

Ringwood Uniting Church Kindergarten FAQs

Welcome! 2020 OPEN DAY would normally see us field many questions from visitors to our service. Unfortunately, this is not possible with the current COVID-19 pandemic.

Educators in our team have created a list of frequently asked questions usually asked by prospective parents looking to enrol.

We are also very happy for you to call us if you feel you have questions of a more specific nature regarding your child.

To ensure we can give you the time needed, please call us on 9870 1707.

Or email your question to one of our teachers and we will respond as promptly as possible

kate.braunthal@vt.uniting.org (4yo preschool aged group)

di.catalano@vt.uniting.org (4yo preschool aged group)

cheryl.emerson@vt.uniting.org (3yo kindergarten group)

Do you teach children religious education because you are part of the Uniting Church?

No. Although we are on Uniting Church land, our curriculum is the same as other preschools in that we are guided by the National Quality Standards and the Victorian and National Early Years Learning and development frameworks.

We do have occasional visits to see our elderly friends in the friendship centre here, where we sing or read stories with them.

We are a multicultural community working with families with a range of religious beliefs.

Can families be involved in the preschool?

Yes, in many ways and we welcome your participation. We are managed by Uniting Vic Tas, so this means they take on most of the official side of running a

preschool, including financial management, fees, policy development, employment and so on.

We invite families to be involved in various ways including

- Volunteering time to support children during our sessions
- Attending working bees to help keep the grounds and playrooms clean and tidy
- Organising and supporting fundraising (usually raffles)
- Supporting staff by helping with some administration support or preparation of materials
- Coming to do cooking or reading with the children
- Helping arrange parent morning or afternoon teas within their child's group
- Volunteering time once or twice a term to attend our Parent advisory group. Your ideas and feedback on our programs are important to us.

How many children are in each group?

Quality of care is a priority at Ringwood Uniting Church Preschool. In our Preschool (year before school) group are 22 with 1 qualified Early childhood teacher and 1 Early childhood Co-educator. If there is a need for additional support in the group, a funded aide may be employed to work with the groups.

In our Kindergarten group (2 years before school entry) the numbers are 21 with 1 qualified Early childhood teacher and 1 Diploma trained Co-educator. Additional aides are not eligible to work in this group as it does not receive any Government funding.

How many children move from the Kindergarten group into the Preschool group the following year?

This can vary from year to year, but traditionally children who are enrolled in the Kindergarten group also enrol in the Preschool group for the following year. Many parents like to know their child will transition through their preschool years with friendships formed. Staff across the service also get to know every child across all groups and this makes for a very smooth, positive transition from the younger group into the older groups.

My child doesn't speak English at all or very well. Is this a problem?

Not at all. It can mean they may require some additional support with the use of bilingual staff support, bilingual resources or visual communication aides which are used daily in our programs for ALL children. Children are very adaptable and they learn very quickly from observing others. It is usually the children who pick up

English faster than their parents sometimes! Educators will support you to help your child during the transition into both the kindergarten or preschool groups.

What happens if either myself or the teacher believes my child will not be ready for school?

The decision on when to start your child at Preschool can be a tricky one for some parents. This may be because of their child's date of birth or other individual factors. It is always recommended that you share any concerns about readiness with your child's teacher as soon as possible. During the first term of Preschool, your child's teaching team will be taking lots of observations of your child across all areas of development, how they interact socially, how resilient they are, how they are settling in and so on. They will share any thoughts on school readiness with you quite early. This is for reasons outlined under the question about having a second funded year of preschool.

When you decide to enrol your child at an early learning service, you should consider all the knowledge you have about your child when deciding on the most appropriate group for them. Readiness for either age group is not based only on age or their ability to recognise letters and numbers. Readiness incorporates MANY things. You can meet with your child's teacher to share knowledge together and help you make an informed decision.

Does my child need to be toilet trained?

Generally speaking, if your child is attending one of the older Preschool groups with the intent of attending school in the following year, it is preferable. Having said this, some children may have a physical or medical problem that means accidents may occur. Any child can have an occasional toileting accident and we are prepared for this. We recommend a spare set of clothing in your child's bag for such times.

However, if your child regularly wets or soils with no underlying physical issue, then this can be a very strong indicator that they are not ready for this group. Independent toileting is encouraged and is usually established by this age group.

If your child is being enrolled in the younger aged Kindergarten group, it is more common that accidents occur whilst some are still undergoing toilet training. Again, staff are prepared for this. If your child is not aware of their bodily urges at all however, it can be a strong indicator that a child is not yet developmentally ready for kindergarten. If a child has occasional accidents and needs the security of a pull up, this is not uncommon. We will still encourage your child to manage their pull up and the toilet for themselves as much as possible. Again, if they need support for this, please discuss this with the staff.

At what age can I enrol my child? How do I do this?

In Maroondah council, there is a central enrolment process. You cannot enrol at multiple preschools. You will be asked to nominate 3 choices, with your most preferred choice on the top of your list. All enrolments go through MIKA (Maroondah Integrated Kindergarten Association) first. Once they receive your enrolment and requests for a particular early learning centre, they will add you to the enrolment list of one of your nominated Preschools and they will contact you about what happens next.

Children can be enrolled through MIKA in the year prior to starting at the service

Can I visit the Preschool before making my decision?

Normally yes you could. However, currently you cannot visit preschools due to the COVID-19 outbreak.

Once social distancing rules are eased, tours may be conducted again. Tours may be arranged by phone and are held on a Monday and Tuesday when our administrative assistant is here to show you through while sessions are running. Social distancing and hygiene procedures will need to be followed. Visiting children will not be permitted to engage in activities.

Please be mindful that the teaching team must maintain supervision at all times of the children attending, so tours are not the ideal time to ask the teachers questions. We are very happy however, to arrange a meeting or a phone chat with you. Please call us on 9870 1707.

Tours run for around 15 minutes to be respectful to the teachers and children in session.

Does my child have to do Kindergarten at your service to be accepted into the Preschool aged group?

No. Many families prefer to do this if possible, for continuity and a sense of familiarity with the service for their child.

Some families choose not to enrol their child in an unfunded Kindergarten group at all due to the high costs, however, with the newly announced funding being gradually rolled out across the state for these groups, this will soon be funded and attendance rates will be higher.

There is strong evidence that 2 years of formal early childhood learning prior to school entry is highly beneficial to a child's learning outcomes.

Why don't I receive a discount on my fees in the unfunded Kindergarten group? I have a Health care card or visa.

In unfunded kindergarten groups, the early learning service itself must find the money required to pay for staff salaries and program running costs. There is currently NO government funding for the kindergarten groups in our area and therefore, no concession cards of any kind are applicable. This is why fees are higher than in the funded preschool groups. Once government funding is allocated to our area however, then fees will be able to be subsidised for holders of a health care card, refugee visa and other applicable concessions.

Do you take the children out on excursions?

Occasionally we do, providing we have parental consent and approval from our approved provider (Uniting) after completing a thorough risk minimisation process and the excursion is for an educational purpose.

For example:

- Visiting a local primary school
- Visiting and playing at Federation Estate
- Visiting Reverse Art truck
- Taking walks around our local area.

Generally, most of our additional learning opportunities are conducted at the service. We call these Incursions. Parents are still informed of what the incursion is and must provide consent, a risk minimisation form is still completed and must be approved.

Some of our incursions over the years have included

- African drumming
- Music/drama groups such as CARP, Wiggerly worm
- Dentist talks
- Responsible Pet Program
- Thingle Toodle road safety program
- School crossing supervisor visit
- Farm visit
- Rabbits
- Chicken hatching.

What does a normal session look like?

At Ringwood Uniting Church Preschool, we are flexible with our routines. Routines give children a sense of security in knowing what will happen and when. However, children can be hungry at different times, or need outdoor play upon arrival.

Our days very much work around the needs and interests of the children on any day. We also value the importance of as much uninterrupted play periods as possible to allow children the time they need to practice and revisit experiences. We try to minimise interruptions to their learning as much as possible.

Children will have 2 eating times and at least a third of each session will be spent outdoors being active, even in colder weather.

Wherever possible, we run an indoor/ outdoor program where children can choose to be in or out and move between these two learning spaces. Many of our indoor experiences are set up outdoors as well to cater for children who learn best or feel more relaxed in an outdoor setting.

We try to gather for eating times and stories or music sessions as it is a great opportunity for social and language development. It creates a sense of belonging to a group. Groups may be large or small, again depending on the needs of the group.

Throughout sessions, children are encouraged to challenge themselves, to practice independence and to build resilience, all whilst receiving support and guidance from the teaching team.