



Family Handbook



GEKA Vision: To be the leading provider of innovative, professional, inclusive Early Years Education that fosters a lifelong love of learning.



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Welcome to GEKA

As the CEO of GEKA, I would like to welcome you all to our amazing kindergartens across the City of Glen Eira. There is an exciting year waiting, designed to promote and enhance your child's growth and development. This very important year promises to be one filled with discovery and joy as your child works and plays in an environment that is warm, safe, challenging, and above all – fun.

Being a part of a GEKA managed kindergarten means that families can devote their time and energy to their child's experiences and enjoy the year knowing the responsibilities of managing the operations of the service are in our capable hands.

I believe that communication is the key to your child's success and encourage you to contact your teacher, or any GEKA staff member if you have any questions or concerns. We are here to make your year with us as easy as possible.

It is our belief at GEKA that children in their earliest years have tremendous curiosity and capacity to learn. We will encourage these characteristics and work to help your child learn and grow.

I truly believe that your child will be



in the best hands, receiving a quality education, and most importantly, enjoying their time spent learning.

We will work together with you to ensure your child is prepared for their transition to school, academically as well as socially and emotionally.

Our wonderful educators have the freedom to cater their teaching styles to the individual learning needs of each child. This allows children to develop at their own pace, and explore their world according to their own interests and abilities.

I look forward to getting to know the GEKA families. Please take some time to read through the information sent to you, and on our website, and enjoy the year ahead!

Samantha Kolasa

Chief Executive Officer

The GEKA Story

Our Beginnings

Early Years Management (previously known as Kindergarten Cluster Management) was developed by the Victorian state government in response to many volunteer committees of management feeling burdened by the increasing administration, financial accountability and employer responsibilities.

GEKA works in partnership with the Department of Education and Training (DET), and is a state government funded Early Years Manager and a not-for-profit organisation. We undertake the operational management and employer responsibilities for 10 kindergartens in the Glen Eira municipality.

To read more about our beginnings and the aims and benefits of Early Years Management please visit our website [ABOUT US](#)

We acknowledge our partnership with the Department of Education and Training (DET) and thank them for their funding support.



GEKA
Glen Eira Kindergarten Association Inc.

VICTORIA
State Government

Values:

- Respect
- Authenticity
- Integrity
- Community
- Celebration

Our Mission:

To work in partnership with:

Children: GEKA is committed to maximising outcomes for children's early years

Families: GEKA is committed to encouraging opportunities for families to be involved in their child's early education

Educators: GEKA is committed to promoting pedagogical and career support that is consistent, professional and available

Community: GEKA is committed to providing professionally run early years services within the Glen Eira community

Our Goals:

- provide quality early childhood and care programs for all children enrolled in a GEKA kindergarten

- ensure that families are provided with information regarding their child's year at kindergarten and how they can be involved
- ensure that all GEKA educators are provided with an orientation program that ensures a smooth transition to GEKA
- ensure that GEKA builds a sustainable organisation that has a robust governance structure and financially viable framework

As we build these partnerships we look forward to working with you all to ensure the best possible outcomes for children and families within the local Glen Eira community.

Acknowledgement of Country



GEKA respectfully acknowledge Aboriginal people as the traditional custodians of the land. We pay our respects to them and their cultures and to Elders Past, Present and Future.

GEKA Vision: To be the leading provider of innovative, professional, inclusive Early Years Education that fosters a lifelong love of learning.

Philosophy

- We believe that all children are capable and resourceful learners who are active contributors to their own learning.



- Children are valued as individuals, within the context of their family and their community.
- Children develop confidence, resilience and positive self-esteem through a supportive and secure environment.
- We strive to empower children, by using their thoughts and ideas to develop and enhance the program.
- We promote each child's confidence and positive self-image through a range of provisions, experiences and opportunities that build upon their understandings, skills, values and sensitivities and promote success.
- We implement an inclusive approach to positively support children's growth of identity, self esteem and critical thinking and

encourage each child to reach their full potential in accordance with their individual ability.

- We will support children in becoming active citizens of their educational community as they gain their own unique sense of belonging, being and becoming.
- We believe that the environment is significant to learning, so a calm, relaxed atmosphere is evident as children are able to move between experiences in a flexible environment that supports individual rhythms.
- We are committed to supporting children in ways that help connect them to the natural world in order to build and promote awareness of environmental and sustainable practices.
- We implement a play base curriculum. We believe it is important to provide children with a learning environment that provides many opportunities to develop decision making and problem solving skills.



Philosophy

Continued

- We are dedicated lifelong learners who support each other to maintain a culture of inquiry and reflective practice. Educators maintain professional confidence by keeping up to date with educational research, connecting with professional learning communities and by advocating for the joy of ongoing learning.
- We believe that families are the first and primary influence in the lives of children and are knowledgeable of their child. Trusting, respectful partnerships with families are a critical component of the way we establish a sense of belonging consistent between kindergarten and home.
- We respectfully incorporate and reflect upon the diversity within our community into our inclusive educational programs and will strive to build meaningful links with the local community and the wider world. Everyone comes from their own unique culture.



- Our kindergartens acknowledge their connection to the Glen Eira Kindergarten Association (GEKA) Inc. and uphold the vision and values of this association.
- We believe that a statement of the kindergarten's philosophy changes, as new insights are gained and practice is evaluated.



Why choose GEKA?

For families being part of 'Early Years Management' means ...

- our priority is ensuring a positive learning experience for your child at kindergarten
- GEKA actively supports and develops educators to provide the best quality early childhood programs
- we encourage opportunities for families to be involved in their child's kindergarten program
- we ensure that families are provided with information regarding their child's year at kindergarten and how you can be involved
- being part of GEKA strengthens your kindergarten as a long term, sustainable organisation, with a robust governance structure and financially viable framework
- we regularly review the programs provided (that is, the sessions and times that children attend at the kindergarten), taking into account feedback from families in the development of future program models
- removal of significant administrative burdens from the parent advisory group to enable them to focus on fundraising social and maintenance activities which directly benefit children.

GEKA as the Approved Provider is responsible for:

- operational management of the kindergarten, which includes: policy development, operational and governance structure, financial management, determining fee levels and program models, administrative support and marketing
- employing all staff, including recruitment of kindergarten educators and undertaking responsibility for the professional development of educators, support, develop and monitor employees' performance
- provides a high quality, developmentally appropriate, educational program for children
- the legal representative (Licensee) in relation to the new legislation and regulations
- GEKA hold the lease of all Glen Eira Council owned kindergarten buildings and others too.



High Quality Early Childhood Education & Care

Program delivery objectives

Programs will be delivered in such a manner that will:

- be in accordance with the values, policies and procedures of GEKA
- strive to enhance each child's early learning journey, developmental capabilities, and independence
- reflect current knowledge and best practice in early childhood education and service delivery
- foster best practice and effective performance by educators in an ongoing learning environment
- ensure a safe working and learning environment
- be viable and cost effective in operation
- always strive to improve the quality of services provided
- fulfil the GEKA duty of care, legal and professional practice responsibilities
- ensure the buildings, grounds and equipment are maintained in a safe and attractive manner
- maintain compliance in relation to all National Law and Regulations and support each service in working towards exceeding the National Quality Standards

The seven quality areas covered by the National Quality Standard are:

1. Educational program and practice
2. Children's health and safety
3. Physical environment
4. Staffing arrangements
5. Relationships with children
6. Collaborative partnerships with families and communities
7. Governance and leadership

Further information about the quality areas as well as what rating each GEKA service has received, please visit the GEKA website, under [GEKA QUALITY](#)





Ongoing Quality Improvement

Establishing and maintaining a culture of ongoing reflection and self-review offers challenge, provides motivation and supports positive levels of educator, co-ordinator and staff member satisfaction (Early Years Learning Framework, 2009 page 13)

GEKA's cohesive approach to continuous improvement, is achieved through:

- a shared understanding of the principles that inform the service

- processes in place for reviewing the performance of educators and identifying the extent to which the service meets or exceeds the National Quality Standard
- Ongoing review of the service Quality Improvement Plan (QIP: available on request) and the GEKA organisation Service Improvement Plan (SIP: Available on request).

Through an effective evaluation and self-review process, GEKA enables our services to continuously improve our policies, procedures and practices. This approach enables the nominated supervisor, educators and management to improve their practice, which contributes directly to improved learning outcomes for children.

The GEKA Curriculum

Our educational programs are strongly influenced by the view that interactions between children and adults shape learning. This acknowledges the significant and connected role parents, families and educators play in children's day-to-day and life-long learning.

The Early Years Learning Framework

Our early childhood educational program is based around the key concepts and principles reflected in the National Early Years Learning Framework: *Belonging, Being, Becoming* (EYLF) and the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF).

The key practice principles that guide our understanding and professional practice includes:

- collaborative family centred practice
- partnerships with professionals
- high expectations for every child
- effective, equity and diversity
- respectful relationships and responsive engagement
- integrated teaching and learning approaches
- assessment for learning and development; and
- reflective practice

Key learning outcomes:

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

What does this look like? What will my child learn?

Our educational program is a play based emergent curriculum which focusses on the strengths and interests of children complimented by the intentional planning undertaken by educators in collaboration with families and the local community.

What is a play based emergent curriculum?

An emergent curriculum is constantly evolving in response to children's changing needs, strengths and interests in addition to the input of educators and families. Each of these key elements shapes the direction for future learning.

Educators plan flexibly with children, as the program is constantly evolving in response to stimuli and feedback.

Learning through play

A play-based emergent curriculum fosters complex learning within children's most natural way of being and within the safe haven of play.

Through a play-based curriculum, children have the opportunity to:

- **hypothesise** by developing independent theories and test them
- **problem solve** in both a cognitive and social/emotional sense
- **Imagine and create** - the potential of a child's unhindered imagination is exponential
- **take reasonable risks**
- **develop resilience** and other dispositions, such as persistence
- **develop a positive sense of self**
- **promote active brain development**
- **use complex verbal and nonverbal language to communicate**, extend and guide their ideas and collaborative work
- **make mistakes**—perhaps most important of all. By not giving children the answers we support them in: *"learning how to learn"*



How do the educators support my child's learning?

The educator's role is to create supportive environments where children can ask questions, solve problems and engage in critical thinking. We will engage in sustained, shared conversations with children to extend their learning. We will ask questions that stimulate thinking and we will nurture and foster the engagement of the mind.

Sometimes we will embark on sustained projects that will engage children in hypothesising and problem solving. We will encourage positive outlooks for learning and creative thinking by developing learning environments that encourage children to explore and construct in imaginative ways. We will provide a balance between educator led and child initiated learning experiences.

Our routines and learning experiences will provide children with a sense of security and stability, enabling children to predict what will happen next, building confidence and a sense of self.

We will work with children to promote and model positive ways to relate and respond to each other, using strategies to help children recognise when play is unfair and offer constructive ways to build a caring, fair and inclusive learning community.

Working with children using a play based, emergent curriculum involves much more than simply providing a range of learning experiences that stem from children's interests or providing interesting materials and resources assuming they will develop.

Engaged teachers play an active, planned and intentional role in a child's learning, using a balanced approach that combines children's interests and needs with a planned focus on the significant learning highlighted in each of the Early Years Learning Framework key learning outcomes and practice/principles.

The program is documented and available for families to view and contribute to. Children's individual learning journeys are documented in a portfolio which is also accessible to families within the service. We actively encourage all families to share in and contribute to this wonderful educational experience.





Child Safe Environments

GEKA has a moral and legal responsibility to ensure that all children are safe whilst in our care and will provide training, resources, information and guidance to support this.

Victoria has mandatory minimum child safety standards that apply to most organisations working with children. All organisations working with children are strongly encouraged to ensure they have child safe strategies in place. There are seven child safe standards that GEKA comply with.

We ensure that all children attending the kindergarten are provided with a safe environment and all steps are taken by educators to care for the health, safety and wellbeing of children.

GEKA have a particular focus on promoting the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, the cultural safety of children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and the safety of children with disability.

Educators also have a duty of care to take action if they are concerned about a child and provide effective intervention for children who may be at risk of abuse or neglect. This may include a referral to *The Orange Door* or a report to Child Protection. *The Orange Door* provides a way for people experiencing family violence and families who need help with the care and wellbeing of their children to access the support they need.

The Orange Door is a free, voluntary service in Victoria that provides professional support and advice to families, professionals and the general community. Families needing additional support are encouraged to **contact The Orange Door on 1800 319 353**

Attending Kindergarten - Family Responsibilities

Session Times

Your GEKA Kindergarten session timetable, including term dates and public holidays is available here:

[Kindergarten Timetable](#)

Orientation

On commencement of the kindergarten year, shorter sessions will be offered to families for the first two weeks of Term 1 to give educators the opportunity to meet with the children on an individual basis. In the case of children requiring a more individualised program, this will be formulated in conjunction with educators and families.

An orientation timetable was provided during enrolment however please contact the GEKA enrolments team if you have any questions or concerns. The kindergarten team can also answer questions on the program.

Door Security

Please ensure on all occasions that the door you enter or exit

is securely closed behind you. Parents/guardians will be provided with a PIN code at the beginning of the year so that they can enter these areas. Please treat this PIN as confidential to prevent unauthorised access to the children's program.

Attendance

For your child to feel comfortable, learn and develop from our program, it is important for your child to attend on a regular basis. Please communicate with the kindergarten any absences for any period of time by phone or Flexibuzz. If your child is unwell, include the nature of the illness to support the service in minimising the spread of infection. Your kindergarten service may be able to provide you with support and health information. We are committed to supporting successful transitions for all children and can support families to develop a responsive and individualised transition plan for your child.

Arrival and departure

Parents/guardians must sign and enter the time of arrival and departure in the attendance book. If a person other than a parent/guardian is collecting a child from the service, the name of that person must be noted in the attendance book and prior written notice must be given (enrolment).

Change of parent/guardian's daily contact numbers or availability should also be noted.

All children must be collected by an adult who is known to them, and is **at least 18 years of age.**

Photo ID will be required at the time of collection for all unknown individuals. In the case of an emergency, a telephone call advising who will collect the child is acceptable. When a parent/guardian is running late, it is important that educators are notified via a phone call.

Continued late arrival may result in a late collection fee.

What to wear to kindergarten

Casual, comfortable play clothes that are easy to wash.

Remember your child is actively involved in messy activities and although protective clothing is provided, accidents can occur.

Please do not wear thongs or similar footwear to kindergarten.

They are not safe for activities such as climbing.

What to bring to Kindergarten

Clearly named:

- Kindergarten bag/backpack that is large enough to accommodate their belongings
- Complete set of extra clothing in the bag in case of accidents and water play/sensory play
- Drink bottle (WATER only please)
- Healthy packed lunch/snacks that do NOT contain any nuts or nut products
- Protective legionnaires or

broad brimmed sun hat for warm weather and a beanie/ waterproof jacket for cold weather

- It is advisable that children avoid bringing valuable items and special toys as if they are lost it can cause much disappointment (but comfort items are ok to support transition).

Sun Protection

Sun protection will be required at all times of the year when the **UV Index level is at 3 or above.**

Information about the UV Index level is available on the SunSmart website at

www.sunsmart.com.au, as a free smart phone app (iPhone or android) and as a free widget that can be added to websites.

During this time all children are required to wear a broad brimmed hat (please make sure it is named), sunscreen applied before they attend the session which is reapplied every two hours in accordance with the SunSmart policy and wear appropriate SunSmart clothing that has shoulders covered.

Clothing for sun protection:

Clothing that is loose-fitting, made from cool, densely woven fabric and covers as much skin as possible. Singlet tops/'shoe string' strap dresses do not provide adequate protection in the sun and cannot be worn at the service.

Families are to provide sunscreen for their child in a roll on, (that is clearly labelled), which children will apply independently.



Incursions & Excursions

Excursions and service events, such as incursions, are planned to extend the educational program and further develop the current interests of children.

Events outside of the service could involve a trip to the local supermarket, the park, the post box or other local places of interest. Children will either walk to and from the destination, or will access local public transport within the designated community area, such as the bus, tram or train. The period the child will be away from the premises could range from 10 minutes to a few hours.

As part of the services educational program, educators will take the children outside of the licensed service premises to engage and interact with the local community and further enrich, support and extend children's learning experiences.

The anticipated number of children likely to be attending the excursion could range from a small group to all of the group, at any one time (up to a maximum of 33 for 4YOs and 28 for 3YOs).



Families will be made aware of these *local community outings* prior to and/or after the event where practicable. Permission is gained at the time of enrolment.

Supervision standards will be maintained at all times (with a minimum of a 1:11 ratio) and a risk assessment conducted of the proposed destinations.

Consideration will be given to any extra costs involved and to ensuring that all children can attend regardless of their abilities, additional needs or medical conditions.

Written authorisation for the child to attend *formal excursions* outside of the local community, will be obtained from a parent/guardian or person named in the child's enrolment record *before* the event.

Rest and Relaxation

Our GEKA kindergartens provide a positive and nurturing environment for all children. This includes recognising that children have different requirements for relaxation and rest, and being responsive to those needs to ensure that children feel safe and secure. Educators consult with families about their child's individual relaxation and rest requirements, and ensure that adequate supervision is maintained while children are sleeping, resting or relaxing. Children have many opportunities to rest and relax during session times in quiet spaces of the program.

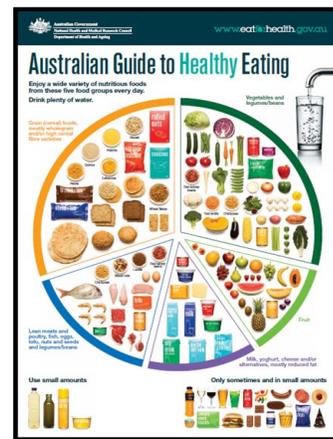


GEKA is committed to:

- promoting nutritious food and eating habits that will contribute to healthy growth and development in children
- providing a safe, supportive and social environment in which children can enjoy eating
- consulting and working collaboratively with families in regard to their child's nutrition and dietary requirements, including responding appropriately to food allergies and recognising cultural and religious practices, and lifestyle choices
- ensuring that food and drink items provided by the service are consistent with national and state guidelines and recommendations
- providing children and families with opportunities to learn about food, nutrition and healthy lifestyles
- ensuring adequate health and hygiene procedures, including safe practices for handling, preparing, storing and serving food
- encouraging physical activity by providing a range of active play experiences for all children at the service.

Nutrition

There are many benefits to promoting healthy lifestyle in early childhood education and care settings, including the positive impact this has on each child's learning and development. Being made aware of positive eating behaviour and the importance of physical activity from an early age can instil good habits that will remain throughout a person's life. Educators are well placed to build this awareness among children and their families, while respecting lifestyle choices, and cultural and religious values.



Healthy Eating at kindergarten

We aim for children to develop good habits towards caring for their environment.

GEKA services subscribe to the NUDE FOOD movement. In simple terms, it means no packaged foods (e.g.; yoghurt tubs or squishy tubes and no glad wrap.)

If any packaging does make its way to the kindergarten, we will simply ask the children to put it in their lunchbox to take home for you to dispose of.

To promote healthy nutritious habits for lunch, and in keeping with our nutrition policy, please include

healthy eating options such as:

- Sandwiches/wrap/roll
- Fruit
- Cheese
- Dry biscuits
- Cherry tomatoes
- Celery
- Carrot sticks with dip
- Sushi
- Muffins/Raisin bread
- Dumplings

We strongly encourage families not to provide 'junk food' such as chips, chocolates or fizzy drinks please.

Please provide water only in your child's water bottle.

Please advise the educators if your child has any relevant allergies or food and drink reactions. Lunches will not be shared between children ensuring any special requirements are met.



Healthy Lunch-box

Use foods from the five core food groups:

- Vegetables and legumes/beans
- Fruit
- Grain (cereal) foods, mostly whole grains and/or high fiber
- Lean meat and poultry, fish, tofu
- Milk, yoghurt, cheese

Website to look at:

www.freshforkids.com.au

What does a Healthy Lunch Box Contain?

A healthy lunch box has four components:

1. **Main item**, such as a sandwich, pasta, soup
2. **Fruit or vegetable snack**, such as whole fruit, veggie sticks, a small salad
3. **Second snack**, based on a core food, such as reduced fat yoghurt, grainy crackers, a wholemeal fruit muffin
4. **Drink**, a bottle of tap water is best

Family involvement

Program Participation

There are many different ways for families to be involved in the Kindergarten. Participating provides you with an opportunity to join in the program and to spend some time with your child in the kindergarten environment. Your child will enjoy this special time with you and your participation is appreciated.

Further information on the benefits of family and community involvement is available on the [GEKA website](#)

Please be sensitive to the privacy of other children and families when you are taking photos of your child engaged in the program; we ask that you seek permission from the teacher prior to taking photos of any other children.

Parent Advisory Group (PAG)

The parent advisory group or PAG as it is known, represents the families and aims to support the development of social connections within the kindergarten and to raise additional funds for the program. The following are the key roles and responsibilities:

- Organise and conduct fundraising and social activities in line with GEKA policies, kindergarten philosophy
- Hold regular kindergarten parent advisory group meetings and providing minutes of the meetings to GEKA
- Day to day maintenance of the kindergarten through working bees in consultation with GEKA

Fundraising

As a community based kindergarten, fundraising is an important part of our yearly calendar. Fundraising helps to purchase additional equipment for the children's activities and support development projects. We hope you can take the time to become involved in fundraising and social events for the kindergarten!

Working bees

The working bee is a great way to meet other families and strengthen the kindergarten community. They are also necessary to maintain the buildings, ground and equipment. We request that each family attends **at least one** working bee during the year to assist with general maintenance. There is a participation levy at all services that is refundable when families attend a working bee or another specified fundraising event.

Laundry

The kindergarten does not have access to washing machine facilities so we need family assistance to help us wash smocks, towels, table cloths and dress ups. A roster will allow families to nominate a week that they can be responsible for the washing and returned to the kindergarten at your next session. We greatly appreciate family assistance.



Respectful Behaviour

Everyone who enters a kindergarten, whether volunteering, working or visiting, play a key role in shaping and influencing the kindergarten. This is also the workplace for our educators and as such they have a right to work in a work place that provides them with a safe working environment. This requires a consistent approach and commitment to the following:

All people volunteering, working or visiting our kindergarten will.....

- treat everybody with respect and dignity and value individuals for who they are and their unique contribution to the kindergarten
- be clear and transparent about decision-making processes, wherever possible providing opportunities for input
- give new ideas from others a fair hearing and proper consideration
- take a proactive approach to workplace health, safety and wellbeing
- be invited to participate and engage in kindergarten activities, and GEKA events
- role model positive behaviours at all times
- always behave ethically, honestly and with integrity

GEKA will not tolerate the following behaviour:

- verbal abuse of any staff member, family member or child
- threats either verbal or physical in nature
- the use of any profanities irrespective of the circumstances
- the entry by visitors into educators work areas where such entry is clearly prohibited
- educators, or visitors attending the kindergarten must not be under the influence of drugs or be intoxicated

Any instances of the above occurrences may result in exclusion of the adult from the kindergarten program.



FlexiBuzz Communications

All GEKA kindergartens use the communication app [FlexiBuzz](#) to share kindergarten information such as newsletters, general updates, reminders, events, absences and more.

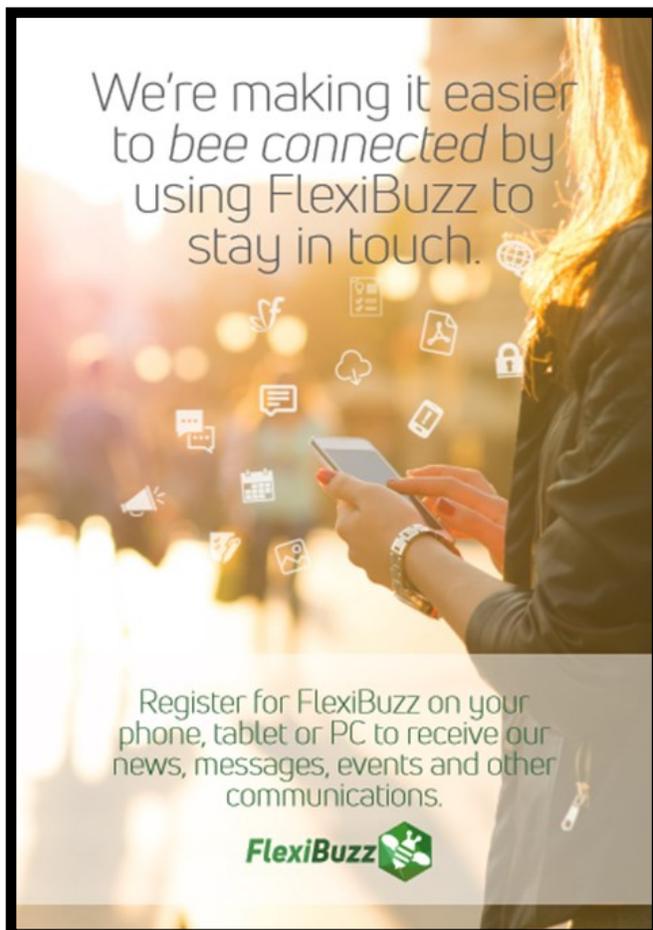
[FlexiBuzz](#) is available on iPhone, iPad, iPod, Android Phone, Android Tablet and Windows phone devices. If you don't have a mobile device, there is also an app available for computer, both Mac and PC. Everything we post can be translated into one of 91 languages.

- We **need** families to download FlexiBuzz to one of these devices (registration is free).
- Once you have registered, tick the kindergarten that your child attends.
- When selecting the kindergarten, ensure you tick '**General****' AND tick the specific group/s that apply to you.

You'll receive all the information with a push notification – much like a text message directly to your device. Please go to your device settings to switch this on.

You can receive FlexiBuzz notifications via email also. Please go into your FlexiBuzz profile (bottom right icon on your hand held device or top right if on a computer) and go down to SETTINGS and select "**receive notifications as emails**".

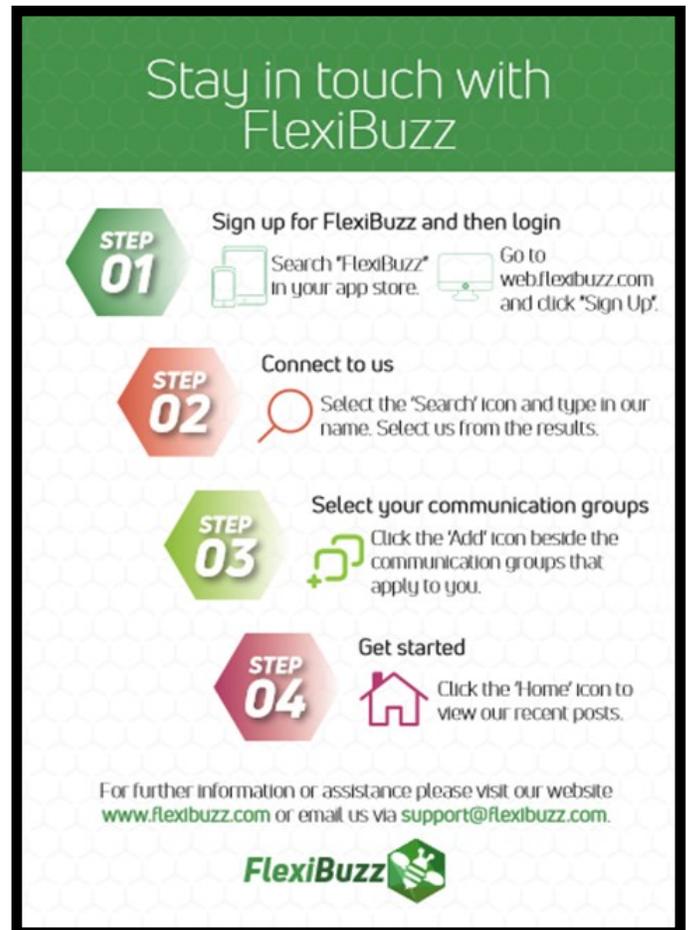
**This is for receiving information about community happenings.



We're making it easier to *bee connected* by using FlexiBuzz to stay in touch.

Register for FlexiBuzz on your phone, tablet or PC to receive our news, messages, events and other communications.

FlexiBuzz 



Stay in touch with FlexiBuzz

- STEP 01** Sign up for FlexiBuzz and then login
 Search "FlexiBuzz" in your app store. Go to web.flexibuzz.com and click "Sign Up".
- STEP 02** Connect to us
 Select the 'Search' icon and type in our name. Select us from the results.
- STEP 03** Select your communication groups
 Click the 'Add' icon beside the communication groups that apply to you.
- STEP 04** Get started
 Click the 'Home' icon to view our recent posts.

For further information or assistance please visit our website www.flexibuzz.com or email us via support@flexibuzz.com.

FlexiBuzz 

Communication with families

The Kindergarten will promote and provide opportunities for families to be involved in the delivery of the kindergarten program. This includes:

- recognising and respecting families as the first and continuing carers and educators of their children
- providing families with information about how the educational program at the kindergarten is developed and the philosophy on which it is based
- offering a variety of opportunities for families to participate directly in the children's program, including spending time with the children, assisting with activities, excursions and special events and sharing special skills with children
- providing opportunities for families to offer feedback to the educators concerning the program
- encouraging families to contribute their suggestions regarding any aspect of the program through discussions with the educators and/or GEKA
- providing the families with opportunities for communication about their child, either informally before or after the program, or by

appointment during the educator's non-contact time

- being inclusive of families within the program and provide a welcoming environment with access to the kindergarten at any time during the hours of operation
- developing strategies which contribute to a partnership approach with families to create a two-way process of knowledge and information sharing, for example individual journals (photos, daily stories) which children are able to take home and share with their family on a regular basis
- providing information regarding the educational program through bulletin boards and regular newsletters, which will show an understanding of, and consideration for, the relevant languages and cultural diversity of the families using the kindergarten
- reading information provided from the kindergarten, this can include information handbooks, newsletters, policies, children's program, emails, noticeboard displays, etc.
- participating in kindergarten events, fundraising activities to

support resources for the kindergarten, assisting at working bees, involvement in the children's program, through the organising of events.

- communicating information about their children with educators, including significant events in the child's life, such as the arrival of a new baby, grandparents visiting from overseas, etc. contributing feedback and ideas for the children's program
- being sensitive to other children's privacy when taking photos of their child while engaged in the program (seeking permission from the teacher).

We ask that families wanting a consultation with kindergarten educators arrange a meeting, by email or in person, that is convenient to both parties. Consultation with GEKA can be arranged by email or phone.

GEKA Policies

GEKA has an extensive Policy and Procedure Manual that informs our practice and guides our procedures in the operational management of the kindergartens. This manual outlines what families can expect from us in the delivery of a quality early childhood education. Policies provide information about what we do and in some cases, what we cannot do.

The following pages highlight some of our key policies. A full GEKA Policy Manual is available for you to view at the kindergarten. Please ask an educator to provide it to you if required.

Privacy and Confidentiality Policy

We believe your privacy is important. We have put in place a 'Privacy and Confidentiality Policy', which explains how we will collect, use, disclose, manage and transfer personal information including health information. This policy is available in our Policies and Procedures Manual at each of our services. For further information visit [GEKA's PRIVACY POLICY](#)

Feedback

Compliments and Concerns

GEKA is committed to providing quality early childhood education services which consistently meet local families and children's needs. Your ideas and suggestions are always appreciated and welcomed.

All members of the GEKA community are responsible for working in partnership to promote continuous improvement that supports the organisation's philosophy and goals. We also aim to ensure that opportunities for improvement are identified, offered and implemented in accordance with the educational philosophy, stakeholder needs and preferences and the changing environment in which the kindergarten operates. You will see the goals and strategies of the kindergarten on the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP). It is a requirement under the National Quality Framework to have a QIP in place that evolves and changes as

feedback is received and goals are either identified or achieved.

Families should approach and speak to the educators in the first instance if there are any concerns. GEKA Management and educators view any feedback as an opportunity to improve the services we provide. Any suggestions for improvement may be generated formally by contacting the GEKA CEO, the General Manager, Operations or informally by discussion with your kindergarten teacher or member of GEKA management.

[Contact us](#)

GEKA is responsible for addressing any comments or concerns to ensure that issues are attended to promptly, with interested parties kept involved of the progress. Please refer to the GEKA Policies and Procedures Manual for more detailed information and our grievance procedure.

Fee Policy

GEKA is committed to:

- providing responsible financial management of the kindergarten, including establishing fees that will result in a financially viable service, while keeping user fees at the lowest possible level
- providing a fair and manageable system for dealing with non-payment and/or inability to pay fees/outstanding debts
- ensuring there are no financial barriers for families wishing to access a funded early childhood program for their child/children
- maintaining confidentiality in relation to the financial circumstances of parents/guardians
- advising members of the kindergarten about program funding, including government support and fees to be paid by parents/guardians
- providing equitable access for families eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy and Early Start Funding.

Please note, **four weeks written notice** (via email) is required for families that decide to withdraw their child from a GEKA program **prior to term commencing**. If such notice is not given, **TERM FEES ARE NOT REFUNDABLE**.

As per the Award that educators are employed under, the first day of term one and the last day of term four will be child free. This does not reduce the overall fee for the term.

Immunisation

All parents/guardians planning to enrol their child in a GEKA kindergarten **must** provide GEKA with:

- a current **Immunisation History Statement** from the Australian Immunisation Register (AIR); **AND**
- the statement must show that the child is **up to date** with all vaccinations that are due for their age, or that they are able to receive.

The **Immunisation History Statement** from the AIR lists the vaccines the child has received and, if applicable, which vaccines are due in the future and when. Medical exemption may also be listed, where applicable.

An Immunisation History Statement from the AIR is the **ONLY** type of immunisation record accepted by GEKA for the purposes of confirming enrolment and must be provided prior to the child starting kindergarten.

Your GP or immunisation nurse will refer to national clinical guidelines to determine what vaccines are recommended at what age, what needs to be on a catch-up program and what is considered a valid medical reason not to be fully immunised.

The quickest way to get your statement is by using your Medicare online account through **myGov** or the **Express Plus Medicare** mobile app. Alternatively, you can request an Immunisation History Statement in person at your local Medicare service centre or call the AIR enquiries line on **1800 653 809** to request a statement is posted to you. It can take 14 days to receive your statement in the post.

Health & Safety

Hygiene

Infections are common in children and often lead to illness, so we need your assistance to help us to reduce the spread of an infection. If your child is unwell we ask that you keep them at home for their own recovery benefit and that of the other children and educators in the group.

A person with an infection may or may not show signs of illness and, in many instances, the infectious phase of the illness may be in the period before symptoms become apparent, or during the recovery phase. While it is not possible to prevent all infections in education and care environments, services can prevent or control the spread of many infectious diseases by adopting simple hygiene practices.

An infection can be spread when an infected person attends the service premises

and contamination occurs. GEKA kindergartens implements a hygiene and infection control procedure that aims to break the cycle and prevent the spread of infections at every stage.

The National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) suggest that to reduce illness in education and care services, the three most effective methods of infection control are:

- effective hand washing
- exclusion of sick children, educators and visitors
- immunisation

Other strategies to prevent infection include:

- cough etiquette
- appropriate use of gloves
- effective cleaning of the kindergarten environment

Collection of unwell children

If a child appears to be unwell, the family will be contacted and asked to collect the child from kindergarten.

Parents/guardians will be

required to collect their children from the centre if their child displays any of these symptoms:

- more than one loose bowel motion in a day
- Vomits and shows signs of being unwell
- A temperature of 38 Degrees Celsius or higher (with other symptoms) and withdrawn from engaging in the program.
- A yellow/green discharge from the eyes
- Excessive ongoing discharge from the nose (associated with another symptom)
- Head lice – see below
- Experiencing breathing difficulties
- Develops a rash

Exclusion of unwell children

We encourage all families to follow the recommended exclusion periods as detailed by the National Health and Medical Research Council. Please keep your child at home in the following circumstances (please see the exclusion timetable at the kindergarten for a full list of circumstances):

Diarrhoea: Exclude until there has not been a loose bowel motion for 24 hours

Vomiting: Exclude until there has not been vomiting for 24 hours

Temperature: Exclude until temperature has returned to normal for 24 hours

Antibiotics: Exclude until 24 hours after the commencement

Conjunctivitis: Exclude until the discharge from the eyes has stopped unless doctor has diagnosed a non-infectious conjunctivitis and treatment started

Hand, foot and mouth disease: Exclude until all blisters have dried.

Head lice: Exclusion is NOT necessary if effective treatment is commenced the day before attendance

Influenza and influenza like illnesses: Exclude until well

Infectious Diseases

Should your child be diagnosed with a condition outlined in the Infectious Diseases Schedule, or has been exposed, please advise the educators so that we may inform other parents and take necessary precautions to reduce further spreading of an infection. A child with any of

the conditions listed should be kept at home for the period prescribed.

Medications

Medication (including prescription, non-prescription, over-the-counter and homeopathic medications) **will not be administered to a child at a service without the authorisation of a parent/guardian or person with the lawful authority to consent to the administration of medical attention to the child.**

Any medications must be handed to a permanent educator at the kindergarten upon arrival at the session. **Please do not store any medications in your child's bag.**

If a child has a temperature of 38°C or higher, educators will make every effort to reduce the temperature by removing clothing, use tepid water to sponge a child and will offer water. The parent/guardian will be contacted and asked to collect a child whose temperature is 38°C or higher, with other associated symptoms and has withdrawn from engaging in the program.

For ongoing management of high temperatures, educators will only give paracetamol when a medical practitioner's certificate is supplied.

This written confirmation must include that the child is not infectious and well enough to attend the kindergarten. Advice from the Royal Children's Hospital www.rch/ccch.org.au indicates that fever is common in children, but it is rarely harmful. Fever is not an illness: it is a symptom, or sign, of an underlying problem.

In the case of an emergency, it is acceptable to obtain verbal consent from a parent/guardian, or to obtain consent from a registered medical practitioner or medical emergency services if the child's parent/guardian cannot be contacted.

In the case of an anaphylaxis or asthma emergency, medication may be administered to a child without authorisation following the direction of the child's medical management plan. In this circumstance, the child's parent/guardian and/or emergency services must be contacted as soon as possible.

Medical Conditions and First Aid

Anaphylaxis / Allergies

Anaphylaxis is a severe and potentially life-threatening allergic reaction, requiring an EPIPEN. Up to two per cent of the general population and up to five per cent of children are at risk.

The most common causes of allergic reaction in young children are eggs, peanuts, tree nuts, cow's milk, bee or other insect stings, and some medications.

If your child has been diagnosed at risk of anaphylaxis or has allergies, requiring medication, you will be required to provide the kindergarten with an approved individual medical management plan for your child signed by the medical practitioner who is treating your child. This will be stored with your child's enrolment form and on display in the service for the information of all staff.

More information is available at www.education.vic.gov.au/anaphylaxis

There is at least one educator at all times who has current and approved, anaphylaxis management training.

Asthma

If your child has Asthma it is important that our educators are advised of the condition. As part of enrolment you will be provided with an **Asthma Action Plan** which needs to be completed in consultation with, and signed by, a medical practitioner. Please ensure children with asthma have reliever medication and a spacer (including a child's face mask, if required) at all times your child is attending the service. Ideally, this would be left at the kindergarten, however if families choose to bring medication back and forth, it is important they take responsibility to take the medication out of the bag and put it in the medication area and also to collect it at the end of the day to take home.

At least one educator who has current approved Emergency Asthma Management (EAM) training is on duty at all times.

A Risk Minimisation and Communication Plan will also need to be completed for any

child with a plan, in consultation with educators.

Incident, Illness, Injury, First Aid Provision

If an accident occurs, or your child becomes unwell whilst at kindergarten, educators will administer first aid, and provide care and comfort to your child. In some more serious instances, the family will be advised to collect their child.

When there is a medical emergency, educators will where necessary, call an ambulance if a child appears very unwell or has a serious injury that needs urgent medical attention. Parents/guardians will be notified as soon as possible of any serious medical emergency, incident or injury concerning the child, and request that you make arrangements for the child to be collected from the service, or inform you that an ambulance has been called.

Smoke Free Zone

The kindergartens are a smoke free zone. Smoking is not permitted within the building and grounds of the centre or within the sight of children.

Emergency procedures

There is an Emergency Management Plan developed for the kindergarten which outlines specific emergency and evacuation procedures, practices and guidelines. Educators know the emergency evacuation plans and all related procedures as they are aware of the children's need for comfort and security during an emergency. Procedures are practiced regularly to ensure familiarisation of how to respond should an emergency arise.

There are three types of emergency responses: Lockdown, Lockout and Evacuation. These responses are practiced each term with anyone present on site at the time. Procedures are displayed at the kindergarten so everyone can develop awareness and follow them.



Inclusion & Equity

GEKA kindergartens are committed to:

- acknowledging and respecting the rights of all children to be provided with and participate in a quality early childhood education and care program
- creating an environment that supports, reflects and promotes equitable and inclusive behaviours and practices
- creating a sense of belonging for all children, families and educators, where diverse identities, backgrounds, experiences, skills and interests are respected, valued and given opportunities to be expressed/developed
- ensuring that programs are reflective of, and responsive to, the values and cultural beliefs of families using the service, and of those within the local/broader community
- working to ensure children are not discriminated against on the basis of background, ethnicity, culture, language, beliefs, gender, age, socioeconomic status, level of ability or additional needs, family structure or lifestyle
- ensuring that no employee, prospective employee, parent/guardian, child, volunteer or student at the service is discriminated against on the basis of having or being suspected of having an infectious disease or blood-borne virus
- upholding the values and principles of Early Childhood Australia (ECA), the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) and Early Childhood Intervention Australia's (ECIA)
- consistently updating and supporting the knowledge, skills, practices and attitudes of educators to encourage and ensure inclusion and equity
- Our Inclusion Practice Coordinator is available to assist and support educators and families with children with additional needs to ensure access to services and an inclusive, equitable play based program.

Code of Ethics

All GEKA kindergarten’s are members of Early Childhood Australia (ECA) and are committed to their Code of Ethics. This provides a framework for reflection about the ethical responsibilities of early childhood professionals. The Code is intended for use by all early childhood professionals who work with or on behalf of children and families in early childhood settings.

Inherent in the Code is the understanding that children learn within their family and community groups, bringing rich knowledge, and a diversity of experiences and identities to their learning. A poster outlining the Code of Ethics is on display at the kindergarten and we would encourage you to read them.

ECA Code of Ethics Vision

Professionals who adhere to this Code of Ethics act in the best interest of all children and work collectively to ensure that every child is thriving and learning.



Our Staffing Principles

Our educators are our most important resource. It is the early childhood educators who engage with the children and families on a day-to-day basis to ensure the best early learning experience for everyone. To achieve this, GEKA believes it is important that all educators are qualified and encouraged to enhance and improve their professional and personal development.

All educators employed at GEKA hold an early childhood qualification:

- all early childhood teachers have completed a three or four year degree in early childhood education
- qualified early childhood educators have completed a two year Diploma in Children’s Services (or equivalent) or a minimum of a Certificate III in Children’s Services (or equivalent).

Goals to support best practice early learning

GEKA educator’s goals are:

- to develop, implementation and evaluation the children’s educational program
- to participate in ongoing early childhood professional learning
- to be co-learners with children and develop positive relationships with each child and their family
- to support children to be active participants in their own learning

Advice

from children

The GEKA community view children as capable, competent and active citizens in the here and now. We strive to empower children, by using their thoughts and ideas to develop and enhance the program. We have consulted with children about the *Family Handbook* and have asked them if they could provide the children that are about to start kindergarten with some advice and practical guidance. We encourage you to share the following information with your child as part of their transition into kindergarten.

What is the best part of Kindergarten that children can look forward to?

"Seeing your friends" Maddi

"Playing outside; Lego and playing with good stuff inside too" Rhys

"You get to do lots of drawing" Emily

"You get to play outside...play with blocks....and have food to eat"

"I love the footy and the running races on the bike track."

"I like to play with all the fairies and the dress ups."

"I like the singing"

How do you know when you've learnt something?

"By practicing something you get better at it, and then you do it. So you know you've learnt it." Abigail

"We learn stuff like you need to know when you're a grown up" Rhys

"The way I know I've learnt something is I learn it, then I notice I've learnt it....How? "That's hard to explain." James

"Your brain isn't all about yourself so you have to tell it when you've learnt something." Jack

What do you need to bring to kindergarten in your bag?

"Bring your drink bottle, lunch, afternoon snack and morning tea probably...you need your hat and put on sunscreen" Rhys

"Spare clothes if you get wet" Ashanti

"No nuts" Adrian

"You need to bring your lunchbox, and your snack boxes. Oh and you need to bring your water bottle....and sometimes you can bring things to show, but they need to stay in your bag."

What are the 'rules' at kindergarten that next year's children need to know?

"To listen, don't climb up the gates, don't run around inside or you get hurt. Oh and when you finish [playing] you pack it all up" Rhys

"Listen, no biting, no jumping on the furniture, no hitting people, no fighting, don't be loud inside, no running inside, use good manners"



How can the teachers help you if you get stuck?

How do you learn new things?



- ◆ *“You learn by just trying...and also by watching and copying”*
- ◆ “They [teachers] tell us stuff and show us stuff ...how to do stuff” Rhys
- ◆ “They [teachers] work, learn us how to do things, help you call mum when you are sick”
- ◆ **“They [teachers] help children if they hurt themselves” Indi**

We are looking forward to having you join the GEKA community of kindergartens. We believe in building community partnerships that focus on active communication, consultation and collaboration and that support the successful development of children’s learning and wellbeing.



Glen Eira Kindergarten Association Inc.



GEKA Bentleigh Kindergarten



GEKA Bentleigh East Kindergarten



GEKA Brady Road Kindergarten



GEKA Carnegie Kindergarten



GEKA Caulfield South Kindergarten



GEKA Centre Road Kindergarten



GEKA Glover Street Kindergarten



GEKA McKinnon Kindergarten



GEKA Murrumbeena Kindergarten



GEKA Orrong Road Kindergarten

Glen Eira Kindergarten Association
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