

# BEACONSFIELD KINDERGARTEN INC.

## FEES FREE KINDER POLICY

Mandatory – Quality Area 7

### PURPOSE

This policy will provide clear guidelines for:

- how Beaconsfield Kindergarten will comply with the Free Kinder initiative
- the application of surplus funding within Beaconsfield Kindergarten, ensuring they are only used to ensure the quality of program delivery and development of children enrolled in the service
- the setting, payment and collection of any additional charges.

Commented [JO1]: funding requirements.

### POLICY STATEMENT

#### VALUES

Beaconsfield Kindergarten Inc. is committed to:

- providing responsible financial management of the service
- supporting the Victorian Government's Free Kindergarten initiative
- increasing access to quality kindergarten programs for all Victorian children
- ensuring there are no financial barriers for families wishing to access an early childhood program for their child/children
- maintaining confidentiality in relation to the financial circumstances of parents/guardians.

#### SCOPE

This policy applies to the Approved Provider, Persons with Management and Control, Nominated Supervisor, Person in Day-to-Day Charge, educators, staff and parents/guardians with an enrolled child, or who wish to enrol a child at Beaconsfield Kindergarten Inc.

### RESPONSIBILITIES

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 in consultation with parents/guardians, the Nominated Supervisor and staff, and in	R	√	√	√	

line with the requirements of DE's Free Kindergarten initiative (refer to Definitions)					
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 (Regulation 168), and take reasonable steps to ensure those policies and procedures are followed (Regulation 170)	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 (if any), including any applicable fees for e.g. excursions and any additional hours	R	√			
Reimbursing families in full for enrolment deposits that have already been paid upon acceptance of enrolment	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 (refer to Definitions)	R	√			
Ensuring any non-funded positions are enrolled in accordance with the Kindergarten Funding Guidelines (refer to Sources)	R	√			
Providing communication to families explaining their access to one funded kindergarten program per child per year and explaining that Beaconsfield Kindergarten will be claiming this government funding	R	√			
Ensuring families that attend both sessional kindergarten and a long day care service <b>nominate and document</b> at 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	√			
Charging families only for occasional special events/ excursions that occur outside the normal program/curriculum	R	√	√		
Considering any issues that may be a barrier to families enrolling at Beaconsfield Kindergarten and removing those barriers wherever possible	R	√			
Ensuring that any child who is eligible for Early Start Kindergarten is still enrolled at the service and recorded on the KIM system	R	√	√		

Commented [JO2]: New

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 (Regulation 171)	R	√			
Providing all parents/guardians with information about Free Kinder and any applicable fees (refer to Attachment 1) (included in the Information Booklet)	R	√			
Providing all parents/guardians with a statement of additional fees and charges (refer to samples in Attachment 2) upon enrolment of their child (included in the Information Booklet) <b>NOTE:</b> parents should also be advised that enrolling for hours over 15 (if available) is optional and families can choose to only enrol for 15 hours and receive this program at no cost.	R	√			
Providing all parents/guardians with an additional fee payment fee agreement ( <i>refer to Attachments 3</i> ) if applicable, and informing them of any action that will be taken if fees are not paid.	R	√			
Reading the Beaconsfield Kindergarten Free Kindergarten information for families ( <i>refer to Attachment 1</i> ) and the Statement of Fees and Charges ( <i>refer to Attachments 2</i> ), and the Additional Hours Fee Payment Agreement (refer to Attachment 3)				√	
Signing and complying with the Additional Hours Fee Payment Agreement ( <i>refer to Attachments 3</i> ), if applicable				√	
Notifying the approved provider if experiencing difficulties with the payment of additional hours fees				√	
Ensuring any fees/charges that are collected are receipted	R	√			
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 fees	R	√			
Notifying parents/guardians a minimum of 14 days prior to any proposed changes to any fees charged or the way in which such fees are collected (Regulation 172(2)), and ideally providing one term's notice	R	√			
Implementing and reviewing this policy, in consultation with parents/guardians, the approved provider and staff, and in line with the requirements of DE's Free Kinder initiative ( <i>refer to Sources</i> )					
Informing the approved provider of any complaints or concerns that have been raised regarding additional hours 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 Kinder, which will support access to two years of high-quality kindergarten programs for all Victorian children. All families with a child enrolled in a funded kindergarten program are eligible for Free Kinder, this includes both 3- and 4-year-old kindergarten programs.

Free Kinder supports families to access a funded kindergarten program by:

- providing a free 15-hour program to four-year-old children enrolled at a sessional service
- providing a free 5-to-15-hour program to three-year-old children enrolled at a sessional service (subject to the length of funded program offered)
- offsetting the funded kindergarten program component of parent fees for three and four-year-old children enrolled at a long day care service.

Free kinder supports every Victorian child to get the best start in life no matter where they live. Research shows that play-based learning is a powerful way to support children's learning and development. Two years of early learning is a crucial part of their educational journey; these benefits last into the school years and beyond.

Regulation 168(2) (n) of the *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011* requires that funded services have a comprehensive written fees policy, and the content of this policy must be communicated to families. Any voluntary parent donations and/or fundraising must comply with the Free Kinder subsidy guidelines and be responsive to the local community.

### Legislation and standards

Relevant legislation and standards include but are not limited to:

- *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities 2006* (Vic)
- *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005* (Vic)
- *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cth)
- *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010*
- *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011*: Regulation 168(2)(n)
- *Equal Opportunity Act 1995* (Vic)
- *National Quality Standard*

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

**Additional Hours/Wrap around care:** care that is provided by a kindergarten service to kindergarten children outside of the 15 hours per week program. Wrap around care fees are not funded by the Victorian Government but may be covered by CCS (refer to Definitions).

**Approved child care:** Approved child care services are services that have Australian Government approval to receive the Child Care Subsidy (*refer to Definitions*) on behalf of eligible parents. Approved child care includes centre-based day care, including long day care and occasional care, family day care, outside school hours care and in-home care.

**Child care subsidy (CCS):** 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](http://www.education.gov.au/child-care-subsidy)

**Early Start Kindergarten:** A funding program that provides eligible children 15 hours of a free of low-cost kindergarten program each week for two years before starting school. To be eligible a child must turn three by 30 April in the year they start kindergarten and be from a refugee or asylum seeker background, identify as Aboriginal and 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 if Free Kinder and/or 15 hours per week of funded three-year-old kinder is offered. This ensures eligible children have priority access to a minimum of 5 but up 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.

**Enrolment registration fee:** A payment to cover administrative costs associated with the processing of a child's enrolment application for a place in a program at the service, if applicable. High priority families (*refer to Definitions*) **should not be charged** any fees or levies, unless it is for outside the funded hours. 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.

**Excursion/service event charge:** An additional charge required to meet the cost of special events or excursions that occur in response to emerging children's program needs. Events that are planned ahead and are included as an expenditure item in the service's budget do not incur this additional charge (*refer to Excursions and Service Events Policy*).

**Fees:** A charge for program hours over and above the 15 funded hours per week (600 per year) and/or wrap around care.

**Free Kinder:** A Victorian Government Best Start, Best Life initiative providing free kindergarten 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)
- offsetting the funded kindergarten program component of parent fees for 3 and 4-year-old children enrolled at a long day care service.

**Funded Kindergarten:** The Victorian Government provides funding to support children to access a high-quality kindergarten program in the two years before they start school. The funding is a contribution towards meeting the cost of the kindergarten program. Funded kindergartens charge fees to help meet the cost of running kindergarten programs. Fees are set by individual kindergartens and depend on things like how many hours children attend and whether there are extra costs such as excursions.

**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 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).

**Pre-Prep:** Four-Year-Old Kindergarten will gradually transition to Pre-Prep over the next decade from 2025. Funded kindergarten hours will double from 15 to up to 30 hours a week. Pre-Prep will be delivered through sessional kindergartens and long-day-care centres. By ~~2032~~ 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/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.

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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)
- The constitution of Beaconsfield Kindergarten Inc.

### Service policies

- *Compliments and Complaints Policy*
- *Delivery and Collection of Children Policy*
- *Enrolment and Orientation Policy*
- *Excursions and Service Events Policy*
- *Governance and Management of the Service*
- *Inclusion and Equity Policy*
- *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy*

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## EVALUATION

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

- regularly seek feedback from everyone affected by the policy regarding its effectiveness, particularly in relation to affordability, flexibility of payment options and procedures for the collection of fees
- monitor the implementation, compliance, complaints and incidents in relation to this policy
- keep the policy up to date with current legislation and government policy, research 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
  - Attachment 2: Statement of Fees and Charges
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## **AUTHORISATION**

This policy was adopted by the Approved Provider of Beaconsfield Kindergarten Inc. on 17<sup>th</sup> March 2014.

**REVIEW DATE:** 16/09/2024

**REVIEW FREQUENCY:** Yearly

**NEXT REVIEW DUE:** September 2025

## ATTACHMENT 1

### Free Kindergarten Information for Families 2025



#### 1. General information

Kindergarten programs for four-year-old and three-year-old children in Victorian Government funded services will be free as part of the Best Start, Best Life reform. This investment will save families up to \$2,500 for each child enrolled in a participating funded kindergarten program.

DE also provides funding to assist eligible three-year-old Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from a refugee or asylum seeker background and children known to Child Protection to access ~~15 hours of kindergarten per week~~ kindergarten programs.

#### 2. What free kindergarten means at our service

Beaconsfield Kindergarten has opted in to the Free Kinder initiative. Applicable parent fees are:

- Funded sessional kindergarten for 3-year-old children – no parent fee (2024: 5 hours per week at Woods St, 7 ¼ hours per week at O'Neil Rd) (2025: 15 hours per week at Woods St, 7 ¼ hours per week at O'Neil Rd)
- Funded sessional kindergarten for 4-year-old children – no parent fee (15 hours per week)

#### 3. Other charges

Other charges levied by Beaconsfield Kindergarten are included on the Statement of Fees and Charges which is also included in this booklet.

These may include:

- **Excursion/service event charge:** At times throughout the year an additional excursion(s) or event(s) may be arranged where it is considered relevant to the service's program and the children's interests. At this time any additional costs to families are taken into consideration before a decision is made (*refer to Excursions and Service Events Policy*). Events that are planned ahead are included as an expenditure item in the service's budget and do not incur this additional charge.
- **Late collection charge:** The Committee of Management reserves the right to implement a late collection charge when parents/guardians are frequently late (more than three times) in collecting a child from the service.

#### 4. Fundraising and voluntary parent payment/donations

While participation in fundraising/donation is voluntary, the support of every family is encouraged. Fundraising activities are also an opportunity for families and communities to come together.

#### 5. Children turning three during the year of enrolment

Children can only commence the program when they have turned three. If your child has been offered a place but will not turn three before the start of the kindergarten year, please complete their enrolment information as soon as possible and they can start kinder after they have turned three.

#### 6. Early Start Kindergarten (ESK)

Three-year-old Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children known to Child Protection and children from a refugee or asylum seeker background are eligible to attend 15

hours of free kinder each week that is planned and delivered by a qualified early childhood teacher free of charge. Contact the service for further information.

**7. Support services**

Families experiencing financial hardship often require access to family support services. Information on these services may be available from the kindergarten service provider or alternatively families may contact the local council.

## ATTACHMENT 2

### Beaconsfield Kindergarten Inc. Statement of Fees and Charges 2025



#### Four-year-old kindergarten

- 15 hours per week

#### Three-year-old kindergarten

- O'Neil Rd: 7 ¼ hours per week (2024 / 2025)
- Woods St: 5 hours per week (2024)
- Wood St: 15 hours per week (2025)

	Fees (\$)	Other charges (\$)	Total (\$)
Term 1	\$ 0.00	\$ 0.00	\$ 0.00
Term 2	\$ 0.00	\$ 0.00	\$ 0.00
Term 3	\$ 0.00	\$ 0.00	\$ 0.00
Term 4	\$ 0.00	\$ 0.00	\$ 0.00
Total	\$0.00	\$ 0.00	\$0.00

#### Late collection charge

The Committee of Management reserves the right to implement a late collection charge when parents/guardians are frequently late (more than three times) in collecting a child from the service.

- The late collection charge will be \$1 per minute for the first 30 minutes and then \$50 for every 15-minute block in excess of 30 minutes - to be charged if collection occurs more than 15 minutes after the end of the session time.
- In circumstances that are beyond the control of families, for example, weather and traffic accidents, which may result in them arriving late to collect their child, the Centre Manager will have the discretion to decide if families will be charged the late fee.

### ATTACHMENT 3

#### Fee payment contract

Child's full name:

Parent's/guardian's full name:

I/we acknowledge that the three-year-old 15 hours per week (600 hours per year) funded kindergarten program is fully funded by the state government, with the balance of additional hours over and above and/or wrap around care coming from fees paid by parents/guardians [remove if not applicable/required].

I/we acknowledge that the four-year-old 15 hours per week (600 hours per year) funded kindergarten program is fully funded by the state government, with the balance of additional hours over and above and/or wrap around care coming from fees paid by parents/guardians.

I/we agree to pay any additional fees for services above the 600 hours by the due date on the invoice.

I/we understand that fees for additional hours each term are non-refundable.

I/we acknowledge that if fees for additional hours are not paid by the due date, the approved provider/Committee of Management/Board [delete whichever is not applicable] will implement the late payment of fees procedures, as outlined in the Free Kinder Information for Families, which could result in the withdrawal of my/our child's place at the service and no further enrolments until the outstanding fees are paid.

I/we agree that if my/our financial circumstances change and I/we am/are unable to pay as agreed, I/we will immediately notify the [responsible position] to discuss alternative payment options.

I/we acknowledge that I/we have received and read the service's Free Kinder Information for Families, which outlines the procedure for payment of fees.

**Signature (parent/guardian):**

**Date:**