



FEES POLICY 2024



PURPOSE

This policy provides a clear set of guidelines for:

- free kindergarten funding for funded sessional programs
- the setting, payment and collection of fees
- ensuring the viability of Robina Scott Kindergarten, by setting appropriate fees and charges
- the equitable and non-discriminatory application of fees across the programs provided by Robina Scott Kindergarten
- the application of surplus funding within Robina Scott Kindergarten ensuring it is only used to ensure the quality of program delivery and development of children enrolled in the service



POLICY STATEMENT

VALUES

Robina Scott Kindergarten is committed to:

- supporting the Victorian Government's Free Kindergarten initiative
- providing responsible financial management of the service, including establishing fees where programs exceed 15 hours 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 free kindergarten funding and fees to be paid by parents/guardians if programs exceed 15 hours

SCOPE

This policy applies to the approved provider, persons with management or control, nominated supervisor, persons in day-to-day charge and parents/guardians attending Robina Scott Kindergarten.

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
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 (<i>refer to Definitions</i>)	R	√			
Ensuring any non-funded positions are enrolled in accordance with the Funding Guidelines (<i>refer to Sources</i>)	R	√			
Ensuring families that attend both sessional kindergarten and a long day care service nominate and document which service the child will participate in the funded kindergarten program	R	√		√	
Ensuring that any surplus funding is used for directly supporting the quality of the teaching and learning in the kindergarten program and/or attendance at the service, including vulnerable children and families not yet enrolled and/or towards the change management required for preparing for three-year-old expansion	R	√			
Ensuring any voluntary parent payments/donations are explicitly agreed to in writing and receipted	R	√			
Charging families only for an occasional special event/ excursions that occur outside the normal program/curriculum	R	√	√		
Ensuring that any child that is eligible for Early Start Kindergarten is still enrolled at the service and recorded on the KIM system	R	√	√		
Collecting all relevant information regarding those with entitlement to concessions and recording it on the KIM system	R	√	√		
Ensuring that the Fee Policy is readily accessible at the service (<i>Regulation 171</i>)	R	√			
Providing all parents/guardians with information about Free Kindergarten)	R	√			
Providing all parents/guardians with a statement of additional hours fees and charges upon enrolment of their child, if applicable	R	√			
Providing all parents/guardians with an additional payment fee agreement, if applicable	R	√			
Reading the Robina Scott Kindergarten Free Kindergarten information for families, the Statement of Additional Hours Fees and Charges, and the Additional Hours Fee Payment Agreement if applicable				√	
Signing and complying with the Additional Hours Fee Payment Agreement, if applicable				√	
Notifying the approved provider if experiencing difficulties with the payment of additional hours fees				√	
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 additional hours fees	R	√	√	√	
Notifying parents/guardians a minimum of 14 days of any proposed changes to the additional hours fees charged,	R	√			

or the way in which the fees are collected (<i>Regulation 172(2)</i>), ideally providing one term's notice.					
Implementing and reviewing this policy, in consultation with parents/guardians, the approved provider and staff, and in line with the requirements of DET's Free Kindergarten initiative (<i>refer to Sources</i>)	R	√	√	√	
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.		√	√		

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 Kindergarten, 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 Kindergarten, this includes both 3 and 4-year-old kindergarten programs.

Free Kindergarten 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 kindergarten 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 Kindergarten 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



DEFINITIONS

The terms defined in this section relate specifically to this policy. For regularly used terms e.g. Approved provider, Nominated supervisor, Notifiable complaints, Serious incidents, Duty of care, etc. refer to the Definitions file of the PolicyWorks catalogue.

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 up to 15 hours per week. Details are available at: www.education.vic.gov.au. Children that are eligible for Early Start Kindergarten (ESK) will continue to be enrolled, this ensure that service providers receive all funding entitlements and that these children have access to 15 funded hours of kindergarten across Victoria. 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.

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 Kindergarten: A Victorian Government initiative providing free kindergarten programs for four-year-old and three-year-old children in funded services

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.

Wrap around care: care that is provided by a kindergarten service to kindergarten children outside of the 15 hours per week program.

ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1: Fee information for Families
- Attachment 2: Acknowledgement of Kindergarten Funded Year for Three Year Old Kindergarten Program
- Attachment 3: Acknowledgement of Kindergarten Funded Year for Four Year Old
- Attachment 4: Free Kindergarten and Statement of Fees
- Attachment 5: Statement of Fees and Charges for Red Group, four-year-old 18 hours p/w
- Attachment 6: Fee Payment Agreement for Red Group
- Attachment 7: Fee Payment Agreement
- Attachment 8: Withdrawal Form



AUTHORISATION

This policy was adopted by the approved provider of Robina Scott Kindergarten on 26/6/2023.

REVIEW DATE: 1/7/2024

ATTACHMENT 1. FEE INFORMATION FOR FAMILIES

1. General information

The Department of Education (DE) provides funding of up to 15 hours for each child enrolled and attending kindergarten in the two years before school as a contribution toward the costs of providing the program. Services meet the balance of costs through charging fees for programs running in excess of 15 hours per week (Red Group) and Unfunded Kindergarten places and fundraising activities. Where a program exceeds 15 hours per week (Red Group) or is an Unfunded Kindergarten place, the service will meet the cost of providing unfunded services through the charging of fees.

DE provides Early Start Kindergarten funding to assist eligible three-year-old Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, from a refugee or asylum seeker background or children known to Child Protection, to access kindergarten programs.

Robina Scott Kindergarten 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 Early Start Kindergarten
- 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 available from the DE 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 Robina Scott Kindergarten are included on the Statement of Fees and Charges. These 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*).
- **Additional hours fees:** Robina Scott Kindergarten offers families hours above the set 15 hours per week (600 hours per year). The additional hours fee is determined by the hourly program rate based on the scheduled fee (including the costs of regular incursions and excursions).
- **Participation Levy:** The participation of parents/guardians is encouraged by the service and can help to keep costs more affordable. Due to changes in DE funding guidelines, the Participation Levy is not able to be charged by the service. As such, participation in specified activities will no longer entitle payees of the Levy to a refund. From 2023, the payment of the Levy is strictly voluntary and will be classified by the service as a non-refundable donation. As Robina Scott Kindergarten Inc. is not a Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR), donated funds may not be claimed by donating individuals as an income tax deduction.
- **Unfunded Kindergarten:** Where the service has greater capacity than what is accessed by children in a funded capacity, the service may enrol children in an unfunded kindergarten space. Unfunded kindergarten attracts fees equal to the amount that would have been generated by the service if the child generated both per-capita and free kindergarten funding
- **Late collection charge:** The Committee of Management reserves the right to implement a late

collection charge when parents/guardians are frequently late in collecting a child from the service. This charge will be set at a level determined by the Committee of Management.

4. Statement of fees and charges

- **Red Group:** A statement of fees and charges for the Red Group four-year-old program will be provided to families on enrolment (*refer to Attachment 4 and 5*).

5. Fundraising

Not all service costs are covered by DE 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

Early Start Kindergarten

Early Start Kindergarten gives eligible children 15 hours of free kindergarten a week for two years before starting school.

To be eligible, the child must be three by 30 April in the year they start kindergarten and meet one of the following criteria:

- be from a refugee or asylum seeker background
- identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
- your family has had contact with Child Protection.

Children can also access free Four-Year-Old Kindergarten through the Early Start Kindergarten Extension Grant. 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 relating to the Red Group program or Unfunded Kindergarten places will be invoiced to parents/guardians directly and must be paid within one month, by the date indicated on the invoice. Each invoice will be accompanied by payment instructions. The first term's fees must be received in full prior to the child commencing at the service. For children enrolled after the commencement of a term, a pro-rata invoice will be issued and must be paid in full within 14 days of the child's commencement at the service. Receipts will be provided at request for all fee payments.

Parents/guardians experiencing difficulty in paying fees are requested to contact the Finance 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, 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.
- No further enrolments of children from the parents/guardians will be accepted until all outstanding fees have been paid.

9. Refund of fees

Fees still apply for programs offering more than 15 hours per week (ie: Red Group) or in Unfunded Kindergarten places. 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.

With the discretion of the Committee of Management, fees will be refunded in the following circumstances:

- A child who has accessed their Unfunded Kindergarten place is withdrawn by the service due to a funded child taking their space will attract a refund on the term fee minus the cost of days available up until the date of withdrawal
- A child who has enrolled into an Unfunded Kindergarten place is not able to access their enrolment due to intervention by DE, such as in the case where the enrolment is not honoured as it compromises unfunded places within the kindergarten

10. Children turning three during the year of enrolment

Children can only commence the program when they have turned three.

Children will not be eligible for a second year of funded 3-year-old kindergarten. After a child has completed a funded year of 3-year-old kindergarten they have the option to commence a funded year of 4-year-old kindergarten in the following year or delay the commencement of their funded 4-year-old kindergarten.

11. 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.

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. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF KINDERGARTEN FUNDED YEAR FOR THREE YEAR OLD KINDERGARTEN PROGRAM

The following is provided in the EnrolNow portal as part of a child's enrolment pack. The parent/guardian will acknowledge the following as part of enrolling their child into a funded year at Robina Scott 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.

Your child can only be funded for a kindergarten place at one service at any one time and only for one year in a Three-Year-Old Kindergarten program and one year in a Four-Year-Old Kindergarten program (unless your child is assessed as being eligible for a second year of Four-Year-Old Kindergarten by your child's kindergarten teacher).

In 2024, your child is enrolled to attend our Three-Year-Old Kindergarten program and we will be claiming kindergarten funding for your child to support the costs of the kindergarten program.

If your child will be attending another service that offers a funded kindergarten program, you must tell that service that you are receiving a funded kindergarten place at our service.

Early Start Kindergarten gives eligible children 15 hours of free or low-cost kindergarten a week for two years before starting school. To be eligible, your child must be from a refugee or asylum seeker background, identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, or your family has had contact with child protection. Eligible children can also access free or low cost Four-Year-Old Kindergarten through the Early Start Kindergarten Extension Grant.

I confirm that my child will be accessing their funded kindergarten place at this service in 2024.

ATTACHMENT 3. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF KINDERGARTEN FUNDED YEAR FOR FOUR YEAR OLD KINDERGARTEN PROGRAM

The following is provided in the EnrolNow portal as part of a child's enrolment pack. The parent/guardian will acknowledge the following as part of enrolling their child into a funded year at Robina Scott 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.

Your child can only be funded for a kindergarten place at one service at any one time and only for one year in a Three-Year-Old Kindergarten program and one year in a Four-Year-Old Kindergarten program (unless your child is assessed as being eligible for a second year of Four-Year-Old Kindergarten by your child's kindergarten teacher).

In 2024, your child is enrolled to attend our Four-Year-Old Kindergarten program and we will be claiming kindergarten funding for your child to support the costs of the kindergarten program.

If your child will be attending another service that offers a funded kindergarten program, you must tell that service that you are receiving a funded kindergarten place at our service.

Early Start Kindergarten gives eligible children 15 hours of free or low-cost kindergarten a week for two years before starting school. To be eligible, your child must be from a refugee or asylum seeker background, identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, or your family has had contact with child protection. Eligible children can also access free or low cost Four-Year-Old Kindergarten through the Early Start Kindergarten Extension Grant.

I confirm that my child will be accessing their funded kindergarten place at this service in 2024.

ATTACHMENT 4. FREE KINDERGARTEN AND STATEMENT OF FEES

From 2023, Robina Scott Kindergarten will deliver Free Kindergarten (*refer to Definitions*) to three year old children up to 15 hours per week and four year old children for 15 hours a week. Where the program exceeds 15 hours per week, such as in the case of Red Group, families will have the choice to accept the additional three hours per week or opt into a 15 hour group. Where families accept the Red Group program, they will be expected to pay fees in line with the operating expenses for these additional hours and within the parameters of this and other relevant policies.

Statement of Fees

Robina Scott Kindergarten, Four Year Old Programs 2024

Group	Term Fee
Red Group, 18 hours p/w	\$300 per term
Blue Group, 15 hours p/w	\$0
Yellow Group, 15 hours p/w	\$0
Orange Group, 15 hours p/w	\$0

Robina Scott Kindergarten, Three Year Old Programs 2024

Group	Term Fee
Green Group, 15 hours p/w	\$0
Pink Group, 15 hours p/w	\$0

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.

ATTACHMENT 5. STATEMENT OF FEES AND CHARGES FOR RED GROUP, FOUR YEAR OLD 18 HOURS P/W

Red Group 2024 Schedule of Fees

18 hours per week

Where families accept the Red Group program, they will be expected to pay fees in line with the operating expenses for these additional hours and within the parameters of this and other relevant policies.

Reference and Date of Invoice	Date Due	Fees (\$)	Total (\$)
Term 1 Fee Fri 13-Oct-23	Fri 10-Nov-23	\$300	\$300
Term 2 Fee Fri 23-Feb-24	Fri-22-Mar-24	\$300	\$300
Term 3 Fee Fri 10-May-24	Fri 7-June-24	\$300	\$300
Term 4 Fee Fri 26-Jul-24	Fri 23-Aug-24	\$300	\$300

The cost of Red Group's three unfunded hours per week is not intended to be a barrier to participation, and families experiencing difficulties should discuss this with the kindergarten service.

Payment of fees – Red Group

Invoices will be issued at the beginning of each Term and must be paid within one month, by the due date.

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.

ATTACHMENT 6. FEE PAYMENT AGREEMENT FOR RED GROUP

The following is provided in the EnrolNow portal as part of a child's enrolment pack. The parent/guardian will acknowledge the following as part of enrolling their child into the Red Group program at Robina Scott Kindergarten:

- I/We accept our enrolment in the Red Group program of 18 hours per week, with 3 of these hours being recognised as wrap around care.
- I/we acknowledge that the kindergarten program is funded by the state government, with the balance of funds for the unfunded 3 hours per week for the Red Group program coming from fees paid by parents/guardians.
- I/we agree to pay all term fees a term in advance 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 Attachment 1 - Fee 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 Finance Officer 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.
- I/we understand that I/we am/are entitled to access Early Start Kindergarten if I/we meet one of the criteria.
- I/we acknowledge that I/we have received and read and understood the service's DE Funding Agreement, which outlines the way the service will be claiming kindergarten funding in respect of your child's enrolled place at the service.
- I/we agree to provide Robina Scott Kindergarten with a completed Withdrawal Form when terminating enrolment (see Attachment 8 - Withdrawal Form)

Early Start Kindergarten

Three-year-old Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children, children from a refugee or asylum seeker background 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 kindergarten service receives funding for children who meet the eligibility criteria. Contact the service for further information.

ATTACHMENT 7. FEE PAYMENT AGREEMENT

The following is provided in the EnrolNow portal as part of a child's enrolment pack. The parent/guardian will acknowledge the following as part of enrolling their child into a funded place that runs up to 15 hours per week.

- I/we acknowledge that the kindergarten program is funded by the state government up to 15 hours
- I/we understand that there will be no term fees owed
- I/we understand that I/we am/are entitled to access Early Start Kindergarten if I/we meet one of the criteria.
- I/we acknowledge that I/we have received and read and understood the service's DE Funding Agreement, which outlines the way the service will be claiming kindergarten funding in respect of your child's enrolled place at the service.
- I/we agree to provide Robina Scott Kindergarten with a completed Withdrawal Form when terminating enrolment (see Attachment 8 - Withdrawal Form)

Early Start Kindergarten

Three-year-old Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children, children from a refugee or asylum seeker background 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 kindergarten service receives funding for children who meet the eligibility criteria. Contact the service for further information.

ATTACHMENT 8. WITHDRAWAL FORM

I/We _____ (name) would like to give notice that we are withdrawing our child from Robina Scott Kindergarten.

_____ in the_. [insert your child's full name] [insert your child's group]

Reason for withdrawal:

Date of withdrawal (Last day at kindergarten):

By signing this form:

- I/we acknowledge that we are required to provide 14 days' notice of withdrawal by completing and signing the Withdrawal Form and returning it to Robina Scott Kindergarten.
- I/we understand that by withdrawing enrolment my/our child's place at Robina Scott will be forfeited.
- I/we understand that withdrawing my/our child's enrolment will result in my/our child being placed at the bottom of any waitlist should I/we wish to re-enrol our child at a later date.
- I/we understand that by withdrawing enrolment, our right to priority enrolment for siblings is forfeited.

Signed: