FREE KINDER ENROLMENT POLICY - VIC

NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD (NQS)

QUALITY AREA 1: EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM AND PRACTICE		
1.1	Program	The educational program enhances each child's learning and development
QUALITY AREA 2: CHILDREN'S HEALTH AND SAFETY		
2.2.3	Child safety and protection	Management, educators and staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities regarding child safety, including the need to identify and respond to every child at risk of abuse or neglect
QUALITY AREA 6: COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS		
6.1	Supportive relationships with families	Respectful relationships with families are developed and maintained and families are supported in their parenting role.
6.1.1	Engagement with the service	Families are supported from enrolment to be involved in their service and contribute to service decisions.
6.1.2	Parent views are respected	The expertise, culture, values and beliefs of families are respected, and families share in decision-making about their child's learning and wellbeing.
6.1.3	Families are supported	Current information is available to families about the service and relevant community services and resources to support parenting and family wellbeing.
6.2	Collaborative partnerships	Collaborative partnerships enhance children's inclusion, learning and wellbeing.
6.2.3	Community and engagement	The service builds relationships and engages with its community.

EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES NATIONAL LAW AND NATIONAL REGULATIONS	
S. 2A	Paramount consideration—safety, rights and best interests of children
73	Educational program
74	Documenting of child assessments or evaluations for delivery of educational program
75	Information about educational program to be kept available
90	Medical conditions policy
92	Medication record
93	Administration of medication
97	Emergency and evacuation procedures

99	Children leaving the education and care service premises
160	Child enrolment records to be kept by approved provider and family day care educator
161	Authorisations to be kept in enrolment record
162	Health information to be kept in enrolment record
168	Education and care service must have policies and procedures
171	Policies and procedures to be kept available
172	Notification of change to policies or procedure
177	Prescribed enrolment and other documents to be kept by approved provider
181	Confidentiality of records kept by approved provider
183	Storage of records and other documents

RELATED LEGISLATION

Child Care Subsidy Secretary's Rules 2017	Family Law Act 1975
A New Tax System (Family Assistance) Act 1999	Working with Children Act 2005 (VIC)
Children, Youth and Families Act 2005	Children Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005
Disability Discrimination Act 1992	Public Health and Wellbeing Amendment (No Jab, No Play) Act 2015
Child Wellbeing and Safety Amendment (Child Safe Standards) Act 2015	Family Violence Protection Act 2008 (MARAM)
Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic)	Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)

RELATED POLICIES

Acceptance and Refusal Authorisation Policy	Emergency and Evacuation Policy
Additional Needs Policy	Family Communication Policy
Anti-Bias and Inclusion Policy	Immunisation Policy
Child Safe Environment Policy	Kindergarten Payment of Fees Policy (VIC)
Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy	Orientation of Families Policy
Dealing with Complaints Policy	Privacy and Confidentiality Policy
Dealing with Infectious Diseases Policy	Record Keeping and Retention Policy
Delivery of children to, and Collection from Education and Care Service Premises	Supervision Policy
Educational Program Policy	Staffing Arrangements Policy
	Transition to School Policy

PURPOSE

Our Service is committed to supporting the Victorian Government's Free Kinder and the Best Start, Best Life reforms. We aim to ensure families receive informative and reliable information about enrolment in our Three- and Four-Year-Old Kindergarten, and Pre-Prep (in selected local government areas).

This policy outlines the processes and requirements for enrolment in our quality kindergarten programs. It ensures enrolment practices are fair, transparent and compliant with legislative and funding requirements, while supporting equitable access for all children and families.

Our Service is committed to being a culturally safe, respectful and inclusive organisation with a zero tolerance for any form of discrimination or abuse. We aim to identify children who require additional support and seek assistance through a range of initiatives to ensure the inclusion of vulnerable children into our programs. The Service operates in accordance with the Victorian Child Safe Standards and related legislation at all times.

SCOPE

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

IMPLEMENTATION

Our Service is committed to ensuring that children's safety, rights and best interests are the paramount consideration in all decisions, actions and practices. Our enrolment process is child centred, and our decisions prioritise children's wellbeing, safety and developmental needs.

Our Service meets the requirements of the Victoria Government to provide *Free Kinder* as part of the Best Start, Best Life reforms. Funding is provided to our Service to support children's access to a high-quality kindergarten program in the 2 years before they start school.

FREE KINDER

Free Kinder is available for funded Three and Four-year-old Kindergarten and Pre-Prep at participating long day care services. Free Kinder is for everyone, and families do not need to show a Health Care Card, a Pension Card or an Australian Citizenship (or similar) to be eligible to access.

To be eligible for Free Kinder, families can only enrol their child in **one** Free Kinder program at any one time. Families are required to sign a "one funded place declaration form" to confirm their child is receiving their funded kindergarten program from one service. Services must complete and lodge this form with the Department and keep a copy in the child's enrolment record.

KINDERGARTEN PROGRAMS

Our Service promotes fair and equitable access to all our kindergarten programs and supports all eligible children to gain access to a kindergarten program, including those children who face barriers to participation. Our Service offers several funded high-quality educational programs as follows.

THREE-YEAR- OLD KINDERGARTEN

Our Service provides a **Three-Year-Old** Kindergarten program for **fifteen hours** per week. Children must be 3 before 30 April in the year they start Kinder. Children cannot start in the funded program unless they have turned three.

Our three-year-old kindergarten program is blended with our 4-year-old kindergarten program. We offer sessional kindergarten, making it entirely free for families. It runs 15 hours, on Monday and Tuesdays in the School terms only. If families require before or after kindergarten hours, they can pick up these added sessions for an extra fee, which generate CCS. It is run by a qualified Early Childhood Teacher, which runs as an "activity day" by other educators if the Teacher is absent.

FOUR-YEAR-OLD KINDERGARTEN

Our **Four-Year-Old** Kindergarten program provides children with **15 hours per week** or 600 hours per year of funded kindergarten planned and delivered by a VIT registered qualified early childhood teacher. Children must be 4 before 30 April of the year they are enrolling to Kinder.

Our three-year-old kindergarten program is blended with our 4-year-old kindergarten program. We offer sessional kindergarten, making it entirely free for families. It runs 15 hours, on Monday and Tuesdays in the School terms only. If families require before or after kindergarten hours, they can pick up these added sessions for an extra fee, which generate CCS. It is run by a qualified Early Childhood Teacher, which runs as an "activity day" by other educators if the Teacher is absent.

KINDERGARTEN STARTING AGE

For children born between 1 January and 30 April, families have a choice about whether their child will start school in the year they turn five or the following year and consequently, the year their child begins kindergarten. As each child's development is unique, parents and carers should discuss with management the best time for their child to start kindergarten.

Children enrolled in Three-Year-Old Kindergarten will be expected to complete a full year of kindergarten in the year they enrol. All children in Three-Year-Old Kindergarten will be expected to transition to Four-Year-Old Kindergarten the following year.

SECOND YEAR FUNDED KINDERGARTEN

Children may be eligible to access an additional (Second) year of Three-Year Old Kindergarten or Pre-Prep (or Four-Year Old Kindergarten for children not eligible for Pre-Prep) when a child shows delays in at least 2 learning and development outcome areas in the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework. Further information about the Second Year of funded kindergarten or Pre-Prep can be found on the Victorian Department of Education website.

Families must apply for an exemption (school exemption) if the child turns 6 before or during their first or second year of funded Four-Year-Old Kindergarten or Pre-Prep. Further information regarding applying for an exemption from school can be found on the Victorian Department of Education website.

OUR FRAMEWORKS

Our kindergarten programs adhere to the *Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF)* as the approved learning framework declared in the Education and Care Services National Law and Education and Care Services National Regulations core funding agreement.

PROGRAM SCHEDULES AND SERVICE CLOSURES

Our Service offers free Three-Year-Old, Four-Year-Old Kindergarten as [sessional model]

There may be times when our scheduled kindergarten programs cannot be delivered due to public holidays, unplanned teacher absences or emergency situations. Families will be provided with a schedule of planned public holidays at the beginning of each year. Communication will be provided with families as promptly as possible in the event of any other disruptions to our program.

PROGRAMS	DAYS	HOURS (e.g., 9.30-2.30)
Program 1	Monday ☒ Tuesday ☒ Wednesday ☐ Thursday ☐ Friday ☐	15
Program 2	Monday ☒ Tuesday ☒ Wednesday ☐ Thursday ☐ Friday ☐	15
Program 3	Monday ☐ Tuesday ☐ Wednesday ☐ Thursday ☐ Friday ☐	
Program 4	Monday ☐ Tuesday ☐ Wednesday ☐ Thursday ☐ Friday ☐	

EDUCATOR TO CHILD RATIOS

In accordance with the Education and Care National Regulations, we ensure that the educator-to-child ratio is 1 educator to 11 children for children from 36 months up to and including kindergarten age, is adhered to at all times.

PROGRAM	NO. OF EDUCATORS	NO. OF CHILDREN
Program 1	3	20
Program 2	3	20
Program 3		
Program 4		

SUBMISSION OF ENROLMENT APPLICATIONS

Upon interest in enrolment, families are required to submit a Waitlist Application to be considered for a funded kindergarten place at our Service. Management will follow the *Waitlist Procedure* to ensure new enquiries are managed in a fair and professional approach in accordance with Priority of Access (PoA) guidelines. To reduce financial barriers to families accessing care, a waitlist fee will not be charged for families applying for a funded kindergarten place at our Service.

Families are required to complete the following details within the Enrolment Form

- Child's name
- Address
- Date of birth

These details will be verified via a birth certificate, passport, or travel document for non-Australian-born children.

For children who do not have a birth certificate, the following documents may be used to confirm the child's full name and date of birth-

- statement from the Australian Immunisation Register (AIR)
- Medicare card
- letter from the doctor or midwife who attended the birth
- doctor's note attesting to a child's age
- passport
- citizenship documents or Australia visa documents

Information collected from families during the waitlist and enrolment process will be used and stored in accordance with our *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy and Record Keeping and Retention Policy*.

Families will be provided with a range of information about the Service, which may include:

- the Service philosophy, description of our funded kindergarten programs, day and times of operation of the kindergarten program, including planned closures, out-of-pocket expenses (e.g., one off excursions), access and inclusion policies, privacy and confidential policies and procedures, record keeping and retention policies and practices, emergency management plan, how families can contribute to the program, waitlist requirements, SunSmart requirements, signing in and out
- procedure, the National Quality Framework, routines, communication methods and Child Care Subsidy (CCS)
- families may be requested to submit any information related to Priority of Access with the enrolment application, including a health care card or visa
- Before confirming a child's enrolment, our Service requires evidence of the child's vaccination status via an *AIR immunisation History Statement* to comply with the *No Jab No Play* legislation. Evidence must show the child:
    - is fully vaccinated for their age, or
    - has commenced a recognised catch-up schedule, and that the next due vaccine/s on the schedule are not overdue 2 months prior to the first day of attending, or
    - has a medical condition that prevents them from being fully immunised for their age or
    - is eligible to enrol under the 16-week grace period while the service works with the family to obtain the necessary immunisations/documentation.

OFFER OF PLACES FOR FREE KINDER

Places will be allocated according to the Priority of Access (PoA) criteria and available places at our Service. Families will be provided with written confirmation of a placement for the Free Kinder program. Families are advised that they can only enrol their child in one Free Kinder program at any one time. Families have two weeks to accept this offer and provide the required documentation to complete the enrolment application. Written confirmation that their child is receiving a funded kindergarten program at our Service is required.

Should families not wish to accept the offer, they are required to withdraw their enrolment application as soon as possible. We ask that families withdraw their application in writing to the nominated supervisor. Families are required to confirm their child is receiving a funded kindergarten place at their service by signing the '*one funded place*' and Free Kinder in 2026.

THE APPROVED PROVIDER/NOMINATED SUPERVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES:

Legislative and funding compliance

- meet the specific terms and conditions for delivering funded Free Kinder as outlined by the Victorian Government Department of Education (2025)
- meet all core requirements and operational requirements under the Education and Care Services National Law and Education and Care Services National Regulations
- ensure the program delivered aligns with the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework
- ensure educators complete *Transition Learning and Development Statements* as part of the kindergarten funding agreement (See *Transition to School Policy* for further information)
- maintain educator to child ratios as per regulations (for children aged 36 months of age or over, one educator to 11 children)
- ensure minimum educator to child ratio for children under three is maintained when considering placement of children under three in the three-year-old kindergarten program (1:4 under three years of age)
- ensure Early Childhood Teachers are registered with the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT)
- ensure the program delivered to children adheres to the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework

Child Safety

- create and maintain a child safe organisation and comply with the Child Safe Standards

- ensure all staff and educators hold current and checked Working with Children Checks (WWCC)
- promote children's wellbeing and safety through:
    - Child Information Sharing Scheme (CISS)
    - Family Information Sharing Scheme (FVISS)
    - MARAM Framework

Access, Equity and Priority of Access (PoA)

- promote fair and equitable access to kindergarten programs
- adhere to the Department's Priority of Access (PoA) criteria for all funded kindergarten places
- communicate clearly with families how waiting lists are prioritised
- access the Kindergarten Inclusion Support (KIS) program and Preschool Field Officer (PSFO) program to support, guide and coach educators to provide inclusive programs that meet the needs of all children with additional needs

Enrolment Requirements and Eligibility

- ensure families complete written confirmation that they are accessing only one funded kindergarten place at any one time ('one funded place' declaration)
- ensure any eligible child for Early Start Kindergarten is enrolled and recorded in Arrival
- ensure families provide evidence of vaccination status in line with No Jab, No Play legislation
- adhere to No Jab, No Play requirements (refer to Enrolment Procedure)

Fees, Free Kinder and Financial Transparency

- ensure the *Kindergarten Payment of Fees Policy* is available for all families
- ensure families are not charged compulsory out-of-pocket fees or levies
- ensure the Kinder Free offset is clearly identified on invoices as the *Victorian Government Free Kinder Offset*, and that this does not impact CCS payments
- provide families with a clear statement for hours beyond funded program hours
- ensure families are not charged for incursions or regular excursions (e.g., Bush Kinder)
- ensure any surplus funding is used to improve the quality of our funded kindergarten program and support engagement of families

Communication and Family Engagement

- display the Kinder Tick logo at the Service
- provide families with details of public holidays and planned closure days annually
- provide information about how personal information is collected and stored
- ensure enrolment and program data is kept up to date and entered in Arrival

- update data within Arrival when service delivery or child enrolment changes occur
- provide details of the education level and occupation of parents (SFOE) for School Readiness Funding (SRF) eligibility
- refer families to our *Dealing with Complaints Policy* and procedures for complaints relating to the handling of funded kindergarten places.

FAMILIES WILL:

- complete all documentation required by the Service for enrolment, including the child's *Immunisation History Statement*
- provide required authorisations as indicated on the enrolment form
- notify the Service of any specific health care needs of the child, including medical conditions and allergies and provide a medical management plan for the child if applicable
- provide information to the Service for annual Student Family Occupation and Education data to assist with our SRF funding
- provide updated information about their child by notifying the Service of any changes as soon as possible- medical, parenting orders, authorisations etc.
- ensure they accept or withdraw their child's enrolment for *Free Kinder* in writing within the given time frame
- complete written confirmation that they are accessing only one funded kindergarten place at any one time
- discuss with management decisions to enrol their child born between January and April, whether they should begin three-year-old kindergarten in the year their child turns three, or the following year.

SCHOOL READINESS FUNDING (SRF)

School Readiness Funding (SRF) is used to support outcomes for children in the priority areas of communication (language development), wellbeing (social and emotional), and access and inclusion.
Our Service will allocate SRF funding to programs that support children's developmental outcomes-
Our Service will comply with all requirements for SRF funding:

- ensure SRF is used in accordance with Victorian Government guidelines
- ensure Student Family Occupation and Education data is collected accurately to determine SRF eligibility
- develop a SRF funding plan annually in consultation with educators and relevant professionals
- ensure accountability and appropriate use of SRF funding

- complete mid-year reviews and end-of-year acquittal funding

TRANSITION LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT STATEMENTS

Our Service will utilise funding from the Department to release early childhood teachers to write *Transition Learning and Development Statements (TLDS)* for every child in our care. The TLDS summarises each child's ability as they start school; identifies their approaches to learning and indicates how the child can be supported to continue learning. A copy of the TLDS statement will be provided to families. Families will be provided with the opportunity to opt out if they do not want relevant information shared with their child's school.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT/REFLECTION

Our *Free Kinder Enrolment Policy* will be evaluated and reviewed on an annual basis or earlier if there are changes to legislation, research, complaints or incidents related to our policy. Feedback will be requested from children, families, staff, educators and management, and notification of any change to policies will be made to families within 14 days.

RESOURCES

2025 Free Kinder funding requirements

Communicating about kindergarten to your community

Early Start Kindergarten

Kindergarten Funding Guide

Kindergarten Funding Rates (2026)

Operational policies supporting the Best Start, Best Life reforms

Priority of Access criteria for early childhood education

Resources for funded kindergartens

Two years of Early Childhood Education

SOURCES

Australian Government Department of Education. (2026). Child Care Provider Handbook

Department of Education and Training. (2016). *Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework. For all children birth to eight years*

Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010

Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011

Victorian Government Department of Education. (2025). Arrival information for long day care services

Victorian Government Department of Education. (2026). The Best Start, Best Life reforms

Victorian Government of Health. No Jab, No Play for early childhood education and care services.

REVIEW

POLICY REVIEWED BY	[NAME] Amy Flockhart	[POSITION] office admin	[DATE] 16/07/2026
POLICY REVIEWED	JUNE 2026	NEXT REVIEW DATE	JUNE 2027
VERSION NUMBER	V13.06.26		
MODIFICATIONS	• annual policy review • subheadings introduced in the responsibility section to improve clarity, reduce duplication and support consistent understanding and implementation of policy • added Pre-Prep funding • funding updates for 2025 • sources updated		
PREVIOUS MODIFICATIONS			
JUNE 2025	• policy maintenance • funding updates for 2025 • updated information for transition to Arrival system from KIMS during 2025 • sources updated as required		