

FREE KINDERGARTEN FEES

QUALITY AREA 7 | Donvale Preschool version 1.1



PURPOSE

This policy will provide clear guidelines for:

- How Donvale Preschool complies with the free kinder initiative.
- the application of surplus funding within Donvale Preschool ensuring it is only used to ensure the quality of program delivery and development of children enrolled in the service



POLICY STATEMENT

VALUES

Donvale Preschool 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 Donvale Preschool.

RESPONSIBILITIES	Committee of Management	Nominated supervisor and persons in day-to-day charge	Early childhood teacher, educators and all other staff	Parents/guardians	Contractors, volunteers and students
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	√	√	√	√	
Reimbursing families in full for enrolment deposits that have already been paid upon acceptance of enrolment – Less any voluntary contributions and Excursion/Events Charge	√	√			
Ensuring that families are informed of the operating hours including term dates, planned closures and additional hours to account for closures.	√	√			
Ensuring families are informed of the total annual fee amount, including any applicable fees for e.g., excursions and any additional hours	√	√			
Ensuring families are not charged any compulsory out-of-pocket levies or maintenance fees (voluntary fundraising and payments/donations are permitted)	√	√			
Ensuring families are only charged for optional kindergarten programs hours that are over and above the 15 funded hours per week (600 hours per year) and/or "wrap around" care	√	√			
Ensuring any non-funded positions are enrolled in accordance with the Kindergarten Funding Guidelines	√	√			
Ensuring families that attend both sessional kindergarten and a long day care service nominate and document which service the child will participate in the funded kindergarten program	√	√		√	
Ensuring that any surplus funding is used in line with acceptable uses of kindergarten funding, including to promote increased participation and / or enhance program quality.	√	√			
Ensuring any voluntary parent payments/donations are explicitly agreed to in writing and receipted	√	√			
Charging families only for an occasional special event/ excursions that occur outside the normal program/curriculum	√	√	√		
Charging families a late pick up fee when they collected their children late from kinder	√	√	√		
Paying the late collection fee when a child is collected late from kinder within 14 days of invoice				√	

Ensuring that any child that is eligible for Early Start Kindergarten is still enrolled at the service and recorded on the KIM system	√	√	√		
Collecting all relevant information regarding those with entitlement to concessions and recording it on the KIM system	√	√	√		
Ensuring that the Free Kindergarten Fee Policy is readily accessible at the service (<i>Regulation 171</i>)	√	√			
Providing all parents/guardians with information about Free Kindergarten	√	√			
Reading the Donvale Preschool Free Kindergarten information for families.				√	
Providing agreement in writing if any additional payments are made to the Donvale Preschool				√	
Complying with the service's <i>Privacy and Confidentiality Policy</i> regarding financial and other information received.	√	√	√	√	
Notifying parents/guardians a minimum of 14 days of any proposed changes to the additional hour's fees charged, or the way in which the fees are collected (<i>Regulation 172(2)</i>), ideally providing one term's notice.	√	√			
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.	√	√	√	√	
Informing the approved provider of any complaints or concerns that have been raised regarding fees at the service		√	√		
Referring parents'/guardians' questions in relation to this policy to the approved provider.		√	√		

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 Kindergarten, 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 Kindergarten 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 kindergarten 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

Approved child care: Approved child care services are services that have Australian Government approval to receive the Child Care Subsidy 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.

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

Early Start Kindergarten (ESK): A funding program that provides eligible children 15 hours of free or low-cost kindergarten program each week for two years before starting school. To be eligible a child must be 3 by 30 April in the year they start kindergarten and be from a refugee or asylum seeker background, or identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, or the family has had contact with child protection. Details are available at: www.vic.gov.au/early-start-kindergarten If a child is eligible for ESK, they should be enrolled in ESK, even where Free Kinder and/or 15 hours per week of funded three-year old kindergarten is offered. This ensures eligible children have priority access to 15 hours of funded kindergarten provided by an early childhood teacher and that service providers receive additional funding and support. 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 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.

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. Families are charged this as part of the enrolment deposit.

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

Free Kinder: A Victorian Government Best Start, Best Life initiative providing Free Kinder programs for four-year-old and three-year-old children in funded services, that have opted into the initiative.

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

- providing a free 15-hour program to 4-year-old children enrolled at a sessional service
- providing a free 5 to 15-hour program to 3-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 3 and 4-year-old children enrolled at a long day care service.

Funded Kindergarten: The Victorian Government provides funding to support children to access a high-quality kindergarten program in the two years before they start school. The funding is a contribution towards meeting the cost of the kindergarten program. Funded kindergartens charge fees to help meet the cost of running kindergarten programs. Fees are set by individual kindergartens and depend on things like how many hours children attend and whether there are extra costs such as excursions.

Late Collection Charge: A fee that may be imposed by the Committee of Management when parents/guardians are late to collect their child/children from the program.

Pre-Prep: Four-Year-Old Kindergarten will gradually transition to Pre-Prep over the next decade from 2025. Funded kindergarten hours will double from 15 to up to 30 hours a week. Pre-Prep will be delivered through sessional kindergartens and long-day-care centres. By 2032, children across Victoria will have access to 1,800 hours of funded kindergarten before school, comprising 600 hours of Three-Year-Old Kindergarten and 1,200 hours of Pre-Prep.

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

Waitlist fee: A fee for when families register their child directly with a service. This fee will not be refunded as it is not part of the Free Kindergarten subsidy, and not related to the fee charged for delivery of the kindergarten program.

Wrap around care: care that is provided by a kindergarten service to kindergarten children outside of the 15 hours per week program. Wrap around care fees are not funded by the Victorian Government



SOURCES

- Best Start Best Life: <https://www.vic.gov.au/give-your-child-the-best-start-in-life>
- The Kindergarten Funding Guide (Department of Education): www.vic.gov.au/kindergarten-funding-guide
- Resources for Funded Kindergartens: www.vic.gov.au/kindergarten-funding-guide
- The constitution of Donvale Preschool Association.



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: Late Collection of Children
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AUTHORISATION

This policy was reviewed by the Committee of Management of Donvale Preschool on 4th September 2023

FREE KINDERGARTEN INFORMATION FOR FAMILIES IN 2024

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.

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

Donvale Preschool has opted in to the Free Kindergarten initiative. Applicable parent fees are outlined below:

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

Donvale Preschool will reimburse families in full for any kindergarten fee deposit) payments that have already been made upon acceptance of enrolment, excluding excursion & events charges any voluntary parent donations/payments that you agree to in writing.

3. Other charges

Other charges levied by Donvale Preschool are included.

These include:

- **Excursion/service event charge:** At times throughout the year additional excursion(s) or event(s) may be arranged where it is considered relevant to the service's program and the children's interests. To cover these costs an Excursion / Service event charge has been set at \$100 per year. This will be paid as your enrolment deposit and is non-refundable.
- **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 charge will be set at a level determined by the Committee of Management. In 2023 the charge will be \$20 for the first 10 minutes (or part thereof) after the session ends and then \$2 a minute thereafter. *(refer to Delivery and Collection of Children policy)*

4. Fundraising and voluntary parent payment/donations

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

5. Refunds & non-refundable payments

The enrolment deposit of 100 will be retained to cover the Excursion/Service event charge for the kinder year. This is a non-refundable deposit.

Non-refundable waitlist fees paid by families when they enter our waitlist will be retained.

6. 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.



ATTACHMENT 2. NOTIFICATION FORM FOR LATE COLLECTION OF CHILDREN

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. A late collection fee may be applied when the parent/guardian is over 15 minutes late in collecting their child. In 2023 the fee will be \$20.00 for the first 10 minutes (or part thereof) after the session ends and then \$2 per minute thereafter.

Notification form

To be used as a follow-up to a verbal/email notification when the parent/guardian is next at the kinder.

I _____ (parent name) have been advised by
_____ (Staff member name) of the details of Donvale
Preschools Late Collection Policy and charges. I have been provided with copies of both these policies.

I understand that if I am late to collect my child from Donvale Preschool in the future I will be invoiced for the late collection as per the schedule listed above. Any invoices must be paid in full within 14 days for my child to continue attending Donvale Preschool.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone number: _____

I understand that my child must be collected by the following times on the following days of the week;

Signed: _____ (Parent/guardian or authorised nominee)

Date: _____

Staff name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Please provide a copy of this signed document to the family and Nominated Supervisor.