

**BALGOWLAH HEIGHTS
PUBLIC SCHOOL
PRESENTS....**

**THE
KINDERGARTEN
PARENTS'
SURVIVAL GUIDE
2007**



**“ACHIEVE YOUR
BEST”**

THE KINDERGARTEN PARENTS' SURVIVAL GUIDE

Welcome to Balgowlah Heights Public School! As a parent or carer starting your first child at school you might be feeling a bit daunted, or even confused. It's been a few years since you started school, and things have probably changed quite a bit (even if you *can* remember that far back)! Maybe you come from another city, state or country and are wondering what is different. You probably have lots of questions but you might not know when or how you can possibly get them all answered. Don't panic! Help is at hand: As parents with children already at Balgowlah Heights Primary School (BHPS) we've all asked the same questions, and thought you might like to hear some of what we found out...

ABOUT THE PEOPLE IN THEIR SCHOOL DAY



Who is my child's teacher?

Most kids will stay in the classes they start with, but due to fluctuating enrolments with unexpected students turning up, or expected students not arriving, some shuffling is necessary. Things can take up to two weeks to settle down.

This process is always harder on you than the kids, so try not to worry too much. The school will keep you informed as much as possible via notes that come home from school in their school bags. If you still have concerns see their teacher, who will inform you of any new developments and if they know anything they will tell you. Unfortunately, it's a bit of a waiting game for everybody concerned.

As soon as things are settled, your class teacher will hold a parents' meeting to introduce herself to parents and to explain the details of

what happens in her class. You'll hear about schedules, curriculum, and any general information you'll need (you'll get timetables for your child's "news day", sports, library, computer classes etc). You'll feel quite informed after this meeting, so if you can't attend try and make a time to talk with the teacher individually.

When can I talk to the teacher?

You can usually find the teacher in the classroom before or after school for a quick chat or, if you need more time, they are always happy to make an appointment for an alternative one. There is a time during the school week known as "RFF" (Relief-From -Face-To-Face) when the kids have a different teacher in the class room for a couple of hours. This is the ideal time to schedule an appointment to meet with their teacher. Your teacher will let you know her RFF times.

Will they have only one teacher?

They have their main teacher, who they invariably love, and pretty much think is the supreme being (get used to being contradicted - "But my teacher says..."). But they are also taught by others including, the RFF teacher (a regular weekly relief teacher), the Japanese teacher, the Dance teacher the Scripture teacher and the Library teacher. All these teachers are generally adored by the children!

Who are the other important people at school?

The school Principal is Craig Davis and the Deputy Principal is Leonie Seaton. There are also four Assistant principals. Astonishingly, they seem to know the names of all the children in the school and are dab hands at helping with the odd teary eye in those first few weeks. The school is very nurturing in its approach to this big new world the little ones face. Of course there are many other important people at school but we'll leave that for your children to explain (usually in exasperated tones - "Oh Mum - don't you even know that's Mrs Dalton in the office?")

What is a buddy?

One day, your child will come home and say they met with their "buddy" today. The school has a program as part of its "school community welfare" philosophy, where they pair up Kindergarten children with older buddies from Years 3 - 6. They do supervised

activities, such as craft, where the older children's leadership skills are honed by helping the younger ones. The Kindergarten children love having a buddy and feel very important being able to greet such big kids in the playground.

ABOUT THEIR DAY

What should be in their bag each day?

Their school bags DO look enormous, but it is for a reason. Each day you should send the following:



- A hat
- A rain coat
- A sweat shirt (especially when it's cool)
- Recess box, Lunch box and Drink bottle
- Home reader (once your class starts its home reading programme)

Where do I bring my child in the morning?

For the first week, bring them to the classroom to hang their bag and place their lunches into baskets. From week 2, they will line up at 9am into class groups under the covered area* and then be taken to the class room.

Your class teacher will keep you informed of changes to routines.

* also known as the COLA (Covered Outdoor Learning Area).

What is their schedule?

In a couple of weeks you'll have the opportunity to ask the class teacher the specifics of this, but for now....



8.45 - 9.00	Supervision in the playground. Suggested arrival time.
9.00	Bell rings and line up under the COLA (the covered area in front of the classrooms)
9.00- 10.35	In class, and attendance roll is taken
10.35 - 10.55	Recess (It seems everyone has their own name for this (morning tea, little lunch, play lunch - at BHPS it is called "Recess")
10.55 - 12.30	In class
12.30 - 1.25	Lunch (The first 20 minutes is "sit down and eat lunch" time, and the rest is play time)
1.30 - 3.05	In class (day ends at 2.45 for first two weeks)
3.05	End of school (after the first two weeks)

Are they always supervised?

During school hours, children are supervised at all times, so if your child has a tumble at lunch or some other mishap they or a friend will always find a teacher.

When do they go to the toilet?

For the first few weeks of school, the children are escorted to the toilet numerous times a day by the teacher. They can also ask to go any time if necessary, and they are always "escorted" to the toilet by another child. In the unlikely event there is an "accident", they will be changed into one of the many clean spare uniforms kept at the office.

What is the lunchtime routine?

At Recess the kids remain seated and eat their snack and have a drink. At Lunch they remain seated to eat for the first 20 minutes, and after that they have free play time for 35 minutes.



Lunchtime is often a worry for parents wondering if their children will know how to deal with the new level of independence required, but try to put your mind at rest. The Kindergarten teachers have a very nurturing approach and understand that this is a transition from preschool where children were guided at every step.



Each teacher has a different approach, so find out from her what she wants your child to do with their lunch when they get to school. Often this involves putting it in a basket for later distribution. Encourage your child do this on their own and check they understand the routine.



Pack their morning tea and lunch into separate named containers as these are usually placed in separate baskets.

Are there special lunch requirements?

The school encourages healthy eating and loves to see kids bring nutritious lunches. Also, it is really important to remember that although the teachers do their best, they have a large number of children to supervise at lunch, so it is definitely better for your child's sake to send easy opening lunches that don't require adult assistance.



Snip open tops of packaged foods like muesli bars, and freeze drinks or food to help keep food cold. Frozen sandwiches are a great idea in the warmer months.

Do they have after-lunch rests?

Depends on the teacher. Often the after-lunch time is a quiet one, as the teachers understand that the kids are transitioning from preschool where they often had daily rests. Some teachers let the children lie down for a few minutes, others just keep things calm and quiet.

Can they play on the Playground Equipment?

For safety, the use of playground equipment must be supervised by a teacher so they only play on it on certain days during the week. School provides other items such as hula hoops, and skipping ropes and things for kids to play with if they wish.



P.S. If toddlers or your school-age children are playing on equipment after school hours, you need to supervise them.

What if my child is sick or injured?

If your child falls over and needs attention to scraped knees, they are looked after and cleaned up by the teacher on playground duty, or in the administration area. If they are not well or more seriously injured, the school will contact you, or your authorised emergency contact person.



At the end of the day, where do I pick them up?

For the first two weeks, you can pick them up outside their classroom from 2.45pm. The teacher won't release them until they have sighted you or their designated "collector"*. After two weeks, they will be released at 3.05pm with the rest of the school. The teacher will bring them outside the classroom for you to collect.

*If someone other than his or her usual pick-up-person is collecting your child (e.g. another parent), send a note so that the teacher knows about the change in routine.

Is it hard to get parking?

It would be fair to say that parking around the school can be a little chaotic! Always, always, always take care with your children and always, always, always read the traffic signs. There are about 600 children entering and exiting the school at these times, not to mention little siblings. Take special note of the areas you are allowed to park and where stopping is not allowed. These areas are marked this way for the safety of the children. Police do monitor the streets at peak times for offenders. Walk to school with your children when you can, to help reduce congestion. Allow extra time if you can, and try to be patient and considerate on the streets surrounding the school. And remember - never ever double park!

What is a “Kiss and Drop” Parking Zone?

You probably won't use these for some time, as most parents walk their Kindergarten children in to school for at least the first half of the year. These areas are designed to keep traffic flowing in Lewis St and Radio Ave. They are clearly marked, and you can stop in them **ONLY** to drop your children off. They only work if the traffic keeps flowing. And be aware - you must not park in these areas - the parking wardens regularly patrol these areas.

Can they use the Pedestrian Crossing?

BHPS is a “split campus” which means that the kids cross the road for Library, Computer, Assembly and a few other activities. They are never allowed to do so unaccompanied, and only children in Years 4, 5 and 6 are allowed to cross the pedestrian crossing at lunch.

Is there any kind of childcare for before and after school and vacations?

ARABANOO is the Before and After-School Care Centre. It runs from 7.30 before school, and till 6.30 after school, as well as having Vacation Care Programs. The staff is much loved, and it is a safe, secure and fun place for your children. To get more information:

- pop into the centre (next to the school hall)
- pick up information from the administration office on the Western Campus
- see the school website www.bhps.net.au

ABOUT THEIR WORK

Do they get homework/home readers?

Kindergarten children don't get homework. When the teacher feels the class is ready (often in the second or third term) home readers will start to come home for a nightly read with you. The home readers will be at a level the child can comfortably cope with to encourage enjoyment of reading and to maintain positive self-esteem.



Do they have their own desks in the classrooms?

They do have allocated positions for sitting that can change from time to time, and they also have a labelled tray which holds work and any other of your child's belongings that need a home in the classroom. If something (such as a Show-and-Tell item) goes astray, this is often where you'll find it. The trays are emptied regularly.

Do we get to see their work?

Every week you'll receive varying quantities of work home in their school bag - certainly enough for you keep a very close eye on where they are up to and how they are doing. Also, there are a couple of open days a year (a "Grand-parents and Special People" day, and an open day in Education Week) where you can see all their work at school. On top of that, there will be a formal parent/teacher meeting where their teacher goes through all their work with you - you'll be amazed!!

What else goes on at school besides learning to read and count?

In Kindergarten the children also do - Computer in the computer room, Library, Japanese, Dance, Sport,



attend school assemblies and Scripture (optional). These things are often the highlights of their week. They can do school banking, drama after school and attend Arabanoo after school care.



Keep your child's weekly timetable in a convenient spot (e.g. inside the pantry door) as a handy reminder of what they need to take each day (eg news, library bag, sneakers etc).

What about school sports?

There are scheduled weekly sports (which focus on Gross Motor Skills) and dance, with gymnastics, fitness and games skills included in the PE program which usually starts in Term 2. In addition to this there is also an Athletics Carnival later in the year.

The children will be allocated to one of the four sports groups (known as "houses"- each has a different name and colour). On that day they do a little bit of serious running and then they do lots of fun stuff (ball games, egg and spoon....). It is a great opportunity for them (and you) to join in with the whole school.



ABOUT ASSEMBLIES

When does the school come together?

Portions of the whole school get together every week on Monday afternoon in the hall. (Alternating between years K-2, years 3-6, and years K-6). At an assembly, the children hear news from a senior teacher or Mr Davis, they watch "class items" (music or drama prepared by each class in the school) and, importantly, they receive Merit Awards, Recognition Awards, Sporting Awards and the Kindergarten children receive birthday certificates .

What are Merit Awards and Recognition Awards?

Your kindergarten child will come home one Monday with a blue certificate for "trying very hard in class" or "beautiful reading" or something similar. This is known as a Merit Award, and they would have received it at the weekly assembly. These awards are fairly allocated and very positive - each child receives 2 or 3 during the year

and all children love it! Parents aren't notified for these due to the number given out and size restrictions in the hall. However, once a term special Recognition Awards are presented at a special assembly. If your child is to receive a Recognition Award one of these, you'll be notified by mail and invited to see them receive it at Assembly - bring your camera!

Assemblies sound interesting – can I attend?

When your child is going to be in a class item, or when they are going to receive a Recognition Award (different from a Merit Award - see above) you'll receive a note from the teacher. These are the times to come to Assembly. As enjoyable as these occasions are, it is unfortunately not possible to fit in all the students and all their parents at every Assembly.

ABOUT UNIFORMS

Is there a sports uniform?

There is no sports uniform for children until Year 3, but on days they have sport or dance they should wear sneakers. These activities start a little way into the term and you will get a schedule from your class teacher so you know what day they should wear their sneakers.



On the days each week that your daughter has sport, you may want to send her in skorts, or if she is wearing a dress, she may want to wear bike pants underneath.

Can I buy the uniform at School?

The school uniform shop (open from 8:30 - 9:30am Tues) is under the Library, next to the computer room, on the Western campus. It sells both new and used uniforms, and in doing so, is an important fundraiser for the school. It is a good idea to purchase the uniform 'in season' as the shop rotates stock accordingly. The wonderful parents who run this are volunteers and do their best to help you with everything you need.



Go up before 3.00 if you want to beat the rush or, even better, send in an order form with your child (you got one on Orientation Day and you can get extras from the office) and you'll receive your order in your child's bag the next day.

Can I buy second-hand school uniforms?

Yes, check the rack in the school uniform shop for great bargains.

When do they wear the Winter Uniform?

In Terms 2 and 3. There will be an information day for Kindy Parents to "preview" the winter options, or look out in the newsletter for availability through the school uniform shop.



What about sun protection?

The school takes this seriously, so there is a range of hats in the uniform - both wide brim, and cap style. The school policy is that children must wear a hat or they are restricted to playing in the shade. Also, it is a good idea to apply sunscreen to your child before they go to school.

OTHER QUESTIONS...

What are the Eastern and Western Campuses?

Your child is on the Eastern Campus, which is the lower campus between Radio Ave and Lewis Street. There is an office on this campus (just next to the staff room at the verandah end of the main block) where you can leave notes etc, but the main Administration office is on the other side (the Western Campus).

What about absences?

When your child is absent from school, notes are the best way to let the school know, as they need the formal notification. If you know in advance, tell the teacher and send a note. If the absence is unexpected, (say if the child is sick) send a note when they return. For longer absences, call the school to advise them of the expected duration.

What about other notes and money for excursions etc?

Send any notes with your child to give to their teacher. If money is required (e.g. for an excursion or for special art supplies) you will usually be invoiced at the end of each term, rather than having to risk the coins going astray!

What if my child is late to school or I need to take them out for part of the day?

Firstly, if possible inform your teacher prior to the time you are going to take the child out of school (you don't want to be running around the school trying to find out where the library is when you are running late for the doctor). Secondly, go to the office and get an "Early Slip" or "Late Slip". Fill it in with details and get a staff member to sign it. (These are really important as they help with the formal school record-keeping, which is a legal requirement).

What if I am unexpectedly delayed at pickup time?

Call the school so that the teacher knows. They will either keep the child with them, or take them over to the main office on the Western Campus.



Put the school phone number (9948 2225) and maybe the phone number of another parent, in your wallet, so that if you get caught out on the other side of the bridge you can make some hasty arrangements.

Can my child order Canteen?

The canteen can be used for lunch orders for Kindergarten children but not until later in term 1 when routines have settled. It is open on Monday, Wednesday and Fridays. Before 9.00, bring their properly labelled brown paper bag (or 2 or 3, if it includes hot food and dairy items), to the Canteen person waiting under the COLA (where the kids line up). Their lunch will be brought to their class room at lunch time.



What happens when it is raining?

Send a raincoat in the child's bag, as it will be used whenever they need to leave the class room. When it is raining steadily, the children remain in the classroom for lunch and do quiet activities.

**What if my child loses something?**

They will!!!!!! Make sure you name *EVERYTHING* especially those items that are easily separated from children such as lunch boxes, drink bottles and hats. If they are named, they usually make their way back into your child's bag in the next few days. If they don't, check the lost property box (there is one located outside the kindy campus office and another in the "Admin. Building" on the Western Campus).

Can my child join the school band or choir?

Admission to the school band is for Years 3-6 children. When your child is in Year 2, you will get information about the school band program and your child will be invited to join the school band. They can join the school choir in Years 4 and 5.

GETTING TO KNOW THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY

What is the Newsletter?

Each Wednesday your oldest child will receive a Newsletter. It is the central forum for communication in the school - letting you know what is going on for children and parents, and what is coming up. If you don't get one, there are spare copies in the offices.



CHECK OUT THE WEBSITE

The BHPS Website contains much of the school information you could want, as well as the weekly newsletter. Check it out at:

www.bhps.net.au

The school's website was developed in 2003 and is constantly being upgraded. It contains lots of useful information (What's On, times, dates, Uniform and Canteen Pricing), so add it to your Favourites List, and check it out whenever you have a question.

How can my child and I get to know other people at the school?

Once the classes are sorted out, a class list will be compiled with the class contact details of each child (this is not done without prior permission). Also, you can become a Class Coordinator (there are usually 2 or 3 a term per class). The "class parents" organise social events such as after-school-picnics in the park, mums' morning teas or parent dinners. They are also that term's contact person for the P&C, and for the teacher to coordinate other parents for something for the class (e.g. excursions). The Class Co-ordinators are also encouraged to welcome new families to the school.

How can I be involved in the school?

Let me count the ways....

- **Go into the classroom**

If you want to get an insight into your child's day and get to know their classmates - help in the classroom when teachers ask for volunteers. It is truly fascinating, and even if you can't do it on a regular basis, most teachers welcome the "when I can get the day off work" or "when I can get a baby sitter" occasional helper. (This isn't just for mums - dads and grandparents also help and are very welcome). Importantly, it also provides vital support to the teacher at a time when our kids are learning to read and write.

- **Check out the P&C -**

If you want an insight and a real involvement in the running of the school on any kind of issue you can imagine - attend the P&C meetings. It is a great way to get a behind-the-scenes look at how things operate as well as a very real way to be a part of things. Many decisions are made at the P&C, so if you want to have a say or have an opinion or want to find out more, try to get along to a P&C meeting (4th Monday of every month). It's also a great way to find out about general educational issues and how they affect our school. (By the way, it is possible to attend the P&C meetings and not end up on a committee - they love to just get feedback from the parent community).

- **Use your skills to help the school**

If none of the above appeals, but you still wish to have an involvement at the school, maybe you have a special skill or qualification that can be of help. We have landscape gardeners, artists, computing professionals and writers, who have spearheaded fantastic initiatives - just take a look at the grounds, buildings and facilities around you!

- **Get your hands dirty! -**

If you're the type of person who just likes to get stuck in and get busy, there are many other opportunities both regular (such as Canteen*) and occasional (such as working bees to tidy up and beautify the campus landscape or help with fundraising). Check the weekly newsletter for opportunities. Did you know, for instance, that the

beautiful classrooms, toilets and playground equipment were painted by parent helpers in 2003?

*Often Kindergarten parents are a little shy about joining the Canteen crews, but don't be. You could get a group of other parents you know and volunteer as a group or you could get to know parents of children throughout the school by getting rostered on individually. It usually ends up involving a shift once a month, morning or afternoon. You could be collecting orders (morning) or selling ice creams (lunchtimes) on the eastern campus. All in all, it can be great fun and is a fantastic way to tap into what's going on at all levels of the school.

- **Fundraising**

There are fundraising activities and events throughout the year. These are a great way to meet people and help the school at the same time. Events such as the Golf/Tennis Day and Christmas Party are events not to be missed.

- **Volunteer Reading Program**

This program requires many volunteers to assist with one-on-one reading at the school. It is a great way to help out and see children make wonderful progress with their reading. The program will begin during term 1. Again, watch the newsletter for more information.

A FINAL PEP TALK

Whether you're excited or nervous or both about your child starting school, this can be a daunting and stressful time. On top of that, the kids look at you blankly when you ask how their day went. Are they learning anything???

Amazingly, they are, even if they don't tell you about it. We can promise you that at some point in the next twelve months your child will astonish and delight you with their independence and newfound abilities. Schools are much more open environments than they were when most of us started and the school prides itself on its community philosophy, so if you have any concerns let your teacher, the Deputy Principal or Principal know.

You and your child are in for the ride of your life so enjoy it, welcome to Balgowlah Heights and good luck!!



Some reflections from previous Kindy Mums

"She was so tired the first term, it was always a good idea to give her dinner much earlier than usual ... sometimes even 4.30pm!"

"I always found it a good idea to let them run off a bit of energy straight after school before going home!!"

"My child told me that his favourite class was always when I helped out out".

"Pick up and drop off at the classroom was how I got to make my new friends at the school!"

Glossary

Arcade	The undercover seating area in front of the main brick building on the Eastern Campus.
Arabanoo	This is the name of the after-school care facility. You'll receive detailed information from them soon in the bags.
Composite Class	A composite class is made up of children from more than one year at school (eg Kindergarten and Year 1). As with other classes, the class is taught by a single teacher. The children, join up with other children from their year for any activities that involve the whole year, such as dance, singing, excursions, physical education and of course lunch and playground time.
COLA	Covered Outside Learning Area. This the covered area in front of the main brick building on the Kindergarten side (aka the Eastern Campus). It provides additional sheltered area for learning activities, as well as providing more sun and rain protection at lunch.
Eastern and Western Campus	Balgowlah Heights covers two blocks and is divided by Lewis St. Kindergarten (along with a few other classes) is located on the campus between Radio Ave and Lewis St, called the Eastern Campus. The campus which houses the remainder of the school is called the Western Campus. The main administration block is here (school office, principal's office, etc).

Recess

Otherwise known as play lunch, little lunch, morning tea. At Balgowlah Heights, the mid morning snack time is called Recess and runs from 10.35 - 10.55.

RFF

Relief-from-Face-to-Face. The RFF teachers come into the class room for a couple of hours each week to give the regular teacher some time in which to do other preparation work, or to meet with parents. The RFF teachers cover a part of the curriculum such as Science, Dance or Craft.