



Nature Kinder Parent Handbook

Kallista Kindergarten

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WHAT IS A NATURE KINDER?

Nature/Bush/Forest Kinders are popping up all over the world, as result of research into children's sedentary lives, which can lead to children's social, physical and mental health being affected.

A Nature Kindergarten provides young children with large amounts of time in natural outdoor settings where they can play, explore and experience natural systems and materials found there. Engaged outside in all types of weather, children and educators investigate natural phenomena and learn about the place in which they live. For almost fifty years there have been forest preschools, Waldkindergarten, and "rain or shine" schools in Northern Europe and Nature Kindergartens in Scotland, all providing outdoor experiences for children in the early years (3 to 6 years old). Research in these European settings has shown that children attending go on to do well in public school. Now, these kindergartens are found in Australia, the UK and New Zealand.

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COMMUNICATION

Parents are asked to always have their mobile phone with them and turned on throughout the duration of the nature kinder session to be easily contactable when necessary and aware of any updates throughout the session.

Please enter the relevant contact details to your phone.

Three-Year-Old Program

Certified Supervisor	Jade Spruitenburg	0411 228 494
Early Childhood Educator	Kallista.kin@kindergarter.vic.gov.au	
Early Childhood Educator	Rachael Willies	0459 226 087
	Pauline Molenaar	

Four-Year-Old Program

Nominated Supervisor	Lu-Ann Randall	0404844650
Early Childhood Educator	Lu-ann@kallistakindergarten.com.au	
Early Childhood Educator	Rebecca Bos	0412260229
	Miranda Fenech	0407577151

Contact for Kallista Kindergarten

Kindergarten:	Kallista.kin@kindergarten.vic.gov.au	97552647
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PARTICIPATION

To participate in this program parents/carers must complete and return to kinder prior to the first session a **Routine Excursion Form** part of the enrolment procedure.

Parents/carers should also provide any changes to their enrolment forms including updating the list of authorised people to collect your child if you are car-pooling.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

At Kallista Kindergarten we believe childhood is precious and that an important part of childhood is being outside in nature. We know in our hearts that children need more time outside in nature. This knowledge is supported by research.

Children are natural learners. Nature Kinder will provide your child with the time and an ideal environment for them to learn in: three hours of uninterrupted play in nature, using what is provided as learning materials. Nature Kinder will be a special part of your child's total kinder experience.

They will have opportunities to play in the rain, roll down grassy mounds, balance on fallen logs, get involved in dramatic play, find insects, draw with sticks in the ground and make mud pies.

Each child's developmental progression, advancing skill levels and particular interests will be noted by their educators. This knowledge will be used to support the children's learning.

Teachers will support children as they take risks and face challenges essential to well rounded learning.

Stories will be told, knowledge will be shared, songs will be sung. Through play your children will connect with and respect this space. They will connect with their land in a way that cannot be done under a roof or within walls.

SESSION OVERVIEW

Prior to the commencement of each session, teachers will scan the nature space for safety and new areas of potential interest. Each Nature Kinder session may begin with the group meeting together with the teachers. A story may be told or a group discussion may take place.

The children will then be free to engage in play within the boundaries of the Nature Kinder site.

The session will conclude with children listening to a story on the east lawn, which is close to the entrance gates, or down at the gazebo.

STAFF

Staff in attendance for the four-year-old program will be Lu-Ann, Bec, and Miranda all qualified educators with a passion for seeing our children learning in natural environments. Three staff will be in attendance at all times. Staff ratios have been set at 1:9.

Staff in attendance for the three-year-old program will be Jade, Rachael and Pauline. Three staff will be in attendance at all times. Staff ratios have been set at 1:7.

VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers must register and gain approval for attendance at each session from staff. Volunteers will be required where the staff determine that additional adult supervision is required to ensure the safe running of the program.

All volunteers must be clearly identified to children. Volunteers remain under the direct supervision of the Lead Teacher at all times throughout the session. Parents, carers and grandparents are welcome to volunteer to assist with sessions, including setup, pack up and to provide extra adult supervision where required as identified by staff.

It is required that all volunteers hold a Working With Children Check (forms available from post offices, free to apply). Volunteers are required to complete a Volunteers form available from the kindergarten.

ATTENDANCE

When shouldn't my child attend?

We ask that parents/carers are diligent and exercise their own judgment in assessing whether it is appropriate for their children to attend Nature Kinder. Children should not attend Nature Kinder if they are ill, excessively tired or if parents are concerned about their well being due to forecast weather conditions.

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE

To ensure our kindergarten children are given freedom to play and engage with nature we ask that adults are respectful of their space at all times. During pick-up and drop-off times if you have siblings present please ensure that you are aware of where your child is at all times to ensure their safety and wellbeing.

LATE COLLECTION FEE POLICY

Parents/carers are asked to be at the nature kinder site by the session end time for collection of their child. Staff members are not paid to care for children after the end of each session. Late collection fees apply if parents/carers arrive late for collection of a child, as per Kallista Kindergarten late collection fee policy.

SESSIONS

Three-Year-Old Program

Red Group Wednesday 10:00 – 12:00

Blue Group Wednesday 12:30 – 2:30

Four-Year-Old Program

Group 1 Monday 9:150 – 12:15

Group 2 Monday 12:45– 3:45

SESSION CANCELLATION

Sessions may be cancelled ahead of time, at short notice or during a session, in the following circumstances:

Reasons For Cancellation or change of venue	Notification
Staff Absences	Group SMS & Flexibuzz
Extreme Weather	Group SMS & Flexibuzz
Sudden Extreme Weather	Group SMS & Flexibuzz
Emergency Evacuation	Group SMS & Flexibuzz
Park Manager	Group SMS & Flexibuzz

Note: If on arrival, Nature Kinder is not set up on site, this means that the session has moved into the kinder yard.

Where the group has been evacuated or relocated the SMS message & Flexibuzz to parents/carers will specify the location for pickup.

WEATHER

It is carers' and families' responsibility to keep an eye on the weather. An SMS / Flexibuzz will be sent out as soon as notification is given by BOM for extreme weather i.e. if fire rating is severe or above, or in case of electrical storms, high winds or extreme heat.

This information will be obtained from the Bureau of Meteorology website:

<http://www.bom.gov.au/vic/forecasts/melbourne.shtml>

<http://www.bom.gov.au/forecasts/graphical/sectors/VIC.php>

CLOTHING

Parents are required to determine appropriate clothing based on the weather forecast

appropriate to their session time.

Children will **not be allowed to attend** a Nature Kinder session if they have arrived with inappropriate clothing and without suitable clothing to change into.

It is important that Nature Kinder participants wear appropriate and protective clothing and footwear which:

- Allows children to move freely and undertake activities such as climbing, balancing, running
- Keeps children warm and dry in cold/wet weather
- Protects children from the damaging effects of the sun, UV rays in warm weather and high UV conditions.
- Prevents sunburn, bites, scratches and stings. (Even in warm weather, long-sleeve tops and long pants are recommended - this clothing should be loose fitting and light).
- Where possible is made from natural fabrics which allow the body to breathe and is comfortable against the skin
- In the case of footwear, keeps feet and toes covered and has a flexible sole to allow children to climb and balance on uneven surfaces

The following table provides examples of recommended clothing, clothing which is not recommended and unacceptable clothing:

	Warm Weather	Cold Weather / Rain
Recommended clothing and footwear	Light loose fitting long sleeve tops (Kinder top with Logo) and long pants, broad brimmed hat, closed toe shoes	Wet weather covers, long pants, long sleeved top, beanie, waterproof gloves, thermals in very cold weather
Not recommended	short sleeved tops, long skirts or dresses, shorts	Skirts, dresses (incompatible with Wet weather covers)
Unacceptable clothing and footwear	Open toe shoes, sandals, thongs, crocs, singlet tops	Non-waterproof outer clothing. (A Wet weather covers on top of non-waterproof clothing is recommended).

Wet Weather Covers: Light rainproof covers worn over clothing, which includes a jacket with a hood, and pants, which zip up over clothing.

Change of clothes: All children participating in Nature Kinder are required to bring a change of clothes and footwear as these may become wet and muddy. It is recommended that the spare clothing include:

- Spare top and bottoms of appropriate thickness/weight for the weather on the day
- Spare underpants (and singlet in winter)
- 2 pairs of socks
- 1 pair of gumboots (it is not recommended that gumboots are worn at all times due to the restriction of movement they impose).
- The Nature Kinder 'on-site kit' will contain some spare clothing, Wet Weather Covers and gumboots for general use.

On high UV days, please ensure that you apply sunscreen prior to the session commencing. Sunscreen will be available for re-application during sessions.

IDENTIFICATION CLOTHING

All children are encouraged to wear Kallista Kindergarten long sleeve t-shirts/jumpers. This clearly identifies them as belonging to the kinder, without identifying them to strangers.

Families will be given the opportunity to buy a Wet Weather Covers set for their child at the Teddy Bear's Picnic, both new and second hand will be available.

Nature Kinder identifiable broad brimmed hats and beanies will be provided by Kallista Kindergarten.

WHAT ELSE TO BRING

Parents/carers are required to provide a bottle of fresh water at all sessions. There will be access to drinking water to supplement this when required on-site. All participants on-site at nature kinder are required to have a water bottle.

FOOD

Parents/carers are required to provide a snack in a sealed container for each session for their child to eat. As per Kinder policy, this food will not be shared. We ask you consider the environment by not including any packaging. If your child prefers the fruit cut, we ask you to send it already cut and ready to eat.

We also ask you to observe food allergy precautions when selecting items to include.

PARKING AREA

Parking is available on Braeside Rd, out the front of the gardens.

PICK UP AND DROP-OFF

The drop-off point is the home base on Braeside Lawn, with pick-up on the East Lawn. Nature Kinder signage will be displayed at the entrance point to our site.

Drop-off.

Parents and carers need to ensure they:

- Bring child's named backpack with change of clothes
- Sign the child in using the attendance book and record the time of arrival
- Take child to home base to wait for the session to begin. All children will assemble here until most children have arrived and the Nature Kinder session formally commences.

Pick-up. Parents and carers need to ensure they:

- Sign the child out using the attendance book and record the time.
- Please ensure the staff are aware you have collected your child.
- Be mindful of not distracting/speaking with staff until all of the children have departed.
- Be responsible for the supervision of the child once signed out, while still at the Nature Kinder site.
- Collect the child's belongings (bag, water, hats, wet weather gear)
- Please refer to main Delivery and Collection of Children Policy for full procedures relating to collection by authorised person, late collection and late collection fees.

TOILETS

Parents are requested to **encourage children to use the public toilets** on their way to their session.

MEDICATIONS

Parents and carers of children affected with anaphylaxis or asthma must ensure they discuss their emergency plans with staff prior to commencing the first session. It is advisable to provide

medication and an action plan, specifically for the nature kinder session to be stored in the teacher's backpack at all times, to ensure it is always at hand.

RISK BENEFIT ASSESSMENT

Risk assessment, including benefit analysis, is an ongoing and continual part of the program.

FURTHER POLICY AND REGULATIONS

Nature Kinder is conducted as part of the Kallista Kindergarten program and therefore is governed by the regulations and procedures of the Kindergarten. Due to location and environmental factors, variations to policy have been identified and different procedures created which are specific to Nature Kinder to ensure the safety and well being of all children, staff and volunteers involved in the program. We ask parents to view the policies regarding Nature Kinder available on our website to gain a full understanding of the responsibilities of the Kallista Kindergarten Committee, staff, volunteers and parents alike.

EVACUATION GUIDE

EMERGENCY EVACUATION

There are times that have been identified that require the Bush Kinder participants to evacuate to a safer location to ensure the safety and well being of the group. In this event, Bush Kinder staff will notify parents via a Broadcast SMS. Parents are asked to familiarise themselves with the designated safe areas and assembly points as detailed in the emergency evacuation maps.

The reasons for relocating include, but are not limited to: Fire/Bushfire, missing child, aggressive dogs off leads, other animal intruders, uninvited person/stranger (threatening, causing a nuisance or unease for staff and participants), natural events, such as extreme weather, floods, severe winds or thunderstorm, medical emergency or accident. It is highly unlikely that any of the identified risks or events will eventuate, however it is our responsibility to ensure that the appropriate policies and procedures are in place in the unlikely event that something should occur.

EVACUATION PROCEDURES

Whatever the emergency, incident or situation that necessitates the evacuation, the following procedures are to be followed by staff and volunteers:

- Blow whistle
- Keep children calm
- Ensure sign-in book is in the teacher's backpack along with other necessary items such as medication
- Count / check off against the sign in sheet to ensure all children are accounted for
- With the exception of the teacher's backpack, leave Nature Kinder gear at the site – it can be collected later

- En route to new location (see below for appropriate locations), calmly walk children in pairs, keep group close together and ensure no child deviates from the group.
 - Teachers/adult volunteers to be positioned at the front and back of the group, and flanking the group where possible
 - Notify emergency services if required
 - On arrival at safe assembly point, conduct a full count/roll call to ensure all children are accounted for
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- Notify parents via broadcast SMS of new location for collection (if required) and notify DEECD (if required)
 - If the evacuation/relocation is for weather reasons, wait for the extreme weather to pass and when it does, resume normal activities if appropriate and safe to do so, following same relocation procedures to return to the Bush Kinder site
 - If the weather does not look like it will pass soon, a broadcast SMS should be sent to all parents, advising of the new safe location for pickup purposes.

SAFE ZONE ASSEMBLY POINTS AND ROUTES

B. ALL OTHER EMERGENCY EVACUATION SITUATIONS (When NECESSARY to evacuate Gardens)

A. TORRENTIAL RAIN, HAIL, ELECTRICAL STORM, EXTREME WINDS AND ALL OTHER EMERGENCY EVACUATION SITUATIONS (when NOT necessary to Evacuate the gardens)

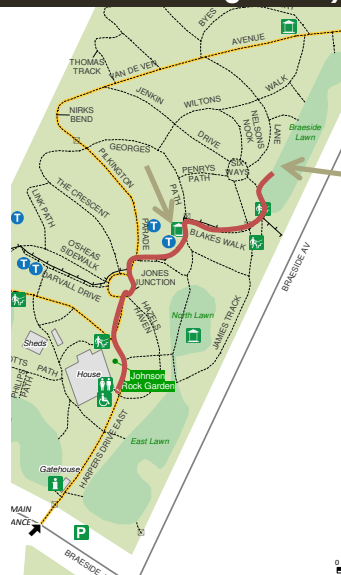
Assembly Point A:

Gazebo

Group to wait here until torrential rain and/or hail has passed and it is safe to resume normal program.

Shelter may be sought under the veranda (B), or George Tindale House if weather shows no signs of abating

Route: Take shortest safe route possible



If it is necessary to evacuate George Tindale Memorial Gardens, there are three exits that can be used.

Which exit is to be used will be determined depending on the rationale for evacuation by staff, or from instruction from Park Rangers or Emergency Services.

Assembly Point C

Main Car Park

Assembly Point D

Sherbrooke Rd

Assembly Point E

Back gate Braeside Rd

Route: Take shortest safe route possible



SITE PLAN/MAP

George Tindale Memorial Gardens

