



PINEMONT PRESCHOOL  
BUSH KINDER/NATURE PLAY HANDBOOK  
JOEYS GROUP  
2022



***'Cherish the natural world because you're a part of it and you depend on it' – David Attenborough***

## **Bush Kinder Overview**

Internationally, Forest Kindergartens are well supported by the growing research that has identified the significant role of play within nature for children's well being, health and development. The Forest Schools concept originated in Scandinavia in the 1950's and has now become a framework for Australian Bush Kinder/ Nature Play Programs. The children are encouraged to play in, connect with and learn from nature.

At Pinemont Preschool, our philosophy states:

We acknowledge the importance of the Early Years and our role in a young child's development.

- We believe children learn through play and direct connection to the outside environment. Educating children on the conservation and protection of our environment is embedded into our curriculum.

Bush kinder/Nature play originated in Australia in 2011 by the Director of Westgarth Kindergarten, Doug Fargher. Rochelle, our Lead Teacher and Christine has spent 3 days with Doug during Term 1 learning about Bush kinder Pedagogy and spending time at Doug's bush kinder site.

Bush Kinder/Nature Play will provide an opportunity for the children to spend time in a rich natural environment that will foster each child's social and emotional development as well as their overall development.

Being on Country gives our young learners context to our embedded First Nations perspectives. Learning about the environment around us, appreciating and using our resources wisely, listening deeply and seeing the land as their teacher gives the children a sense of belonging.

Reference: <https://www.growingwildforestschool.org/amp/the-brief-history-heritage-of-forest-schools-around-the-world>

## **Nature Play Benefits and Opportunities for Taking Risks**

There are many benefits to having regular unstructured play in nature and opportunities to take minor risks eg balancing on a log or rock pile

- Children spend regular periods of time in unstructured active play in natural environments that requires large motor movements, greater core strength, enhanced balance and increased fine motor skills
- Improve resilience – through awareness of risk, ability to overcome challenges
- Increased confidence – through problem solving skills, imaginative play and creativity
- Create stronger emotional foundations – with greater impulse control and sensory regulation.
- Enhance mindfulness
- Reduce levels of stress and anxiety

For more information on the benefits for your child's well being and resilience:

[www.abc.net.au/abckids/early-education/reflective-journal/bush-kinder-nature-wellbeing-and-resilience/13390968](http://www.abc.net.au/abckids/early-education/reflective-journal/bush-kinder-nature-wellbeing-and-resilience/13390968)

## **Location**

Our Bush kinder/Nature Play sessions will take place in the 'Forest Area' located in Ringwood Heights Primary School. This site was chosen as our Bush kinder/ Nature Play area after we spent time onsite in term 3 2021 due to our playground renovation. There are a number of reasons this site will be ideal, these being:

- Close proximity to the Preschool
- A variety of natural play spaces within the fenced boundaries of the school
- It provides a variety of flora, fauna, natural habitats and ecosystems for the children to explore
- Bush setting reflective of the philosophy of Bush kinder
- Amenities such as toilets and drinking fountains
- Ability to form relationships with the local community and Ringwood Heights Primary School

## **Bush Kinder times**

Due to our rotational model of attendance, days will change each week so that each child will have even attendance. For example, Week 1 attendance is Monday, Week 2, attendance is Tuesday etc. The program will run during the schools indoor learning times so as to eliminate cross over of school and kinder children. The times Pinemont Preschool will be onsite at Bush



Kinder/ Nature Play are Mondays 2.00pm-3.15pm and Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays 11.15am-12.45pm. The group will leave Pinemont Preschool to walk to the bush kinder/Nature site approx 15 mins prior to these times and return approx 15 mins after these times.

A timetable will be given to families at the start of each term outlining the days and times the children will be offsite and at Bush kinder/Nature Play.

Educators will have the capacity to cancel a Bush Kinder/ Nature play session at very short notice. The children in this case would remain onsite at the Preschool. Reasons for possible cancellation could be extreme weather or staffing.

## **Consent Form**

Each family will complete a 'regular excursion' form at the beginning of the year with their enrolment forms. A copy of this along with your child's emergency contacts will be taken on each visit.

## **Drop off and Pick up**

Drop off and Pick up will be as usual for a normal kinder session. Normal kinder times apply. All families are to drop off and pick up from the Preschool grounds. As an option, pick up on Monday bush kinder/Nature play sessions can occur at Ringwood Heights Primary school at 3.15pm should families wish to do so.

## **Transportation of Children and Excursion Policy**

The kinder group will be leaving Pinemont Preschool's grounds and walking together to Ringwood Heights Primary school approx 15 minutes before we are due onsite. When leaving Ringwood Heights, the group will walk back to Pinemont Preschool and arrive back onsite approx 15mins after our Bush Kinder/Nature play session concludes. Please refer to 'Bush Kinder times' for specific times. Please refer to our website for Pinemont Preschool's Transportation of Children and Excursion Policy.

## **Attendance**

Parents/carers are responsible for exercising their own judgement in assessing whether it is appropriate for their child to attend their kinder session/Bush Kinder/Nature play. Children should not attend the kinder session in which Bush Kinder/ Nature Play will operate in, if they are unwell, excessively tired or if parents are concerned about their child's wellbeing due to forecast weather conditions. Please note the Bush Kinder/ Nature Play session will be cancelled if the forecast weather conditions are deemed extreme.

## **Communication**

During Bush Kinder/ Nature Play sessions we ask that parents and carers always have their mobile phone switched on and with them so that they are easily contactable. Parents should keep the Pinemont Preschool mobile number handy: 0493 269 230 which will give our families direct contact with the Pinemont Preschool staff. If our mobile is not working for some unforeseen circumstance, families can ring Ringwood Heights Primary School office on 03 9870 3050.

## **Emergency Evacuation**

Should an emergency situation arise, Bush Kinder/Nature Play participants may be required to evacuate to a safer location to ensure the safety and well being of the group. In this event, Pinemont Preschool is included in Ringwood Heights Primary Schools Emergency and Critical Management Plan where we would follow their orders and assemble with the school. The Primary Evacuation meeting point is the Schools Hall.



## **Clothing**

Parents are responsible for appropriately dressing their children. It is important that children wear appropriate and protective clothing and footwear which:

- Allows them to move freely and undertake activities such as heavy lifting, climbing, balancing and running
- Play clothes that may get dirty or muddy.
- Keeps them warm and dry in cold/wet weather
- Protect them from the damaging effect of the sun, UV rays in warm weather and high UV conditions
- Footwear needs to keep feet and toes covered and have a flexible sole to allow children to climb and balance on uneven surfaces.

## **Medical Conditions and Medication**

Staff will take all individual children's medication and action plans with them to each Bush Kinder/ Nature Play session. Teachers will also carry a full first aid kit which will include the emergency medication of Ventolin and Spacer.

## **Safety and Awareness**

At all times staff at Pinemont Preschool are assessing risks children take or may encounter during each Bush Kinder/ Nature Play session. Staff have a clear understanding of each child's level of development and skills therefore are able to stand back and support children with the choices they make when playing in nature. For example, one child may feel more comfortable with the support of a teacher when attempting to climb a tree, whereas another child maybe more confident and reach higher heights more independently. Most children know their limits and will be cautious accordingly.

Each child will have the kinder's mobile phone number on masking tape on the back of their clothing as an extra measure to identify that they are part of the Pinemont Preschool Kinder group.

A full Risk Minimisation Plan is available to all families upon request.

## **Staff and Volunteers**

Each session our regular teachers will be in attendance at all times. If a staff member is unwell we may need to alter/cancel the day we go to Bush Kinder/ Nature Play. We also welcome parent support to assist with the supervision of the group while walking to and from Bush Kinder/ Nature Play and during the off site learning while on Ringwood Heights Primary school site. A Try Booking system will be available for parents to use. Please only book one time to allow for all parents to have the opportunity to attend. We ask that younger siblings are not in attendance for the walk to, during and from Bush Kinder/ Nature Play to ensure parents are able to help staff with supervision and interactions with children. Any parent/carer volunteer will need to show their double vaccination status to Rochelle Brown. Parent/Carers are additional and no essential to the running of the Bush Kinder/Nature Play session.

## **Food**

The children will either before or after our Bush Kinder/Nature Play sessions. This will reduce the need for children to take excess items to our learning site.

## **Water**

The children will be encouraged to drink from their water bottles before leaving Pinemont Preschool. While onsite at Ringwood Heights Primary School, unlimited water is available using their drinking bubblers.

## **Toilets**

All children will be encouraged to use the toilet before leaving Pinemont Preschool to walk up to our Busk kinder/ Nature Play site on Ringwood Heights Primary School grounds. Once onsite at Ringwood Heights Primary School, the children can access the Schools toilets with an accompanying teacher to supervise.

