

FREE KINDER FEES

QUALITY AREA 7 | Greenbrook Kindergarten version 1.1



AUTHORISATION

This policy was adopted by the approved provider of Greenbrook Kindergarten on 28th August 2023

Late collection fee procedure and fine was amended by the approved provider of Greenbrook Kindergarten on 27th November 2023

REVIEW DATE: August 2024



PURPOSE

This policy will provide clear guidelines for:

- how services comply with the Free Kinder initiative.



POLICY STATEMENT

VALUES

Greenbrook Kindergarten is committed to:

- supporting the Victorian Government's Free Kinder 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 Greenbrook 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 DE's Free Kinder initiative (<i>refer to Definitions</i>)	R	√	√	√	
Reimbursing families in full for enrolment deposits that have already been paid upon acceptance of enrolment if applicable	R	√			
Ensuring that families are informed of the operating hours including term dates, planned closures and additional hours to account for closures.	R	√			
Ensuring families are not charged any compulsory out-of-pocket levies or maintenance fees (voluntary fundraising and payments/donations are permitted)	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	√			
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 Kinder Fee Policy is readily accessible at the service (<i>Regulation 171</i>)	R	√			
Providing all parents/guardians with information about Free Kinder (<i>refer to Attachment 1,2 & 3</i>)	R	√			
Reading the Greenbrook Kindergarten Free Kinder information for families (<i>refer to Attachment 1,2 & 3</i>)				√	
Complying with the service's <i>Privacy and Confidentiality Policy</i> regarding financial and other information received.	R	√	√	√	

Implementing and reviewing this policy, in consultation with parents/guardians, the approved provider and staff, and in line with the requirements of DE's Free Kinder 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 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 Kinder, 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)

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 Kinder 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.vic.gov.au/early-start-kindergarten 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 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 charge that may be imposed by the approved provider 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 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: 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 but may be covered by CCS (*refer to Definitions*).

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): www.vic.gov.au/kindergarten-funding-guide
- Resources for Funded Kindergartens: www.vic.gov.au/kindergarten-funding-guide
- The constitution of Greenbrook 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 Kinder information for families
 - Attachment 2: Statement of fees & charges
 - Attachment 3: Free Kinder & Late Collection Fee Agreement Form
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ATTACHMENT 1. FREE KINDER INFORMATION FOR FAMILIES

Greenbrook Kindergarten 2023 / 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.

DE 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 Kinder means at our service

Greenbrook Kindergarten has opted into the Free Kinder 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

Other charges levied by Greenbrook 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 late in collecting a child from the service. One formal warning will be given. Any subsequent late pick-ups will be charged at \$50 per 30 minutes. (i.e. 0-30 minutes \$50, 31-60 minutes \$100 and so on)

3. Fundraising and voluntary parent payment/donations

Participation in fundraising/donation is voluntary. The support of families is appreciated. Fundraising activities are also an opportunity for families and communities to come together.

ATTACHMENT 2. STATEMENT OF FEES AND CHARGES

Three- & Four-year-old Funded Kindergarten Statement of Fees & Charges

Greenbrook Kindergarten 2023 / 2024

Hours: 15 hours per week

	Fees (\$)	Other charges (\$)	Total (\$)	Families eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy		
				Fees (\$)	Other charges (\$)	Total (\$)
Kindergarten fee deposit	N/A	N/A	\$0	N/A	N/A	\$0
Term 1	Free Kinder	N/A	\$0	N/A	N/A	\$0
Term 2	Free Kinder	N/A	\$0	N/A	N/A	\$0
Term 3	Free Kinder	N/A	\$0	N/A	N/A	\$0
Term 4	Free Kinder	N/A	\$0	N/A	N/A	\$0
Total	\$0	N/A	\$0	N/A	N/A	\$0

Late collection charge

The Committee of Management as per the Delivery and Collection of Children Policy & Free Kinder Fee Policy, reserves the right to implement a late collection charge when parents/guardians are late in collecting a child. One formal warning will be given. Any subsequent late pick-ups will be charged at \$50 per 30 minutes. (i.e. 0-30 minutes \$50, 31-60 minutes \$100 and so on)

ATTACHMENT 3. FREE KINDER AND LATE COLLECTION FEE AGREEMENT FORM

Free Kinder and Late Collection Fee Agreement Form

Please complete this form and return to Greenbrook Kindergarten by

Fee Kinder and Late collection payment contract

Child's full name: _____

Parent's/guardian's full name: _____

- I/we acknowledge that the three-year-old and four-year-old kindergarten program is free in 2023 / 2024.
- I / we acknowledge that our child/ ren can only access free funded kindergarten in one program only at one service.
- I / we have signed and dated the Free Kinder Funding Acknowledgment form and will be only accessing free funded kindergarten at Greenbrook Kindergarten in 2023 / 2024
- I / we acknowledge that The Committee of Management as per the Delivery and Collection of Children Policy & Free Kinder Fee Policy, reserves the right to implement a late collection charge when parents/guardians are late in collecting their child.
- I understand the late collection policy and that one formal warning will be given. Any subsequent late pick-ups will be charged at \$50 per 30 minutes. (i.e. 0-30 minutes \$50, 31-60 minutes \$100 and so on)
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Please indicate if you or your child holds one of the following:

- a Commonwealth Health Care Card
- a Commonwealth Pensioner Concession Card
- a Department of Veterans Affairs Gold Card or White Card
- Refugee or Asylum Seeker visa (200-204, 786 or 866) or bridging visas for Refugee or Asylum Seeker visas

Please indicate below which concession you are eligible for as outlined in the criteria above.

Concession: _____

*Pls ensure that you provide a copy of your card to our administrator

Signature (parent/guardian): _____ Date: _____