



PURPOSE

This policy will provide clear guidelines for:

- the setting, payment and collection of fees
- ensuring the viability of South Kingsville Pre School, by setting appropriate fees and charges
- the equitable and non-discriminatory application of fees across the programs provided by South Kingsville Pre School.

POLICY STATEMENT

1. VALUES

South Kingsville Pre School 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
- endeavouring to limit 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 South Kingsville Pre School.

3. BACKGROUND AND LEGISLATION

Background

The Department of Education and Training (DET) provides funding for each child who is enrolled and attending a funded kindergarten program in the year before school. 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 children to attend a funded kindergarten program free of charge in the year before school.

DET also funds eligible three-year-old Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, and children known to Child Protection and/or Child First, to access kindergarten programs as outlined in the *Victorian kindergarten policy, procedures and funding criteria* (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: Governance and Leadership*

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.

Early Start Kindergarten: A funding program that enables three-year-old Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, and children known to Child Protection and/or Child First 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

Enrolment application fee (three year old): A charge to secure a place that has been offered in a program at the service and to cover administrative costs associated with the processing of a child's enrolment. **This fee is non-refundable.**

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

Kindergarten fee deposit: A charge to secure a place that has been offered in a program at the service. This is deducted from term fees.

Kindergarten Fee Subsidy (KFS): A state government subsidy paid in addition to per capita grants to subsidise the costs of parent fees and enable eligible children to attend a funded kindergarten for 15 hours free of charge (*The Kindergarten Funding 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 information for families).

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 Funding Guide (Department of Education and Training):
www.education.vic.gov.au

The constitution of South Kingsville Pre School 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 (Committee) 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
- reviewing the effectiveness of the procedures for late payment and support offered
- 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 Funding Guide* (refer to *Sources*)
- considering any issues regarding fees that may be a barrier to families enrolling at South Kingsville Pre School and removing those barriers wherever possible
- 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
- ensuring that the *Fees Policy* is readily accessible at the service (Regulation 171)
- providing all parents/guardians with a copy of the document containing fee information for families (refer to Attachment 1)
- providing all parents/guardians with a statement of fees and charges (refer to samples in Attachments 2 and 3) upon enrolment of their child, and ensure that the *Fees Policy* is readily accessible at the service.
- ensuring fees are collected and receipted
- providing all parents/guardians with a fee payment agreement (refer to samples in Attachments 3 and 4)
- 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 (*Regulation 172 (2)*)

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 South Kingsville Preschool and removing those barriers wherever possible
- communicating this policy and payment options to families in a culturally-sensitive way and in the family's first language where possible
- considering options for payment when affordability is an issue for families
- providing all parents/guardians with a copy of the document containing fee information for families (refer to Attachment 1)

- providing all parents/guardians with a statement of fees and charges (refer to samples in Attachments 2 and 3) upon enrolment of their child, and ensure that the *Fees Policy* is readily accessible at the service
- providing all parents/guardians with a fee payment agreement (refer to samples in Attachments 4 and 5)
- 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

All other staff 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 South Kingsville Pre School Fee information for families (refer to Attachment 1), the Fee Payment Agreement (refer to Attachments 4 and 5) and the Statement of Fees and Charges (refer to Attachments 2 and 3)
- signing and complying with the Fee Payment Agreement (refer to Attachments 4 and 5)
- 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 information for families).

EVALUATION

In order to assess whether the values and purposes of the policy have been achieved, the Approved Provider will:

- encourage 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 substantial changes to this policy, which would impact on the supervision or care of children.

ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1: Fee information for families
- Attachment 2: Statement of Fees and Charges – Fee schedule – Four-year-old (funded) kindergarten program
- Attachment 3: Statement of Fees and Charges – Fee schedule – Three-year-old kindergarten program
- Attachment 4: Fee Payment Agreement – Four-year-old (funded) kindergarten program
- Attachment 5: Fee Payment Agreement – Three-year-old kindergarten program

AUTHORISATION

This policy was adopted by the Committee of Management of South Kingsville Pre School on 14/09/20

REVIEW DATE: 14/09/21

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The SKPS Fees Policy was originally created by ELAA ©2019

ATTACHMENT 1

Fee information for families

South Kingsville Pre School 2021

1. Why fees are necessary

The Department of Education & Early Childhood Development 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.

DET provides a Kindergarten Fee Subsidy (see below) that enables children from eligible families to attend a kindergarten program free of charge in the year before school.

DET also provides funding to assist eligible three-year-old Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, and children known to Child Protection and/or Child First, to access kindergarten programs.

South Kingsville Pre School provides a range of support options to parents/guardians experiencing difficulty with payment of fees (see below).

2. 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 Funding Guide* (Department of Education and Training) available from the DET website: www.education.vic.gov.au

Once fees are set for the year, they will only be reviewed in extraordinary circumstances, for example, if enrolments drop and the service is at risk of not being able to meet its expenses.

3. Other charges

Other charges levied by South Kingsville Pre School are included on the Statement of Fees and Charges. These include:

- **Administration levy (three year old program):** This payment of \$50 secures a child's place at the service and is payable on acceptance of enrolment. This levy is non-refundable.
- **Kindergarten fee deposit:** This payment secures a child's place at the service and is payable on acceptance of enrolment. The deposit is retained as part payment on term fees. **Families eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy (see below) are not required to pay the deposit.** Families experiencing hardship should discuss any difficulties with the service.
- **Excursion/service event charge:** This additional charge is required to cover the cost of excursions or special events that occur throughout the year in response to emerging children's program needs and interests. Affordability and relevance to the children's interests and the service program will be taken into consideration before a decision is made that will require families to pay this additional charge (refer to *Excursions and Service Events Policy*). Events that are planned ahead are included as an expenditure item in the service's budget and do not incur this additional charge.

- **Maintenance Levy:** The participation of parents/guardians is encouraged by the service and can help to keep costs more affordable. However, not all families are able to assist at the service. A refundable levy system has been introduced by the service and replaces voluntary labour with paid labour. Payment will be refunded to parents/guardians on participation in specified activities which may include working bees, BBQ's, maintenance, fundraising events and gardening etc. Eligible concession card holders will not be required to pay this levy. The levy is not intended to be a barrier to participation and families experiencing difficulties should discuss this with service.
- During Term 2 at South Kingsville Pre School, a refundable "Maintenance Levy" of \$50 will be invoiced to parents/guardians. This levy will be refunded following the family/parent/guardians' attendance/involvement in specified activities. The Administration staff will issue a refund on evidence of participation. Parents/Guardians are encouraged to attend several of the maintenance events despite requiring only one attendance to secure the refund.
- **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 is set at a level determined by the Committee of Management. In these situations, the following procedures will apply:

A late collection fee will be applied :

- On any single occasion where the collection of a child is 10 minutes or longer without notification.
- On the second occasion the parent/guardian or carer is late with or without notification, a verbal warning that financial penalties will be applied, should it happen again.
- A copy of the late collection of children handout and a copy of the Delivery and Collection of Children Policy will be given.
- When there is a practice of late collection of a child, for a third time onwards, a financial penalty will be applied.

FEE STRUCTURE

The fee structure is as follows:

First 10 minutes	\$15.00
Rate per 5 minutes thereafter	\$5.00

All additional costs incurred by the Pre School, including interpreter service fees, will be directly charged to the parents/guardians.

FEE COLLECTION PROCEDURE

- The parent/guardian will receive an invoice detailing all charges as per the above fee structure and any additional costs.
- Payment due within 14 days of the invoice date.
 Non-payment within 14 days may result in the Committee of Management withdrawing the child's place at the service. In this case, parents/guardians will be provided 14 days notice by mail.

5. Fundraising

Not all service costs are covered by DET per capita funding and the fees charged. Fundraising is undertaken to meet the balance and/or pay for additional items for the service. While participation in fundraising is voluntary, the support of every family is encouraged. Fundraising activities are also an opportunity for families and communities to come together.

6. Subsidies

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

The Kindergarten Fee Subsidy is provided by DET and enables eligible children to attend 15 hours of kindergarten free of charge. Eligibility conditions may change from time-to-time and must be checked in the most recent edition of the *Kindergarten Funding Guide* (refer to *Sources*).

Families may be eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy in the year before school if their child:

- is Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander; or
- holds, or has a parent/guardian who holds a Humanitarian or refugee Visa; or
- is a multiple birth child (triplets or more); or
- holds, or has a parent who holds a Commonwealth Health Care Card, Pensioner Concession Card or Veteran's Affairs Card.

Exclusions and exceptions: Not available for long day care services in receipt of Commonwealth Child Care Benefit.

Where a child is identified by a parent, carer or legal guardian as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, no verification is required.

Supporting documentation must be sighted by the service on acceptance of a place or on commencement in 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.

6.2 Early Start Kindergarten fee subsidy

Three-year-old Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and children known to Child Protection and/or Child First 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 for further information.

7. 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. The following fee collection procedures apply:

- **Payment 1**
Three-Year-Olds: A \$170 deposit is required to secure the position in the program and is paid on enrolment.

Four-Year-Olds: A \$160 deposit is paid on enrolment to secure the position in the program. Those eligible for Kindergarten Fees Subsidy and Early Start Fee Subsidy are exempt from the deposit.

Payment 2

Invoices for Term 1 are to be paid within 14 days of the invoice date (invoiced in the year preceding commencement). Term 1 fees must be paid in full before the child commences at the centre.

- **Payments 3,4 &5**
Invoices for Terms 2,3 and 4 will be emailed 3 weeks prior to the end of the previous term and are to be paid in full within 14 days of the invoice date.

Each invoice will be accompanied by payment instructions.

Parents/guardians experiencing difficulty in paying fees are requested to contact the 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.

8. Unpaid fees

If fees are not paid by the due date, the following steps will be taken.

- An initial reminder letter will be sent to parents/guardians with a specified payment date.
- Where payment is not received, families will be contacted by the Administration Officer to discuss non-payment, the range of support options available and establish a payment plan.
- Where payment is still not received, families will be invited to attend a meeting to discuss the range of support options available and establish a payment plan.
- Continued non-payment may result in a second and final letter notifying parents/guardians that the child's place at the service **may** be withdrawn unless payment is made or a payment plan is entered into within a specified period of time. The Committee of Management will continue to offer support by providing information on a range of support services available for the family.
- If a decision is made to withdraw the child's place at the service, the parents/guardians will be provided with 14 day notice in writing. (The Committee of Management reserves the right to employ the services of a debt collector.)

The Administration Officer, Treasurer and any committee members involved will ensure the *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy* of the centre is adhered to. Educators will not be involved in any stage of this process but may be consulted regarding a child's attendance rates and any other information required for the Treasurer to fulfil their role.

9. Late enrolments

For children enrolled after the commencement of Term 1, an invoice will be issued pro rata and the child is able to commence the program immediately. The fee invoice will need to be paid within 14 days of commencement.

10. Refund of fees

If a family becomes eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy during a term, a full refund of the applicable term fees (and fee deposit, where appropriate) will be provided. Fees may still apply for programs offering more than the required minimum hours per week.

The Administration fee for the three-year-old program is non-refundable. In any other case, fees are non-refundable (exceptional circumstances may apply – these are at the discretion of the Committee of Management and will be considered upon written application).

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.

11. Children turning three during the year of enrolment

Full payment from the first day of Term 1 is required if a place is to be reserved for a child in the three year-old kindergarten program. Children can only commence the program when they have turned three.

12. Notification of fee changes during the year

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 1 term in advance of any required fee increase and will be offered the option to request a payment plan.

ATTACHMENT 2 Statement of Fees and Charges

South Kingsville Pre School Fee schedule
Four-year-old (funded) kindergarten

Hours: 15 hours per week

Fee Schedule 2021

	Fees (\$)	Other charges (\$)	Total (\$)	Families eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy		
				Fees (\$)	Other charges (\$)	Total (\$)
Kindergarten fee deposit		\$160 deposit				
Term 1	\$460 less deposit paid		\$300	\$0		\$0
Term 2	\$460		\$510	\$0		\$0
Term 3	\$460		\$460	\$0		\$0
Term 4	\$460		\$460	\$0		\$0
Total	\$1840	\$50 refundable maintenance levy	\$1730	\$0		\$0

Payment of fees

Depending on Hobson’s Bay City Council issuing placements on schedule, invoices for Term 1 will be issued in October/November of the year prior to commencement. Invoices for Terms 2, 3 and 4 will be issued three weeks prior to the end of term and must be paid by the due date.

Kindergarten Fee Subsidy

Families who are eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy (refer to Fee information for families) will not be required to make fee payments providing that supporting documentation has been sighted.

Maintenance Levy

South Kingsville Pre School invoices a \$50 Refundable “Maintenance Levy” prior to Term 2 that is in addition to term fees (refer to Fee information for families).

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 (refer to Fee information for families).

ATTACHMENT 3
Statement of Fees and Charges

South Kingsville Pre School Fee schedule

Three-year-old kindergarten

Hours: 6 hours per week

Fee Schedule 2021

	Fees (\$)	Other charges (\$)	Total (\$)
\$170 deposit		\$50 administration fee	
Term 1	\$470 less deposit paid		\$300
Term 2	\$520		\$520
Term 3	\$470		\$470
Term 4	\$470		\$470
Total	\$1930	\$50 refundable maintenance levy(term 2)	\$1760

Payment of fees

Invoices will be issued in the September/October of Term 4 the year prior to commencement and must be paid by the due date. Invoices for Terms 2, 3 and 4 will be issued three weeks prior to the end of term and must be paid by the due date.

Administration levy

Parents/guardians are required to pay the Administration levy of \$50 on offer of a place. Payment will secure the child’s place in the three-year-old kindergarten program. This levy is non-refundable.

Early Start Kindergarten fee subsidy

Families who are eligible for the Early Start Kindergarten fee subsidy (refer to Fee information for families) will not be required to make fee payments providing that supporting documentation has been sighted.

Children turning three during the year

Full payment from the first day of Term 1 is required if a place is to be reserved for a child in the three year-old kindergarten program. Children can only commence the program when they have turned three.

Maintenance Levy

South Kingsville Pre School invoices a \$50 Refundable “Maintenance Levy” prior to Term 2 in addition to term fees (refer to Fee information for families).

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 (refer to Fee information for families).