



Alphington
GRAMMAR SCHOOL

Early Learning Centre Handbook



Aspiring to Excellence

Welcome to Alphington Grammar School's Early Learning Centre.



Our Early Learning Centre (ELC) is a positive and enriching place where **3 - 6 year olds** develop a lifelong love of learning.

Teachers in our Early Learning Centre are highly dedicated, creative, reflective and caring professionals who appreciate and value the wonderfully diverse uniqueness of the children in our care. Our teachers use reflective practices catering for individual differences, as well as a strong collaboration and networking with teachers within the broader teaching community of AGS.

We look forward to working with you along this wonderful journey.

Welcome to Country

The AGS ELC Community respectfully acknowledges the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation as traditional owners and custodians of the land on which the kindergarten is located. We pay our respects to their Elders both past, present and emerging.



Philosophy of our Program

The Importance of Play Based Learning

The Early Childhood Framework, devised by the Federal Government and the Victorian State Government, requires all centres providing care and education for children aged 0-5 years to embed the Framework into their curriculum.

The Federal Government's **Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF): *Belonging, Being, Becoming*** and the Victorian Government's **Early Years Learning and Development Framework (EYLDF)** have five outcomes that we are required to address. These are **Identity, Community, Wellbeing, Learning** and **Communication**.

Both these frameworks state that *play* forms the foundation of Early Years Education.

Outcome 1: **Identity:** Children have a strong sense of identity.

Outcome 2: **Community:** Children connect with and contribute to their world.

Outcome 3: **Wellbeing:** Children have a strong sense of wellbeing.

Outcome 4: **Learning:** children are confident and involved learners.

Outcome 5: **Communication:** Children are effective communicators.

These outcomes reflect our service philosophy and the educational program we provide.



At Alphington Grammar School, the ELC is a richly creative play based learning environment for preschool aged children. We appreciate each child's unique individuality and we strongly believe that the most powerful way that children learn is through play.

Our time together will see the children discover many things about themselves, others and the world around them. The children will learn concepts, relationships, cause and effect, sizes, colours, textures, feelings, emotions, sensations, sounds, symbols and language through play.

We value and place great importance on collaborative group work and the sharing of thoughts and ideas to help guide the direction of our learning. Our learning projects are creative, interesting, inviting and challenging, allowing the children to build on existing knowledge and discover new learning.

We provide experiences, which foster children's imagination and creativity as they invent, refine, explore their surroundings, processes and relationships with their friends and teachers. With this in mind, we encourage children to take their time by offering open ended access to resources and materials, and we promote a range of individual, small group and project work.



We encourage children to use both the indoor and outdoor space by offering flexible programs to meet their need for play in the environment of their choice. Throughout the week, the children participate in specialist programs of language, physical education, music and library. The children enjoy being part of the broader school community, attending school events and assemblies with eager pride.

Active participation in our Early Learning program ensures that our students have a solid and sound foundation upon which to build further learning.

Our Curriculum

Alphington Grammar ELC takes inspiration from the Reggio Emilia approach to teaching and learning, believing a happy child learns best. The Reggio Emilia Philosophy is an innovative and inspiring approach to early childhood education, which values the child as strong, capable and resilient, rich with wonder and knowledge. We endeavor to build strong foundations and inspiring learning opportunities for all children using self-directed, experiential learning in relationship-driven environment. This is at the heart of Alphington Grammar School learning community.



By viewing learning as a continuum, the wider school environment encourages a commitment to our learners to experience Alphington Grammar Schools dedication to education. Throughout the week the children participate in specialist programs of immersive, play based Greek language learning, physical education through a perceptual motor program (PMP), music, library, and bush adventuring. Our popular before and after school program offers families flexibility for extended hours. The children enjoy being part of the broader school community, attending school events and assemblies with eager pride.

Individual learning maintains our focus for belonging, wellbeing, expression, and engagement of the whole child. We appreciate each child's unique individuality and we strongly believe that the most powerful way that children learn is through play.

We view children as confident and capable learners who, through active participation in the Early Learning Centre ensures that our students have a solid and sound foundation to build further learning upon. Teachers use reflective practices to improve learning outcomes and work collaboratively with families to ensure the best outcome for each child.



The Learning Environment

Alphington Grammar School's ELC offers safe and secure learning environments both indoors and out. It is an environment carefully planned, monitored and maintained with safe and developmentally appropriate materials. This ensures our learners maximise growth across all developmental domains.

Promotion and discussion of health, nutrition and the importance of physical activity is highly valued and embedded throughout our curriculum.



Bush Adventure Program

‘Children involved in unstructured play in nature are calmer and will engage in richer imaginative play, increased physical activity, and more focused play and with positive social interactions.’ (From Nedovic et al, 2013).

Current research is overwhelming in the benefits of nature play for children.

Our program is underpinned by theories and pedagogy that is integral to the effectiveness of the program. Furthermore, our principles are underpinned by the Victorian National Curriculum Frameworks for the Early Years Education: *‘children must be allowed time to explore and experience the natural environment’*.

Nature is a perfectly balanced play space for children, abundant in loose parts, where children gain a sense of purpose as they problem-solve, become independent and acquire leadership skills whilst having uninterrupted periods to pursue games of imagination and creativity. Children have real life opportunities to make dynamic risk assessment that develops grit and resilience along with determination and courage.



Children are introduced to our Bush Adventuring program gradually as they become more confident with their new environment.

This will occur on a designated day on the grounds of Alphington Grammar and surrounding grasslands habitat. Children arrive at Alphington Grammar ELC for our morning meeting dressed in appropriate bush adventuring gear (Change of clothes/shoes in their school bag is advisable). After our morning gathering, children and teachers will walk to our welcome tree. Here we say our acknowledgement to country and start our bush adventuring.



In Term 1, we will walk around school grounds, familiarising children with their surrounds and discussing safety. As children settle into our ELC, we will gradually introduce them to the Darebin Parklands area located by Sparks Reserve. In addition, the local Darebin Ranger attends our ELC for some incursions, as well as a local indigenous elder who will come and share their knowledge of the land on which we play and learn.



Staffing

Alphington Grammar School ELC operates in accordance with government regulations. The staffing ratio is 1:11.

The team at Alphington Grammar is comprised of qualified and experienced staff, committed to providing the highest quality of education and care for your child.

Children will also meet many of the Primary School teachers as well as their teachers for Greek, PE, Music and Library.

ELC Specialist opportunities

Our program is enhanced by the learning that comes from specialists in the areas of Physical Education, Greek, Music and Library.

Greek

The teaching of the Greek language is immersive in the ELC program. Greek language teachers work with the children in their own environment and introduce the Greek language through conversation and play. We are also excited to be part of the ELLA (Early Learning Languages Australia) program. ELLA is a digital, play-based language-learning program for preschool children.



Physical Education

Children attend Physical Education sessions in the School gymnasium. The sessions, delivered by a trained PE teacher in conjunction with ELC teachers is integrated into the ELC curriculum. It covers all aspects of children's physical development including large muscle skills – for example running, skipping, hopping, jumping, rolling, and tumbling – as well as eye-hand coordination skills using ball, hoop, rope, and bean bag games. Elements of the Perceptual Motor Program are also incorporated.



Music

Music is interwoven daily throughout our ELC activities, as well as in structured lessons delivered by specialist music teachers. These sessions provide students with an introduction to a range of instruments and music genres as well as reinforcing skills such as identifying rhythms, patterns and sequences.



Library

An appreciation and love of books is developed during scheduled library lessons. The children will also borrow books on a weekly basis. To keep our books protected and in good condition your child will need a library bag.



Documentation

ELC teachers record the children's ideas, thoughts and experiences, and the processes they work through to come to new understandings. Many of these are shared with parents via the AGS online Learning Management System, SCHOOLBOX and parents. Snapshots of Learning, classroom displays, our reflections book and through our program planning. Families are encouraged to engage in the program and are always welcome to participate. We encourage parents' feedback on our program, located by the sign in book.

Each family will be given a code to access the AGS Schoolbox. This is a valuable tool for sharing and communicating your child's 'Snapshot's of Learning.'

What does documentation look like?

- Photographs
- Transcripts of small group discussions, explorations of a topic
- Children's symbolic representations of their theories and ideas (drawing, sculpting, painting)
- Collaborative projects

The purpose of documentation is to:

- Show the children that teachers value both the process and the product of their work
- Allow parents to see how their children participate in the program and research children's thinking and learning
- Revisit learning (children, educators and parents can do this)
- Provide documentation necessary for reflecting on our program and future planning.
- Communicate with other children, parents, and the wider community

Parent Communication

Parents can communicate at the start and end of the kinder day verbally with their child's teacher. For longer conversations, it is advised to book in a meeting or contact your child's teacher with any concerns via email.

Notices of upcoming events, dates to remember, and other information are sent via email and by Alphington Grammar School's online Bulletin fortnightly on a Wednesday. The Bulletin is the official, regular method of communication between the School and parents and is therefore essential reading. Families should contact the school office if there is a change to their email address after enrolment. The school newsletter, which captures events and activities across the whole school, is distributed fortnightly on a Friday.

Pre-School Field Officer

Victorian state funded kindergarten programs are eligible for Preschool Field Officer (PSFO) services to support the access and participation of children with additional needs in their kindergarten program. Preschool Field Officers use a locally responsive approach that includes consultative support, resourcing and practical advice to assist kindergarten teachers.

PSFOs also assist kindergartens to link families with the support and services available for children with developmental concerns, broader child, and family supports.

The Department funds community service organisations and local councils to provide PSFO services across the state. There is no cost to the kindergarten program or families for the PSFO service.

Quality Improvement Plan

A Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) is a document that identifies the goals for the ELC and notes some strategies for achieving those goals. It helps everyone at the centre to stay focused on the improvements and on implementing the strategies needed to achieve the goals.

Orientation

In the New Year, children commencing in ELC will participate in an orientation program for shorter sessions designed to make them feel comfortable and supported in the ELC environment. This 'staggered start' allows the children to acclimatise in their own time, and it allows the educators to learn their individual needs.

Clothing

The Alphington Grammar School uniform is worn daily by all children. On "Bush Adventuring Day" children will be required to wear the school sports uniform. Alphington Grammar will supply 'coveralls' for the activities on this day, however children are asked to bring their gumboots.

Footwear should be easy to take on and off and suitable for running and climbing – Velcro fastening is useful and encourages children to be independent. Every item of clothing, including shoes, should be clearly labelled.

In the bottom of your child's school bag parents should supply a complete change of clothes just in case – extra underwear, pants and socks as well as a plastic bag.

Outside Centre Hours Care



The School's 'before and after school care' is managed by OSHClub (Camp Australia) and includes holiday programs. Students take part in a range of fun and dynamic activities. Before school care is available from 7.00am. After school care starts from the end of the school day and finishes at 6.00pm. Children are provided breakfast and afternoon tea.

With the exception of Public Holidays or when the School, including the ELC, is officially closed, OSH operates holiday programs from 7.00am to 6.00pm each day of the holidays.

Parents needing to enrol their child in any of the OSHC programs need to make bookings by calling OSHC on 9998 2162. OSHC will mail accounts directly to families, for their services. Their staff can also provide information on fees.

Bush Adventure Clothing & Protective/Appropriate Clothing

It is important that Bush Adventure participants wear appropriate AGS sport clothing or protective clothing / footwear which:

- Allows them to move freely and undertake activities such as climbing, balancing, running and puddle jumping.
- Keeps children warm and dry in cold/wet weather.
- Protects them from the damaging effects of the sun, UV rays in warm weather and high UV conditions.
- Prevents sunburn, bites, scratches and stings. (Even in warm weather, long sleeve tops and long pants are essential - this clothing should be loose fitting and light).
- Where possible, clothing made from natural fabrics is best, and allows the body to breathe and is comfortable against the skin.
- Keeps feet and toes covered and has a flexible and gripped sole to allow them to climb and balance on uneven surfaces.
- All children participating in the bush-adventuring program are required to bring a change of clothes and footwear as these become wet and muddy.
- Coveralls and high visibility jackets are provided for all children participating in our bush-adventuring program.
- A risk assessment folder is available for parents to view outlining any questions you may have.

Sun Protection Policy



Under the School's Sun Protection Policy, the School 'hat' is a compulsory item of clothing for all students in Terms 1 and 4. Parents can purchase hats from the uniform shop, Noone Imagewear

<https://www.noone.com.au/school/alphington-grammar-school/shop/>

All ELC children keep their hats on their hooks. Teachers also ask parents to apply sun cream to their child before each ELC session; it is the parents' responsibility to do this in the first instance. The ELC does stock sun cream and staff will re-apply it as necessary throughout the day.

On high UV days, children should wear appropriate clothing so their skin is adequately covered. Parents can check the UV rating online, with the rating displayed throughout the Centre.

Lost Property

ELC staff make every effort to trace items of lost property, placing any articles not claimed in the lost property box. Please write your child's name on ALL their belongings.

Daily Routine

While the ELC routine follows broadly the same timetable each day (as outlined below), staff are not bound to a schedule but work as a team to meet the needs of each group. The day's timetable can change depending on the weather, the time of year, and group dynamics.

The ELC program begins at 8.30am when children are welcomed and encouraged to take part in a range of activities designed to challenge and engage them, and that may include working on an ongoing project.

Our group will gather in a circle time for a morning meeting. Children share their ideas and discuss them. Morning meetings may also incorporate singing, dancing, and stories. Children then break for morning tea. Educators intersperse outdoor breaks throughout the day, giving children a chance to explore the outdoor environment and experience the freedom of the playground. The indoor and outdoor environments will have planned activities and experiences with intentional teaching related to our program.

Children enjoy their lunch at 12.30pm. This is a social time and children are encouraged to sit in small groups. Lunch is followed by a short rest time during which the children relax their bodies, participate in yoga, read or listen to stories. After, the children play again in both the indoor and outdoor area. A story precedes home time between 2.45pm and 3.00pm. Collection time needs to be prompt as staff have meetings and other afterschool commitments to attend.

Events and Celebrations

Throughout the year, our ELC enjoys many special experiences involving children, parents, teachers, and the wider Alphington Grammar School community. Some events are planned and others are more spontaneous – all add to the richness of the program.

Activities our ELC has held include:

- Greek Cultural Day with food and activities reflecting our language program
- Excursions or incursions that enhance our current program, such as CERES environmental park, Henny Penny Hatching and community links with our neighbours at the Aged Care Home.
- Mothers' Day & Father's Day Celebrations
- Grandparents' and special friend's day
- Concerts
- Soup Soiree' shared cooking
- Book Day Dress Ups
- Celebrating various cultural days
- Christmas celebration concerts and parties
- Responsible Pet Ownership Program

Celebrating Birthdays in our ELC

In our ELC, we like to acknowledge each child's birthday. If you would like to send along birthday cupcakes to share at snack time, please do so, the children love to celebrate! We do however discourage the distribution of lolly bags and ask that parents do not bring these to ELC. If in any doubt, please feel free to discuss your plans for any celebrations with us. We are always happy to have a chat.

We would appreciate it if you could provide us with a list of the ingredients used in the cupcakes or the original packaging if it is from a shop. This helps us to cater for the needs of children with allergies. Be reassured that the children with allergies have a supply of their own "special" snacks that we can offer should they be unable to consume the birthday treat.

If your child's birthday falls on a weekend or holiday, you may like to send a cake on the nearest ELC day.

Health and Wellbeing

ELC staff hold First Aid certificates and are responsible for treating minor illness or injury. The school also has a full time nurse on site. The School's Registered Nurse, who is on duty during school hours, will attend a child who suffers a serious illness or injury. Staff may need to call parents to collect a sick child or if they are at all concerned about an injury.

As young children are particularly susceptible to coughs and colds, to help keep infection to a minimum, parents should keep an unwell child home for a day or two until they are able to cope with the rigors of a full and energetic Kindergarten day. Children who have a runny nose and who are sneezing excessively should not be sent to the ELC.

Similarly, if a child has been vomiting, in line with Department of Health guidelines, they should not attend Kindergarten until 48 hours have passed since the last episode. Generally, a child should not return to the centre after a long illness until cleared by a doctor.

If a child has been diagnosed with health problems (for example asthma, anaphylaxis, allergies or epilepsy), or if they need medication at any time while they attend the ELC, parents are asked to let staff know and to provide a health action plan. Children identified through the enrolment process, as having certain medical conditions (asthma, anaphylaxis and epilepsy) cannot commence kindergarten until an action plan is received by the school.

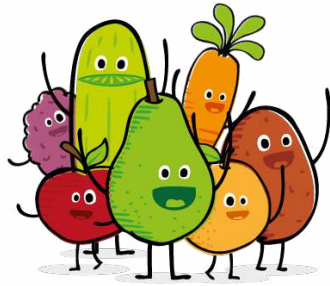
Medication

The ELC applies the following protocols with respect to children's medications:

- Staff will administer medication only with the written consent of the child's parent or guardian on the appropriate Administration of Medication Form.
- Parents must give medication directly to the teacher and not be left in the child's school bag.
- Another staff member will witness the administration of all medication.
- Staff maintain a record of all medication administered and inform parents if they note any unusual reaction.
- Staff will only administer prescription medication that displays the child's name and is in its original container.

Food Allergies

Allergies to foods are common. You are required to inform educators if your child is allergic to particular foods. Food allergies can be life threatening so you may be asked to restrict particular foods in our ELC to ensure the safety of all children. Please ask the educators if you are unsure about foods that can be brought to ELC.



Food in our ELC

Alphington Grammar School is committed to:

- Promoting nutritious food and eating habits that will contribute to healthy growth and development in children.
- Providing a safe, supportive and social environment in which children can participate in social meal times.
- Working with families about their child's nutrition and dietary requirements, including responding appropriately to food allergies and respecting cultural and religious practices and lifestyle choices.
- Providing children and families with opportunities to learn about food, nutrition and healthy lifestyle.



Mealtimes

Children need to bring their own lunch and snack, as well as a water bottle. Lunch boxes should contain an ice pack to keep food fresh, especially in hot weather. Food that needs heating or refrigeration is not appropriate, as Teachers cannot leave the children to collect food from the fridge or, to heat it for individual children. However, parents can send something hot during the winter months in a wide-necked Thermos. Teachers encourage children to drink water, so drink bottles need to be washed and filled each day.

Lunch orders need to be placed in the blue tub in the classroom at the commencement of the school morning for collection.

Healthy eating is part of the ELC's educational program. Consistent with this, teachers request parents provide healthy food.

Going Green

Our ambition is to help children understand the importance of a sustainable world. We continue to encourage children to show respect for the environment and become environmentally responsible by reducing waste. We encourage parents to help us by supporting their child in learning about sustainability by packing 'nude food' lunch boxes.

Food without plastic wrapping

At Alphington Grammar School, we want to show our support for a cleaner, greener earth and for our ELC to be environmentally friendly. Children have access to water throughout the session whether it is from a water bottle, a cup provided by us, or the drink bubblers outside.

Nude Food or food without plastic wrapping is a fantastic opportunity to educate children about how their actions affects the environment and their health. Kindergarten's nation-wide are encouraging children to reduce packaging with extra plastic, wrappings with a single use or cling wraps. Focusing on the positive message of '**a healthy body + a healthy planet**', we want our children to be empowered to choose healthy, rubbish free food for their lunches and snacks.

Head Lice

From time to time, head lice presents a problem at every school. Parents can help the ELC minimize the problem by

- Regularly checking their child's head.
- Notifying their child's teacher as soon as they detect lice so all children can be checked.
- Treating their child and family and, repeating treatment one week later. ELC staff will contact parents to collect a child with live lice in their hair. The child can return to the ELC once their hair has been appropriately treated, which may be as soon as the next day.

Toileting

The ELC requires that all children are fully daytime toilet trained and able to manage the bathroom independently. Please refer to the Alphington Grammar School 'toileting policy' for more information, located on the ELC Schoolbox page.

Parent/teacher interviews

ELC staff offer a formal interview with parents during Term 2. Parents can also request to meet with their child's teacher at any point during the year, particularly if they have concerns that should be addressed promptly.

Transition reports

As part of the State Government's transition process, staff prepare a transition report for each child who will attend school the following year. They provide one copy to parents and another to the future school.

School Readiness

As part of the larger School community, the ELC has access to many of its facilities. As well as the gymnasium, ELC children make frequent trips to the oval to kick footballs, fly kites, and explore the school surrounds.

To help children make a smooth transition to Prep the following year, from Term 3 onwards children make regular visits to Prep classrooms for shared learning experiences, to help become familiar with the environment and the staff. A formal transition program starts in Term 4.

Transition to school

During November, children currently enrolled in our ELC and continuing to Alphington Grammar Primary School will participate in an orientation program with our Prep teachers. ELC and Prep teachers work closely together to communicate the individual needs of each child. Children will be already familiar with our school grounds and teachers, enabling a smooth transition to take place in our close school community.

Parent Involvement

Parent involvement is an integral component of our program and we welcome you to participate on a daily basis. Parents' ideas, thoughts and expectations will be encouraged. Our ELC program plan, displayed in the welcome foyer encourages parent feedback and contributions.

ELC staff are delighted when parents give of their time and expertise to enrich the program, for example, parents who play an instrument or who would like to help with singing, storytelling, dancing, cooking or participating in our bush-adventuring program. Parents are encouraged to share ideas and, let the group teacher know ahead of time so an activity can be included.

Throughout the year staff also invite parents to functions and performances that are important to the children. Parents will get advance notice so they can plan their diaries.

Any parent working with children, including attending an excursion, will require a current Working with Children Check and will need to sign the school's Code of Conduct for Behaviour with Children.

Toys

Sometimes bringing a toy to the ELC can help a child to make friends as showing it to others sparks lively discussion, but it can be difficult for staff to keep track of who owns what, and where it ends up. Little children are only just learning about 'what is mine and what is yours', and the social rules around 'borrowing' other children's things.

As a rule, toys from home are not to be played with at the ELC, as they tend to be broken or damaged, and sometimes simply disappear. Books and games that can be shared with the group are more appropriate. (They just need to be named clearly.)

If the toy is highly valued or fragile, it is best for a child to show it early in the morning and for parents to take it home. Until that time, the toy should be stored in the child's backpack or given to the teacher.

Policies

All ELC Policies are available on SCHOOLBOX website. We encourage all families to familiarise themselves with them. New families receive their Schoolbox Login details in the New Year.

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