

FEES - FREE KINDER

QUALITY AREA 7 | VERSION 1



PURPOSE

This policy will provide clear guidelines for:

- how services comply with the Free Kinder funding requirements.



POLICY STATEMENT

VALUES

Beaconsfield 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 Beaconsfield 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 | | | | | |
| 1. 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 | √ | √ | √ | |
| 2. Ensuring that policies and procedures are in place for the payment of fees (if applicable) and the provision of a statement of fees charged by the service <i>(Regulation 168)</i> , and take reasonable steps to ensure those policies and procedures are followed <i>(Regulation 170)</i> | R | √ | | | |

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| 3. Ensuring that families are informed of the operating hours including term dates, planned closures and additional hours to account for closures. | R | √ | | | |
| 4. Ensuring families are informed of the total annual fee amount, including any applicable fees for e.g. excursions and any additional hours | R | √ | | | |
| 5. Ensuring families are not charged any compulsory out-of-pocket levies or maintenance fees (voluntary fundraising and payments/donations are permitted) | R | √ | | | |
| 6. 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) (<i>refer to Definitions</i>) | R | √ | | | |
| 7. Ensuring any non-funded positions are enrolled in accordance with the Kindergarten Funding Guidelines (<i>refer to Sources</i>) | R | √ | | | |
| 8. Providing communication to families explaining their access to one year of three-year-old and one of four-year-old funded kindergarten program | R | √ | | | |
| 9. Ensuring families that attend both sessional kindergarten and a long day care service nominate and document at which service the child will participate in the funded kindergarten program | R | √ | | √ | |
| 10. 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. | R | √ | | | |
| 11. Ensuring any voluntary parent payments/donations are explicitly agreed to in writing and receipted | R | √ | | | |
| 12. Charging families only for an occasional special event/ excursions that occur outside the normal program/curriculum | R | √ | √ | | |
| 13. Ensuring that any child that is eligible for Early Start Kindergarten is enrolled at the service and recorded on the Arrival system | R | √ | √ | | |
| 14. Collecting all relevant information regarding those with entitlement to concessions and recording it on the Arrival system | R | √ | √ | | |
| 15. Ensuring that the <i>Fees - Free Kinder Policy</i> is readily accessible at the service (<i>Regulation 171</i>) | R | √ | | | |
| 16. Providing all parents/guardians with information about Free Kinder (<i>refer to Attachment 1</i>) | R | √ | | | |
| 17. Reading the Beaconsfield Kindergarten Free Kinder information for families (<i>refer to Attachment 1</i>), if applicable | | | | √ | |
| 18. Providing agreement in writing if any additional payments are made to the Beaconsfield Kindergarten | | | | √ | |
| 19. Complying with the service's <i>Privacy and Confidentiality Policy</i> regarding financial and other information received, | R | √ | √ | √ | |



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|--|---|---|---|---|--|
| including in relation to the payment/non-payment of additional hours fees | | | | | |
| 20. 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 | √ | | | |
| 21. 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 | √ | √ | √ | |
| 22. Informing the approved provider of any complaints or concerns that have been raised regarding additional hours fees at the service | | √ | √ | | |
| 23. 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)
- offsetting the funded kindergarten program component of parent fees for three and four-year-old children enrolled at a long day care service

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)

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- 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.

Additional Hours/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*).

Approved child care: Approved child care services are services that have Australian Government approval to receive the Child Care Subsidy (*refer to Definitions*) 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) if applicable: 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.

Waitlist fee: A fee for when families register their child directly with a service (not part the councils central registration and enrolment scheme). This fee will not be refunded as it is not part of the Free Kinder subsidy, and not related to the fee charged for delivery of the kindergarten program. A service may charge for one-off excursions/incursions, and registration fees (sometimes called waitlist fees). Waitlist fees are returned to families once they have accepted a kindergarten place.

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:

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- 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: For service’s that have not opted for Free Kinder, 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.

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.

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 2036, 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.

Pre-Prep priority cohort: From 2026, between 16 and 25 hours of Pre-Prep will be available to:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children
- children from a refugee or asylum seeker background
- children who have had contact with Child Protection
- children who were supported by Early Start Kindergarten (ESK) or Access to Early Learning (AEL) in their Three-Year-Old Kindergarten year.

Pre-Prep hours for this group of [priority cohort children increase to up to 30 hours from 2028](#).

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.

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: <https://www.vic.gov.au/resources-funded-kindergartens>
- The constitution of Beaconsfield 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

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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



AUTHORISATION

This policy was adopted by the approved provider of Beaconsfield Kindergarten on 15 SEP, 2025

REVIEW DATE: 29/09/2026



ATTACHMENT 1. FREE KINDER INFORMATION FOR FAMILIES

Beaconsfield Kindergarten 20205/2026

1. General information

Kindergarten programs for four-year-old and three-year-old children in Victorian Government funded services will be free as part of the Best Start, Best Life reform.

Free Kinder provides families with a free program in sessional services and a fee offset in long day care services.

DE also provides funding to assist eligible three-year-old Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, Asylum seeker and refugee children and children known to Child Protection, to access kindergarten programs.

1.A 2025 Operation Hours and Closure Dates

Beaconsfield Kindergarten will be closed during the following school holiday dates in accordance with the Victorian Government School schedule:

10th March (Labour Day public holiday)

End of Term 1: 4th April – 22nd April (inclusive)

Friday 25th April – ANZAC Day public holiday

Monday 9th June – King's Birthday public holiday

End of Term 2: 4th July – 21st July (inclusive)

End of Term 3: 19th September- 6th October (inclusive)

Tuesday 4th November – Melbourne Cup public holiday

End of Term 4: 19th December - 28th January (inclusive)

Centre closure date for whole staff professional development – no children in attendance: Friday 1st August

Organisational days (no children in attendance):

Lilly Pilly Group: Tuesday 28th January, Thursday 6th February & Thursday 18th December

Myrtle Group: Tuesday 30th January, Friday 7th February & Thursday 18th December

Waratah Group: Tuesday 28th January, Friday 7th February & Thursday 18th December

Joey Group: Tuesday 28th January, Thursday 13th February & Thursday 18th December

Bilby Group: Tuesday 28th January, Thursday 13th February & Thursday 18th December

Echidna: Tuesday 28th January, Friday 7th February & Thursday 18th December

Wattle: Tuesday 28th January, Thursday 6th February & Thursday 18th December



2025 Kindergarten Timetable:

| O'Neil Road 2025 Draft Timetable – Blue Room | | | | |
|--|--|--|---|--|
| Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday |
| 8.30am – 2:30pm Lilly Pilly Group 4yo | 8.30am – 2.30pm Myrtle Group 4yo | Bush Kinder 8:30am –12:00pm Myrtle Group 4yo 3.5 hours | 8.30am – 2.00pm Lilly Pilly Group 4yo | 8.30am – 2:00pm Myrtle Group 4yo |
| 6 hours | 6 hours | | 5.5 hours | 5.5 hours |
| | | Bush Kinder 12:30pm – 4:00pm Lilly Pilly Group 4yo 3.5 hours | | |

| O'Neil Road 2025 Draft Timetable – Purple Room | | | | |
|--|---|---|--|---|
| Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday |
| 8:30am – 12:30pm Joey Group 3yo | 8.30am – 1.30pm Waratah Group 4yo | 8.30am – 1.30pm Waratah Group 4yo | 8:30am – 12:30pm Bilby Group 3yo | 8.30am – 1:30pm Waratah Group 4yo |
| 4 hours | 5 hours | 5 hours | 4 hours | 5 hours |
| 1:00pm – 4:15pm Bilby Group 3yo | | | 1:00pm – 4:15pm Joey Group 3yo | |
| 3.25 hours | | | 3.25 hours | |

| Woods St 2025 Draft Timetable | | | | |
|--|---|--|---|---|
| Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday |
| 8.30am – 4:00pm 4yo Wattle Group | 8.30am – 2:00pm 3yo Echidna Group | 8:30am –12:30pm 3yo Echidna Group | 8.30am – 1:00pm 4yo Wattle Group 4.5 hours | 8.30am – 2:00pm 3yo Echidna Group |
| 7.5 hours | 5.5 hours | 4 hours | | 5.5 hours |
| | | Bush Kinder 1:15pm – 4:15pm 4yo Wattle Group 3 hours | | |

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1.B 2026 Kindergarten Timetable (term dates and closures TBC)

O'Neil Rd (4YO Campus) Myrtle Room

| Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday |
|--|--|---|--|--|
| 8.30am-2.30pm 6 hours Myrtle A Myrtle B | 8.30am-2.30pm 6 hours Myrtle C Myrtle D | 8.30am-11.30am 3 hours Myrtle B Myrtle C Bush Kinder Term 2-3 1.00pm-4.00pm 3 hours Myrtle A Myrtle D Bush Kinder Term 2-3 | 8.30am-2.30pm 6 hours Myrtle B Myrtle D | 8.30am-2.30pm 6 hours Myrtle A Myrtle C |

O'Neil Rd (4YO Campus): Lilly Pilly Room

| Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday |
|--|--|--|--|--------|
| 8.30am-4.00pm 7.5 hours Lilly Pilly A Lilly Pilly B | 8.30am-4.00pm 7.5 hours Lilly Pilly B Lilly Pilly C | 8.30am-4.00pm 7.5 hours Lilly Pilly C Lilly Pilly D | 8.30am-4.00pm 7.5 hours Lilly Pilly A Lilly Pilly D | |

Woods St (3YO Campus):

| Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| 9.00am-3.00pm 6 hours Bilby | 8.30am-2.30pm 6 hours Echidna | 8.30am-12.00pm 3.5 hours Echidna 12.30pm-4.00pm 3.5 hours Bilby | 9.00am-2.30pm 5.5 hours Bilby | 8.30am-2.00pm 5.5 hours Echidna |



2. What Free Kinder means at our service

Beaconsfield Kindergarten has opted in to the Free Kinder 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

3. Other charges

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 approved 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.

The late collection charge will be \$1 per minute for the first 30 minutes and then \$50 for every 15-minute block in excess of 30 minutes – to be charged if collection occurs more than 15 minutes after the end of the session time.

In circumstances that are beyond the control of families, for example, weather and traffic accidents, which may result in them arriving late to collect their child, the Centre Manager will have the discretion to decide if families will be charged the late fee.

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.

6. Notification of fee changes during the year for additional hours/wrap around care

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.

