

# FEES - FREE KINDERGARTEN

QUALITY AREA 7 | ELAA VERSION 1.0

Adopted by Approved Provider of Golden Plains Shire Council Children's Services	July 2023
Date revised:	New
Next revision due:	July 2024



## PURPOSE

This policy will provide clear guidelines for:

- free kindergarten funding for funded sessional kindergarten programs
- the application of surplus funding within Golden Plains Shire Council ensuring it is only used to ensure the quality of program delivery and development of children enrolled in the service



## POLICY STATEMENT

### VALUES

Golden Plains Shire Council 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 Golden Plains Shire Council services.

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	√	√	√	
Ensuring families are not charged any compulsory out-of-pocket levies or maintenance fees (voluntary fundraising and payments/donations are permitted)	R	√			
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 <b>nominate and document</b> 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	√			
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	√			
Read the Golden Plains Shire Council Free Kindergarten information for families ( <i>refer to Attachment 1</i> )				√	

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 15-hour program to three-year-old children enrolled at a sessional service
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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](http://www.legislation.vic.gov.au)
- Commonwealth Legislation – Federal Register of Legislation: [www.legislation.gov.au](http://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](http://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.

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

**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. 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.

**Late collection charge:** The approved provider 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 approved provider.



## 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](http://www.education.vic.gov.au)
- Resources for Funded Kindergartens: <https://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



## AUTHORISATION

This policy was adopted by the approved provider of Golden Plains Shire Council – July 2022.

**REVIEW DATE:** July 2024

## ATTACHMENT 1: FREE KINDERGARTEN INFORMATION FOR FAMILIES

Golden Plains Shire Council 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

Golden Plains Shire Council has opted into the Free Kindergarten initiative. Applicable parent fees are outlined below:

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

Golden Plains Shire Council will reimburse families in full for any kindergarten fee deposit (*refer to Definitions*) payments that have already been made upon acceptance of enrolment, excluding any voluntary parent donations/payments that you agree to in writing.

### 3. Other charges

Other charges levied by Golden Plains Shire Council are included on the Statement of Fees and Charges, that will be provided to families upon enrolment.

These include:

- **Late collection charge:** The approved provider 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 approved provider.

### 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. 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.