



KINDERGARTEN PAYMENT OF FEES POLICY

Under the Education and Care Services National Regulations [regulation 162 (2)], the approved provider must ensure a comprehensive written fee policy is in place for the payment of fees and clearly communicate this policy with all families at time of enrolment.

Our Service is committed to supporting the Victorian Government’s Free Kindergarten initiative as part of the Best Start, Best Life reform.

NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD (NQS)

QUALITY AREA 7: GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP		
7.1	Governance	Governance supports the operation of a quality service
7.1.2	Management Systems	Systems are in place to manage risk and enable the effective management and operation of a quality service
7.1.3	Roles and Responsibilities	Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined, and understood and support effective decision making and operation of the service

EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES NATIONAL REGULATIONS	
168	Education and care services must have policies and procedures
172	Notification of change to policies and procedures

RELATED LEGISLATION

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

Child Wellbeing and Safety Amendment (Child Safe Standards) Act 2015	
Family Assistance Law- Incorporating all related legislation for Child Care Provider Handbook in Appendix G https://www.education.gov.au/early-childhood/resources/child-care-provider-handbook	

RELATED POLICIES

CCS Accounts Policy Child Care Subsidy (CCS) Governance Policy Dealing with Complaints Policy Delivery of children to, and Collection from Education and Care Service Premises	Kindergarten Enrolment Policy Fraud Prevention Policy Governance Policy Orientation of Families Policy Privacy and Confidentiality Policy Termination of Enrolment Policy
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PURPOSE

This policy provides guidelines for *Free Kinder* for funded kindergarten programs available at our Service and the collection and payment of additional hours of education and care. It works in conjunction with the *Payment of Fees Policy* and the *Enrolment Policy*.

SCOPE

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

IMPLEMENTATION

Our Service aims to ensure families understand the fee schedule and how *Free Kinder* funding is applied for our kindergarten programs.

We are committed to meet our obligations to maintain financial integrity and comply with all *Free Kinder* funding and Child Care Subsidy legislative requirements.

We have effective compliance systems in place to ensure all childcare funding is administered appropriately. Our Service ensures the confidentiality and privacy of all personal information provided to the Service about the enrolled child and family and abides by the Victorian Protective Security Standards (VPSS) and Australian Privacy Principles (APP).

FEES/FREE KINDER

- Fees are based on our ability to provide the requirements of the Education and Care National Law and National Regulations, Family Assistance Law, the Australian Taxation Office and guidelines contained in the Child Care Provider Handbook and the Funded Kindergarten Guide.
- Fees are charged for each session of care and vary depending on the session time, Free Kinder fee offset and the family's eligibility for Child Care Subsidy (CCS).
- The Victorian Government will make *Free Kinder* payments to our Service to offset the parent fee component for a 15-hour program. This equates to a \$2,000 reduction in fees per year for each child and is calculated and paid pro-rata from a child's funding start date.
- Children must only receive funding for *Free Kinder* at one service. If a child attends more than one service that offers a funded kindergarten program (e.g. a sessional service for some days and a long day care service on other days), the family must nominate at which service they will receive their funded kindergarten program and therefore their Free Kinder funding.
- Free Kinder fees will be applied termly.
- Free Kinder offsets will not impact CCS payments to families for additional education and care provided by our Service.
- CCS is paid directly to the Service, and this is used as a fee reduction.
- Families are required to pay the difference between the fee charged, *Free Kinder* offset fee and the CCS subsidy amount- the 'gap' amount
- Fees must be kept in advance of a child's attendance
- A dated statement will be provided fortnightly.
- Fees are to be paid weekly or fortnightly through a direct debit system. It is a requirement that the family pay in advance and are not in arrears.
- Fees are payable in advance for every session that a child is enrolled at the Service. This includes public holidays, sick days, parent choice and family holidays but excludes periods when the Service is closed. The Service may be directed to close due to periods of local emergency such as bushfire or flood.
- Fees are charged for full sessions only (regardless of the actual attendance hours any day).
- Casual days may be offered to families if available within the Service's license.
- Our Service promotes participation of all children, particularly among children who require additional support, such as children with disability and Aboriginal children. Free or low-cost programs are available for eligible children through the Early Start Kindergarten (ESK) program. We will ensure deposits for placements do not present a financial barrier to families seeking to access an ESK place.

DAILY FEES

Our daily fees are available here: <https://alphabet-preschools.com/about/#fees>

KINDERGARTEN FEE DEPOSIT

- A kindergarten booking fee of \$50 plus two weeks of fees is to be paid to hold a child's funded kindergarten position at the Service. This fee will be taken off the first two weeks of fees when the child begins.
- These fees are non-refundable should the child not participate in the funded kindergarten program
- Kindergarten fee deposits may be waived for children who are eligible for Early Start Kindergarten (ESK).

PAYMENT OF FEES

- Families will be sent a *Statement of Entitlement* every fortnight.
- The *Statement of Entitlement* is generated using our CCS Software which meets all requirements as per Family Assistance Law legislation.
- Free Kinder fee offset will be clearly indicated on parent invoices
- Families are required to pay fees using the Service's direct debit system. The family is required to provide banking details to facilitate set up of the direct debit account
- Fees and charges associated with direct debit system are outlined upon enrolment
- A dishonour fee will apply for direct debit transactions where there are insufficient funds to cover the fees

FINANCIAL DIFFICULTIES

Our Service is committed to building supportive and trusting partnerships with families and children. Families experiencing financial difficulties are requested notify the Nominated Supervisor. Payment plans can be negotiated, and deposits can be waived if a family is accessing an ESK place.

Eligible families can apply for Additional Childcare Subsidy (ACCS) through Centrelink for additional fee assistance.

DEBT RECOVERY PROCEDURE

- If a family fails to pay the required fees on time, a reminder will be issued asking families to pay within 24 hours.

- At any time of the debt recovery process the family will be encouraged to enter a debt agreement with the service to repay outstanding fees. The family will be invited to attend a meeting to discuss repayment options.
- A written contract will be provided for the family to sign outlining repayment plan details. The repayment plan will provide information as to the duration and amount of the repayments as well as steps that will be taken if the repayment plan is not adhered to.
- A child's position will be terminated if payment has not been made after two weeks, for which the family will receive a final letter terminating the child's position. At this time the Service will initiate its debt collection process, following privacy and conditional requirements.

LATE FEES

- Our Service is not licensed or insured to have children on the premises after hours. This is a breach of the Education and Care Regulations.
- It is unacceptable to pick children up late from the Service. A late fee will apply where children are not picked up prior to closing time or outside of a child's session time.
- Currently, a fee of \$2 per minute per child will be incurred by the family.
- Late fees will not have Child Care Subsidy or Kindergarten Funding applied
- A review of the child's enrolment will occur where families are consistently late with fee payment.

HOLIDAY BOOKINGS AND FEES

Families will be offered four weeks of holidays in a calendar year. Families are required to give two weeks' notice, in writing, of holidays and a reduced fee will payable. Holiday bookings will be offered as casual days to other children or a reduction in staff will occur, therefore holidays, once booked, cannot be cancelled without prior arrangement.

CHANGE OF FEES

- Fees are subject to change at any time provided a minimum of 14 days written notice is given to all families.
- CCS hourly rate caps may be increased by the CPI at the commencement of each financial year. Any CCS hourly rate increases are governed by CCS and are automatically adjusted through our CCS Software.

COMPLAINTS RELATING TO THE ADMINISTRATION OF CHILDCARE SUBSIDY

Families who wish to raise concerns regarding the management of Child Care Subsidy should speak with the Nominated Supervisor in the first instance. The Nominated Supervisor will follow the steps as outlined in this policy, including advising the Approved Provider of all grievances.

Families can raise concerns regarding management of the Child Care Subsidy to the dedicated Child Care Tip-Off Line either via phone or email:

Phone: 1800 664 231

Email: tipoffline@education.gov.au

TERMINATION OF ENROLMENT

- Parents are to provide **two weeks** written notice of their intention to withdraw a child from the Service.
- If termination from the Service is required without notification families may lose their Child Care Subsidy, resulting in the requirement of full fees to be charged.
- If a child moves to another service during the kindergarten year, funding for Free Kinder will move with the child, with regular payments made to the new service for the remainder of the year.
- In some circumstances CCS may not be paid for sessions if the child has not physically started care.
- Additionally, CCS may not be paid for absences submitted after a child's last physical day of care, unless conditions have been met as specified by Family Assistance Law.

RESPONSIBILITY OF MANAGEMENT

THE APPROVED PROVIDER AND NOMINATED SUPERVISOR WILL:

- provide all families with access to our *Kindergarten Payment of Fees Policy*
- provide information to families of operations related to funded kindergarten programs
- review this policy annually and in consultation with families/staff and other stakeholders
- ensure families are aware of payment options and procedures
- directly offset the full *Free Kinder* payment from the fees of parents with children receiving their funded kindergarten program at the service
- regularly provide families with a parent invoice statement that clearly indicates the offset amount (labelled Free Kinder funding)
- ensure families are not charged for incursions or regular excursions (e.g. Bush Kinder)
- ensure families are notified of any additional charges – excursions/incursions in writing

- ensure any surplus funding is used to improve the quality of our funded kindergarten programs and support engagement of families
- ensure that any funded child is recorded in KIMS
- notify families of any overdue fees
- discuss fee payment with families if required
- provide families with reminder letters as required
- provide at least 14 days written notice to families of any proposed fee increases or changes to the way in which fees are collected
- adhere to the service's *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy* regarding financial and other information
- share or request information with other Information Sharing Entities (ISEs) under legislative principles of Child Information Sharing Scheme (CISS) or Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme (FVISS)
- ensure any person with management or control and any person responsible for the day-to-day operation of the service are fit and proper persons to be involved in the administration of Child Care Subsidy and Additional Child Care Subsidy (Family Assistance Law)
- ensure background checks, including criminal history checks are carried out for any personnel administering Child Care Subsidy and Additional Child Care Subsidy (Family Assistance Law)

EDUCATORS AND OTHER STAFF WILL:

- read and adhere to the *Kindergarten Payment of Fees Policy*
- advise the Nominated Supervisor or management of any concerns or complaints regarding the management of Child Care Subsidy or kindergarten funding subsidy or grants raised by families

RESPONSIBILITY OF FAMILIES

- read and adhere to the *Kindergarten Payment of Fees Policy*
- provide the Service with the correct enrolment details to facilitate the *Free Kinder Funding* and Child Care Subsidy (CCS), if required, including:
 - Centrelink Reference Numbers for child and CCS claimant
 - Date of Birth for child and CCS claimant
- provide proof of their child's immunisation status as per No Jab No Play legislation
- nominate and document which service their child will participate in to receive Free Kinder funding
- ensure payment of additional fees as per policy
- notify the approved provider/nominated supervisor if experiencing any payment difficulties
- notify Centrelink of any changes that may affect their CCS entitlement
- confirm their child's enrolment through the parent's myGov account.

MONITORING, REVIEW AND EVALUATION OF POLICY

- Ongoing review and evaluation of this policy will support the continuing development of the Service.
- Evaluation will involve all stakeholders
- The policy will be reviewed to reflect compliance with all related legislation, research and best practice.
- The development of a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) will form part of the reflection procedure.

DEFINITIONS

Child Care Subsidy	A Commonwealth Government means tested subsidy to assist families with childcare fees at approved education and care services. Payment is made directly to approved childcare providers. Eligible families can receive CCS under Family Assistance Law. [Child Care Subsidy]
Early Start Kindergarten	A funding program that enables eligible three-year old children to access up to 15 hours of kindergarten a week for two years before starting school. Eligible children must be three by 30 April in the year they start kindergarten and include those who are from a refugee or asylum seeker background, or identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander or are known to Child Protection or Child FIRST [Early Start Kindergarten]
Enrolment application fee	A payment to cover administrative costs associated with the enrolment of a child at our service
Excursion/event fee	An additional fee charged to cover the costs for participation in a planned excursion where fees are required to cover transportation, entry fees or other related costs. (See: Excursion/Incursion Policy)
Fees	Fees charged for program hours over and above the 15 funded hours per week (600 hours per year).
Free Kindergarten	Free Kinder is an initiative by the Victorian Government to support families to access up to 15 hours of free kindergarten for three-year-old and four-year-old children in a funded service.
Kindergarten fee deposit	Payment to secure a position in a funded kindergarten program. This fee should not act as a barrier to enrolling families to our Service. The enrolment fee will offset the families first two weeks of fees.
Statement of entitlement	A statement provided to parents eligible for CCS each fortnight detailing sessions of care provided and the resulting fee reduction amounts, including the Free Kinder offset fees.

RELATED RESOURCES

Overdue Fee Payment Procedure- including non-payment of fees letters to parents

SOURCE

Australian Children’s Education & Care Quality Authority. (2014).

Australian Government Department of Education. Child Care Provider Handbook

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

Australian Government Services Australia. (2021). [Child Care Subsidy](#).

Department of Education and Training. (2023). [The Kindergarten Funding Guide](#).

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

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

REVIEW

POLICY REVIEWED BY:	Megan Hipkiss	Centre Support	April 2024
POLICY REVIEWED	JUNE 2023	NEXT REVIEW DATE	JUNE 2024
VERSION	V4.06.23		
MODIFICATIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Policy re-written to adhere to <i>Free Kinder</i> funding guidelines (2023)• hyperlinks checked		
POLICY REVIEWED	PREVIOUS MODIFICATIONS		NEXT REVIEW DATE
OCTOBER 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• New policy drafted for Funded Kindergarten (VIC)		JUNE 2022