

FREE KINDERGARTEN FEES

QUALITY AREA 7 | ELAA version 1.0



PURPOSE

This policy will provide clear guidelines for:

- free kindergarten subsidies for funded sessional kindergarten programs
- the application of surplus funding within Warrandyte Kindergarten ensuring it is only used to ensure the quality of program delivery and development of children enrolled in the service.



POLICY STATEMENT

VALUES

Warrandyte Kindergarten is committed to:

- supporting the Victorian Government's Free Kindergarten initiative
- increasing access to quality kindergarten programs for all Victorian children
- ensuring there are no financial barriers for families wishing to access an early childhood program for their child/children
- maintaining confidentiality in relation to the financial circumstances of parents/guardians.

SCOPE

This policy applies to the approved provider, persons with management or control, nominated supervisor, persons in day-to-day charge, early childhood teachers, educators, staff, parents/guardians attending Warrandyte Kindergarten.

RESPONSIBILITIES	Approved provider and persons with management or control	Nominated supervisor and persons in day-to-day charge	Early childhood teacher, educators and all other staff	Parents/guardians	Contractors, volunteers and students
R indicates legislation requirement, and should not be deleted					
Implementing and reviewing this policy in consultation with parents/guardians, the Nominated Supervisor and staff, and in line with the requirements of DET’s Free Kindergarten initiative <i>(refer to Definitions)</i>	R	Y	Y	Y	
Reimbursing families in full for enrolment deposits made upon acceptance of enrolment	R	Y			
Ensuring families are not charged any compulsory fees or levies (voluntary fundraising and donations are permitted)	R	Y			
Ensuring families are only charged for kindergarten program hours that are over and above the 15 funded hours per week (600 hours per year) and/or extended care <i>(refer to Definitions)</i>	R	Y			
Ensuring any non-funded positions are enrolled in accordance with the Funding Guidelines <i>(refer to Sources)</i>	R	√			
Ensuring families that attend both sessional kindergarten and a long day care service nominate and document which service will receive the child’s kindergarten program funding	R	Y		Y	
Ensuring that any surplus funding is used for directly supporting the quality of the teaching and learning in the kindergarten program and/or attendance at the service, including vulnerable children and families not yet enrolled and/or towards the change management required for preparing for three-year-old expansion	R	Y			
Ensuring any voluntary parent payments/donations are explicitly agreed to in writing and receipted	R	Y			
Only charging families for occasional special events/excursions	R	Y	Y		
Ensuring that any child that is eligible for Early Start Kindergarten is still enrolled at the service and recorded on the KIM system	R	Y	Y		
Collecting all relevant information regarding those with entitlement to concessions and recording it on the KIM system	R	Y	Y		
Ensuring that this Fees Policy is readily accessible at the service <i>(Regulation 171)</i>	R	Y			
Providing all parents/guardians with information about Free Kindergarten <i>(refer to Attachment 1)</i>	R	Y			

Providing all parents/guardians with access to this policy which outlines all fees and charges including those relating to the extended care program (<i>refer to Attachments</i>), upon enrolment of their child	R	Y			
Ensuring all parents/guardians acknowledge and agree to the terms and conditions outlined in this policy, via EnrolNow	R	Y			
Reading Warrandyte Kindergarten Fees Policy				Y	
Acknowledge and agree to the terms and conditions outlined in this policy, via EnrolNow				Y	
Notifying the approved provider if experiencing difficulties with the payment of additional hours fees				Y	
Providing agreement in writing if any additional payments (including donations) are made to Warrandyte Kindergarten				Y	
Complying with the service's <i>Privacy and Confidentiality Policy</i> regarding financial and other information received, including in relation to the payment/non-payment of extended care fees	R	Y	Y	Y	
Notifying parents/guardians a minimum of 14 days of any proposed changes to fees charged, or the way in which the fees are collected (<i>Regulation 172(2)</i>), ideally providing one term's notice	R	Y			
Implementing and reviewing this policy, in consultation with parents/guardians, the approved provider and staff, and in line with the requirements of DET's Free Kindergarten initiative (<i>refer to Sources</i>)	R	Y	Y	Y	
Informing the approved provider of any complaints or concerns that have been raised regarding fees at the service		Y	Y		
Referring parents'/guardians' questions in relation to this policy to the approved provider.		Y	Y		

BACKGROUND AND LEGISLATION



BACKGROUND

The Best Start, Best Life reform will help all Victorian children dream even bigger through increased access to quality early childhood education and care. A critical part of the reform is Free Kinder, which will support access to two years of high-quality kindergarten programs for all Victorian children. All families with a child enrolled in a funded kindergarten program are eligible for Free Kindergarten, this includes both 3 and 4-year-old kindergarten programs.

Free Kinder supports families to access a funded kindergarten program by:

- providing a free 15-hour program to four-year-old children enrolled at a sessional service
- providing a free 5-to-15-hour program to three-year-old children enrolled at a sessional service (subject to the length of funded program offered)
- offsetting the funded kindergarten program component of parent fees for three- and four-year-old children enrolled at a long day care service

Free kinder supports every Victorian child to get the best start in life no matter where they live. Research shows that play-based learning is a powerful way to support children's learning and development. Two years of early learning is a crucial part of their educational journey, these benefits last into the school years and beyond.

Regulation 168(2) (n) of the Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011 requires that funded services have a comprehensive written fees policy and the content of this policy must be communicated to families. Any voluntary parent donations and/or fundraising must comply with the Free Kindergarten subsidy guidelines and be responsive to the local community.

LEGISLATION AND STANDARDS

Relevant legislation and standards include but are not limited to:

- Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities 2006 (Vic)
- Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)
- Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)
- Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010
- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011: Regulation 168(2)(n)
- Equal Opportunity Act 1995 (Vic)
- National Quality Standard

The most current amendments to listed legislation can be found at:

Victorian Legislation – Victorian Law Today: www.legislation.vic.gov.au

Commonwealth Legislation – Federal Register of Legislation: www.legislation.gov.au



DEFINITIONS

The terms defined in this section relate specifically to this policy. For regularly used terms e.g. approved provider, nominated supervisor, notifiable complaints, serious incidents, duty of care, etc. refer to the Definitions file of the PolicyWorks catalogue.

Approved child care: Approved child care services are services that have Australian Government approval to receive the Child Care Subsidy (*refer to Definitions*) on behalf of eligible parents. Approved child care includes centre-based day care, including long day care and occasional care, family day care, outside school hours care and in-home care. Warrandyte Kindergarten is not an approved child care provider.

Child care subsidy (CCS): A Commonwealth Government means tested subsidy to assist eligible families with the cost of child care. Payments are paid directly to approved child care providers. Further information can be found at: www.education.gov.au/child-care-subsidy. Families attending Warrandyte Kindergarten are not eligible for the child care subsidy.

Early start kindergarten: A funding program that enables three-year-old Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, and children known to Child Protection to attend a kindergarten program that is planned and delivered by an early childhood teacher for up to 15 hours per week. Details are available at: www.education.vic.gov.au. Children that are eligible for Early Start Kindergarten (ESK) will continue to be enrolled, this ensure that service providers receive all funding entitlements and that these children have access to 15 funded hours of kindergarten across Victoria. ESK enrolments contribute to School Readiness Funding (SRF) calculations for service providers. It also allows the Department to continue to monitor efforts to engage the most vulnerable children in kindergarten across Victoria and provide additional targeted support where required through SRF or Early Childhood LOOKOUT.

Enrolment application fee: A payment to cover administrative costs associated with the processing of a child's enrolment application for a place in a program at the service. This payment is made via EnrolNow when completing a Registration Form and will not be refunded as it is not part of the Free Kindergarten subsidy and is not related to the fees charged for delivery of the kindergarten program.

Enrolment deposit: A charge to secure a place that has been offered in a program at the service. This should not act as a barrier to enrolling for any families. Warrandyte Kindergarten will reimburse families in full for any deposit or fee payments that have already been made, excluding any voluntary

parent donations/payments that are agreed to in writing. Enrolment deposits will only be refunded if the child commences in the service.

Excursion/service event charge: An additional charge required to meet the cost of special events or excursions that occur in response to emerging children's program needs. Events that are planned ahead and are included as an expenditure item in the service's budget do not incur this additional charge (*refer to Excursions and Service Events Policy*)

Extended care: A program that is provided by Warrandyte Kindergarten to children outside of their three-year-old or four-year-old kindergarten program

Fees: A charge for program hours over and above the 15 funded hours per week (600 per year) and/or extended care.

Free Kindergarten: A Victorian Government initiative providing free kindergarten programs for three-year-old and four-year-old children in funded services

Health care card: A Commonwealth Government entitlement providing concessions for low-income earners and other eligible people. Details are available at: www.servicesaustralia.gov.au

Voluntary payment/donation: A voluntary payment/donation for items not directly related to the provision of the children's program. Explicit and written agreement from the person making the voluntary payment/donation is required for any voluntary payments. Attendance at the service is not conditional on this payment.

SOURCES AND RELATED POLICIES



SOURCES

- Best Star Best Life: <https://www.vic.gov.au/give-your-child-the-best-start-in-life>
- The Kindergarten Funding Guide (Department of Education and Training): www.education.vic.gov.au
- The constitution of [Service Name]

RELATED POLICIES

- Compliments and Complaints
- Delivery and Collection of Children
- Enrolment and Orientation
- Excursions and Service Events
- Governance and Management of the Service
- Inclusion and Equity
- Privacy and Confidentiality

EVALUATION



In order to assess whether the values and purposes of the policy have been achieved, the approved provider will:

- regularly seek feedback from everyone affected by the policy regarding its effectiveness, particularly in relation to affordability, flexibility of payment options and procedures for the collection of fees
- monitor the implementation, compliance, complaints and incidents in relation to this policy
- keep the policy up to date with current legislation and government policy, research, policy and best practice
- revise the policy and procedures as part of the service's policy review cycle, or as required

- notifying all stakeholders affected by this policy at least 14 days before making any significant changes to this policy or its procedures, unless a lesser period is necessary due to risk ([Regulation 172 \(2\)](#)).



ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1: Free Kindergarten information for families
- Attachment 2: Statement of extended care fees
- Attachment 3: Extended care fee payment agreement



AUTHORISATION

This policy was adopted by the approved provider of Warrandyte Kindergarten in September 2022.

REVIEW DATE: September 2023

ATTACHMENT 1. FREE KINDERGARTEN INFORMATION FOR FAMILIES

Warrandyte Kindergarten 2023

1. General information

Kindergarten programs for four-year-old and eligible three-year-old children in Victorian Government funded services will be free as part of the Best Start, Best Life reform.

This investment will save families up to \$2,500 for each child enrolled in a participating funded kindergarten program.

The Department of Education and Training (DET) also provides funding to assist eligible three-year-old Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, and children known to Child Protection, to access kindergarten programs.

2. What free kindergarten means at our service

Warrandyte Kindergarten has opted into the Free Kindergarten initiative. Applicable parent fees are outlined below:

- Funded sessional kindergarten for 3-year-old children (10 hours per week) – no parent fee
- Funded sessional kindergarten for 4-year-old children (15 hours per week) - no parent fee

Warrandyte Kindergarten will reimburse families in full for any deposit or fee payments that have already been made, excluding any voluntary parent donations/payments that are agreed to in writing.

If a child also attends a long day care service or other sessional kindergarten, families must nominate in writing which service will receive the government's kindergarten funding. This nomination will occur via Warrandyte Kindergarten's EnrolNow system. If Warrandyte Kindergarten is not the nominated service, families will be required to pay the forgone government funding to Warrandyte Kindergarten. This would include the \$2,500 per annum Free Kinder funding as well as existing kindergarten funding received from the Department of Education.

3. Other charges

Other charges levied by Warrandyte Kindergarten are:

Excursion/service event charge: At times throughout the year an additional excursion(s) or event(s) may be arranged where it is considered relevant to the service's program and the children's interests. Additional costs to families are taken into consideration before deciding whether to implement an excursion or service event charge. (*refer to Excursions and Service Events Policy*).

Late collection charge: The Committee of Management reserves the right to implement a late collection charge when parents/guardians are frequently late in collecting a child from the service. This late collection charge will be \$1.00 for every minute that the parent/guardian is late in collecting their child (i.e. for every minute after the session has ended).

Late payment fee: If extended care fees are not paid following a number of steps taken by the service to recover the fees, a late payment fee of \$25 will be charged.

4. Extended care fees

Warrandyte Kindergarten offers families the option of enrolling their child/ren in extended care sessions. The fee for extended care is applicable to all families enrolling in these sessions. The Free Kinder initiative does not apply to extended care. In addition, families eligible for a concession are required to pay full extended care fees.

5. Fundraising and voluntary donations

While participation in fundraising and making donation is voluntary, the support of every family is encouraged. Fundraising activities are also an opportunity for families and communities to come together.

6. Payment of fees for extended care

The Committee of Management will regularly review payment options and procedures to ensure that they are inclusive and sensitive to families' cultural and financial situations.

Extended care fees will be invoiced to parents/guardians directly and must be paid by the date indicated on the invoice. Each invoice will be accompanied by payment instructions. The first term's fees must be received in full prior to the child

commencing at the service. For children enrolled after the commencement of a term, a pro rata invoice will be issued and must be paid in full within 14 days of the child's commencement at the service. Receipts will be provided for fee payments, upon request.

Payment for casual extended care sessions will be made via the Warrandyte Kindergarten website at the time of booking the session.

Parents/guardians experiencing difficulty in paying fees are requested to contact the bookkeeper to arrange a suitable alternative payment plan. The bookkeeper's contact details will appear on the invoice. The [Privacy and Confidentiality Policy](#) of the service will be complied with at all times in relation to a family's financial and/or personal circumstances.

7. Unpaid fees

If extended care fees are not paid by the due date, the following steps will be taken:

- an initial reminder letter will be sent to parents/guardians with a specified payment date and will include information on a range of support options available for the family. This letter will also advise that a late payment fee of \$25 will be incurred.
- where payment is still not received, the bookkeeper will attempt to contact families by phone or text and establish when payment will be made or recommend a payment plan and remind that a late payment fee of \$25 will be incurred.
- continued non-payment will result in a final letter notifying parents/guardians that unless payment is made or a payment plan is entered into within a specified period of time Committee will be advised to engage a debt collector.
- in the event of the family being in default of their obligation to pay, and the overdue account then being referred to a debt collector agency (or a law firm) for collection, the recovery costs and agency charges will be passed on to the family in full.

A family with outstanding extended care fees in 2023 will not be able to enrol their child/ren at Warrandyte Kindergarten in any program in subsequent years if these fees remain unpaid or have not been formally waived by the Committee of Management.

8. Refund of fees

The enrolment deposit ([refer to Definitions](#)) will be fully refunded to families only when the child commences at the service.

Enrolment application fees ([refer to Definitions](#)) paid via EnrolNow when completing a Registration Form will not be refunded as it is not part of the Free Kindergarten subsidy and is not related to the fees charged for delivery of the kindergarten program.

All other fees are non-refundable, including all extended care fees. Exceptional circumstances may apply and these will be considered by the Committee of Management. A family wishing to request a refund of fees must put their request in writing. There will be no refund of fees in the following circumstances:

- a family choosing not to send their child to the program for the maximum number of hours for which they are enrolled
- a child's short-term illness
- public holidays
- family holiday during operational times
- closure of the service for one or more days when a qualified educator is absent and a qualified reliever is not available
- closure of the service for staff training/professional development days
- closure of the service for child free days as per the Victorian and Early Childhood Teachers and Educators Agreement 2020
- closure of the service due to extreme and unavoidable circumstances, including days of catastrophic bushfire risk and Total Fire Ban days.

9. Support services

Families experiencing financial hardship often require access to family support services. Information on these services may be available from the kindergarten service provider or alternatively families may contact the local council.

10. Notification of fee changes during the year

Fees set for the year would only be reviewed in extraordinary circumstances, for example, if attendance rates fall below the budget 'break even' point. Parents/guardians will be notified 14 days in advance of any required fee increase and will be offered the option to request a payment plan.

ATTACHMENT 2. STATEMENT OF EXTENDED CARE FEES - 2023

Warrandyte Kindergarten

Extended care is an optional program that is only available to families enrolled at Warrandyte Kindergarten. Families can book a whole term and pay upon receipt of an invoice or they can book a casual session via the Warrandyte Kindergarten website and pay at the time of booking.

Extended Care fee schedule – per term

Hours: 3.5 hours per session

	Extended Care (per term)
1 st Session	\$380
2 nd Session	\$380
3 rd Session	\$300
4 th Session	\$300

Casual Extended Care fee schedule – per session

	Extended Care (per session)
Session	\$50

Payment of fees

Invoices for per term extended care fees will be issued by the bookkeeper once a term and must be paid by the due date.

Term	Invoice Issue Date	Due Date
Term 1	Before 14 November 2022	30 November 2022
Term 2	31 March 2023	28 April 2023
Term 3	16 June 2023	14 July 2023
Term 4	8 September 2023	6 October 2023

Payment can be made by Electronic Funds Transfer directly into the kindergarten's bank account as follows:

Bank: Bendigo Bank
Account Name: Warrandyte & Dist Pre-school Ass Inc
Account Number: 121 118 061
BSB: 633 000
Reference: Your child's first and last name.

Payment for casual extended care sessions must be made at the time of completing the online booking form on the Warrandyte Kindergarten website.

Late collection charge

The Committee of Management reserves the right to implement a late collection charge when parents/guardians are frequently late in collecting a child from the service. This late collection charge will be \$1.00 for every minute that the parent/guardian is late in collecting their child (i.e. for every minute after the session has ended).

ATTACHMENT 3. EXTENDED CARE FEE PAYMENT AGREEMENT - 2023

Fee payment contract

By acknowledging and agreeing to the conditions outlined in the Warrandyte Kindergarten Fees Policy via EnrolNow you will be agreeing to the following:

- I/we acknowledge that the three-year-old program offering 10 hours per week is fully funded by the State Government.
- I/we acknowledge that the four-year-old program offering 15 hours per week (600 hours per year) is fully funded by the State Government.
- I/we acknowledge that funding for the optional extended care program comes from fees paid by parents/guardians.
- I/we agree to pay any extended care fees by the due date on the invoice if enrolling for a term.
- I/we agree to pay extended care fees at the time of the online booking if enrolling for a casual session.
- I/we understand that fees for the extended care program are non-refundable (except at the discretion of the Committee of Management).
- I/we acknowledge that if fees for extended care are not paid by the due date, the Committee of Management will implement the late payment of fees procedures, as outlined in the Free Kindergarten Fee Information for Families, which could result in the withdrawal of my/our child's place at the service and no further enrolments until the outstanding fees are paid.
- I/we agree that if my/our financial circumstances change and I/we am/are unable to pay as agreed, I/we will immediately notify the bookkeeper to discuss alternative payment options.
- I/we acknowledge that I/we have received and read the service's Fees Policy for 2023, which outlines the procedure for payment of fees.

Note: Invoices, receipts and collection of fees will be in accordance with the Warrandyte Kindergarten Fees Policy for 2023.