

FREE KINDERGARTEN FEES

QUALITY AREA 7 | ELAA version 1.0



Purpose

This policy will provide clear guidelines for:

- free kindergarten funding for funded sessional kindergarten programs
- reduced fees for children enrolled in a funded kindergarten program in a long day care centre
- the application of surplus funding within Middle Park Kindergarten ensuring it is only used to ensure the quality of program delivery and development of children enrolled in the service
- the setting, payment and collection of (additional hours fees, or long day-care parent fees minus the Free Kindergarten Funding).



POLICY STATEMENT

VALUES

Middle Park Kindergarten is committed to:

- supporting the Victorian Government's Free Kindergarten initiative to be reviewed annually
- 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 Middle Park 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 annually 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	√	√	√	
Reimbursing families in full for enrolment deposits that have already been paid upon acceptance of enrolment during Term 1, 2023 except when families have opted to donated the deposit	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 Funding Guidelines (<i>refer to Sources</i>)	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	√			
Ensuring any voluntary parent payments/donations are explicitly agreed to in writing and receipted	R	√			
Charging families via Ezidebit 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 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	√			
Providing all parents/guardians with a statement of additional hours fees and charges <i>(refer to Attachments)</i> upon enrolment of their child	R	√			
Providing all parents/guardians with an additional payment fee agreement.	R	√			
Reading the Middle Park Kindergarten Free Kindergarten information for families, the Statement of Additional Hours Fees and Charges <i>(refer to Attachments)</i> , and the Additional Hours Fee Payment Agreement <i>(refer to Attachments)</i>				√	
Signing and complying with the Additional Hours Fee Payment Agreement <i>(refer to Attachments)</i>				√	
Notifying the approved provider if experiencing difficulties with the payment of additional hours fees				√	
All families to sign up to Ezidebit Direct Debit. All families to be given two weeks written notice when they will be charged for Excursions or Special Events. Ezidebit also used to charge families for additional hours in the 4 year old kindergarten group above the 15 hour free kinder funding.		√		√	
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/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	√			
Implementing and reviewing this policy annually, 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 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 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
- 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.

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): 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: 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. 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.

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 Kindergarten subsidy, and not related to the fee charged for delivery of the kindergarten program.

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 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.

Wrap around care: care that is provided by a kindergarten service to kindergarten children outside of the 15 hours per week program.



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
- 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
- Attachment 2: Statement of additional hours and/or wrap around fees
- Attachment 3: Additional hours and/or wrap around care fee payment agreement

AUTHORISATION

This policy was adopted by the approved provider of Middle Park Kindergarten November 2022.

REVIEW DATE: JUNE 2023



ATTACHMENT 1. 2023 THREE YEAR OLD FREE KINDERGARTEN INFORMATION FOR FAMILIES

Important information regarding your child's Free Kindergarten Program for 2023

From 2023, the Victorian Government is offering kindergartens to opt-in to Free Kinder, an initiative that provides up to \$2,500 in additional funding per child.

The Middle Park Kindergarten Committee has decided to opt into this initiative for 2023, with the decision to be a part of the Free Kinder program to be reviewed on a year-to-year basis.

In line with the Victorian Government's requirements for Free Kinder, your child can access an 11 hour kindergarten program at **Middle Park Kindergarten for free** (assuming that you are not doing so at another centre already).

Under the Free Kinder program we will still charge parents for costs associated with one-off special events such as excursions (e.g. to the Kew traffic school) or one off incursions (reptile encounters, concerts etc). Children with concession cards or eligibility categories for KFS will not be charged for this. Our kindergarten will be signing up each family to Ezidebit for collection of these fees.

The Free Kinder funds do not cover weekly sports and music programs offered by specialised teachers, nor do they cover general maintenance of kindergarten facilities. As you know, our Kindergarten is run by a volunteer parent committee and has a history of running a wonderful music and sports program with specialised teachers. **To be able to continue our sports and music program, and to maintain the kindergarten in its current state (all of which has thus far been funded through kinder fees), we will be relying on donations (the suggested minimum donation amounts to allow us to continue running those programs are included in the attachment) and involvement from parents.**

Please complete, sign and return the attachment by 30 November 2022 to acknowledge that your child is accessing their Middle Park Kindergarten Three-Year-Old 'Free Kinder Payment' at our service in 2023. Please note your child can only receive Free Kinder at one service at any one time and only one year in a Three-Year-Old Kindergarten program.

If your child will be attending another service that offers a Victorian Government funded kindergarten program, including at a long day care service, you must advise that service that you are receiving a funded kindergarten place at our service.

Please let us know if you have any questions.

Kind regards

Middle Park Kindergarten Committee of Management

Three Year Old Kindergarten 2023

The 3 year old kindergarten program will run in 2023 during the school term:

Monday 12:45pm-3:45pm

Wednesday and Friday 8:45am-12:45pm

(11 hours per week)

Please read and complete **all** the relevant attachments to confirm your acceptance of this offer on or **before 30 November 2022**. If we have **not** received signed attachments by this date, it will be assumed that you no longer require the place, and it will be offered to the next child on the waiting list. Please return all signed attachments to middle.park.kin@kindergarten.vic.gov.au or deliver to kinder on your second Orientation day.

- Accepting This Letter of Offer (see Attachment)

Please email a signed Acceptance Form to accept this Letter of Offer.

If you are eligible for Early Start Kindergarten or identify as Vulnerable or hold a valid Concession Card, please notify the kindergarten by selecting the applicable box on the Acceptance Form and providing a copy of the card.

- *'Free Kinder Payment' Nomination (see Attachment)

If you would like to nominate Middle Park Kindergarten to receive your child's annual 'Free Kinder Payment' (funded kindergarten place) for 2023 please read and sign the attachment

Refunds Due to Change of Mind.

Please note, in line with Victorian Government guidelines, **all fees are non-refundable**.

Free Kinder Payment Nomination to A Different Early Learning Service.

Where Middle Park Kindergarten does not receive the signed documents **by 30 November 2022** or your child is receiving their Free Kinder subsidy at another centre, the standard term fees as per your original letter of offer will be implemented.

Excursions & Special Events.

We endeavor to provide several one off 'Special Events' each year based on children's interest and dependent on entertainers/specialist availability.

As we arrange special events and excursions for the children, we will require a **small payment** to cover associated fees for these events from families who have nominated MPK as their 'Free Kinder', as the costs for excursions and special events are not covered by the Free Kinder program funds. We will endeavor to keep these ad hoc charges to a minimum. These charges will be communicated 2 weeks prior and will be collected via our direct debit Ezidebit system. The sign up form will be emailed to families.

Fundraising & Donations

Fundraising will continue to form an important component of the kindergarten's operation and Middle Park Kinder will depend on your support throughout the year.

To be able to run our music & sports program by specialised teachers and continue to maintain the kindergarten grounds and facilities, we are reliant on donations as we are unable to charge for this.

Attachment A – please complete table below

2023 THREE YEAR OLD KINDERGARTEN SCHEDULE

		PLEASE COMPLETE BELOW
ENROLMENT DEPOSIT We are requesting families to donate this deposit to go towards resources and the kindergarten program	\$800	Already Paid
TERM ONE	FREE	FREE
TERM TWO	FREE	FREE
TERM THREE	FREE	FREE
TERM FOUR	FREE	FREE
Suggested Sports Levy	\$275 per year	\$
Suggested Music Levy	\$120 per year	\$
Suggested Maintenance Levy	\$100 per year	\$
Additional Contributions Welcome		\$
TOTAL	\$800 already paid \$495 donation	\$

We welcome and appreciate any donations by 30 November 2022 for the Committee to be able to advise our specialist music & sports teachers of bookings for 2023. Without the suggested donations we will be unable to offer these programs in 2023. Please complete above.

Payable to: Middle Park Kindergarten

BSB: 063 100

Account: 1005 1032

Ref: Your child's name

Letter of Offer Acceptance Form
2023 Offer of Enrolment
3 year old Kindergarten Program due 30 November 2022
(leave blank any boxes that are not applicable)

Yes, I accept a place forin the 3 year old group in 2023

ENROLMENT DEPOSIT

Yes, I wish to give my enrolment deposit already paid as a donation towards the kindergarten program

OR

No, I do not wish to donate my enrolment deposit already paid.
Please refund to my bank account

BSB: _____

Account Number: _____

Refunds will be made in Term 1, 2023 after your child commences kinder.

SPORT / MUSIC / MAINTENANCE LEVY

Yes, I will be making a donation towards sports/music/maintenance levy of
\$ _____ (total as per previous page – suggested \$495)

Your bank reference/receipt no: _____

Deposit Date: _____

EZIDEBIT – ONE OFF SPECIAL EVENTS

Yes, I agree for Middle Park Kindergarten to charge through Ezidebit the small cost for a one off event with two weeks written notice. Ezidebit form to be completed and returned by 30th November 2022.

OR

I hold a valid concession card and will present the original card along with photo identification in person to Middle Park Kindergarten by 30 November 2022.

Name: _____

Signed: _____

Attachment B

Form to Access One (only) 'Free Kinder Payment' Place

I confirm that my child will be accessing their 'Free Kinder Payment' (funded kindergarten place) at Middle Park Kindergarten for the three year old program in 2023 only.

Name of service: Middle Park Kindergarten (Incorporated Association Name: Middle Park Kindergarten Inc	
Date:	Child name:
Parent name:	Signature:

ATTACHMENT 1. 2023 FOUR YEAR OLD FREE KINDERGARTEN INFORMATION FOR FAMILIES

Important information regarding your child's Free Kindergarten Program for 2023

From 2023, the Victorian Government is offering kindergartens to opt-in to Free Kinder, an initiative that provides up to \$2,500 in additional funding per child.

The Middle Park Kindergarten Committee has decided to opt into this initiative for 2023, with the decision to be a part of the Free Kinder program to be reviewed on a year-to-year basis.

In line with the Victorian Government's requirements for Free Kinder, your child can access a 15-hour free kindergarten program at Middle Park Kindergarten (assuming that you are not doing so at another centre already). **As Middle Park Kindergarten runs an extended 16 hour per week program in the four year old group, you will be charged at \$400 per term, which is heavily discounted from your previous letter of offer.**

Under the Free Kinder program we will still charge parents for costs associated with one-off special events such as excursions (e.g. to the Kew traffic school) or one off incursions (reptile encounters, concerts etc). Children with concession cards or eligibility categories for KFS will not be charged for this. Our kindergarten will be signing up each family to Ezidebit for collection of these fees.

The Free Kinder funds do not cover weekly sports and music programs offered by specialised teachers, nor do they cover general maintenance of kindergarten facilities. As you know, our Kindergarten is run by a volunteer parent committee and has a history of running a wonderful music and sports program with specialised teachers. **To be able to continue our sports and music program, and to maintain the kindergarten in its current state (all of which has thus far been funded through kinder fees), we will be relying on donations (the suggested minimum donation amounts to allow us to continue running those programs are included in the attachment) and involvement from parents.**

Please complete, sign and return the attachment by 30 November 2022 to acknowledge that your child is accessing their Middle Park Kindergarten Four-Year-Old 'Free Kinder Payment' at our service in 2023. Please note your child can only receive Free Kinder at one service at any one time and only one year in a Four-Year-Old Kindergarten program.

If your child will be attending another service that offers a Victorian Government funded kindergarten program, including at a long day care service, you must advise that service that you are receiving a funded kindergarten place at our service.

Please let us know if you have any questions.

Kind regards

Middle Park Kindergarten Committee of Management

Four Year Old Kindergarten 2023

The 4 year old kindergarten program will run in 2023 during the school term:

Monday 8:45am - 11:45am,

Tuesday and Thursday 8.45am – 3:15pm

(16 hours per week)

Please read and complete **all** the relevant attachments to confirm your acceptance of this offer on or **before 30 November 2022**. If we have **not** received signed attachments by this date, it will be assumed that you no longer require the place, and it will be offered to the next child on the waiting list. Please return all signed attachments to middle.park.kin@kindergarten.vic.gov.au or deliver to the office.

Accepting This Letter of Offer (see Attachment)

Please email a signed Acceptance Form to accept this Letter of Offer.

If you are eligible for Early Start Kindergarten or identify as Vulnerable or hold a valid Concession Card, please notify the kindergarten by selecting the applicable box on the Acceptance Form and providing a copy of the card.

***Free Kinder Payment Nomination (see Attachment)**

If you would like to nominate Middle Park Kindergarten to receive your child's annual 'Free Kinder Payment' (funded kindergarten place) for 2023 please read and sign the attachment.

Refunds Due to Change of Mind.

Please note, in line with Victorian Government guidelines, **all fees are non-refundable**.

Free Kinder Payment Nomination To A Different Early Learning Service.

Where Middle Park Kindergarten does not receive a signed documents by 30 November 2022 or your child is receiving their free kinder subsidy at another centre, the standard term fees as per your original letter of offer will be implemented.

Excursions & Special Events.

We endeavor to provide several one off 'Special Events' each year based on children's interest and dependent on entertainers/specialist availability. Four year old kindergarten also schedules two excursions. Transportation and entry fees will need to be covered by families.

As we arrange special events and excursions for the children, we will require a **small payment** to cover associated fees for these events from families who have nominated MPK as their 'Free Kinder', as the costs for excursions and special events are not covered by the Free Kinder program funds. We will endeavor to keep these ad hoc charges to a minimum. These charges will be communicated 2 weeks prior and will be collected via our direct debit Ezidebit system. The Ezidebit sign up form will be emailed to families.

Fundraising & Donations

Fundraising will continue to form an important component of the kindergarten's operation and Middle Park Kinder will depend on your support throughout the year.

To be able to run our music & sports program by specialised teachers and continue to maintain the kindergarten grounds and facilities, we are reliant on donations as we are unable to charge for this.

Attachment A – please complete table below

2023 FOUR YEAR OLD KINDERGARTEN SCHEDULE

		PLEASE COMPLETE BELOW
ENROLMENT DEPOSIT	\$120	Already Paid
TERM ONE – due 30 November 2022	\$400	\$400
TERM TWO – due 28 February 2023	\$400	\$400
TERM THREE – due 23 May 2023	\$400	\$400
TERM FOUR – due 30 Aug 2023	\$400	\$400
Suggested Sports Levy 4yo Program is \$6000 per year / 22 children	\$275 per year	\$
Suggested Music Levy 4yo Program is \$2600 per year / 22 children	\$120 per year	\$
Suggested Maintenance Levy Used for urgent and general repair and replacement of equipment	\$100 per year	\$
Additional Contributions Welcome	\$	\$
TOTAL		\$

Term 1 Fees – for program hour above the 15 hours of free kinder (\$400 per term)

Term 1 Fees must be paid by 30 November 2022 to confirm and secure your child's enrolment.

We welcome and appreciate any donations by 30 November 2022 for the Committee to be able to advise our specialist music & sports teachers of bookings for 2023. Without the suggested donations we will be unable to offer these programs in 2023. Please complete above.

Payable to: Middle Park Kindergarten

BSB: 063 100

Account: 1005 1032

Ref: Your child's name

Attachment A / cont.

**Letter of Offer Acceptance Form
2023 Offer of Enrolment
4 year old Kindergarten Program due 30 November 2022
(leave blank any boxes that are not applicable)**

- Yes, I accept a place forin the 4 year old group
at Middle Park Kindergarten for 16 hours per week in 2023

TERM 1 FEES

- Yes, I have paid my Term 1 fees – due 30 November 2022 and acknowledge that fees for
Term 2, 3 & 4 will be charged via Ezidebit

SPORT / MUSIC / MAINTENANCE LEVY

- Yes, I will be making a donation towards sports/music/maintenance levy of
\$ _____ (total as per previous page – suggested \$495)

Your bank reference/receipt no: _____

Deposit Date: _____

EZIDEBIT – ONE OFF SPECIAL EVENTS

- Yes, I agree for Middle Park Kindergarten to charge through Ezidebit the small cost for a one off event
with two weeks written notice. Ezidebit form to be completed and returned by 30th November 2022.

OR

- I hold a valid concession card and will present the original card along with photo identification in person
to Middle Park Kindergarten by 30 November 2022.

Name: _____ Signed: _____

Date: _____



Attachment B

Form to Access One (only) 'Free Kinder Payment' Place

I confirm that my child will be accessing their 'Free Kinder Payment' (funded kindergarten place) at Middle Park Kindergarten for the four year old program in 2023 only.

Name of service: Middle Park Kindergarten (Incorporated Association Name: Middle Park Kindergarten Inc)	
Date:	Child name:
Parent name:	Signature: