Caloundra City Private School

Bush Kindy

PARENT HANDBOOK



GROWING EARLY LEARNING THROUGH NATURE-BASED EXPERIENCES

Bush Kindy Overview

Our Bush Kindy program has been developed in response to strong research showing that outdoor experiences in natural environments significantly support children's health, wellbeing, and overall development.

The program aligns closely with the Caloundra City Private School Sessional and Early Learning Centre Kindergarten curriculum, enriching and extending the learning that takes place in our classrooms. Many early learning services across Australia have successfully implemented Bush Kindy, reflecting its growing recognition and value.

The Bush Kindy approach is inspired by the forest preschool model that originated in Scandinavia in the 1950s. This philosophy encourages children to play, explore, and learn directly from the natural world. In Australia, this framework has been adapted to suit our unique landscapes and has become the foundation for Bush Kindy programs nationwide.

We believe deeply in the importance of children actively exploring, engaging with, and experiencing natural environments. Outdoor play is an essential part of our



program, offering meaningful opportunities for children to discover, investigate, and connect with the world around them. Time spent in nature allows children to slow down, be present, and interact with natural materials in ways that support their physical, emotional, and spiritual growth.

Learning alongside nature nurtures a strong appreciation and respect for the environment. It also introduces early sustainability practices, supports healthy living, and lays the groundwork for creativity, independence, and resilience.

Our Bush Kindy program provides children with regular, extended opportunities to learn in natural bushland settings.

While outdoor learning naturally involves some level of risk, these risks are carefully balanced with the significant developmental, social, emotional, and environmental benefits. Through intentional teaching, active supervision, and thoughtful planning, we manage and minimise risks to ensure children can safely experience the rich learning opportunities that nature provides.

Key features

Extended unstructured play

Children spend long, regular periods engaged in open ended play within natural environments throughout the year.

Experiencing weather and seasons

Children learn to observe and adapt to daily and seasonal changes, deepening their understanding of the natural world.

Nature based materials only

No toys, tools, or art supplies are taken to Bush Kindy.

Children play with what nature provides

Sticks, leaves, stones, sand, water - ensuring the experience is authentic, sustainable, and leaves only a footprint behind.

Current research on children who regularly play in outdoor natural settings has concluded that they have:

Greater confidence and resilience

Children show increased motivation, concentration, and the ability to persist through challenges.

Enhanced social, physical and language skills

Outdoor environments naturally promote communication, cooperation, physical strength, and coordination.

A deeper understanding of nature

Children develop strong conceptual knowledge and a respectful connection to the natural world.

Stronger immune systems

Exposure to natural materials such as mud, sand, water, leaves, and sticks can stimulate immunity, helping children become sick less often.

Healthier lifestyles

Regular physical activity outdoors supports healthy weight, fitness, and overall wellbeing.

Improved emotional wellbeing

Children who spend time in nature show greater resistance to stress, fewer behavioural concerns, reduced anxiety and depression, and higher self worth.

A stronger sense of belonging

Bush Kindy helps children understand their community, their place within it, and encourages authentic engagement with real life experiences.

A deeper connection to Country

Children develop environmental awareness, learning to care for plants, animals, and ecosystems, contributing to a well connected and environmentally conscious community.

Benefits of Bush Kindy

Environmental awareness and stewardship

Children develop a deep connection to Country, learning to care for plants, animals and ecosystems.

Confidence in considered risk-taking

Children learn to assess natural risks, make informed decisions, and trust their judgement. Activities such as climbing, balancing, exploring, and navigating natural obstacles build

Resilience and perseverance

Children learn to persist through challenges such as uneven terrain, weather changes, and problem-solving in natural environments.

Cultural learning

Children learn about local First Nations knowledge, stories and connections to Country.

Social and emotional growth

Children collaborate, negotiate, communicate, and support one another in shared outdoor experience.

Physical development

Gross motor skills, balance, coordination, and core strength are strengthened through natural movement.

Creativity and imagination

Natural materials inspire open-ended play, story-telling and problem solving.

Wildlife awareness and calm response skills

Children learn to recognize wildlife, respond safely, and respect animal habitats.

Links to our Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) core curriculum

identity

Building resilience

Supporting children to persist, adapt and recover from challenges.

Coping with change

Helping children navigate transitions and new situations with confidence.

Taking healthy risks

Encouraging safe decision-making while exploring and learning.

Trying new experiences

Building confidence through new activities and discoveries.

Independent self management

Developing independence in routines, belongings and self-care.

Wellbeing

Gross motor development

Building coordination through climbing, running, jumping and balancing.

Fine motor development

Developing hand and finger skills through natural play and exploration.

Messy play exploration

Encouraging sensory learning through hands-on, open-ended play.

Developing empathy

Fostering kindness and care for plants, animals and others.

communication

Attentive listening

Building listening skills to support learning and connection.

Clear communication

Helping children express ideas, needs and feelings confidently.

Asking questions

Encouraging curiosity and deeper understanding through inquiry.

Following instructions

Supporting children to listen, understand and follow directions.



learning

Fostering curiosity

Encouraging children to explore, wonder and ask questions.

Creative thinking

Supporting imagination, ideas and problem-solving.

Noticing patterns

Helping children identify patterns and connections in nature.

Estimating and predicting

Encouraging children to make predictions and test their ideas.

Sorting and classifying

Developing skills to group and organise objects by their features.

community

Cooperating with others

Supporting children to work together and share ideas.

Initiating and joining play

Encouraging children to confidently engage in shared play.

Showing respect

Guiding children to interact with kindness and consideration.

Following group expectations

Helping children follow routines and rules that support a positive environment.

location

Where is it?

Our Bush Kindy program is run at a designated site at bushland located on school grounds to the left of the CCPS school entrance at **200 Pelican Waters Blvd, Pelican Waters.**

Getting there

The children will be escorted to and from the Bush Kindy site by three educators. On the walk the educators and children stay on the designated path and walk with one educator leading the group at the front, an educator walking within the middle of the group, and another following all at the rear to ensure appropriate supervision at all times.

prepping your child

Children will be gradually prepared for Bush Kindy over the coming weeks through both intentional teaching and incidental discussions. Each group will learn about the Bush Kindy site, encouraging them to think about what they may see, experience, or do while there. Educators will introduce and practise safety routines and boundaries, helping children understand the expectations and appropriate actions required in the outdoor environment.

To support confidence and familiarity, children will rehearse safety drills and protocols before attending Bush Kindy. These important messages will be revisited during our regular group meeting held at the beginning of each session, ensuring children remain aware, prepared, and ready to participate safely.

Permission Form

To participate in Bush Kindy all children will have their parent/guardian complete a permission form, which will be distributed by staff. All contact details must be completed and returned prior to our first Bush Kindy excursion.

Communication

Whist our Bush Kindy session is running, parent/guardians are requested to have the provided emergency mobile number turned on and with them so that they are easily contactable should the need arise.

Medical Conditions/Medications

Staff will take individual children's medications and actions plans with them each week to Bush Kindy. All staff are trained in level 2 First Aid and have access to a full medical/first aid kit.

days & time

Every Monday and alternate Friday
(weather permitting)

CCPS City Stars ELC will attend 9.30am-11.30am

CCPS City Stars Sessional will attend 11.30am-1.30pm

clothing & what to bring

To ensure children can participate safely and comfortably in Bush Kindy, each child will be loaned a brightly coloured **puddle suit**, which will be stored on site at the service. Children MUST wear their allocated puddle suit for every session. These suits help keep children dry in wet weather and provide protection from insects and potential snake encounters during warmer months. Their bright colours also support educators with effective supervision.

Parents are responsible for choosing appropriate school clothing for warmth, comfort, and ease of movement to be worn underneath the puddle suit.

Children are required to wear their Kindergarten hat at all times in accordance with our Sun Smart policy.

Footwear must be closed toe for all Bush Kindy sessions. Gumboots are strongly recommended, as children will often be walking through mud and wet areas. **Gumboots** help prevent wet feet, soggy socks, and discomfort during the session.

In the event of wet weather or an accident, **families must provide a full change of clothing- including socks and underwear - packed in a labelled zip lock bag.** This spare clothing will be transported to and from the Bush Kindy site in the educators' backpack.

Children will take their full water bottles to the site, and additional drinking water will be available for refills throughout the session.

Morning tea will be provided on site for the ELC City Stars group. The sessional City Stars group will bring their lunch boxes for a shared picnic at the Bush Kindy location.

Before departing the service for each Bush Kindy excursion, educators will assist children to put on their puddle suits and will **apply sunscreen and insect repellent** to ensure they are prepared for the outdoor environment.

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Find out more

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