

**Mermaid Waters Community
Kindergarten
2026 Family Handbook**



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WELCOME!

Come and join us on our learning journey at Mermaid Waters Community Kindergarten.

Jingeri and Kaiala! (hello)

Mermaid Waters respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we operate, the Kombumerri People, recognising their enduring connection to Country — land, sea, and community. We pay our deepest respects to Elders past, present, and emerging. We are privileged to learn from and alongside the world's oldest living and thriving cultures, and we are committed to walking together toward a more inclusive and respectful future. At Mermaid Waters, we believe that early childhood education is most meaningful when it honours the knowledge and stories of the past, embraces the present, and inspires a shared future.



We warmly welcome children and families from all cultural and linguistic backgrounds to our kindergarten. We value the rich diversity that each family brings and are committed to creating an inclusive, respectful, and supportive environment where everyone feels a strong sense of belonging. Your stories, traditions, and languages are not only welcome here — they are celebrated and embraced as part of our learning community.



Lady Gowrie (Qld)

Our Kindergarten is affiliated with Lady Gowrie (Qld) Inc, a community based not for profit organisation. We receive funding from the government via Lady Gowrie - our Central Governing Body (CGB) - through the Queensland Kindergarten Funding Scheme. (QKFS).

Lady Zara Gowrie established Lady Gowrie Qld in 1940 and the focus has always centred on supporting Queensland families and ensuring that children realise their full potential, thereby bringing both social and economic benefits to the Queensland community. Lady Gowrie is committed to holistic, responsive, high-quality services for children and families. Lady Gowrie is an umbrella organisation that encompasses a wide range of services that support, guide and advise services to ensure maintenance of high standards of care, staff, equipment, curriculum, facilities and grounds. Lady Gowrie's strong heritage in early childhood education drives excellence and innovation in early education.

Our Kindergarten is operated by an elected Management Committee.

Our committee comprises parents and community members. All members support in a voluntary capacity, continued support is of paramount importance to maintain our community Kindergarten and therefore to meet the needs of young children in our local community. The environment we enjoy today is a testament to the commitment and dedication of the hundreds of families who have passed through its doors over the years. Ours is a community effort and we continue to work together to promote the importance of quality early childhood Education and to ensure that the Mermaid Waters Kindergarten will always be a fine example of this.

We would like to welcome you and your family and encourage you to be as involved as possible. We hope your family's involvement at Mermaid Waters Community Kindergarten will ensure a most rewarding year for your family.

NQF - National Quality Framework

In 2009 the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) signed an agreement to unify all states and territories with one early childhood regulatory and quality assurance process. The National Quality Framework (NQF) for early childhood education and care has put in place a National Quality Standard (NQS) which ensures a high quality and consistent standard of early childhood education and care across Australia. The aim of the NQF is to ensure services focus on the continual improvement approach.

Mermaid Waters Community Kindergarten completed the Assessment and Rating process in 2022 and was awarded the Rating of Exceeding. The kindergarten achieved Exceeding in all 7 of the Quality Areas of the N. Q. S.

CURRICULUMS

Our kindergarten program is guided by two key curriculum frameworks: the **Queensland Kindergarten Learning Guideline (QKLG 2024)** and the **Early Years Learning Framework for Australia (EYLF V2.0)**. Both frameworks focus on children's holistic development and recognise that early childhood is a vital time for learning, growth and wellbeing. They emphasise play-based learning, building positive relationships, and valuing children's voices and cultural backgrounds. Together, they guide educators to create rich, engaging programs that support children to become confident learners, effective communicators, connected community members, and resilient individuals with a strong sense of identity and belonging.

QIP – Quality Improvement Plan

Our Kindergarten has its own QIP which is continually updated throughout the year. The latest edition of this plan can be found in our office – Please ask our administrator for access. Parents are encouraged to become familiar with this document. Contributions and input are made by the children, families, the Management Committee and Educators.

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OUR KINDERGARTEN

Our Philosophy

Revised August 2025



Our core values and beliefs guide our professional practice, along with our commitment to developing strong community ties and a kindergarten environment that warms, welcomes and creates a sense of wonder for all within.

Our values and beliefs within our philosophy encompass the following:

Children



Play based experiences are the underlying pedagogy that best support children's ongoing learning and development.

We acknowledge the profound impact of social and cultural contexts on children's identities and relationships, recognizing them as vital components of their growth.

Central to our philosophy is the cultivation of children's positive self-identity, which flourishes in environments where they feel a deep sense of belonging and are supported by secure, responsive relationships.

Our curriculum is designed to actively engage children in their learning journey, placing them at the forefront of meaningful inquiries that shape their educational experiences.

*We intentionally craft experiences that encourage creative thinking, problem-solving, and **resilience-building**, understanding that these elements are crucial for enriching children's learning and fostering strong relationships within our community.*

Our practice is informed by:

Attachment Theory (The Circle of Security) understands that secure, trusting relationships with adults support young children to thrive.

Socio Cultural Theory recognises social relationships impact children's experiences, play and peers support children in the learning process

Partnerships

We value the richness of our community and recognise the uniqueness of every child and family. We are committed to building cultural knowledge and understanding both within and beyond our kindergarten.

Partnerships with families and the wider community are central to our approach. We actively encourage their involvement in the curriculum, acknowledging the vital role they play in children's learning and wellbeing. These Collaborations foster strong, respectful relationships and create opportunities for shared decision-making and engagement.



We embrace equity, diversity, and inclusion, celebrating the similarities and differences that enrich our community. Our goal is to create an environment where every child can participate fully and feel valued for who they are.

Guided by contemporary theories—particularly Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, which emphasises the role of social interaction and culture in learning—along with the anti-bias curriculum, we are committed to equity, inclusiveness, social justice, and gender considerations throughout our practice.

Sustainability

We value nature as the foundation of all life. Our kindergarten is a vibrant community embedded in sustainable living and learning.

We actively teach and practice sustainable habits, including litter-free lunches, composting, recycling, and energy conservation.



We support children's understanding of environmental, social, and economic sustainability by encouraging care for the natural world, promoting social responsibility, and making choices that support wellbeing now and into the future. Guided by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of knowing, doing, and being, we foster respect for Country, community, and each other.

Education for Sustainability (EfS) is at the heart of our approach. It helps children learn how people, places, and nature are all connected, and empowers them to care for the world around them. Through everyday experiences, we encourage children to think critically, act responsibly, and value fairness for a healthy and sustainable future.

Reflective Practice

At our kindergarten, educators are committed to ongoing critical reflection to grow professionally and improve our practice. This continuous learning enriches both our team and the early childhood community we serve.

We include families and children in our reflective practices, encouraging open communication and collaboration. By valuing their perspectives and insights, we create a shared approach that supports meaningful learning and positive outcomes for everyone involved.

Through questioning, examining and considering different perspectives, we ensure our practices support the best outcomes for children and families

Our approach is shaped by:

The Reggio Emilia Theory, where we honour children as capable, resilient, and full of potential. We also recognize the environment as a 'third teacher,' thoughtfully arranging spaces that invite curiosity, creativity, and discovery.

Moreover, we draw insights from Bronfenbrenner's Theory, appreciating that every child is shaped by many layers of their world—from family and community to society at large. This understanding guides us to support children in meaningful ways, recognizing the richness of their experiences beyond the classroom.

First Nations Peoples

Mermaid Waters Community Kindergarten acknowledges Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, the traditional custodians of the lands, sea, and skies across Australia.

We honour that they represent the oldest continuous culture in the world, carrying knowledge, traditions, and stories passed down through countless generations.



We pay our respects to Elders past, present, and emerging and share our friendship, connection, and kindness.

We give thanks for sharing and caring for Country—the land we love to learn and play on. We acknowledge the profound significance of storytelling in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, recognising it as a vital means of preserving and sharing knowledge, history, and cultural identity.

We also acknowledge the deep spiritual and cultural connection to place held by First Nations Peoples. At our kindergarten, we recognise the local natural environment as part of our shared Country and value the teachings of the Kombumerri people, the Traditional Custodians of this land. We engage with these teachings respectfully, guided by cultural educators and community knowledge holders.

Child Safety and the Rights of the Child

Our vision is that every young child is thriving and learning in an environment where they are safe, respected, and empowered.



*Our work is guided by the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child**, using its four key principles:*

- 1. Every child everywhere experiences a good life.*
- 2. The best interests of children always come first.*
- 3. Survival, development, and protection of all children.*
- 4. Children have a voice—the right to be listened to and involved in decision-making.*

*In alignment with these principles, we are also committed to upholding the **Queensland Child Safe Standards**, which support our responsibility to create a safe, inclusive, and child-centred environment. These standards guide our practices to prioritise children's wellbeing, recognise their rights, and protect them from harm in all aspects of their early learning experience.*

Our kindergarten children's voices reflect their aspiration to play, to be known as capable, to be cared for as individuals, and to care for others and their learning environment. These aspirations are supported and upheld by embedding a culture of safety, participation, and trust—where children know they are heard, valued, and protected.

THE PRE-PREP YEAR (Also known as the Kindergarten Year)

- The curriculum is based on the Queensland Kindergarten Learning Guideline by the Queensland Studies Authority
- The Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF V2) is a national early learning framework for children from birth to five years. EYLFv2 describes childhood as a time of belonging, being and becoming. This framework guides our program and goes hand in hand with the Queensland Kindergarten Learning Guidelines. Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF V2) basic beliefs:
 - **Belonging** is the basis for living a fulfilling life. Children feel they *belong* because of the relationships they have with their family, community, culture and place.
 - **Being** is about living here and now. Childhood is a special time in life and children need time to just 'be' – time to play, try new things and have fun.
 - **Becoming** is about the learning and development that young children experience. Children start to form their sense of identity from an early age, which shapes the type of adult they will become.

The Queensland Kindergarten Learning Guideline 2024 and the Early Years Learning Frameworkv2, combined with our Kindergarten's philosophy and children's interests form the vital components behind our teaching and learning – it shapes our curriculum and influences our decision making and teaching practices. Through daily observation, reflection and evaluations; educators base curriculum decisions on children's, interests and abilities. Hence, the curriculum is a dynamic, ever changing, evolving process, a reflection of both individual and group interests and strengths, and one that ensures the delivery of high-quality early childhood education in our local community.

PLAY

Children learn best through play-based learning. We honour every child's right to play, build on their existing learning from home, and provide foundations to be successful and contribute to a community of learners. Your child will experience many opportunities to explore, enquire, problem solve, develop friendships, imagine, use their creativity and extend their capabilities in all curriculum areas including language, literacy and numeracy. We are open to your child's ideas and will foster their social and emotional growth and provoke their curiosity. We build on children's strengths and interests through their play, to grow their learning and support their development.



Storypark – Our Storypark digital app provides comprehensive communication between our educators and families. It communicates to families the experiences children are engaging in, their learning and growth, and their interests and achievements. From photos of artistic creations and daily activities to written documents detailing your child's progress, families are able to enjoy deep insight into your child's development. This comprehensive communication helps parents to better understand the curriculum and see their children grow.

Parents are warmly invited to build your child's connections with us through Storypark – e.g. send a photo or video of an interest, life at home; share family photos, write about a special event or holiday, include art work done at home. More in-depth information related to how Storypark is used is at the end of this handbook.

STAFF

Our team is committed to our Kindergarten and to the delivery of quality early childhood education. Our highest priority is to ensure our Kindergarten is a place where you and your child feel happy, healthy and safe. The Pre-Prep group's learning is met by qualified university-trained educators and trained assistant educators.

Stephanie Magahy joined our kindergarten in January 2023 and, in 2025, stepped into the role of Director and Early Childhood Teacher for both the Blue and Yellow Groups. Steph brings a wealth of experience from many years working in Community Kindergartens and holds an ACECQA-recognised Diploma of Teaching (Early Childhood Education).

As our Educational Leader, she works alongside the teaching team to guide, mentor, and inspire, ensuring we continue to grow together as educators. Steph places children's learning and wellbeing at the centre of everything we do, fostering a warm, supportive environment for all families.

Amy Hallowell has been at our kindergarten since the start of 2025 as the Early Childhood teacher each Wednesday. Amy has worked in community kindergartens for more than 15 years and brings a wealth of professional knowledge to co-creating an inspiring program. Amy holds a Masters in Education.

Alanna Swanson has been part of our kindergarten community since 1984 and has completed a Child Care Practices course. Alanna is the Assistant Educator with the Yellow Group. She is a talented educator who brings creativity into the program through art experiences and shares her love of gardening with the children to connect them with nature.

Victoria Wells joined us in 2022 and is the Assistant Educator in the Blue Group. She holds a Diploma in Community Services (Children's Services) and a Certificate III in Education Support. Victoria is a warm and friendly educator who builds strong, trusting connections with children, helping them feel safe and confident as they learn and grow.

Gemma Tidemann joined us in 2023 and is our Inclusion Support Assistant. She holds a Certificate III in Education Support. Gemma supports the team to ensure every child feels included and valued, and she especially enjoys sharing her love of cooking with the children.

Julie Schumacher is our friendly Administrator and the first welcoming face families meet at the kindergarten and is always ready to greet families with a smile, answer questions, and provide support. Julie has worked at the kindergarten since 2004 and is also Justice of Peace – Qualified and owner of Kindy Kippers.

FIRST AID

All Educators in contact with the children are trained in First Aid, CPR, asthma and anaphylaxis management, as required by the Child Care (Child Care Centres) Regulations 1991.



STAFF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Our Kindergarten actively supports ongoing professional development through attendance at courses, seminars, workshops and conferences. Each staff member is encouraged to develop, in the annual self-appraisal process, an ongoing approach to planning their professional development.

KINDERGARTEN POLICIES

We have a range of policies in place to make sure our environment is nurturing, safe, and supportive. Below is a guide to our policies and how they shape our everyday practice. Families are welcome to read our full policies at any time. Policy folders are available in the office, and staff are always happy to help if you would like to view them.

BEHAVIOUR GUIDANCE POLICY

At our kindergarten, we support children to learn **positive** ways of managing their feelings and behaviour. Educators use strategies such as modelling, calm communication, teaching problem-solving, and providing safe spaces for children to regulate their emotions. Families and staff work together so children experience a consistent approach between home and kindy.

We encourage children to become confident, independent learners while developing empathy, care and respect for others. Clear and consistent boundaries help them feel secure and understand their responsibilities within the group. Educators guide children to problem-solve and manage conflicts with confidence using protective behaviours, logical consequences, positive redirection and respectful conversations.

If extra support is needed, educators work closely with the child and their family, so progress is consistent and collaborative. Above all, we are committed to respecting the rights and dignity of every child in our care.

CHILD PROTECTION – PREVENTION AND RESPONSE POLICY

Your child's safety is our highest priority. All children have the right to be safe. Our Educators complete child protection training every year and follow strict laws about reporting concerns of harm or abuse. From 1 January 2026, new *Child Safe Standards* will apply nationally, ensuring services embed child safety in every aspect of practice, policy, and governance. We take preventative steps by teaching children about their rights and supporting families with information and resources. If staff are worried about a child's safety, they must act immediately and follow our reporting procedures. Contacts for reporting Child Safety Concerns appear at the end of this handbook and are displayed on our front pinboard and locker room.

CHILD SAFE ENVIRONMENT POLICY

We provide a safe and welcoming place where children can learn and play. Hazards are checked daily, risks are minimised through the use of risk assessments, and children are taught about safety in age-appropriate ways. Families are encouraged to share any concerns or ideas about keeping our kindy safe.

SAFETY AND SUPERVISION POLICY

Children are always within sight and/or hearing of educators, whether inside or outside. Ratios are always maintained, and daily safety checks are completed. Equipment is regularly inspected.

Supervision plans for indoor and outdoor, together with active supervision strategies are adopted for activities like water play, climbing, busy transition times, and blindspots to ensure children are always effectively and actively supervised.

Community Kindergartens follow the guidelines of the Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995. This Kindergarten has developed its own Workplace Health and Safety Manual to ensure a safe place for the children and adults at all times. A copy is available for you to read, located in the office.

Daily safety checks are conducted by staff and the management committee has a Workplace Health and Safety Officer to ensure health and safety practices and procedures are maintained to the highest level. This includes annual checks by fully qualified electricians for electrical items.

INTERACTIONS WITH CHILDREN POLICY

Positive, respectful relationships are the foundation of learning. Educators are attuned to children's needs, offer comfort when needed, and encourage children's ideas and voices to be part of the program. We value warmth, respect, and trust, so that children feel safe and confident.

EMERGENCY EVACUATIONS AND PROCEDURES POLICY

We practice fire, lockdown, and evacuation drills so that children and staff know what to do in an emergency. Supervision plans are displayed in our room, and staff are trained in first response. Families will be informed quickly if an emergency ever affects our program. Our evacuation plan and procedures appear at the end of this handbook.

BLUE CARD POLICY - COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE ACT – 2000

It is a requirement of the Queensland Government that people working with young children must undergo a criminal check annually. All staff and members of the Management Committee hold a Suitability Card.

All employers and education providers must warn all potential staff (paid employees, volunteers or students) that it is an offence for a disqualified person to sign a blue card application.

ADMINISTRATION OF MEDICATION POLICY

For children with medical conditions such as such as anaphylaxis, asthma, diabetes or epilepsy, we ask that you provide details on enrolment and meet with you teacher to complete an individualised Medical Management Plan before commencement. A signed comprehensive Medical Action Plan from your child's medical practitioner is also required.



- A child-resistant cupboard is provided for the storage of medication.
- All medication must be in the original packaging with the child's name and clear instructions and be in date. Medication requiring refrigeration will be kept in a lockable box in the refrigerator.

SICK CHILDREN

- Children with a contagious illness will not be admitted.
- Parents are requested to contact the Kindergarten to report a contagious illness.
- In the event of a child becoming ill, the parent will be contacted; therefore it is imperative that current phone numbers are on file.
- In the event of a parent or contact not being available, steps considered to be necessary to ensure the child's well-being will be taken.
- The Illness/disease policy (from QLD Health is on display).

IMMUNISATION

We ask that you provide your child's immunisation status on enrolment. Please update this during the year if your child's immunisation status changes (e.g. 4 year old needles). In the event that an outbreak of a vaccine preventable disease occurs, and your child is unimmunised, or their immunisations are not up to date, they will be required to remain at home, if this is the advice by the Public Health Unit. The immunisation schedule can be found at www.immunise.health.gov.au or by calling 1800 671 811.

Please upload your child's immunisation history statement in XAP

INJURIES AND INCIDENTS

In the event of any child-related incidents:

We will contact you for all significant incidents, and you may be asked to collect your child. Educators will continue to monitor and care for your child until he/she is collected.

A detailed incident report will be completed in preparation for you to review and a copy provided on request.

Where your child requires medical treatment beyond immediate first aid, and we are unable to contact you, we will ensure your child is cared for and comforted and we will contact your emergency contact/s and call an ambulance. It is very important to make sure your list of emergency contacts is up to date at all times.

MEDICAL EXPENSES

The parent will be required to pay ALL medical expenses if your child has an incident.

HYGIENE POLICY

When there are many children playing and learning together there is increased chance of children becoming unwell. For this reason we follow thorough, best practice procedures to ensure that a clean, hygienic environment is maintained for you and your child. Please support us with this by washing your and your child's hands on arrival and departure.

FOOD PREPARATION, HANDLING AND STORAGE POLICY

Safe food practices are always followed to minimise risks of contamination and foodborne illness. Staff are trained in hygiene and food safety, and all kitchen and meal areas are kept clean and sanitised. Families are asked to support this by sending food that is safe and labelled, and that any perishables are stored in the refrigerator. Any allergies or dietary requirements must be communicated in the XAP enrolment. Cooking experiences with children are carefully supervised and designed with safety in mind.

SLEEP AND REST TIME POLICY

Children's individual sleep and rest needs are respected. Some may choose to nap, while others may relax with quiet activities. Educators always follow safe sleep practices, and families are asked to let staff know about any preferences, cultural practices, or changes to sleep routines.

SUN PROTECTION POLICY

Queensland sun is strong year-round, so we follow the "Slip, Slop, Slap, Seek, Slide" approach. Families are asked to provide sun-safe BUCKET STYLE HATS with a broad brim and *no chin strap*. Please dress your child in sun-safe clothing to cover shoulders. We have sunscreen available at the entrance of the kindergarten **and ask that you initial each day on the daily sign in sheet your awareness of applying sunscreen**. Outdoor activities are planned for shaded areas and outside of peak UV times where possible. and to apply sunscreen each morning.

Australia has the highest rate of skin cancer in the world and current evidence suggests that childhood sun exposure makes a significant contribution to the lifetime risk of skin cancer. Research suggests that sun exposure in childhood can be the stimulus for the development of cancer later in life.

The Suncare and Protection Policy is emailed to families at the start of attendance.

EMBRACING DIVERSITY

We embrace and celebrate the diversity that exists within and between our communities. By respecting diversity, children are supported to create positive relationships and a strong sense of identity. Inclusive early childhood programs acknowledge that all children have different life experiences, and support children to value and celebrate similarities and differences. We invite and welcome you to share your culture, background and life experiences with us.

TOWARDS RECONCILIATION

"Reconciliation involves building mutually respectful relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and other Australians that will allow us to work together to solve problems and generate success that is in everyone's interest. Achieving reconciliation involves raising awareness and knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, their history and culture, changing attitudes that are often based on myths and misunderstandings, and encouraging action where everyone plays their part in building a better relationship between us fellow Australians" (Reconciliation Australia).

Our Kindergarten understands and acknowledges the responsibility it has to promote and use education to support individuals, families and communities to build and develop their knowledge of Australia's past, their rights and responsibilities in the present, and how they can form meaningful partnerships that will assist the nation to move forward in the true spirit of reconciliation. We:

- Ensure children engage in culturally – inclusive and safe early childhood education and care experiences.
- Recognise the place of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.
- Consider Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives and contacts.
- We ensure educators have access to training in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander understandings.
- Support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment and career prospects.
- Embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural perspectives in the teaching curriculum.

USE OF TECHNOLOGY AND INTERACTIVE MEDIA POLICY

Technology and interactive media, when used thoughtfully, can support children's learning and creativity. We use iPads and a monitor to extend play, problem-solving, and promote research and exploration. Technology never replaces play, outdoor experiences, or social interactions, but is used alongside them. Educators model safe, balanced, and respectful use of digital tools and support children to build healthy habits around technology. Families' preferences about children's use of digital technology in the program are respected. **Permission to take photographs and video footage in Storypark is sought in the Enrolment form in XAP.**

PERSONAL ELECTRONIC DEVICES POLICY (Mobile Phones, Tablets, Smart Watches)

To protect children's privacy and safety, personal devices are not to be used in learning spaces. Staff, visitors, and volunteers may not use personal devices to take photos or videos of children. This ensures the focus remains on play, learning, and relationships. Children's own medical devices, if brought, are stored safely. On special occasions, parents may photograph their own child e.g Christmas Concert,- **ensuring that they are not including other children in their photo.**

PRIVACY POLICY

The privacy of your family is important. This Kindergarten abides by the privacy policy of our CGB. The policy is available for parents to read.

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Our kindergarten has a Parent/Guardian/Family Code of Conduct Policy, which is available to read. Where a parent/guardian has any concern relating to the program, the waiting list etc, this Kindergarten advocates that the parent/guardian make direct contact with the educator responsible for the children. The parent/guardian can also contact any member of the Management Committee, our Lady Gowrie Advisor or an Officer of the Office of Early Childhood Education and Care. Refer to telephone numbers on Contacts page.

Where a parent has any query relating to committee management or administration, you are advised to discuss the matter with the President of the Management Committee and our Administrator.

STAFF GRIEVANCES

Where a staff member has any concern or grievance, depending on the nature of the issue in question, they are advised to contact any member of the Management Committee or the relevant Lady Gowrie Advisor.

SUSTAINABILITY

We believe that one of our most significant responsibilities is to help all children appreciate and protect nature, to see the beauty in the world, to learn to be problem solvers and creative thinkers. We will develop your child's respect and love for the natural world so that they will grow up with the desire, knowledge and skills necessary to promote action for sustainability.

Your child will learn and play in natural spaces, filled with natural materials. Your child will recycle, garden, learn about their community and be involved in caring for animals. We hope you will join us on this fantastic and important journey and encourage you to share with us what your family does to connect with and respect our natural environment.



- The use of fresh food is encouraged for lunch and morning tea to reduce the over use of packaging. This is a conservation issue as well as a nutritional one.
- The children are shown how to sort their food scraps for composting and to feed the worms in our kindergarten's worm farms.

PARTNERSHIPS WITH PARENTS

COMMUNICATION

We believe that a strong partnership between families and educators is vital, and achieving this requires open, honest and respectful communication. We will communicate to you about the experiences your child is engaging in, their growth and development, projects being undertaken, and opportunities for you to become involved. We also encourage you to share your ideas, provide feedback and connect with others at our Kindergarten.

We will regularly talk with you about your child's progress. You can arrange a meeting at any time to talk about how your child is progressing or to share concerns you may have.

Various methods of communication are fostered through Storypark, the Planning Book, newsletters, emails, the noticeboard, photo displays and discussions at arrival and departure times.

PARENT RESPONSIBILITIES

It is the parent's responsibility to notify the Kindergarten regarding change of information recorded about a child (i.e. moving, change of telephone, updated immunisation records etc).

It is the parent's responsibility to read all the information relating to policy information.

It is the parent's responsibility to comply with relevant health and hygiene policies (displayed throughout the Kindergarten) and to participate where possible in the Kindergarten's activities.

PARENT PARTICIPATION

You may have a special skill or an interesting item or activity that you'd like to share with the children. If you have time you can spend at kindergarten, please discuss any ideas you have with us so we can roster you on. Parental involvement is always encouraged. It also gives parents the opportunity to share in their child's interactions with friends and adults and is a positive experience for the children, educators and parents. We will guide you as to the assistance you can provide. When a parent spends time sharing an activity at kindergarten, it is their responsibility to sign in and sign out and read the information provided re: drills, first aid etc. This information is found in the Visitor and Volunteer booklet located in the kitchen and requires a signature also.

MEETINGS

Parents are encouraged to attend the Annual General Meeting held in February each year and encouraged to attend at least one monthly Management Committee Meeting each term. Meetings are held via Skype or at the Kindergarten with a time and week night decided at the AGM.

PARENT LIBRARY

A small parents' library is available for you to browse through; located on top of the lockers in the locker room. You may borrow any of the publications for two weeks at a time. Please write your name, the title and the borrowing date in the book provided. The library also has pamphlets on many subjects. If you happen to find any books that you feel may be beneficial to other parents, please let us know and we will purchase a copy for the library.



READY TO START

In the lead up to your child's first day, talk with your child about what their first day will be like; discuss the things they will bring with them and help them to recognise their own belongings e.g. lunch box, hat etc. Talk about their teachers, using our names and chat about the children they will play with and the experiences they will engage in. Remind them of what they saw during their visit to us, the bathroom, lockers and play areas.

FIRST DAY

You and your child may be a little nervous and this is completely normal. Here are a few tips to help make the first day as smooth as possible:

- All children are different, some bounding off, others more reserved, so give yourselves plenty of time to settle on the first day.
- Your child may become upset, reassure them calmly and confidently that you will return. We will be making sure your child feels safe, secure and comfortable. You are welcome to phone to check how they settled.
- Make sure your child knows their belongings and let them unpack in the morning.

WHAT TO BRING

- Small back pack* (to fit inside our lockers)
- Drawstring bag (approx. 60cm x 46cm) and 2 sheets.* Our sheet supplier is Kindy Kippers. You can order direct with Julie or on the website www.kindykippers.com.au
- Morning Tea in separate container* Fruit or equal (carrot, boiled egg, sultanas etc.) in a named container. Water is supplied for each child at this time.
- "*Litter free*" *named Lunch box* – cooler bags are discouraged as lunches are immediately refrigerated.
- Nutritious lunch* – sandwiches, wraps etc. and extra piece of fruit are a basis for a healthy lunch. Water is provided for the children at this time. We discourage chips, sweet biscuits, muesli bars, fruitsticks, roll-ups and all pre-packaged foods.
- One set of spare clothes, named* and kept in child's bag
- Shady hat with broad brim* – a bucket style hat please- **no ties or strings.**



***Please mark all items with your child's name.**

- Drinks* - Water is provided for the children. Therefore **your child does not need their own drink bottle.** N.B. Water is always available for the children throughout the day at the bubbler and filtered chilled water is always provided in jugs.

FOOD AND NUTRITION

At kindy, we encourage families to think carefully about the food children bring from home. Foods high in added sugar, like sweet biscuits, cakes, roll ups and some muesli bars, can affect children's health, energy levels and behaviour throughout the day. We aim to support children's concentration and wellbeing by promoting nourishing options that give them steady energy for play and learning.

WHAT TO WEAR

Clothing and Shoes

At kindy, children are encouraged to take off their shoes and socks during the day. *Please note shoes that flash contain button batteries, and as per our restriction on button batteries entering the centre, these shoes must not be brought to kindergarten.* Bare feet help children develop balance, coordination and strength, and support their safety when climbing and exploring. If your child needs to keep their shoes on for any reason, please chat with their teacher.

We also ask that children wear comfortable play clothes that are easy to move in and manage independently. Long dresses and skirts can catch on climbing equipment, so please consider climbing safe clothing. Very tight clothing or tricky fastenings can also make climbing or toileting difficult. Jewellery presents a safety hazard, and can get caught when children climb. It also tends to get lost, or leads to sharing difficulties amongst children. We prefer no jewellery comes to kindergarten.

“Good” clothes may get marked during play.

While most of our paints wash out after soaking in cold water, some pigments may leave stains—so older, practical clothes are best.

SHOES VERSUS BARE FEET

This Kindergarten recognises the benefits of barefoot play for children’s safety, growth, and the development of sensory awareness. Shoes are a hazard in outdoor play areas. Nerve endings in the feet can sense a variety of textures. Bare feet can grip climbing equipment and promote more effective balance and control, e.g. during music sessions or when climbing.

As an additional benefit, noise levels may be reduced indoors when shoes are removed. Children can be encouraged to remove and replace shoes themselves; an independence skill to be fostered. Our classroom is heated in the cooler months, allowing the removal of shoes in comfort during the winter months.

You may like to purchase socks for winter with “grip” soles. Socks without grips can be a safety hazard on our floors, so only grippy socks can be worn at kindergarten.

REST, RELAXATION AND SLEEP

Children’s individual sleep and rest needs are respected. Some may choose to nap, while others may relax with quiet activities. Educators follow safe sleep practices at all times, and families are asked to let staff know about any preferences, cultural practices, or changes to sleep routines.

We recognise that rest and relaxation are an important part of every child’s day, and that each child rests in their own way. In line with our Sleep and Rest Policy and Safe Sleeping guidelines, we provide opportunities for children to rest and recharge in ways that suit their individual needs.

After lunch, we offer a Quiet Time to give children a chance to slow down after a busy morning. During this time, children may listen to gentle music or stories, enjoy books, or explore quiet play with toy bags. The routine and length of Quiet Time are reviewed and adjusted as the year progresses, ensuring it remains responsive to the needs of the group and each child.

By supporting children to experience calm, restful moments, we help them build lifelong skills for managing stress, maintaining wellbeing, and recognising their own needs for relaxation.

GENERAL INFORMATION

STUDENT PLACEMENT

This Kindergarten recognises the importance of student placements as being consistent with the long term training of staff in the provision of quality education and care for children. Students are supervised both by Educators and University/TAFE staff.

However, acceptance of placement of students will be determined after consideration by the Director and approval by the Management Committee.

WORK EXPERIENCE AND OTHER STUDENTS/TRAINEESHIPS

This Kindergarten supports the inclusion of work experience school students in the educational program. This can be implemented on a limited basis upon request from the school liaison officer and in consultation with the Director and approval by the Management Committee.

VOLUNTEERS

This Kindergarten may accept placement of volunteers but only after the commitment of students has been met and after a full investigation of the person concerned. Volunteers will work under the guidance of the Director and with the approval of the Management Committee.

ENROLMENTS and HOURS

Each Pre-Prep (Kindergarten) group consists of 22 children.

The Kindergarten complies with the Education Queensland's structure of 4 terms per year. Parents will be informed of term dates and hours including pupil free days and public holidays at the beginning of the year. A laminated calendar is emailed and given to each family and displayed on our front display pinboard.

The Kindergarten will be closed for Queensland state school holidays and Public Holidays.

ABSENCES- **Please email us if your child will be absent.**

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE

Children must be signed in and out each day by an authorised adult using the Kiosk iPad on the verandah with a PIN. This process ensures we know exactly who is responsible for your child's care. Staff carefully supervise **adult-to-adult transitions** at these times to make sure children are safe and feel settled.

We are committed to ensuring your child's safety at all times. Families are asked to keep us updated with current details of any adults authorised to collect their child. **If someone who is not listed as a nominated pick-up person needs to collect your child, we will require your written permission, their personal details and photo identification.** Children must always be brought to and collected from kindergarten by a responsible adult aged eighteen years or older.

Our **doors open at 8:40am.** On arrival, parents are asked to sign in via the Xap iPad, assist their child with unpacking, and then accompany them to the main mat area where an educator will be present.

In the afternoon, our doors open at 2:30pm, with the latest collection time being 2:55pm when our centre is closed.

NON-CONTACT CHILD FREE TIME – PREPARATION

During this time the Educators prepare the environment, maintain their written program and administration records, conduct staff meetings and attend regional meetings. These additional duties serve to enhance the quality of the program offered to parents and children.

EXCURSIONS/INCURSIONS

Parents will be notified if the children are to go on an excursion or outing. Children will leave the Kindergarten only if the ratio of adults to children is appropriate to the excursion. Permission slips for each excursion must be signed by the parent prior to any event that we will leave the front gate.

We will have Incursions (special visitors/performers) during the year. These performances are an extension of the curriculum.

BIRTHDAYS

Children are encouraged to celebrate their birthday by bringing along 22 iceblocks/freddo frogs or cupcakes to share with their friends and educators. Please consider allergies, as some years you will be advised not to send in cakes.

PROPERTY

Lost Property is kept in a basket in the Locker Room. Any lost property not claimed by the end of each Term will be disposed of as the Kindergarten sees fit.

N.B. Children are requested not to bring toys or jewellery from home to kindergarten – which tend to cause sharing difficulties, and we can not be responsible for loss and breakages.

TRANSITIONING TO SCHOOL AT END OF KINDY YEAR

There are many ways to make the transition to school a positive and calm experience.

- Talk regularly and positively about the experience and your own experiences of school.
- Encourage your child to be responsible for their belongings – unpack independently at Kindergarten each morning. Name items together, so your child can identify their own belongings.
- Encourage independent eating and drinking, supporting your child to open their lunch box and unwrap their food etc.
- Walk past their school and attend orientation meetings. We will display the local schools' orientation meeting dates and open days. Participate in the school's Under 8's Week celebrations if they are open to the community.
- Discuss safety at school – there may not be child proof gates.
- Show your child where you will pick them up at the end of the day and what to do if you're late.
- Reassure your child that if they unsure of anything, to ask an adult.

Your child will be provided with a Transition Statement for Prep eligible children which provides a snapshot of your child's learning across the Kindergarten year.

FROM YOUR COMMITTEE

CONGRATULATIONS!

We're so pleased to welcome your family to Mermaid Waters Community Kindergarten! By becoming a paid member, you are joining a wonderful community where families, educators and children work together to care for and nurture our kindy.

Each year, we elect a volunteer Committee of Management to help oversee the running of the kindergarten, with guidance and support from Lady Gowrie Qld and our Nominated Supervisor.

Being part of a community kindergarten also means that families play an important role in keeping our kindy strong—whether that's through joining the committee, helping with maintenance, supporting fundraising efforts, or lending a hand in other ways.

Your involvement makes a big difference, and together we can ensure our kindy continues to be a warm, thriving place for all children to play, learn and grow.

HOW OUR KINDERGARTEN WORKS

FUNDING

Acceptance of enrolment is based upon families electing Mermaid Waters Kindergarten as the provider of their child's Kindergarten program. Government Funding is available for each child to access (1) one Kindergarten program only.

From 2024, The Department of Education, Queensland introduced **FREE kindy** to give every child a great start. This supports more families to enrol in kindy—making it more accessible. This investment is the most significant funding reform for early childhood education and care in Queensland.

By meeting a rigorous rating and assessment process we achieve and maintain service approval. This legislation, the National Quality Framework and National Quality Standards are freely available at our Kindergarten for you to access. In 2022 we were awarded "Exceeding" in each of the 7 National Quality Areas after the Assessment and Rating process. Our Report is available on entry into our classroom.

Staff salaries, purchase of classroom resources, maintenance and repair of the equipment, cleaning and gardening, maintenance and repair of the building and council rates are some of the other expenses supported by our FREE KINDY funds.

MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Each year a **Management Committee** is elected at the **Annual General Meeting** to run the Kindergarten. The Management Committee consists of a President, Vice-President, Treasurer and Secretary. Only Management Committee members are entitled to vote at Management Meetings. It looks after the general running of the kindergarten—things like wages, maintenance, repairs and our beautiful grounds.

Other positions include – Garden Maintenance Co-ordinators, Workplace Health and Safety Officer, Book/Poster and Resources Co-ordinators, Child Protection Officer, Washing Monitors and Grants Officer.

We also have a **Fundraising and Social Sub-Committee**, which works alongside the Management Committee. This group helps to organise fun events that bring families together and raise funds to support our kindergarten. All families are warmly encouraged to join in, lend a hand, and enjoy being part of these occasions that make our kindy such a vibrant community.

While only committee members are entitled to vote at monthly meetings, every parent is welcome to come along, share ideas and stay connected.

We value the voices of all families, and your input helps us make decisions that reflect our whole community.

At the start of each year we hold our **Annual General Meeting (AGM)**, and we ask that **at least one parent from each family attends**. Families can also volunteer for committee or sub-committee roles before or at the meeting. Getting involved is a great way to meet others, support the kindy, and make a difference in your child's experience.

FAMILY MEMBERSHIP FEES

With your Enrolment Deposit there will be an included fee of \$20.00 per family which is your annual Family Membership Fee. This makes your family a financial member and entitles your family to one vote at our Annual General Meeting and any General Meetings, but not at Management Committee Meetings. However your input at Management Committee meetings is encouraged and valued.

Community Kindergartens achieve their economical fee structure and supportive family atmosphere only through parent participation. Families are advised that funding received from the Government is for their child's attendance at Mermaid Waters. Parents must advise us if they are accessing a pre-prep program at another service.

ENROLMENT DEPOSIT

This amount of \$100 comprises a non-refundable Administration Fee of \$80.00 and a \$20.00 Membership fee.

WAITING LIST FEE

- A waiting list fee of \$25.00 is taken the day your child's name is placed on the waiting list. Parents receive a receipt as proof of their child's name being placed on the Waiting List.
- Applications for waiting list are processed in the order they are received. We have no policy for transfer between our Kindergarten and others.
- We have no policy for holding a space in our wait list for siblings. Eligible age children are at least 4 years old by June 30 in the year they participate in our approved Kindergarten program.
- It is possible to access a Delayed Entry or Exit for your child.

Storypark – Keeping Your Child’s Learning Safe

What is Storypark?



Storypark is a secure, online space where educators and families can share children’s learning and development. It allows families to see and celebrate their child’s learning journey in real time. It helps strengthen the partnership between home and kindergarten.

Why do we use Storypark?

We use Storypark because it helps build stronger connections between educators and families, and keeps families informed about their child’s progress and experiences. It is a space to document and celebrate children’s learning in a meaningful way.

How is my child’s information kept safe?

- Private access – Only the family and friends you choose can view your child’s stories.
- Strong security – Storypark uses the same type of secure technology as online banking.
- Stored in Australia – All data is held safely on secure servers in Sydney.
- No selling or sharing – Your child’s information is never shared with outside companies.
- Your control – You own your child’s stories. You can remove or delete them at any time.

Group Stories and Photos

- Sometimes we share group stories (such as a class project, special event, or celebration).
- If your child is in a group story, it will be shared with the families of all children in that story.
- These stories are private to our centre community and never made public.
- If you would prefer your child not to appear in group stories, please let us know — we will always respect your wishes.

What are my choices?

- You’ll be asked for consent before your child is added to Storypark in your XAP enrolment.
- You decide who can view your child’s profile.
- You have the right to say no. If you choose not to use Storypark, we’ll find other ways to share your child’s learning with you.

 *Our goal is to help you feel connected, supported, and reassured that your child’s information is safe.*

EVACUATION PROCEDURE

FIRE DRILLS/LOCKDOWN PROCEDURES

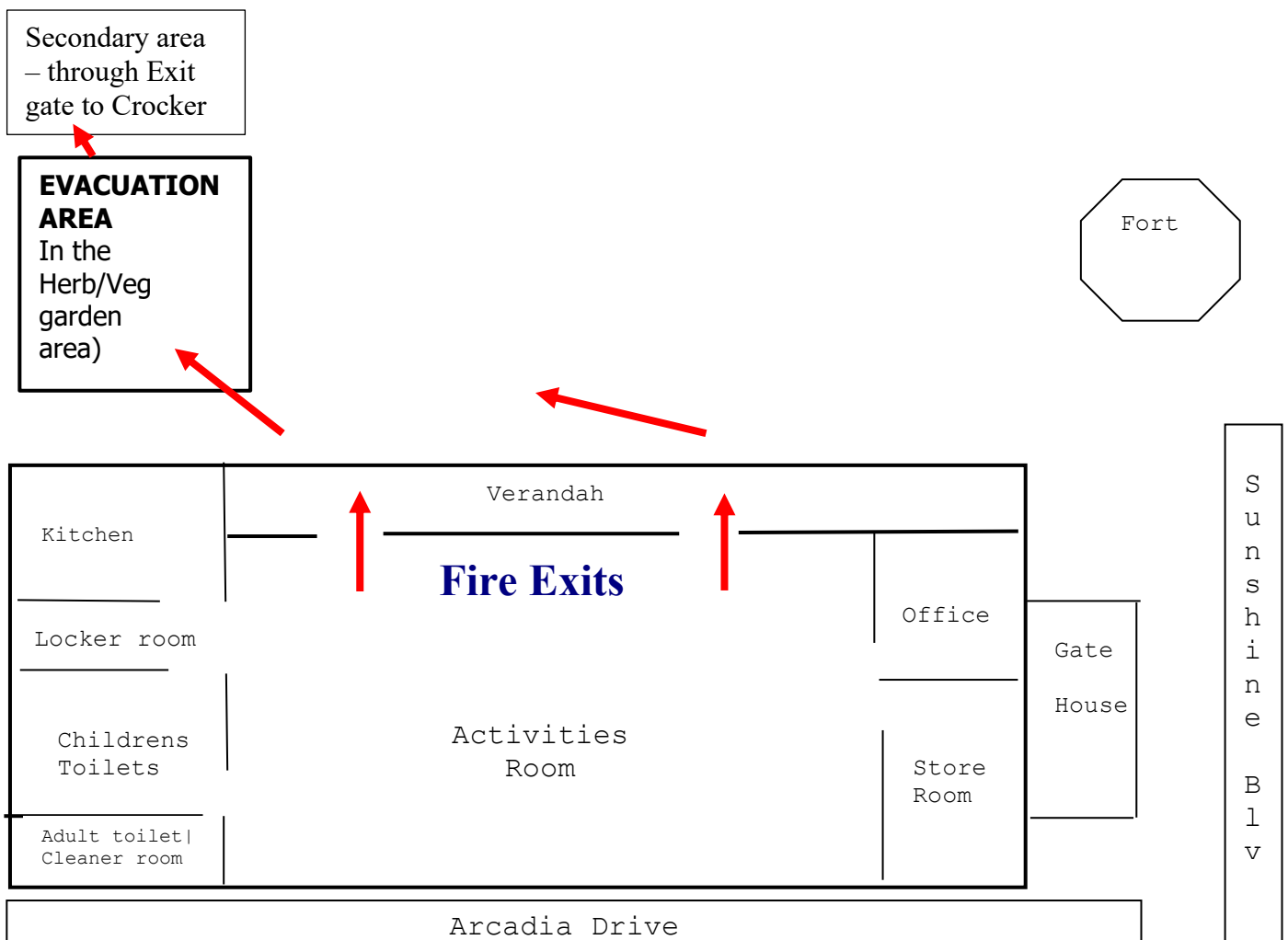
Fire Drills/ Lockdown Procedures are practised regularly. Children, parents on site and staff will be required to participate.

Fire evacuation plans are located in the classroom, office and kitchen. Refer to evacuation plan on this page.

What to do. Please do not enter the building if you hear the fire alarm sound.

Children and adults are required to **evacuate to the vegetable garden area** in the far left corner of kindergarten (Kitchen end), where Educators use the XAP roll to ensure all children, visitors and volunteers are present and accounted for.

Therefore it is extremely important that you sign your child in/out to kindergarten each day via the ipad on the sign in table.



Re: Emergencies/Extreme weather conditions: The parent Management Committee reserves the right to close Mermaid Waters Community Kindergarten in the event of an Emergency situation or due to Extreme Weather Conditions. The safety of our children, families and staff is our highest priority and should the Kindergarten be closed due to an Emergency situation, all fees will be non-refundable.

CONTACTS

Mermaid Waters Community Kindergarten

203 Sunshine Blvd and 1 Arcadia

Mermaid Waters Q 4226

Telephone: (07) 5572 1666

Mobile: 0491 205 380

E: contact@mermaidkindergarten.com.au

Lady Gowrie Qld Head Office

33 Brookes Street

Bowen Hills QLD 4006

Telephone: (07) 3252 2667

E: info@ladygowrie.com.au

Early Childhood Regulatory Authority

Email address:

southeastregion.ecra@det.qld.gov.au

Telephone: 5656 6688

Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority

www.acecqa.gov.au

Child Safety Contacts — Gold Coast, QLD

Emergency (if a child is in immediate danger):

Dial Triple Zero (000)

Child Safety Concerns:

During business hours (M–F, 9 am–5 pm):

Contact **CHILD SAFETY South East Queensland Regional Intake Service** (covers Gold Coast):

Phone: 1300 679 849

-speaking directly with departmental staff trained to assess child protection concern

After/hours

Child Safety After Hours Service Centre

(24/7)

Freecall: 1800 177 135

Kidsafe Australia

www.kidsafe.com.au

Nutrition Australia

www.nutritionaustralia.org

Queensland Health

www.health.qld.gov.au

Immunisation Australia

www.immunise.health.gov.au

Anaphylaxis

Asthma Australia

www.asthmafoundation.org.au

Autism Australia

www.autismspectrum.org.au

Diabetes Australia

www.diabetesaustralia.com.au

NAPCAN (Preventing child abuse)

www.napcan.org.au

Raising Children Network

www.raisingchildren.net