Thornbury Kindergarten

Out & About

Program Handbook 2027

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PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

Permission

To participate in this program parents/carers must provide permission for their child via the online enrolment process.

Communication

We ask parents/carers to **always have their mobile phone with them and turned on** throughout the duration of an Out & About Kinder session. It's important that parents/carers are easily contactable when necessary and aware of any updates throughout the session.

Teachers continually assess any changes to a situation while with children and will put into place the established Emergency Management Plan as needed. This may include walking back to home kinder or to the identified safe assembly points. Further details can be found in the risk assessment. Please refer to the Emergency Management section for more details.

Please save relevant numbers to your phone:

Contacts for Out & About Kinder in session:

Out & About Mobile Telephone	Orange – Monika Nitschke	0444 590 652
	Green – Lucy Evans	0480 277 442
	Purple – Heidi Ratje	0499 102 144

Contacts for Thornbury Kindergarten:

Kindergarten	director@thornburykinder.com	9484 1095
President	president@thornburykinder.com	
Director	Angela Storer	9484 1095
Out & About rep	offsite@thornburykinder.com	9484 1095

Pick Up & Drop-Off

Pick up and drop off will be at home kinder. Please ensure that your child is dropped off on time to allow the group to depart at the scheduled time for Out & About.

Please refer to main *Delivery and Collection of Children (Bush Kinder)* Policy for full procedures relating to collection by authorised person, late collection, and late collection fees.

Clothing

Thornbury Kindergarten's Out & About Kinder program is intended to operate across a broad spectrum of weather conditions, allowing children to experience nature and its elements across the seasons. For this reason, there are some particular clothing requirements in the Out & About Kinder setting that may differ from requirements in a centre-based environment (see **Clothing** section below).

It is important that Out & About Kinder participants wear appropriate and protective clothing and footwear in line with the *Protective Clothing (Bush Kinder)* Policy.

OUT & ABOUT KINDER – AN OVERVIEW

Out & About Kinder is one of two programs offered at Thornbury Kindergarten (the other is Bush Kinder). As part of the program, children spend up to four hours experiencing the learning waiting to happen outside the kinder door – at local parks, nearby schools, around our local neighbourhood and elsewhere.

Children and teachers bring that learning back to home kinder, and home kinder learning can also inform the scope of Out & About Kinder experiences and learning. Just like children doing the Bush Kinder sessions, children doing Out & About Kinder spend their remaining hours at home kinder.

The children's learning at Out & About Kinder will:

- Tap into our sense of wonder and curiosity about the world, considering our impact on it.
- Notice birds, plants and insects.
- Develop new ideas for dramatic play informed by our engagement with nature.
- Increase problem solving and resilience as we engage with open ended natural resources and experiences (for example building a bush cubby or tree climbing).
- Challenge and trust children, through play, to experience challenge and develop self-awareness in managing risk according to ability and self confidence
- Look for ways to be creative and to spark our imaginations.

PROGRAM RATIONALE

It is extremely important for lifelong health to be physically active every day. It is recommended that toddlers and pre-schoolers be active for 3 hours every day
https://www.health.gov.au/health-topics/physical-activity-and-exercise
Out & About Kinder gives children natural opportunities to establish healthy habits as they move their bodies; playing, running, climbing and jumping as well as walking to their destination.

Why is being involved in our community important?

Thornbury Kindergarten's Out & About Kinder program is intended to build on the existing connection children and their families have to their community.

Out & About Kinder helps children develop positive, meaningful connections to people and places and helps children to see themselves as active contributors to the world. As children's sense of connection to trusted people and community increases so too does their sense of belonging and wellbeing. A strong sense of belonging and wellbeing underpins a disposition for learning.

Learning Outcome 2 of the Victorian Government's Early Years Learning and Development Framework focuses on children's connectedness with others and the wider world. It says: "Children strive for connection and seek belonging – to people, country, place and communities that help them to learn about local ways of being…. As children experience settings beyond home and kinship groups in which they live, their experiences, relationships and connections broaden."

Taking children out of the service gives children the opportunity to engage meaningfully in the world around them. They are given opportunities to gain the knowledge and life skills necessary to deal with the world around them. Like adults, children learn how to deal with unplanned events, make responsible and appropriate choices and engage curiosity in respectful ways as they engage the full range of learning opportunities that take place in the world. These things can only be learnt through personal experience. (https://www.cela.org.au)

Why is play in nature important?

At Thornbury Kindergarten we believe children are competent, capable and eager to learn. Their learning is natural and embedded in the people, places and experiences of their world. We value play in nature because it is intrinsically motivating for children and offers so many opportunities to learn, interact and develop language skills. One of the fundamental principles of Out & About Kinder program is that children learn to be adaptable, hardy and resilient. One of the ways they do this is by learning to have fun in all weather conditions including rain, which is often the most fun of all!

Learning and Development Outcome 4 of the Victorian Government's Early Years Learning Framework focuses on children being confident and involved learners. It states that "Children are active learners and thinkers who use their senses to investigate, experiment, count, compare and create theories about how things work. Dispositions such as curiosity, persistence and creativity enable children to manage challenges and learn from mistakes." (DE, 2026).

The Out & About Kinder program provides natural environments for children to visit that have no toys or manufactured resources and can encourage the development of long-term learning dispositions such as creativity, wonder, persistence, discovery and confidence as children resource their own learning.

Current research suggests that the identified benefits of nature play include:

- children's inner wellbeing is benefitted by being outdoors as the natural environment enhances their health, learning and behaviour by supporting personal and social development, as well as physical and mental health
- the sense of calm and restoration gained from spending time in the bush
- fostering an appreciation of the natural world and the interdependence between people, animals, plants, lands and waters providing opportunities for children to engage with all concepts of sustainability through environmental education. (ACECQA 2022)

Thornbury Kindergarten's Out & About Kinder program is intended to support young children through play, to develop responsibility for themselves and others. It will encourage a child's ability to independently assess and manage risk. This may help young children start to consider the impact of their actions on themselves and on others. In so doing, children learn to take on challenges and accept responsibility.

Possible Play Experiences	**Learning and Developmental benefit**
Nature play at local park	• Long term learning dispositions such as creativity, persistence and confidence are fostered as children resource their own learning in the park using their imagination and natural materials rather than have materials provided for them, e.g. they use a stick to write • Children develop verbal and social skills to negotiate roles in games and to communicate what an object stands for in a game. e.g. a stone to be a dinosaur egg

	• Develop responsibility for their own belongings • Children are supported to assess and manage risk • Play is valued because it is intrinsically motivating for children and offers so many opportunities to learn, interact and develop language skills.
Experience a range of play equipment and challenge at local parks	• Children who have opportunity to develop confidence in their physical skills will also develop academic and emotional confidence. • Children develop strength when they have the opportunity to move and use big muscle groups in a variety of ways every day. • As children climb, swing, twirl and spin they develop their core strength, spatial and visual awareness, vestibular and proprioceptive systems. Developing these body systems are important for effective self-regulation and being ready to learn. • A variety of equipment challenges and interests for children, • Uncluttered space to play big running games. • Equipment offers opportunities for increasing core strength and big muscles group necessary for sitting up strong and focusing for group times and developing fine motor control etc. • Children are involved in motor planning as they balance on a log, climb trees or equipment. • Children are supported to assess and manage risk to make appropriate choices • Being physically active can help young children to achieve and maintain a healthy weight. It can also help children to develop strong bones and muscles, enhance cognitive development and emotional regulation, as well as develop movement patterns and motor skills. Physical activity can provide opportunities for young children to interact with others, make friends and develop social skills.
Waste warrior walks; collect rubbish in local environment, Deposit soft plastics at local supermarket	• Practising sustainability and active community participation • Educating about impact of litter on environment
Bus trips to places of interest e.g. Preston market, Melbourne Museum, Preston town hall, libraries	• Connections to local community • Road safety knowledge and active practice of road safety skills
Visits to local primary schools	• Supports connection with community

	• Strong partnerships with local schools lead to positive outcomes for children in their transition to school
Stewardship of the earth	• As children learn about and are actively part of their community they begin to care for the world and the people, plants and animals in it. This type of learning is lifelong and ensures positive, sustainable outcomes
Endless learning opportunities!	• Noticing changes in the weather, plants, gardens, the environment, and the seasons. • Curiosity about houses being built or demolished • Noticing and naming birds • Time to lie on your back and watch the clouds float by • Looking at environmental print such as signs and talking about what they mean

SESSION OVERVIEW

Session times

The Out & About Kinder sessions will run fortnightly on Tuesday, Thursday and Friday during kindergarten terms. At times it may be necessary to change the Out & About session day if experiences cannot be organised for the usual day. Families will be notified in advance if this is the case.

Offsite days and times for groups are between:

Green Group – Tuesday	9.15 – 1.15
Purple Group – Thursday	9.15 – 1.15
Orange Group – Friday	9.15 – 1.15

Staff

When children are taken offsite as part of the Out & About Program the staff to child ratio is 3 staff to 22 children. This is above the Department of Education regulations which require a staff ratio of 1 qualified adult to 11 children. Families joining in are warmly welcomed.

The children attend Out & About Kinder with their group teacher and educator and an additional staff member. All kindergarten staff have a Level 2 First Aid Certificate.

Session Outline

Prior to the commencement of each session, staff will inspect the Out & About site for safety.

Each Out & About Kinder session will begin with the group meeting together with the staff. A story may be told or a group discussion may take place. Teachers will point out and discuss boundaries with the children as required. The children will then be free to engage in play within the boundaries of the Out & About Kinder site.

The children will have the opportunity to play in the rain, roll down grassy mounds, balance along fallen logs, get involved in dramatic play, find insects and draw with sticks in the ground. The teachers will note each child's developmental progression, advancing skill levels and particular interests. The teachers will use this knowledge to support the children's learning just as they do at home kinder. Teachers will support children as they take the risks and face challenges essential to well-rounded learning.

At times a specialist may be engaged to support the children's learning with their particular expertise. We will invite involvement of the Indigenous Australians who have a spiritual and historic connection with this land to share their knowledge and expertise with the children.

Location

This will vary from week to week and will include but not limited to the following venues:

- Pender's Park
- Hayes Park
- TA Cochrane Reserve
- Pender's Grove Primary School

Venues are selected based upon the group's interests as well as the time of the year. Sites are chosen to provide clear lines of sight for staff, volunteers and children. Boundaries are discussed and reinforced with the children each session. We reflect thoughtfully upon the children's developing capacity, confidence and stamina and plan locations accordingly.

Out & About Kinder allows us to build and develop the children's play skills, language skills, social skills, imagination and creativity. We do this by building on familiar experiences and repeated visits to places. Familiar places require less of a mental load (children know the rules, boundaries and expectations and don't need to learn a new set each time), allowing the children to go deeply into their explorations as they build with sticks, look for insects, grind up rocks for paint, and talk, run and play with their friends, picking up their ideas where they left them previously.

Staff will notify families in advance of the location of the Out & About Kinder session.

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Toilets

Depending on the location visited a camping toilet may be provided for children's use when necessary and housed in an appropriate tent. Staff will attend to any children requiring assistance. The children's use of the toilet will be supervised by staff, and children will only be allowed to use the toilet and change room individually. There may be occasions when children use a public toilet and further details can be found in the risk assessment as to how these occasions are managed.

Training & Awareness Sessions

Dog and road safety awareness sessions will be run as part of the Out & About Kinder orientation process for staff, children and parents/carers.

Risk Assessment

Extensive risk evaluations have been carried out by Out & About Kinder staff and are available each week for families to read.

WHAT WILL MY CHILD NEED?

Water

Parents/carers are required to provide a named water bottle of fresh water at all sessions. There will be access to drinking water to refill this when required on site.

Food

Parents/carers are required to provide healthy snacks and lunch in a sealed container for each session for their child. We ask you consider the environment by not including any packaging. We also ask you to be mindful of food allergy precautions when selecting items to include.

CLOTHING

Parents/carers are required to determine appropriate clothing based on the weather forecast appropriate to their session time. Variable weather conditions in Autumn and Spring can mean waterproof clothing is required throughout the year.

It is important that Out & About Kinder participants wear appropriate and protective clothing and footwear which:

- Allows children to move freely and undertake activities such as climbing, balancing, running
- Keeps children warm and dry in cold/wet weather
- Protects children from the effects of the sun, UV rays in warm weather and high UV conditions.
- Covers body and length of limbs to prevent sunburn, bites, scratches and stings. Such clothing is likely to lessen the severity of a snake bite (Even in warm weather, long sleeve tops, long socks and long pants are recommended - this clothing should be loose fitting and light).
- Keeps feet and toes covered and has a flexible sole to allow children to climb and balance on uneven surfaces. Gumboots are only suitable for wet, muddy days. Good quality walking boots/shoes or sneakers with decent grip are recommended for all other weather.

The following table provides examples of **recommended** clothing, clothing which is **not recommended** and is **unacceptable** clothing:

	Warm Weather	**Cold Weather /Rain**
Recommended clothing and footwear	Light, loose-fitting long-sleeved tops, long socks and long pants, broad brimmed hat or legionnaires hat, closed toe shoes suitable for climbing	Waterproofs (tops & bottoms), long pants, long sleeved top, beanie, gum boots, waterproof gloves, thermals in very cold weather
Not recommended	Short-sleeved tops, long skirts or dresses, shorts, gumboots	Skirts, dresses, bulky jumpers (incompatible with Waterproofs)
Unacceptable clothing and footwear	Open toe shoes, sandals, thongs, crocs, singlet tops and dangly jewellery	Non-waterproof outer clothing (Waterproofs on top of non-

		waterproof clothing is recommended) Highly flammable polyester dangly clothing, such as costumes.

Waterproofs: Light rainproof suit worn over clothing, including a jacket with a hood, and pants or overalls, which zip up over clothing**.** Please consider ease of toileting and your child's growth when purchasing waterproofs.

Change of clothes: Please provide a spare change of clothes for your child and these will be kept at home kinder for your child to change into if required. This is to ensure children's bags are a reasonable weight for children to carry. Bags are checked prior to outings to ensure clothing such as raincoats and sun hats are packed as required.





Staff will take some spare clothes for children to use when out and about.

Identification and visibility

Children should wear high-visibility clothing, such as a red hat or red clothing, for Out & About sessions so staff can easily see them. Clothing should also be appropriate for the weather and allow children to move freely.

ATTENDANCE

When shouldn't my child attend

We ask that parents/carers are diligent and exercise their own judgement in assessing whether it is appropriate for their children to attend Out & About Kinder.

Children should not attend Out & About Kinder if they are ill, excessively tired or if parents/carers are concerned about their well-being due to forecast weather conditions, for example if weather conditions trigger asthma or severe hay fever.

Parents/Carers and Volunteers

We welcome parents and carers to volunteer to join us. It's a great way to be involved in your child's kindergarten program. Please indicate your intention at the commencement of the session.
Volunteers will be required where the staff determine that additional adult supervision is needed to ensure the safe running of the program. This may include for example, a bus trip to the museum or market, or to provide additional support for a bush walk undertaken through a park.

Children will remain under the direct supervision of the Lead Teacher (Responsible Person) at all times throughout the session. Thornbury Kindergarten is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children and is a Child Safe organisation.

It is essential that volunteers other than parents and carers hold a Working With Children Check https://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au/

Volunteers are required to complete a multi-step screening, compliance, and induction process designed to meet the Child Safe Standards and fulfill mandatory requirements dictated by the Education and Care Services National Regulations and the Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority (ACECQA).

Session Relocation

Throughout the year we will experience a variety of weather conditions. We will always ensure it safe to go out. We are guided by information from the Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) website when making these decisions.
http://www.bom.gov.au/vic/forecasts/melbourne.shtml

In the event of extreme weather or other unforeseen circumstances the Out & About Kinder program may be cancelled and the group will remain at home kinder. This may be at short notice. We will notify families prior to the session if this is the case. On occasion if the weather changes suddenly and is deemed unsafe, the group will return to home kinder early.

The following circumstances would result in **relocation**.

Reasons for relocation	Notification	Contact Person
Forecast temperature of 36°C or greater. There is no pre-set minimum temperature. Note: Thermals and clothing layers should be worn on very cold days. Refer *Protective Clothing (Bush Kinder)* Policy	Written on whiteboard outside room or email.	Early Childhood Teacher
Forecast of electrical storm activity and/or hail	Written on whiteboard outside room or email.	Early Childhood Teacher

BOM forecast of extreme weather/storm warning	Written on whiteboard outside room or email.	Early Childhood Teacher

EMERGENCY Management Plan

There are times that have been identified that require the Out & About Kinder participants to evacuate to a safer location to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the group. Possible safe zones and evacuation routes will be outlined in the risk assessment. The safe zone assembly points will differ depending on the nature of the situation:

The reasons for relocating include, but are not limited to:

- fire or bushfire
- missing child
- aggressive dogs off lead
- other animal intruders
- uninvited person/stranger (threatening, causing a nuisance or unease for staff and participants)
- natural events, such as extreme weather, floods, severe winds or thunderstorm
- medical emergency or accident.

FURTHER POLICY AND REGULATIONS

Out & About Kinder is conducted as part of the Thornbury Kindergarten program and therefore is governed by the regulations and procedures of the Kindergarten.

Due to location and environmental factors, variations to policy have been identified and different procedures created which are specific to our offsite programs to ensure the safety and well-being of all children, staff and volunteers involved.

We ask parents/carers to view the policies on our website, to gain a full understanding of the responsibilities of the Thornbury Kindergarten Committee, staff, volunteers and parents/carers. Full policy documents are available on the Thornbury Kindergarten website or in the Amethyst foyer at Home Kinder.

Please contact your child's teacher or the Committee of Management if you would like to discuss any concerns or queries.
Out & About Kinder Committee representative: offsite@thornburykinder.com