



Primary School
Pre-School
Early Learning Centre
Out of School Hours Care

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AN INTRODUCTION TO THE FORREST LEARNING CENTRE

Service approval number Forrest Primary School Council SE- 0000 3552 (ACECQA)

Forrest Early Learning Centre, part of Forrest Primary School is situated 35 km south east of Colac in the Otway Ranges. The school has proudly served the rural community since 1885 and the Pre-School commenced operation in 2000. Prior to 2014, School Council held a service agreement to run Preschool and Occasional Care services. In 2014 our new centre based service agreement will alter to reflect the changing needs of the Forrest community, enabling more comprehensive childcare and educational service options.

The school, with a current enrolment of 38 students, has extensive gardens and grounds providing active and passive play areas, and several well maintained play equipment areas. The grounds cover four hectares with an oval, a tennis/basketball court and a safe adventure playground with ample room for further development of play and environmental study areas. The Early Learning Centre, current enrolment 11, is complete with safe and stimulating outdoor play areas suitable for children under school age.

At Forrest we believe that children deserve the opportunity to fulfil their potential. We know this can best occur when children are actively engaged in learning tasks in a safe, positive and supportive environment, where individual assistance is readily available. Multi-level class structures are a feature of our school, pre-school and childcare programs, which encourage cross-age learning. To realise these aims we encourage community support with active participation.

Educators work together in a purposeful and professional manner to plan and implement programs. Pre-School and Childcare programs are based upon the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework. The (VEYLDF) is designed to advance all children's learning and development from birth to eight years of age. The framework provides early childhood professionals with a common language for describing outcomes for children, and describes practice principles to guide early childhood professionals to work together, with children and with families to achieve the best outcomes for every child.

Forrest Early Learning Centre is firmly committed to providing excellence in education and is continually assessing school, pre-school and student needs for further plans and improving student outcomes. The ELC is vital to our community and serves as an excellent introduction for families into the more formal primary school setting.

HISTORY

When the need to provide 15 hours of funded Pre-School was first broached with Department of Education and Early Childhood (DEECD) in term 4, 2013, we seized an incredible opportunity to consult with our community and overhaul services to best reflect community need. Many Forrest families had resorted to travelling with their children to childcare centres in both Colac and Birregurra (about 30 minutes by car). Previously Forrest had been used for “In Venue Family Day Care” but the Corangamite Shire withdrew this service in 2013. In 2014, the Birregurra “In Venue Family Day Care” service also closed, again displacing some families. Therefore we needed to act before our families found childcare and eventually a primary school out of Forrest.

Not only do we view our Pre-School and Early Learning Centre as an integral element of our learning community, but the building also facilitates Maternal and Child Health Nurse visits, adding another level of community support for new parents and babies.

DEMOGRAPHIC

Both physical location and social demographic affect our Early Learning Centre. Forrest is situated in the Colac Otway Shire and is considered significantly disadvantaged, as supported by the Australian Early Development Index data (33% of children deemed at risk in one or more of; physical health and wellbeing, social competence, emotional maturity, language and cognition, communication skills and general knowledge) and a DEECD determined Student Family Occupations density Index of 0.4274. The physical location of the Early Learning Centre and Primary School is within the DEECD location index level 0.19. The DEECD component determines our school funding levels, and also affects our Pre-School funding (small rural) levels.

SERVICE SUMMARY

PRE-SCHOOL- state funded educational program 4 YEAR OLDS (15 hours a week)

PRE-SCHOOL- locally funded educational program 3 YEAR OLDS (15 hours a week)

Cuddly Koalas CHILDCARE- care for before school aged children, capped at 4 places per session.

Friendly Frogs CHILDCARE- care for before school aged children, capped at 4 places per session.

Awesome Afters- Out of School Hours Care Program for school aged children 5-12years old.

ELC PROGRAM

Our Early Learning Centre is a vibrant and happy place to learn, with many programs to suit all ages of children, from babies and toddlers through to Primary School aged children. The following program has been developed after extensive community consultation and we are very excited to be able to offer increased services.

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
9am- 2pm	Cuddly Koalas CHILDCARE	Cuddly Koalas CHILDCARE	PRE-SCHOOL (4YO)	PRE-SCHOOL (4YO)	PRE-SCHOOL (4YO)
			PRE-SCHOOL (3 YO)	PRE-SCHOOL (3 YO)	PRE-SCHOOL (3 YO)
			Cuddly Koalas CHILDCARE		
2-3.30pm	Dazzling Dolphins CHILDCARE	Dazzling Dolphins CHILDCARE	Dazzling Dolphins CHILDCARE	Dazzling Dolphins CHILDCARE	Dazzling Dolphins CHILDCARE
2pm- 6pm	Friendly Frogs CHILDCARE	Friendly Frogs CHILDCARE	Friendly Frogs CHILDCARE	Friendly Frogs CHILDCARE	Friendly Frogs CHILDCARE
3.30- 6pm	AWESOME AFTERS Out of School Hours Care	AWESOME AFTERS Out of School Hours Care	AWESOME AFTERS Out of School Hours Care	AWESOME AFTERS Out of School Hours Care	AWESOME AFTERS Out of School Hours Care

STAFFING

All our dedicated staff are early childhood qualified, with Degree, Certificate and Diploma level training. Some staff will be undergoing training in 2014 whilst working with us. All have First Aid Training, meeting the requirements of our Service Agreement with ACECQA (Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Assurance) requirements.

OUR FEE STRUCTURE

The following fees and charges have been set by school council.

PROGRAM	FEES
3 & 4 YEAR OLD PRE-SCHOOL - educational program	\$250 a term (\$1000 annually) Health Care Card rebate of \$860 No rebate is available for 3 year olds.
CUDDLY KOALAS- Childcare	\$5 hour = \$25 a day
DAZZLING DOLPHINS Childcare	\$7.50 a day
FRIENDLY FROGS- Childcare	\$5 hour = \$20 a day
AWESOME AFTERS Out of School Hours Care	\$25 a day (CCB claimable- 50%)

NOTE: While School Council has endeavoured to provide programs which attract Child Care Rebate (federal funding) to make care accessible for all families, we have not been able to do this with all programs.

Therefore we have determined in 2014 to temporarily lower fees to enable more parents to utilise the services. This is not sustainable in the long term so we are looking for a workable solution now.

LIMITATIONS

Unfortunately, due to limitations of facilities/ location/ staffing we are unable to offer under school aged childcare programs that attract the federal government Child Care Benefit (CCB). Luckily our Out Of School Hours Care service is registered for the CCB rebate lowering parents' costs.

We cannot offer a Long Day Care service, which does attract CCB, as our centre is not able to operate for the necessary 8 hours a day, 48 weeks a year. Our limitations on this include; the space being used for our funded Pre-School program 3 days a week, the significant disadvantages of our physical rural location, facilities and the inflexibility of national childcare legislation.

THE FUTURE

The future is bright for Forrest Early Learning Centre but we need some assistance.

- Recently we were notified that we have been invited to submit a more detailed application for the **Early Learning Facility Upgrade Grant 2013-2014**. This process must be completed by the end of February 2014, and we await a successful outcome which will enable us to increase our level of capacity and programs and provide a more enriched learning environment.
- On a financial level we require certain **legislative changes that will enable us to provide childcare programs which will attract the federal government CCB**, therefore making childcare accessible to all families. Perhaps an exemption of service hours may be applicable to remote/ rural areas such as Forrest.
- If a **Child Care Management System (CCMS)** was integrated into our Departmental Administrative program (Cases21) it would mean less double handling and time wasted.

Thank you very much for taking the time to consider our situation at Forrest. We await your considered report and envision all childcare centres benefitting from this Productivity Commission process.