

# Mernda Hills Christian College

## Early Learning Centre Parent Handbook



# Important Contact Information

## Early Learning Centre Office

[elc@merndahills.vic.edu.au](mailto:elc@merndahills.vic.edu.au)

03 9717 7300 ext. 3

370 Bridge Inn Rd, Mernda VIC 3754

## Our Staff

**Note:** As we prepare for our opening in January 2026, we will continue to add to our Early Learning staff team. Staff details will be updated here as our additional key staff members are confirmed.



***College Principal - Kristin Hankins***



***ELC Regional Manager - Katherine Darroch***

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# Welcome

Welcome to Mernda Hills Christian College Early Learning Centre.

It is our privilege and a wonderful experience to nurture, educate and care for your child in our Early Learning Centre at Mernda Hills Christian College.

Working with children and influencing their early years is a passion of every staff member at our centre. It is without a doubt, a rewarding job, and we like to think that the children that learn in our classrooms influence and impact us just as much as we influence and impact them.

We would like to warmly welcome you to Mernda Hills Early Learning Centre, and we look forward to working alongside you.

The information in this handbook will assist you and your children in settling in and enjoying your experience at our centre.

If you require further information after reading this document, please do not hesitate to contact the Early Learning Centre staff through the contact information found on page 1.

The Early Learning Policies are available on our website for you to view at any time.

Once again, welcome to our Centre. We look forward to sharing the wonderful journey of early education with your family.

# Our Statement of Philosophy

We believe every child is a unique gift from God. As a Christ-centered provider, our mission is to nurture each child's individuality and inspire a lifelong love of learning. We create a warm, inclusive, and secure environment where faith, curiosity, and community can flourish.

Our educational approach is grounded in Christian values and guided by our motto, "Nothing Without God." We provide opportunities for a seamless educational journey from our Early Learning Centre through to the end of Year 12 within the Mernda Hills Christian College community. This continuity provides a strong sense of belonging and helps children feel secure and confident as they learn and grow together.

We are committed to a high-quality, play-based curriculum that purposefully supports early literacy and numeracy. We understand that play is a child's natural way of exploring, and our educators thoughtfully guide this process to ensure school readiness. Our focus is to nurture the whole child—fostering their creativity, unique talents, and sense of wonder.

We believe that education is a partnership between the family, the child, and the school. Our Early Learning Centre is a core part of the broader Mernda Hills Christian College community. We are dedicated to building strong connections and a sense of belonging for all our families, supporting our shared purpose to "transform lives through Adventist Education." Our focus is on nurturing for today, learning for tomorrow, and building character for life.

## Priority of Access

All enrolments received by Mernda Hills Early Learning Centre will be accepted in accordance with the Commonwealth 'Priority of Access Guidelines'. Any applications for enrolments received after all places are allocated will go onto a waiting list. As vacancies arise, the priority of access guidelines will be applied to place children into the centre.

If day/s requested are not available, then Mernda Hills Early Learning Centre will contact parents/guardians and discuss the following options:

- Change of days (subject to availability)
- The child's place on the waiting list
- Cancellation of a booking enabling the child to enter care

Parents will be notified by phone if their place is to be given to a higher priority child. This notification will be given with a minimum of 14 days notice.

### Priority for allocating places:

First Priority	A child who is considered High Priority under government priority access criteria.
Second Priority	A child of a single parent who satisfies, or of parents who both satisfy, the work/training/study test under Section 14 of the Family Assistance Act.
Third Priority	Working parents requiring 5 days of care.
Fourth Priority	Any other child.

## Priority of Enrolment

During periods of high demand for places, the following priority criteria will be considered in addition to the Government Priority of Access:

Kinder Funding:	Children whose families will be allocating their Kinder Funding to Mernda Hills Christian College ELC. <i>*NOTE: Only one Kinder can claim funding for a child at a time.</i>
Existing Family:	Children already attending Mernda Hills Christian College ELC in the previous room's program, siblings of Mernda Hills Christian College families, or children of current staff members.
Primary School:	Children who have applied for future enrolment at Mernda Hills Christian College.

## Confidentiality and Privacy

Mernda Hills Early Learning Centre protects the privacy and confidentiality of individuals by ensuring that all records and information about individual children, families, staff and school are kept in a secure place.

CCS assessment notices, enrolment forms, attendance sheets, attendance amendments, payment sheets and medical certificates will be kept in the Centre's office. This information is only accessed by, or disclosed to, those people who need the information to fulfil their responsibilities at the centre or have a legal right to know.

All photography and/or filming of children will only be allowed with written permission from the parent/guardian/approved person and remain the property of the centre.

## Places and Hours of Operation

Mernda Hills Early Learning Centre is registered for up to 33 places per class. The centre is unable to accept any children over this approved number of places.

Centre Operating hours are from 7:00am - 6:00pm 49 weeks of the year.

Opening and closing dates will be advertised on the school website: [merndahills.vic.edu.au](https://merndahills.vic.edu.au)

## Child Care Subsidy (CCS)

Mernda Hills Early Learning Centre supports a fee system that is affordable and accessible to all families. Clients of the centre are eligible to receive reduced fees when they register with Centrelink for the Child Care Subsidy (CCS).

CCS for all eligible families will be paid directly to the centre and a reduced statement will be received by those eligible families.

### ***Common reasons why the government would stop your CCS payments:***

- You have not completed in full your assessment for the current financial year.
- Your prior year tax return has not been completed.
- Your child's immunisations are not up to date.

Parents can register by calling Centrelink or by completing your assessment online through MyGov.

## Free Kinder in Long Day Care

<https://merndahills.vic.edu.au/curriculum/early-learning/free-kinder>



## Bond Payments

It is a requirement that all families pay a \$500.00 bond per child at the time of accepting their place at Mernda Hills Early Learning Centre. Your place will not be secured until the payment has been received. Your payment can be made by contacting the Centre and paying over the phone or by bank transfer. (As per the bank details under the section: Statement & Collection of Fees.)

### Bond Requirements:

1. Your booking must remain locked in for your first 12 weeks, from your start date. Decreased days or withdrawal within your locked period will result in forfeiting your bond payment.
2. If you have forfeited your bond payment and your child is returning to the Centre the next year, it is a requirement that you pay a bond for the new year with the same 12 weeks locked period for that new year.
3. Returning children for the next year (bond still in place) - there is a locked period from the 1st October to the end of Term 1 the next year. (Same ruling as Rule 1)
4. Increased days in your locked period will not affect your bond payment.

The bond is held by the Centre until the family completes a de-registration form with the two weeks notice requirement. If the bond requirements have not been broken, the bond will be returned to the family via bank transfer or credit card a minimum of 8 weeks after the de-registration date, this gives the Centre time to ensure there are no changes to any CCS entitlements.

## Statement & Collection of Fees

Family statements are available to the primary carer only (CRN holder) through their Xplor Home app. Payments must be made by the due date advertised fortnightly to parents.

For an up to date schedule of fees, please visit: <https://merndahills.vic.edu.au/admissions/fees-payments>

*Fees are reviewed at the beginning and middle of each year, any increases will be advertised 4 weeks before being applied.*

### Payment Options

The payment options available to parents/guardians are:

1. Xplor Debit Success - automatically processed each week (set-up through your Xplor Home app).
2. Manual payment processed through the Xplor Home app, PAYNOW under finance.
3. Eftpos or credit card payments via the ELC office.
4. Direct deposit into Mernda Hills ELC bank account, by electronic funds transfer (EFT).

**Please ensure you use your child's name as your reference in the description if paying by EFT.**

### Account Details for Bank Transfer

Account Name: Mernda Hills ELC

BSB: 033 135

Account No.: 613 817



## Non-Payment of Fees

Mernda Hills Early Learning Centre encourages parent/guardian/approved persons to contact the centre if there is a problem with paying their account. Any difficulties encountered in paying the account should be discussed with the Bursar or the Centre Manager. Continuous non-payment of fees may jeopardise your child's place at the Centre.

## Late Pick-up Fee

Collection of children between 6:01-6:15 pm - **Fee: \$23.00 per child**

Collection of children after 6:16 pm until collected - **Fee: \$15.00 per 15 min block per child**  
(eg. collection between 6:16 - 6:30pm: \$23 + \$15 = \$38 per child)

Please be aware that this fee is not claimable through your Child Care Subsidy.

Staff will endeavour to contact the families/caregivers or emergency person nominated. If late fees are incurred on three occasions within a term, the family's ongoing enrolment will be reviewed.

## Bookings, Cancellations and Absent Days

Bookings and cancellations are essential.

Casual bookings will only be accepted where and when vacancies are available. Casual bookings must be cancelled by 9am the day prior to avoid the casual fee being charged. Casual bookings can be requested through the Xplor Home app.

Fees are payable for all permanent booked days including absent days. Absent days **MUST** be recorded in the Xplor Home app by the parent/guardian as soon as you know your child will not be attending their booked day.

Change of a permanent booking or discontinued enrolment requires a minimum of two weeks' notice. If no cancellation is received or cancellation is made after the specified time, the session fees will be invoiced.

For booking or cancellation queries, please contact the Early Learning Centre:

Phone: 03 9717 7300

Email: [elc@merndahills.vic.edu.au](mailto:elc@merndahills.vic.edu.au)

## Public Holidays

The centre is closed on Public Holidays. Please note that Public Holidays are charged at 50% of the daily rate.

## Signing In and Out

Accurate attendance records need to be kept, as this is a legal requirement of the Department of Education and Training. Only parents/guardians, or their authorised representatives are permitted to sign children in or out of the centre.

### **IMPORTANT NOTE:**

Only parents/guardians will be able to use contactless sign in/out using the Xplor Home app. All other authorised persons must be set up by the parents/guardians in the Xplor Home app as a 'Contact'. A Contact will use their own details to sign in/out on the iPad. This is a very important step in our process of ensuring **ALL** children are leaving our centre with a safe and authorised person.

**IT IS A BREACH OF OUR SECURITY POLICY IF YOU SHARE YOUR LOGIN DETAILS WITH ANY OTHER PERSON.** If you require someone other than an already authorised person to collect your child, please add them as a 'Contact' on the Xplor Home App, or call the office - 03 9717 7300 and follow the steps in the next section, Alternate Pick Up Arrangements.

***Authorised person/s must be 16 years or over.***

No children will be permitted to leave the Centre/school grounds alone.

## Alternate Pick Up Arrangements

If a parent is aware that they are unable to pick up their child by closing time, they need to organise another authorised person to collect their children.

If an existing authorised person is unable to collect a child then the parent can give verbal or written consent (email) for another person to come and pick up their child. They must give the staff member the unauthorised person's name, their relationship to the child, address, date of birth, and phone number.

The unauthorised person's photo identification must be verified by an ELC staff member and will be photocopied and kept on file before they can sign the child out.

***All authorised persons must be 16 years or over.***

## Custody

The centre will abide by any existing court orders issued by the Australian Family Court where a child attending the centre is not living with both parents. A copy of the court order must be attached to the enrolment form or supplied to Administration. Families need to provide legal documentation for any changes to a court order as soon as possible.

# Protective Care of Children

Mernda Hills Early Learning Centre has a responsibility to all children attending the centre to defend their right to care and protection against abuse and neglect. Procedures are in place to record and report any cases of suspected abuse. The Centre Manager will be notified and will report the claim further. All matters will be kept confidential.

## First Aid

All permanent staff will receive training to 'Provide First Aid in an Education and Care Setting', which meets the Children's Services National Regulations.

The Centre will ensure that a First Aid kit is maintained in effective order at all times on the premises in a position readily accessible to staff in an emergency.

## Immunisation Requirements

**No Jab, No Play** legislation requires parents/carers to provide evidence that their child has received all the vaccines they need and can confirm enrolment in a service. Following enrolment parents are required to keep this evidence up to date with the service.

An up to date immunisation statement must be provided before a child's starting date. You are also required to provide an updated statement whenever changes are made to your child's statement.

If you do not keep your child's immunisations up to date, the government will stop your rebate payments to the centre (CCS).

## Sun Smart

Mernda Hills Early Learning Centre has a responsibility to keep the children safe and protected at all times. This is especially important when children are outside and need protection from harmful ultraviolet radiation (UVR) of the sun.

The centre will ensure that all children and staff attending are aware of the UV / Sun Safe policy and procedures.

The Sun Smart program will be followed throughout the year and the UV levels are checked every day to determine the use of sun protection.

All children attending the centre must have a hat that covers their ears and neck. A hat will be provided on your child's first day and is to be taken home and returned each day. Families can purchase replacement hats from the centre.

## Medical Details

Mernda Hills Early Learning Centre aims to provide a safe environment in which children may play free from harm. In the event of an accident, trained staff will apply appropriate First Aid.

Parents/guardians are required to provide written authority (included in the enrolment form) for staff of the centre to seek medical attention for their child if required. All children's medical records will be kept readily available for all staff.

Parents/guardians will be asked to check and update children's medical details annually. However it is the parent/guardian's responsibility to notify the centre of any changes throughout the year.

Parents/guardians must provide the centre with up to date medical action plans annually (if applicable).

Parents/guardians must provide the centre with any medication required while at care, and complete the relevant Medication Authorisation Form.

Children with inaccurate/incomplete medical forms or no medication provided where required will not be allowed to attend the centre.

## Food Allergy Management

We are an [Allergy Aware](#) service. This means that there is no blanket ban on particular foods, however we have a range of procedures and processes in place to ensure that children with allergies are kept safe at all times, whilst also educating children to be aware of and sensitive to food allergies.

A list of current food allergies will be available in each room and updated and shared electronically with families as any changes occur.

## Nutrition

Our service aims to promote healthy eating habits. The centre will respect and support any special dietary requirements of individual children.

Healthy morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea must be provided by families. At morning tea, children are encouraged to eat fruit, vegetables and other healthy snacks. Children are encouraged to eat other snacks at lunch time after their main lunch is finished. Children are also required to bring with them a water filled drink bottle daily.

Lunch orders are available through the school canteen system on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays, and will be delivered to the ELC. To order lunch for your child, please download the Spriggy Schools app, and set up your account. Further information is available from the ELC office.

## Uniform

All ELC students are required to have a uniform polo top, rugby top and sports jacket to be worn at the centre during their enrolment in the Early Learning program. Uniform shorts, track pants and skorts are also available for optional purchase. Alternatively, children may wear dark navy shorts or trackpants with the uniform top, and plain white socks with supportive running shoes (no other colours or items are permitted). Uniform items can be purchased from our supplier [LOWES](#).

Shop 42/415 McDonalds Rd, Mill Park  
Phone: 9404 3651

## Toilet Training

Mernda Hills Christian College Early Learning Centre is committed to partnering with families to support each child's individual developmental journey. We understand that toilet training is a significant milestone, and we will work with you to support your child as they progress.

Our program is designed to be active and engaging, with experiences that often take us away from the ELC. These include visits to locations around the College and community outings. During these times, our staff ratios and available facilities can pose challenges for nappy changes. We encourage you to discuss your child's individual needs with the Centre Manager upon starting, so we can work together to ensure your child can fully participate in all our activities.

If your child requires nappies/pull ups (including for rest time), we ask that families discuss this with the Centre Manager prior to commencing at the Centre, and send these along each day in their child's bag.

## Staff

Mernda Hills Early Learning Centre acknowledges that professional staff results in a high quality centre. It is important that each family feels comfortable with the staff members supervising their children.

Mernda Hills Early Learning Centre staff members are offered regular opportunities for appropriate training updates to provide high quality education & care for all children. Mernda Hills Early Learning Centre requires all staff members to be suitably qualified, experienced and meet the requirements of the regulatory authority.

To ensure children's safety, staff and volunteers (including student and parent volunteers) are not permitted to bring any personal devices that are able to take video or photos, or store videos or photos, into the ELC rooms or playground area. Personal devices must be stored securely at front reception or in the staffroom prior to entering ELC rooms.

## Positive Guidance of Children

Our Centre provides a safe, positive and stimulating environment, where responsible and constructive behaviour is encouraged in all children. We firmly believe the management and guidance of children's behaviour is a critical part of providing a quality service.

Behaviour management strategies will always respect the child's rights, whilst at the same time being appropriate to the individual child's stage of development.

Staff will provide a consistent approach to the guidance of children's behaviour and will intervene to prevent inappropriate behaviour.

All rules and behaviour expectations are founded in our College values of respect, responsibility, resilience and being a learner. Rules will be clear, child focused and easy to understand. Staff will endeavour to communicate and work with the children displaying inappropriate behaviour to understand and discuss the issues. When appropriate, children will be redirected into a positive experience.

## Emergency Procedures

Mernda Hills Christian College Early Learning Centre aims to provide a safe environment for all children and staff. Personal safety and security of all children is of prime importance while in attendance at the centre.

Smoke alarms and fire extinguishers have been installed and are maintained. Emergency evacuation procedures are clearly displayed on the entrance of the centre and emergency evacuation will be practised with the children every day for one week of each school term.

## Grievance and Complaints Procedures

Mernda Hills Early Learning Centre will seek to foster positive relations between all families and staff. Every parent has the right to a positive and sympathetic response to his or her concerns.

Solutions will be sought to resolve all disputes, issues and concerns that affect the day-to-day wellbeing of the centre in a fair, prompt and positive manner. If parents/guardians/approved persons have a concern about the centre, they can discuss the issue with the Administration or put any concerns in writing.

Any grievance received will be acknowledged within one working day of receipt. All grievances will be handled in a confidential manner. If required, please see our Dealing with Complaints Policy available online on the website, or through front reception.

Complaints and grievances received from children will be resolved in the same manner as parents' complaints and grievances.