

Handbook For Parents And Carers 2024



Contents

Contents	2
WELCOME TO PARENTS AND FAMILIES	3
HISTORY OF GOWER STREET KINDERGARTEN	3
GOWER STREET KINDERGARTEN PHILOSOPHY.....	3
MISSION STATEMENT	4
AIM	4
OBJECTIVES	4
VALUES.....	4
GOWER STREET KINDERGARTEN TIMETABLE 2022.....	5
STAFF	5
2024 TERM DATES.....	5
OUR PROGRAM	6
Values	6
Curriculum	6
Teaching practices	6
Evaluation & Reflection	7
Program	7
YOUR CHILD’S PROGRESS and TRANSITION TO SCHOOL.....	7
ADDITIONAL NEEDS	7
KINDERGARTEN MANAGEMENT	8
BECOMING A MEMBER OF GOWER STREET KINDERGARTEN	8
PARENT INVOLVEMENT	8
PRACTICAL INFORMATION.....	9
ENROLMENT FORM, HEALTH & IMMUNISATION RECORDS.....	9

CHANGE OF INFORMATION	9
ARRIVING AND LEAVING	9
Gate and driveway	9
Signing in and out of the attendance book	9
Pickup	9
Late pick ups	10
Collection of children	10
Absences	10
PERSONAL BELONGINGS	10
WHAT TO BRING	10
LUNCH AND SNACKS	11
FOOD ALLERGIES	11
BIRTHDAYS	11
SUNSMART	11
TOILET TRAINING	12
COMMUNICATIONS	12
Sign-in table	12
Noticeboard	12
Website	12
Facebook	12
COMPLAINTS AND CONCERNS	12
PHOTOGRAPHS	12
PRODUCT DONATIONS	13
KINDERGARTEN TEACHING PROGRAM	13
GUIDING CHILDREN'S BEHAVIOUR	13
STAFF/CHILD RATIO	13
ATENDING A SERVICE	14
STUDENT PLACEMENT	14
INCURSIONS	14
HEALTH AND SAFETY	14
MEDICATIONS AND DIAGNOSED MEDICAL CONDITIONS	15
KINDERGARTEN POLICIES	15
CHANGE OF DETAILS FORM	16

WELCOME TO PARENTS AND FAMILIES

From the staff and Committee of Management we welcome your family to Gower Street Kindergarten!

In this handbook, you'll find some useful information about the kindergarten and how it operates. Keep it handy and use it as a reference throughout the year. If you can't find what you're looking for in this handbook or if you have any questions or concerns, feel free to contact the staff or committee at any time. We're here to help.

HISTORY OF GOWER STREET KINDERGARTEN

Opened in 1977, Gower Street Kindergarten is a purpose-built kindergarten. The environment has been designed to provide children with many different learning opportunities.

Both the indoor and outdoor areas are large and children can play without encroaching on each other's space. The settings and materials are changed gradually throughout the year to provide children with new challenges. Programs are designed to give each child the opportunity to contribute to the program.

We run programs for both 3-year-old and 4-year-old children.

GOWER STREET KINDERGARTEN PHILOSOPHY

- Gower Street Kindergarten fosters play based learning to support each child's individual development and learning. We believe that children learn best when they are engaged in a programs and activities that are stimulating and support all areas of development. GSK works to create a learning environment that allows every child to establish a sense of belonging, being and explore their individuality.
- Using play based learning as our guiding principle, GSK creates suitable learning opportunities for children that allow children to connect with the world around them while learning to become active and contributing members of their community. Children are encouraged to socially connect with others in a community that is welcoming and inclusive. Creating play based learning opportunities allows children to co-construct their understanding of the world around them. This gives children the foundations to create a sense of self, allowing them to grow in confidence and become more effective communicators.
- GSK believes it is important for children to engage with environmentally sustainable practice. This increases awareness and understanding of the impact our actions have on our environment. Through sharing information and including children in sustainable planning and practice such as maintenance of our garden, the upcycle of materials, incursions, and upkeep of our worm farm, they can develop knowledge and understanding about the natural world around us.
- GSK believes every child should explore, identify, negotiate, take risks, and create meaning. Children who engage in quality play experiences are more likely to have well-developed memory skills, language development, and can regulate their behaviour, leading to enhanced school adjustment and academic learning (Bodrova & Leong, 2005).
- These early years for children are critical to their long term social and emotional development. This time can be a defining point in any child's life. For families, these years pass quickly and at GSK we

allow every opportunity for children to explore the world around them in an accessible and inclusive environment with the support of our of educators.

MISSION STATEMENT

To deliver service excellence that provides every child with the opportunity to grow and explore their identity in a community that is free, safe and celebrates diversity through a sense of belonging.

AIM

To deliver a culturally enriched sessional kindergarten program that supports children of all abilities between 3-5 years of age, aligning to the National Quality Framework, in the City of Darebin.

OBJECTIVES

1. Increase the awareness and understanding of the benefits of Early Years Play Based Learning Program.
2. Increase the participation of children with all abilities in all program areas; and
3. To plan and deliver programs that are cultural enriched in a flexible planning model that meets the diverse needs of each individual child.

VALUES

- Effective Governance
- Relationships
- Diversity
- Inclusion
- Respect for oneself and others
- Transparency
- Play based learning
- Communication
- Safety

GOWER STREET KINDERGARTEN TIMETABLE 2024

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
4-Year-Old Kookaburra 8.30am -4.00pm <i>7.5-hour session</i>	4-Year old & 3-Year old Possum /Joey 8.30– 4.00pm <i>7.5 hour session</i>	3-Year-Old Joey's 8.30am-4.00 pm <i>7.5-hour session</i>	4-Year-Old & 3-Year Old Kookaburra Joey Group 8.30am -4.00pm <i>7.5-hour session</i>	4-Year-Old Possum 8.30am-4.00pm 7.5 hour session

STAFF

4-year-old	Teacher	Assistant
Kookaburra group	Michelle Ericson	Nikki Wheeler & Rachelle Robertson
Possum group	Maria Tsaroumis	Rachelle Robertson & Nikki Wheeler
3-year-old	Teacher	Assistant
Joey group	Michelle Ericson	Nikki wheeler

2024 TERM DATES

Term 1	Term 2	Term 3	Term 4
30th Jan – 28 th March	15th April – 28th June	15th July – 20th Sept	7th Oct – 20th Dec

The kindergarten term dates are in line with the Victorian school term dates.

Staff return on Monday 29th January.

Staff Organisational/ Interview Days are held on first 4 Days of Term 1.

OUR PROGRAM

Values

Education in the kindergarten acknowledges the stage of each child's level of development (Piaget), and the unique ways of thinking that are typical of these age groups. It is not a narrow scaled down school program, but offers a broad and changing range of experiences, where each child can be challenged and expect high levels of achievement.

Gower Street Kindergarten provides a safe and secure environment where skills can be refined and extended, and children are encouraged to make choices about how to pursue their own interests. Children can experiment with their creativity and develop projects where the process is just as important as the product.

Curriculum

Our curriculum is developed in line with the Victorian Early Years Learning & Development Framework. There are five learning outcomes which direct the curriculum planning from the VEYLDF. In planning each session, we consider the development of each child's physical, emotional, social, and intellectual skills. These outcomes are refined into individual short-term learning goals, which are the basis of the daily program. Large and small group learning experiences are planned so that each child can experience high levels of achievement and satisfaction.

Teaching practices

The role of the teacher is to plan and present the learning environment and to allow the children to make choices about how & what they learn. Activities are provided so that the children can develop specific skills. Children need time to gain experience, and competency with the materials and to build positive relationships with others. The day is structured so that there are times for inside and outside activities where the children, with staff support, develop social, physical and intellectual skills. There are small and large group experiences where the children explore literacy and numeracy concepts.

Each session children can explore seasonal change, and how this affects people, plants, animals and insects. Interlaced with this are many opportunities to portray this learning through painting, collage and drawing, while books, stories and pictorial aids extend and enrich these concepts. Discussions about occupations, transport systems, celebrations and multi-cultural events allow children to develop concepts about the wider community. Resources for this are gathered from parents, the local community and the library, and the kindergarten staff continually aim to increase these resources.

The playroom and outdoors can be rearranged frequently and easily, to accommodate a variety of interests and group projects. Materials can be added, and the program is flexible, so that spontaneous learning can be acknowledged and extended.

Staff and families share information about children's interests and these become part of the program.

Evaluation & Reflection

The program is developed and evaluated by using a cycle of observing the children, planning then presenting interesting activities, reflecting on and evaluating how these are used and then planning to further scaffold learning.

Progress is documented in **individual learning portfolios** (available to view throughout the year and sent home at the end of each term), which are shared with families, and this reflects the holistic development of the child. Our **program & weekly reflection** (displayed during the session) describes the proposed learning outcomes, and also documents the spontaneous learning which occurs.

Program

The fortnightly program for all groups are incorporated into a big book which is on display during the session for parents to view. Your feedback is highly valued and parents are encouraged to share any feedback, information and concerns they may have about their child or the program.

Our children are big contributors to our program. Teachers consider the interests of the groups and often look to incorporate this into the program.

Parents are also encouraged to take part in the program. This may be as a helper during the session or you might be keen enough to run an activity relating to the program (e.g.: sharing talents such as playing a musical instrument or demonstrating a hobby, craft or cooking and cultural activities/events).

YOUR CHILD'S PROGRESS and TRANSITION TO SCHOOL

By observing, recording, photographing and reflecting on each child's actions staff document your child's progress. This is shared with families every term. Families are encouraged to provide feedback about their child's progress.

Parents are also encouraged to discuss their child's development and the program with staff. If you have specific concerns you would like to discuss, please arrange a meeting with staff at any time.

There are also regular opportunities for parent teacher interviews throughout the year. You will be advised of these as part of the folio distribution.

Transition statements summarising your child's achievements, skills, abilities and unique learning profiles are integral to informing the learning stakeholders within the school environment. Funding and resources available to support children and families use the transition statement as a planning tool. <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/childhood/professionals/learning/Transition%20information%20sheet%20for%20families.pdf>

ADDITIONAL NEEDS

All children have access to our kindergarten and our programs are designed to meet the needs of *all* children. Specialist services can be accessed to ensure your child has support to reach their full potential. Parent involvement is also encouraged to ensure the program objectives developed can be achieved.

KINDERGARTEN MANAGEMENT

BECOME A MEMBER OF GOWER STREET KINDERGARTEN

Gower Street Kindergarten is an incorporated body and is governed by our rules of association (the constitution).

Becoming a committee member is a great opportunity to shape the future of our kinder and work with a great community of parents and teachers to make the kinder what we want it to be.

Who is eligible to be a member?

Any person who supports the purposes of the Association of Gower Street Kindergarten Inc. is eligible for membership.

How to apply to become a member:

To apply to become a member of the Association, a person must submit a written application to a committee member stating that the person—

- (a) wishes to become a member of the Association; and
- (b) supports the purposes of the Association; and
- (c) agrees to comply with these Rules.

The application—

- (a) must be signed by the applicant; and
- (b) may be accompanied by the joining fee.

Note

The joining fee is the fee (if any) determined by the Association under rule 12(3).

Once your membership is reviewed and accepted by the Committee of Management and you are a member of the Association (subject to rule 13(2) of the Constitution), is entitled to exercise his or her rights (including nomination for the Committee of Management).

For more information regarding membership of the process of becoming a Committee member please do not hesitate to speak with a staff member.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

All parents and family members are encouraged to participate in many aspects of Gower St Kindergarten. Involvement promotes a wonderful sense of community, allows you to actively assist your kinder in becoming what you want it to be and all children love to have a parent or family member excited to share in their time at kinder.

Examples of involvement include:

- *Participating on the Committee of Management.* A rewarding experience that allows you to shape the future of our kindergarten and form stronger relationships with the staff and families of GSK ;

- *Attending social functions held at the kindergarten.* Fundraising helps our kindergarten remain well resourced with new supplies and equipment. Funds raised go directly to enhancing each child's experience during their time at kinder ;
- *Sharing a talent.* We love it when parents or family members are able to share a special skill such as playing a musical instrument, demonstrating a hobby, craft or cooking.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

ENROLMENT FORM, HEALTH & IMMUNISATION RECORDS

Legally the kindergarten cannot accept your child into the program until the Gower Street Kindergarten enrolment form has been completed with immunisations up to date, recorded and returned. On Enrolment Day, an educator will spend a few minutes with you to go through the form and ensure we have all the required information. It is a legal requirement that all children are protected by vaccination and accurate health records are maintained by the Kindergarten management. We need to know if your child has a medical condition so that we can manage this while in our care. Please refer to <http://www.vic.gov.au/news/no-jab-no-play.html> addressing vaccination requirements from the Victorian government.

If your child has any physical, emotional or social needs requiring additional support or intervention please contact us beforehand so we can plan and best cater for your child's individual needs. The earlier we are able to address these needs the better we are able to allocate good resources, support and funding.

CHANGE OF INFORMATION

If you have a change in your address, contact details, emergency contacts or your child's medical condition during the year please ensure you complete the form found at the end of this guide. It should be returned to the teachers at the earliest opportunity.

ARRIVING AND LEAVING

Gate and driveway

Please make sure that the front door and gates are closed each time you enter or leave the service. Please ensure that you do not let any child, other than your own, to exit the gate. We also ask that you do not allow children to climb on gates in order to open them; this can result in the gate becoming damaged and not shutting properly.

For safety reasons, we would appreciate parents not parking in the driveway. During drop off and pick up times, backing out safely can be difficult.

Signing in and out of the attendance book

The attendance book must be signed with the correct time by a parent or guardian as children enter and leave the session. The book is used in emergency situations, fire drills and provides a record of attendance.

Pickup

Always sign out your child in the attendance book with the correct time of departure. If you need to collect your child early, please let the teacher know in advance. Either phone the kindergarten on or speak to the teacher when you arrive at the session.

Parents are admitted to the kindergarten 5 minutes before the session ends.

Late pick ups

If you know you are going to be late please phone the kindergarten on 9478 5374 at the soonest opportunity. A late fee of \$1.00 for every minute late may be charged at the discretion of the Committee.

If you are late, both parent and staff will sign the attendance book with the pickup time. A warning will be issued in a first instance of lateness with subsequent instances resulting in an invoice being issued and payment required within seven days.

Collection of children

Only people aged 16 or over nominated on the enrolment form and/or emergency contact form may collect your child. If you need to add extra names to the list, please inform staff. Under no circumstances will staff allow an unauthorised person to collect any child. If a different person from usual is to collect the child, staff must be notified by the parents and the person may be asked to provide identification.

Absences

Parents are requested to phone the kindergarten on 9478 5374 if their child will be absent.

PERSONAL BELONGINGS

Please ensure all your child's belongings are clearly labelled. Gower Street Kindergarten accepts no responsibility for lost items. There is a lost property box and we encourage you to check this first before you contact the kindergarten.

WHAT TO BRING

- A named bag to keep food in and to take home artwork. Please check the bag for any kindergarten items that may find their way inside.
- Lunchbox (in warmer weather include an icepack if required – lunches are not refrigerated)
- Drink bottle
- Clothes that are:
- comfortable and suitable for active and messy play (smocks are provided, but clothes can still get dirty), and
- Easy to go to the toilet in.
- Shoes that protect your child's feet and allow for climbing and running (no thongs).
- A change of clothes and underwear

Please avoid bringing toys from home. These can get lost, broken or distract the child from the program.

LUNCH AND SNACKS

Parents are asked to send healthy food, which may include sandwiches, fruit, vegetables, cheese and yoghurt. We discourage junk food and sweets (e.g.: chips, lollies and chocolate).

Children are encouraged to take home what they do not eat. This allows you to monitor what your child *does* eat. Please make sure that lunches are easy to unwrap or open, children can get frustrated with trying to remove plastic wrap and may not always ask for assistance.

Also send a named drink bottle filled with **water only**. The children will have access to this at all times and staff will refill it if needed.

FOOD ALLERGIES

We ask that you do not bring foods containing nuts (e.g.: peanut butter, eggs, nutella®) as some children can have a severe reaction to these foods. Because of this reason, children do not to share their foods with other children.

BIRTHDAYS

We do celebrate birthdays with our own 'cake' and children get to blow out the candles!

If you would like to celebrate a birthday or special occasion in a particular way, please speak with staff beforehand. Due to risk of allergic reactions we do not encourage sharing of food. Staff will advise about the best way to celebrate. Some suggestions have been fruit birthday cakes which relate to the healthy eating pyramid.



SUNSMART

All children are required to wear a hat outdoors from September through to April. Each child is provided with their own hat by the kindergarten and this hat remains at the kindergarten.

Children should be suitably dressed in clothing that cover the shoulders, back and tummy for proper sun protection. Sleeveless tops, singlets and sundresses do not provide adequate sun protection.

It is recommended that during term 1-3 and term 4 you apply sunscreen to your child before coming to kinder. Sunscreen is available at the kindergarten for reapplication. If your child has particular sensitivities, then we recommend you also supply your own sunscreen (please label with your child's name).

TOILET TRAINING

To support the ease of toileting, please speak with our teachers about specific needs. If required, we ask that your child attend GSK Kindergarten in pull ups if they are not yet able to use the toilet independently (rather than nappies). 'Training underwear' is also great when starting out.

GSK does not have the adequate facilities to safely Nappy change any child.

COMMUNICATIONS

Sign-in table

Please ensure you regularly check the sign in table at the kindergarten. This is one of the ways we distribute the newsletter, fundraising information and other information relating to the kindergarten.

Noticeboard

Also check the noticeboard in the foyer. There is always some new information about what has been happening, upcoming events or useful information posted here.

Website

www.gowerstkindergarten.com

You'll find handy information here such as this handbook, phone numbers and timetable information. A 'Noticeboard' is regularly updated with information about events, activities and general information. It's the quickest and easiest way to stay up to date. You can subscribe to receive information directly to your email.

Facebook

The kindergarten does have a Facebook page where you can find photos of all things happening at the kindergarten (especially special events).

COMPLAINTS AND CONCERNS

If you have a complaint or concern, we ask that you:

- Talk with the staff member involved (particularly if related to the program or children's performance or behaviour)
- Talk to or email the committee's Complaints Officer. Their details are displayed in the foyer and included at the bottom of each newsletter
- Contact Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) Northern Metropolitan Region

Parents are strongly urged to first approach staff with any concerns before raising these with either the committee or DEECD.

PHOTOGRAPHS

Staff will take photos of children throughout the year as a means of documenting progress and these will be collated in individual learning. Parents will be able to see that in StoryPark you will be able to access it when invited by staff. As part of the enrolment form we ask you give consent to your child's photo being used in another child's folio (e.g. a photo may have multiple children doing an activity together).

A photographer may be engaged by the service to take individual and/guardians prior to the event, and will include the date and the photographer's details (Privacy and confidentiality policy).

Photos may be used on the website or Facebook page. In all cases, you must consent to your child's photo being used for these specific purposes. The consent is included in the enrolment form and you may wish not to consent to this. Should a photo of your child be used on any of these sites, we will not name children.

PRODUCT DONATIONS

We welcome any product donations that can be used for child activities. This may include:

- Cardboard boxes
- Cardboard tubes (no toilet rolls)
- Fabric of all sizes
- Wool, ribbon, string
- Buttons
- Corks
- Plastic Lids
- Small pieces of wood
- Coloured paper / wrapping paper
- Containers, boxes and packaging with text written in Chinese, Vietnamese, Italian and all the other first languages of our children are especially welcome

If unsure, please speak to staff and they will advise on suitability.

As you know, children also use a lot of toilet paper and tissues! While we ask each family to donate these items at the beginning of the year these don't last long and often we need a restock (particularly in term 3 and term 4). Donations of these items are welcome at any time.

KINDERGARTEN TEACHING PROGRAM

GUIDING CHILDREN'S BEHAVIOUR

Children require limits and the security of knowing what they can and cannot do. They also require the understanding that staff will help guide their behaviour. The staff work as a team to develop age appropriate limits for each group and these will be discussed with parents where appropriate.

Guidance of children is approached in a positive manner and positive reinforcement of acceptable behaviour will help children develop a positive self-image. Conflict between children is an unavoidable but necessary part of the learning process and children are helped to develop strategies for dealing with disagreements.

A teacher will consult with parents if they have concern about a child's behaviour.

STAFF/CHILD RATIO

The Education & Care services regulations 2011 state that all staff are to hold a Working with Children card and a police check, and current First Aid.

A qualified Early Childhood Teacher must be on duty at all times during a 4-year-old funded program and hold a current VIT registration card. A qualified Early Childhood Teacher/Activity Leader must be on duty at all times during the 3-year-old program.

A ratio of 11 children to 1 qualified staff member is required for the service to operate. If in the event of a staff absence and where suitable qualified relief staff cannot be found, the service will close. We appreciate that this would be inconvenient for parents but it is a legal requirement that ensures the safety of your child.

ATENDING A SERVICE

All visitors must sign in and out of the visitor sign in book before entering and leaving the service. To be in direct contact with children at the services require an approved check (working with children and criminal history record checks).

STUDENT PLACEMENT

Gower Street Kindergarten encourages the placement of Early Childhood Education students in the kindergarten. Students work with the staff and children. They are organised to cause minimal disruption to the children and the program. Students who have teaching placements are required to have approved checks (working with children and criminal history record checks).

INCURSIONS

While we do not arrange excursions to outside venues, the kindergarten does arrange an *incursion* every term. Activities and visitors are arranged to come to the kindergarten. Visits and incursions that reflect the children's interests are organised throughout the year. In the past, we have arranged a drama toolbox/performance, musicians and even an animal visit.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

The health of all children is important. If your child is ill, they should be kept at home. This prevents the risk of other children and staff becoming sick. The kindergarten does not have facilities for children who are sick. If your child becomes ill during the session, you will be contacted to collect your child.

If a child is injured and the staff determine that immediate medical action is needed, the parents will be contacted. If they are not available, the emergency contacts will be contacted. If it is of an extreme nature the staff will call an ambulance as well as the family GP. Any costs associated with ambulance or medical attention will be the responsibility of the parents.

Children and staff must be excluded from the kindergarten if they have certain infectious diseases and it is important to inform staff if your child has an infectious disease. The Department of Health Victoria provides additional information about communicable diseases in their Blue Book. Specific information relating to exclusion can be found on their website (<http://ideas.health.vic.gov.au/guidelines/school-exclusion-table.asp>).

More commonly, your child should not be at kindergarten if they have:

- Flu
- Fever
- Diarrhoea (present in the previous 48 hours)
- Vomiting
- Conjunctivitis
- Hand-foot-mouth
- Head lice
- Covid 19 symptoms (Coronavirus)

At times, minor accidents may happen (e.g.: a fall or a bump). All information relating to accidents, illnesses and incidents are recorded in the Incident Record Book. Parents must sign their child's entries.

All staff have current level-two first aid and anaphylaxis training and attend additional training sessions for illnesses such as asthma.

Emergency evacuation from the centre is practiced once a term.

MEDICATIONS AND DIAGNOSED MEDICAL CONDITIONS

Where a child requires long term administration of a medication or has a specific medical condition, such as a severe allergy or a risk of anaphylaxis, parent/guardians must notify staff in writing. The written notice should also include a letter from the child's doctor stating the name of the medication and/or condition, dosage and symptoms/indicators for administration. Please ask staff for one of these forms if you don't already have one from your doctor.

A Risk Management Plan will be developed by the staff together with the parent/guardian and treating doctor before enrolment.

For all other medication, details will be recorded in the medication folder. This will detail the child's name, name of medication, time to be administered, dosage and last dosage. This will need to be signed by the parent/guardian. Please give any medication to staff as it must not be stored in children's bags.

All medication will need to be clearly labelled with the child's name and dosage.

Parents will also be required to notify staff, in writing, of any changes to this.

KINDERGARTEN POLICIES

There are a number of policies available that expand on some of the topics in this handbook. Policies cover topics such as health and safety, administration and operation.

These policies are regularly updated and a policy folder is available for all parents in the foyer. Please contact the staff or committee if you have any questions about our policies or need further information on any particular topic in this handbook.

CHANGE OF DETAILS FORM

Childs name: _____

Change of address

New address: _____

Change of contact details

New contact details:

Phone (home): _____

Phone (mobile): _____

Phone (work): _____

Email: _____

Other: _____

Change of emergency contact

Remove

Name: _____

Relationship to child: _____

Address: _____

Add / Change

Name: _____

Relationship to child: _____

Address: _____

Phone (home/mobile): _____

Phone (work): _____

Change in medical condition

Attach letter from the child's doctor stating the name of the medication and/or condition, dosage and symptoms/indicators for administration.