



# Noosa Pengari Playgroup

## Handbook

### WELCOME

It is a pleasure to welcome you to our Playgroup. Together we will work to provide a nourishing space for parents and children to learn and grow.

### ABOUT OUR PLAYGROUP

Our Playgroup is a weekly organized session for parents with young children based on the spiritual perspective of child development given to us by Rudolf Steiner.

Principles underlying our Playgroup (from the *Parent and Child Group Handbook*)

- During the first seven years, children are in the process of growing healthy bodies and learning the skills of everyday living. Formal learning comes later.
- Young children need the freedom to develop at their own pace in their own time.
- Children need to have time to play
- During the first few years young children are very open to all sensory impressions: they soak in everything.
- Rhythm and repetition are fundamentally important qualities in a young child's life.
- Young children are totally trusting and learn everything through imitation and 'doing'. Most of all they need to be able to imitate the everyday tasks of life.
- What young children need to see adults doing is the work of everyday life – caring for the room and toys, cleaning, crafts etc.

### TIMES

Playgroup is held on Fridays from 9.15am to 11.15 am. Being on time helps us to establish our rhythm and routine.

## ENVIRONMENT AND VENUE

Playgroup sessions are held in our own room in Possum Place, behind the Treasure House.

The colour, feel and furnishings of the Playgroup room create a warm home-like environment. When we speak of a home-like environment, we mean a building that the adults care for like their own home. We want you to feel comfortable here and to love and embrace the building and all that is within.

## WHAT TO BRING

- A piece of fruit or a vegetable to share (preferably organic/biodynamic please)
- A change of clothes for your child
- A drink bottle for you and your child
- A broad brimmed hat
- Warm clothes, beanie and coats in winter
- Slippers (optional—but nice to keep feet warm in winter)

## CLOTHING

Please dress your child in simple, plain clothes of natural materials – no logos or images. Soft colours and patterns are preferable. Children need to be comfortable and to be able to move freely. Sturdy footwear for walks to the garden or compost. You may also like to think about the colours and images on your own clothing. The room can get cold in winter so bring extra layers.

## PARENTS

Reverence for the child is the basis of the Playgroup programme. We strive to create a balance between the social needs of the parent and the needs of the child.

As mentioned earlier – children need to see adults doing the work of everyday life. Our Playgroup is a little different than some, in that while the children play the parents participate in meaningful work. Ways that you can contribute is by helping to prepare morning/afternoon tea, bringing flowers from your garden for the table, assisting with the tidying away of toys, gardening, polishing blocks and wooden playthings with lavender wax, making repairs to damaged playthings, undertaking a craft activity, wiping the table, washing dishes, sweeping and dusting. If you have any other ideas, please feel free to suggest them.

*“For educational activities appropriate to the young child, we need look no further than the traditional tasks of the home: cooking, baking, gardening, laundry, cleaning, and so on. Purposeful tasks that proceed in a logical sequence and involve a wide variety of movements and gestures become the basis for logical and flexible thinking later on in life, when performed in a conscious, deliberate way that allows the child to take in what is happening. It takes patience and creativity to cheerfully perform such “mundane” tasks amidst the rush of modern life, and to include young children in an age-appropriate way, but they are more powerful than any contrived educational program or learning tool.*

*An artistic quality can lift our work above the humdrum. If we take pleasure in folding the napkins beautifully, sing a special song as we wash the dishes, or simply enjoy the rainbow colours of the soap bubbles in the laundry tub, we feed the soul’s hunger for beauty.”*

From [http://www.waldorfearlychildhood.org/family\\_workplay.php](http://www.waldorfearlychildhood.org/family_workplay.php)

Our Playgroup room will be filled with the joy of little voices, but as adults we need to be mindful of our voices and what we are saying. Our voices are much louder and can fill the room if we are not aware.

It is also lovely to try to have a little time where the parents are focussed on their work with minimal talking. Even 10 minutes or so of mindful work – it is quite delightful to experience what happens when we tune into what we are doing and enjoy the children at play.

Space in the Playgroup room is limited but there is a room next door where bags may be left. To keep doorways clear and avoid tripping hazards, shoes can be removed and left neatly against the wall. You may like to bring indoor shoes or an apron for yourself.

### **PHONES**

Please note that mobile phones are not to be used during the morning (except in emergencies).

### **RHYTHM & ROUTINE**

The Playgroup sessions follow a simple rhythm that aims to create a sense of security for children. They soon come to know what to expect as they transition gently through song from one activity to the next. Part of the Playgroup rhythm also focusses on the seasons, learning through songs, stories and craft.

### **FOOD**

Morning Tea at Noosa Pengari Playgroup is a wholesome, nourishing experience. Each Playgroup session incorporates bread making, and the rolls that are made are shared together at morning tea. We will also

prepare and share fruit or vegetables. The ingredients we use are organic. We say a simple blessing to give thanks before our meal.

### **HEALTH**

If children are unwell or tired they should be kept in the comfort of their home to rest. Just let the Playgroup Coordinator know if you cannot attend. With any probable contagious infections, you must seek a doctor's advice and notify the office immediately if your child is diagnosed with an infectious disease. Contagious children are to be kept home until they are cleared. Examples of contagious illness include: Conjunctivitis, Mumps, Ringworm, Whooping Cough, Measles, Chicken Pox, Hepatitis and Scarlet Fever. If your child has headlice please keep them at home until treatment is concluded.

### **PLAY**

- Free, imitative and imaginative play is vital for healthy child development.
- Play is work for the children and we as adults have our own work (while still keeping an eye on the children). Once your child is settled then it is time to withdraw and do 'grown-up' work. Adults, busy in their own work activity, 'hold' children in a safe space where they can feel free to play.
- Some children may need help to settle into play and the playgroup leader may help children to start play and then withdraw.
- Natural objects, simple materials and 'unfinished' toys encourage imaginative play.
- Some of the older children may be ready to do small jobs.

**Tidying up after play** – Freya Jaffke describes playing and tidying up as belonging to each other. *“The way tidying up is done is important, and it needs to be carried out carefully, without rushing. Remember that children imitate us. Each toy and object has its place and there is a delightful satisfaction in the regaining of order after the freedom of play.”*

At first, where everything goes will be unfamiliar, but soon you and your child will become experts in putting everything in its place.

### **TOYS**

Our room has been lovingly filled with simple natural handmade articles. We have natural fabrics of all colours and textures and natural pieces of timber all taking on many varied and wonderful forms during play. These toys are only limited by the child’s imagination. Please keep your child’s personal toys at home (security toys are welcome).

### **SONGS AND STORIES**

Each session we will sing simple songs and fingerplays. It is important for adults to be fully engaged and to imitate the leader’s gesture and mood as closely as possible. Children may or may not participate, and this is perfectly normal. Some children will join the group only after observing for several weeks, and some will never join in. It is fine for your child to observe but this is not a time to play with the toys. If your child does not want to join in, but is becoming disruptive, please take them for a little walk outside.

Most of the time the children will imitate people around them and even if they don’t participate will certainly be taking in all that we do. Young children love repetitive songs and verses, so the songs will be repeated

several times over the weeks, as will the stories. As the songs change with the seasons, repetition will also help everyone to learn them.

### **BEHAVIOUR**

Through the rhythm of the day we build a secure and knowable environment for the children. This simple structure may alleviate many behaviour “problems” before they arise.

It is also helpful for parents to be aware and mindful of their child’s whereabouts and behaviour during Playgroup.

Young children are still learning how to interact in social situations and sometimes will hurt another child. If a child is hurt or has hurt another child, then it is important that the situation be addressed. If your child has hurt another you might like to help them get a drink of water for the hurt child or help get some ice to put on the sore part.

If your child repeatedly hurts other children, you may like to take the child outside and sit alone with them for a while or go for a little walk. If a child is hurting other children on a regular basis then the Playgroup Co-ordinator will discuss the matter with the parent and if no satisfactory solution can be found, the family will be asked to have a break from Playgroup as it is important that we all feel safe.

If you or your child are not having a good day in any respects, it is fine to ‘let go’ and quietly and calmly go home or to a park etc. We have all had those days as parents! Please try to let someone know so that the Playgroup Co-ordinator is aware. Once home, if you wish to discuss some issues, you may make an appointment with the Playgroup Co-ordinator or contact another parent for a chat.

Here are some suggestions to try in difficult situation:

- If possible, remember that the emphasis is on modelling positive behaviour and language. This includes showing kindness and understanding towards all parties involved.
- Avoid using words such as: “You must share”, because this is too abstract for little ones. It is much better to quietly say “Ben, can Jess have it when you are finished with it”? Most of the time children will agree.

Really inappropriate behaviour which is disrupting the play of others, is best handled by the calm re-direction of the child. (Maybe they can help with a job) – a walk to feed the chickens or take the compost is a good one.

### **TELEVISION**

The adverse effects of TV are many, depriving children of their ability for creative play, over-stimulating the senses and disconnecting the children from THEIR REAL WORLD. Children learn best through imitating real life around them and experiencing the world by ‘doing’.

### **PARENT RESOURCES**

Noosa Pengari Steiner School has a small library for those parents enrolling to learn more. The Parent Library is located in The Treasure House. See the school office to join.

Some recommended reading:

*You are Your Child’s First Teacher* / Rohmina Baldwin

*Work & Play in Early Childhood* / David Elkind

*The Hurried Child* / Freya Jaffre

*The Incarnating Child* / Joan Salter

*Festivals Family & Food* / Cary & Large

*Waldorf Parenting Handbook* / Lois Cusich

*Who’s Bringing Them Up* / Martin Large

It is highly recommended that at least one of these books is read once your family begins attending Playgroup to gain a greater appreciation of Steiner Education and how helpful it can be in your home life.

### **CONCLUSION**

This Playgroup may not suit all children – your child may not be ready for playgroup and that is ok 😊 On the other hand your child may find that Playgroup is not enough for them. Please feel free to discuss with me at any time.

***You are your child’s first teacher.*** Strive to understand your child and create the circumstances in which they will grow healthy in body and mind, balanced in all ways. It is a big responsibility, very challenging and one of the greatest and most rewarding things we will ever do.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions

**Jana D’Arville – Playgroup Coordinator**

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