

FEES POLICY

Mandatory – Quality Area 7

PURPOSE

This policy will provide clear guidelines for:

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

POLICY STATEMENT

1. VALUES

Alfred Road 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 Alfred Road 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

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>

Enrolment application 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.

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 deposit: A charge to secure a place that has been offered in a program at the service.

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 information for families).

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 DEECD website*: www.education.vic.gov.au)
- The constitution of Alfred Road 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 Alfred Road 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)

- 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 (Regulation 171)
- providing all parents/guardians with a fee payment agreement (refer to samples in Attachments 3 and 4)
- 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 Alfred Road 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 DEECD's *The Kindergarten Guide* (refer to *Sources*)
- considering any issues regarding fees that may be a barrier to families enrolling at Alfred Road 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)
- 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 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
- ensuring a notice outlining fees charged by the service is displayed prominently in the main entrance to Alfred Road Kindergarten.

All 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 Alfred Road Kindergarten 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:

- 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 information for families
- Attachment 2: Fee Payment Agreement – Four-year-old (funded) kindergarten program
- Attachment 3: Fee Payment Agreement – Three-year-old kindergarten program

AUTHORISATION

This policy was adopted by the Approved Provider of Alfred Road Kindergarten on **19/06/2018**.

REVIEW DATE: MAY 2021

ATTACHMENT 1

Fee information for families

Fee Policy Summary 2022

Why fees are necessary?

The Department of Education and Training (DET) provides per capita funding for all eligible three and four year old children, as a contribution towards the cost of operating the kindergarten. The kindergarten is responsible for all costs incurred in operating and maintaining the center. As these costs are greater than the funding available, income from other sources, such as primarily fees, is required to meet the cost of the service.

Parents/guardians need to be aware that kindergartens are not a free service and rely on prompt payment of fees to meet operational costs. All parents/guardians must pay fees. The service has the discretion to withdraw service for non-payment of fees.

Fee structure

	Hours per week	Fees per term
3 year old – Wombats Includes incursions	8	\$400
4 year old – Koala Group Includes incursions	15	\$620
3 & 4 year old Eligible Concession Card Holders Includes incursions	8/15	Funded by DET
Mixed Age – Kookaburra Group 3 year old	2 ½	\$240
4 year old	2 ½	\$240
Refundable Maintenance Levy		\$50

All fees are due and are to be fully payable by the date stated on the invoice. Invoices for all fees will be issued by email. Payment can be made via online bank transfer (preferred) or by credit card. Receipts will be issued automatically. Please note that fees are correct as at time of publication and subject to change.

A term shall be deemed as corresponding in time to the State kindergarten terms. Fees are payable for each child attending in full or part of the term thereof. The Committee of Management reserves the right of exclusion, should fees be outstanding (maximum of three weeks into the current term).

Term 1 fees non-refundable deposit

Term 1 fees are payable in full when an initial offer for a place in a program is accepted, in order to secure/reserve the place offered. All term fees are non-refundable.

Refundable Maintenance levy

Each family is required to pay a \$50 per term refundable levy with their term fees, to contribute towards the maintenance costs of the Kindergarten. The levy will be refunded after participation in

a fundraising activity during the term, being a maintenance day (minimum of five hours per year and a minimum of 1 hour per family per term), volunteering as a member of the Committee of Management, or other activities approved by the Kindergarten.

Fee subsidy for low income families

A parent/guardian or child who holds a current eligible Concession Card or Visa is eligible for a reduction in their fees. To obtain a reduction in fees, the eligible card or visa must be sighted prior to the start of the year and on expiration of the original card. Re-issued/replacement card or visa must be sighted by ARK if any queries regarding the payment of fees arise. Please contact ARK if assistance is required.

NOTE: Personal financial matters are dealt with in strict confidence.

Eligible concession cards and visas

Eligible concession cards and visas are:

- Commonwealth Health Care Card (parent or child)
- Commonwealth Pensioner Concession Card
- Visas 447, 451, 785 or 786 (temporary protection/humanitarian visas)
- Visas 200-217 (refugee and special humanitarian visas)
- Bridging Visas A-F (asylum seekers)
- Department of Veterans' Affairs Gold Card
- Or the child is a triplet or quadruplet and all siblings are attending a funded program in the same year and the family does not have 'approved' Commonwealth Child Care Benefit applied to the fee.

Early Start Funding

Early Start Kindergarten provides free or low cost kindergarten to eligible three year old children. Applications for Early Start Kindergarten funding are made by ARK on your behalf and the grant is paid directly to the service.

Your child is eligible if they are aged three by 30 April in the year they will be attending kindergarten, and:

- Your family has had contact with Child Protection (or been referred by them to Child FIRST), or
- Your child is Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander

Payment of accounts

Fees will be invoiced to families directly and must be paid by the date indicated on the invoice. Please note that the first installment of fees must be received before the child can commence kindergarten. Families experiencing financial hardship should contact ARK to discuss an individualised payment plan.

Unpaid fees

Fees not paid by the due date will incur a \$25 late fee and be followed up by:

- a reminder letter stating fees are overdue, giving ten (10) working days for payment.
- if payment is not received or an agreed payment plan has not been drawn up, the family will be contacted by telephone.
- if payment is not received or an agreed payment plan has not been drawn up, a second and final letter will be sent notifying parents/guardians that unless payment is made within ten (10) working days, there will no longer be a place available at the service for their child.

The Committee reserves the right to take action to recover debts.

Late collection fee

- A late collection/pick-up fee will be incurred by parents when children are not collected within 15 minutes of the end of session. From this time, the fee will be charged at a rate of \$5.00 per five minute blocks with a minimum charge of \$15.00. Record of the late fee payable will be kept in the attendance register and the Treasurer will be notified and proceed to raise immediate invoice. Overdue late pickup fees will be treated in the same manner as overdue fees. The late pickup fee will be waived in emergency situations at the discretion of the Committee of Management.

Child absence

If the child is absent for any reason, including holidays and illness, fees are still required to be paid in order to maintain a kindergarten place.

Late enrolments

Please note, that if a child is enrolled after the start of the kindergarten year, the first installment of fees (prorated if applicable) must be received before the child can commence kindergarten.

ATTACHMENT 2 Fee Payment Agreement

[Year]

Four-year-old (funded) kindergarten program

Please complete this form and return to Alfred Road Kindergarten by [Date]

Fee payment contract

Child's full name: _____

Parent's/guardian's full name: _____

- I/we acknowledge that 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.
- I/we understand that I/we am/are entitled to obtain the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy if I/we meet one of the criteria below. If my/our eligibility lapses, then I/we understand that full payment of fees is required from the beginning of the following term.
- I/we agree to pay fees by the due date on the invoice.
- I/we understand that term fees are non-refundable.
- I/we acknowledge that if fees are not paid by the due date, the Committee of Management/Board [delete whichever is not applicable] will implement the late payment of fees procedures, as outlined in the *Fees Policy*, which could result in the withdrawal of my/our child's place at the service.
- 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 Fee information for families, which outlines the procedure for payment of fees.

Kindergarten Fee Subsidy

Please indicate below which concession you are eligible for – the criteria is outlined on Attachment 1 Section 6.

Concession: _____

Supporting documentation will need to be sighted on commencement at Alfred Road Kindergarten by the [responsible position].

Note: the eligibility of concessions may vary from time-to-time. Up-to-date information can be found in *The Kindergarten Guide* (Department of Education and Early Childhood Development) available under *early childhood / service providers on the DEECD website:*

www.education.vic.gov.au

Signature (parent/guardian)

Date

Note: Invoices, receipts and collection of fees will be in accordance with the Alfred Road Kindergarten *Fees Policy*.

ATTACHMENT 5 Fee Payment Agreement

[Year]

Three-year-old kindergarten program

Please complete this form and return to Alfred Road Kindergarten by [Date].

Fee payment contract

Child's full name: _____

Parent's/guardian's full name: _____

- I/we acknowledge that the three-year-old kindergarten is not funded by the state government and that the program cannot operate without receiving fees (the only exception is where a child is eligible for the Early Start Kindergarten fee subsidy – see below).
- I/we agree to pay fees by the due date on the invoice.
- I/we acknowledge that if fees are not paid by the due date, the Committee of Management/Board [delete whichever is not applicable] will implement the late payment of fees procedures, as outlined in the *Fees Policy* which could result in the withdrawal of my/our child's place at the service.
- I/we understand that term fees are non-refundable.
- 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 Fee information for families, which outlines the procedures for payment of fees.

Signature (parent/guardian)

Date

Note: invoices, receipts and collection of fees will be in accordance with the Alfred Road Kindergarten *Fees Policy*.

Early Start Kindergarten

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 for further information.