

CHILDREN'S SERVICES GUIDEBOOK 2024



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Cranbourne North 3977
5996 9056
www.merindapark.com.au

Table of Contents

CENTRE INFORMATION	1
<i>Contact Information</i>	1
<i>Hours of Operation</i>	1
WELCOME	2
ABOUT US	3
<i>Merinda Park Community Centre Kindergarten (MPCCCK) 3-Year-old and 4-Year-Old Funded Kindergarten</i>	3
<i>Day Care Program</i>	3
<i>Before School Care Program (BSC)</i>	3
<i>After School Care Program (ASC)</i>	3
<i>School Holiday Program</i>	4
<i>Our Educators</i>	4
<i>Policies and Procedures</i>	4
<i>No Jab, No Play</i>	4
<i>Allergies</i>	4
<i>Unwell Children</i>	4
ENROLMENT	5
<i>Enrolment Procedure</i>	5
<i>Administration Fee and Bond</i>	5
<i>Child Care Subsidy (CCS)</i>	5
<i>Xplor App</i>	5
BOOKINGS AND FEES	6
<i>Permanent and Casual Bookings</i>	6
<i>Increasing Days</i>	6
<i>Cancellation of Days</i>	6
<i>Public Holidays</i>	6
<i>Swapping Days</i>	6
<i>Late Collection Fee</i>	6
ATTENDANCE AND ABSENCES	7
<i>Attendance</i>	7
<i>Non-Attendance</i>	7
<i>Initial Absences</i>	7
<i>Additional Absences</i>	7
ACCOUNTS AND BILLING	8
<i>Statements</i>	8
<i>Payments</i>	8
<i>Late Payment</i>	8
<i>Cessation of Care</i>	8
<i>Change of Details</i>	8
HEALTH AND SAFETY	9
<i>Authorised Emergency Contacts</i>	9
<i>First Aid</i>	9
<i>Health Related Exclusion</i>	9
<i>Medical Conditions</i>	9
<i>SunSmart Policy</i>	10
PROGRAM INFORMATION	11
<i>Day Care</i>	11
<i>Kindergarten</i>	12
<i>School Aged Programs</i>	13
<i>Out of School Hours Care (OSHC)/Pupil Free Day (PFD)</i>	13
<i>School Holiday Program</i>	13
POLICIES AND PROCEDURES	14
<i>Parents/Guardians Involvement</i>	14
<i>Communication</i>	14
FEEDBACK AND SUGGESTIONS	15

Centre Information

Contact Information

Main Office: 5996 9056

Children's Services Office: 5996 9878

Children's Services Email: mpcs@merindapark.com.au

Admin Office Email: admin@merindapark.com.au

Website: www.merindapark.com.au

Hours of Operation

Admin Office: Monday to Friday 9:30am – 3:30pm

3 and 4-Year-Old Funded Kindergarten: 9:30am – 2:30pm

Day Care: 9:30am – 2:30pm

Before School Care: 6:30am – 9:00am

After School Care: 3:30pm – 6:00pm

School Holiday Program: 6:30am – 6:00pm

Pupil Free Day: 6:30am – 6:00pm

Our Centre is closed on all Public Holidays and over the Christmas/New Year period.

Welcome



Welcome to Merinda Park Learning and Community Centre (MPLCC). We are delighted that you have chosen our Centre, and we hope that you and your family will be very happy during your time with us.

This Guidebook has information on the various services that we provide and important information that you need to know to ensure you and your child/ren get the most from the service. Please keep this Guidebook in a safe place so that you can use it as a reference for general information and policies.

If you require further information after reading this Guidebook, please contact our Children's Services Manager or our administration staff.

About Us

Merinda Park Learning and Community Centre Inc. is in Cranbourne North within the City of Casey. We are a not-for-profit organisation and have been servicing the Cranbourne area for more than 20 years. We offer a reliable, caring and nurturing childcare program that prioritises the well-being and growth of each child. All our services are Child Care Subsidy (CCS) approved. Our services include:

Merinda Park Community Centre Kindergarten (MPCCK) 3-Year-old and 4-Year-Old Funded Kindergarten

Our Kindergarten program is structured and provides a safe and stimulating environment that fosters the holistic development of every child. All our educational programs are guided by recognised Early Childhood Frameworks. While the Kindergarten program is structured, we believe in a healthy, balanced play diet. Both structured and unstructured play are equally important for a child's well-being and growth which enables logical and creative thinking skills. At MPCCK, each child is valued and respected and is allowed to make choices and decisions to develop their independence.

Day Care Program

Our nurturing and fun Day Care program prioritises the well-being and growth of every child. You don't need to work to use our Day Care, you can take some time for yourself, go shopping, get your nails done, do some study or care for an elderly parent. As a not-for-profit Community Centre, we are proud to offer some of the lowest rates in the City of Casey and the Cardinia Shire.

Before School Care Program (BSC)

Our supportive BSC program caters to the busy schedules of working parents with children at St. Therese's and Courtenay Gardens Primary Schools. Children will receive breakfast and enjoy activities tailored to their interests, supervised by qualified and caring Educators. You can head to work knowing that your children are in capable hands and will be safely taken to school.

After School Care Program (ASC)

Our ASC program is designed to provide a supportive space where children can unwind, socialise, and participate in enriching activities. We will pick up your child/ren safely from school by a walking bus or in our minibus. Children will receive afternoon tea, including appetising rainbow wraps, tantalising meat tacos, mouth-watering chicken curry and much more.

School Holiday Program

Our School Holiday program provides a fun-filled and safe environment for children during school holidays. We offer a wide range of age-appropriate activities to keep children entertained and engaged during their time in our School Holiday program. We have incursions such as Reptile Day, Silent Disco, First Aid for Children and African Drumming. We also take the children on exciting excursions. These excursions include roller skating, bowling, going to the local movies and local parks. All excursions are carefully planned and supervised by our qualified and experienced Educators.

Our Educators

All of our Educators have:

- A Children's Services qualification and/or Teaching qualification
- A Working with Children Check and Police Check
- First aid
- CPR
- Anaphylaxis Management
- Asthma Management

Policies and Procedures

All Children's Services policies and procedures are available to Parents/Guardians at the Centre on request to the Children's Services Manager.

No Jab, No Play

Your child must meet immunisation requirements to get childcare fee assistance (Child Care Subsidy). The National Immunisation Program Schedule provides a list of the vaccines currently recommended. Some exemptions apply, but vaccination objection is not a valid exemption. To check whether your child is fully immunised, visit the Australian Immunisation Register <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/australian-immunisation-register>.

Allergies

We endeavour to provide a nut-free service and ask you NOT to bring nuts or nut products into the Centre.

Unwell Children

We ask that you do not bring your child if they are unwell. If your child becomes unwell at the Centre, you will be notified to collect them as soon as possible.

Enrolment

Enrolment Procedure

Before your child can attend any of our programs, you must complete an enrolment form that includes their Immunisation History Statement, as well as information regarding their medical condition(s) such as Asthma, Anaphylaxis, dietary requirements, and additional needs. It is mandatory to provide all necessary information to ensure your child's safety and well-being while attending our programs. Your Immunisation History Statement can be downloaded from MyGov <https://my.gov.au> or the Medicare app.

In order to appropriately manage the care of children in custody situations, a copy of any Court Orders in relation to custody must be provided upon enrolment.

Administration Fee and Bond

An administration fee of **\$20.00** per child per year covers documentation, file creation, and data entry. A \$100.00 once-off Bond per family is also to be paid and will be held until you finish using our services and all fees are paid in full.

Child Care Subsidy (CCS)

All MPLCC children's programs attract the Child Care Subsidy (CCS).

The CCS is a national childcare system that manages all approved childcare services online. You must complete an online CCS assessment by providing your combined income estimate, activity details and confirming your child's enrolment. These details can be provided through the Centrelink online account via <https://my.gov.au> or through the Express Plus Centrelink mobile app. You should complete the CCS assessment or CCS claim online, after which Centrelink will send you an assessment of your CCS eligibility and entitlement. CCS will be paid directly to MPLCC.

If you are not claiming CCS or your child is not linked with MPLCC via Centrelink, you will be charged the full fee. For further details please see the following website or contact the Services Australia Centrelink Families line on 13 61 50.

<https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink/child-care-subsidy>

Xplor App

At MPLCC, we use the Xplor App to manage bookings. Upon enrolment, you will receive a Welcome to Xplor email inviting you to set up an account. Click 'Create Account'. From here, create a 'Password' and then press 'Next'. Enter your mobile number and then press 'Next'. Enter a PIN on the next screen, press 'Next'. Now that you have set up your account with Xplor, you need to download the Home App. Log in using your email and password, and you are all done.

Bookings and Fees

At MPLCC, we offer permanent and casual bookings for our Before and After School Care programs as well as the Day Care program.

Permanent and Casual Bookings

Permanent bookings are guaranteed places that are in place week to week. Casual bookings allow you the flexibility of being pre-enrolled and using the service as needed. However, this is dependent on the number of children already booked in on the days you require care. All casual care bookings must be made via the Xplor App. If you require assistance, please email mpcs@merindapark.com.au.

Our School Holiday program is offered on a casual basis only, which families will need to book before each school holiday period. All bookings require a Booking Form to be completed.

Families with a permanent or casual booking will be charged for days the child does not attend.

Increasing Days

An increase in days can only be approved when spaces are available. Additional permanent days require a new Booking Form to be completed.

Cancellation of Days

To cancel permanent bookings, two (2) weeks' notice is required. This notice must be in writing to mpcs@merindapark.com.au; no other forms of communication are accepted.

Public Holidays

Children with permanent bookings that fall on a Public Holiday are charged for the service.

Swapping Days

We do not allow swapping of days unless there are extenuating circumstances and you have obtained permission from the Children's Services Manager. However, you may add a day, provided there is availability. Please note you will still be charged for the day your child cannot attend.

Late Collection Fee

Please ensure that all children are collected from their respective programs on time. For Day Care/Kindergarten, children must be picked up before 2:30pm. For Out of School Hours Care/School Holiday Program/Pupil Free Day, children must be picked up before 6:00pm.

In the event that a child is not collected on time, a late fee of \$1 per minute per child for the first 10 minutes will be charged, and then a fee of \$4.00 per minute per child will be charged up to a maximum of 2 hours.

Attendance and Absences

Attendance

Families are required by law to sign in and out using the Xplor Hub for all services. A tablet with the Xplor program is placed on the table near the Children's Services room. Select the Xplor app on your phone, select 'sign in' and scan the QR code located on the Hub. When you arrive to pick your child up, open the Xplor app on your phone, select 'sign in' and scan the QR code located on the Hub. The Hub will sign your child out.

Educators will not allow a child to leave the Centre unless they are with a parent or authorised person. Children will NEVER be sent home alone.

Educators collecting children from schools have an attendance list and emergency contact list to ensure all children are collected.

Non-Attendance

It is vital that Educators are informed if a child is not attending on any booked day. Please use the Xplor App to mark your child absent as soon as you are aware that your child is unable to attend. All children, either permanent or casual, if absent, will be charged the full fee. Half the normal fee will be charged if a medical certificate is provided, or the service is notified more than 7 days in advance that a child will not attend a session (e.g., going away on holidays, school camps).

Initial Absences

Each child is eligible to receive CCS for 42 absent days per financial year. These 42 absences can be used for any reason, including public holidays. No evidence of the absence circumstance is required for these initial 42 absence days.

Additional Absences

Once a child has used their initial 42 absence days, additional absences require supporting documentation such as:

- A medical certificate.
- Parent's rotating shift or rostered days off.
- Shared custody arrangements.

As long as you provide the relevant supporting documentation, there are no limits on the number of additional absences.

Accounts and Billing

Statements

Statements for your child's programs are emailed fortnightly on a Tuesday. Accounts must be paid no later than 14 days from when the email is sent. Alternatively, the Primary Carer can check the balance of their account at any time by opening the Xplor Home app and navigating to 'Finance' at the bottom of the screen, where you will be able to see the current balance.

Payments

Your payment can be made at Reception or over the phone between 9.30am and 3.30pm OR **directly into MPLCC's bank account, which is our preferred method.** Details are as follows:

Commonwealth Bank Account Name: Merinda Park Learning and Community Centre

BSB: 063 250

Account No: 10021302

When paying into the bank, please ensure you put your Surname and/or child's name in the reference field to enable us to apply the money to the correct account.

Payments can also be made by setting up Direct Debit and PayNow through the Xplor app. **Payments made via Xplor will incur additional charges to your account.**

Late Payment

Families experiencing financial difficulties are encouraged to discuss fee payments with the office. Where an account falls over two (2) weeks in arrears, you will be contacted to discuss a payment plan. Failure to make regular payments may result in exclusion from using the program until fees are up to date or regular contributions are made.

Cessation of Care

Two (2) weeks written notice is required to withdraw your child from the Centre's Services. Please email mpcs@merindapark.com.au. Children must attend the service on their last day to attract CCS. If your child is absent on their last day of care, you will be charged the full fee.

Change of Details

MPLCC must have the current address and phone numbers of the children's Parents/Guardians and emergency contact details. Please notify us immediately if there are any changes.

Health and Safety

Authorised Emergency Contacts

If you cannot collect your child who is sick, injured or left at the service after closing time, the authorised emergency contacts listed on their enrolment form will be contacted and requested to collect your child.

A minimum of two (2) authorised emergency contacts, other than yourself, are required when enrolling your child. Please keep us updated with authorised emergency contact details. An authorised emergency contact person will be required to show a form of photo identification to pick up your child.

First Aid

A First Aid kit is always maintained in the Childcare room. In a minor accident, an Educator will give your child appropriate First Aid treatment. All accidents are recorded on an Incident/Injury/Trauma/Illness form. This information may be used to assist in the future planning of play spaces, equipment, programming, and the establishment of accident prevention strategies.

Head, facial, or serious injuries are immediately reported to Parents/Guardians. If your child has an Incident/Injury/Trauma/Illness form, you will be required to sign it upon collection.

Health Related Exclusion

Please refer to the Victorian State Government Department of Health website for Health-Related Exclusions. Visit: <https://www.health.vic.gov.au/infectious-diseases/exclusion-periods-for-primary-schools-and-childrens-services>.

Medical Conditions

An Action Plan must be provided for your child if they have allergies, Asthma, anaphylaxis, Diabetes, ADHD or other medical conditions at the beginning of each school year or commencement of care. Please provide a colour copy of a Medical Management Plan signed, stamped and dated by your child's Doctor; this plan must include a photo of your child. A Risk Minimisation Plan and Communication Plan must also be completed by Parents/Guardians in consultation with the Children's Services Manager. Action Plans must remain current throughout your booking with MPLCC. Notification is required immediately if there is a change to your child's medication. Educators can only administer medication prescribed by a Doctor that is in its original packaging and has the pharmacy instructions label attached.

We are unable to permit children to attend our services without their appropriate up-to-date Medical Management Plan or their medication requirements; all medication must remain at the service.

SunSmart Policy

MPLCC cares for the health and well-being of children and Educators when they are outdoors to minimise the risks of UV exposure through sun protection strategies. This policy has been developed for use between 1st September and 30th April each year but is not limited to these dates. This ensures that:

- All children and Educators have some UV exposure for Vitamin D.
- All children and Educators are well protected from too much UV exposure by using a combination of sun protection measures during the daily local sun protection times, which are issued whenever UV levels are three (3) and above.
- The outdoor environment is sun safe and provides shade for children and Educators.
- Children are encouraged and supported to develop independent sun protection skills.
- MPLCC supports duty of care and regulatory requirements.
- MPLCC supports appropriate WHS strategies to minimise UV risk and associated harms for Educators.

Program Information

Day Care

The Day Care program is a wonderful multi-age room where we offer families five (5) hour sessions. MPLCC prides itself on having a nurturing and family-like environment as we are aware that this is the first place your child spends time outside the family home for many families. We take this privilege seriously and love getting to know your child while supporting their learning and development through the Early Years Learning Frameworks and National Quality Standards.

We offer places for children from six (6) weeks to six (6) years. Children are free to choose experiences to engage in, which are set up by our Educators both indoors and outdoors. These experiences are set up based on the age range of children, observations taken by Educators and the current and ever-changing interests of the children. Educators will follow through with your child's routine set up at home and encourage the socialisation of the group through set meal times and group times.

What to Bring

- A legionnaire, broad-brimmed or bucket-style hat.
- Weather-appropriate clothing such as a beanie, coat, and gumboots.
- Enough nappies to last the day for your child and any nappy creams your child requires.
- Any comfort items your child requires, for example, a dummy, soft toy, or blanket.
- Changes in weather-appropriate clothes.
- If your child is toilet training, please pack spare outfits, including underwear, shoes and socks.
- If your child requires medication whilst they are in care, ensure it is taken out of the bag and handed to the Educators in the room, along with the relevant paperwork.

A lunchbox with food for your child including a piece of fruit for the morning, lunch, a labelled drink bottle with water, and a snack. Our centre is nut-free.

Please ensure everything you bring in is clearly labelled with your child's name in a bag.

Orientation

An orientation process is designed to assist you and your child in settling into childcare. This allows your child the opportunity to explore their new environment and form a relationship with their Educators and peers. Orientation is offered but not forced, depending on what you would like to do. Educators will offer advice based on what is observed from your child's first visit to the room. We also encourage you to pick up your child early on their first couple of days of care to ease them into their new routine.

Nutrition and Food

We aim to promote healthy food habits and good nutrition. Mealtimes will be treated as social occasions; Educators will sit with the children and interact with them to encourage good eating habits and an appreciation of various foods. Children will be assisted as required while encouraged to be independent and help themselves.

Kindergarten

Our vision is to cultivate a love for learning that lasts a lifetime. We believe in nurturing the unique potential of each child and laying the foundation for their future success in a supportive and engaging setting. The Centre has a long-standing reputation within the community for providing high-quality education and care highlighting the core values:

- **Child-Centric Approach:** We prioritise the needs and interests of each child, tailoring our curriculum to accommodate various learning styles and preferences.
- **Safety and Well-being:** The safety and well-being of all children are our top priority, with secure facilities and well-trained staff.
- **Structured Learning:** Our curriculum incorporates a rich range of structured play opportunities and experiences that will extend your child's knowledge and develop their understanding of their world and the people in it.

Our team of experienced and certified Teachers and Educators are committed to providing a nurturing and supportive learning environment. We believe in building a strong partnership with parents to ensure the success of each child. Regular communication and involvement in Kindergarten activities, along with timely feedback, are encouraged.

What to Bring

- A legionnaire, broad-brimmed or bucket-style hat.
- Weather-appropriate clothing such as a beanie, coat, and gumboots.
- Enough nappies to last the day for your child and any nappy creams your child requires.
- Any comfort items your child requires, for example, a dummy, soft toy, or blanket.
- Changes in weather-appropriate clothes.
- If your child is toilet training, please pack spare outfits, including underwear, shoes and socks.
- If your child requires medication whilst they are in care, ensure it is taken out of the bag and handed to the Educators in the room, along with the relevant paperwork.
- A lunchbox with food for your child including a piece of fruit for the morning, lunch, a labelled drink bottle with water, and a snack. Our centre is nut-free.

Nutrition and Food

We aim to promote healthy food habits and good nutrition. Mealtimes will be treated as social occasions; Educators will sit with the children and interact with them to encourage good eating habits and an appreciation of various foods. Children will be assisted as required while encouraged to be independent and help themselves.

School Aged Programs

All Children attending Prep/Foundation to Grade 6 are eligible to attend these programs.

Out of School Hours Care (OSHC)/Pupil Free Day (PFD)

If Parents/Guardians need to work, our Educators will care for your child/ren. Children will receive breakfast in the morning and a snack after school. There are many fun activities based on your children's interests while they are in our care which are overseen by our qualified and caring Educators. You can head to work, knowing that your child/ren are in capable hands and will be safely taken to and collected from school by a walking bus or in our minibus. You can drop off your child/ren from 6:30am and collect your child/ren from the Centre anytime until 6 pm.

My Time, Our Place: The Framework for School Age Care in Australia provides children in OSHC and PFD, with a framework that best promotes children's learning and development while recognising the importance of social interactions and recreation. The broad objective of the Framework is to ensure that children in OSHC have stimulating, positive experiences and interactions that foster self-esteem and confidence. The Children's Services team, in collaboration with children and in partnership with families, use the My Time, Our Place Framework outcomes to guide the planning for children's well-being and learning. The Children's Services team identify children's strengths and interests and chooses the best strategies and design environments to actively engage the children in learning.

School Holiday Program

An exciting mix of activities, including incursions and excursions, are planned for the four school term breaks. All families are required to book for the school holiday program, with spaces being allocated on a first-in basis. All bookings are to be made through the My Xplor app. If you require assistance, please contact the Centre on 5996 9056. Children must have a booking before they can attend any days of the School Holiday program. Fees are payable in full at the time of booking. All outstanding OSHC fees must be paid before booking for any School Holiday program days are accepted.

Nutrition and Food

All children in the school-aged programs are offered a choice of breakfast before 8:00am. Our educators prepare our state-winning afternoon tea with the assistance of children, who help pick the ingredients from the pantry, cook, serve, and clean up. Some meals include rainbow wraps, meat tacos, chicken curry, and spaghetti bolognese, with fresh fruit and veggies served daily.

Policies and Procedures

Parents/Guardians Involvement

We encourage your involvement to ensure we maintain the quality of service you expect. Your contribution of ideas, experiences and skills are welcomed and valued. We encourage you to provide feedback about the policies and procedures implemented, complete Parent Satisfaction Surveys, and assist at fundraising events set up by MPLCC. You are welcome to visit or call MPLCC at any time. We value your input.

Communication

We believe the best way to work with you and your child is by building a partnership of care. We understand that everybody has different communication styles and that pick-up/drop-off times can be a little rushed, so we have many types of communication we use for our families. These includes:

- Face-to-face verbal interactions at drop-off and pick-up times.
- Emailed newsletters.
- Notes can be left for Educators.
- Meetings can be held where you can raise any issues or topics you feel need discussing.
- Phone calls.
- Email sent to mpcs@merindapark.com.au

Feedback and Suggestions

Your feedback and suggestions are greatly appreciated as they help us improve and provide the best experience for your child/ren. We use complaints as an opportunity to improve our services. Your feedback helps us identify areas for improvement and implement necessary changes. If you have a concern about any aspect of our program, please advise us verbally so action can be taken immediately if necessary. Please also speak directly to the Children's Services Manager, who can investigate further. You may be asked to put the complaint in writing. If you are not satisfied, you can see the Centre Manager or Committee of Management (CoM). A meeting can then be organised with you, a member of the CoM and the Centre Manager at a mutually agreed time.

You have the right to make a complaint to the Department of Education and Training (DET). Please visit <https://www.vic.gov.au/make-complaint-about-child-care-or-childrens-services> for further information.