Mt Compass Preschool Centre is a part time kindergarten, our session times vary depending on the current enrolment. We have two permanent teaching staff, Jay Elmslie (Director) and Jen Gilligan. Angela Jones and Heather Kitto are our support workers and lunch time carers. Sandra Waye is the finance officer.

We are based in a rural community and our practices reflect the rural nature of our community. We hope that you and your child enjoy being a part of this community and feel comfortable in sharing matters of interest or concern with us.

**Centre Philosophy**

Our kindergarten is part of the State Government Department of Education and Child Development (DECD). We are situated in the Fleurieu Partnership of preschools and schools. Our beliefs and practices reflect those of DECD. We acknowledge that

- Families play an ongoing and central role in children’s learning and development.
- Children learn best when there is a positive partnership between families and educators.
- Each of us are life long learners.
- Children need a safe, nurturing environment in which to discover and extend their skills in a variety of learning areas.
- Children are individuals and have their own personalities, needs, learning dispositions and capabilities, preschool staff strive to create learning environments and opportunities that support each individual.

The educational program offered at our kindergarten is based on the national curriculum document called Early Years Learning Framework: Being, Becoming, Belonging. Our complete Philosophy Statement is on display in the preschool and on our website. (www.mtcompasspre.sa.edu.au)

**What to bring to Kindergarten....**

Each day children bring to kindergarten

- Named bag
- Named water bottle – we have water and cups at kindergarten as well
- Spare set of clothes, including underpants
- Named hat: see sunsmart policy

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• A piece of fresh fruit  
Children place their fruit in the named bowls provided.  
Children attending over lunch time need bring to kindergarten lunch in a  
named lunch box (as well as morning fruit).  
We ask that lunch consist of a sandwich or salad, and that sandwich fillings  
be nutritious (that is low in sugar, salt and fat) and some fruit.  All South  
Australian preschools and schools have been introduced to the Eat Well  
Policy of DECD that explains the need for children to eat fruit and  
vegetables several times a day, drink water and exercise to develop good  
health. We also encourage families to provide a litter free lunch to support  
a healthy future for our environment.

**What to leave at home.......**

We ask that children do not bring the following to kindergarten  
• toys  
• drinks other than water  
• foods that are high in sugar or fat  
• food packaging  
Children love to bring things in from home and it sometimes helps them  
bridge the gap between home and kindergarten. It also provides a good  
prop for children to develop skills and confidence when talking an  
audience. We recognize this and we encourage children to bring items of  
interest to kindergarten when they relate to topics under investigation at  
kindergarten. When we are looking at a particular topic we will send a  
note home requesting items to be brought from home ( eg. Hats when we  
look at hats; tools when we do a unit on technology, etc). At other times we  
ask you to ensure that children leave toys at home.

**Attendance at Kindergarten**

Kindergarten is not compulsory, however children do benefit from regular  
attendance as they develop confidence in routines and their learning and  
friendships are uninterrupted by absences. We ask that you notify staff by  
phone if your child is going to be away.  
During the first three weeks of each term DECD gathers statistics on  
attendance and this is used to determine staffing. Poor attendance during  
these two weeks could result in less staff.

**Dropping children off at kindergarten**

When entering or leaving the kindergarten we ask that parents ensure that  
the gate is shut behind them. We encourage parents to be involved in their  
child’s kindergarten experiences and there are many ways parents can be  
involved. However, children often find it difficult to separate from their  
parents if it is not clear to the child when the parent is going to leave.
Please talk to staff if you wish to discuss effective ways of separating from your child.

**Collecting children from kindergarten**

At the end of the session, children usually gather on the mat for a story or group activity - we call this group time. During this time, it is important that children’s concentration is not interrupted, so we ask that parents enter the kindergarten quietly and wait quietly for their child to leave the group area. Teachers say goodbye to children individually as they see the person who’s come to collect the child. It may take a little time to say goodbye to all children, but your patience helps ensure the children’s safety. We don’t want to lose anyone in the rush to see Mum or Dad!

If someone else is collecting your child, please record this information on the sheet in the parent area.

**Keeping track of the time**

Staff arrive at kindergarten before the session starts to prepare the room and themselves for the day. We, therefore, ask that you do not arrive until 9am. Some kindergartens have closed doors until the session starts - we choose not to shut the doors in the belief that families understand our need to prepare for the day. Likewise at the end of the day staff have many jobs to do once the children have departed, again we ask that children be collected on time.

**Keeping in touch and sharing information**

At Mt Compass Preschool we value the relationships we develop with the children in our care, and their families. We believe that it is through relationships and a sense of wellbeing that your child will engage in learning experiences at preschool.

Throughout your child’s preschool year we encourage you to seek out staff to discuss your child’s time at preschool as the need arises. Sometimes this is a quick chat at the beginning or end of session, or we can make time outside preschool hours to meet. Likewise preschool staff touch base with parents to talk about how each child is going as the need arises.

In the second term of each child’s year at preschool we offer parents the opportunity to meet with preschool staff to discuss their child’s time at preschool. It is an opportunity to share our respective pictures of your child and how s/he is developing socially, emotionally, physically and cognitively both at home and at preschool.

There are several other ways we keep in touch with each other.

- Our regular newsletters let families know about what’s been happening
at preschool and what’s coming up. You will find these posted in your child’s pigeon hole along with other notes.

- We also have a notice board on the left as you enter the preschool, and we often put important reminders on an easel at the top of the entry ramp !!!
- Parent Planning Group/Governing Council meetings are a great way to keep up with preschool curriculum, as well as events.
- Also watch out for displays around the room, these often show the children in action.
- Each child has a preschool book which helps to track their journey through the preschool year with a selection of their art and craft work, photographs and learning stories.
- We seek parent feedback each year through a DECS Parents Survey which helps us with our review and planning processes.
- Lastly when your child finishes their preschool year staff provide an overview of their year in the form of a Statement of Learning, copies of this are given to the school with parent’s permission.

**Illness**

Illness spreads quickly through kindergartens so please keep your sick child at home to rest and recover. Some childhood conditions are highly infectious, so please notify the kindergarten if your child contracts an infectious condition.

**Head Lice**

Head lice are common among young children and spread through close contact. There is a lot of information available regarding the treatments for head lice. When staff observe that a child has head lice we ask that the head lice be effectively treated before the child returns to kindergarten. We will send a general note home when head lice are detected requesting that all children be checked and treated for head lice where necessary.

**How you can help**

There are many ways you can be involved in your child’s kindergarten. Here are a few suggestions/requests:

- Washing. A parent volunteers to take the weekly washing home for a term at a time.
- Extra washing. Volunteer to take the home corner clothes home and give them a wash
- End of Term/Year cleaning. Periodically the kindergarten needs some extra cleaning.
- Supporting our fundraising/social events
- Becoming a member of the Governing Council
- Arrange to come and spend some time at kindergarten helping with a special project/skill/or interest

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Working Bees. Become involved in periodic working bees
Offer to help with some of the art/craft preparation
Collect useful junk that children can use in their creations at kindy
Watch out for requests in newsletter

A parent participation form will be sent home in the first few weeks of term 1.

The Parent Planning Group (formally the Governing Council)
The Planning Group members are elected by the parents each year to oversee the running of the centre. They meet twice a term (8 times a year) and are involved in financial management, maintenance and upgrading of the buildings, grounds and equipment. The group arranges fundraising events throughout the year. The kindergarten relies on funds raised by the group. We use this money to purchase new equipment and generally keep the centre and grounds safe, clean and tidy.

All parents are welcome to come along to the meetings. (See also Criminal History Screening at the end of this handbook)

Child Protection Curriculum
The Child Protection Curriculum is now a mandatory part of our preschool and school curriculum and is part of teaching and learning from preschool through to Year 12. It explores two themes

- We all have the right to be safe
- We can help ourselves be safe by talking to people we trust

With preschool children we explore the concept of safety within the context of young children’s experiences. We do this through exploring instances that occur at preschool; stories; use of puppets; role plays and other related activities. The second theme focuses on children being able to self select a range of people they trust.

Orientation to School
Each term the preschool group visits the Mt Compass Area School, on a discovery tour!! We check out the (empty) Reception classroom, the girl’s and boy’s toilets, the Library, the office, staffroom, sick room, and other places of interest. During the year the Reception class and class teacher visit the preschool. This builds up the children’s general knowledge and experience of school, school ‘things’ and people. It also gives us a basis to discuss school at preschool. During a child’s last term at kindergarten they attend a transition to school program. These programs are organized by the school at which the child is enrolled to commence reception. These Transition visits give children some more specific experience of the school environment they will be part on the following year.

Preschool Session Times
All preschool aged children are eligible for 15 hours of preschool per week or 30 hours per fortnight. In 2015 preschool sessions will be run on a
fortnightly basis, three days on the odd weeks of term and two on the even weeks of term.  
Weeks 1,3,5,7,9,11   Monday, Tuesday & Wednesday 9am – 3pm  
Weeks 2,4,6,8,10     Monday & Wednesday 9am-3pm  
Please check with the Director for availability of sessions.

**Fees**

Preschools charge fees to cover some of the running costs of the program. We ask that families pay their fees promptly. If you think you may have some difficulty paying on time please talk this over with the Director so that a payment schedule can be organized. Payments can be made through Centrelink. Families are asked to choose a payment option as part of the enrolment process by completing a Payment Form.

**Preschool**

$85 per term preschool fees

All fees are payable by week 4 of the current term. Please select a fee payment schedule and sign the Fees Payment Form.

We ask that each family provide a packet of tissues & 2 rolls of toilet paper each term to offset some of our running costs and to share the fundraising load across more families.

**Criminal History Screenings (CHS)**

All persons working (paid or volunteer) at the preschool are required to have a current criminal history screen clearance for child related paid or unpaid work. This means that if you come into preschool to volunteer your time you will require a current CHS. It also applies to all Parent Planning Group/Governing Council members. The only exception is for one off involvement in a day time activity in which you are not supervising a child/children on your own eg attending a preschool BBQ or other event.

Please check with the Director for valid CHS as some are not accepted by DECD (ie police screenings are not accepted). The Director will supply you with forms to fill out and the preschool will cover the cost of the screening. Please note that at present this process can take several months to complete, so if you think you may be involved in this way some time during the year please complete the CHS process pronto!!

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