

PURPOSE

This policy will provide clear guidelines for:

- the setting, payment and collection of fees
- ensuring the viability of Ascot Kindergarten, by setting appropriate fees and charges
- the equitable and non-discriminatory application of fees across the programs provided by Ascot Kindergarten.

POLICY STATEMENT**1. VALUES**

Ascot Kindergarten is committed to:

- providing responsible financial management of the service, including establishing fees that will result in a financially viable service, while keeping user fees at the lowest possible level
- providing a fair and manageable system for dealing with non-payment and/or inability to pay fees/outstanding debts
- 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
- advising users of the service about program funding, including government support and fees to be paid by parents/guardians
- providing equitable access for families eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy.

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to the Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, Certified Supervisor, educators and parents/guardians with an enrolled child, or who wish to enrol a child at Ascot Kindergarten.

3. BACKGROUND AND LEGISLATION**Background**

The Department of Education and Training (DET) provides per capita funding as a contribution towards the costs of the four-year-old kindergarten program. Income from other sources, primarily fees, is required to meet all the additional costs incurred by the service in the delivery of the children's program. In addition, the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy (refer to *Definitions*), enables eligible families to attend the four-year-old kindergarten program at minimal or no cost.

DET also funds eligible three-year-old Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, and children known to Child Protection, to access kindergarten programs as outlined in *The Kindergarten Guide* (refer to *Sources*).

DET requires that funded services have a comprehensive written fees policy in place, and the content of this policy must be communicated to families. The policy must include a written statement about the fees to be charged, as required under Regulation 168(2)(n), and the payment process. All families must be informed of applicable term and annual fees at the time of enrolment. Services must also advise eligible families of the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy arrangements. The fees charged must comply with the *Kindergarten Fee Subsidy – Fees Policy* (refer to *Definitions*), and be responsive to the local community and the viability of the service. *The Kindergarten Guide* (refer to *Sources*) outlines the criteria to be covered in the policy.

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, Quality Area 7: Leadership and Service Management*
 - Standard 7.3: Administrative systems enable the effective management of a quality service

The most current amendments to listed legislation can be found at:

- Victorian Legislation – Victorian Law Today: <http://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/>
- Commonwealth Legislation – ComLaw: <http://www.comlaw.gov.au/>

4. DEFINITIONS

The terms defined in this section relate specifically to this policy. For commonly used terms e.g. Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, Regulatory Authority etc. refer to the *General Definitions* section of this manual.

Approved care: Care given by a service provider that has been approved by the Family Assistance Office to receive Child Care Benefit payments on behalf of eligible families. Most long day care, family day care, before-and-after school care, vacation care, some occasional care and some in-home care childcare services are approved providers. Details are available at: www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/services/centrelink/child-care-benefit

Central Registration Service (CRS) administration fee: A non-refundable payment made to Moonee Valley City Council to cover administrative costs associated with the processing of a child's enrolment application for a place at the service.

Central Registration Service (CRS) registration form: A form to apply for a kindergarten place at the service.

Child Care Benefit (CCB): A Commonwealth Government payment to help families who use either approved or registered childcare services. All eligible families can receive some Child Care Benefit. Details are available at: www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/services/centrelink/child-care-benefit

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 a specific number of hours. Details are available at: <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/learningdev/Pages/default.aspx>

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 a place within a program at the service.

Health Care Card: A Commonwealth Government entitlement providing concessions for low-income earners and other eligible people. Details are available at: www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/services/centrelink/health-care-card

Kindergarten Fee Subsidy (KFS): A state government subsidy paid directly to the funded service to enable eligible families to attend a funded kindergarten program at no cost (or minimal cost) to promote participation. Details, eligibility requirements and a calculator, are available in *The Kindergarten Guide* (refer to *Sources*).

Kindergarten Fee Subsidy – Fees Policy: Provides operational guidelines for services administering the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy and can be found in *The Kindergarten Guide* (refer to *Sources*).

Late collection charge: A charge that may be imposed by the Approved Provider when parents/guardians are late to collect their child/children from the program (refer to Attachment 1 – Fee Policy Summary).

Registered care: Care provided by nannies, grandparents, relatives or friends, individuals working within kindergartens, occasional care services and outside school hours care services that are registered with the Family Assistance Office. Eligible families can receive some reimbursement of costs when using a registered care provider. Details are available at: www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/services/centrelink/child-care-benefit

Voluntary parent/guardian contribution: A voluntary payment for items not directly related to the provision of the children's program. Attendance at the service is not conditional on this payment.

5. SOURCES AND RELATED POLICIES

Sources

- *The Kindergarten Guide* (Department of Education and Early Childhood Development) is available under *early childhood / service providers* on the DET website: www.education.vic.gov.au
- The constitution of Ascot Kindergarten

Service policies

- *Complaints and Grievances Policy*
- *Delivery and Collection of Children Policy*
- *Enrolment and Orientation Policy*
- *Excursions and Service Events Policy*
- *Inclusion and Equity Policy*
- *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy*

PROCEDURES

The Approved Provider is responsible for:

- reviewing the current budget to determine fee income requirements
- developing a fee policy that balances the parent's/guardian's capacity to pay, with providing a high-quality program and maintaining service viability
- implementing and reviewing this policy in consultation with parents/guardians, the Nominated Supervisor and staff, and in line with the requirements of DET's *The Kindergarten Guide* (refer to *Sources*)
- ensuring that this policy is based on the principles of the *Kindergarten Fee Subsidy – Fees Policy* (refer to *Definitions*)
- considering any issues regarding fees that may be a barrier to families enrolling at Ascot Kindergarten and removing those barriers wherever possible
- reviewing the number of families experiencing financial hardship and the effectiveness of the procedures for late payment and support offered
- considering options for payment when affordability is an issue for families
- clearly communicating this policy and payment options to families in a culturally-sensitive way, and in the family's first language where possible
- providing all parents/guardians with a copy of the document containing fee information for families (refer to Attachment 1- Fee Policy Summary)
- providing all parents/guardians with a statement of fees and charges (refer to Attachment 2) upon enrolment of their child, and ensure that the *Fees Policy* is readily accessible at the service (Regulation 171)
- collecting and receipting all fees
- collecting all relevant information and maintaining relevant documentation regarding those with entitlement to concessions, where applicable
- complying with the service's *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy* regarding financial and other information received, including in relation to the payment/non-payment of fees
- notifying parents/guardians within 14 days of any proposed changes to the fees charged or the way in which the fees are collected (Regulation 172(2))
- ensuring a notice outlining fees charged by the service is displayed prominently in the main entrance to Ascot Kindergarten.

The Nominated Supervisor is responsible for:

- assisting the Approved Provider in developing this policy, and ensuring that this policy is based on the principles of the *Kindergarten Fee Subsidy – Fees Policy* (refer to *Definitions*)

- implementing and reviewing this policy, in consultation with parents/guardians, the Approved Provider and staff, and in line with the requirements of DET's *The Kindergarten Guide* (refer to *Sources*)
- considering any issues regarding fees that may be a barrier to families enrolling at Ascot Kindergarten and removing those barriers wherever possible
- considering options for payment when affordability is an issue for families
- communicating this policy and payment options to families in a culturally-sensitive way and in the family's first language where possible
- providing all parents/guardians with a copy of the document containing fee information for families (refer to Attachment 1- Fee Policy Summary)
- providing all parents/guardians with a statement of fees and charges (refer to Attachment 2) upon enrolment of their child, and ensuring that the *Fees Policy* is readily accessible at the service
- collecting all relevant information and maintaining relevant documents regarding those with entitlement to concessions, where applicable
- complying with the service's *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy* regarding financial and other information received, including in relation to the payment/non-payment of fees
- notifying parents/guardians within 14 days of any proposed changes to the fees charged or the way in which the fees are collected
- ensuring a notice outlining fees charged by the service is displayed prominently in the main entrance to Ascot Kindergarten.

Certified Supervisors and other educators are responsible for:

- 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
- assisting the Approved Provider, as required, in sighting supporting documentation for access to the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy.

Parents/guardians are responsible for:

- reading the kindergarten's *Fees Policy*, Fee Policy Summary (refer to Attachment 1) and Fee Statement (Attachment 2)
- signing and complying with the Parent/Guardian Consent and Declaration on the enrolment form acknowledging the above documents have been read
- notifying the Approved Provider if experiencing difficulties with the payment of fees
- providing the required documentation to enable the service to claim the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy for eligible families (refer to Attachment 1 – Fee Policy Summary).

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
- monitor the number of families/children excluded from the service because of their inability to pay fees
- keep the policy up to date with current legislation, research, policy and best practice
- revise the policy and procedures as part of the service's policy review cycle, or as required
- notify parents/guardians at least 14 days before making any changes to this policy or its procedures (Regulation 172(2)).

ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1: Fee Policy Summary
- Attachment 2: Fee Statement

REVIEW DATE: AUGUST 2017

Attachment 1:

FEE POLICY SUMMARY - ASCOT KINDERGARTEN 2018

Why Fees Are Necessary

The Department of Education and Training (DET) provides per capita funding as a contribution toward the costs of providing a four-year-old kindergarten program. Services meet the balance of costs through charging fees and fundraising activities. *Please note that funding can only be claimed by one early childhood service – please contact the kinder Administration Officer if your child is attending another early childhood service and you have any questions regarding funding allocation.*

The DET provides a Kindergarten Fee Subsidy (see below) that enables children from eligible families to attend a four-year-old kindergarten program for 15 hours free of charge. The DET also provides funding through the Early Start Kindergarten (ESK) grant to assist three-year-old Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, and children known to Child Protection, to access kindergarten programs two years before school.

[Service Name] provides a range of support options to parents/guardians experiencing difficulty with payment of fees (see *Payment of Fees* section).

How Fees Are Set

As part of the budget development process, the Committee of Management sets fees each year for the programs of the service, taking into consideration:

- the financial viability of the service
- the level of government funding provided for the program, including the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy
- the availability of other income sources, such as grants
- the fees charged by similar services in the area
- the capacity of parents/guardians to pay fees
- reasonable expenditure in meeting agreed program quality and standards
- requirements of the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy (details in the Department of Education and Training *Kindergarten Funding Guide*: available under *Early childhood – For service providers* on the DET website: www.education.vic.gov.au)

Fees set for the year are only reviewed in extraordinary circumstances, for example, if attendance rates fall below the budget 'break even' point or if there is a change in legal or regulatory requirements that has a significant impact on the viability of the kindergarten. 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.

Other Charges

Other charges levied by [Service Name] are listed below. These include:

Late collection charge: The 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 and will be applied at the discretion of the teacher/s

Late payment charge: The Committee of Management reserves the right to implement a late payment charge of \$20 when parents/guardians have not paid term fees by the due date listed on the invoice.

Excursion/Incursion Event charges: The Committee of Management allocates funds each year towards the cost of incursions/excursions and special events however from time to time families may be required to contribute towards the cost of a specific event arranged in response to children's emerging needs and interests. This will take into account affordability and relevance to the program and will be advised to families prior to the event.

Fundraising

Not all service costs are covered by DET per capita funding and fees charged. Fundraising is not used for general operating costs but is undertaken to pay for additional resources and equipment required for the service. While participating in fundraising is voluntary, the support of every family is encouraged.

Methods of Payment

Kindergarten fees may be paid by cash, cheque, money order or electronic funds transfer (EFT). Payments by cash, cheque or money order must be placed in a sealed envelope listing your child's name and group and placed in the secure fees box inside the kinder room. Payment made by EFT is preferred and must include the invoice number and the child and/or family name.

Grants and Subsidies

Kindergarten Fee Subsidy (four-year-old programs only)

The Kindergarten Fee Subsidy (KFS) is provided by DET and enables eligible children to attend a funded kindergarten program for 15 hours free of charge. Eligibility conditions change from time-to-time – contact the service for further information.

Services may apply for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy (KFS) for a child in the following circumstances:

- the child is identified by a parent, carer or legal guardian as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander
- The child is identified on their birth certificate as being a multiple birth child (triplets or more)
- the child individually holds, or has a parent/guardian who holds one of the following:
 - a Commonwealth Health Care Card
 - a Commonwealth Pensioner Concession Card
 - a Department of Veterans' Affairs Gold Card or White Card holders
 - Refugee Visa (subclass 200)
 - In-country Special Humanitarian visa (subclass 201)
 - Global Special Humanitarian visa (subclass 202)
 - Temporary Humanitarian Concern visa (subclass 786)
 - Protection visa (subclass 866)
 - Emergency Rescue visa (subclass 203)
 - Woman at risk visa (subclass 204)
 - Bridging Visas A–E

Note: Supporting documentation must be sighted by the service (where applicable) on acceptance of a place within the program. Families are eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy for the full term in which their concession is valid. Contact the service for further information.

Early Start Kindergarten (ESK) grant

Three-year-old Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and children known to Child Protection are eligible to attend a funded early childhood program that is planned and delivered by a qualified early childhood teacher free of charge. The service receives funding for children who meet the eligibility criteria. Contact the service to discuss eligibility or request further information.

Child Care Benefit (CCB)

Child Care Benefit is an Australian Government payment that can assist eligible families with the costs of childcare at an approved or registered care provider. Ascot Kindergarten is not an approved or registered care provider with the Family Assistance Office.

Payment of Fees

The Committee of Management will regularly review payment options and procedures to ensure that they are inclusive and sensitive to families' cultural and financial situations. Fees will be invoiced to parents/guardians directly and must be paid by the date indicated on the invoice. Each invoice will be accompanied by payment instructions. The first term's fees must be received in full prior to the child commencing at the service. For children enrolled after the commencement of a term, a pro rata invoice will be issued and must be paid in full within 14 days of the child's commencement at the service. Receipts will be provided upon request. Parents/guardians experiencing difficulty in paying fees are requested to speak with their child's teacher or contact the kinder Administration Officer to arrange a suitable alternative payment plan. The *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy* of the service will be complied with at all times in relation to a family's financial/personal circumstances.

Late Payment of Fees/Unpaid Fees

The procedure for late payment of fees or unpaid fees is set out in the Ascot Kindergarten *Fee Policy* (copy available upon request).

Refund of Fees

If a family becomes eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy during a term, a full refund of the applicable term fees will be provided. In any other case, fees are non-refundable (exceptional circumstances may apply – these are at the discretion of the Committee of Management). There will be no refund of fees in the following circumstances:

- a child's short-term illness
- public holidays
- family holiday during operational times
- closure of the service for one or more days when a qualified educator is absent and a qualified reliever is not available
- closure of the service for staff training days
- closure of the service due to extreme and unavoidable circumstances.

In addition, there will be no refund where a family chooses not to send their child to the program for the maximum number of hours for which they are enrolled. If a family withdraws from the service after fees are paid in full for the term, the Committee of Management

will in some circumstances, consider a partial pro-rata refund of fees if the vacant position is filled immediately. If a refund is approved, an administration fee of \$20 will be applied.

Support Services

Families experiencing financial hardship often require access to family support services. Information on these services is available from the kindergarten service provider and a list can be supplied to those families who require it. If your service does not already have this information a good place to start is with your local council

Attachment 2

2018 Ascot Kindergarten Fee Statement

3 year old kinder fees per child per term \$485.00

4 year old kinder fees per child per term \$525.00

Ascot Kindergarten acknowledges the support of the Victorian Government.



Three year old kindergarten – 5 hours per week

Three-year-old kindergarten is not funded by the state government, therefore concessional fees are not available and the program cannot operate without receiving fees. The only exception is where a child is eligible for the Early Start Kindergarten (ESK) fee subsidy (please see the Ascot Kindergarten *Fee Policy Summary* or speak with your kinder teacher regarding eligibility). **Note: Full payment of term 1 fees is required to reserve a place in the 3 year old kindergarten program however children can only commence attending the program when they have turned three.**

	Fees	Due Date
Term 1	\$485	Tuesday 14 th November 2017
Term 2	\$485	Wednesday 28 th March 2018
Term 3	\$485	Wednesday 27 th June 2018
Term 4	\$485	Wednesday 19 th September 2018
Total	\$1940	

Four year old kindergarten – 15 hours per week

The four-year-old kindergarten program is partly funded by the state government, with the balance of funds coming from fees paid by parents/guardians.

Parents/guardians are entitled to obtain the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy (KFS) if they meet one of the criteria outlined in the *Fee Policy Summary* (see attached). Families who are eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy will not be required to make fee payments. If eligibility for this subsidy lapses, then the full payment of fees is required from the beginning of the following term (please speak with the kinder Administration Officer for further information).

	Fees	Due Date
Term 1	\$525	Tuesday 14 th November 2017
Term 2	\$525	Wednesday 28 th March 2018
Term 3	\$525	Wednesday 27 th June 2018
Term 4	\$525	Wednesday 19 th September 2018
Total	\$2100	

General Fee Payment Information

- Fees are non-refundable and are payable by the due date on the invoice (if applicable)

- If fees are not paid by the due date, the Committee of Management may implement the late payment charge of \$20, and begin the procedure for late or unpaid fees (as outlined in the *Ascot Kinder Fee Policy*)
- If financial circumstances change and parents/guardians are unable to pay as agreed, they should immediately notify the kinder Administration Officer, or a Committee of Management member, to discuss payment options.
- Invoicing, receipting and collection of fees will be in line with the *Ascot Kindergarten Fee Policy*
- Throughout the year there may be times where kindergarten sessions are cancelled due to unforeseen circumstances such as a qualified teacher not being available, or planned closures such as staff training days. Parents will be notified in advance of any closures and the reason for the closure.