

The sky's the limit at Yarra Valley Grammar

Not every school has a space program, so it seems that Yarra Valley Grammar is ahead of the pack, as earlier this morning, a group of ELC students launched their rocket at 8.45am and headed skyward. Wearing custom-made space-suits, they discovered aliens, examined rocks under microscopes, ate marshmallows, before heading home, exhilarated. While it may have seemed like a day of fun and games to the three and four-year-old travellers, the weeks spent preparing for this trip, from planning and design, were being particularly

negotiating, building, designing and planning. They're playing all day but it's the learning that's happening through that, that's developing their creativity and imagination. They take their experiences home so when parents were involved, the learning is further cemented at home.

Three-year-olds and four-year-olds occupy separate rooms and engage in specific programs. The structured, age-relevant teaching that YVG offers "is appropriate for them to retain, learn from, and build on." Mrs Callow says that because the population is so young, "From an emotional point of view, having the familiarity of staff and other children is really

important." The day is interspersed with routine activities.

"Within that there are lots of opportunities for free time and free exploration; parents want some structure in their child's day but it is important to also to have the opportunity to explore at their level," says Mrs Callow.

"We have a large campus within a bush setting, and use the whole school community and teacher and beyond in a fun way, and a lot of the learning is done through investigations."

"We like to say we spend the whole day playing! Play takes on many different forms, such as physical, social, emotional, dramatic, imaginative, group and independent play. We provide indoor and outdoor play experiences that are based on observations of what the children are doing every day, so they learn how to play together, cooperate with them in real life situations."

ELC students are well supported by VGE students, as well as the emotional support of their older friends, who work out their interests and passions. "By the time they work out their interests and passions, it's a different way of learning and experiencing and many of the younger students don't have brothers or sisters that are 16 or 17, and love the 'big children' engaging with them one on one."

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Mrs Nicola Galloway, Early Learning Centre Director