



**Northern Schools
Early Years Cluster**

Kindergarten Handbook for Families

2024

Table of Contents

About Kindergarten	4
Welcome to kindergarten!	4
The benefits of kindergarten	4
Two years of free kindergarten	4
Term dates for 2024	5
Early Childhood staff, management and administration	5
Management of the kindergarten	5
Kindergarten staffing	5
NSEYC purpose, values and goals	5
Quality assessment	6
Completing enrolment	6
Using Xap	6
Concerns and complaints	7
What to bring to kindergarten	7
Kindergarten bag	7
Clothing	7
Water bottle	7
Sun protection	7
Healthy food	8
Attending kindergarten	8
Orientation and settling in	8
Kindergarten parking	8
Arrival and departure	8
Signing in and out	9
Attendance	9
Authorisations	9
Late pick up	9
Incursions and excursions	9
Emergency evacuation	9
Service closures	9
Withdrawing your child	9
Family participation and communication	10
Communication with families	10
Parent interviews	10
Family participation	10
Celebrations	10
Children’s health, safety and wellbeing	10
Interactions with children	10
Illness	10
First aid and emergency care	11
Medical authorisation	11

No Jab No Play	11
Asthma, anaphylaxis, allergies and medical conditions	11
Administration of medication	11
Toileting.....	12

About Kindergarten

Welcome to kindergarten!

We are excited to welcome you to the Northern Schools Early Years Cluster (NSEYC)!

Thank you for choosing a NSEYC kindergarten for your child. We look forward to sharing in your child's learning journey and getting to know you and your child throughout the year.

We recognise that parents are the child's first teacher and there has been much learning that has already taken place for your child.

We pride ourselves on forming respectful relationships with families where teachers and families work in partnership, sharing the task of guiding your child's development and learning.

Every child's learning journey will be slightly different. Our goal is for your child to be engaged and connected to their community and an active participant in their own learning and development in the kindergarten program.

The teaching teams at NSEYC kindergartens support and facilitate children's learning to enable them to become more aware of the world in which they are growing up. The teacher does this by providing materials and many experiences, both indoors and outdoors, from which your child can freely choose throughout their session at kindergarten, as well as guidance to help your child develop particular skills and abilities. Your child can also choose to play on their own, with other children or with adults. The teachers also provide a warm, caring and secure environment, which encourages your child to become a curious, creative and involved learner.

We operate with an integrated approach that promotes an engaged and connected organisation. This means that the kindergarten is not just a place for children - it is a place for you too. It is somewhere you can discover, meet new friends and contribute to your child's learning. There are opportunities for you to join in with your child program and offer your personal skills and knowledge to enrich the children's learning and development.

The benefits of kindergarten

Attending kindergarten is one of the most important stages of a child's education. It is the stepping stone for future learning.

Our kindergarten curriculum is guided by the Early Years Learning Framework and the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF). The vision and purpose of these frameworks is to guide early childhood teachers in partnership with families towards the achievement of agreed Learning Outcomes where children:

- Have a strong sense of identity
- Are connected with and contribute to their world
- Have a strong sense of wellbeing
- Are confident and involved learners
- Are effective communicators.

As part of these outcomes the curriculum also supports children to:

- Develop self-esteem and confidence
- Encourage growth towards independence and self-regulation
- Help the child to develop their individual sense of agency
- Encourage a love of learning and dispositions that reflect curiosity and wonder
- Develop respectful relationships with peers and adults.

Two years of free kindergarten

From 2023, the State Government is funding two years of free kindergarten for children before they start school, starting from when they are three years of age.

In 2024, children who turn 3 by 30 April are entitled to 15 hours of funded kindergarten.. The State Government provides a per capita grant to kindergarten service providers based on data submitted to the Department of Education and Training which makes kindergarten free for families.

Children who turn 4 by 30 April in the year prior to school are entitled to 15 hours of kindergarten funded by the State Government.

If your child is attending more than one funded service you will be asked by the service(s) to nominate which service you wish to receive the funding. Your child cannot access kindergarten funding at more than ONE kindergarten.

Term dates for 2024

Our kindergarten programs are delivered in line with the school term dates. For 2022, these are as follows:

	Start date	Finish date
Term 1	30 January 2024	28 March 2024
Term 2	15 April 2024	28 June 2024
Term 3	15 July 2024	20 September 2024
Term 4	7 October 2024	20 December 2024

The specific term start/end dates for each kindergarten program depend on the days of the week it operates, but the above dates provide a general guide.

Early Childhood staff, management and administration

Management of the kindergarten

NSEYC is a not-for-profit Early Years Management organisation established in 2011 to provide effective governance and management of several kindergartens on school sites across the Hume, Moreland and Macedon Ranges and the City of Melbourne municipalities. NSEYC currently operates a long day care service at the Glenroy Hub Children's Centre and 15 kindergarten services (14 of which are co-located on school sites), under a collaborative governance structure involving school principals, local government representatives and community sector representatives.

The NSEYC is committed to ensuring children, families and staff will enjoy services that improve the outcomes for all children and assist them to reach their full potential. The kindergarten services that operate within the NSEYC enjoy the reputation of offering the highest quality learning programs with improved and measurable outcomes for children and families.

The NSEYC Office is responsible for enrolments and administration of the kindergarten program (including fees). For enquiries in relation to enrolments or fees please contact us by calling the Office on 9306 1662 or by email at office@nseyc.org.au

Kindergarten staffing

Our kindergarten teachers and educators are knowledgeable, competent and committed to providing the best quality early learning experiences for the children in our communities. They will work hard to get to know your child and your family and develop trusting relationships to support their individual learning journey.

Our kindergarten staffing reflects the requirements for centre-based early childhood education and care operating under the National Quality Framework. Our kindergarten programs are led and delivered by bachelor-trained early childhood teachers. In addition, all educators hold a minimum of a certificate III early childhood qualification, and at least 50 per cent of educators hold, or are actively working towards, at least an approved diploma level education and care qualification.

NSEYC purpose, values and goals

At NSEYC, our purpose is 'To love a life of learning and living'. You can see a copy of our Strategic Plan for 2021 on the last page of this handbook.

We value:

- **TRUST**
- **RELATIONSHIPS**

- **RESPECT**
- **CURIOSITY**

Our goals are to:

- Quality children's services
- Sustainability
- Strengthening communities
- Strengthen our workforce
- Growth

Quality assessment

Early childhood education and care services (long day care, family day care, preschool/kindergarten, outside school hours care) are assessed and rated against the National Quality Standard (NQS) to:

- promote continuous improvement in the provision of quality education and care
- improve knowledge and access to information about the quality of services to help families make informed decisions about their child's education and care.

The NQS is part of the National Regulations and includes 7 quality areas that are important to children's learning and developmental outcomes. These include:

- QA1. Educational program and practice - Children are supported to participate in play and learning
- QA2. Children's health and safety - Children are protected from illness and hazards
- QA3. Physical environment - Children play in a safe and well-maintained environment
- QA4. Staffing arrangements - There are enough qualified staff to give children the attention they need
- QA5. Relationships with children - Children are made to feel supported and welcomed
- QA6. Collaborative partnerships with families and communities - Local community involvement and respect for the beliefs and values of families
- QA7. Governance and leadership - Children are cared for in a positive and well managed environment.

Completing enrolment

Before your child starts kindergarten, please make sure you have completed the enrolment form on Xap or in hard copy and provided all of the necessary documentation including:

- Your child's original birth certificate (we will take a copy)
- Your child's current Immunisation History Statement
- If your child has an allergy or illness, a Medical Action Plan signed by your child's doctor

If your child is attending 3 year old or 4 year old kindergarten, you also need to provide:

- proof of your eligibility for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy (where applicable), such as a concession card or refugee/asylum seeker visa (see 'Fees' for more information)
- copies of any qualifications that the child's parents hold (such as a Certificate, Diploma or Degree). This is required as it affects the level of funding the kindergarten receives from the Government.

Please note that your child will not be able to start at kindergarten until their enrolment form is complete and we have all of the documents we require.

Using Xap

We use an online system for managing things like signing your child in and out at kindergarten, as well as your child's enrolment information, notifications (such as absences or illnesses) and for general communication between families and the kindergarten staff.

If you haven't already, please make sure you download the Xap Guardian app onto your smart phone. You should have received log-in details from Xap already, which you can use to log into the app – if not, please contact the NSEYC office on 9306 1662.

Concerns and complaints

We hope that families within our kindergarten are happy with the service we provide. Staff are available to discuss any concerns parents may have. In the first instance, it is preferable for families to address any concerns with the teacher, particularly those relating to your child or the program.

Should you still not be satisfied or wish to discuss any other issues, please feel free to contact Elicia Napoli, Operations Manager or Sigi Hyett CEO of NSEYC directly on 9306 1662.

A “Complaints policy” can be found on our website (www.nseyc.org.au) or in the policy book located at each kindergarten.

What to bring to kindergarten

Kindergarten bag

Your child will need a bag large enough for carrying their belongings and any artwork they do at kindergarten. They will need to bring their bag on the days that they attend the kindergarten. It would be appreciated if you could also include the following items in their bag:

- A change of clothes (underwear, socks, t-shirt, long pants) in case of accidents or wet/messy activities. Children can become upset about putting on strange clothes and find it more comforting to put something on if they know that it belongs to them.
- A sun hat and sunscreen. In line with the organisation’s SunSmart policy, sunscreen will also be supplied at the kinder.
- A coat or warm jacket and a warm hat (beanie) in winter.

Please ensure that all clothing and other belongings are clearly labelled with your child’s name.

Clothing

We ask that you dress your child in comfortable clothes that are easy to move in and that they can manage for themselves (e.g., trousers that pull down easily when they go to the toilet). It is also a good idea to label all removable clothing! The staff will do their best to protect the children’s clothes and the children will be encouraged to wear smocks when they paint, play with clay and do other “messy” activities. However, it is not possible for the children to stay clean at all times, so it is better for the children to wear clothes that wash easily.

As a safety precaution please also send your child in shoes with a closed-in toe and that do not slip off their feet to enable your child to run and climb (no thongs please).

Even in the winter months children are encouraged to play outside, therefore we ask that you provide an appropriate cool weather hat and coat, as well as gumboots for wet days.

Water bottle

Your child will need to bring a filled water bottle with them to kindergarten for every session. We ask that you clearly label it with your child’s name. We encourage healthy eating at kindergarten so water is the best option for your child.

Sun protection

We are a Sun Smart service and will follow our Sun Smart Policy at all times. The Policy can be accessed on the NSEYC website and in the policy handbook located at each kindergarten. We are guided by the Cancer Council UV ratings as to when sunscreen is required.

The NSEYC kindergartens operate indoor/outdoor programs where children are able to choose where they play, either indoors or outdoors. Both environments are supervised constantly by kindergarten staff. Outdoor play is an essential part of the kindergarten program. Given this some children may spend a large proportion of their day learning in the outdoor environment. To ensure your child is protected for the sun please provide a hat with a wide brim. If your child has any skin sensitivities, please also provide appropriate sunscreen for the kindergarten staff to apply.

Please make sure your child wears light clothing in summer, such as a t-shirt, shorts or skirt and a hat. If your child does not bring a hat, they may be asked to play in the shade to limit the risk of sunburn. A hat with a broad brim such as a school hat is ideal.

Healthy food

Healthy eating is encouraged and promoted across all of our kindergartens.

Children will have morning tea and lunch during and as part of the session they attend. You will need to provide a snack and lunch for your child to eat while he/she is at kindergarten. The snack and lunch may include, for example, a sandwich, any piece of fruit, cheese, carrot, celery, sultanas, yoghurt and a drink. Or alternatively please pack food that you would normally eat at home.

Please do not send chips, lollies, chocolates, cakes, or mini packets of 'shapes' (e.g. pizza shapes), chewing gum, fizzy drinks or drinks in glass bottles, which are not in line with our Healthy Eating Policy. Additionally, please avoid sending foods that contain nuts as these are common allergens for children – particularly if you have been advised that there is a child with anaphylaxis attending the kindergarten.

We ask that you please place their snack/lunch in containers clearly labelled with your child's name. If there are any items need to go in the refrigerator, please let staff know at the beginning of the kindergarten session.

Some services practice what is known as 'progressive snack'. This is where children are encouraged to make their own decisions about when they have their morning snack. This allows the child to engage in long uninterrupted sessions of play which supports their growth and development. If you have concerns about your child's eating habits, please have a conversation with your child's teacher.

Attending kindergarten

Orientation and settling in

The first few sessions are an important part of your child's commencement at kindergarten. This is a time to formulate the foundations of relationships with children and adults.

For pre-school aged children, coming to kindergarten may be an exciting adventure, however may also be stressful. Children need time to feel that they can trust their new teachers, and time before they are prepared to let you - the most important person in their life - leave them on their own.

You are more than welcome to stay for the first day of kindergarten or until your child has settled in happily, as some children feel shy, need reassurance and need to become familiar with their new surroundings/teacher. However, if your child has not settled, after the staggered orientation period, your child's teacher may discuss with you an ongoing staggered timetable (shorter hours) for as long as necessary to assist your child develop a sense of belonging.

Kindergarten parking

To ensure the safety of children at all times around cars and the road please ensure that you:

- Park in an appropriate position, before getting your child out of the car.
- Travel very slowly – children do not have the same viewing ability and perception as adults.
- Be aware of children crossing the road and coming out of the kindergarten and or school.

Arrival and departure

All children must be brought to the kindergarten and picked up by an adult (someone over the age of 18 years). You must wait with your child until the session commences and they are under the supervision of kindergarten staff.

It is important that your child is collected **promptly** at the end of each session. Children often fret if they have to wait more than a few minutes at the end of the session. Staff also require adequate time for other commitments such as preparing for the next session and cleaning.

Signing in and out

You will also use Xap to sign your child in and out of kindergarten.

Families will be required to login to the app and establish a PIN number that will be used to sign your child in and out of the service.

In the event that you or the authorised nominees are not able to collect your child from the service **and you have nominated another authorised person to collect your child**, staff will be able to sign your child in/out on their behalf.

Attendance

Under the State Government's policy your child is entitled to 15 hours per week of 3 and 4 year old funded kindergarten in the two years prior to their attendance at school.

To ensure your child receives all off the benefits of kindergarten it is important that your child attends regularly. Please contact the kindergarten and inform the teacher if your child is absent.

Authorisations

If someone other than a parent or guardian is coming to pick up your child please notify staff at the beginning of the session, as they will need to check that the person is nominated on your enrolment form or in Xap. If they are not listed, you will be contacted by telephone and the person picking up your child will be required to show ID and fill out an authorisation form on arrival to collect the child.

Late pick up

If you are running late, please contact your kindergarten teacher as soon as possible. For families that continue to be late, a late fee may be charged for children who are collected late. **After 15 minutes, \$10.00 may be charged for every 5 minutes late.** After 30 minutes the NSEYC Operations Manager may contact you and will discuss the policy.

Incursions and excursions

During the year incursions, excursions and other special days may be arranged as part of the children's kindergarten program. You will be notified when they are to occur through a notice (usually through Xap) and will be asked to provide your permission for your child to attend. Kindergarten staff complete a detailed risk assessment prior to the excursion or incursion commencing.

Emergency evacuation

The kindergarten has an Emergency Management Plan on display at each exit point. Parents are requested to read and familiarize themselves with the plan in case we need to put it into action when they are present.

Evacuation drills are required to be practised with the children, at least once per term. You will be notified of any planned drills.

Service closures

On occasions it is necessary to close the kindergarten due to unforeseen circumstances. Families will be notified through Xap and via SMS text message. The kindergarten will be closed for a staff professional development day during the year. Families will be notified of this date in advance.

Withdrawing your child

If you plan to withdraw your child from the program, please provide a least two weeks' notice to our Enrolment Officer either by email or phone: Office@nseyc.org.au or 93061662

Family participation and communication

Communication with families

Parents are children's first and most important educators, and we place a high value on working in partnership with families to support children's learning at home as well as at kindergarten. Communication between the home and the kindergarten is essential. We ask that you please let the staff know of any changes in your child, their development, the home routine or anything else that you feel we may need to know in order to assist us in planning for your child's learning and development.

If your contact details change, please advise the teacher and update them on Xap.

It is also essential that families receive timely information about the operations of the kindergarten and anything that is happening within the kindergarten on a daily basis.

The majority of information pertaining to the day-to-day operations of the services and communication from the staff will be shared via the Xap Guardian app and via email. Of course, the kindergarten staff will still communicate with you each day at drop off and pick up. The online communication is an additional tool that will strengthen our communication with you.

Parent interviews

As well as attending an interview with your child's teacher at the start of the year, at any time during the year you can arrange an appointment if you wish to discuss your child progress at kindergarten. It is a great opportunity to work in partnership to establish goals for your child.

All staff are very approachable and are committed to working in partnership with you to develop an individual learning plan for your child that will support your child in their learning journey at kindergarten. Our highly experienced teachers will also talk with you about your aspirations and expectations for your child's kindergarten year.

Family participation

We always encourage families to participate in the program and encourage you to share your talents, culture, or stories with the children and staff. Programs are more effective when parents and staff work as a team, and where the learning that happens at kindergarten is also supported at home.

Celebrations

We are an inclusive community and encourage you to share your traditional and cultural events in the kindergarten program. This may include things like birthdays, Eid, Diwali, Easter, Passover just to name a few.

Many of the kindergartens celebrate these festivals and events as part of the program and would always encourage you to participate and share your knowledge about these things.

Children's health, safety and wellbeing

Interactions with children

The NSEYC has an Interactions with Children Policy, in line with the National Regulations 2011, that outlines how staff go about developing respectful relationships with children and how we will meet the values of the organisation in doing this. The Policy can be accessed on the website and from the policy handbook located at each kindergarten.

Illness

If your child is sick or shows signs of illness, please keep them away from the kindergarten until they are well enough to return. Infectious diseases spread quickly among children, so please be considerate of other families and keep your sick child at home until they have recovered.

If your child is going to be away, please contact the service and notify the staff of the child's absence.

If your child does contract a contagious condition, it is important that you let the staff know and that you follow the advice of your doctor regarding exclusion from kindergarten. Please note that this is a government directive, and the time of exclusion must be followed. Further information please contact the Communicable Disease Prevention and Control Section on 1300 651 160 or visit www2.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/infectious-diseases/school-exclusion

First aid and emergency care

Minor cuts and abrasions are treated at kindergarten. All staff are trained in First Aid and Emergency Paediatric Resuscitation. Parent will be notified if there is a head injury or of the child is upset and does not settle. You may be asked to collect your child however staff will discuss this with you.

If a serious accident occurs staff will administer first aid. An ambulance may be called by staff if it is deemed necessary.

Accidents will be recorded and reported to DET/ACECQA if the child is required to see a medical professional as a result of the incident or accident.

All accidents require an accident/ illness /injury form to be completed by staff which also require the parent/guardian signature.

Medical authorisation

Through the enrolment form you have given your authority to the kindergarten teacher to call an ambulance for your child in an emergency situation. This means, if your child was to have a serious accident at the kindergarten the teacher/educator has permission to call for an ambulance. It also means that you are responsible for any resulting costs.

The enrolment form also asks that you provide details of your child's medical practitioner. It is compulsory that you fill in/sign this section of the enrolment form.

No Jab No Play

You will be required to provide an Immunisation History Statement as part of the enrolment. Under the 'No Jab, No Play' legislation, before enrolling a child, Early Childhood Services will have to first obtain evidence that the child is fully immunised for their age, or on a vaccination catch up program or unable to be fully immunised for medical reasons.

An Immunisation History Statement is available via your myGov account or from the Medicare or Centrelink office.

'Conscientious objection' is not an exemption under the 'No Jab, No Play' legislation.

Asthma, anaphylaxis, allergies and medical conditions

Each kindergarten has an Asthma, Anaphylaxis and Medical Conditions Policy.

Upon enrolment, families who have children with Asthma, Anaphylaxis, Allergies or a Medical Condition that requires medical support are required to complete a Medical Action Plan with their Medical Practitioner. Your child will not be able to commence kindergarten until this plan is received as this will ensure safety for your child. This is also required under the Regulations.

Parents will need to provide the kindergarten with any medication that is required, in a self-contained plastic container. If an EpiPen/Anapen is required, it must be supplied to the kindergarten by the parent/guardian. Please be mindful of the expiry dates on all medication provided to the Kindergartens. Any medication to be administered must be within the use-by date on the packaging and be prescribed to the child.

New allergies, medical conditions, or any changes to Medical Action Plans, need to be reported to staff immediately.

Administration of medication

If your child requires any medication while at kindergarten:

- **your written authorisation is required in the medication book**
- **medication must be provided to the kindergarten in a sealed plastic container that is clearly labelled with your child's name**

- all medication **must be handed to staff** on arrival and staff will ensure it is put in a secure place that cannot be accessed by children
- all medication must be administered by a staff member - **children will not be allowed to keep medicine in their kinder bag or administer it themselves**
- the medication must be what is noted on your child's action plan
- **the medication must have the chemist's label on it – detailing your child's name and dosage.**

If your child requires pain relief during the session (such as Panadol), staff will only administer it if it has been prescribed by a doctor. If this is required, it may be better for your child to stay home from kindergarten while they are unwell or experiencing pain.

Toileting

Children progress at different rates and therefore your child may still be in nappies when they attend 3-year-old kindergarten and in some cases 4 year old kindergarten. We will always cater to individual children's needs and in the case where your child is still in nappies, we will work with families to develop goals to support your child to become independent with their toileting.

NSEYC Strategic Plan 2023

OUR PURPOSE
To love a
life of learning
and living

OUR VALUES
TRUST
RELATIONSHIPS
RESPECT
CURIOSITY

OUR GOALS

- QUALITY CHILDREN'S SERVICES
- SUSTAINABILITY
- GROWTH
- STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES
- STRENGTHEN OUR WORKFORCE

