

# FEES - FREE KINDER

QUALITY AREA 7 | ELAA VERSION 1.2



## PURPOSE

This policy will provide clear guidelines for:

- how Denzil Don Kindergarten complies with the Free Kinder funding requirements.



## POLICY STATEMENT

### VALUES

Denzil Don 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(ren)
- maintaining confidentiality in relation to the financial circumstances of parents/carers.

### SCOPE

This policy applies to staff, students, volunteers, visitors, parents/carers, children, and others attending programs and activities at Denzil Don Kindergarten, including offsite excursions.

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/carers	Contractors, volunteers and students
<b>R</b> indicates legislation requirement, and should not be deleted					
Implementing and reviewing this policy in consultation with parents/carers, the nominated supervisor and staff, and in line with the requirements of DE’s Free Kinder initiative ( <i>refer to Definitions</i> )	R	√	√	√	
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	√			

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 informed of the total annual fee amount, including any applicable fees	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 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 any non-funded positions are enrolled in accordance with the Kindergarten Funding Guidelines ( <i>refer to Sources</i> )	R	√			
Providing communication to families explaining their access to one year of 3-year-old and one of 4-year-old funded kindergarten program	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 in line with acceptable uses of kindergarten funding, including to promote increased participation and/or enhance program quality	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 <i>Fees - Free Kinder Policy</i> is readily accessible at the service ( <i>Regulation 171</i> )	R	√			
Providing all parents/carers with information about Free Kinder ( <i>refer to Attachment 1</i> )	R	√			
Providing all parents/carer with a statement of After Kinder Care fees and charges to families enrolling their child into AKC <b>NOTE:</b> parents must also be advised that enrolling for hours over 15 is <b>optional</b> and families can choose to only enrol for 15 hours and receive this program at no cost.	R	√			
Providing all parents/carers with an additional hours payment fee agreement ( <i>refer to Attachments 3</i> ), if applicable	R	√			
Informing parents of any action that will be taken if additional hours fees are not paid ( <i>refer to Attachments 3</i> )	R	√			
Reading the Denzil Don Kindergarten Free Kinder information for families ( <i>refer to Attachment 1</i> ), After Kinder Care (AKC) Fees and Charges ( <i>refer to Attachments 2</i> ), and the AKC Fee Terms & Conditions ( <i>refer to Attachments 3</i> ) if applicable				√	

Complying with the Additional Hours Fee Payment Agreement ( <i>refer to Attachments 3</i> ), if applicable				√	
Ensuring any additional hours fees are collected and receipted	R	√			
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 Denzil Don Kindergarten				√	
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/carers 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/carers, 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 raised regarding additional hours fees at the service		√	√		
Referring parents'/carer' 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 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)

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)

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- 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. Refer to the definitions file on the kindergarten website for regularly used terms.

**After Kinder Care (AKC):** care that is provided by a kindergarten service to kindergarten children outside of the 15 hours per week program. AKC fees are not funded by the Victorian Government or the Child Care Subsidy.

**After Kinder Care Fees:** a fee charged for a child's attendance in the AKC program.

**Early Start Kindergarten (ESK):** a program that provides eligible children 15 hours of free kindergarten 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](http://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 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.

**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).

**Pre-Prep:** 4-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.

**Voluntary parent/CARER 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.



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## 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](http://www.vic.gov.au/kindergarten-funding-guide)
- Resources for Funded Kindergartens: <https://www.vic.gov.au/resources-funded-kindergartens>
- 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



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## EVALUATION

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)*).



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## ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1: Free Kinder information for families



## AUTHORISATION

This policy was adopted by the approved provider of Denzil Don Kindergarten on 25/11/2024.

**REVIEW DATE:** 25 / NOVEMBER / 2025

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## ATTACHMENT 1. FREE KINDER INFORMATION FOR FAMILIES

### 1. General information

Kindergarten programs for 3-year-old and 4-year-old children in Victorian Government funded services are free as part of the Best Start, Best Life reform.

Free Kinder provides families with a free program in sessional service. 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.

### 2. After Kinder Care (AKC)

Denzil Don Kindergarten offers After Kinder Care (AKC) to support families needing care beyond their child's sessional kindergarten program. Participation in AKC is completely optional.

### 3. Payment of After Kinder Care (AKC) fees

After Kinder Care (AKC) is offered Permanently (a termly booking, paid in full prior to the first session the child is to attend) OR Casually (a casual/ad hoc booking).

AKC fees are as follows:

PERMANENT BOOKINGS: \$20 per hour

CASUAL BOOKINGS: \$26 per hour.

Invoices for Permanent AKC are sent before the end of term and must be paid in full before the first session of the term. Casual AKC attendance is invoiced the week following attendance and must be paid within three days of receipt of the invoice. Invoices can be paid via direct deposit OR credit card (Square). All credit card payments incur a 2.2% merchant fee.

### 4. Unpaid fees for After Kinder Care (AKC)

Unpaid AKC fees may result in your child's attendance at AKC being cancelled.

### 5. Late Collection Charges:

**Regular Sessional Kinder program:** children collected late from their sessional kindergarten program will be signed in to After Kinder Care (AKC) and the family invoiced for their child's attendance at a minimum of 1-hour casually (\$26/ hour).

**After Kinder Care:** if a child is not collected within the booking window (referring to Permanent Bookings only), families will be invoiced at the casual rate, with a minimum charge of one hour. Families must ALWAYS sign their child out at the correct time. Staff will monitor sign-out times and change them if they are incorrectly recorded.

AKC ends strictly at 5:30 pm. If a child is collected after 5:30 pm, a late collection fee of \$20 per 10 minutes (or part thereof) will be applied. Repeat late collections may result in cancellation of your child's AKC booking.

### 6. Refund of After Kinder Care (AKC) fees

AKC fees are non-refundable, including in the following circumstances: non-attendance due to illness, family holiday and personal choice. Known public holidays, centre closure days and centre closures due to staffing issues or other unforeseeable operational circumstances will not be charged to families/reimbursed.

### 7. Notification of fee changes during the year for After Kinder Care (AKC)

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

### 8. 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.