



Family Handbook



Welcome to Maples

Welcome to Maples Early Learning! At Maples, we offer premium early learning and funded kindergarten to the local community for children aged between six weeks and six years of age. We are largely influenced by the Reggio Emilia philosophy which was founded in Reggio Emilia, Italy.

Our philosophy embraces the children, families, educators, community, education and the environment. It is important to all of us at Maples to practice what we promise and therefore we are confident that you will feel at home within our environment which is guided by our philosophy.

Our educators are suitably qualified and experienced in providing meaningful educational programs to the children. Our funded kindergarten program is taught by a qualified early childhood teacher who holds a bachelor's in early childhood or equivalent.

Maples is a partnership between Lynda Kelly (founder of Explorers Early Learning) & Jarrod Macdonald. Our centre is operated with all members of the leadership team experienced and qualified in early childhood education. This allows our team to appropriately guide the practices of our team daily to ensure a high-quality educational curriculum is provided to all children. Our aim is to provide rich and meaningful environments where children can explore, allowing them to learn, grow and most importantly establish a sense of belonging at maples and within their community.

We have a vision of continual improvement and regularly invite and encourage family feedback. We do this through a variety of mediums such as surveys, discussions and maintaining an open-door policy at all times.

We look forward to welcoming your family to the Explorers community.

Lynda Kelly & Jarrod Macdonald



Locations

Abbotsford 3 Flockhart St, Abbotsford, VIC 3067 Monday - Friday 7.00am - 6.30pm 03 9429 1900 flockhartst@eel.com.au	Armadale House 21-23 Munro Street, Armadale, VIC 3143 Monday - Friday 7:00am - 6:30pm 9248 3030 armadale@eel.com.au	Brighton East 761 Nepean Hwy, Brighton East, VIC 3187 Monday - Friday 7.00am - 6.30pm 9067 5535 brightoneast@eel.com.au	Maples Early Learning 310 Bridge Inn Road, Mernda, VIC 3754 Monday-Friday 6:30am-6:30pm 03 7020 1447 mernda@maplesearlylearning.com.au
Maidstone Level 1, 50 Hampstead Rd, Maidstone, VIC 3012 Monday - Friday 6.30am - 6.30pm 03 9317 0411 maidstone@eel.com.au	Point Cook 24 Gramercy Boulevard, Point Cook, VIC 3030 Monday - Friday 6:30am - 6:30pm 03 9017 4100 pointcook@eel.com.au	Preston 391 Murray Road, Preston, VIC 3072 Monday - Friday 6:30am - 6:30pm 03 9069 0545 preston@eel.com.au	
Upper Point Cook 11 Bensonhurst Parade, Point Cook, VIC 3030 Monday - Friday 6.30am - 6.30pm 03 9068 4966 upperpointcook@eel.com.au	Surrey Hills 1 Stanley Terrace Surrey Hills, VIC 3127 Monday - Friday 6:30am-6:30pm 03 9069 0544 surreyhills@eel.com.au	Williams Landing 2 Fogarty Street Williams Landing, VIC 3027 Monday - Friday 6:30am-6:30pm 03 7020 1900 williamslanding@eel.com.au	

New Locations

Williamstown 130 Ferguson Street, Williamstown, VIC 3016 1300 000 335 admissions@eel.com.au Due to open in December 2019	Nunawading 86-88 Springvale Road, Nunawading, VIC 3131 1300 000 335 admissions@eel.com.au Due to open in June 2020
Tarneit Homebush Road, Tarneit VIC 1300 000 335 admissions@eel.com.au Due to open in November 2019	Greenvale 990 Mickleham Road, Greenvale, VIC 3059 1300 000 335 admissions@eel.com.au Due to open in 2020



Why Choose Maples

At Maples we are influenced by the Reggio Emilia philosophy and aim to be a step ahead with our educational programs. Our educators are deeply inspired by the Reggio Emilia approach and encourage children to:

- 🍁 Engage freely between the indoor and outdoor environment
- 🍁 Explore an environment that is presented with respect and is aesthetically pleasing
- 🍁 Explore and learn through a play-based approach
- 🍁 Explore their learning through the 100 languages of children
- 🍁 Explore the environment through investigation with the natural world

Our Values

Maples is a privately family-owned business that believes that children have access to high quality learning environments. We are guided by five core values:

- 🍁 We care for and respect each other
- 🍁 We practice what we promise
- 🍁 We think like our customers
- 🍁 We innovate to be a step ahead
- 🍁 We understand the small things are huge



Our Philosophy

Children

- Children are seen as active participants in creating their own learning environment within a safe indoor/outdoor curriculum that fosters their well-being and development.
- A child initiated play based program stimulates children's learning, exploration and social connections.
- Children are trusted to make choices and contribute towards their own learning.
- Children are recognised as a competent community of teachers and learners.
- Maples value the belief that children use one language's and more to explore their world.

Families

- Maples recognise that families are the primary influence on their child's learning and development.
- Respectful partnerships between Educators and each family are nurtured and valued.
- Children are given the opportunity to spend quality time with siblings, family and friends.
- Maples encourages open and transparent communication between our educators and families
- Maples value family engagement and feedback to enhance the learning opportunities for children

Education

- Our environments are influenced by the principles of Reggio Emilia
- Our environments and learning opportunities are inspired by nature pedagogy and natural environments.
- Documentation will support the education of children and will enhance the learning environment.
- All families have opportunity to discuss the development and wellbeing of their children in a professional and confidential environment.
- Maples encourage planned and spontaneous learning enhanced through critical reflection.

Educators

- Educators are intentional in their approach to creating more meaningful opportunities for learning.
- Educators explore and share diverse pedagogical practices and experiences
- Educators are intrinsically motivated to reflect on and enhance their professional development.
- Our educators support the principles of Reggio Emilia and the importance of nature pedagogy.

Community

- Maples are committed to exploring the local community and building long and meaningful relationships.
- The Maples community is enriched by celebrating and sharing similarities and differences.
- Maples are dedicated to learning about and acknowledging the traditional owners of the land.
- Maples recognise their responsibilities as active community members, raising funds for charities selected by the Maples community.

Environment

- Children are encouraged to explore their inherent connection to nature, including dirt, sand and water.
- Children form empathy towards all living things through enjoyment of nature and a sense of responsibility within quality environmental programs such as pet programs and community gardens.
- The Maples community are dedicated to promoting and implementing sustainable practices.
- Maples promotes the use of recycled, reusable, natural and sustainable resources.

Our Curriculum

The children's educational programs are developed by our early childhood trained educators. Each program reflects Maples' unique philosophy, commitment to the environment and local community. Our curriculum is enhanced with a variety of excursions and incursions to further challenge and reward children. Maples embrace the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF).

Development Framework

Maples embrace the VEYLDF and is dedicated to exceeding the criteria of this framework and the National Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF), Belonging, Being, & Becoming.

Maples strongly supports the VEYLDF and is committed to exceeding all requirements in the children's educational programs.

The National Quality Framework (NQF)

In December 2009, the Australian government established a National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care ('National Quality Framework').

The goal of the National Quality Framework is to raise quality and drive continuous improvement in education and care services through:

- The Education and Care Services National Law and Regulations
- The National Quality Standard for Early Childhood Education and Care and School Age Care ('National Quality Standard')
- A national quality rating and assessment process
- A national body jointly governed by the Australian Government and state and territory governments- the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA)—to oversee the new system.

The National Quality Standard (NQS)

The National Quality Standard sets the benchmark for the quality of education and care services. The NQS is a key aspect of the National Quality Framework. It brings together the seven key quality areas:

1. Educational program and practice
2. Children's health and safety
3. Physical Environment
4. Staffing arrangements
5. Relationships with children
6. Collaborative partnerships with families and communities
7. Leadership and service management

Ratings are available to view in each centres entrance foyer.

Cycle of Planning



Room Curriculum

Each children's room provides an educational program that is tailored to meet the needs of both the children's interests, strengths and developmental levels. Each child has an active online portfolio which captures individual and small group experiences.

We welcome families to read the Room Curriculum and discuss the program with their child's Educators.

Environments

Educators set up learning experiences within both the Indoor & Outdoor Environment with the intent for children to learn through their play. Educators extend on children's learning through intentional teaching strategies.

Learning Experiences

Each room has learning experiences to promote the below areas of development:

- Creative Expression
- Science & Discovery
- Routines & Independence
- Literacy & Numeracy
- Construction
- Physical Well-being

Family Involvement

Nothing enriches the children's curriculum more than the involvement of the special people in their lives. Maples extends an invitation to all families and friends to share their skills with their child's class and get involved in the learning process.

Below are some general ways to get involved in the Explorer's curriculum:

- Singing – children are so susceptible to language at an early age and it is wonderful to share your child's favourite songs, no matter what language you sing in, with their friends.
- Cooking – we love to explore the different tastes and textures of food from a variety of cultures.
- Reading a favourite story from a special book.

Please speak to your child's Educator or the Centre Director if you have a skill you would like to share!

Families are an important part of our curriculum. Each family is consulted to find more about their child's interests, development and aspirations. These contributions will be incorporated into the planning of the individual child's program.

Individual goals are created together with families for every child. A plan is put together through intentional teaching strategies, providing opportunities for each child to reach their goals.



Maples Extras Program

Gardening & Sustainability

We believe nature and sustainability teaches interconnectedness, and establishes a child's understanding that they are part of and dependent on something greater than themselves.

Our complimentary Gardening & Sustainability program, available to all children, is run by our passionate in-house Sustainability Officer.

This program involves many experiences including:

- Growing, caring for and harvesting our own fruit and vegetables in the community garden. The produce is then used in cooking or taken home for families to enjoy
- Growing seeds, planting and gardening
- Utilising recycle stations, worm farms and compost bins, which families and children are encouraged to contribute to
- Teaching children to reduce food waste and behave sustainably.

Music & Movement

Our Music & Movement program is designed to help children's physical and social wellbeing. Our resident Music and Movement teacher encourages a highly active class, involving the children in various music, dance, singing and movement experiences.

Music and movement stimulates all areas of child development, helping the mind and body work together. This program assists children in learning to express themselves, empathise, think abstractly, memorise, listen and much more.

Language

Our French teacher helps children learn the French language through stories, songs, dances and many other engaging experiences.

We witness many great benefits of exposing children to second languages in their early years. These include:

- The appreciation for other cultures, people and styles of communication
- Improved problem solving skills & critical thinking skills
- Enhanced memory and creativity.

Creative Arts

At Maples we are guided by the principles of the Reggio Emilia approach, which promotes the belief that children learn and express themselves through multiple mediums.

During our Creative Arts sessions all children have the opportunity to explore a range of creative tools and materials, with the support and direction of a qualified artist. The classes encourage self-expression, communication, exchange of ideas, collaboration and social interaction.

We respect our children's work and proudly share creations in our centre, in the local community and with families.



Connecting with Nature

At Maples we create moments, experiences and spaces for our children to connect with the natural world.

We purposely design our environments with the intention to encourage curiosity, discovery and a sense of wonder. Our curriculum provides opportunities for children to actively explore both the indoor and outdoor classrooms.

Our Indoor-Outdoor environments include a variety of natural elements to provide opportunities for children to explore the natural world. Our environment may include sand, grass, plants, tree logs all of which challenge and provide children with an appropriate level of risk.

The children's curriculum also includes the preservation of the world and the children actively manage and care for centre pets, composting programs, community gardens and worm farms.



Online Portfolio

Maples utilises portfolios as a means to create a documented journey of each child's progress.

Educators will update each child's portfolio to share with families:

- Learning Outcomes for groups and individual children
- Photos & videos
- Pieces of art work
- Scripts from children's conversations with peers and educators
- Reflections from educators
- Summative Assessments

Families will be encouraged to participate in their child's portfolio, adding family reflections as well as looking through the portfolio. Benefits of family involvement in the portfolios include:

- It allows families to actively participate in their child's learning.
- The child's learning experiences at Maples can be shared with extended family members and friends.
- Families have the opportunity to write and share stories about their child's experiences and learning over the weekend and holidays.
- Families have the opportunity to provide comments about their child's learning at Maples.
- It gives our educators further knowledge of the child's interests that can be incorporated into the Maples program.



Kindergarten Program

The Kindergarten years are rich and stimulating and provide a range of important opportunities that not only prepare your child for school, but prepare your child for life. Maples offers a combined Kindergarten program for both 3 and 4 year-old children.

This allows for many fabulous mentoring opportunities amongst the children as they share their abilities and build their self-esteem. These are the years that children will be exploring their own concepts of responsibility and co-operation, as well as their sense of belonging to a wider community. The Kindergarten program promotes the following strategies:

- Independence
- Social interactions
- Play which is creative
- Play that will discover and explore concepts about themselves and their peers
- Experimentation (science concepts) through exploring their understandings of nature and the world around them
- Facilitating children's conversation and discussion
- Allowing time for children to recognise emotions

Our Kinder teachers will provide six monthly assessments to each family of their child's achievements whilst in our care and educational setting. In addition, families will have an opportunity to meet with their child's teachers through our parent-teacher interview process.

School Readiness

Kinder funded children will have access to the Maples Kindergarten program. The program focuses on getting children ready for life, for school and as members of their community.

Features of the Kinder Program include:

- **Welcome Group Time** - Each morning the class will have a 'Welcome Group Time,' welcoming the children to the room and the learning experiences that are planned for the day.
- **Centre Library** - Children have the opportunity to borrow books from the centre library to take home and share with their family.
- **Water Bottles** - Children are encouraged to bring their own water bottle and take responsibility of it throughout the day.
- **Show and Tell** - Show and Tell is encouraged throughout the program.
- **School Bags** - Children can choose to bring their school bag in Term 4
- **Lunch Boxes** - A lunch-box program occurs in Term 4. Children are asked to bring an empty lunch box on certain days, and the chef will provide them with a packed lunch. This enables the children to practice a lunch routine similar to school, whilst being supported by our Educators.
- **School Excursions** - Children will go on excursions to the local school, enabling them to see a school class room and playground alongside their Kinder friends.



Access to a State Funded Kindergarten Program

The State Government provides one year of funding for all children to attend a Kindergarten program the year before they start school.

Children attending the 4 year old Kinder program at Maples are accessing a state funded Kindergarten program.

All children have the right to access a funded preschool Kinder program for a minimum of 15 hours each week. If your child accesses their funded 15 hours at a separate Kindergarten, Maples may be required to negotiate the days your child attends or provide your Maples booking to another child unable to access Kinder elsewhere.

If your child will not attend school the year they are eligible to commence, please inform us once the decision has been made.



Our Team

Our service is committed to employing care and education professionals who share a passion for early childhood education, interest-based play programs and the environment. Maples commitment extends to employing quality educators that have completed an early childhood qualification that meets the *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2013*

Our educators are the most important part of ensuring a quality Early Childhood Service. All team members of Maples have the necessary mandatory qualifications or are actively studying towards an approved qualification of the below:

All Educators are required to have:

- Valid Working with Children Checks or an active Victorian Teachers Registration
- First Aid Training
- CPR Training
- Asthma & Anaphylaxis Training
- Child Protection Training

Staffing Arrangements

Our service will have a pool of permanent part time/casual educators that are regularly employed to backfill any annual or personal leave. This will ensure the continuity of staff and maintain the quality of care for children and families.

Throughout their employment, educators and other staff will be offered regular and varied training opportunities. It is important that all employees remain up to date with current and best practices. Our educators are easily recognisable by their uniform (apron).
Provide the minimum of educators as required by the Education and Care Services National Regulations 2013 at all times.

State	Age	Educator to Child Ratio
Victoria	Birth to 24 months	1 Educator to 4 Children
	Over 24 months and less than 36 months	1 Educator to 4 Children
	Over 36 months of age or over (not including children over pre-school age)	1 Educator to 11 Children





Nutrition

Our in house kitchen provides a nutritionally balanced menu prepared on our premises each day! We love the aromas coming from the kitchen, especially the smell of baked goods made fresh daily!

Children at Maples are provided with breakfast, morning tea, lunch, afternoon tea and a late fruit snack.

Healthy, Fresh & Local

- 🍁 Our fresh fruit and produce is sourced from our edible gardens and local suppliers.
- 🍁 All meals follow a menu supported by Nutrition Australia and are prepared fresh on the premises by experienced chefs or cooks.
- 🍁 All services have fresh fruit bowls available for all children and families upon entry and exit to encourage healthy eating.
- 🍁 To increase the nutritional benefits, we reduce the amount of white carbohydrates and sugar given to the children. We use a lot of brown rice, wholemeal flour, homemade vegetable spreads for toast, etc.
- 🍁 A progressive approach to meal time is provided to accommodate for individual needs.
- 🍁 Water is always available and encouraged.
- 🍁 During various cultural celebrations children have opportunities to help cook special meals for the day. For example, Dumplings during Chinese New Year.

A Typical Day

Maples provide a nutritionally balanced seasonal menu that changes every week. An example of a days menu for Maples children is:

Breakfast: Healthy Cereals and Toast

Morning Tea: Stewed Fruit, Muesli and Yoghurt

Lunch: Lamb or Vegetable Tagine with Fresh Fruit

Afternoon Tea: Zucchini and Date Wholemeal Loaf

Late Snack: Fresh Fruit

Allergies and Dietary Preferences

We value your child's allergies and dietary preferences. We understand there are many children with food intolerances and minor to severe food allergies.

Only food sourced by Maples is provided to children to protect children with allergies. We ask that no outside food is brought into our centres. Alternative menus are available to accommodate allergies and dietary requirements. Common alternate options are dairy free, gluten free & vegetarian. Nuts and eggs are not used in any meals.

We ask that **NO FOOD** is brought into the centre.



Joining Our Family

Wait List Process

Our Maples Admissions Team regularly review our waitlist and offer families places as soon as they become available. The following factors are considered when offering a place:

- Siblings of children attending the centre
- Preferred commencement date
- Preferred days of attendance
- Priority guidelines as outlined by the Department of Education

Join the wait list by visiting eel.com.au or call 1300 000 335.

Enrolment Process

1. Accept a Letter of Offer

We review our waitlist daily and email families a Letter of Offer for available places four weeks in advance.

To accept an offer you will need to:

- Click on the Accept button (following the link emailed in the Letter of Offer)
- Pay the bond amount stated in your Letter of Offer. Families are required to pay a bond that equate to two weeks of full fees for the days of attendance. Bonds are refundable subject to no outstanding fees and receiving your intention to cease care in writing with four weeks' notice.

2. Complete enrolment information

Prior to your child's first orientation please email your centre the following:

- Completed Enrolment Form & Direct Debit Form emailed in the Letter of Offer
- Immunisation History Statement from Medicare
- Your child's Birth Certificate
- Medical Action Plans (where applicable)
- Parent and Child CRN for Child Care Subsidy

**For more information on Child Care Subsidy please visit humanservices.gov.au*

3. Attend your orientations

We will book your child into three orientation sessions:

- 1 x 1 hour Meet and Greet (with parent present; no cost)
- 2 x 3.5 hour orientations (no parent presence; charged for half day)



The Maples Enrolment Form

The Maples Enrolment Form contains information about you and your child, including contact details, emergency contacts, medical details, routine information and any special requirements your child might have.

Children are unable to commence care, including the orientation process, without a completed enrolment form.

If your child has a Medical Action Plan, please provide this with your enrolment form so a copy can be provided to your child's room. It must be completed and signed by a doctor and updated on a yearly basis.

Maples uses the Enrolment Form to collect personal information for the purpose of program enrolment, provision of services and invoicing. These records are stored securely.

The information may be shared with administrators for operational and financial purposes, associated companies, our childcare software provider, and third parties such as debt collection agencies.

The information will not be disclosed to any other party except as where required by law. You are able to amend or correct information on request by contacting our Support Services team on 1300 000 335 or info@eel.com.au

Fee Assistance Child Care Subsidy

From 2 July 2018, the government implemented the Child Care Subsidy (CCS) as part of The New Child Care Package came into effect.

The CCS is calculated by a number of factors including:

- Activity level
- Combined family income
- Service type and hourly rates

How to apply

For families to be eligible to receive any relevant subsidies, you will be required to have a **myGov** account linked to Centrelink. Through **myGov** you are able to complete a Child Care Subsidy Assessment. For further information about the CCS please visit: www.education.gov.au/childcare or contact Centrelink on 13 61 50.

Annual Subsidy Cap

For most families, there will no longer be an annual cap on the amount of subsidy you can receive. If your family earns more than \$188,163 or less, you won't have an annual cap on your subsidy. If your family earns between \$188,163 and \$352,453 Centrelink will cap your subsidy. This means Centrelink will subsidise your fees up to the annual cap of \$10,373 per child each financial year.

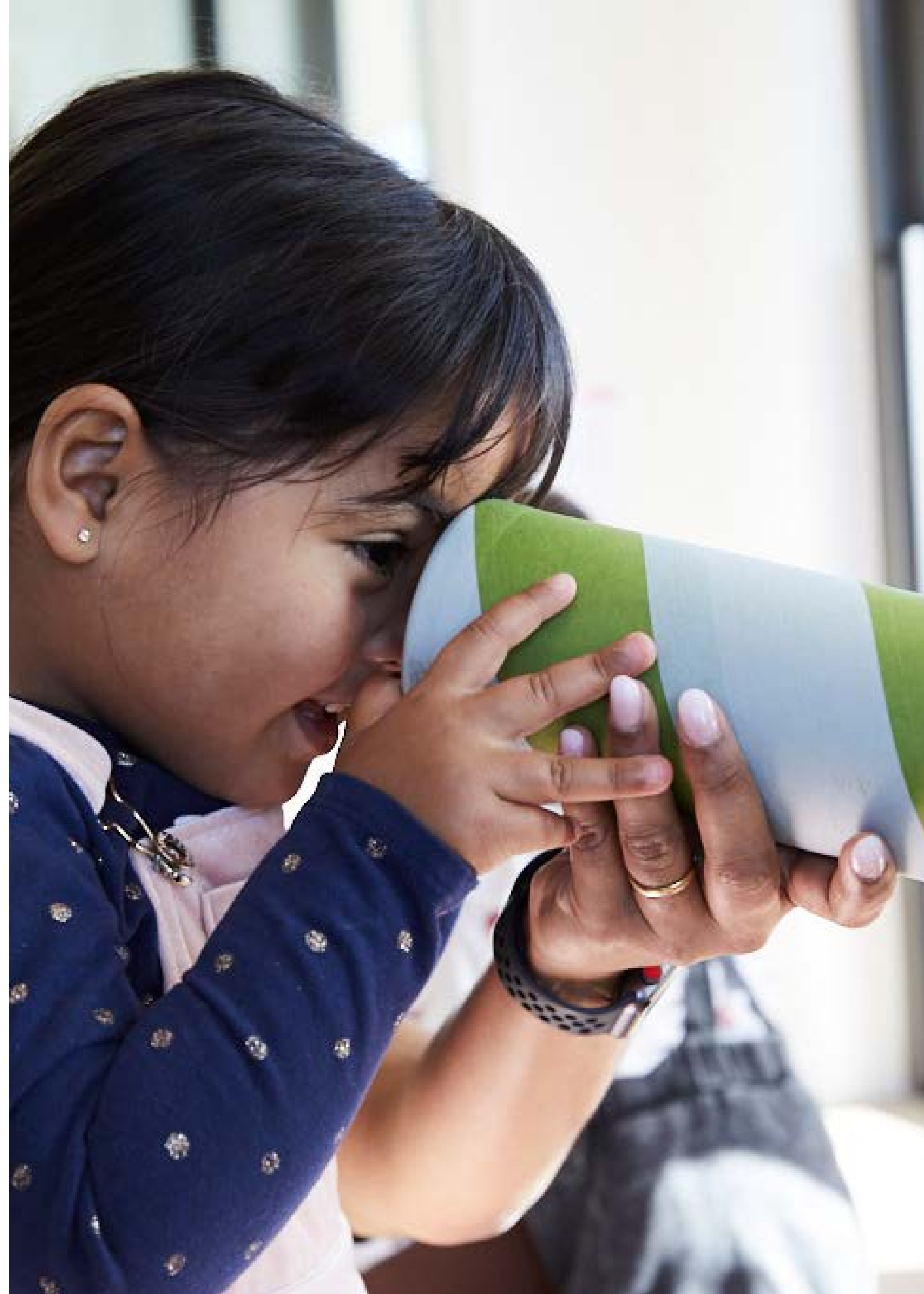
Please visit www.education.gov.au/childcare or contact Centrelink on 13 61 50 for more information.

Repayments

Child Care Subsidy (CCS) is paid directly to the centre. It is based on the attendance records that are submitted for your child. The gap between the Centre's daily charge and the CCS will be payable by the family via Direct Debit.

Maples Fees and Charges

Please refer to our current **Fees and Charges Summary** on our website for information.



Getting Ready for Care

What we supply

The centre supplies the following:

- Nappies & Wipes
- Sunscreen
- Children's bedding
- All meals including breakfast (from centre opening to 8am), morning tea, lunch, afternoon tea & a late snack
- Bottles and S26 formula (if required)

What to bring

Children need to bring their own bag to the centre each day. This bag will be placed in your child's locker. The following items will need to be included in the bag:

- Alternative milk bottles and formula/ breast milk (if required). We provide cow's milk at our centres.
- Security /comfort items
- Reusable water bottle filled with water only. This bottle will be returned home at the end of each day for cleaning
- A complete change of clothes (For children being toilet trained, three sets of clothes and a pair of shoes.)
- Our Sun Smart policy requires children to wear hats when playing outside, (Legionnaire hat is required from the start of September to the end of April. Baseball caps do not offer enough protection and are therefore not recommended).
- A warm jumper, woolly hat and coat for cooler weather
- Nappy Cream (if required)
- The Maples Wet Bag for children's dirty / wet clothing

How to prepare your child

At Maples, we understand that the initial settling in process can be a stressful time for both families and children. There are some small things you can do to prepare your child for long day care:

1. Book the three orientations close together as close to your child's first full day. This will help your child settle in, as the environment, educators and other children will be easier to remember.
2. Book extra days. This can also help to settle a child in as the more frequently they attend, the more they become familiar with the centre, educators and children.
3. For children that are breast feeding, introduce them to the bottle prior to commencing care, this will make it more likely for them to accept a bottle from their educators.
4. Open discussion with your child about what to expect when joining Maples. You may like to walk past the centre or share the centres social pages/videos.
5. Commence care before returning to work/study to allow your child to have shorter days initially, gradually



General Information

Security Access

At Maples each child's safety is extremely important. All services use an electronic security access system (pin code). Entry to the centre is via a security pin entered into the key pad located at the centre's entrance. The pin is provided to families by management. Please do not pass this code onto anyone.

We also have a door bell and intercom system. Once staff verify the person wishing to enter the centre, the door will be released and the code may then be given.

Maples Environmental Impact

Maples Early Learning is committed to reducing the impact of plastic bags on our environment. To support limiting the use of plastic bags Maples supplies each family with a Wet Bag which is included as part of the Enrolment Pack.

This re-usable bag is provided to each family during the orientation process. This bag will be used to store any soiled, wet or dirty clothing.

Start today and say NO to plastic bags. Below are some tips for reducing plastic bag use:

- Bring your own reusable shopping bag
- Refuse plastic bags if you don't need them
- Ask for a cardboard box as an alternative
- Use a shopping jeep or backpack for heavy loads
- Refuse *Reduce *Re-use *Recycle

Children with Special Rights

Maples Early Learning is committed to an inclusive program for all children with additional needs. The centre is able to access a number of external services to support children and families. For more information please contact the Director of your service.



