



# Our Learning Steps Childcare and Kindergarten Parent Handbook - 2019

Our Learning Steps Childcare Centre & Kindergarten  
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## Welcome to Our Learning Steps Childcare and Kindergarten.

Our Learning Steps Childcare Centre and Kindergarten is a family owned and operated centre, located in the heart of Patterson Lakes. The centre has a warm and homely atmosphere. The centre offers a 'Kinder House' for the 3-5yr olds whilst accommodating for the 0-3yr olds age groups in the 'Front House'.

## Our Philosophy

Our Learning Steps was formed on the lands of the Bunurong People of the Kulin Nation. We acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples as the Traditional Custodians of this country and their connection to land, water and community in which we operate. We pay our respect to them, their cultures and customs both past and present.

### MISSION STATEMENT

Our Learning Steps is committed to providing excellence in care and education for all children. We are committed to being accessible to all families providing a safe and caring environment enabling children to feel secure and happy.

### PHILOSOPHY

- We strongly believe in the value of play. Play offers the opportunity for children to explore their identity and community and become confident and involved learners.
- We value that Early Childhood Education is the foundation for lifelong learning.
- We believe that each child is individual and unique.
- We believe that it is important to provide an environment that is accepting, encouraging, stimulating and enjoyable. In this environment we can best foster strong self-identity, positive attitudes towards learning and positive roles within the community.
- The learning environment allows for communication, self-help and socialising. Children will learn from each other, teachers, parents and the community. They will be provided with opportunities to experiment, discover, explore, create, investigate, problem solve, practice theories and express ideas with the support of their peers and educators.

- We believe that children learn differently, in rates, ways and time. We allow time for spontaneous learning and understand the need for flexibility.
- We role model to support children in creating mutual respect for their peers and friendships.
- We promote an appreciation of the natural environment, we aim to provide children with natural materials but also encompass bright colours to promote happiness, excitement and visual engagement.
- We endeavour to build strong partnerships with families, children and the wider community and include them in the centre's day to day activities. Regardless of gender, religion and race children and their families are treated equally.
- Our educators strive to build relationships with families based on co-operation and a mutual respect for the reciprocal roles that each child play in the lives of the children. The relationships are based on mutual trust and a high level of open communication.
- The work our educators do, the ideas they create and the strategies they employ have a deep and lasting effect on the families and children entrusted into our care promoting lifelong relationships, knowledge and values.

### **VALUES AND GOALS**

All children have access to our centre regardless of sex, religion, disability, medical conditions or socioeconomic status. Our policy is one of non-discrimination. All children are individuals and differences in personalities should be accepted. We are responsive to difference and provide a program that meets individual needs. Routines and activities are flexible and appropriate to meet the needs of the children and families of the centre. Programs promote and foster identity, community, wellbeing, learning and communication. These programs will prepare children for the transition to primary school in partnership with the National Early Years Learning Framework.

Educators work as a team to provide a safe, warm, happy and stimulating facilities where children can thrive, grow and learn. Staff professional development is ongoing. We endeavour to educate children to have non-sexist, non-racist and non-violent attitudes. We will acknowledge and respect different cultures, religions and celebrations.

Our Learning Steps provides programs that accurately reflect the variety of backgrounds represented in the centre and the wider community. We strive to encourage creativity and appreciation of the natural environment. We encourage and invite active parent

involvement in the centre's activities and aim to communicate daily with parents both written and verbally.

Our Learning Steps has a commitment to continuous improvement and maintains a culture of ongoing critical reflection and self-review.

## **Our Management Team:**

Approved Provider: PETER COLLIVER 0418 184 567  
[peter@ourlearningsteps.com.au](mailto:peter@ourlearningsteps.com.au)

Nominated Supervisor LISA O'CONNELL  
[admin@ourlearningsteps.com.au](mailto:admin@ourlearningsteps.com.au)

Educational Leader PETER COLLIVER

If your complaint alleges that the health and safety or well being of any child within the centre may have been compromised, or there has been an infringement of the Children's Services Regulations, the Licensee must notify the DET within 48 hours of receiving the complaint.

Department of Education and Training  
Quality Assessment and Regulation Division  
165-167 Thomas Street, Dandenong 3175  
Ph: 8765 5787  
Email: [smr.qar@edumail.vic.gov.au](mailto:smr.qar@edumail.vic.gov.au)

## Our Difference

Entrusting a Service to care for your child is a very important decision, and one that parents need to feel comfortable with. We want all our children and their families to feel like they are at home. At Our Learning Steps Childcare and Kindergarten we aim to be the family you choose to leave your children with. We certainly do not look like a child care centre, and the love and attention our educators provide to your children is, we think, unique in the approach and dedication.

We offer a variety of special activities including,

- ✓ Jump for Joy
- ✓ Let's Get Active
- ✓ ICT Computer Gum
- ✓ Expressing ourselves through music
- ✓ A strong program based on principles of active play
- ✓ School readiness and preparedness program.

Throughout the year we offer a range of extra activities, including marine education, responsible pet ownership, jungle jamming, visits from the local emergency services and we even have a farm visit the centre. See for yourself on the calendar that appears on our website <http://www.ourlearningsteps.com.au>

## Our Staff

*Approved Provider & Educational Leader* – Peter Colliver

*Nominated Supervisor* – Lisa O'Connell

### *Room Leaders*

Babies	Emma Kelly
Toddlers	Ellie Broughton
Pre Kinder	Donna Randall
Kinder	Rachael Brooks
Kinder	Jessica Thirumal

### *Room Educators*

Nora Lakatos	Helen Larke
Genine Benson	Raelene Augustus
Kaitlin Ives	Kirsten Colliver
Narelle Macguire	Sushila Thapa
Rachael Davis	

## **Enrolment**

Experience has shown us that in order for our Child Care Centres to operate happily and smoothly, certain guidelines and policies need to be implemented. This handbook does that in a way, which makes you, the Parents, Staff and Management fully aware of each other's rights and obligations. The under mentioned information pertaining to your child's development is prepared within the guidelines of the regulatory bodies.

All child care centres operate on a priority of care system, outlined as follows:

- 1st priority – A Child at risk of serious abuse or neglect.
- 2nd priority – A Child of a single parent who satisfies, or of parents who both satisfy the work, training, study test.
- 3rd priority – Any other child

Our Centre keeps a waiting list - however priority of enrolment will be given to children of parents falling within the above categories.

Every effort will be made to accommodate everyone who requires care.

You will need to complete and sign the Centre's enrolment form and agree to the Centre's terms and conditions when enrolling your child. Immunisation records are sighted and copied by Management. It is the parent's responsibility to provide update immunisation records are up to date at the Centre as your child receives new immunisations. Any child with a medically diagnosed condition will need a Medical Alert poster, and a Medical Management and Communication Plan must be provided to the centre before care can commence.

We also have some forms we ask you to complete to help us get to know your child and family better.

## **Hours of Operation**

Our Learning Steps Childcare and Kindergarten is open all year round, with the exception of gazetted public holidays. We are open between 7:00am and 6:00pm each weekday.

We close at 4:00pm on Christmas Eve (December 24) and New Years Eve (December 31)

## Room Structure

The Kinder House offers a fully funded Kindergarten program with the added bonus of being a long day kinder as opposed to sessional kinder. The advantage is that the children learn at their own pace throughout the week and receive extra learning opportunities. The Kinder house is divided into two rooms- Room 1 caters for the 4-5 age group (Senior Kinder) with a strong focus on school readiness towards the second half of the year, and Room 2 caters for the 3-4 age group (Junior Kinder).

Our Funded Kinder program runs Monday to Friday between 9:00am and 5:00pm throughout the year.

We also have a Pre-Kinder Room; located in the front house; which is used for our older toddlers who are turning 3 years old or have turned 3 years but may need further time to practice newly acquired social and self-help skills. The aim of this room is to prepare the children for the big move to the Kinder House. In the Pre-Kinder Room, the children are given opportunities to spend small amounts of time with the kinder group while being challenged to further their skills to the optimum.

The Front House consists of a Nursery (Little Bubs), Babies' Room (Big Bubs), Toddlers' Room and Pre-Kinder Room. Each room allows children to develop skills for each stage of development while providing and loving, nurturing environment.

## Policies

Our policies are available to families in our foyer area. They are also located online at <http://www.ourlearningsteps.com.au/policies>. Every year we endeavour to review our policies in conjunction with our community. We welcome your feedback about how our Centre runs. Please contact the Nominated Supervisor or Approved Provider for assistance with any questions or queries you might have in relation to our Centre policies or the programs we offer at Our Learning Steps.

## Centre Visitors

Parents are most welcome to visit the Centre and contribute at any time. Occasionally we have other visitors to the centre. Other visitors are asked to make themselves known to management and sign in at the foyer prior to entering any other part of the Centre



## Settling in to Our Learning Steps

Orientation in to a new environment is going to be naturally different for all children. Some children settle with ease, whilst others take some extra time with pre orientation to begin to feel comfortable in our environment.

When beginning care at Our Learning Steps, we recommend

- ✓ Start with a tour and meet our Educators to ensure you are happy, as a parent, with our environment and feel here.
- ✓ Try to arrange at least two sessions to orientate your child to this new environment. This allows for parents to become familiar with your child's surrounds and Educators and for us to become more familiar with your child's own needs, support and comforts. We recommend at least one session where you leave your child with our Educators to become a little more independently confident of their surroundings.
- ✓ Feel free to telephone at any time to check on your child. Our Educators are always happy to provide you with an update on your child's day. Similarly if we are concerned (eg. Slight temperature, quiet behaviour) we will also call you to check and provide and update about your child. Staff are always happy to discuss any concerns.
- ✓ When first starting care, begin with a shorter day and build up to longer periods if you can. It assists to make the transition in to care easier on your child, and sometimes on Mum and Dad too. We recognise that this is not always possible though, and will work with all our families.
- ✓ When your child is ready to 'move up' we work to orientate and transition your child with you to ensure a smooth progression to the next room.

## Communication

Much of our written communication – invoices, newsletters, forms etc is delivered electronically. Please provide us with an email address that you check regularly to ensure you receive all correspondence. We also use StoryPark to communicate to parents our daily activities and learning.

## Confidentiality

Your family's right to confidentiality is of the utmost importance to us. Our Centre Management is always available to discuss any matters of concern. Please call and make an appointment for a chat at a time that is convenient to you.

## Arrival and Departure

At arrival and departure, the adult dropping off or picking up must sign their child in to or out from care for the day. Parents nominate authorised persons to pick their children up from care and only those listed on your child's enrolment form are permitted to do so. Should you wish for a person not listed on your child's enrolment form pick up your child, you will need to add that person's details to the enrolment form. For security we will require a drivers licence or appropriate photographic identification if we do not know the person, or have not met them before.

## Late Collection of Children

Please note that all children should be picked up prior to 6:00pm. Where a child is not picked up before this time, late fees may be charged as outlined in our fee policy. Staff will endeavour to contact parents and pick-up/emergency contacts to arrange immediate pick up of your child. We are only able to keep a child for a maximum of one hour before contacting police and/or family services.

## Fees

For comprehensive information please read our Fee Policy. Our fees at July 2019 are

Daily (children in care 1-4 days)	\$122 per day
Daily (children in care 5 days, 7:30am – 5:30pm)	\$121 per day
Holiday Rate	\$80 per day.

*\*Holiday rate is only available for care over two weeks in a year. If your child is booked for 4 days a week when holiday rate is taken then you are entitled to 8 days total. Holiday rate is only available if fees are up to date ("zero balance or better") and not in arrears.*

Most families are eligible to receive a refund of up to 50% of their weekly fees through the Jobs for Families Package. This considerably reduces the weekly cost of care. Please make sure that you have registered for and are receiving your full entitlements for Child Care Subsidy (CCS). Details are available from

- ✓ Department of Human Services – 13 61 50
- ✓ Website – [www.humanservices.gov.au](http://www.humanservices.gov.au)
- ✓ MyGov – [my.gov.au](http://my.gov.au)

At Our Learning Steps all absences need to be paid, whether through illness, public holidays, time off or vacation. If you are not eligible for CCS, for an absence the full fee will be charged for the day.

Fee payments are available via direct debit, through a bank account or credit card only.

## Minimum Days for Enrolment

Children settle to their surroundings and develop safe and secure relationships with Educators and their peers when attending care for a minimum of two days.

## Late Fees

In order to maintain fees at a figure as low as possible for our families, fees are due weekly. If any family wishes to pay their fees at any other interval this needs to be through written agreement with Management. Late fees for care owing that is more than two weeks overdue may attract a \$4 per day late fee.

Any fees involved in engaging with debt collection agencies, or legal fees or otherwise involved in collecting unpaid fees you may have at Our Learning Steps will be passed on directly to you.

## Change of Days of Care or Termination of Care

The Service requires full four weeks written notice of an intention to change the days or the number of days required or to withdraw a child from the Service. The four weeks notice begins from the close of business on the day the Service receives the written advice. If your child is absent from care on the last day/s of care, Child Care Subsidy cannot be paid. Parents will be billed for the full cost of care for this period.

## Staffing

The Service is cognizant of the requirements – including transitional and saving provisions – for staffing in the Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011 and meets or exceeds these at all times it provides education and care to children. These provisions include:

- ✓ Educator-to-child ratios
- ✓ Educator formal qualifications
- ✓ First Aid, anaphylaxis and Emergency Asthma Management
- ✓ Rest periods
- ✓ Educators' rest pauses and short absences
- ✓ The Early Childhood Teacher
- ✓ The Early Childhood Teacher's rest pauses and short absences (including those during rest periods).

All staff have current Working with Children Checks and Police Checks completed prior to undertaking employment with Our Learning Steps.

## Room Programming

Room programming is completed by Room Leaders who work with staff to plan and cater for specific developmental programs suitable to the individual children they are working with. This is displayed in your child's room and we welcome your input and ideas in to our planning to provide the best experiences possible for your child. Core to our planning process are the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF) and the "Belonging, Being and Becoming" Federal Government Framework, where

1. Children have a strong sense of identity.
2. Children are connected with and contribute to their world.
3. Children have a strong sense of wellbeing.
4. Children are confident and involved learners.
5. Children are effective communicators

A copy of these frameworks are available on our website. We also have hard copies available in our foyer (subject to Government availability).

Planning is regularly reviewed between room staff, and in staff meetings to best meet the needs of children in our care.

## The National Quality Framework (NQF)

The NQF has been designed to build on the capacity of Child Care Centres to improve education and care services offered. Our Centre policies adhere to different areas of the framework and are listed in each individual policy.

The NQF covers seven quality areas

1. Educational program and practice.
2. Children's health and safety.
3. The physical environment.
4. Staffing arrangements.
5. Relationships with children.
6. Collaborative partnerships with families and communities.
7. Leadership and service management.

Programs, initiatives and relationships here at Our Learning Steps consider and reflect the values of the NQF to build the best of early years education for the young children we are lucky enough to provide care for.

## **Medical Conditions and Health Emergencies**

Parents are asked not to bring any unwell child into the Service, and not to enter the Service if they are unwell themselves. The Nominated Supervisor can refuse entry to any child or adult (including a staff member) who comes to the Service clearly unwell.

Should a child become unwell during the day, the parents or authorised person are contacted immediately to collect the child. Parents or authorised persons will be contacted when a child's temperature is recorded at 37.5 degrees and above. When a child's temperature reaches 38 degrees a parent or authorised person will be required to pick up the child immediately. Children with a temperature of 38 degrees and over, or where a parent has been asked to collect an unwell child, will be required to be excluded from the Service for the following day. The parent will be asked to sign the Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Record. If appropriate, the parent will be provided with a Parent/Doctor Report.

If we are unable to contact both yourself and/or the emergency contacts the Centre staff may take your child to the closest doctor or by ambulance to hospital. Upon enrolment at your child's centre you are required to sign a form declaring ambulance coverage. Any fees associated with Medical Treatment or Ambulance Transport remains parental responsibility.

Children who are sent home from Our Learning Steps unwell or with a temperature are excluded from the service for the following day.

To ensure the safety of other children, staff and visitors, parents are asked to inform the Service if their child has been exposed to any infectious disease

Our Learning Steps strictly adheres to the National Health and Medical Research Council's recommended minimum exclusion periods for infectious conditions. For greater convenience to parents, The Australian Government Recommended minimum exclusion periods for infectious conditions for schools, pre-schools and child care centres is available for download from our website.

Where an outbreak is a vaccine preventable disease, the Service may be required to notify the relevant health authority, and will follow that authority's recommended guidelines and directives. Children and staff who are not immunised may be excluded from the Service for the duration of the outbreak.

## **Guiding Children's Behaviour**

Management of children's behaviour is consistent with our Inclusion Policy. We always attempt to resolve issues with children in a calm, patient and attentive way. We listen to the voice of all our children. We guide behaviour through encouragement, positive

reinforcement, while teaching children to empathise with others and acknowledge that our own actions can affect those around us. Parents are notified of any specific behavioural problems. Where necessary, we work with families to develop a plan to support children while here at Our Learning Steps.

## **Food and Nutrition**

Our Learning Steps provided nutritious breakfast, morning tea, lunch, afternoon tea and late snack. Our menu rotates on a four weekly basis. Our chef freshly makes all our food on the day it is served to children. Naturally we cater for allergies and intolerances in children accordingly, as well as any special religious or cultural requirements. The daily menu is displayed in each room. We welcome your feedback in to our menu, and provide some tasty recipes in each quarter's newsletter.

We ask families not to bring any food items in to the centre. This reduces the risk of children coming in to contact with food items that could potentially trigger an allergic reaction.

Cupcakes or fairy bread help to celebrate your child's birthday at the centre.

## **Personal Belongings**

Personal belongings brought in to the Centre remain the responsibility of families. They should be labelled with your child's name and stored safely in your child's room. The Centre cannot take responsibility of items that are lost or misplaced while children are in care at the Service. Some toys may need to be looked after by Educators to avoid conflict with other children in the day.

## **Excursions**

If we plan an excursion we will send out a permission form to outline

- ✓ The purpose of the excursion
- ✓ The time and date of the excursion
- ✓ Your permission for your child to attend
- ✓ Medical management protocols
- ✓ Emergency contact information.

We always maintain appropriate staff ratios on excursions, and complete a risk management survey prior to the excursion being approved.

## **Newsletters**

Our newsletter is sent out to families by email regularly. It updates our families on the different things we have done in the centre, as well as upcoming events and items of interest to our families.

## **Additional Information for Parents**

We hold a range of information obtained from different sources for parents who may need some form of assistance or information. This is stored in the foyer. If you cannot find information you are seeking, please see an Educator or at the Office who will be able to assist in sourcing this information on your behalf.

## **The Start of a Wonderful Journey...**

We trust that your child will love their time here at Our Learning Steps Childcare and Kindergarten. We look forward to getting to know you and your family. If you ever have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask.

Welcome to Our Learning Steps Childcare and Kindergarten.

## **Four Year Old Kindergarten Program**

At Our Learning Steps we benefit from a Kinder Program that is run five days per week. We have small group sizes with two staff available to work with children throughout the week. One of the strengths of our program is that we have consistency in our staffing throughout the week, with both our Early Childhood Teacher and Kindergarten Assistant present five days per week.

Our program runs between 9:00am and 5:00pm each day. Long day care is offered for children in other hours for the benefit of working families. This is available for our kinder children between 7:00am and 6:00pm.

It is a Department of Education and Training Requirement that all children receive either 15 hours of kinder per week or 600 hours of kinder over the course of a year.

### **Why are we different?**

We have several advantages to our kinder program over Council run kinder programs. Our groups are smaller than Council run kinder programs. We have a maximum of around fifteen children in our group each day, not a minimum of 22 as you find in Council Kinder programs.

Our staff work with the group each day. We have an Early Childhood Teacher and Kindergarten Assistant who run our program each day.

Children have many different needs in the classroom that is our focus every day. We are not Council cost saving or run by a regulatory board who has no interest in the kinder and it's families. We are regulated solely by the needs of our children and their learning.

### **Our Curriculum**

Our Learning Steps follows the Department of Education and Training's Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF) with the vision of advancing children's learning and development to achieve high expectations for every child within the five development outcomes. We believe that extending on the VEYLDF and developing our own essential learning for children, not only will they meet their expected learning outcomes but also they will exceed their expected learning outcomes.

Our curriculum is founded on the following aspirations for children.

To grow up as competent and confident learners and communicators, healthy in mind, body and spirit, secure in their sense of belonging and in the knowledge that they make valued contributions to society. We will empower all children to learn at high levels to become successful independent, lifelong learners. Our program and practices will



provide an educational foundation that supports the full range of skills that children will need as lifelong learners in a rapidly changing society.

Our curriculum centers on the development of children's learning and capabilities.

At Our Learning Steps, children will develop increasing independence, a growing sense of self-identity as a learner. Children will develop self-regulation regarding their emotions and sense of control; they will develop an increased ability to cope with change while widening their social interactions and developing a sense of others. They will develop an understanding and appreciation of diversity and an increased ability to take responsibility for their own actions.

Planning in the room is based on the immediate needs and interests of the children and are recorded through photos on a daily basis and in written forms e.g. Daily reflections and portfolios. We also have an ongoing plan that allows for emerging interests to be planned for daily and new experiences are added as interests emerge. This planning aims to be interactive with your child and your family. Please feel welcome to make suggestions and participate in the program, we encourage special visits from families and friends. The portfolios are available for you and your child to look through at your convenience. The portfolios will be sent home mid-year so that you can make contributions.

### **Extra Curriculum Activities**

Our children participate in a range of extra activities, including

#### **Let's Get Active**

Let's Get Active is a fortnightly program focusing on health, physical fitness, and activity. Children focus on coordination skills, fine and gross motor activities, team and cooperation, and turn taking.

#### **Computer Gym**

Computer Gym occurs weekly on a Friday. Children develop computer skills using laptops. They learn skills including mouse control, early numeracy and literacy concepts using computers, problem solving and clear thinking games.

We also go on a range of excursions and incursions each term.

### **Supporting Your Child at Home**

Daily reflections are sent home to families. It is encouraged that parents use these as a basis for conversations with your child about their day and the different learning activities they have been participating in.

Should your child have any concerns, or is particularly enjoying a particular area of curriculum in the classroom, please let us know! Our Educators are always happy to assist you.

### **Parent Input**

We welcome the input of parents throughout the year. Maybe you have a particular skill, or there is something you feel you could contribute for the benefit of the children in the kindergarten program. Please feel free to let us know. We have parents and grandparents who love to come in and read books, help with activities, or come in on special occasions. Families are always welcome to be a part of our program.

### **Readiness for School**

Different children progress at different times, and no two children are alike. If you have a specific concern about your child's progression to school please feel free to make a time to discuss it with the Early Childhood Teacher. Similarly we will contact you if we have any concerns we would like to discuss.

Where there are worries for progression to the Foundation year of Primary School the centre undertakes a process with parents and the child throughout term three of the year to assess and address any apprehensions held for the child's development.

We are always very supportive of families who feel their child would benefit from a second year of kindergarten. We work with our families to facilitate this process for the following year.

Transition Statements are prepared for all children in our program, which as agreed to by parents and supplied to the child's intended school in term four of the year. This outline some information about the child, their interests, areas of strength and how to help them settle best in to school the following year.