



# CHILDRENS GARDEN KINDERCARE

Rudolf Steiner Childcare & Kindergarten

## PARENT HANDBOOK

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# PARENT HANDBOOK

Welcome to the Childrens Garden Kindercare community.

You will find detailed information in this Parent Handbook with regard to your child's enrolment and early education at our centre.

Your trust in us to protect, nurture and educate your child is recognized and respected by each of our staff and management team.



## OUR VISION

Childrens Garden Kindercare is committed to providing an alternative form of care where the early years of childhood are protected and nurtured, into which children are welcomed with love and surrounded by warmth, wonder and wisdom. Our care will give the children the best start to develop a secure sense of personal wellbeing, a love for learning, individual confidence and empathy for others.

## OUR MISSION

We will care for young children in a beautiful, safe and organic environment. We will provide consistent daily, weekly and seasonal rhythms for the children to rely upon and develop within. Through this the children can run, play, rest and explore as positive educational foundations are laid for their future. This exceptional care that meets the changing needs of the developing child will be provided by our professional and dynamic team committed to "receiving the children in reverence, educating them with love, and letting them go forth in freedom" (Rudolf Steiner).

## OUR PRINCIPLES

Childrens Garden Kindercare provides quality childcare and kindergarten with a difference, based on Rudolf Steiner's principles for early childhood within an atmosphere of honesty, integrity and respect. Each child will receive individual care within a group setting which supports and enriches their family life as well as assisting the child to develop their unique potential at their own pace. We do this by supporting parents and meeting the needs of the children in our care. We hold to the following:

- Beauty Children are encouraged to find beauty and wonder in the world through a variety of exploration and play activities. Beautiful classrooms and gardens allow them to experience the joys & mysteries of childhood.
- Colour used appropriately allows young imaginations to flow, thus pastel rainbow colours promote a gentle, tranquil feeling life. Magenta is recommended by Dr Steiner as the colour for kindergarten. It is the colour of light shining through our skin.
- Imitation is the way of the child, 0-7yr. Our educators are mindful of all that is presented to the children in our care. In imitative play, we learn the early skills of all the professions, trades, arts, physical and social sciences.
- Nurture Each child receives individual care within a group setting that supports and enriches their family life, as well as assisting the child to develop their unique potential.
- Nutrition provided is biodynamic or organic. A warm and friendly home-like environment is created by preparing food with the children and sharing it together. Healthy eating is modelled and promoted with nutritious choices.
- Play is the foundation upon which our educators build. Creative self-directed play is essential for developing fine & gross motor skills, hand-eye coordination, interpersonal relationships, imagination, confidence & self-esteem.
- Rhythm & routines develop childrens trust and security as they eagerly anticipate what is coming next. Daily, weekly and seasonal rhythms allow children to fully experience our carefully chosen activities.
- Warmth is vital in childrens surroundings, not only in the physical environment but also radiating from the hearts of the adults in their midst.



## IMITATION

The young child's work and play is focused on imitation. The whole being of the young child is essentially a sense organ. They absorb us as parents and educators just as we are. Our words, deeds, gestures and practices are of vital importance. 'Health for the whole of life depends on how one conducts oneself in the presence of the child.'

Rudolf Steiner, Kingdom of Childhood

### OPENING HOURS

7.30am – 6.30pm      Monday to Friday  
8.30am – 5.30pm      Saturday

### KINDERGARTEN AND CHILD CARE SERVICES

Childrens Garden Kindercare is an extended-hours Kindergarten and Child Care Service. Care will be provided for children aged from approximately 18 months to 6 years of age not yet attending school.

### CHILDRENS PROGRAMS

*Kindergarten:* 22 places for 3-5 year olds  
Monday to Friday: 7.30am – 6.30pm

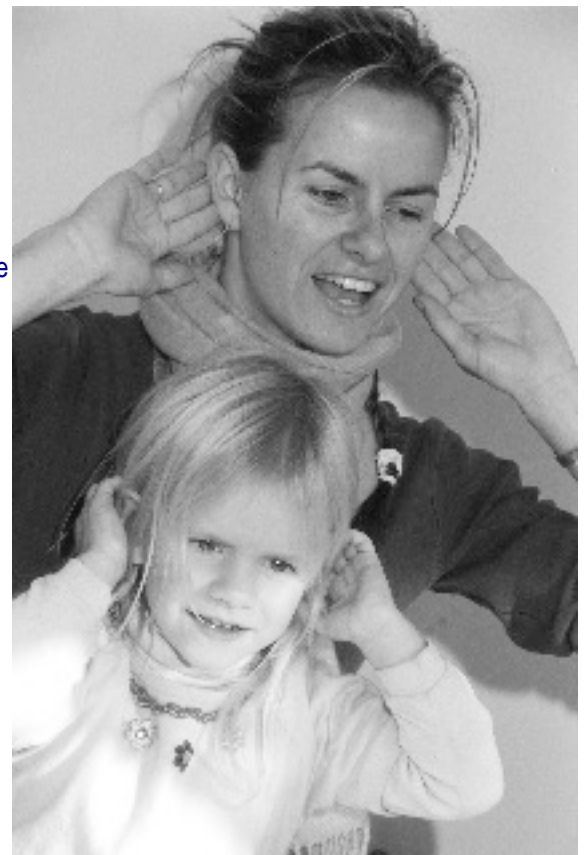
*Ring o Rosie:* 20 places for 1-3 year olds  
Monday – Friday: 7.30am – 6.30pm

Saturday Child Care mixed age: 8.30am – 5.30pm

The Kindergarten teacher will oversee programs delivered by qualified group leaders responsible for the extended hours care of the children. Punctuality to kindergarten is essential as morning circle is a special and uninterrupted start to the day.

### KINDERGARTEN AND CHILD CARE CURRICULUM

Our Centre will meet the childrens individual needs through rhythmical activities appropriate for their age. The curriculum is structured around the fundamental principles of imitation and example, self-directed play, art, music, movement and life skills. The weekly rhythm may include: painting, drawing, singing, gardening, nature studies, animal care, sewing, sand play, water play, Spanish and German songs, cooking, puppet shows and stories, music, dance & movement. The seasonal daily & weekly schedule of activities is provided at the start of each term.



## PLAYGROUPS

Parent and child playgroups are available for families at the Centre.

10.00am to 12noon Saturdays

Our Playgroup Leaders facilitate, educate, support and inspire parents to increase their awareness of primary care and child development. The Playgroup is the child's initiation into short structured activities outside their own home before childcare or Kindergarten. Mothers-to-be are welcomed to playgroup.



## COMMUNITY

Our Centre is a community hub where families can access kindergarten, childcare, playgroup, parent education and support, counselling, maternal and child health services. Your participation and contribution to our Centre community is warmly welcomed. Community events include education and child development sessions, adult education seminars, parent-teacher evenings, support networks, email trees, lectures, study groups, and seasonal festivals. Volunteers and helpers are always needed. Our intention is to bring people together to learn, share and inspire each other to make a positive contribution to the world.

## TOURS

We conduct introductory tours for parents on the first Tuesday morning of the month at 10am. Guided tours will also take place on Open Days. Bookings are essential for a tour during term.

## FESTIVALS

Festivals are an integral aspect of Rudolf Steiner Education. They bring the community together to celebrate a season or an event that impacts humanity. It is a time when children experience adults working together creatively and courageously to create special occasions throughout the year. At Childrens Garden Kindercare we will celebrate Birthdays, Shrove Tuesday (Pancake Day), Autumn Harvest Season, Easter, Mid-Winter, Spring, Christmas and Summer Season. We warmly invite parents to initiate additional celebrations important in their own culture and tradition.

## OPEN DAYS

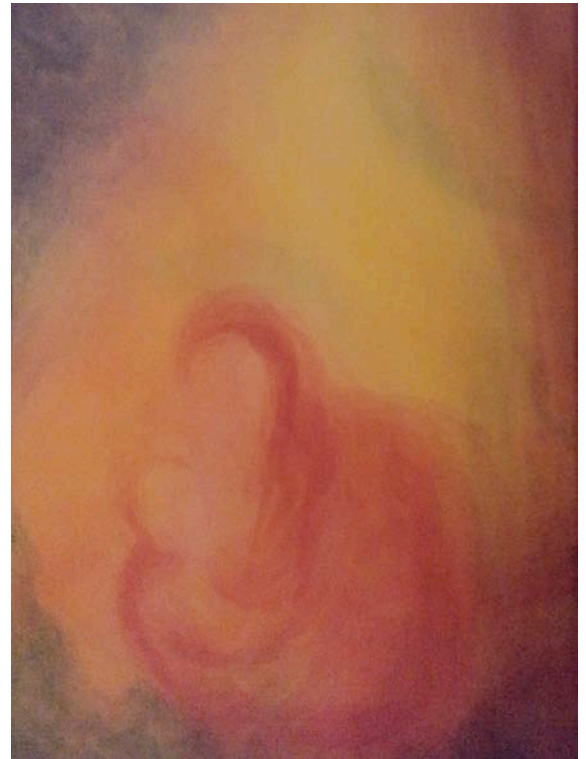
Each year we will open our doors and garden to the public to proudly share our unique facility and an education system that works. Parents, extended families and staff working together make these exemplary days an informative and fun day for all participants.

## TEACHER HOME VISITS

It is beneficial for the education of the child to have a teacher visit your home. This assists the teacher to develop a more comprehensive picture of the child that will greatly enhance the teacher's ability to meet each child's individual needs. The best we can do as carers, educators and parents is to work together in harmony in the best interests of each child. The more we are in tune with each other and working in the same direction, the more settled, healthier and happier your child will be. Harmony between the centre and home is a primary goal of all who hold the children in their hearts. The principles of Rudolf Steiner Early Childhood Education are straight forward and simple. Parent participation in the centre is welcomed.

# PROTECTING CHILDHOOD & PLAY

'The first three years, to the seventh year, are much the most important in the whole development of man... The child possesses a wonderful plastic power [plasticity] and is perpetually at work as a kind of inner sculptor upon his own being. The child at play will naturally imitate what is going on in his surroundings... The child must be allowed to remain as long as possible in the peaceful, dreamlike condition of pictorial imagination in which his early years are passed. For if we allow his organism to grow strong in this way, he will develop in later life the intellectuality needed in the world today.' Rudolf Steiner, Education: Lecture VI; Walking, Speaking, Thinking



## WORK IS PLAY AND PLAY IS WORK

Play is essential for the child to assimilate life and learning experiences and to make them fully his or her own. For this to occur unhindered, the child is supported at our centre by a beautiful environment and sufficient time to foster self-directed play. Extensive time is given for indoor self-directed play with natural materials in a homelike environment supportive of the physical, social, emotional and intellectual growth of the child. Outdoor play periods in the beautiful gardens are regularly incorporated into the childrens day, providing experiences of nature, growth, experimentation, exploration and the seasons of the year. Daily structured group activities are provided in the weekly schedule.

In the last decade there has been a revolution in our understanding of babies, children and early childhood education. Modern researchers, educators, philosophers and scientists are providing the evidence that supports the principles of Rudolf Steiner Early Childhood Education - imitation, self-initiated play and natural environments. Let the children be children. Let them play.

## THE EARLY YEARS LEARNING FRAMEWORK

The Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) has been developed collaboratively by the Australian and State and Territory Governments with substantial input from the early childhood sector and early childhood academics. The Early Years Learning Framework is part of the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) reform agenda for early childhood education and care and is a key component of the Federal Government's National Quality Framework. The three principles of Belonging, Being and Becoming underpin the Early Years Learning Framework.

**Belonging** is the basis for living a fulfilling life. Children feel they belong because of the relationships they have with their family, community, culture and place. Where they spend their time, children need to feel a sense of belonging.

**Being** is about living here and now. Childhood is a special time in life and children need time to just 'be' - time to play, try new things and have fun. Young children fully absorbed in their play are 'being'.

**Becoming** is about the learning and development that young children experience. Children start to form their sense of identity from an early age, which shapes the type of adult they will become. In imitative play, they learn the early skills of all the professions, trades, arts, physical and social sciences. Children learn the moral reality of all those around them, hence the importance of strong positive adult role models.

Through the Framework's five learning outcomes educators at Childrens Garden Kindercare will assist children to develop:

- a strong sense of their identity
- a strong sense of wellbeing
- connections with their world
- confidence and involvement in their learning
- effective communication skills

## CLOTHING

A spare clean change of clothes in your child's bag is essential daily. Broad brimmed sunhats must be worn in Terms 1 and 4. A warm beanie is required in Terms 2 and 3. Slippers are to be brought to the centre with the child for indoor footwear. Gumboots are to be worn outside on wet days.

It is important that children's clothing is soft, comfortable and loosely fitting, suitable for running, jumping, climbing and exploring. Plain colours are recommended, however, stripes, checks and small patterns on clothing are acceptable. Black clothing is not suitable for young children. Denim and/or tight jeans that restrict hip rotation in any way are strongly discouraged. Commercialisation, cartoons, movie and super-hero characters pictured on children's clothing are unacceptable. Nothing should distract one from looking clearly at a child's face when she or he is speaking. Adults and peers comments on advertisements on children's clothing take away attention from the child.



## TV, DVDS AND COMPUTERS

Our educators encourage parents to keep their young children away from viewing television, dvds or using computers for at least the first seven years as these mediums are not beneficial to early childhood development.

From worldwide research results, the American Institute of Paediatrics and Early Childhood currently advocate that children under 2 years of age should have zero screen time. Steiner Teachers assert the whole of childhood where possible should be screen free.

## COMMERCIALISATION OF CHILDHOOD

As part of our mission to protect childhood, we acknowledge the words of Diane Levin PhD that in our modern world, beginning in infancy, children are bombarded with noise and electronic stimulation, mobiles with flashing lights and music, advertising, super-heroes and fast food. Manufacturers employ psychologists to target toddlers and pre-schoolers in elaborate marketing strategies. Children lack creativity and imagination and experience difficulty playing cooperatively with others or resolving conflicts without aggression. They prefer structured activities at school or kindergarten, movies to watch or video games to play at home. Parents often enrol them in organised afterschool activities to keep them occupied. This describes the condition in which children are no longer active agents of their involvement in the world. It interferes with their ability to engage in play that promotes optimal development, learning, social skills, and conflict resolution. It can lead to remote-controlled people who exhibit conformist behaviour, accept orders without questioning, and miss out on the joy of play. For many children, the more they use electronic media, the more they need them, which can set up a never-ending cycle of increasing dependence.

Susan Linn, Harvard Medical School Psychiatry, writes: Play is essential to the development of creativity, empathy, critical thinking, problem solving, and making meaning. One of the biggest problems is the commercialization of children's lives and this push by the media, and toy and marketing industries, to convince parents and children that children need things that corporations sell in order to play, in order to be creative. Linn emphasises: The best toys are 10% toy and 90% child. This is the first generation of parents that really have to consciously & actively carve out commercial free time, space & silence for their children to play creatively. Parents and educators have to make active decisions to nurture creative play.

## SCHOOL READINESS

Our Kindergarten Teacher will assist you to make the decision about your child's school readiness. Children going on to a Rudolf Steiner School generally stay in Kindergarten until they are six years of age. A comparison of many nation's school starting age reveals the following:-

- 5 years – Australia, New Zealand, United Kingdom, Pakistan, Burma, Nepal
- 6 years – France, Germany, Spain, Norway, Austria, Belgium, Netherlands, Greece, Portugal, Italy, Iceland, Canada, USA, Mexico, Argentina, Chile, Peru, India, Japan, Kenya, Israel, Iran, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Turkey, Hong Kong, Malaysia
- 7 years – Switzerland, Sweden, Finland, China, Russia, Brazil, South Africa, Poland, Croatia, Denmark, Lithuania, Indonesia

Early Childhood educational consultant Kathy Walker writes: Readiness is defined in most research in international studies as predominately based upon a young child's social and emotional maturity. School readiness is not, as commonly thought, related to reading, writing or arithmetic. Readiness is not related to being bright. It is better to ask the question: What's the hurry?

# NATURAL ENVIRONMENTS

Indoors and outdoors, our environment is natural, organic, beautiful and captivating for the young child. There are many challenges, textures, adventures and discoveries to be made in our wonderful large garden. Much work can be done by all in our digging patch and vegetable boxes.

Indoors, our toys are especially selected to encourage creative play and flowing imaginations. Our toys may appear unfinished, they are designed this way. Dolls faces are indistinct, the children can imagine she is laughing, talking, singing, sad or happy.



'Outdoor spaces should include a range of different natural features, such as sand, soil, grass, a variety of different plantings and trees. Children must be able to actively explore, engage with, and experience different types of natural environments. This means allowing children to touch and interact with the natural environment in their everyday play.' Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Victoria 2010

## ALL NATURAL MATERIALS

- FIBRE
  - WOOL
  - COTTON
  - SILK
- WOOD
  - BARK
  - SAND
  - STONE
- WATER
  - GRASS
  - SOIL
  - PLANTS
- HENS & GUINEA PIGS





## NUTRITIOUS FOOD

The children will be well nourished with vegetarian, organic and biodynamic food. There will be a variety of grains provided each week: wheat, barley, rye, millet, oats, rice. Wherever possible children can participate in gardening and basic food preparation to develop their skills and knowledge of nutrition.

We will grow some of our own fresh produce in our organic garden beds, harvest the food and enjoy eating it together. This is a rare and wonderful opportunity for city children.



## MENU

The centre's four weekly rotating menu is available at the start of each term at Reception. Vegetarian organic and biodynamic fresh produce along with a range of grains form the basis of our nutritious menu.

## ALLERGIES

To assist our staff to understand and support each child, please detail all relevant dietary restrictions and allergies in the enrolment form. Medical documentation including management plans for dietary restrictions is required.

## ANIMAL HUSBANDRY

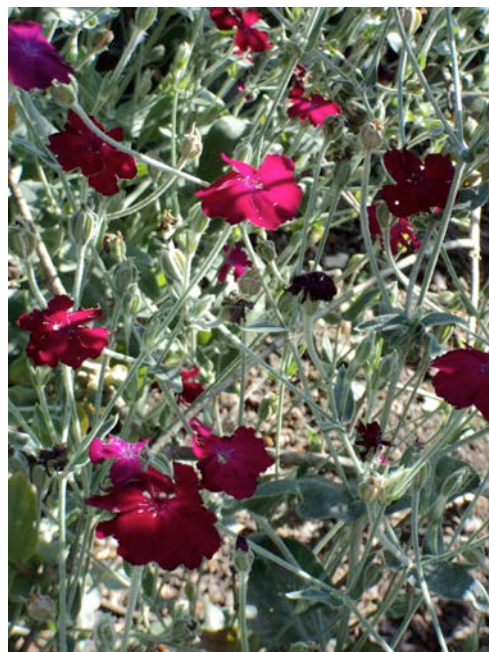
Childrens Garden Kindercare will also be the home to guinea pigs, hens and chickens. The children will experience how it is to nurture, clean and feed animals together with the joy and responsibility that comes with caring for animals.

An example of how children begin basic mathematics is evident when the hens begin to lay and counting them and keeping track of them becomes important. This comes naturally to the children without any educational pressure from teachers.



# ENROLMENT PROCEDURE

1. Complete Waitlist Registration Form and submit with \$50 non-refundable booking fee.
2. Read the Parent Handbook and make an appointment to visit the Centre with your child. Meet and chat with Director, Kindergarten Teacher or Childcare Group Leaders.
3. Complete Enrolment Form and submit to Centre.
4. The Centre will send out letter of Offer of Place. Return Acceptance of Place form with holding deposit. Confirm orientation dates & times.
5. If you would like to, please consider what active role you might like to take in the Centre: peer support, gardening, maintenance, open days, art & craft, seminars. Your skills are valued in our community.



## VISITING THE CENTRE

Once enrolled, you and your family are welcome to visit the Centre. Please phone Reception and let us know that you are planning to visit. Or book a date in our Visitors Calendar kept at Reception. You will be asked: "What is your task?" This question is in keeping with our practice of all adults in the children's environment to be engaging in meaningful activity. As parents, teachers and carers, we are role models every minute in the children's vicinity. Our thinking, feeling and actions are all important and we each individually must be mindful of our impact on the children and their space. Our activity needs to be worthy of imitation. Consider these things as you plan your visit.

You are welcome to have a cuppa in the garden and stay awhile. Come and be busy. We encourage Mums and Dads, Guardians and Grandparents to come and enjoy our all-natural environment.

## RHYTHM & ROUTINE

The children benefit from experiencing the weekly mood repeated throughout the term. Confidence and security grow and strengthen as the children eagerly anticipate what is coming next throughout their day and their week. An example of a weekly plan for a term may be:-

Day of The Week	Colour	Grain	Chosen Activity
Monday	Violet	Rice	Painting
Tuesday	Red	Barley	Baking Bread
Wednesday	Yellow	Millet	Beeswax
Thursday	Orange	Rye	Drawing
Friday	Green	Oats	Polishing
Saturday	Blue	Corn	Cooking



# CHILDRENS GARDEN KINDERCARE

## Policies

### **POLICY HANDBOOK FOR PARENTS**

The Policy Handbook for Parents is held at Reception. All families are provided with a copy of the Policy Handbook for Parents upon enrolment. It details the policies and procedures for our Kindergarten and extended hours Childcare service. An abbreviated sample of relevant policies are as follows:-

### **KINDERGARTEN PUNCTUALITY**

Parents are advised to drop Kindergarten children at the Centre by 8.45am. Kindergarten sessions commence with Morning Circle at 9.00am. Morning Circle is not to be interrupted except in an emergency. Children arriving after 9.00am will not be able to enter the Kindergarten room until 9.45am. Parents may accompany their children to play in the garden until 9.45am.

### **EXTENDED HOURS CHILDCARE**

The Centre opens at 7.30am Monday to Friday. Childcare and Kindergarten children will start the day in family grouping and go to their own room at approximately 8.30am. At the end of the day, the children will join together in family grouping once more. The Centre closes at 6.30pm. Late Fees are charged for children left at the Centre after 6.30pm. The Centre is open 49.5 weeks of the year. Closed: 24<sup>th</sup> December to 8<sup>th</sup> January (inclusive).

### **CLOTHING**

A spare clean change of clothes in your child's bag is essential daily. Slippers are to be brought to the Centre with the child for indoor footwear. Gumboots are to be worn outside in winter. Childrens clothing is to be soft natural fibres, comfortable and loosely fitting, suitable for running and climbing. Plain colours are recommended, however, stripes, checks and small patterns on clothing are acceptable. Black clothing or tight jeans that restrict hip rotation are not suitable for young children. Commercialisation, cartoons, movie and super-hero characters pictured on childrens clothing are unacceptable.

### **FEE SCHEDULE**

The Fee Schedule is attached to the Enrolment Form available from Reception.

### **PAYMENT OF FEES**

All Fees are due and payable two weeks in advance of your child's attendance at the centre. Two-weekly fees not paid in advance are considered to be Unpaid Fees and an Unpaid Fees Notice will automatically be given to parent/guardian and your child will not be accepted at the centre. Late Fees or Outstanding Fees will result in 12% interest charged on arrears, in addition to all debt administration fees, debt recovery costs, and forfeiture of childcare place. When terminating your childcare place, you are required to provide two weeks written notice to the Director or you are liable to pay the equivalent of two weeks childcare fees to the centre.

### **FEE DISCOUNTS**

First Child Semester (six months) Fees paid in advance = 5% discount; Concurrent Second Child Fees = 10% discount. Families eligibility for discounted fees will be confirmed at enrolment.

### **WAITLIST REGISTRATION**

A \$50 fee is to be paid when you submit your Waitlist Registration Form for entry onto the Childrens Garden Kindercare waitlist for either childcare or kindergarten. This is an administration fee and is non-refundable.

### **HOLDING DEPOSIT**

A holding deposit equal to two weeks full-time fees per child is required with Acceptance of Offer of childcare place. This holding deposit secures your childcare place and is refundable upon two weeks notice of withdrawal from Childrens Garden Kindercare providing all fees are up to date, however, this deposit is forfeited if less than two weeks notice is received and/or if attendance is not commenced on the original start date. Providing the correct advance notice is given of withdrawal and fees are up to date, the holding deposit is returned in full to families during the last week of their child's attendance at the Centre.

### **CAPITAL CONTRIBUTION**

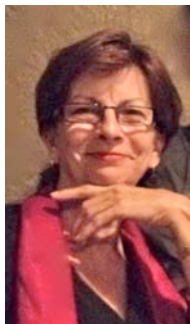
An annual family Capital Contribution Fee is due on 1<sup>st</sup> September. The Capital Fund is for the purchase of new materials, resources and playground equipment.

### **METHOD OF PAYMENT**

Method of payment will be via direct debit, b-pay, credit card, eftpos, money order or cash. Surcharges may apply.

# CHILDRENS GARDEN KINDERCARE

## Management team



### NATALIE PARK

Natalie holds a Bachelor of Social Science in Psychology and Family Studies. She has extensive training and experience in management, stress debriefing, psychotherapy, family systems and therapy, counseling, and early childhood care and education. She has four children and four grandchildren. Natalie has been a student of Rudolf Steiner's Anthroposophy for 40 years, and loves her art and craft.



### AMY BERRIDGE

Amy has been a Steiner Playgroup Leader for over ten years. She holds the Certificate in Rudolf Steiner Early Childhood Development. Amy has done tertiary study in Rudolf Steiner's Anthroposophy and Teacher Training. She is bilingual after spending a year in Switzerland speaking German. Amy is also a painter and a musician. She has two children who attend Sophia Mundi Steiner School.



### HARLEY BERRIDGE

Harley holds a Bachelor of Health Science in Paramedics and a Bachelor of Applied Science in Physical Education. He is a Duty Manager for Ambulance Victoria. Harley is married and a keen father of two young sons. Harley is a practical gardener and a sportsman.



### JOSEPH BERRIDGE

Joseph holds an Advanced Diploma in Steiner Teaching from Melbourne Rudolf Steiner School. In Perth he completed two years study in the foundations of Anthroposophy. Joseph is a musician and teaches guitar. He is currently studying for his Bachelor of Education and is interested in a variety of the arts.



### GERARD ZAHRA

Gerard operates an accounting and business consulting practice in Warrandyte. He has additional training in counselling and traditional chinese medicine. Gerard has 2 children who attend Melbourne Rudolf Steiner School.

Harley, Amy and Joseph Berridge attended Rudolf Steiner Kindergarten and Primary School. This experience laid the foundations of knowledge and enthusiasm to bring this choice of quality education to more children in Melbourne. Amy and Joseph have also done tertiary study in Rudolf Steiner Education. Gerard was a founding parent in the establishment of the Briar Hill Primary School Steiner Stream in Melbourne, Victoria.

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