Welcome

Welcome to your child’s first year of formal schooling. This year brings many new experiences for your child as they learn the routines of school life, good work habits and appropriate social skills.

Our fantastic double room and outdoor space is a vibrant learning area where the children are encouraged to explore and learn about the world around them. At times the children will all work together in one group, other times they will be in class groups or small groups with the teachers.

This year we are continuing our Play-based curriculum (Investigation Time) where the children can investigate various topics through hands on activities. During these sessions we will encourage lots of speaking and listening and working cooperatively.

Our aims this year are for your child to develop a positive attitude to school and learning, be willing to take risks in their learning (by trying new things) and become more independent. We look forward to working with you all to make this year a great success and a fun time for all.

Meg Moore
Junior - Prep Team Leader

VELS – Level One

Victorian Essential Learning Standards – VELS

We use the VELS state wide documents to form the basis of our program. Most prep children will be working at Level One during their prep year. Whilst there are defined subjects for us to work with we do use an integrated approach. Your child will be developing skills and knowledge in the following areas:

Strands
- Physical, Personal and Social Learning
  - Health and Physical Education
  - Interpersonal Development
  - Personal learning
  - Civics and Citizenship
- Disciplined-based Learning
  - The Arts
  - English – speaking and listening, reading, writing
  - The Humanities
  - LOTE – Auslan
  - Mathematics – number, space, measurement
  - Science
- Interdisciplinary Learning
  - Communication
  - Design, Creativity and Technology
  - Information and Communications Technology (ICT)
  - Thinking Processes

Learning Programs

Learning:
- is an active process building upon prior knowledge, skills
- is a developmental process
- requires motivation and purpose
- requires ‘having - a – go’ / ‘trying to do it’
- requires an understanding that it is a process and that making mistakes is part of that process and that it is normal and ‘ok’ to make mistakes
- requires a desire to learn
- each home group at school consists of individuals – varying background experiences/ different interests / different personalities

Our curriculum consists of a variety of learning experiences and teaching methods. There are times
when we explicitly teach reading, writing and mathematics. While other times the children are immersed in games and exploration and may not even be aware of the important learning taking place. Throughout 2013 the children will take part in Investigation Time. During this time they will choose from various stations to complete learning tasks. There is a complete outline of this important program in the Investigation Time handout.

Take Home Books
The take home book routine will begin after the children attend school for the full week. These books, along with a recording sheet will be sent home most days in the black Eastwood “Home Folder”.

We encourage the children to take responsibility for changing their take home books. The purpose of the take home books is:

- to show you how well they are progressing with their reading
- to practise smooth reading
- to engage in a reading session where they are the readers and you, the parents, are the listeners
- to begin to develop homework routines
- to enjoy reading books together, without pressure

The take home book reading is a small component of the classroom reading program.

- the books will always be an easier text than what the children read for instructional text in class
- please don’t cover the pictures – the pictures are there to support early reading.

‘Sounding out’ is not the only strategy for beginning readers. We want the children to develop a variety of strategies and cues when they read and this strategy can hinder developing readers. As the children progress as readers they will learn to chunk letters. Few beginning readers have enough knowledge about letter and sound relationships to do so effectively.

The children will learn to read even if:

1. They don’t bring home a new book every single night.
2. They bring the same book home a few times.
3. You don’t like a particular choice they make.

Remember your praise is worth an enormous amount to your child!

Notices
There are many notices and handouts that will be sent home. Our Home Folder is the best means to get these to you efficiently. Please ensure your child places this into his/her bag each night ready for school. It is important to check the Home Folder each night for notes, receipts, etc. If you have notices that need to be returned or notes for the teacher, these should be placed in the Home Folders. This avoids losing important items.

Excursions
Some terms there may be an excursion or outing organised for the children. Often this relates to our learning programs and is a real-life experience for the children. The cost of these will vary and will be included in your term fees. We will let you know well in advance of any excursions and also ask for parent helpers.

Library
The children will visit the school library and throughout the year will focus on how to behave in the library, caring for our books and locating books on shelves. Please remember:

- children need a library bag to be able to borrow a book
- library books are borrowed for the duration of 2 weeks
- each class has a library borrowing day but the books can be returned any day
- books are put into their library tub
- children may not borrow another book until a borrowed book is returned in their library bag.

Social Skills, PATHS
Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies. This program aims to develop and strengthen emotional literacy in children. PATHS develops an understanding our own emotions and the emotions of others and how this effects behaviour.

This is a whole school weekly program and covers the following:

- Self esteem
- Problem solving
- Self Control
- Friendships
- Emotional understanding
Buddies
We have started our buddy system and the preps will work with a year 5/6 buddy or buddies. There will be many opportunities for the children to see their buddies, both formally and informally.

Some of the work we will do with our buddies will be based around the PATHS program.

Transition
You may have noticed that your child’s first few weeks of school have resembled their Kindergarten or Pre-school environment. This has helped the children to settle into school through familiar activities and situations. There is a lot to learn in a new environment and with new people so we try to make this transition a very gentle and safe situation for the children.

Our sessions at the end of last year also developed a sense of belonging for the children. They became more familiar with the surroundings and the people they will work with.

Assessments
Thank you for bringing your child ren into school for the Learning assessments on Wednesdays. This initial assessment gives us a picture of your child’s literacy and numeracy ability and will help to guide our teaching programs. This is another on-line task that is very non-threatening and lots of fun.

Parental Involvement
Parent help is a very important part of the junior grades and is something we value highly. There are many ways you can become involved in your child’s year in prep such as:

• helping with literacy in the classroom (commencing in term 2)
• Investigation Time
• Swimming
• Local walks
• Help on the computers /in the lab
• Activity Maths
• Excursions
• Special days and events

Class Reps
Each class has parent representatives who liaise with the class teacher. The role includes setting up a contact list for parents, organising get-togethers and attending class rep meetings.

Homework
For the Preps reading and sharing books is the main focus of homework – maximum 10 minutes.

Other homework may possibly include:

1. Follow up from a classroom activity or finishing a task not completed in class in the expected time.
2. Bringing something to school for a particular activity.
3. Using the computer.
4. Helping measure food for cooking.
5. Playing card or board games.
6. Counting items around the home (eg flowers in a vase, eggs in the carton).

Prep children put in all day at school and need relaxation time after school.

Canteen

• Our school canteen currently operates Monday, Thursday and Friday for snacks over the counter and lunch orders.
• We are not encouraging preps to purchase icy poles from the canteen at recess times, rather to wait until lunch time when they have more time to eat them.
• We are encouraging the children to only bring enough money to purchase something for themselves, not for other children, this can cause difficulties.
• Please work out with your child a safe place to keep their money (eg the zipped pocket of their bag) and to only get it when they are going to the canteen.
• When having a lunch order the children will still need a snack for recess and their water bottle for the day.

Healthy Eating
Eastwood Primary School is a ‘Healthy Eating School’. This means we encourage children to eat a well balanced diet with lots of fresh fruit and vegetables. It is important for children to be well hydrated; therefore children are encouraged to sip WATER ONLY in class time. The children regularly have their drink bottles on the classroom so they can sip water when required. Each day we enjoy a fruit break and ask that you send along a piece of fresh fruit or vegetables to eat during this time.