platform for each child's family and is not to be shared on other social platforms.

Individual observations can only be seen by the teachers and families, including any comments. Multiple children and group observations can be accessed by any child's family who is included. The children love to hear comments from families about what they have been doing at kindergarten, so feel free to add any positive comments or tap the heart icon.

"We do drawings, blocks and play with the birds." – Luka

HEALTH AND ABSENCE

Please do not bring your child to Kindergarten if he/she is unwell. Kindergarten is a fabulous and fun place to be, but if your child is unwell or overtired the stimulation and challenges of Kindergarten environment can be very difficult to cope with.

In fairness to other children and their families, keep your child at home for 48 hours after diarrhoea/vomiting ceases. **Your child's current immunisation status/details are by law, required to be provided to the kindergarten and are kept with the confidential emergency details on file.**

Parents need to be aware that non-immunised children will be excluded from Kindergarten, unless they qualify for the "grace period" as determined by the Health Department guidelines.

Please phone the kindergarten and let staff know if your child or a member of your family has an infectious disease, so that they may tell you how long the regulations state he/she must be excluded from Kindergarten. If your child is going to be away for more than a few days, please notify your teacher.

Any child who suffers from a medical condition such as Asthma / Anaphylaxis / Severe Allergy etc., will need to provide information provided by their Doctor and complete a risk management and a communication plan with their child's teacher. A child at medical risk cannot attend Kindergarten until these forms have been completed and any medication that may be required have been given to the Service.



EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURES, MEDICATION & FIRST AID

These procedures are displayed throughout the Centre. During the year we will practice emergency evacuation and containment procedures with the children in each group, at least once each term throughout the year.

All medications to be administered at the Kindergarten must be recorded in the medication book. These medications must be in their original container, complete with original label, instructions and expiry date.

The First aid cabinet is located on the wall above the children's lockers in the bathroom. Each staff member is trained in First Aid, Asthma Management and Anaphylaxis.

WASTE MATERIALS

Kindergarten is a great place to see recycling at its best! So please remember us when sorting through for recycling. The sort of waste materials that we can use include – boxes – all shapes and sizes, fabric, wool, cotton reels, bottle tops, buttons, beads, cards, containers and cylinders, paper and foil etc. These items will be used as your child creates and explores their learning environment.

Soft wood off-cuts for carpentry are also much appreciated. We *cannot* use medicine bottles, toilet rolls, match boxes, egg cartons, milk cartons or anything soiled or damaged.

KINDERGARTEN LIBRARY

At the beginning of Term 2 we will commence the lending library in the kindergarten groups. One book at a time may be borrowed on your child's Library Day. (Yellow group Tuesday's, Blue and Green Group Friday's)

If a book is lost or damaged it should be replaced.

An enjoyment of reading and books is greatly encouraged. Books help children to develop so many new skills, such as communication and broadening their understanding of the world. We have recently purchased a range of bi-lingual books and have begun QR coding our library to assist families with literacy challenges. If you use the QR code it will take you on a online reading of the story which you can share together with your child.



"If someone doesn't know how to do a puzzle, you could help them. We could play together and do a drawing." - Freddie

TRANSITION LEARNING DEVELOPMENT STATEMENTS

In 2009 the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development introduced a Transition Learning and Development Statement as a way to share information between families, Kindergartens and the School your child will be attending. This statement will be prepared during Term 4, ready to be passed on to your child's school later in the term.

Communication between the staff and families is of the utmost importance in achieving the best learning outcomes for each child. If you would like information on your child's progress do not hesitate to speak with your teacher, informally, or make an appointment at a convenient time, for updates on your child's progress or if a problem should arise. We also offer parent teacher interviews midyear.

We hope your association with the Ballarat Fidelity Club Kindergarten will be a happy and positive experience. We look forward to meeting and working with you and your child and thank you for allowing us the opportunity of sharing in this magical year of early learning with your child.