



BUSH KINDER INFORMATION SHEET

Why Bush Kinder?

Bush Kinder, otherwise known as Forest school or Nature school, is a preschool held outdoors, where children are encouraged to explore, learn and play in a natural setting.

Every child deserves to be in nature, to seek adventure, explore the wilderness, connect with nature and our earth. Children need to be encouraged to climb trees, build nature cubbies/dens, search and identify bugs and fungi, jump in puddles, share stories, create nature art, and explore the wilderness, whilst experiencing the ever changing landscapes and seasons that nature has to offer.

Every child has the right for free unstructured play in a stimulating natural learning environment.

What is Bush Kinder?

Nature pedagogy has been in existence in Northern Europe for over 50 years. Bush Kinder has emerged in Australia in the last 6 years and a number of kindergartens in Victoria have looked overseas for inspiration, with Westgarth Bush Kinder opening in 2011 and Balnarring and Somers Kindergarten opening as a Beach Kinder. Its popularity here is increasing as practitioners begin to understand the vital importance of nature pedagogy. Around 140 centres are now running a Bush Kinder program of some sort in Victoria.

What are the benefits?

According to World Health Organisation Statistics (2011), Australian children on average spend 52 hours a week in front of a screen and only one third play outdoors as part of recreation. Research has proven that lack of outdoor play can lead to unhealthy lifestyles, with epidemics such as anxiety, obesity, ADHD etc on the rise amongst young children.

There are huge benefits of children spending time outdoors – better brain development, better bone and muscular development, better social and cognitive development, emotional wellbeing and less illness. Alongside that, children develop strong physical, social and language skills, and above all self-esteem, patience, self-regulation and self-confidence, plus a great respect and love for the environment in which they live.

What happens in a Bush Kinder session?

The children at Home Road Kindergarten are used to an indoor/outdoor program, where learning takes place in any setting.

Bush Kinder allows us to experience:

- Group morning meeting (with story/discussion based on a delicate balance following children's interests, whilst providing new challenges to children)
- Learn about flora and fauna and wildlife
- Learn about the connections to the land
- Story telling
- Exploring the surrounding areas/bush walks
- Den building
- Woodland art and crafts
- Possible fire side cooking – damper etc
- Bug Hunting
- Opportunities for specialist/ranger/local Aboriginal elders to assist with children's learning
- Getting muddy and having fun!

Over time, a Bush Kinder focus will be adopted into our daily curriculum, ensuring our whole kindergarten community will benefit, incorporating more events such as our recent Winter Solstice evening and sustainable daily activities such as the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden program, and ensuring all children have the opportunity to get out and about even more into our local community.

Where will it take place?

Most Bush Kinder sessions will take place in the Arboretum at Newport Lakes Reserve, which is a few minutes' walk from the Paveys Park recreational and Parking area, just off Mason Street. Public buses also stop near the entrance to the reserve on Mason Street, Newport. There will be an allocated meeting point where families will be asked to drop off/collect children for each Bush Kinder session.

On occasion, due to the rare maintenance of our allocated area, we may be directed to another site within the reserve. We may sporadically organise a walk around the lake or similar, however these will be pre-planned as may require parent helpers.

<http://www.friendsofnewportlakes.com/aboretum.php>



What do the children need to bring?

Home Road Kindergarten have secured a Mobil Grant in order to provide the children with appropriate clothing for Bush Kinder. The children will be decked out in brightly coloured Scandinavian Rainwear, protecting them against mud, puddles and dewy grass, allowing them the freedom to play in all terrains.

Remember, there is no such thing as bad weather, just bad clothing choices! It is possible to have fun in all weather conditions....including rain. Children will learn to be resilient and adaptable.

Although there will be some spare, we do ask that you provide your children with their own gumboots which can easily be obtained from outdoor centres, such as Bunnings or many retail outlets.

Children will also be requested to bring their snack / lunch and hat, as per their normal kindergarten session.

How many educators will there be?

There will be 4 qualified Home Road Kindergarten staff at all times (who will also be decked out in appropriate clothing in order to join in the learning!). As normal, parent helpers are most welcome to attend.

What about risks?

Home Road Kindergarten are committed to providing a safe and healthy environment for children and the educators participating in the Bush Kindergarten Program. We have strict risk benefit policies in place, which are adhered to on every bush kinder session. Policies will be adapted and reviewed continuously throughout the program.

We have built a great relationship with the Park Rangers of Hobsons Bay City Council, who will work with us early in 2018, before commencing the Bush Kinder program, to educate the children on respectfulness and safety within Newport Lakes Reserve, including an awareness of the presence of snakes in the warmer months. Alongside this, we will also ensure the children participate in the National Pet Ownership Program, in order to educate the children on procedures for dealing with any dogs that may enter the Bush Kinder space.

Children learn to take risks and learn to succeed with small, achievable tasks. If we are not exposed to risk, we cannot face many of life's challenges. Risk taking behaviour is a natural coping mechanism, and by taking a risk, children are reducing their fears by approaching their phobias head on. They learn to manage their own risk levels to achieve personal safety, under the guidance of the educators. This allows children to solve their own problems and teach them to "have a go". It gives them life skills so they can deal with disappointments, building resilience.

'Outdoor spaces with plants, trees, rocks, mud and water invite open ended interactions, spontaneity, risk taking and a connection with nature (National Quality Standards, 2010, Element 3: Physical environment)

What happens in extreme weather?

Cancellation of sessions will be unlikely, however will occur in the following circumstances:

- Forecast temperature of 36 degrees Celsius or above
- Forecast wind speed in excess of 45 kms per hour
- Forecast of electrical storm activity
- BOM weather warnings of extreme storm activities or excessive rainfall
- Restrictions from Newport Lakes Park Rangers.

In the event of a cancellation, you will be advised by SMS, which may be sent on the morning of the actual session. If cancellation occurs, members of the Red group will need to be dropped off and picked up at Home Road Kindergarten instead of Newport Lakes Reserve.

Please note, any additional Bush Kinder programs / excursions that are scheduled to take place on a day of extreme weather, will be cancelled with no alternate arrangements taking place on that day.

Further questions?

Further information will be made available very soon. If you have any queries in relation to our Bush Kinder program, please contact our centre on 9391 2958 or email manager@homeroadkindergarten.vic.edu.au