



Fees Policy

PURPOSE

This policy will provide clear guidelines for:

- the setting, payment and collection of fees
- ensuring the viability of West Wimmera Shire Kindergarten Cluster, by setting appropriate fees and charges
- the equitable and non-discriminatory application of fees across the programs provided by West Wimmera Shire Kindergarten Cluster

POLICY STATEMENT

Values

West Wimmera Shire Kindergarten Cluster 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
- minimising financial barriers for families wishing to access a kindergarten 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.

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 in a West Wimmera Shire Council kindergarten.

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 line with the requirements of DET's *Victorian kindergarten policy, procedures and funding criteria* (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 in a West Wimmera Shire Council kindergarten and minimising these 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
- 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 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 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 in the main entrance of each West Wimmera Shire Council kindergarten
- providing families experiencing difficulty paying their fees with payment options (refer Attachment 6).
- Collaboration with WWSC internal departments to strive toward positive outcomes for families

Nominated Supervisor & 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.
- contributing to policy and procedure review

Parents/guardians are responsible for:

- reading West Wimmera Shire Council's 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)
- paying each term's fees in advance of their child attending the program
- 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).



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 contribute to the costs incurred by the service in the delivery of kindergarten programs. 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 *Victorian kindergarten policy, procedures and funding criteria* (refer to *Sources*).

DET requires that funded services have a comprehensive written fees policy in place, and the content of this policy must be communicated to families. The policy must include a written statement about the fees to be charged, as required under Regulation 168(2)(n), and the payment process. All families must be informed of applicable term and annual fees at the time of enrolment. Services must also advise eligible families of the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy arrangements. The fees charged must comply with the *Kindergarten Fee Subsidy – Fees Policy* (refer to *Definitions*), and be responsive to the local community and the viability of the service. The *Victorian kindergarten policy, procedures and funding criteria* (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

DEFINITIONS

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

Early Start Kindergarten: A funding program that enables three-year-old Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, and children known to Child Protection 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 www.education.vic.gov.au/ecsmanagement/careankinder/earlystart/



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.centrelink.gov.au/internet/internet.nsf/payments/conc_cards_hcc.htm

Kindergarten fee deposit: Term 1 fees paid in advance 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 are available at <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/parents/kindergarten/Pages/fees.aspx>

Kindergarten Fee Subsidy – Fees Policy: Provides operational guidelines for services administering the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy and can be found in the *Victorian kindergarten policy, procedures and funding criteria* available at <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).

SOURCES AND RELATED POLICIES

Sources

- *Victorian kindergarten policy, procedures and funding criteria:*
<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/providers/funding/Pages/kinderfundingcriteria.aspx>

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*

EVALUATION

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



- seek feedback from parties affected by the policy regarding its effectiveness
- 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 – Four-year-old (funded) kindergarten program
- Attachment 3: Statement of Fees and Charges – Fee schedule – Pre-Kinder program
- Attachment 4: Fee Payment Agreement – Four-year-old (funded) kindergarten program
- Attachment 5: Fee Payment Agreement – Pre-Kinder program
- Attachment 6: Payment Plan Agreement

AUTORISATION

This policy was adopted by the Approved Provider of West Wimmera Shire Council Kindergarten Cluster on **27/09/2017**

REVISION	DATE APPROVED	AUTHOR	SIGNATURE	DATE OF NEXT REVISION
1	1/08/18	C. Hurley		1/08/21



FEE POLICY - Attachment 1

Fee information for families

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.

2. How fees are set

As part of the budget development process, West Wimmera Shire Council sets fees each year for their programs, 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 *Victorian kindergarten policy, procedures and funding criteria* document)

3. Fees and charges for 2020

4 year old kindergarten fees for 2020 are \$320 per term, for 15 hours of kindergarten.

Pre-Kinder fees for 2020 are \$320 per term, for 7.5 hours of pre-kinder.

Please note, Kindergarten (4 year old) receives government subsidies, whereas Pre-kinder (3+ year old) groups receive no funding. Pre-kinder is funded entirely through fees, fundraising, and West Wimmera Shire Council funding.

4. Fundraising

Not all service costs are covered by DET per capita funding and the fees charged. Fundraising is undertaken by the Parent Advisory Group each year in order to maintain the kindergarten yards and provide additional activities and resources. Participation in fundraising is voluntary, although the support of every family is encouraged.

5. Subsidies

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

The Kindergarten Fee Subsidy is provided by DET and enables eligible children to attend kindergarten free of charge or at minimal cost.

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

- Health Care Card holders
- 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. If a current concession is not shown at the time, families will be required to pay fees for that term. Please contact the service for further information.

5.2 Early Start Kindergarten fee subsidy

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. Please contact the service for further information.

6. Payment of fees

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. Fees are not to be paid directly to the kindergarten.

Fees are to be paid in advance each term – prior to your child attending for that term.

In order to confirm your child's place in the program, Term One fees must be paid upon enrolment, and prior to your child commencing at the kindergarten. Invoices for subsequent terms will be issued prior to the completion of each term, and must be paid before the commencement of the following term. Receipts will be provided for all fee payments.

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

Families experiencing financial hardship may require access to family support services. Information on these services can be obtained from the Early Years Coordinator or the kindergarten.

West Wimmera Shire Council will regularly review payment options and procedures to ensure that they are inclusive and sensitive to the needs of families, and fair to all service users.

7. Unpaid fees

If fees are not paid by the first day of each term, 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.
- If payment is still not received after 7 days, 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 establish a payment plan will result in a second and final letter notifying parents/guardians that the child's place at the service will be withdrawn in a further 7 days unless payment is made or a payment plan is entered into.



- If a child's place is withdrawn, they will be eligible to attend the service again upon payment of all unpaid fees, including the current term's fees in advance, provided that there is still a place available in the program.
- West Wimmera Shire Council reserves the right to employ the services of a debt collector for any unpaid fees.

8. Refund of fees

If a family becomes eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy during a term, a refund of the applicable term fees may be provided, depending on the timeframe.

In any other case, fees are non-refundable.

There will be no refund of fees or discounted fees if a family chooses not to send their child to the program for the maximum number of hours for which they are enrolled.

9. 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 a Pre-Kinder program. Children can only commence in the program once they have turned three.

10. Late collection charge

West Wimmera Shire Council reserves the right to implement a late collection charge when parents/guardians are frequently late in collecting a child. Parents/guardians will be notified in writing if this is going to occur.

11. 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.



FEE POLICY - ATTACHMENT 2

Statement of Fees and Charges

West Wimmera Shire Council Kindergarten Cluster Fee schedule 2020

Kindergarten Program (4 year old, funded kindergarten)

Hours: 15 hours per week

	Fees (\$)	Other charges (\$)	Total (\$)	Families eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy		
				Fees (\$)	Other charges (\$)	Total (\$)
Term 1	\$320		\$320	\$0		\$0
Term 2	\$320		\$320	\$0		\$0
Term 3	\$320		\$320	\$0		\$0
Term 4	\$320		\$320	\$0		\$0
Total	\$1280		\$1280	\$0		\$0

Payment of fees

Term One fees are to be paid in advance of your child starting in order to secure their position in the program.

For subsequent terms, invoices will be issued two weeks prior to school holidays, and must be paid before your child commences each term.

Kindergarten fee deposit

Parents/guardians are required to pay Term 1 fees in advance of their child starting in order to secure their child's place at kindergarten. No additional deposit is needed.

Kindergarten Fee Subsidy

Families who are eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy, i.e. Health Care Card holders, will be required to provide evidence of their eligibility and will then not be required to make fee payments.

If evidence of eligibility is not provided, fees will be required to be paid before your child commences the term.



FEE POLICY - ATTACHMENT 3

Statement of Fees and Charges

West Wimmera Shire Council Kindergarten Cluster Fee schedule 2020

Pre-Kinder program (3+ year old, non-funded)

Hours: 7.5 hours per week

	Fees (\$)	Other charges (\$)	Total (\$)	Families eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy		
				Fees (\$)	Other charges (\$)	Total (\$)
Term 1	\$320		\$320	\$0		\$0
Term 2	\$320		\$320	\$0		\$0
Term 3	\$320		\$320	\$0		\$0
Term 4	\$320		\$320	\$0		\$0
Total	\$1280		\$1280	\$0		\$0

Payment of fees

Term One fees are to be paid in advance of your child starting in order to secure their position in the program.

For subsequent terms, invoices will be issued two weeks prior to school holidays, and must be paid before your child commences each term.

Kindergarten fee deposit

Parents/guardians are required to pay Term 1 fees in advance of their child starting in order to secure their child's place at kindergarten. No additional deposit is needed.

Early Start Kindergarten fee subsidy

Families who are eligible for the Early Start Kindergarten fee subsidy (i.e. Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children, or children who have been known to Child Protection) will not be required to make fee payments. This does not apply to Health Care Card holders.

Children turning three during the year

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



FEE POLICY - ATTACHMENT 4

Fee Payment Agreement

Kindergarten Program (4 year old, funded kindergarten)

Fee payment contract

Child's full name: _____

Parent's/guardian's full name: _____

- I acknowledge that the Kindergarten (4 year old) program is partly funded by the state government, with parents/guardians required to contribute fees towards the running of the service.
- I understand that I am entitled to obtain the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy if I meet one of the criteria below. If my eligibility lapses, then I understand that full payment of fees is required from the beginning of the following term.
- I agree to pay fees by the due date on the invoice, prior to my child attending kindergarten each term.
- I understand that term fees are non-refundable.
- I acknowledge that if fees are not paid by the due date, West Wimmera Shire Council will implement the late payment of fees procedures, as outlined in the *Fees Policy*, which may result in the withdrawal of my child's place at the service.
- I agree that if my financial circumstances change and I am unable to pay as agreed, I will immediately notify the Early Years Coordinator to discuss alternative payment options.
- I acknowledge that a full copy of the Fee Policy is available at the service; and that I can request a copy to be printed or emailed by the Kindergarten Teacher or Early Years Coordinator.

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

A copy of the supporting documentation must be attached to this form

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

PLEASE COMPLETE THIS FORM AND RETURN TO WEST WIMMERA SHIRE COUNCIL ALONG WITH YOUR ENROLMENT FORM.



FEE POLICY - ATTACHMENT 5

Fee Payment Agreement

Pre-Kinder program (3+ year old, non-funded)

Fee payment contract

Child's full name: _____

Parent's/guardian's full name: _____

- I acknowledge that Pre-Kinder programs are not funded by the state government and that the program cannot operate without receiving fee contributions (the only exception is where a child is eligible for the Early Start Kindergarten fee subsidy – see below).
- I agree to pay fees by the due date on the invoice, prior to my child attending kindergarten each term.
- I understand that term fees are non-refundable.
- I acknowledge that if fees are not paid by the due date, West Wimmera Shire Council will implement the late payment of fees procedures, as outlined in the *Fees Policy*, which may result in the withdrawal of my child's place at the service.
- I agree that if my financial circumstances change and I am unable to pay as agreed, I will immediately notify the Early Years Coordinator to discuss alternative payment options.
- I acknowledge that a full copy of the Fee Policy is available at the service; and that I can request a copy to be printed or emailed by the Kindergarten Teacher or Early Years Coordinator.

Signature (parent/guardian)

Date

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 (West Wimmera Shire Council's Pre-Kinder 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. Please contact the service or the Early Years Coordinator for further information.

PLEASE COMPLETE THIS FORM AND RETURN TO WEST WIMMERA SHIRE COUNCIL ALONG WITH YOUR ENROLMENT FORM.

