

FREE KINDERGARTEN PROGRAM ENROLMENT POLICY (VIC)

Our Service is committed to supporting the Victorian Government’s Free Kindergarten initiative as part of the *Best Start, Best Life* reform. We aim to identify children that require additional support and seek assistance through a range of initiatives to ensure inclusion of vulnerable children into our programs. This policy provides guidelines for enrolment in our quality kindergarten programs to ensure compliance with legislative and Department of Education and Training requirements.

Our Service is committed to being a Child Safe Organisation with a zero tolerance for child abuse. At all times we act in accordance with the Victorian Child Safe Standards and related legislation.

NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD (NQS)

QUALITY AREA 1: EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM AND PRACTICE		
1.1	Program	The educational program enhances each child’s learning and development
QUALITY AREA 2: CHILDREN’S HEALTH AND SAFETY		
2.2.3	Child Protection	Management, educators and staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities to identify and respond to every child at risk of abuse or neglect.
QUALITY AREA 6: COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS		
6.1	Supportive relationships with families	Respectful relationships with families are developed and maintained and families are supported in their parenting role.
6.1.1	Engagement with the service	Families are supported from enrolment to be involved in their service and contribute to service decisions.
6.1.2	Parent views are respected	The expertise, culture, values and beliefs of families are respected, and families share in decision-making about their child’s learning and wellbeing.
6.1.3	Families are supported	Current information is available to families about the service and relevant community services and resources to support parenting and family wellbeing.
6.2	Collaborative partnerships	Collaborative partnerships enhance children’s inclusion, learning and wellbeing.
6.2.3	Community and engagement	The service builds relationships and engages with its community.

EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES NATIONAL REGULATIONS	
73	Educational program
74	Documenting of child assessments or evaluations for delivery of educational program
75	Information about educational program to be kept available
84	Awareness of child protection law
89	Educators must be working directly with children to be included in ratios
90	Medical conditions policy
92	Medication record
93	Administration of medication
97	Emergency and evacuation procedures
99	Children leaving the education and care service premises
160	Child enrolment records to be kept by approved provider and family day care educator
161	Authorisations to be kept in enrolment record
162	Health information to be kept in enrolment record
168	Education and care service must have policies and procedures
177	Prescribed enrolment and other documents to be kept by approved provider
181	Confidentiality of records kept by approved provider

RELATED LEGISLATION

Child Care Subsidy Secretary's Rules 2017	Family Law Act 1975
A New Tax System (Family Assistance) Act 1999	Working with Children Act 2005 (VIC)
Children, Youth and Families Act 2005	Children Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005
Disability Discrimination Act 1992	Public Health and Wellbeing Amendment (No Jab, No Play) Act 2015
Child Wellbeing and Safety Amendment (Child Safe Standards) Act 2015	Family Violence Protection Act 2008 (MARAM)

RELATED POLICIES

Acceptance and Refusal Authorisation Policy Additional Needs Policy Anti-Bias and Inclusion Policy Children's Belongings Policy Child Safe Environment Policy Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy	Immunisation Policy Kindergarten (VIC) Payment of Fees Policy Orientation of Families Policy Privacy and Confidentiality Policy Record Keeping and Retention Policy Sick Children Policy Sun Safe Policy
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Dealing with Infectious Disease Policy Delivery of children to, and Collection from Education and Care Service Premises Educational Program Policy Emergency Evacuation Policy Family Communication Policy	Supervision Policy Staffing Arrangements Policy Transition to School Policy Withdrawal of a Child Policy
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PURPOSE

We aim to ensure children and families receive informative and reliable information about enrolment in our Free Kinder programs for Three- and Four-Year-Old children.

SCOPE

This policy applies to management, the approved provider, nominated supervisor, educators, families, and children of the Service.

IMPLEMENTATION

Our Service meets the requirements of the Victoria Government to provide *Free Kindergarten* as part of the Best Start, Best Life reform. Funding is provided to our Service to support children access a high-quality kindergarten program in the two years before they start school.

FREE KINDER

Free Kinder is for all children. Families do not need to show a Health Care Card or Pension Card or Australian Citizenship (or similar) to be eligible to access. Free Kinder will offset out of pocket fees for children attending a Kindergarten program in our LDC Service. Free Kinder is a fee offset of up to \$2,000. Children can access a 15-hour kindergarten program (or shorter Three-year-old kindergarten) for free. Families may still be required to pay additional fees depending on the number of days their child attends our Service. Child Care Subsidy (CSS) is available to assist in paying out of pocket fees for ‘wrap around care’ provided by our Service.

To be eligible for Free Kinder, families can only enrol their child in **one** Free Kinder program at any one time. Families are required to sign a “[one funded place and Free Kinder in 2024](#)” form to confirm their child is receiving their funded kindergarten program from one service. Services must complete and lodge this form with the Department and keep a copy in the child’s enrolment record.



KINDERGARTEN PROGRAMS

Our Service promotes fair and equitable access to all our kindergarten programs and supports all eligible children gain access to a kindergarten program including those children who face barriers to participation. Our Service offers several funded high-quality educational programs as follows.

EARLY START KINDERGARTEN (ESK)

All children are eligible for Free Kinder however, we also enrol eligible children in Early Start Kindergarten (ESK) as these enrolments contribute to *School Readiness Funding (SFR)* and other additional targeted support from the Department of Education and Training (DET). ESK provides up to 15 funded hours of kindergarten. To be eligible for ESK, children must be **three years old by 30 April** in the year they are attending the kindergarten program and:

- are from a refugee or asylum seeker background *or*;
- are of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent, *or*;
- have had contact with Child Protection

For further details see the Department's website page: [Early Start Kindergarten](#)

THREE-YEAR- OLD KINDERGARTEN

Our Service offers **Three-Year-Old** kindergarten for a minimum of **five hours** and up to **fifteen hours** per week. As we are an integrated long day care your child has access to the early childhood teacher 5 days a week from 9am-3pm.

FOUR-YEAR-OLD KINDERGARTEN

Our **Four-Year-Old** Kindergarten program provides children with **15 hours per week** or 600 hours per year of funded kindergarten planned and delivered by a VIT registered qualified early childhood teacher (ECT). As we are an integrated long day care your child has access to the ECT 5 days a week from 9am-3pm.

KINDERGARTEN STARTING AGE

For children born between 1 January and 30 April, families have a choice about whether their child will start school in the year they turn five or the following year and consequently, the year their child begins kindergarten. As each child's development is unique, parents and carers should discuss with management the best time for their child to start kindergarten.

Children enrolled in Three-Year-Old Kindergarten will be expected to complete a full year of kindergarten in the year they enrol. All children in Three-Year-Old kindergarten will be expected to transition to Four-Year-Old Kindergarten the following year.

Children may be eligible to access an additional (Second) year of funded Four-Year-Old Kindergarten when a child shows delays in learning and development outcome areas in the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework. Further information about Second Year of funded Four-Year-old Kindergarten can be found on the [Victorian Department of Education and Training website](#). Families must apply for an exemption (school exemption) if the child turns 6 before or during their first or second year of funded Four-Year-Old Kindergarten. Further information regarding applying for an exemption from school can be found on the [Victorian Department of Education and Training website](#).

PRIORITY ACCESS CRITERIA (PoA) Kindergarten Funding Guide

In instances where more eligible children apply for a place at our Service for Three-Year-Old and Four-Year-Old Kindergarten programs, we must follow the [Priority of Access \(PoA\)](#) criteria to prioritise specified cohorts of children and work with other local kindergarten services and the regional Departmental offices to ensure all eligible children have access to a kindergarten place.

Priority of Access

Children at risk of abuse or neglect, including children in Out-of-Home Care

Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children

Asylum seeker and refugee children

Children eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy

Children with additional needs, defined as children who:

- require additional assistance in order to fully participate in the kindergarten program
- require a combination of services which are individually planned
- have an identified specific disability or developmental delay

OUR FRAMEWORKS

Our kindergarten programs adhere to the *Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF)* as the approved learning framework declared in the Education and Care Services National Law and National Regulations core funding agreement.

PROGRAM SCHEDULES AND SERVICE CLOSURES

There may be times when our scheduled kindergarten programs cannot be delivered due to public holidays, unplanned teacher absences or emergency situations and our closure period over Christmas. Families will be provided with a schedule of planned public holidays at the beginning of each year. Communication will be provided with families as promptly as possible in the event of any other disruptions to our program.

EDUCATOR TO CHILD RATIOS

In accordance with the Education and Care National Regulations we ensure that the educator to child ratio is 1 educator to 11 children for children from 36 months up to and including kindergarten age are adhered to at all times.

ENROLMENT PROCEDURE

To apply for Free Kinder, families are required complete an Enrolment Form.

Families will be provided with a range of information about the Service which may include:

- the service philosophy, description of our kindergarten programs, out-of-pocket expenses (e.g., one off excursions), access and inclusion policies, SunSmart requirements, signing in and out procedure, the National Quality Framework, routines, communication methods and Child Care Subsidy (CCS)
- families will be requested to submit any information related to **Priority of Access** with the enrolment application
- Before confirming a child's enrolment, our Service requires evidence of the child's vaccination status via an *AIR immunisation History Statement* to comply with the *No Jab No Play* legislation. Evidence must show the child:
 - is fully vaccinated for their age, or
 - has commenced a recognised catch-up schedule and that the next due vaccine/s on the schedule are not overdue 2 months prior to the first day of attending, or
 - has a medical condition that prevents them from being fully immunised for their age or
 - is eligible to enrol under the 16-week grace period while the service works with the family to obtain the necessary immunisations/documentation.

OFFER OF PLACES FOR FREE KINDER

Places will be allocated according to the Priority of Access (PoA) criteria and available places at our Service. Families will be provided with written confirmation of a placement. Families have two weeks to accept this offer and provide required documentation to complete the enrolment application. Written confirmation that their child is receiving a funded kindergarten program at our Service is required.

Should families not wish to accept the offer, they are required to withdraw their enrolment application as soon as possible. We ask that families withdraw their application in writing to the Nominated Supervisor. Families are required to confirm their child is receiving a funded kindergarten place at their service by signing the 'one funded place' and Free Kinder in 2024.

THE APPROVED PROVIDER/NOMINATED SUPERVISOR WILL:

- meet the specific terms and conditions for delivering the funded Free Kinder as outlined by the Department of Education and Training (DET) (2023)
- ensure the *Kindergarten Fee Policy* is available at the service
- promote fair and equitable access to kindergarten programs
- display the Kinder Tick logo at our Service
- adhere to the DET's Priority of Access criteria to all funded kindergarten places
- communicate how waiting lists are prioritised clearly with families
- ensure families complete written confirmation that they are accessing only one funded kindergarten place at any one time ('one funded place' form- Free Kinder in 2024)
- ensure families provide evidence of the child's vaccination status (*No Jab, No Play*)
- ensure families are not charged any compulsory out-of-pocket fees or levies (except for cost of one-off excursions- entry and transport costs) (*See Kindergarten Payment of Fees Policy*)
- ensure the Free Kinder offset is clearly indicated on parent invoice statements and that this offset will not impact their CCS payments- labelled Victorian Government Free Kinder Offset
- provide families with a statement of additional fees and hours charged that are over and above the 15 hours of funded hours per week
- ensure the full amount of the offset fee (up to \$2000 per child) is passed on to families to reduce out of pocket fees
- ensure families are not charged for incursions or regular excursions (e.g.; Bush Kinder)
- ensure any surplus funding is used to improve the quality of our funded kindergarten program and support engagement of families
- notify parents that any financial contribution to is completely voluntary and any fees that have already been paid, are refunded
- ensure that any eligible child for Early Start Kindergarten is enrolled and recorded in the Kindergarten Information Management System (KIMS)
- ensure enrolment and program data in KIMS is kept up to date
- update data within KIMS is updated immediately when service delivery or child enrolment changes occur

- provide details of the education level and occupation of parents (SFOE) for School Readiness Funding (SRF) eligibility
- ensure educators complete *Transition Learning and Development Statements* as part of the kindergarten funding agreement (See *Transition to School Policy* for further information)
- meet all core requirements and operational requirements as per National Quality Standard and National Law and National Regulations
- adhere to the *No Jab No Play* legislation (See Enrolment Procedure section of this policy)
- provide families with details of public holidays and any other defined days of closure each year
- work with families of children who are born between January and April to decide whether to enrol children in three-year-old kindergarten in the year they turn three, or the following year
- maintain educator to child ratios as per regulations (for children aged 36 months of age or over, one educator to 11 children)
- ensure minimum educator to child ratio for children under three is maintained when considering placement of children under three in the three-year-old kindergarten program (1:4 under three years of age)
- ensure Early Childhood Teachers are registered with the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT)
- ensure all staff and educators hold current and checked Working with Children Checks (WWCC)
- ensure the program delivered to children adheres to the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework
- create and maintain a child safe organisation and comply with the Child Safe Standards
- promote children’s wellbeing or safety by adhering to the Child Information Sharing Scheme (CISS), the Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme (FVISS) and the Family violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management (MARAM) Framework
- provide information to families about how personal information is collected and stored as per our *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy*

FAMILIES WILL:

- complete all documentation required by the Service for enrolment including child’s *Immunisation History Statement*
- provide required authorisations as indicated on enrolment form
- notify the Service of any specific health care needs of the child, including medical conditions and allergies and provide a medical management plan for child if applicable
- provide information to service for annual Student Family Occupation and Education data to assist with our SRF funding

- provide updated information about their child by notifying the Service of any changes as soon as possible- medical, parenting orders, authorisations etc.
- ensure they accept or withdraw their child's enrolment for *Free Kinder* in writing within given time frame
- complete written confirmation that they are accessing only one funded kindergarten place at any one time
- discuss with management decisions to enrol their child born between January and April if they should begin three-year-old kindergarten in the year their child turns three, or the following year.

SCHOOL READINESS FUNDING (SRF)

School Readiness Funding (SRF) is used to support outcomes for children in the priority areas of communication (language development); wellbeing (social and emotional) and access and inclusion. Our Service will allocate SRF funding to programs that support children's developmental outcomes. Our Service will ensure we comply with all requirements for SRF funding including:

- collecting Student Family Occupation and Education data from families
- enter information into KIMS against each child's record
- completing an annual plan for our service
- accepting regular engagement with the department to provide progress updates
- complete mid-year reviews and end-of-year acquittal funding

TRANSITION LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT STATEMENTS

Our Service will utilise funding from the Department to release early childhood teachers to write *Transition Learning and Development Statements (TLDS)* for every child in our care. The TLDS summarises each child's ability as they start school; identifies their approaches to learning and indicates how the child can be supported to continue learning. A copy of the TLDS statement will be provided to families. Families will be provided with the opportunity to opt out if they do not want relevant information shared with their child's school.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT/REFLECTION

Our *Free Kindergarten Enrolment Policy* will be updated and reviewed annually in consultation with families, staff, educators and management.

RESOURCES

[Funding and policies supporting Three-Year-Old-Kindergarten](#)

[Kindergarten Funding Guide \(2023\).](#)

[Kindergarten Funding Rates \(2023\)](#)

[Kindergarten Information Management System](#)

[Priority of Access criteria for early childhood education](#)

[Resources for funded kindergartens](#)

SOURCES

Australian Government Department of Education. Child Care Provider Handbook

<https://www.education.gov.au/child-care-package/resources/child-care-provider-handbook>

Department of Education and Training. (2016). [Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework. For all children birth to eight years](#)

Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010. (Amended 2023).

[Education and Care Services National Regulations.](#) (2011) (Amended 2023)

Victorian Government Department of Education and Training. (2023). [The kindergarten funding guide](#)

REVIEW

POLICY REVIEWED BY	Kumari Van der Meer	Managing Director	20/11/2023
POLICY REVIEWED	20/11/2023	NEXT REVIEW DATE	20/11/2024
VERSION NUMBER	V10.11.23		
MODIFICATIONS	NOVEMBER <ul style="list-style-type: none"> additional information re: PoA; Second Year Funding; School Readiness Funding (SFR), Transition Learning and Development Statements as per DET feedback access to one funded kindergarten place- form for parents added JUNE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rewrite of policy to comply with <i>Free Kinder</i> funding guidelines (2023) Resources updated and hyperlinks repaired 		
POLICY REVIEWED	PREVIOUS MODIFICATIONS	NEXT REVIEW DATE	
JUNE 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of policy to reflect 2022 provisional kindergarten funding Free kindy information for 2021 removed Hyperlinks checked and fixed where required 	JUNE 2023	
OCTOBER 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> re-write of some content to adhere to DET requirements additional information related to 3 and 4-year-old kindergarten funding and eligibility requirements transition to learning and development statements 	JUNE 2022	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • requirement for parents to provide written confirmation accessing only one funded kindergarten place • explanation of waitlist procedures to be added by services 	
JUNE 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • policy rewritten to include specific enrolment information and procedures for families • additional information added re Priority Access criteria, Free Kinder (2021), Kindergarten Inclusion Support, Three-Year-Old Kindergarten • sources and resources checked for currency 	JUNE 2022
SEPTEMBER 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approved learning Framework added • Curriculum area added • Enrolment section added including priority access guidelines • National Quality Standard and Regulations added • Further sources added 	JUNE 2021
JUNE 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • additional information 'Kindergarten' • additional content added re: approved learning framework • additional content re: Approved Provider responsibilities • additional information re: programs offered including Three-Year-Old preschool • Educator to child ratios added • small edits to spelling/layout resources and sources checked for currency 	JUNE 2021
JUNE 2019	New policy drafted	JUNE 2020