

Kindergarten Philosophy

We, as teachers and educators in the Little Geniuses room, acknowledge that Kindergarten is an extremely important stage in each child's life.

We acknowledge that each child is unique in personality, their stage of development, culture, customs, values and abilities. Each child's individuality is embraced within the learning environment and is promoted in a number of different ways, with educators and children working side by side to continue to promote each child's attributes. The children receive so many opportunities to grow and develop throughout their many interactions with their peers, engagements with a wide range of experiences and by creating play scenarios in both our indoor and outdoor environments. Our educators strive to plan for the many different interests displayed by the children and acknowledge that these interests help to modify, add to and change our engaging and inviting learning environment. Nutrition and healthy eating is highly valued within our learning environment. Each meal is prepared fresh onsite and each child's dietary requirements and needs are taken into account. We use cooking regularly in our programs to help children gain independence as well as learning science, mathematics and nutrition. Many of our children created meals originate from other countries around the world, which then allows our educators to further teach the children about various cultural beliefs, values, customs and ways of living. Mathematical concepts are addressed through measuring and counting ingredients; children engage in scientific processes as they observe and experiment with scientific outcomes such as liquids becoming solids; literacy as they engage in instructional text to follow recipes; and, problem solving and sharing as they work together to create their meals. Clearly labelled water bottles are readily made available to children every day so that they remain hydrated for their busy kinder day.



All of our educators work to instill our many sustainable values and beliefs in the children. Our sustainability garden is filled with a wide range of plants, fruits and vegetables that all of the children have helped to plant and then look after. The children also help to take responsibility for caring for our many animals that live at Smartie Pants, with collecting the chicken and duck eggs a real highlight for all! Food scraps from the kitchen are collected and fed to the animals by the children, as well as fruit scraps from the Little Geniuses room placed into our communal compost bin and fed to the worms in our worm farm. Our children's involvement in these sustainable practices encourage a sense of responsibility, not just in their learning environment, but for the world they live in. The plants and animals depend on the care provided by the children and would not be able to thrive and prosper without them.

We embrace diversity and community and display an interest in all similarities and differences, equity, fairness and empathy towards everyone. Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are recognised as an important part of our nation's history and our educators strive to actively include acknowledgement of these cultures on our daily programmed experiences. Our Kindergarten children become involved in a Kinder Buddy Program throughout the year, where our children head down to the Hug-a-Bubs room and interact and create relationships with the babies. This, again, adds to the children's sense of responsibility as they are required to provide care for, nurture and guide smaller versions of themselves through their play.

As kinder educators, we believe that we need to be able to continue to learn. By actively seeking opportunities to continue to progress as educators, we not only building on our knowledge, but also passing on more and more learning opportunities to the children. All educators continually participate in professional development opportunities in order to grow as both educators and as learners.

We engage many different approaches when educating our children and offer children a variety of ways to learn throughout their time in their learning environment. This way each child's individual abilities are addressed.



Smartie Pants Early Learning & Development

KINDERGARTEN

The team at Smartie Pants offers you and your child a very warm welcome to our centre. At Smartie Pants we believe that our centre should be an extension of your family home.

You can learn more about our philosophies, policies, programs and team by visiting us at

www.smartiepants.com.au

www.raiselearning.com.au

www.facebook.com/smartiepants.earlylearninganddevelopment

www.instagram.com/smartiepants_diamondcreek



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Meet Our Teacher

Hello, my name is Michael Ashton. I am the Kindergarten teacher at Smartie Pants and will also be the Kindergarten teacher for 2019. I am currently in my fourth year in this position and fourth year of teaching, having successfully completed my Bachelor of Education (Early Childhood/Primary) in 2014. During my time of study, I also worked as a casual educator at Smartie Pants, which has helped me to build a number of positive relationships with the families that attend the centre. I am also the Educational Leader at Smartie Pants.



I believe a conducive learning environment requires routine and structure. This approach not only creates familiarity and comfort for the children, it also guides them in making positive and effective play choices. Group times are also an important part of our learning environment, as it facilitates the learning continuum; extend children's interests; creates an inclusive learning environment; and builds confidence and resilience in the children. I believe that children should contribute to their own learning through open ended learning experiences and shelving so children have choice for play scenarios. This approach promotes self-regulation and enables children to draw comfort from their play environment. Lunch times also take place as a group, with children and educators sitting down for a meal. Communal meal times facilitates relationships between the children, as well as with their educators.

Our program is updated weekly and is created from the children's interests, which are documented as observations. All of our educators observe the children throughout their play and these observations are documented in our online LIFT program. LIFT allows our educators to document the children's developmental progress over the course of the year and also allows all families to log in and see what their children are doing while at Kinder. I welcome all parents contribution to LIFT, such as commenting on our program, documented observations and parent input, as our educators love to speak with all of our children about what fun and interesting things they have been doing outside of Kinder. I look forward to working with all families in the future and am happy to answer any further questions through emails, phone calls and meetings

E: michael.ashton@smartiepants.com.au

Support Team

Michael is supported by 3 assistants during the day.



End of Year Transitions

Early childhood teachers delivering a funded kindergarten program are required to prepare a Transition Learning and Development Statement (Transition Statement) for every child transitioning into school the following year. The Transition Statement is a tool for families and educators to share information about a child's learning and development.

It is designed to assist schools, particularly Prep teachers, to:

- build relationships with the child and family
- identify the child's strengths, interests and abilities
- understand how the child can best be supported as they transition into school
- plan appropriate learning programs that meet their individual needs.

At the end of the kindergarten year, Smartie Pants will provide each family with a Transition Statement for their child. The Transition Statement provides valuable information to parents about a child's learning and development in the early years.



W hat Sets Us Apart From Other Programs?

What is the difference between Kinder at Smartie Pants and being enrolled in the Little Geniuses room? To start, Kinder children have access to our Qualified Bachelor trained Kindergarten Teacher and his resources in an intensive program designed specially to prepare each funded child for their transition to school. Children in our funded program also participate in a number of special excursions outside of Smartie Pants. These excursions add to the engaged learning and knowledge that the children are continually obtaining.



Our Kinder children also interact with the Kinder teacher beyond the regular program including group times, reading and writing exercises and one on one evaluations.

Our Kinder program strives to create an inclusive, safe and comfortable learning environment that all children are able to learn and develop in. By creating this environment, our educators encourage all children to ask questions and contribute their ideas and thoughts at every opportunity possible. This is mainly conducted through our variety of group times, where both children and educators discuss stories, songs and various topics that relate directly to our learning environment. As part of our outdoor environment, we offer an extremely inclusive Sustainability Yard and Program. Through this, all of our children participate in the growing and care of various plants and vegetables. This provides the children with another area of learning and another way our educators can transfer the learning. Other practices that relate to our Sustainability Program are conservation and use of recycled water, from both our room and water tank, on our garden; care of our chickens and duck; use of recycled materials throughout our learning environment and our compost bin that is added to by all rooms.

Our educators are also continually attending Professional Development opportunities, with ideas and resources then incorporated into our learning environment. Professional Development opportunities relating to such topics as Brain Development, Social and Emotional Development, Inclusive Practices and Sustainable Practices are attended by all of our educators. The knowledge gained is shared by incorporating their new understanding into our learning environment.



E xemption from School

If a child will be turning 6 years old at any point during the time they are enrolled in kindergarten, whether for a first or second year, the child's parents must apply for an exemption from school.

Teachers and parents should carefully consider the implications of children attending prep in the year they turn 7 years old when their grade peers may be turning 5 or 6 years old. Schools are well equipped to deal with a range of abilities and may be a more appropriate and supportive education environment for children than kindergarten.



Families are encouraged to consult with early childhood professionals (such as early childhood teachers, Maternal and Child Health nurses, Early Childhood Intervention Services, paediatricians etc.) when considering applying for an exemption from school for their child.

P Progress Reports

During the kindergarten year, the early childhood teacher and the child's parents will work together to plan for the child's transition to school.

This will involve open and honest communication about the child's learning and development, and strategies to facilitate a smooth transition. We do this through the use of LIFT, phone and email communication, face to face meeting and mid year parent/teacher meetings.

Our Kinder teacher is always available for meetings to be set up outside of the scheduled communications listed above.



S Second Year Funding

In most cases it is appropriate for a child to transition to school after their kindergarten year. Schools are responsible for ensuring all students have access to a quality education that meets their diverse needs and are obligated under the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 to make adjustments to accommodate students with a disability. In exceptional circumstances where a child is observed to display delays in key outcome areas of learning and development, the possibility of a second year of funded kindergarten may be considered. However, a second year should only be considered where the kindergarten program is deemed to be the most appropriate learning program and environment for that individual child, and that the child will achieve better outcomes at kindergarten than if they go to school.

Careful consideration should be given to this decision as in many cases, school can be the most appropriate environment for a child with identified delays or disabilities for a number of reasons including:

- increased contact time in an educational environment
- strong peer/friendship group support
- access to additional support, equipment or specialist staff.

It is important to consider the anticipated barriers to the child achieving good outcomes in school and what the experience of an additional year in kindergarten will provide to address these barriers.

W Why Kinder?

Kindergarten programs provide an educational program in which qualified early childhood teachers and educators work to engage each child in effective learning, thereby promoting communication, learning and thinking, positive relationships, identity and wellbeing. Engaging children in high-quality learning experiences benefits all children, their families and the broader community.

Research shows that participation in early childhood education can improve a child's learning and development outcomes and long-term engagement in education and employment



Kindergarten and effective learning environments help all children to continue with the social and emotional development. Children are continually given opportunities and scenarios to create and build on their relationships with their peers.

Resilience and patience are also developed through social interactions, such as contributing differences, ideas and thoughts to their created small group play



E ligibility

To be eligible to attend Kinder your child must be turning 4 prior to April 30

Enrolment of children with a birth date between January 1 and April 30

Families of children with birth dates between January 1 and April 30 have a choice about whether their child will commence school in the year they turn five or the following year, and therefore whether they commence kindergarten in the year they turn four or the year they turn five.

All children learn and develop in different ways. Some children may benefit from starting school at a younger age, while other children may benefit from starting later. Families with children born between January 1 and April 30 need to make an informed choice about which year they would like their child to commence school and therefore which year their child will attend a funded kindergarten program. Smartie Pants would advise families with children who are born between January 1 and April 30 to choose carefully, as children are expected to complete a full year of kindergarten in the year they enrol and begin attending, and are also only funded for one year of kindergarten before school (unless they are eligible for an Early Start Kindergarten grant or an approved second year of funded kindergarten)

We recommend prior to enrolling your child in our program that you speak to our Kinder teacher, your maternal child health professional or other relevant professionals included in your child's development. Smartie Pants is required to confirm our funded enrolments for the year to the Department in April, those children whose enrolment have been confirmed will access their 600 hours of funded kindergarten in that calendar year. If you have enrolled your child into our program, but feel you may not proceed with school the following year, April is the cut off for this decision. Please do not make any decisions to withdraw your child from Kinder without talking to our Kinder teacher.

Withdrawing your child from the Kinder program prior to April does not mean your booking at Smartie Pants in the Little Geniuses room will be cancelled, but your booking may be altered. Your booking will continue on as normal, your child will just not be a funded Kinder booking accessing Kinder specific activities. Our Kinder teacher can help to reassure concerned families by discussing the ways in which their child's individual learning and development needs can be supported within our kindergarten program.



E nrolment Process

Kinder programs delivered in a Long Day Care setting are not a part of the central enrolment system used for Community Based Kinder Programs. Enrolments are taken via our Kinder Enrolment form handed out in June with places being confirmed by September.

Existing Smartie Pants families, with a booking of 3 or more days, automatically have a space saved in our Kinder program for the year their child is eligible. The position in the program is guaranteed, not your existing booked days. Smartie Pants families have first access to all Kinder bookings prior to the public.



H ours Of Operation

Our Kinder program is delivered between 9am-3pm Monday through Friday. Our program runs semi in line with Victorian school terms.

Your child's booking will revert to a Long Day Care booking outside of these days and times. Children attending school the following year will have their booking closed off with Smartie Pants as of December 31 unless a prior date is given. We ask that your child is enrolled for 3 days minimum to attend our program as this provides the required exposure and preparation for school.

Hours of Operation

Why we ask for a 3 day minimum booking?

Service providers are required to provide a program delivered by a qualified early childhood teacher for a minimum of 15 hours (teacher/child contact time) per week or 600 hours per year over a minimum of 40 weeks.



Whilst our kinder teacher is here for 9 hours a day, 5 days a week on average, there are factors that cut down child/teacher contact hours:

- Kinder teacher's shift may vary based on centre requirement
- Children's attendance times vary
- Kinder teacher's breaks do not count towards contact time (1.66hrs per day)
- Kinder teacher's programming times do not count towards contact time
- Public Holidays
- Kinder teacher's absence due to annual leave or illness
- Centre closures

3 days attendance between 9am-3pm ensures that the 15 hours required is achievable. All children must be enrolled in a 15 hour kindergarten program to be eligible for kindergarten funding. While services are required to provide a program for a minimum of 15 hours per week (600 hours per year) children have individual needs and some parents, after discussion with the early childhood teacher and centre coordinator, may choose not to have their child attend the kindergarten program for all hours offered at the start of the year.

Funding & Costs

Kindergarten Fee Subsidy

The Kindergarten Fee Subsidy enables eligible children to attend a funded kindergarten program for 15 hours free of charge. A service provider can apply for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy for a child for whom it receives a per capita grant in any of the following circumstances:

- the child is identified by a parent, carer or legal guardian as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander
- the child is identified on their birth certificate as being a multiple birth child (triplets or more)
- the child individually holds, or has a parent or guardian who holds one of the following:
 - a Commonwealth Health Care Card
 - a Commonwealth Pensioner Concession Card
 - a Department of Veterans' Affairs Gold Card
 - White Card/Refugee visa (subclass 200)
 - In-country Special Humanitarian visa (subclass 201)
 - Global Special Humanitarian visa (subclass 202)
 - Temporary Humanitarian Concern visa (subclass 786)
 - Protection visa (subclass 866)
 - Emergency Rescue visa (subclass 203)
 - Woman at risk visa (subclass 204)
 - Bridging visas A-E



Kindergarten Fee Subsidy in long day care services

Child Care Subsidy is a Commonwealth Government benefit to help cover the cost of child care. A child enrolled in a long day care service is not eligible for a Kindergarten Fee Subsidy where approved CCS is applied to the fee charged for the time spent in the kindergarten program. In this case, Smartie Pants will ensure families of children eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy are aware that they may be able to access a 15 hour kindergarten program free of charge at another service.

Funding

Funding is provided by the Government for each child enrolled into Kinder for 1 year. Second year funding may be available for children who are experiencing developmental delays. Funding in Long Day Care Kinder programs ensures that parents are not required to pay additional expenses for their child to attend the program (excluding excursion/incursion/events)

Cost

At Smartie Pants, a child attending our Kinder program does not attract additional costs to attend. Eg. Smartie Pants daily fee for a child over 3 is \$10⁷* whether they attend our Kinder Program or another room.

*Price correct at time of printing April 2018

Fees are direct debited fortnightly on a Thursday and are payable as directed in our policies. Additional costs may be payable for excursions and incursions.