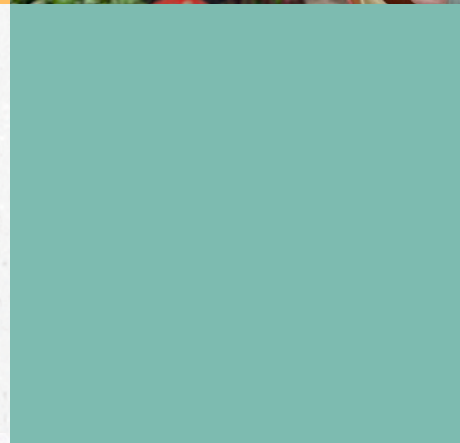




Smartie Pants Kindergarten Handbook



We acknowledge the Wurundjeri people
of the Kulin Nation as the
Traditional Custodians of the land on
which we stand. We pay our respects to
the Elders past and emerging.



Contents

The Kinder Years	4
About Us	5
Early Literacy Programs	8
Language Programs	11
Our Music	12
Early Numeracy Programs	13
Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics (STEM) and Inquiry Programs	14
Social, Emotional & Wellbeing Programs	16
Sustainability & Environment Care	18
Excursions & Community Engagement	19
Supporting Our Children	20
Everything Else You Need to know	21



The Kinder Years



The Benefits Of Kinder

Early learning between the ages of 3 and 5 is one of the most impactful periods in a child's development. It lays a strong foundation for both academic achievement and social-emotional growth by nurturing essential cognitive, language, and motor skills. These foundational abilities foster problem-solving, creativity, and critical thinking from an early age, setting children up for lifelong success.

Beyond skill development, quality early education helps children transition smoothly into formal schooling. They become familiar with structured routines, collaborative play, and core learning concepts, which build confidence and reduce anxiety. As a result, children enter school better prepared, more engaged, and ready to thrive.

Did you know that 90% of a child's brain develops by the time they turn five?

Seamless Transitions & Lasting Bonds:

BENEFITS OF CONSISTENCY FOR YOUR CHILD'S EDUCATION

For many of our children, we have been an integral part of their early and formative years.

We have taken the time to know them inside out, learning about their preferences, dislikes, and the most effective ways they learn.

This knowledge grants us the privilege of crafting tailored learning opportunities that cater to your child's individual needs. Additionally, it establishes a foundation for children to thrive and discover more about themselves as they confidently engage with their learning environment. They can rely on the trust and strong connections they have already formed with their teachers. This consistency strengthens their confidence, supports deeper learning, and nurtures strong, trusting relationships with their teachers. Children who remain in a familiar setting are more likely to take learning risks, express themselves openly, and develop a genuine love of learning — giving them a meaningful advantage as they move through their early education.

Evidence also shows that two years are better than one in early education, so Kinder now begins two years before school.



Our Philosophy

Our curriculum is grounded in decades of robust research and evidence-based practice in early childhood education. We thoughtfully integrate proven approaches that support children's language and cognitive development, early literacy and numeracy, social-emotional wellbeing, physical development, and inquiry-based learning; creating a cohesive program that responds to the needs and interests of the children in our care.

Our approach is child-centred and inclusive. We create culturally safe environments where every child feels respected, valued, and able to participate meaningfully. Children's agency, voice, and choices are central to our practice, with educators using intentional teaching within rich play-based experiences to extend learning.

We work in close partnership with families and allied health professionals to ensure each child's individual strengths, needs, and developmental pathways are supported. Through ongoing observation, reflection, and collaboration, we maintain a responsive program that nurtures holistic development across all areas of learning and wellbeing. This research-informed approach helps children build confidence, curiosity, and the foundational skills they need to thrive.

Our Kindergarten Teachers

Michael Ashton

Hello, my name is Michael, and I am the Lead Kindergarten Teacher here at Smartie Pants. I am currently in my 14th year of employment with Smartie Pants and in my 12th year as a Kindergarten Teacher. I hold full teaching registration and have a Bachelor of Education (Early Childhood/Primary). I am passionate about helping to guide children through their social and emotional development, as well as enjoying focusing on numeracy and school readiness.

I believe that each child is unique and each learns and grows at their own pace and stages of development. I enjoy watching children become motivated to learn and believe that my role as an educator is to facilitate this passion for lifelong learning.

My highlight of each Kindergarten year is when the children and families enjoy their Graduations, taking time to reflect on the journey they have been on in their last year of Early Childhood education. They reflect on how much growth their children have made throughout their learning and engagement, and become excited about what the next step in their educational journey is.

I live with my fiancée, Sarah, and our two children, Arlen, who attended Smartie Pants and is in his first year of schooling, and Hadlie, who is currently attending Smartie Pants as well. I love getting out with my family on the weekends, cooking a number of new recipes and playing cricket in the Summer months.





Madison Higgins

Hello families! My name is Madi, and I am excited to be part of your child's educational journey this year. With a Bachelor of Early Childhood and Primary Education and over seven years of experience in early childhood learning, I am passionate about guiding young minds and supporting their growth and discovery.

I deeply believe in the power of nurturing relationships. When children feel safe, supported, and connected with their educators and families, their potential for learning becomes boundless. I am inspired by the Montessori approach, where child-led independence is key. This approach encourages children to actively engage in their daily routines and take ownership of their learning spaces, fostering empowerment and self-confidence.

In our classroom, I strive to create an engaging environment where learning is both fun and meaningful. I specialise in integrating phonemic awareness, mathematics, and music into our curriculum. I also use Auslan to promote inclusive communication, ensuring every child feels confident in expressing themselves. Watching their confidence soar as they prepare for the transition to school is one of the most rewarding aspects of my role, though bittersweet as they move on.

Outside of the classroom, I enjoy exploring new cultures and experiences. I have visited wonderful places like Japan and France. On weekends, I cherish moments spent with family and friends, often enjoying a coffee at a café or catching up on some much-needed rest!

I look forward to collaborating with you all to create a memorable and enriching experience for your child this year.



Parneet Kohli

I am a Kindergarten teacher who has spent the last three-plus years cultivating resilience and curiosity in children. Transitioning from a successful background in journalism, I bring a unique lens to education viewing every child's development as a story worth telling and every day as an opportunity for investigative learning.

At the core of my philosophy is the belief that children must be empowered to make decisions for themselves, gaining the autonomy needed to navigate the world. In my personal view, mastery of social skills is a vital foundation that ensures children develop the emotional intelligence and collaborative spirit necessary to become lifelong future learners.

In addition, I am a fierce advocate for risky play, believing that managed challenges help children build essential problem-solving skills and self-confidence. By seamlessly weaving high-level literacy activities into active, adventurous play, I aim to ensure my students are not just meeting developmental milestones, but thriving. For me, teaching wasn't just a career shift; it's a fulfilling mission to support children as they grow into confident, capable, and articulate individuals.



Sarthak (Sharkie) Munjal

I began my journey in Early Childhood Education with a strong passion for supporting children's growth, curiosity, and confidence during the important kindergarten years. Although I am relatively new to the sector, having worked in the industry for the past year and a half, Smartie Pants has been my first full-time role and has provided me with invaluable opportunities to grow as an educator and a teacher.

My teaching philosophy is grounded in the belief that learning can be found in almost any experience when it is approached with genuine intent, curiosity, and the right perspective. I value commitment, consistency, and intentional teaching and I strive to create an environment where children feel secure, supported, and inspired to explore the world around them. My long-standing love for theatre and film, and my experience exploring these creative fields through university electives, have also shaped my appreciation for storytelling, collaboration, and imaginative thinking, which continue to influence the way I teach and connect with children.

Natalie Higgins

In 2005, I founded Smartie Pants with Sharon, stepping into the sector with the unique perspective of both an engineer and a new mother. Over the past 21 years, I have evolved from an educator into a qualified teacher, driven by a deep conviction that learning is never linear. I believe a child's capability often far exceeds our preconceived notions, and my role is to ensure our teaching is highly responsive to their natural curiosity.

Today, Smartie Pants is a true family affair; my own children and closest friends now work alongside me in the centre. I work hands-on with our incredible Kindergarten team, challenging them to drive best-practice strategies that impact not just our centre, but the wider early learning community. My goal is to ensure every child finds both challenge and joy in their learning journey.

**Sharon Carrafa**

As the other founding director of Smartie Pants in 2005, my perspective on education and care was not only shaped by my experience in senior healthcare administration, but also as I navigated being a new mum. For both Natalie and myself, these 'alternative lenses' helped us redefine what quality education and care look like. We understand that as educators, we provide the blueprint for a child's learning journey and we strive, as a team, to ensure each child in our care has the finest blue-print.

After completing my Diploma in Children's Services, I was driven by a desire to understand how children learn. This passion led me to complete my Bachelor of Education (Early Childhood and Primary) in 2018, further fuelling my passion and understanding of the vital importance of early childhood education.

I believe that education is a lifelong journey, beginning at birth, extending throughout a child's life as they build on their foundational understandings. As a teacher, my role is to introduce a stimulating and nurturing environment that leverages their natural curiosity and extends on natural desire to learn and discover their world. As teachers, I believe we are the scaffold for growing our children into world-ready individuals who are passionate about their learning.



Early Literacy Programs

Throughout each Kindergarten setting, the children are provided with numerous opportunities to engage with literacy. Our children are encouraged to engage with literacy experiences that appeal to their interests, as well as challenging them in their thinking and learning. Children are encouraged to explore letter recognition and construction throughout free play and intentional teaching experiences, such as creative pieces in Art Corner, name tracing and constructing on whiteboards and free play with chalk in the outdoor setting.

Abecedarian Approach

LANGUAGE RICH ENVIRONMENTS

Continuing implementation of the 3A Abecedarian Approach focuses on putting 'Language Priority' at the heart of our curriculum to maximise early brain development and learning outcomes. By seamlessly integrating therapeutic learning games and responsive caregiving into our daily practice, we ensure every child receives the personalised, language-rich interactions they need to thrive.



Heggerty

PHONEMIC AWARENESS

Heggerty is a fast-paced, highly engaging literacy program focused entirely on phonemic awareness- the ability to hear, identify, and manipulate individual sounds in spoken words.

Designed as a daily 5-10 minute routine, it relies on completely auditory and oral exercises, meaning children don't read words from a page. Instead, they use active hand motions and physical gestures to blend sounds together, chop words into syllables, and swap out beginning or ending sounds. By turning sound-play into a lively, collaborative game, Heggerty trains young ears to recognise the building blocks of language, laying a crucial foundation for confident reading and writing.



Heggerty

WIDOTW

SHOW AND TELL PROGRAM

What I Did On The Weekend is our unique, child-led twist on traditional Show and Tell. Instead of bringing toys from home, children are encouraged to share a photo from their weekend or a natural treasure they found, such as a unique leaf, a beach shell, or an interesting rock. This approach serves two fantastic purposes: it bridges the connection between home life and the classroom, and it levels the playing field so the focus is entirely on the child's experiences rather than a toy. WIDOTW is a wonderful tool for building early public speaking confidence, developing descriptive language, and fostering meaningful conversations as children proudly share their real-world adventures with their peers.



PreLit

EARLY LITERACY PROGRAM

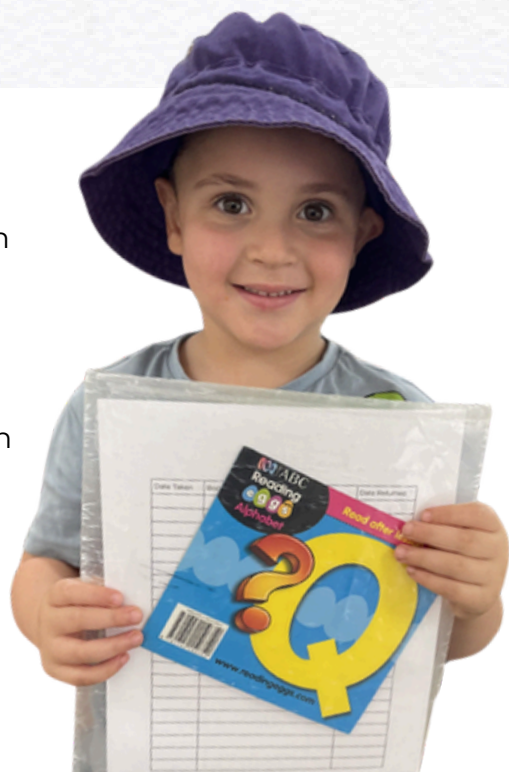
We introduced the PreLit program in early 2022 after finding out that the MultiLit program, which is used by hundreds of schools around Australia, had expanded its program into preschool-level learning. **PreLit is specifically designed to support teachers in providing foundational literacy pre-reading skills, like oral language and phonological awareness, which is the ability to identify sounds and their associated letters.** – Delivered in short 15-minute small-group sessions three times a week, PreLit develops oral language and pre-reading skills through structured storybook reading using dialogic techniques



Readers

TAKE HOME READERS PROGRAM

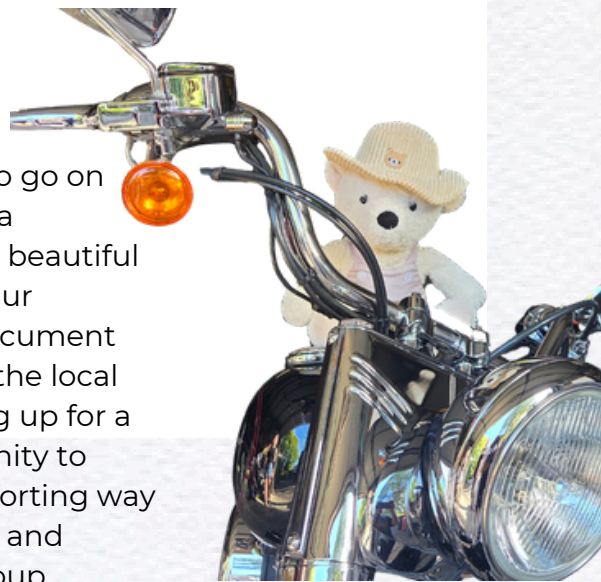
Each Kinder enrolled child has the opportunity to engage with our Take Home Reader program. Each child selects a simple reader to take home and begin to engage with independent reading and skills related to this. While we acknowledge that not every child has yet developed full confidence in independent reading, just engaging with and moving through these readers at home can build on skills relating to independent reading, such as correct direction of turning the pages, identifying known letters and acknowledging character emotions. We ask that each family return and change their readers within two weeks, so that every child has an opportunity to choose a variety of books. The readers vary in difficulty level, so each child's literacy and reading skill levels can be evenly provided for.



Everywhere Bear

TRAVELLING BEAR / HOME-LINK PROGRAM

Inspired by Julia Donaldson's storybook, *The Everywhere Bear* is our wonderful take-home classroom mascot program. Just like the character in the book who leaves his classroom shelf to go on incredible journeys, our Kindergarten bear takes turns visiting a different child's home each weekend. This program serves as a beautiful "home-kinder link," building a bridge between family life and our classroom community. When it is your child's turn, they will document their weekend adventures with the bear- whether it's a trip to the local Diamond Creek park, helping make breakfast, or simply curling up for a bedtime story. Back at kinder, your child will have the opportunity to share their journal pages with their peers. It is a fantastic, comforting way to build early public speaking confidence, practice storytelling, and celebrate the unique everyday lives of all the families in our group.



Auslan

SIGN LANGUAGE PROGRAM

Our Auslan Program introduces children to Australian Sign Language, building early communication skills and inclusivity. Professionally trained through the renowned "Honeybee" curriculum by Lisa Mills, our educators bring Auslan to life using a Word of the Week approach. We embed a new sign and conversational phrase into daily routines, alongside the alphabet and numbers. Woven naturally into morning greetings and group times, this consistent, playful exposure helps children connect gestures to language while celebrating diverse ways of communicating.



ELLA

EARLY LEARNING LANGUAGES AUSTRALIA PROGRAM

ELLA is a captivating program for young children that offers an engaging digital platform for language learning. It introduces preschoolers to various cultural experiences from an early age. Children can learn any of thirteen languages through interactive and playful applications called The Polyglots. At Smartie Pants, we have chosen **Italian** as our ELLA language. These apps are designed to be used on tablets in a preschool setting. Their development involved collaboration with language, early childhood education, and technology experts. ELLA offers a range of benefits for preschoolers and educators alike: It effectively introduces young children to a new language, fostering their interest in language learning both at school and beyond. ELLA promotes cultural competency by exposing children to diverse cultures, and fostering respect and understanding. It also encourages families to share their home languages, further enhancing language appreciation. ELLA develops children's cognitive and social skills, improving their literacy, memory, and concentration.



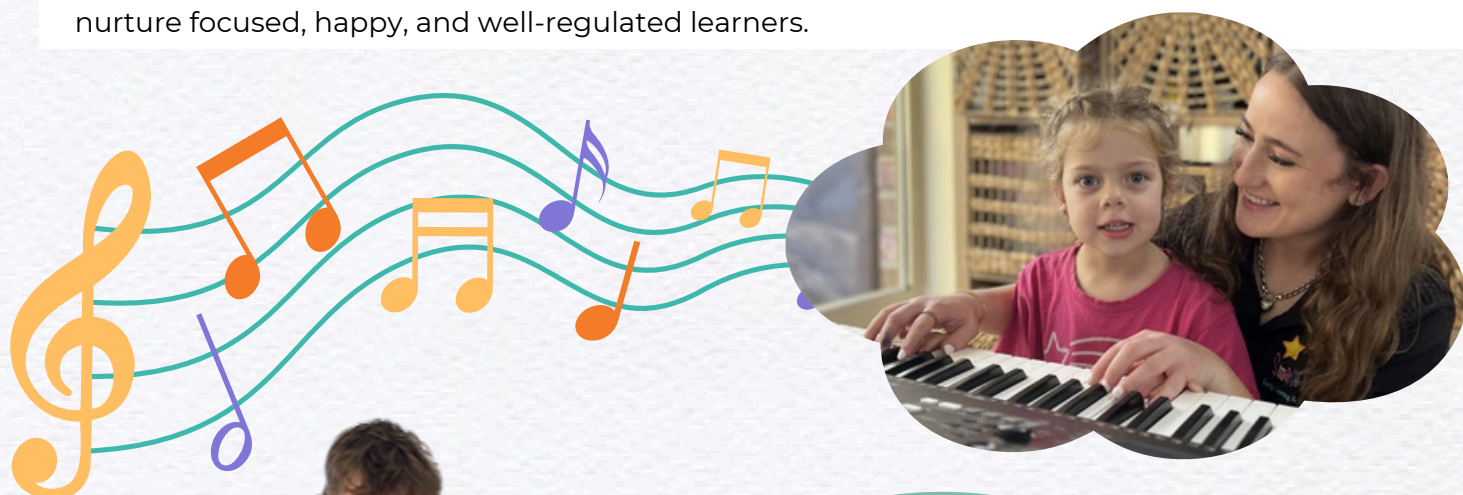
Musical Child

MUSIC PROGRAM

Our Musical Child program introduces children to the joy of music through engaging, rhythm-based games. Our talented team bring their own musical passions into the classroom, playing live keyboards, guitars, and ukuleles. Children don't just listen- they get hands-on experience learning how to hold and play these instruments themselves.

Beyond the fun, music is a powerful tool for early childhood development. Engaging with rhythm and melody boosts cognition, strengthening the neural pathways responsible for spatial reasoning, memory, and early math skills like counting and pattern recognition.

Crucially, music also plays a vital role in co-regulation. We intentionally use specific beats, tempos, and singing games to help children transition between activities, channel their energy, and learn how to calm their minds and bodies. Through Musical Child, we use the science of sound to nurture focused, happy, and well-regulated learners.

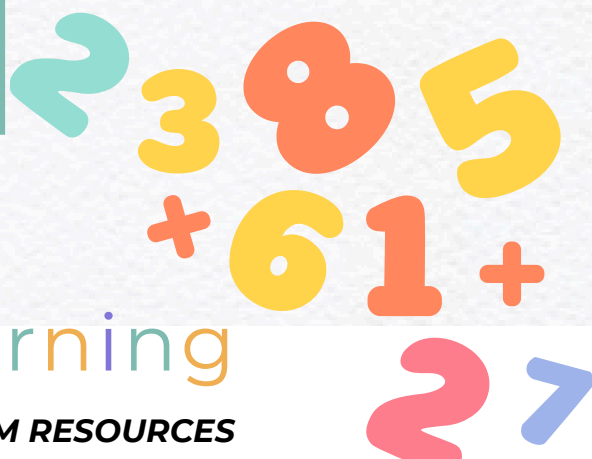


Early Numeracy Programs



Arc Learning

VICTORIAN CURRICULUM RESOURCES



At Smartie Pants, we embed the **ARC Learning platform**, created by the Department of Education, to support engaging mathematics and numeracy experiences. ARC provides our educators with guidance on creating activities that cater to all of our children's desire to learn about numeracy, as well as encouraging them to engage in small-group work and to challenge themselves in their learning and interactions with their educators and peers.

Our educators work to embed learning across a range of numeracy topics and areas of learning, such as patterns, number knowledge, measurement, and problem-solving, while ensuring each lesson is fun for the children, so that our belief in play-based learning is continually upheld.



Let's Count & Maths Maker

An extension of the ARC implementation in our setting is our engagement with the **Let's Count Program**. Developed by The Smith Family, Let's Count encourages families and educators to notice, talk about and explore mathematics in all kinds of settings, such as the kitchen, outdoors, going shopping and playing on the playground.



To further promote the Let's Count Program in our setting, educators have created a **MATHS Maker** take-home pack. Our educators encourage families to take the pack home for one week and document all of the Maths that they can make with their families, with the help of a mathematical resource that is packed inside.



Families are also encouraged to take photos and email them to their classrooms, so that they can share their results with their peers and educators. Our families' engagement with MATHS Makers not only promotes mathematics within the family home, but also encourages family engagement with our early childhood setting, allows the children to have fun as they learn and explore and again, like our What I Did On The Weekend program, promotes self-confidence and public speaking as children share their results.

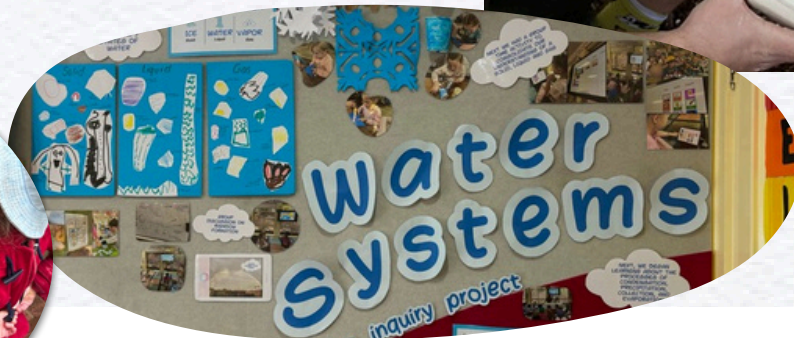


STEM & Inquiry Learning Programs

EARLY STEM EDUCATION PROGRAM

Children explore hands-on STEM experiences, including woodworking, construction, simple science experiments (floating and sinking, plants, weather) and engineering challenges. We also use the **Little Scientists program** to spark curiosity, creativity and a deeper understanding of the world.

In 2021, members of our team commenced Professional Development in the Little Scientists program. This accredited, pedagogy-based program fosters creative STEM learning in topics like water, air, engineering, optics, acoustics, mathematics, the human body, computer science, chemical reactions and design and technologies. The program integrates perfectly with some of the amazing science programs, like Science Kathy, already established at Smartie Pants.



Water Systems INQUIRY PROJECT

Our Water Systems Inquiry Project is a child-led STEM journey sparked when the children noticed dark storm clouds and wondered, "Why do clouds make rain?"

This hands-on project allowed our young scientists to investigate the water cycle and the three states of matter (solid, liquid, and gas).

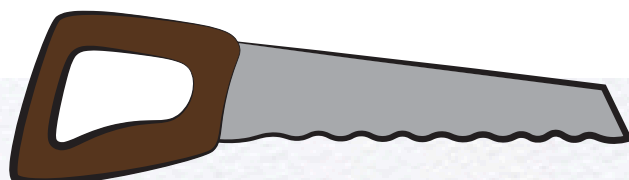
Through interactive experiments- like simulating rain with shaving cream and tracking evaporation in the sun- the children transformed abstract concepts into tangible discoveries. Led by their own curiosity and documented in our foyer display, the children blew us away by confidently adopting real scientific terms like condensation and precipitation to describe the world around them!

Wood working

Embedding structured woodwork into our program allows us to view three-year-olds as capable, competent learners. Through hands-on experience with real tools like hammers and hand drills, children practice dynamic risk assessment—learning to distinguish between an adult-managed hazard and a risk they can safely navigate. This deliberate exposure to structured risk play fosters deep focus, fine motor refinement, and executive function skills as children plan, troubleshoot, and build. Beyond practical construction, this authentic engineering experience instills a profound sense of agency and resilience, teaching children to view minor setbacks not as failures, but as opportunities to persist and try again.



To safely manage this high-reward experience within our group of 30 children, the program operates under a rigorous safety framework. Woodwork occurs within a dedicated, enclosed area under strict supervision ratios, utilising a systematic tool-tracking system. We prioritise process over product, utilising a sequential skill ladder that begins with low-risk tasks—like hammering golf tees into foam—before children gradually progress to using real nails, hand drills, and wood glue. Through upcoming family events, portfolios, and daily documentation, we look forward to partnering with you to champion the essential value of risk play in helping our children become world-ready.





Social, Emotional & Wellbeing

Emotional Safety & Wellbeing

Health, wellbeing and safety are the foundation for confident learning and lifelong success. Throughout the day, our children are exposed to experiences, projects and activities that help them develop essential life skills and dispositions as well as promote physical fitness.

You Can Do It! program explicitly teaches children to name feelings, show empathy and learn perspectives. Through the use of animation and puppets, this highly popular program focuses on fostering positive attitudes and essential skills such as resilience, confidence, persistence, organisation, and social skills in young children in a fun and relatable way.

Healthy Living Programs

Healthy Harold:

This program promotes overall health and well-being among our students. It covers various aspects such as nutrition, physical activity, and mental wellness.

Yoga: Our yoga program aims to enhance flexibility, strength, and mindfulness among our students. Through regular yoga sessions, children learn relaxation techniques and develop a deeper connection with their bodies.

Smiles 4 Miles dental program: Our partnership with the Smiles 4 Miles dental program ensures that students receive proper dental care and education about oral hygiene practices.

Water Hero encourages our children to develop a habit of drinking water and staying hydrated throughout the day by promoting the importance of water intake and educating children on the benefits of hydration.

Animal Fun is a highly engaging evidence-based movement program designed to enhance gross and fine motor skills, balance, coordination, and social skills in children aged 3–6 years. Developed by physiotherapists, occupational therapists, and psychologists at Curtin University, the program uses playful animal-inspired poses and actions that children love.



PERSONAL SAFETY AND PROTECTIVE BEHAVIOURS

Children learn body autonomy, consent, road safety, water safety and e-safety in age-appropriate ways. We follow SunSmart guidelines and uphold Child Safe Standards with zero tolerance for harm.



My Body Safety Rules

My body is my body and it belongs to me!

I can say, 'No!' if I don't want to kiss or hug someone.
I can give them a high five, shake their hand or blow them a kiss.
I am the boss of my body and what I say goes!



I have a Safety Network

These are five adults I trust. I can tell these people anything and they will believe me.
If I feel worried, scared or unsure, I can tell someone on my Safety Network how I am feeling and why I feel this way.



Early Warning Signs

If I feel frightened or unsafe
I may sweat a lot, get a sick tummy,
become shaky and my heart might
beat really fast.

These feelings are called my Early
Warning Signs. If I feel this way about
anything, I must tell an adult on my
Safety Network straightaway.



Secrets

I should never keep secrets that make me
feel bad or uncomfortable. If someone
asks me to keep a secret that makes me
feel bad or unsafe, I must tell an adult on
my Safety Network straightaway!



Private Parts

My private parts are the parts of my body
under my bathing suit. My mouth is a
private part too. I always call my
private parts by their correct names.
No one can ask me to touch their private
parts. And no one should show me pictures
of private parts. If any of these things happen,
I must tell a trusted adult on my Safety
Network straightaway.



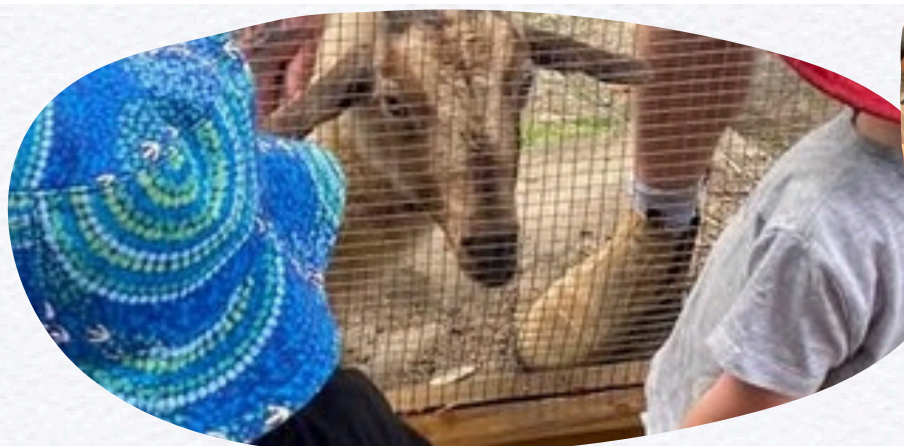
DIVERSITY, COMPASSION & UNDERSTANDING

At Smartie Pants we offer programs that teach compassion and acceptance. We achieve this not only through our interactions and group experiences, but also through our child sponsorship program with Smith Family, our child and family sponsorship program in the Philippines, our visits to Estia Aged Care Facility and our fundraising events.



Responsibility, Respect and Empathy through Animal Care

A key part of our program involves caring for the animals that share our bushland setting. By looking after our chickens, rabbits, and goats, children develop a sense of responsibility and a deeper connection to the natural world. These experiences help children understand the interdependence between people, animals, and the environment, fostering care and respect for the world around them.

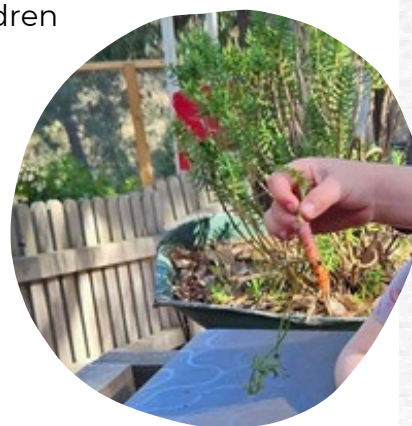


Sustainability & Care for Environment

Sustainability is woven throughout our curriculum, particularly within science and STEM learning. Through hands-on experiences and enquiry-based projects, children explore how sustainability connects to the natural world and their everyday lives. These experiences help children develop practical understanding while encouraging them to think creatively about how their actions can make a positive difference.

Teaching sustainability supports the development of critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, and collaboration skills. It also helps children build a meaningful connection to nature and an appreciation for healthy, environmentally responsible living.

We take a holistic and practical approach to sustainability by embedding it into children's daily routines and experiences. Children learn about waste reduction, recycling, water conservation, and energy use through meaningful, age-appropriate activities.



STEPHANIE ALEXANDER'S KITCHEN GARDEN PROGRAM

Our children love engaging with our kitchen garden! Through this Program, children learn about sustainability and environmental care by growing, harvesting, and cooking their own food.

- **Seasonal Learning:** Children explore how weather shapes nature by planting varieties suited to both warm and cool seasons
- **Seed to Table:** We regularly grow and use fresh ingredients—including carrots, strawberries, rosemary, mint, and tomatoes—directly in our cooking experiences
- **Knowledge Sharing:** This hands-on program empowers children to care for the environment and proudly share their sustainable practices with others

Excursions & Community Engagement

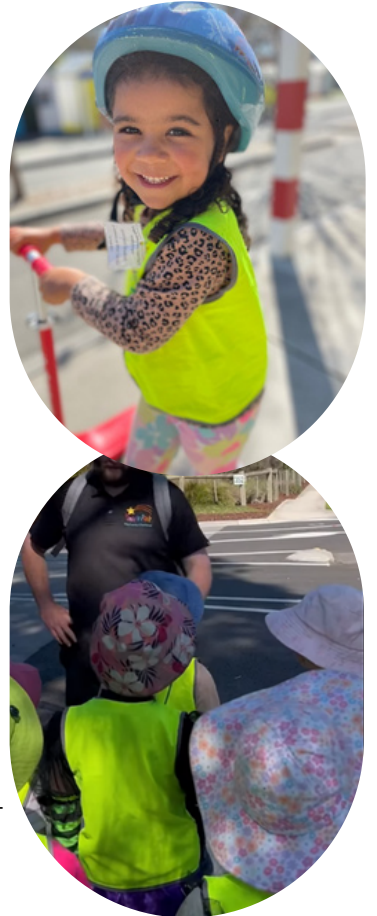
Our Excursions

We offer excursions throughout the year to our 3 and 4 Year Old Adventurers and Explorers Funded Kindergarten children. We endeavour to provide up to 3 excursions each year to our Kindergarten children, with each excursion providing our children opportunities to learn, grow and develop, such as;

- The development of confidence through a learning opportunity is a right of passage and a sign of growing up
- 'Hands-on' 'real life' experiences
- Listening and following skills
- Literacy skills and awareness
- Traffic and Road safety, through travelling on buses and walking to our destinations

Some of our past excursions have included:

- The Royal Botanical Gardens
- Eltham, Diamond Valley and Thomastown Libraries
- Edendale and Collingwood Children's Farms
- ScienceWorks
- Kew Traffic School
- Walking excursions to Estia Health Aged Care, a program that we offer to our 4-year-old explorers in the Little Geniuses room: We are currently conducting our walking excursions monthly, starting from February each year.



Our Community

Engagement with our community is a connection that we strive to develop and maintain. Engagement with the community allows children to develop their sense of belonging and security as they connect to their world. It also provides them the opportunity to give back. Some ways that we have and continue to connect with are:

- Walking excursions to Estia Health Aged care
- Participating in the Diamond Creek Town Fair parade
- Singing and performing Christmas Carols at Carols in the Park, Diamond Creek
- Contributing to the local FoodBank
- Engaging with the local DC Traders through creating and decorating a new Christmas tree each year- These trees are then placed throughout the Diamond Creek township
- Consistent visits from the local CFA, as well as dental visits and water safety visits from local swimming schools
- Promoting Careers Week within our service and inviting parents and families into the service to discuss their lines of work
- Child sponsorship with the Smith Family

Supporting Our Children

At our service, we are committed to providing an inclusive learning environment where every child can thrive!

To support this goal, we engage multiple strategies. Please reach out to our Kindergarten Teachers to discuss further support for your family's needs.

PRESCHOOL FIELD OFFICER PROGRAM (PSFO)

We actively engage with the Preschool Field Officer (PSFO) program, a free, state-funded initiative delivered by the Victorian Department of Education.

The PSFO program is designed to build the capacity, skills, and confidence of our early childhood educators to deliver highly inclusive kindergarten programs for children with additional needs or developmental vulnerabilities.

The PSFO program is available to support children across all of our government-funded kindergarten programs, including:

- Three-Year-Old Kindergarten
- Four-Year-Old Kindergarten
- Early Start Kindergarten

KINDERGARTEN INCLUSION SUPPORT (KIS)

KIS provides funding which enables us to plan and implement an inclusive program that is responsive to the needs of children with a disability, developmental delay or complex medical needs. Applications are made by your Kindergarten teacher, in consultation with families, early childhood intervention specialists, allied health specialists and PSFO. *Applications for KIS funding can be made from Term 4 of the year before your child commences Kindergarten, **5 October 2026**.*

EDUCATOR TRAINING

In addition to working closely with our PSFO, we also provide both onsite and offsite training, to develop our Early Childhood Teachers and Educators to best support our children as they navigate their big emotions and learn to communicate their needs.

ALLIED HEALTH

We will work closely with your child's allied health professionals to implement their developmental recommendations and specialist programs to help your child achieve their goals. Please speak to our Kindergarten Teachers if you wish to discuss your child's needs further or are seeking a referral.

NDIS

In addition, we also work closely with Next Steps Pathways who can help your family access developmental support and help you navigate the NDIS system if required.



Everything Else You Need to Know

Delivery of Our Programs

Our Kindergarten programs run 7.5 hours per day. The days these programs will be delivered will be confirmed once enrolment applications have been received and emailed out to all families before confirmations are sent.

Whilst our Kinder programs run during specific times of the day, it is the family's choice as to what hours their child actually attends the program. For example families may go away on holidays, start later in the day due to shift changes, or leave early for appointments.

Typically our Kinder programs align with Victorian school terms, but due to the progressive roll out of Kinder reforms we tailor our kinder delivery year to year to allow for optimal kinder engagement which means this delivery is subject to change. Program delivery will be confirmed closer to the time. Kinder does not affect your child's booking as they continue as a Long Day Care booking outside of these days and times.

Children heading off to school the following year will have their booking ceased with Smartie Pants on Friday, 8th January 2027. Occasional care bookings in January will be available pending vacancy.

Enrolment Process

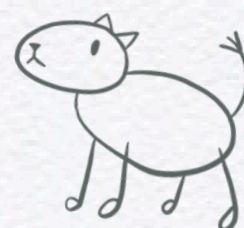
Kinder programs delivered in a Long Day Care setting are not a part of the central enrolment system used for Community-Based Kinder Programs.

Kinder applications are emailed to families and completed online. Families will nominate their booking preference and one second option.

Existing Smartie Pants families, with a booking of 2 days or more, automatically have a space saved in our Kinder program for the year their child is eligible. While a position in the program is guaranteed, existing booked days are not and positions are filled in the order submitted. Smartie Pants families have first access to Kinder bookings prior to the public.

WHY DO WE RECOMMEND 3 DAYS FOR KINDERGARTEN?

Whilst our enrolment minimum for 4-year-old kinder is 2 days per week we recommend children attend 3 days minimum where possible. This provides maximum Kinder exposure and adequate preparation for 5 days of school.



FEES AND COSTS

Smartie Pants' daily long-daycare fee of \$173.75* covers all costs** for the care and education of your child. The cost of this fee is reduced by your childcare subsidy (CCS). Further, in 2023, the government introduced 'Free Kindergarten', which provides for 15 hours per week (600 hours per year) of free kindergarten. For Kinder programs delivered within a Long Day Care service, **this subsidy is directly passed on to families** in the form of the Victorian Government Kinder Offset to reduce the cost of their day care bill. Currently, this payment is approximately \$ 2,101 per year.

**Fee is correct at the time of publishing, but is subject to change in accordance with the Fee Policy. Please refer to the fee policy for full-time and casual rates.*

***Additional costs may be payable for excursions and incursions.*

VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT KINDER OFFSET PROGRAM

The Victorian Government Kinder Offset program will help all Victorian children dream even bigger through increased access to quality early childhood education and care. A critical part of the reform is Free Kinder, which will make two years of high-quality Kindergarten programs free for all Victorian children. Free Kinder will continue to be available for both 3 and 4-year-old Kindergarten programs in 2027.

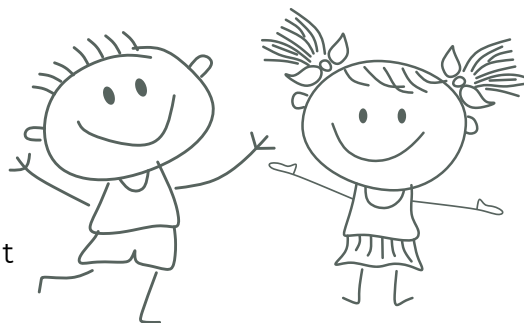
The payment will be evenly distributed throughout the Kinder year, being added to your statements each month.

The offset amounts will be indicated as Victorian Government Free Kinder offset on your invoice.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Whilst funding in a stand-alone/sessional service directly reduces fees, funding in Long Day Care Kinder programs goes directly to the service to ensure that families are not required to pay additional fees for their child to attend the program (excluding excursions, incursions, and special events).

Two years of Kinder Funding is provided by the government for each child enrolled on a Kinder program, one year for 3-year-old Kinder and another for 4-year-old Kinder.



EXEMPTION FROM SCHOOL

If a child turns six at any point during their kindergarten enrollment, whether in the 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 seven, when their grade peers may be turning five or six. Schools are well equipped to address a range of abilities and may be a more appropriate and supportive educational environment for children than Kindergarten.

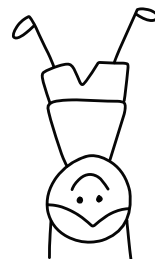
Families are encouraged to consult with early childhood professionals (such as early childhood teachers, maternal and child health nurses, Early Childhood Intervention Services, paediatricians, etc.) when considering applying for an exemption from school for their child.

KINDERGARTEN SUBSIDIES

Certain government subsidies and funding are available to eligible children to ensure their inclusion and access to a Government funded Kinder Program.

Please speak to Emma, our Kinder Funding Coordinator, if you believe you fit any of the following criteria:

- Your child is identified by a parent, carer or legal guardian as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander
- Your child has been known to Child Protection at some stage throughout their life
- Your family or child are refugees



ADDITIONAL (2ND) YEAR OF FUNDING AFTER 4-YEAR-OLD KINDERGARTEN

In most cases it is appropriate for a child to transition from 3 year old Kinder to 4 year old Kinder then to school..

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 at least 2 out of 5 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.

EARLY START KINDERGARTEN (ESK)

ESK continues to be available for eligible 3-year-old children, providing 15 hours of kindergarten each week with no gap fee up to a set amount for the year.

To be eligible for ESK, children must be 3 years of age by 30 April in the year they start kindergarten, and either: - identify as

- Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander
- be from a refugee or asylum seeker background or
- be from a family that has had contact with Child Protection

It is important that our service enrolls eligible children in ESK, even if Free Kinder or funded Three-Year-Old Kindergarten is available. This ensures eligible children have priority of access, and services can receive additional funding and support.

Children who are eligible or have access to ESK, are eligible for enrolment into a Pre Prep program the following year.

PRE-PREP ROLLOUT SCHEDULE

All Victorian children can now benefit from two years of quality, play-based early learning. For some families, this includes access to the new Pre-Prep program.

This guide will help our families understand the options available to them and know how to register and enrol.

Looking ahead to 2027:

- Statewide Pre-Prep access will be available for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from refugee or asylum seeker backgrounds, and those who've had involvement with Child Protection
- Children who participated in Early Start Kindergarten or Access to Early Learning during their Three-Year-Old Kindergarten year will also be eligible for Pre-Prep.
- 12 additional local government areas will roll out Pre-Prep, building on the successful implementation in 6 areas this year
- Three-Year-Old Kindergarten will continue progressing toward full statewide rollout. (This is already state wide)
- Free Kinder will remain available for families
- Pre Prep programs will increase to 30 hours per week, for priority groups, by 2030, with full roll out to all eligible children in 2036. Pre-Prep will be continue at Smartie Pants in 2027 for eligible children. Pre-Prep does not differ from 4 year old Kinder other than offering children more hours in the week, which means there will be more time for children to deepen their learning and development.
 - Pre-Prep is a play-based learning program led by qualified teachers. Like Four-Year-Old Kindergarten, Pre-Prep will follow the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework.
 - **ELIGIBILITY FOR PRE-PREP**
From 2026, between 16 and 25 hours of Pre-Prep will be available statewide to:
 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children
 - Children from a refugee or asylum seeker background
 - Children who have had contact with Child Protection services
 - Children supported by Early Start Kindergarten or Access to Early Learning in their ThreeYear-Old Kindergarten year
 - If you think your child meets one of the eligibility criteria for Pre-Prep, please contact Emma, our Kindergarten enrolment Coordinator. If your child is currently accessing Early Start Kindergarten at our service in 2026, they are eligible for Pre-Prep from 2027.





Enrol Today!

