

Boongaiai Preschool Parent Handbook



The Armidale Waldorf School
and Boongaiai Preschool
FOR RUDOLF STEINER EDUCATION

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Boongaiai Philosophy

Our highest endeavour must be to develop free human beings who are able of themselves to impart purpose and direction to their lives. The need for imagination, a sense of truth, and a feeling of responsibility—these three forces are the very nerve of education.

Children who live in an atmosphere of love and warmth, and who have around them truly good examples to imitate, are living in their proper element.

To immerse the child in rich experiences, developing a sense of wonder and reverence for life so that each child can grow and truly become part of the world in which they live.

The educational approach at Boongaiai is based on the work of Rudolf Steiner, which he named 'Anthroposophy', meaning wisdom of the human being. The indications and recommendations given by Steiner form the base of our approach. This includes the education of the whole child: intellectual, physical, artistic, social, moral, spiritual and emotional aspects of each individual child. Another important indication given by Steiner was to adapt the education to the time, place and children who are being educated.

The first seven years are seen as the early years of childhood. During these years we educate with a focus on teaching the child through imitation. This means the teacher must constantly be aware that their actions are an example for the children to follow. Children often help staff as they prepare food, care for the garden and carry out daily activities. Through these activities the children learn to care for themselves, each other and the world around them.

Boongaiai Preschool intends to

- Create a home-like environment in which each child feels cared for and secure.
- Foster interactions between teacher-child and child-child that are positive and supportive.
- Support the child's developing senses, through real activities - including music, gardening and baking.
- Surround the child with, and create, things of beauty.
- Use manual play things that are of natural materials that support problem solving skills, and an endless possibility of ways that the children can engage in creative and social play.
- Enrich the child's inner-life with stories, songs, poems, movement and with artistic experiences in painting, drawing and beeswax modelling.
- Create a connection with nature through caring and playing with the garden, outdoor yard and class and yard pets (crabs, silk worms, ants etc.).
- Bring elements of nature into the classroom including a nature table with a seasonal display, and flowers on the eating table.
- Repeat songs, stories, and activities to allow children to feel familiarity and mastery.



The Essentials of Rudolf Steiner Early Childhood Education (early years: birth to 7 years)

Adapted from an article by Susan Howard.

Rudolf Steiner spoke about the experiences that are essential for the healthy development of the young child. These include:

- Love and warmth
- An environment that nourishes the senses
- Creative and artistic experiences
- Meaningful adult activity to be imitated
- Self-initiated free, imaginative play
- Protection of the forces of childhood
- Gratitude, reverence and wonder
- Joy, humour and happiness

Boongaiai Preschool promotes all these aspects, providing an early childhood Steiner education.

Sample Daily Rhythm

8.15am	Children begin to arrive, outside play
10.30am	Pack away outside play
10.40am	Inside Circle Time
11.00am	Lunch
11.40am	Inside play with artistic activities and domestic activities
1.20pm	Pack away
1.30pm	Storytelling / Puppetry
1.45pm	Home made afternoon tea
2.15pm	Rest time
2.50pm	Pack away rest time and sing goodbye
3.00pm	Parents begin to arrive, end of day for children
3.45pm	Final pickup, end of day for staff

“If a child has been able to play, to give up his whole living being to the world around him, he will be able to in the serious tasks of later life, devote himself with confidence and power to the service of the world”.

Rudolf Steiner

The daily rhythm changes according to the seasons.

Above is an example of our Summer / Spring Rhythm.

The small child still has an intimate relationship with their surroundings and can be deeply touched by the world around them and how others interact within it. By providing a home away from home where the child is surrounded with natural resources, calming colours and activities such as daily baking, painting, beeswax modelling, seasonal craft activities and festivals that take inspiration from the seasons, the child is surrounded by a calming natural environment where they are able to explore and belong.


The education of the small child is based on rhythm and repetition. We provide a variety of general activities that occur within a rhythmical sequence. Children feel safe and secure when they know what is happening next in the day. It also eliminates the need for constant verbal direction.

We try to make the child's environment and surroundings a positive place for creative play. Play is the child's 'work' – they learn to solve problems, anticipate difficulties, plan ahead, communicate with others, ask when help is required, all within play. It is important therefore to create a space that allows the children to play creatively and imaginatively.

The rhythm is arranged to achieve a balance between free play, domestic work and artistic activities. The day is rhythmically structured and ordered providing artistic and imaginative activities (washing, sweeping, packing away) so the children can develop an understanding that our preschool stays ordered and cared for. The children also have more respect for the toys and objects when they are involved in caring for and repairing them.

Another important aspect of preschool is storytelling. Through storytelling the children acquire listening skills and also enter into the imaginative world of the tales, allowing some stories to have a healing effect on certain behaviours. Story telling is also the foundation in which reading and writing skills develop, listening to stories and incorporating the oral language used builds a solid base for later literacy skills.

We also offer a variety of artistic activities including painting, modelling with beeswax, crayon drawing and craft. Your child will not always be bringing things home. Most painting and drawings will be kept in a folder (one for each child) until the end of the year.



“Receive the children in
reverence, educate them
with love and send them
forth in freedom.”

Rudolf Steiner

Festivals

To celebrate the rhythms of the year through the changing of the seasons, preschool participates in festivals throughout the year.

These festivals are very important to the child in preschool, with lots of preparation and anticipation. The children often remember last year's festivals and talk about them long after they are finished. The children experience the meaningful preparation through decorating the room or garden, baking treats, completing craft and learning songs and verses for each festival.

Our seasonal festivals are a time for families and friends to come and participate with the children in a simple ceremony, with songs, stories or games. A lovely sense of community is felt during our festivals and we look forward to sharing them with you.

The festivals are usually held towards the end of each term, so please remember these when planning your year as the festivals are a vital experience for the young child to find their place in the world.

Birthdays

At Boongaiai Preschool we hold a special birthday ritual to celebrate your child's birthday.

You will be invited to attend this special time, (at 1.30pm) as close to your child's birthday as possible. Parents are an essential part of this celebration ritual so we ask that you keep this date in mind as you plan your year. Prior to this day you will be asked to complete a few reflections about your child's life thus far which will be used in the birthday ritual. We will bake a cake in the morning of your child's birthday to share with the group. If your child has special dietary requirements please provide birthday cake options for our birthday celebrations (we can freeze these for your child) and also a birthday cake for their celebration to share with the children. We bake a wholesome and organic birthday cake for all children with flour, eggs and butter. If your child is having a party and you wish to invite preschool friends, please pass the invitations onto the teacher who will discreetly send them home with the children invited.

Learning Journals

We develop a learning journal for your child throughout the year.

This becomes a collection of focused individual activities your child may need, group focus interests, drawings and special occasions / events noted, i.e birthday celebration, festivals, mothers' day etc. We encourage you to look through this journal with your child at preschool and also to take these home from time to time to add any pictures, experiences from home or holidays that may support the planning, sharing and extension of your child's interests, skills and abilities.



To enrol at Boongaiai Preschool

To enrol at Boongaiai Preschool a complete enrolment form must be lodged at the Preschool with:

- Birth Certificate and Medicare Card
- Copy of immunisation record
- Two emergency contacts
- A copy of health care card if you are wishing to receive a subsidy
- Copies of court orders if required
- Paid enrolment fee and bond, as a direct debit into the account, details on enrolment form.

After the enrolment package is received, the Preschool Director will contact you to set up an enrolment meeting and a visit before your child starts at Boongaiai Preschool. During this meeting days of attendance and starting date will be discussed.

Paperwork/Administration: Please make an appointment with the Director to lodge your enrolment form and documents.

Immunisation Requirements

All NSW Childcare Centres, Preschools and Family Daycare providers are required by new laws to have a current Australian Immunisation Register (AIR) record up to date on file for each child for enrolment.

Orientation to Boongaiai Preschool

1. Boongaiai Preschool will begin the orientation process. Once the enrolment form has been received, days of attendance verified and the enrolment fee paid.
2. Families will be invited to come and spend a period of time at preschool; these visits will be flexible as they need to suit both the parents and preschool staff. This will be a time of orientation for the child and parents. Before children start it is advisable to have at least one visit to preschool.
3. A family member will remain in the premises service during these orientation visits. The child cannot be left at the service until they have formally commenced at the service, and are therefore not included in the ratios.
4. At the start of each year the preschool will hold a 'meet the teacher' type event so families may become familiar with staff and the setting.



Settling in to Boongaiai Preschool

We understand that leaving your child at preschool for the first time can be a hard thing to do, both for the child and the parents. Some children may have more difficulty settling into a new environment than others and it is normal for a child to be hesitant the first few times he/she is left in a new situation.

To support your child to have a settled and confident start to the day, we ask you to avoid lingering or waiting for the child to settle into an activity (this may only happen when the parents are gone) or sneaking away (as this does not help the child to build up trust).

In addition, we ask you to:

- Keep chatter to a minimum once inside the preschool grounds.
- Work closely with the teachers and share with them any particular circumstances affecting your child's possible response to settling in, any interests your child has to help us prepare an early transitioning environment
- A suggestion to help your child is to start with two consecutive mornings at Preschool, and build to full days in a month or so. This is to create a routine for your child as they become more familiar with the preschool. Once a week can seem like a very long time in between visits.
- We suggest the following staggered plan of settling time for those children who need help settling in. This may be altered and will be discussed.

Times Parent/Carer are recommended to stay until to assist with settling into Preschool:

Day 1: 10.00am, just before pack up time

Day 2: 9.45am

Day 3: 9.45am

Day 4: 9.30am

Day 5 and after: 5-10 minutes as required

When you spend time in the preschool, please be aware to:

- Be clear and stick with the time that you said you would leave. Uncertainty in when you will leave can create insecurity in the child.
- Settle into an adult chair and engage in some work- this will be demonstrated by the teacher. This is to focus your attention on your work, and leaves your child free to look and engage in the room, knowing you are still there too. This meaningful work of the adult helps children settle.
- If your child wants to stay close to you, this is OK, but try to let them engage with the room, other children and teachers, rather than you. Please do not force your child to join in; it is better for the child to slowly find their way in without pressure.
- If your child cries, do comfort them, but otherwise focus strongly on the work you are doing.
- Try to bid your child goodbye with relaxed confidence. If your child is upset a staff member will work closely with you during the transition. Staff will always call you if a child has not settled within a reasonable time frame.

What your child will need at preschool

Clothing

At Boongaia we strive to create a warm and nurturing environment for the children in our care and we ask that you support this from home. Please send your child in practical, comfortable clothing that is suitable for sand play, painting and water play.

Please ensure that your child is sun safe. We encourage loose fitting older clothes:

- Shirts with sleeves (no singlets or midriff tops please)
- Coloured clothing (please avoid black)
- Dresses with sleeves
- A broad-brimmed sun hat
- Sturdy shoes and sandals are also recommended; no thongs.
- In the case of wet weather, please send gumboots and a raincoat.

We also ask that your child wears clothing that is free of slogans or TV or movie characters as these can impact on the children's play and affect their day.

A full set of clothes needs to be sent each day in your child's bag. Please make sure all your child's clothing is clearly labelled.

Indoor shoes

Indoor slippers are worn inside, these can be purchased at the preschool for \$40.00 and will stay in your child's locker.

Bedding

Please provide a bed roll (see picture) or a blanket and fitted cot sheet for rest time at preschool. Natural materials and calm, plain coloured images are preferred.



Lunch

Lunch is expected to be a wholesome meal.

- We ask that you do not send processed packaged food such as; chips, juice, chocolate yoghurt, sweet biscuits and so forth.
- Pack an ice brick if needed as lunches go into the lunch crate under the sign-in table.
- Please also send in a small drink bottle to be left in your child's locker each day. Please fill the bottle with unfrozen water only.
- Wholesome afternoon tea is provided by the preschool.

Labels

Please label all belongings i.e. blanket, drink bottle, lunch box, hat, and clothing.

Toys

We ask that your child does not bring toys from home to preschool. If your child wishes to share something with their friends and teachers, please bring in something that is interesting and beautiful for the nature table. We do hold "Show and Tell" opportunities throughout the year.

We understand that at times a favourite toy or comfort item may support a child's transition into preschool and assist with emotional regulation. This can be discussed and agreed upon on a case-by-case basis with families to best support individual needs.

The Parent Community and Parents' Responsibilities

Arrival Routine: Supervision Requirement and Signing In/Out

You are required to sign the attendance book both when your child arrives and when your child leaves each day.

Please ensure your child is always delivered directly into the care of an educator so staff are aware of their arrival.

NOTE: Only a person over the age of 16 years can drop off and pick up a child from the Preschool. In addition, staff will not release a child to any person who has not been authorised in writing by the responsible parent.

Illness

If your child is unwell, please let them rest at home. This will not only benefit your own child, but also others, particularly if he or she has a contagious illness. A child who has had Panadol or cold and flu medication should be kept home unless given clearance by a GP to attend preschool. It is a requirement that children are kept at home for 48 hours after the last symptoms of fever/vomiting and other associated gastroenteritis symptoms have ceased.

*We do understand there are other medication needs to be given at home or at preschool and this should be discussed with preschool staff. Please see our Administration of Medication and Medical Conditions Policy.

Arrival and Departure

Children should arrive between **8:15am and 9:15am**. Pick-up occurs between **3:00pm and 3:45pm**. We sing our goodbye song at 3.00pm, so many children are awaiting their parent's arrival shortly after this time.

Children must be accompanied into the preschool by an adult, who guides them through the following routine.

- Upon arrival, sign the attendance sheet and check the notice board
- Help your child place their lunch into the lunch crate and bag into their locker
- Help your child place their fruit into the fruit bowl
- Help your child put their hat and coat on if needed

Please keep social chatter to a minimum during this time, as preschool is a space for children.

It is important to sign your child in and out each day.

Preschool and Kindergarten Car Parking

To ensure a safe and protected environment for our children, parents and teachers, **car parking for the Kindergarten and Preschool is confined to the lower car park, down the hill and to the left of the bus circle**. The upper carpark is restricted to staff and school bus only. **Parking is NOT permitted in the bus circle at any time**; this is only for buses to pick up and drop off. Small children cannot be seen around and behind cars in the bus turning circle.

Please do not park in designated staff parking spaces, as this may impact staff availability and our ability to meet required educator-to-child ratios.

What to do when you collect your child

Arrive to collect your child by 3.45pm. Your child will be waiting outside until you arrive and looking forward to telling you all about their day

- Collect your child's belongings from their locker and any work they have done during the day, ie beeswax, homebaking
- Check to see if any information has been placed into your child's locker.
- Sign the attendance sheet and check the notice board.

We kindly remind parents to collect their child promptly at the end of the day by 3.30pm as this way the educators and parents have a chance to discuss their child's day.

It is a legal requirement to collect your child no later than 3.45pm as after such time the preschool is not licenced to care for children. Once you have signed your child out, you are responsible for supervision – educators require this time for tidying up and to meet for reflective programming and child studies.

If you are running late

A late fee of \$15 per 15 minute blocks will be imposed for lateness. Of course, if there is a reasonable explanation given by telephone before 3.15pm or a real emergency has occurred then the late fee will not be charged. For more information, please refer to the Late Policy.

If someone else will be collecting your child

If another person is collecting your child, they must be authorised in writing. They will be required to show identification before your child is released into their care.

The Parent Community and Parents' Responsibilities

Attendance

We aim to offer access to Preschool Education for as many families in our community as possible. Classes are thoughtfully planned to meet parents' needs, staff to student ratios and to support the social and emotional wellbeing of each child.

We ask parents and carers to support their child's regular attendance and to **notify us as soon as possible of any planned or unplanned absences**. Extended or frequent absences without adequate notice or reason may result in a review of enrolment.

If you would like your child to attend Preschool for an **additional day**, please speak with our staff. This may be arranged where places are available.

Communication with parents

Good relations and communication with parents are a priority for staff. Please feel free to discuss your child at the end of the day, but if discussions are of a more private nature please call or organise a time to talk to your teachers, as these concerns cannot be addressed during preschool hours. You may also contact the school administration if you wish to explore other channels of communication such as College, Board or office staff.

Friends of Waldorf

All parents are encouraged to participate in Friends of Waldorf activities. This is a wonderful way to interact with the wider school community. The Friends of Waldorf raise valuable funds each year for much needed educational resources, and also run workshops and social activities for parents. Please contact reception at reception@waldorf.nsw.edu.au to find out more.

Your own address and contact details

It is vital that the Preschool always has your current address, phone number and other contact details. Please ensure you advise the Preschool staff and the School Office promptly of any changes. A preschool contact list will be provided early in the year. Please inform the Director if you do not wish your details to be placed on this public list.

Hair and Nails

Please ensure that your child's nails are trimmed short and hair is tied back when attending Boongaia. This helps prevent the spread of head lice and accidental scratching as children play together.



Parent Bulletin

A weekly parent bulletin is produced weekly to keep you up to date with current information and stories relating to the Preschool and the School. Please check the parent bulletin for important reminders and upcoming events. Preschool parents are welcome to attend parent events in the School.

What parents can do at home

Based on an extract from 'You are your child's first teacher' by Rahima Baldwin:

The rushed lives that most of us live make it difficult to provide children with an ideal world for their early childhood years. Yet there is a great deal parents can do for their child by providing an environment filled with love and warmth. By understanding a young child's development and his complete openness to his surroundings, we can do our best to provide a stable and nurturing environment with our current living situation.

- Attend to your own life and emotions. The emotional environment you create for your child is far more important than the material environment
- Honour the spiritual element in life, especially as it is brought to you in your children
- Work towards rhythm in family life that can support you and your children
- Remember that imitation and repetition are the keys to the young child's learning and will support positive behaviours
- Set limits and consistently enforce them: accept that you are the parent
- Allow plenty of time for your child's creative free play as well as musical and artistic play. Including time for just being at home and 'doing nothing'
- Buy or make childlike toys; ones that encourages imaginative play
- Avoid pressuring your child to be an early achiever in academics, sports or the arts
- Continue to pay attention to what your child experiences, limiting overstimulation from loud music and television
- Avoid concerning your child with adult problems through news broadcasts, conversations and so forth.

Screen Time

We ask that parents keep screen time in your home to a minimum (i.e. less than 1 hour per day, if at all). We specifically ask that your child does not have any late screen time on the nights before and in the mornings before coming to preschool. More information on Television and its effects on children can be provided by the teachers.

Excursions

Excursions are an important part of our emerging autonomy and connection to our community. Preschool often visits the library, where children love to explore books and adapt to another environment with a developing respect for the peace and quietness that comes within a library space. We also visit our 'big school' garden, noticing changes, growth and new additions throughout the year. We love visiting and feeding our Kindergarten chickens and also having a play and explore in their bigger playground sometimes.

Preschool Policies

Communications will inform of any Policy updates.

Further Reading

Suggested reading on Parenting and Steiner Education. If books are unavailable in our Parent library, speak with the Boongaiai Educators.

- Work & Play in Early Childhood *Freya Jaffke*
- You Are Your Child's First Teacher *Rahmina Baldwin*
- Festivals, Family & Food *Cary & Large*
- The Genius of Play (2001) *Sally Jenkinson*
- The Hurried Child *David Elkind*
- The Incarnating child *Joan Salter*
- Miseducation *David Elkind*
- The Waldorf Parenting Handbook *Cois Cusick*
- Free to Learn (2001) *Lynne Oldfield*
- Ready to Learn (2002) *Martyn Rawson & Michael Ros*
- Mothering with Soul *Joan Salter*
- Beyond the Rainbow Bridge *B Patterson & P Bradley*



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