

OLYMPIC AVENUE KINDERGARTEN FEES POLICY 2023 “FREE KINDER”

QUALITY AREA 7 | ELAA version 1.0



PURPOSE

This policy will provide clear guidelines for:

- free kindergarten funding for funded sessional kindergarten programs
- the application of surplus funding within Olympic Avenue Kindergarten ensuring it is only used to ensure the quality of program delivery and development of children enrolled in the service
- the setting, payment and collection of additional hours and extended care fees



POLICY STATEMENT

VALUES

Olympic Avenue 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 Olympic Avenue 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 | √ | √ | √ | |
| Reimbursing families in full for enrolment deposits that have already been paid upon acceptance of enrolment | R | √ | | | |

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| Ensuring families are not charged any compulsory out-of-pocket levies or maintenance fees (voluntary fundraising and payments/donations are permitted) | R | √ | | | |
| 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 (<i>refer to Definitions</i>) | R | √ | | | |
| 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 | R | √ | | √ | |
| 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 | √ | | | |
| Ensuring any voluntary parent payments/donations are explicitly agreed to in writing and receipted | R | √ | | | |
| Charging families only for an occasional special event/ excursions that occur outside the normal program/curriculum | R | √ | √ | | |
| Ensuring that any child that is eligible for Early Start Kindergarten is still enrolled at the service and recorded on the KIM system | R | √ | √ | | |
| Collecting all relevant information regarding those with entitlement to concessions and recording it on the KIM system | R | √ | √ | | |
| Ensuring that the Free Kindergarten Fee Policy is readily accessible at the service (<i>Regulation 171</i>) | R | √ | | | |
| Providing all parents/guardians with information about Free Kindergarten (<i>refer to Attachment 1</i>) | R | √ | | | |
| Providing all parents/guardians with a statement of additional hours fees and charges (<i>refer to Attachments 2</i>) upon enrolment of their child, if applicable | R | √ | | | |
| Providing all parents/guardians with an additional payment fee agreement (<i>refer to Attachments 3</i>), if applicable | R | √ | | | |
| Reading the Olympic Avenue Kindergarten Free Kindergarten information for families (<i>refer to Attachment 1</i>), the Statement of Additional Hours Fees and Charges (<i>refer to Attachments 2</i>), and the Additional Hours Fee Payment Agreement (<i>refer to Attachments 3</i>) | | | | | √ |
| Signing and complying with the Additional Hours Fee Payment Agreement (<i>refer to Attachments 3</i>), if applicable | | | | | √ |
| Notifying the approved provider if experiencing difficulties with the payment of additional hours fees | | | | | √ |
| Providing agreement in writing if any additional payments are made to the Olympic Avenue Kindergarten | | | | | √ |

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|--|---|---|---|---|--|
| 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 additional hours fees | R | √ | √ | √ | |
| Notifying parents/guardians a minimum of 14 days of any proposed changes to the additional hours fees charged, or the way in which the fees are collected (<i>Regulation 172(2)</i>), ideally providing one term's notice. | R | √ | | | |
| 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 | √ | √ | √ | |
| 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)

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

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.

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.

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*)

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

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

Enrolment fee: 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. Services must ensure that families understand that the enrolment deposits will only be refunded if the child commences in the service.

Voluntary parent/guardian payment/donation: A voluntary payment/donation 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.

Wrap around care (also called Extended care): care that is provided by a kindergarten service to kindergarten children outside of the 15 hours per week program.

SOURCES AND RELATED POLICIES



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 and Training): www.education.vic.gov.au
- Resources for Funded Kindergartens: <https://www.education.vic.gov.au>
- The constitution of Olympic Avenue Kindergarten

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 additional hours
- Attachment 3: Statement of extended care hours
- Attachment 4: Additional hours and/or extended care fee payment agreement

AUTHORISATION

This policy was adopted by the approved provider of Olympic Avenue Kindergarten on 11TH October 2022.

REVIEW DATE: OCTOBER 2023

ATTACHMENT 1. FREE KINDERGARTEN INFORMATION FOR FAMILIES

Olympic Avenue 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.

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

Olympic Avenue Kindergarten 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 program) - no parent fee
- Funded sessional kindergarten for 4-year-old children (15 hours per week program) - no parent fee
- Funded sessional kindergarten for 3-year-old children (16.5 hours per week program) - parent fee
- Funded sessional kindergarten for 4-year-old children (16.5 hours per week program) - parent fee
- Extended care session for 3 & 4-year-old children - parent fee

Olympic Avenue Kindergarten will reimburse families in full for any kindergarten enrolment fee (*refer to Definitions*) enrolment fee payments that have already been made upon **commencement** at the service, excluding any voluntary parent donations/payments that you agree to in writing. There will be no refund of the enrolment fee if parents withdraw prior to the start of Term 1 2023.

3. Other charges

Other charges levied by Olympic Avenue Kindergarten are included on the Statement of Fees and Charges, that will be provided to families upon enrolment.

These include:

- **Excursion/service event charge (outside of the 15 hours per week program):** 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. At this time any additional costs to families are taken into consideration before a decision is made (*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 charge will be set at a level determined by the Committee of Management and is currently \$50 per fifteen minutes.
- **Additional hours and/or extended care fees**

Olympic Avenue Kindergarten offers families 3 hours above the set 15 hours per week (600 hours per year) in a 3-year-old group and a 4-year-old group. The additional hours fee is determined by the hourly program rate based on the scheduled 2023 fee. If parents that are enrolled in the 16.5 hour per week group do not want to pay a fee, they will be advised of the times of the 15 "core hours" that they will be able to attend. If parents deliver their child to the service prior to the commencement of the core hours, they will be charged the term fee for the entire term.

Olympic Avenue Kindergarten also offers extended care outside of the sessional kindergarten program. This fee is applicable to all families that require care after the kindergarten session.

- **Late payment Fee:** A \$10 per week late charge that will be imposed by the Approved Provider when fees are not paid by the due date, unless prior arrangement has been made with the Compliance Officer or Treasurer.

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. Payment of fees for extended hours and extended care

Fees are payable for hours over and above 15 hours per week (600 hours per year) and/or extended care.

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

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. Each term's fees must be received in full prior to the child commencing the next term. 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 only be provided for fee payments on request. Extended care fees must also be paid prior to the commencement of each term in order for the child to commence the next term.

Parents/guardians experiencing difficulty in paying fees are requested to contact the Compliance Officer or Treasurer prior to the due date to arrange a suitable alternative payment plan. The *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy* of the service will be complied with at all times in relation to a family's financial/personal circumstances.

6. Unpaid fees for extended hours and extended care

If fees are not paid by the due date, the following steps will be taken.

Extended hours groups

- An initial reminder email will be sent to parents/guardians with a specified payment date.
- Where payment is still not received, families will be advised that in order to attend the next term, payment needs to be made in full, or a payment plan requested. If a payment plan is requested, a payment plan will be created for the family containing weekly instalments.
- Failure to make contact with the Compliance Officer/Treasurer to discuss the payment plan, or failure to adhere to the payment schedule in the payment plan may result in an email notifying parents/guardians that the child's place at the service may be withdrawn unless payment is made or a payment plan adhered to within a specified period of time. This letter will also include information on a range of support options available for the family.
- The approved provider/Committee of Management will continue to offer support and will reserve the right to employ the services of a debt collector.
- If a decision is made to withdraw the child's place at the service, the parents/guardians will be provided with 14 days' notice in writing.
- No further enrolments of children from the parents/guardians will be accepted until all outstanding fees have been paid.

Extended care groups

As per Extended hours groups above. Children will not be able to commence extended care each term if their extended care fees are unpaid

7. Refund of fees

The enrolment fee (*refer to Definitions*) will be fully refunded to families only when the child commences at the service.

In any other case, additional hours are non-refundable (exceptional circumstances may apply – these are at the discretion of the Committee of Management. There will be no refund of these fees in the following circumstances:

- 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 days
- closure of the service due to extreme and unavoidable circumstances.

In addition, there will be no refund where a family chooses not to send their child to the program for the maximum number of hours for which they are enrolled.

8. 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.

9. 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 one term in advance of any required fee increase and will be offered the option to request a payment plan.

ATTACHMENT 2. STATEMENT OF ADDITIONAL HOURS (16.5 HOUR PER WEEK PROGRAM)

Fee schedule 2023

Funded sessional kindergarten for three/four-year-olds – 16.5 hour program

Hours: 16.5 hours per week

| | Additional Hours | Total (\$) |
|--------|------------------|------------|
| Term 1 | 165.00 | 165.00 |
| Term 2 | 165.00 | 165.00 |
| Term 3 | 165.00 | 165.00 |
| Term 4 | 165.00 | 165.00 |
| Total | 660.00 | 660.00 |

Payment of fees

Invoices will be issued via email, and each invoice will be due prior to the start of the upcoming term. Fees must be paid by the due date in order for the child to commence the term, unless prior arrangement has been made.

Late collection charge

The approved provider/Committee of Management reserves the right to implement a late collection charge when parents/guardians are frequently late in collecting a child (*refer to Free Kindergarten Information for Families*).

This charge will be set at a level determined by the Committee of Management and is currently \$50 per fifteen minutes.

Late payment Fee

A \$10 per week late charge that will be imposed by the Approved Provider when fees are not paid by the due date, unless prior arrangement has been made with the Compliance Officer or Treasurer.

ATTACHMENT 3. STATEMENT OF ADDITIONAL HOURS (EXTENDED CARE)

Fee schedule 2023

Extended care for three/four-year-olds

Hours: Optional 3 hour extended care program on a Monday/Tuesday/Thursday

If enrolling in Monday extended care, cost will be \$1280 for the year

If enrolling in Tuesday extended care, cost will be \$1280 for the year

If enrolling in Thursday extended care, cost will be \$1280 for the year

| | Extended care Deposit | Extended care cost per term (for each session) | Total (\$) |
|--------|-----------------------|--|------------|
| Term 1 | 100.00 | 320.00 | 320.00 |
| Term 2 | | 320.00 | 320.00 |
| Term 3 | | 320.00 | 320.00 |
| Term 4 | | 320.00 | 320.00 |
| Total | 100.00 | 1280.00 | 1280.00 |

Payment of fees

Invoices will be issued via email, and each invoice will be due prior to the start of the upcoming term. Fees must be paid by the due date in order for the child to commence the term, unless prior arrangement has been made.

Extended care booking form

If you want to join extended care during the year, please email officeolympicave@gmail.com so that the “extended care booking form” can be completed and the deposit paid. You will be contacted within 2 business days to be advised whether there are spaces available.

Extended care deposit

This is payable on application for an extended care place. Note only one deposit is payable even if multiple days are selected. Once your application is confirmed your child will be booked in for the 4 terms. The deposit will be deducted from the term 4 extended Care fee invoice. It will not be refunded if you withdraw your child from extended care during the year. Your deposit will be returned to you if the program is oversubscribed.

Late collection charge

The approved provider/Committee of Management reserves the right to implement a late collection charge when parents/guardians are frequently late in collecting a child (*refer to Free Kindergarten Information for Families*).

This charge will be set at a level determined by the Committee of Management and is currently \$50 per fifteen minutes.

Late payment Fee

A \$10 per week late charge that will be imposed by the Approved Provider when fees are not paid by the due date, unless prior arrangement has been made with the Compliance Officer or Treasurer.

Casual Bookings

Refer to “Extended Care Procedures” document.

2023

Fee payment agreement

Child's full name:

Parent's/guardian's full name:

- I/we acknowledge that the three-year-old 15 hours per week (600 hours per year) funded kindergarten program is fully funded by the state government, with the balance of additional hours over and above and extended care coming from fees paid by parents/guardians.
- I/we acknowledge that the four-year-old 15 hours per week (600 hours per year) funded kindergarten program is fully funded by the state government, with the balance of additional hours over and above and extended care coming from fees paid by parents/guardians.
- I/we agree to pay any additional fees for services above the 600 hours, if applicable, and fees for extended care sessions by the due date on the invoice.
- I/We understand that if my family withdraws from the kindergarten (including extended care) we need to provide 4 weeks notice in writing to the child's Teacher and the Compliance Officer/Treasurer.
- I/we understand that fees for additional hours and for extended care are non-refundable. In the event of a withdrawal, if 4 weeks notice is provided and there is a child on the wait list at the time of the withdrawal that can immediately take over the spot, the fees may be refunded. Otherwise there will be no refund.
- I/we acknowledge that if fees for additional hours are not paid by the due date, the approved provider/Committee of Management will implement the late payment of fees procedures, as outlined in the Free Kindergarten 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 understand that my child cannot commence the term unless fees are paid or contact has been made with the Compliance Officer/Treasurer to arrange a payment plan.
- I/We understand that if I have chosen the 16.5 hour per week session and I don't want to pay fees, my child can only attend during the "core" 15 hours that the Approved Provider will specify.
- 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 Compliance Officer or Treasurer to discuss alternative payment options.
- I/we acknowledge that I/we have received and read the service's Free Kindergarten Information for Families, which outlines the procedure for payment of fees.

Signature (parent/guardian):

Date:

Note this form will be digitally acknowledged via enrolment forms (Enrol Now).