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RIPPONLEA KINDERGARTEN BUSH KINDER INFORMATION HANDBOOK 2026



Welcome to Ripponlea Kindergarten.

We hope it will be an enjoyable year for you and your child.

This information booklet, along with the policy statements prepared by the Committee of Management, is designed to help you understand the Bush Kindergarten program.

Please read thoroughly and keep in a safe place for easy referral.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY	3
STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT TO CHILD SAFETY.....	3
ABOUT THIS HANDBOOK.....	3
BUSH KINDER OVERVIEW	3
ABOUT THE PROGRAM.....	4
ENROLMENT	4
BUSH KINDER HOURS OF OPERATION	4
BUSH KINDER START DATES FOR 2026	4
BUSH KINDER STAFF	4
LOCATION	4
PARKING	4
CONTACTING THE KINDERGARTEN	5
NON-ATTENDANCE	5
SESSION CANCELLATION	5
WEATHER	5
SUN PROTECTION POLICY.....	5
SESSION OVERVIEW	6
WALKING DOWN PROCEDURE	6
PICK UP PROCEDURE	7
FAMILY HELPERS.....	7
AFTERNOON TEA	7
CLOTHES	7
TOILETING.....	8
PLEASE REMEMBER TO BRING	9
ATTACHMENT 1.....	10
ATTACHMENT 2.....	11
ATTACHMENT 3.....	12

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Ripponlea Kindergarten respectfully acknowledges the Boon Wurrung / Bunurong people as the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we attend Bush Kinder. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present and acknowledge and uphold their continuing relationship to this land.

STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT TO CHILD SAFETY

Ripponlea Kindergarten is committed to the rights of all children to feel safe, and be safe at all times, including:

- promoting the cultural safety of Aboriginal children
- promoting the cultural safety of children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- promoting the safety of children with a disability
- promoting the right to safety of trans and gender diverse children and their families in ECEC settings
- ensuring that LGBTQI+ children and families feel included and safe

We value, respect and care for children and take all reasonable steps to ensure their health, safety, and wellbeing, whilst also promoting their learning and development. We have zero tolerance for child abuse and will actively take steps to prevent its occurrence.

ABOUT THIS HANDBOOK

This handbook is to be read in conjunction with the general information handbook for the Kindergarten as well as related Bush Kinder policies (available on our website).

BUSH KINDER OVERVIEW

Ripponlea Kindergarten launched a Bush Kinder program in 2016 for one of our four-year-old groups at the time. This program will continue in 2026 on Thursday afternoons (Walert group) each week.

Our Bush Kinder program reflects growing recognition and research that children's sedentary lives negatively affect their social, physical, and mental health. Bush Kinder exposes young children to natural outdoor settings where they can play, explore, and experience natural systems and materials. Engaged outside in all types of weather, children and educators investigate natural phenomenon and learn about where they live.

Our program aims to:

- Facilitate a closer connection with nature
- Encourage a community that values and participates in nature-based activities more regularly
- Inspire a healthier and more environmentally aware community
- Develop a well-connected and cohesive community

- Foster creative, independent and resilient children

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

ENROLMENT

For your child to participate in the Bush Kinder program, parents/guardians must have agreed to the Bush Kinder program consent question on their electronic enrolment form, as well as signed a permission form for your child to walk to Rippon Lea Estate from the kindergarten premises. You should also have provided details on the enrolment form of all authorised people who are able to collect your child. People other than those listed on your enrolment form will not be allowed to collect your child unless we are notified by you in writing before the session's end.

For further information, please see the Delivery and Collection of Children policy.

BUSH KINDER HOURS OF OPERATION

Children will **leave the Kinder at 12.30pm to walk to Rippon Lea Estate every Thursday during term and be picked up by their authorized contact from the Estate at 3.50pm.** If cancelled, bush kinder will be held back at the Centre and you will be notified of the changed pick-up location.

BUSH KINDER START DATES FOR 2026

Walert group first day of on-site Bush Kinder (at the kindergarten for the previous week) - Thursday 12th February (weather permitting).

BUSH KINDER STAFF

Teacher: Laurian Treleani (Graduate Diploma in Early Childhood Teaching)

Co-educator: Jasmine Main (Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care)

Extra staff member to walk with the children to the Estate: Mishel Lowndes (Bachelor of Arts Early Childhood Education)

There is a ratio of 3 educators to 12 children while walking to the Estate and then 2 educators to 12 children during the session. All staff members hold a current First Aid Certificate and have Asthma and Anaphylaxis training. Teachers are currently registered with the Victorian Institute of Training and co-educators have a Victorian Working with Children Check.

LOCATION

Bush Kinder is held on the grounds of Rippon Lea Estate at 192 Hotham Street, Elsternwick, 3185 (see Attachment 1).

PARKING

There is limited parking around the Estate so please be mindful of where you park. Nearby Elm Street, Acacia Street, and Willow Street have parking restrictions but often have short term parking availability suitable for picking up. Please be mindful to hold your child's hand at all times when picking up at Bush Kinder as Hotham Street is very busy.

CONTACTING THE KINDERGARTEN

On days that your child is attending Bush Kinder our preferred means of contact is via our mobile phone: **0452 553 182**. We ask that you keep your mobile phone on you and turned on during Bush Kinder sessions so we may be able to contact you easily if necessary. We also ask that you put the Kinder mobile phone number in your mobile phone. Please only use this number if you need to contact Kinder regarding your child on a Bush Kinder day as we are unable to view emails while we are in session.

NON-ATTENDANCE

Please notify the teacher if your child will be absent from kindergarten and why. As with kinder held back at the Centre, children should not attend if they are unwell.

SESSION CANCELLATION

We will endeavour to provide as much warning as possible if we need to cancel, but this may also occur at short notice. You will be contacted via Kindyhub and asked to reply YES that you have acknowledged the change of pick up location. If other people are picking up your child, it is your responsibility to inform them of the change.

WEATHER

Bush Kinder runs all year round. It will be cancelled only in times of extreme weather or due to staff assessment of suitability on the day. Examples of reasons for cancellation include the following:

- forecast temperature is 35°C or greater (anything over 30 degrees will be assessed on the day to determine the suitability of walking to the Estate in the heat)
- forecast wind speed greater than 45km per hour
- forecast electrical/thunderstorms activity
- Bureau of Meteorology weather warnings of extreme storm conditions, excessive rainfall, dust storms, hailstorms, or other extreme weather forecasts
- Environment Protection Authority Victoria advice of very poor or hazardous air quality
- any other (extreme) weather or (Estate) event that the staff assess as being a hazard to children on the day

For further information please see the Bush Kinder Cancellation policy.

SUN PROTECTION POLICY

The Sun Protection policy applies whenever the sun's UV levels reach three or higher. During these periods children and adults are required to wear hats outdoors— No hat, NO PLAY. The children's hats will be taken to Bush Kinder by staff when required.

Children should wear loose fitting clothing that covers as much of the skin as possible. Singlet tops or shoestring strap dresses are not appropriate.

We will apply sunscreen to your child before they walk to Bush Kinder. Staff will reapply sunscreen after afternoon tea if required.

For further information refer to the Sun Protection policy or SunSmart website: <https://www.sunsmart.com.au/>

SESSION OVERVIEW

Every year staff carry out a risk assessment and review any areas of concern. At the commencement of each session, the third teacher will carry out a safety check of the area and discuss any areas of concern with the other teachers, Estate staff and/or volunteers. Each Bush Kinder session begins with a group meeting with the teachers, children, and Family helpers. At each meeting we Acknowledge Country and then go over the Bush Kinder rules, including walking through the boundaries in the first weeks (which can be revisited as required throughout the year). After the meeting the children are then free to engage in play within the boundaries of the Bush Kinder site. At around 2 pm we all come together for afternoon tea. When children are finished, we reapply sunscreen (when required) and the children continue to play. At the end of the session, we ensure the site is returned to how we found it and we walk back to the entrance for children to be picked up and signed out.

WHAT WE BRING

- The children's hats (when the UV is forecast to be 3 or above)
- First aid kits (one large and 2 small kits for staff to carry on themselves), including a spare EpiPen
- Any medication required by children attending that are usually kept at Kinder along with their action plans and risk minimisation plans
- A small amount of drinking water for emergencies
- The Kinder mobile phone
- Sunscreen
- Emergency contact details for all children attending
- High vis vests
- Children's rain suits (when rain is forecast).

WALKING DOWN PROCEDURE

- From home kinder the children pack their bags, place them on one of 2 trolleys, go to the toilet, apply sunscreen when required, put their hats on when required, yellow rain suits when required and put their high vis vests on and line up
- Roll is called and numbers are confirmed and children leave the premises with the 3 teachers – one at the front with a trolley, one in the middle and one at the rear with a trolley
- Teachers hold the hands of any of the children that they have observed may need increased supervision (teachers already know children as they are the previous year's 3yos). Children not holding hands with a teacher, hold hands with each other (teacher assigned) as required (eg. Crossing roads)
- Teachers regularly count the children during the walk and let each other know that they are all present
- On arrival we enter the premises through the side gate and go to our designated area to sit down
- One staff member then lets the estate know we are there and how many people are there, does a safety check of the area we will play in then returns to the kinder

See Attachment 2 for walking down route

PICK UP PROCEDURE

We will return to the pickup area at 3.40pm to ensure parents have ample time to collect their child. The session finishes at 3.50pm.

- Please wait for a staff member to hand over your child and then sign them out
- Be responsible for the supervision of your child while still at the Bush Kinder site
- Children must only be collected by an authorised person as nominated on your child's enrolment form.

In winter the Estate closes its gates at 4pm sharp. It is imperative that children are picked up on time as it is not safe for staff and children to wait on busy Hotham Street for you to collect your child.

Please refer to Delivery and Collection of Children Policy for full procedures relating to collection by authorised persons, late collection, and late collection fees.

FAMILY HELPERS

Family helpers are required for every Bush Kinder session, and assist in maintaining high adult - child ratios, enhancing the safe running of the program. A brief explanation of roles expected of family helpers at Bush Kinder, and Bush Kinder rules, are set out in Attachment 3: The Role of Family Helpers at Bush Kinder. At Bush Kinder all helpers must be clearly identified by wearing a Bush Kinder hi-vis vest, allowing them to be easily identified by children and Estate users. Family helpers remain under the direct supervision of the teachers at all times throughout the session. They are requested not to use their mobile phones whilst assisting at Bush Kinder. Family helpers cannot have other children with them.

Ripponlea Kindergarten is committed to providing a safe environment for all children in our care. All Family helpers and family members staying longer than 10 minutes to settle their children, are required to hold a current Victorian Working with Children Check (volunteer) and to be familiar with our Child Safe Environment and Wellbeing Policy.

AFTERNOON TEA

Afternoon tea is usually held around 2pm when the children sit together to eat their meal.

Each child is asked to bring their own labelled separate afternoon tea container containing healthy food such as fruit, vegetables or cheese and crackers and we will ensure their drink bottle is full before leaving. We remain nut free at Bush Kinder. Please ensure the food is kept in an insulated lunch bag in warmer weather. We bring some fresh water to each session in case of emergency as we have no other access to drinking water on site.

For further information see the Food Safety policy and the Nutrition, Oral Health and Active Play policy.

CLOTHES

Parents are responsible for appropriately dressing their children. Children will not be allowed to attend Bush Kinder if they arrive with inappropriate clothing and footwear, and without suitable clothing to change into. It is important that children wear appropriate and protective clothing and footwear which:

- allows them to move freely and undertake activities such as climbing, balancing, and running
- keeps them warm and dry in cold/wet weather
- protects them from the damaging effects of the sun, UV rays in warm weather and high UV conditions
- prevents sunburn, bites, scratches, and stings (even in warm weather, long sleeve tops and long pants are recommended - this clothing should be loose fitting and light)
- where possible is made from natural fabrics which allow the body to breathe and is comfortable against the skin
- Footwear needs to keep feet and toes covered and have a flexible sole to allow children to climb and balance on uneven surfaces.

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

	Warm weather	Cold weather/rain
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Recommended clothing and footwear	Light loose fitting long sleeve tops and long pants, broad brimmed or legionnaires hat, closed toe shoes.	Waterproofs*, long pants, long sleeved top, beanie, gumboots, waterproof gloves, thermals in very cold weather
Not recommended	Short sleeved tops, long skirts or dresses, shorts.	Skirts, dresses (incompatible with waterproofs)
Unacceptable clothing and footwear	Crocs, thongs, singlet tops	Non-waterproof clothing (waterproofs on top of non-waterproof clothing is acceptable)

WATERPROOFS* - supplied by Ripponlea Kindergarten to each child to use throughout the year. If used during session they will go home to be washed and must be returned to the kinder before or at the next bush kinder session. These suits can become hot so layered clothing underneath is ideal.

PLEASE NAME ALL CLOTHING. Please note the Kindergarten is not responsible for any lost items.

SPARE CLOTHES: Please provide a complete change of labelled clothes (including socks, underpants, and, if possible, shoes) that are appropriate to the weather, to remain in the child's bag in case of need

GUMBOOTS: on wet days a pair of gumboots is optimal for the children to wear. Please supply a change of shoes so they can change if needed.

HATS: staff bring the children's hats from the kinder each session that they are required.

For further information please refer to the Bush Kinder Protective Clothing policy.

TOILETING

Children will be encouraged to use the toilet at home kinder prior to their session. Children will have the use of an adult sized public toilet if needed.

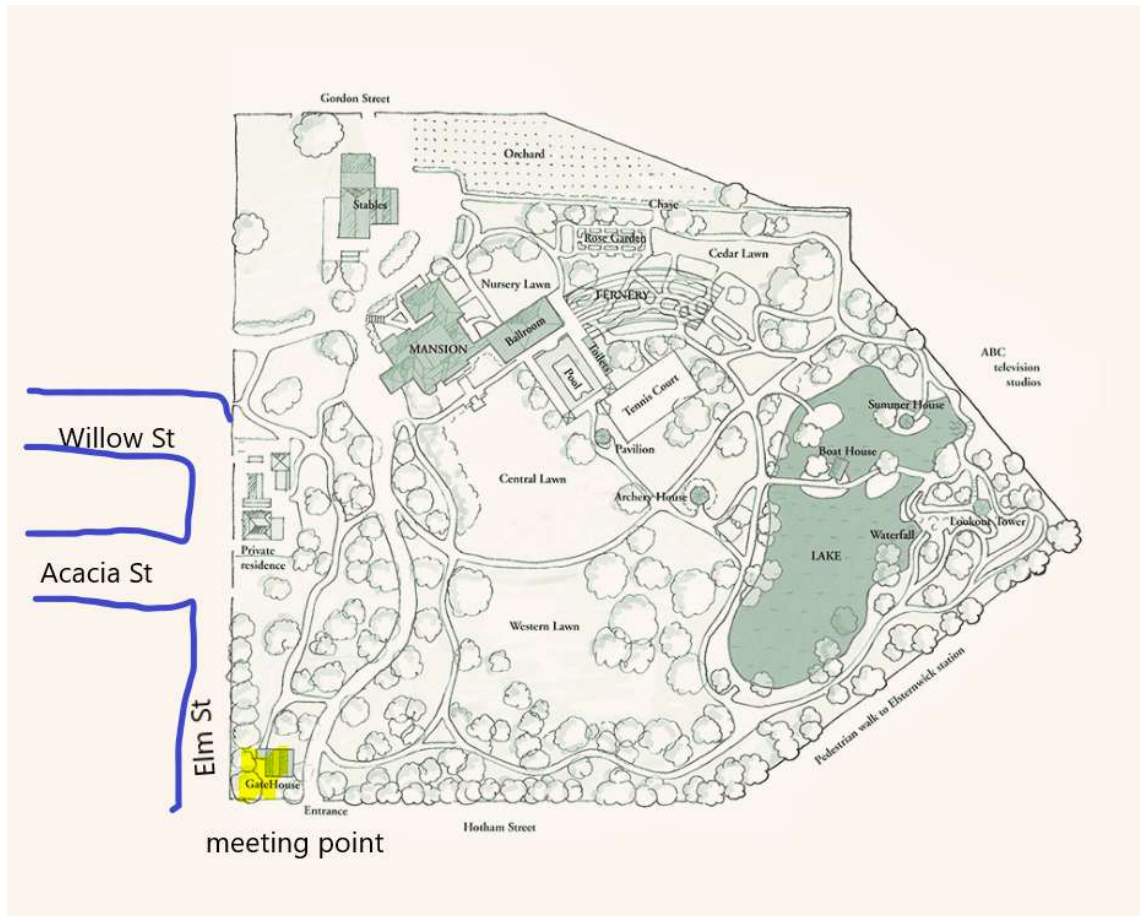
PLEASE REMEMBER TO BRING

- Kinder bag — labelled with your child's name (plus extra recycled bag/s for extra things).
- Clothing that is practical for play
- Set of spare clothes — labelled with your child's name
- Coat in winter — labelled with your child's name
- Snack box just for afternoon tea— labelled with child's name — containing healthy snacks
- Drink bottle — labelled with your child's name

The Staff at Ripponlea Kindergarten

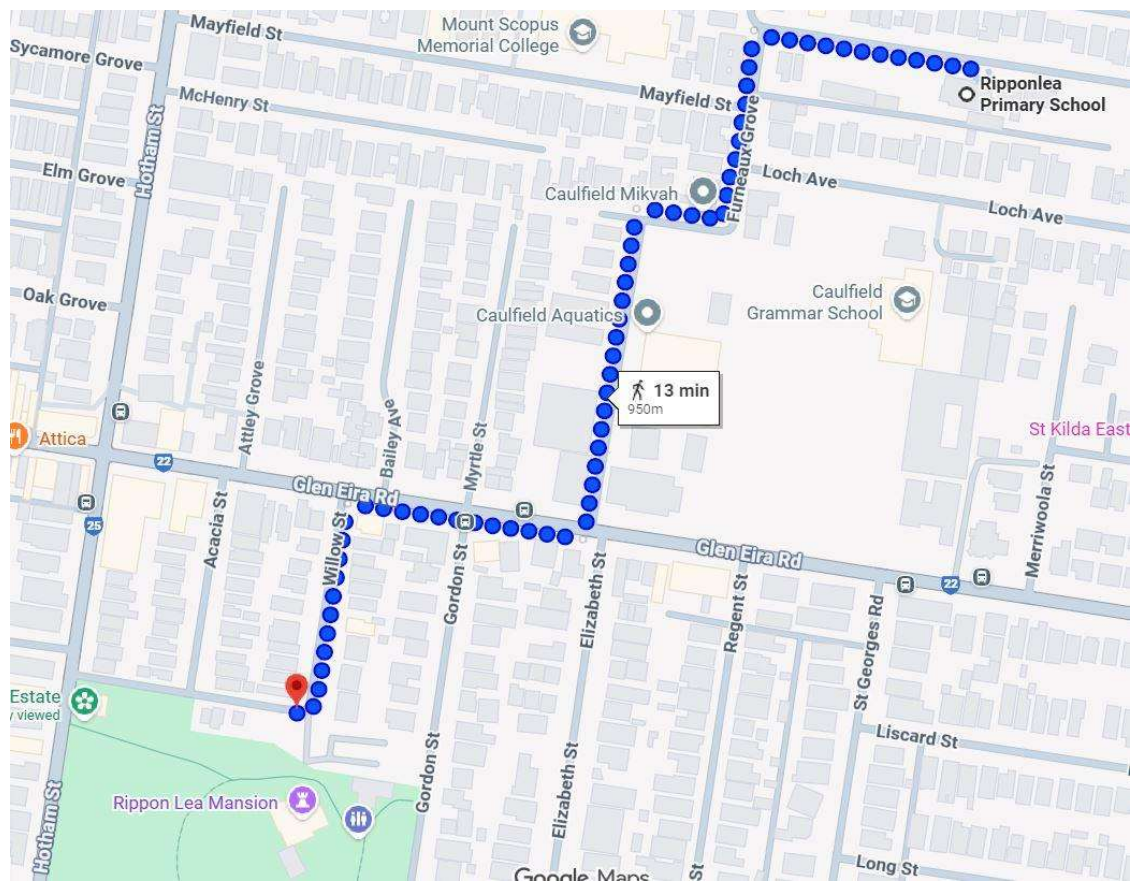
ATTACHMENT 1

Streets to park in



ATTACHMENT 2

Walking route



ATTACHMENT 3

Role of Family helpers at Busk Kinder

Being a family helper for Bush Kinder is very important and there are procedures that must be followed. Family helpers will meet the group at the Estate and stay for the duration of the program. We need a family helper for each session of Bush Kinder who is willing to be involved in the program including:

- Assisting to supervise the children and maintaining the boundaries and bush kinder rules
- Conversing and interacting with the children during the session
- Observing and being involved in play with the children. This also includes seeking staff support for issues around behaviour management/ safety
- Mobile phones are to be used in an emergency only (there is a Bush Kinder phone which may be used as part of the education program)

Bush Kinder Rules:

- Boundaries - Walk through the boundaries. Talk about when we can go out of the boundaries
- Garden litter - Use what you find on the ground. Please don't pick anything from the plants or trees
- Plants - We don't put anything in our mouths or rub our eyes. Education around touch and smelling plants
- Whistle - Ask the children what to do if they hear the whistle? Come to the teacher straight away. Practice this.
- Getting Lost - Stop, Call out "I am lost", wait for teachers to come. Can ask someone to call the teachers using the number inside the vest. Check each vest has the Kinder phone numbers
- Water safety - Remind the children we do not go near the water without an adult
- Tree Climbing/tree safety - check the strength of the branches (larger than wrist). Check for sounds of falling branches and observing your environment for broken branches
- Stick Play - Holding sticks down when walking or covering the ends with your hands. Give your sticks space
- Snakes - Tell the teacher. If close, stay still. If in the distance walk away slowly and call the teachers. If you get bitten stay still
- Birds - Talk about swooping, protecting eyes. We do not chase the birds as this is their home too. We do not feed them
- Mushrooms - We can look at them but not touch them. If we accidentally touch them ask a teacher for some sanitiser
- Bees - If allergic, be aware. Remind children that they can sting
- Spiders - We can look but do not touch them.