

FEES POLICY

Mandatory – Quality Area 7

AUTHORISATION

This policy was adopted by the Approved Provider of Doris Blackburn Preschool in June 2016.

REVIEW DATE: NEXT DUE JUNE 2022

PURPOSE

This policy will provide clear guidelines for:

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

POLICY STATEMENT

1. VALUES

Doris Blackburn Preschool 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, Person with Management and Control, Nominated Supervisor, Person in Day-to-Day Charge, educators and parents/guardians with an enrolled child, or who wish to enrol a child at Doris Blackburn Preschool.

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 Early Start Kindergarten for three-year-old Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, and children known to Child Protection, to access kindergarten programs as outlined in *The Kindergarten Funding Guide* (refer to Sources).

Regulation 168(2) (n) of *Education and Care Services National Regulations* 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 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 requirements* (refer to *Definitions*), and be responsive to the local community and the viability of the service. The *Victorian Kindergarten Funding 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), as amended 2011
- *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005* (Vic), as amended 2012
- *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

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 funded program that enables three-year-old Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, and children known to Child Protection to attend a kindergarten program that is planned and delivered by an early childhood teacher for up to 15 hours per week. Details are available at: www.education.vic.gov.au.

Enrolment application fee: A non-refundable payment to secure a place within a program at the centre.

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 Subsidy (KFS): A state government subsidy paid directly to the funded service to enable eligible families to attend a funded kindergarten program or funded three-year-old place at no cost (or minimal cost) to promote participation. Details are available at <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/providers/funding/Pages/kinderfundingcriteria.aspx>

Kindergarten Fee Subsidy – Fees Policy: Provides operational guidelines for services administering the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy and can be found in the *Kindergarten Funding Guide* <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/providers/funding/Pages/kinderfundingcriteria.aspx>

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 Doris Blackburn Preschool

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 *Kindergarten Funding 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 Doris Blackburn Preschool 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 (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 (Attachment 3)
- 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 Doris Blackburn Preschool.

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 *Kindergarten Funding Guide* (refer to *Sources*)
- considering any issues regarding fees that may be a barrier to families enrolling at Doris Blackburn Preschool 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 (Attachment 1)
- providing all parents/guardians with a statement of fees and charges (Attachments 2) 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 (Attachment 3)
- collecting and receipting fees
- 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 Doris Blackburn Preschool.

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 Doris Blackburn Preschool Fee information for families (Attachment 1), the Fee Payment Agreement (Attachment 3) and the Statement of Fees and Charges (Attachments 2)
- signing and complying with the Fee Payment Agreement (Attachment 3)
- 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: Statement of Fees and Charges – Fee schedule – Three-year-old (unfunded) Activity Group and Four-year-old (funded) Kindergarten Program
- Attachment 3: Fee Payment Agreement
- Attachment 4: Outstanding Fee Payment Schedule

ATTACHMENT 1

Fee information for families

This fees information is given to you, so that you have a full understanding of your obligations and financial commitments when sending your child to Doris Blackburn Preschool.

1. 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.

DET provides a Kindergarten Fee Subsidy (see below) that enables children from eligible families to attend a four-year-old kindergarten program free of charge, or at a minimal cost.

Doris Blackburn Preschool 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 Fee Subsidy – Fees Policy* (details in the *Kindergarten Funding Guide*)

Fees set for the year are only reviewed in extraordinary circumstances, for example, if attendance rates fall below the budget 'break even' point.

Fee payment options:

BPAY facility is managed by the Preschool's administration office, ASK. This payment can be made by Internet or phone. The payment slip must be returned to the Preschool and placed in the Fees Box.

3. Other charges

These include:

- **Enrolment fee**

3YO

This payment, currently set at \$25 per child, secures a child's place at the service and is payable on acceptance of enrolment.

Note: The enrolment fee for 3YO enrolments in 2022 will increase from \$25 to \$50 per child.

4YO

This payment, currently set at \$50 per child, secures a child's place at the service and is payable on acceptance of enrolment.

Families eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy (see below) are required to pay the enrolment fee. Families experiencing hardship should also discuss any difficulties with the

service. This payment is non-refundable and contributes to Incursion/Excursion costs and ASK administration fees.

The enrolment fee will only be refunded if the following criteria are met: A written application for a refund addressed to the Committee of Management is to be submitted. Upon receipt of this letter and only if the position is filled on or before 30th of October of the given year, will a refund be granted.

- **Fundraising levy:** \$15 is charged in included to the term fees for each family.
- **Non-refundable levy:** This levy is retained by the service and is included in the total fees charged by the service
- **Late collection charge:** The Committee of Management/Board 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 currently set at \$1 per minute. Should a parent/guardian be late on more than three (3) occasions, this fee will increase to \$5 per minute.

4. **How to make payment**

All payments, must be made by BPAY. Cheque or Money Orders will only be accepted in exceptional circumstances.

Payment of enrolment fees can be made by direct transfer into the preschool account. It can also be made by cash or cheque. Bank account details:

Doris Blackburn Preschool

BSB: 704-191

Account: 180757

Please include your SURNAME as a reference.

5. **Statement of fees and charges**

A statement of fees and charges for the three and four-year-old groups will be provided to families on enrolment.

6. **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.

7. **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 change from time-to-time – contact the service for further information.

Families who may be eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy (four-year-old programs only) include those who are:

- Health Care Card holders
*Health Care Card Holders are eligible for current government rebates for Four-year Preschool Group children only.
Health Care Cards need to be sighted each term or as soon as a family becomes eligible for one.
Parents/Guardians must also inform the Preschool as soon as they are no longer eligible for a Health Care Card.*
- Pensioner Concession Card holders
- Department of Veterans' Affairs Gold Card holders
- Temporary Protection/Humanitarian Visas 447, 451, 785 or 786
- Asylum seekers on Bridging Visas A–F

- Refugee and Special Humanitarian Visa 200–217
- Resolution of Status (RoS) visa, Class CD, subclass 851
- Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children
- Triplets or quadruplets attending a funded kindergarten program in the same year.

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.

(Note: From 2022 the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy will also apply to the three-year-old program. Families who are eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy will not be required to make fee payments for the funded portion of their hours)

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. Term fees are payable in advance with invoices issued to families when fees are due.

Term 1 fees: are to be paid in full by the commencement of Term 1.

Term 2 fees: are to be paid in full by the end of Term 1.

Term 3 fees: are to be paid in full by the end of Term 2.

Term 4 fees: are to be paid in full by the end of Term 3.

Receipts can be provided for fee payments (other than BPAY, where the financial institution offers a transaction receipt number).

Parents/guardians experiencing difficulty in paying fees are requested to contact the Director of the Preschool 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. 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 program. Children can only commence the program when they have turned three.

9. Unpaid fees

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

- A late fee of \$20 will be added to the term's fee
- An initial reminder letter will be sent to parents/guardians with a specified payment date, and will include information on a range of support options available for the family.
- 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.
- Failure to attend the meeting and 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. This letter will also include information on a range of support options available for the family.
- The Committee of Management will continue to offer support and will reserve the right to employ the services of a debt collector.
- If a decision is made to withdraw the child's place at the service, the parents/guardians will be provided with 14 days' notice in writing.

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.

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 (term fees are required to hold your child's place)
- 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. 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.

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 one 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

Doris Blackburn Preschool

Fee schedule 2021

Three-year Old (unfunded) Kindergarten Program

Hours: 5 hours per week

The fees for the Three-Year Old (unfunded) Activity Group are subject to change.

	Fees (\$)	Other Charges (\$)	Total
Enrolment Fee	\$50.00	\$0	\$50.00
Term 1	\$160.00	\$15	\$175.00
Term 2	\$160.00	\$15	\$175.00
Term 3	\$160.00	\$15	\$175.00
Term 4	\$160.00	\$15	\$175.00
Total	\$640.00	\$60	\$700.00

Note: From 2022, families in Victoria will have access to 5 hours a week of subsidised kindergarten for Three-Year Olds. Government subsidies will cover approximately two thirds of the program cost. Fees paid by families cover the remaining cost. Families can access at low or no cost, if their child meets the eligibility criteria. For example, Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, Health Care and eligible concession cardholders.

Doris Blackburn Preschool

Fee schedule 2021

Four-Year-old (funded) kindergarten

Hours: 15 hours per week

All eligible children can attend the Four-Year old (funded) kindergarten program **free of charge in 2021.**

	Fees (\$)	Other charges (\$)	Total (\$)	Families eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy		
				Fees (\$)	Other charges (\$)	Total (\$)
Kindergarten enrolment fee	\$50.00	\$0	\$50.00	\$50.00	\$0	\$50.00
Term 1	\$460.00	\$15.00	\$475.00	\$0	\$0	\$0
Term 2	\$460.00	\$15.00	\$475.00	\$0	\$0	\$0
Term 3	\$460.00	\$15.00	\$475.00	\$0	\$0	\$0
Term 4	\$460.00	\$15.00	\$475.00	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total	\$1,840.00	\$60.00	\$1,900.00	\$50.00	\$0	\$50.00

Payment of fees

Invoices will be issued two weeks prior to the end of term and must be paid by the due date.

Enrolment fee

Parents/guardians are required to pay the enrolment fee upon acceptance of their child's offer to secure the child's place in the four-year-old (funded) kindergarten program and the three-year-old (non-funded) activity group.

Kindergarten Fee Subsidy

Families who are eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy (refer to Fee information for families) will not be required to pay term fees (enrolment fee is still applicable).

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

Fee Payment Agreement - Four-year-old (funded) kindergarten program & Three-year-old unfunded program

A full copy of the Fee Policy will be available on our website at www.dorisblackburnpreschool.vic.edu.au

Please complete this form and return it to Doris Blackburn Preschool when you attend your first orientation session.

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 acknowledge that the three-year-old activity group is an unfunded program and does not receive government funding, parents/guardians are responsible for the payment of fees.
- 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 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 Director of the Preschool to discuss alternative payment options.

Kindergarten Fee Subsidy

Please indicate if you are eligible for one of the following concessions:

Health Care Card Pensioner Concession Card

DVA Gold Card Bridging Visas A–F

Temporary Protection/Humanitarian Visas 447, 451, 785 or 786

Resolution of Status Visa (RoS) Visa Class CD, Subclass 851

Refugee and Special Humanitarian Visas 200–217

Triplets or Quadruplets Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander

Supporting documentation will need to be sighted on commencement at Doris Blackburn Preschool.

Note: the eligibility of concessions may vary from time-to-time. Up-to-date information can be found at www.education.vic.gov.au/ecsmangement/careankinder/funding/subsidy.htm

Signature (parent/guardian)

Date

Note: invoices, receipts and collection of fees will be in accordance with the *Doris Blackburn Preschool Fees Policy*.

ATTACHMENT 4

Outstanding Fee Payment Schedule

Child’s Full Name: _____ Group: _____

Parent’s/Guardian: _____

- I/We acknowledge understand that I/we am/are responsible for the payments of the outlined outstanding fees.
- I/We acknowledge that payments will be made on or before the due date, and for the amount outlined in the schedule below.
- I/We understand that the term fees are non-refundable.
- I/We agree that should our financial circumstances change and I/we am/are unable to pay as agreed, I/we will immediately notify the Director of the Preschool to discuss alternative payment options.
- I/We understand that if the outstanding fees are not paid by the due dates, the Committee of Management will request a further meeting to amend the plan.
- The total outstanding amount as at [insert date] is [\$ insert].

Payment Dates & Amounts

Date	Amount Due
[day / date / month / year]	[\$ insert]
[day / date / month / year]	[\$ insert]
[day / date / month / year]	[\$ insert]
[day / date / month / year]	[\$ insert]
[day / date / month / year]	[\$ insert]
[day / date / month / year]	[\$ insert]
[day / date / month / year]	[\$ insert]

Parent/Guardian Name: _____

Parent/Guardian signature _____

Date: _____