

BELGRAVE HEIGHTS CHRISTIAN SCHOOL
ELC PROGRAM





INTRODUCTION

The vision of a Kindergarten to Year 12 school was held by school founders Isabel Bell, Lyn Thompson and Jennifer McCallum since the school began in 1983. However, it wasn't until 2003 that a group of passionate parents began planning how to achieve their desire for their youngest children to receive a Christian early childhood education. In reaching towards this aim, they instigated a playgroup at Belgrave Heights Convention Centre to support their younger children socially, emotionally, cognitively, physically and spiritually, incorporating the values that they held at home.

The popularity of Belgrave Heights Christian School Playgroup saw it relocate to the school grounds in 2007 and become a rostered playgroup.

Increasing demand and popularity of the Early Childhood Program, saw the need for a purpose-built Early Learning Centre. Our first Kinder Teacher, Mrs Sarah Jobson, welcomed the first Kinder group to the new Early Learning Centre in 2012.

Our ELC Team is comprised of two ELC Teachers and two Co-educators. Working together, they create a welcoming and nurturing environment, where children and adults support and encourage each other as they learn about God, self, family, community and the world around us.

Children are natural learners, who want to discover and learn about the world. At Belgrave Heights Christian School Early Learning Centre (BHCS ELC), we encourage their natural curiosity and creativity, support the children to follow and extend their own interests, and scaffold their learning through play.



ELC PROGRAM

Play-based learning provides children with opportunities to experiment with the different roles of identity, negotiate, take risks, explore, and create meaning to their world. Through play, children build resilience, learn how to interact with others, solve problems, and form relationships.

Our fully qualified ELC Teachers and Co-educators support the children as they solve problems with their own ideas, extend the children's interests through play-based activities, and provide a safe and caring environment for children to explore.

Our program offers flexible indoor-outdoor sessions which enable children to learn through play, in the environment that best suits them. We also use structured times together to form routines and rhythms, such as group time, songs, and games, which provide security and predictability that strengthens children's social and emotional development.

We favour the use of items from nature, wooden resources and open-ended materials, which let children control their play. When children use these types of resources, they derive enjoyment from their imagination, and extend their learning.

Real tasks, such as cooking, washing, and gardening, allow children to contribute to the care of each other and the learning space. We believe that children should not only be connected to nature, but also understand how to care for the environment. Children experience opportunities to upcycle resources, use rainwater tanks, witness food scraps change to compost, and see food grown from seeds. Children are able to witness how they can be involved in environmental sustainability.



The ELC Team offer guidance and support to children in order to provide opportunities to take calculated risks and develop awareness of their own abilities and limitations. The use of fragile items, such as glass and porcelain, along with the use of high risk items such as hammers, assists in developing these skills in children.

We believe that there is no such thing as bad weather, simply inappropriate clothing. With suitable outdoor clothing, children are able to interact with all types of weather. Playing outside, getting dirty, and squeezing mud between their toes is good for children's health; it promotes resilience, increases fitness and can reduce stress.

Bush Kinder is an integral part of the 4 Year Old Kinder Program. It offers children opportunities to connect with nature, wonder at God's creations, and promote a protective attitude towards the environment. Playing outside enables children to experience the changing seasons, helps them to develop an understanding of the rhythm of the year, and connect the year to Christian teachings and God.

Activities experienced throughout the year may include: French, Music, Science and Library with teachers from within the school. Specialist activities enable the children to interact with school children and teachers, as well as become more comfortable within the School Grounds and facilities.

ELC FACILITIES

The ELC was designed to create a beautiful, light-filled, open and natural learning space. Parents/Carers enter the ELC via a spacious family friendly foyer - a place to meet and chat to other families, hold craft sessions, and form an ELC Community.

The interior is large and spacious, providing an abundance of safe spaces for children to explore and learn. Furniture has been specifically selected to be made of natural materials, to provide a warm, homely feel, that promotes a connection with nature.

The kitchen is designed, with child height benches, to be fully functioning for children and enable them to participate in cooking and take ownership of morning tea preparation, as well as contribute to a home-style environment. A compost bin and worm tower help to connect children to the natural world, while they observe how our food scraps break down and nurture the Earth.

The indoor/outdoor program empowers children to choose whether their learning will take place inside or outside, in all types of weather. Wet weather gear is an essential part of the children's clothing to facilitate outdoor winter play.

The outdoor play area is designed to promote children's creativity, problem-solving skills and allows them to explore acceptable risks within a safe environment.

A rock encased sandpit, offers a unique and natural twist on a traditional sandpit, and provides a contrasting texture, as well as play inspiration. The slide and rock areas offer a place to explore, create and imagine with natural elements.

Staggered rocks, climbing ropes, and the steep slide afford children the opportunity to use gross motor skills, balance and confidence, whilst assessing risk, and learning to understand their own capabilities.

A fire pit is used in Autumn and Winter. The experience of sitting around a fire with adults provides a great environment to discuss fire safety, the changing seasons, elements of nature, and perhaps toast marshmallows.

As the ELC is located on the edge of the Primary school, the children have opportunities to form friendships with Primary School staff and students. In addition to this, the ELC children regularly use the School facilities, such as the ovals, the Discovery Centre (Library), Bush Kinder, and walks around the School. Regular access to the School facilities promotes a sense of belonging and comfort within the school environment, and assists with a smooth transition from ELC to school.



EXCURSIONS & INCURSIONS

Excursions provide an opportunity for children to experience new places, and learn in a different environment. Excursions are provided to extend the children's current interests, or allow them to explore the local community. This gives the ELC children opportunities to go off premises and engage in real life experiences such as bus or train travel, while learning something new. In previous years, we have visited places such as the fire station, parks, local libraries, the train station and Belgrave Main Street.

Throughout each term, the ELC children also experience a number incursions where we have special visitors come to the Early Learning Centre. Some of these include CFA visit, Pet Responsible Program, pet visits and Thingle Toodle Road Safety.







FAMILIES LEARNING TOGETHER

The importance of family in a child's development cannot be underestimated. Belgrave Heights Christian School ELC, warmly welcomes all families; believing that families are a child's first teacher and are an integral part of our ELC community. We believe that Early Learning is a collaborative partnership between parents/carers and staff, working together to encourage your child's interests, learning and development. A parent's unique understanding of their child is critical in helping to guide the child's development.

Parents/Carers are always welcome. We warmly encourage parents/carers to be a part of our ELC Community in whichever way they feel most comfortable.

Throughout the year we celebrate a variety of festivals and celebrations such as Easter, Mud Day, Pentecost, Book Week and the Nativity. Festivals and celebrations offer families a chance to meet with other families, learn more about our ELC, and celebrate with your own family.

PARENT PARTICIPATION

To assist in the running of a full ELC program, parents/carers are required to join us once a term for ELC duty. We encourage parents/carers to be themselves whilst on ELC duty - talk to the children about what they are doing, encourage them, and assist where needed. ELC duty offers you an insight to what your child is doing at the ELC Program, who they are playing with, and how our day runs. ELC duty is also an opportunity to showcase your skills or knowledge, such as playing an instrument, gardening, sewing, dancing, face painting and so on. During ELC duty, you can tell us about your family, bring in a family pet, help out with ELC tasks, or simply join in on activities. ELC children always take great pride in having a family member joining us at the program.





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