

GORDON STREET PRE SCHOOL INC

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 Gordon Street Pre School, by setting appropriate fees and charges
- the equitable and non-discriminatory application of fees across the programs provided by Gordon Street Pre School.

POLICY STATEMENT

1. VALUES

Gordon Street Pre School 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, Persons in Day to Day Charge, educators and parents/guardians with an enrolled child, or who wish to enrol a child at Gordon Street Pre School.

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 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 2011* requires that funded services have a comprehensive written fees policy, 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 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)
- *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*, including Quality Area 7: Governance and Leadership

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 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

Enrolment acceptance 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. Non refundable.

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 in addition to per capita grants to subsidise the costs of parent fees and enable eligible children to attend a funded kindergarten for 15 hours free of charge (*The Kindergarten Funding Guide* (refer to *Sources*)).

Late collection charge: A charge that may be imposed by the Approved Provider when parents/guardians are late to collect their child/children from the program (refer to Attachment 1 – Fee information for families).

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.

Working Bee Levy: A non refundable \$100 working bee levy will be charged with your child's term 1 kinder fees, and replaces voluntary labour with paid labour to tidy our grounds and carry out other maintenance tasks. We ask that at least one member of each family attends one of two scheduled working bees each year. As we are a Community Kindergarten, we cannot maintain the grounds and surrounding areas without participation from families.

5. SOURCES AND RELATED POLICIES

Sources

The Kindergarten Funding Guide (Department of Education and Training): www.education.vic.gov.au

- The constitution of Gordon Street Pre School

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 and Person with Management and Control 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 Funding Guide* (refer to *Sources*)
- considering any issues regarding fees that may be a barrier to families enrolling at Gordon Street Pre School and removing those barriers wherever possible
- reviewing 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
- ensuring that the *Fees Policy* is readily accessible at the service (Regulation 171)
- providing all parents/guardians with fee information (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
- providing all parents/guardians with a fee payment agreement (refer to samples in Attachments 4 and 5)
- ensuring fees are collected and receipted
- 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 a minimum of 14 days of any proposed changes to the fees charged or the way in which the fees are collected (Regulation 172(2)), and ideally providing one term's notice.

The Nominated Supervisor and Person in Day to Day Charge is responsible for:

- assisting the Approved Provider in developing this policy, and ensuring that this policy is based on the *Kindergarten Funding Guide* (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 *The Kindergarten Funding Guide* (refer to *Sources*)
- considering any issues regarding fees that may be a barrier to families enrolling at Gordon Street Pre School and removing those barriers wherever possible

- considering options for payment when affordability is an issue for families
- communicating this policy, the availability of the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy and payment options to families in a culturally-sensitive way and in the family's first language where possible
- providing all parents/guardians with fee information (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 ensuring that the *Fees Policy* is readily accessible at the service
- providing all parents/guardians with a fee payment agreement (refer to samples in Attachments 4 and 5)
- 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.

All other Staff 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.

Parents/guardians are responsible for:

- reading the Gordon Street Pre School 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)
- Accepting the Fee Payment Agreement (refer to Attachments 4 and 5) through Enrol Now when completing their child's enrolment form
- 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)).

ATTACHMENT

- 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 – Three-year-old (funded) kindergarten program
- Attachment 4: Fee Payment Agreement – Four-year-old (funded) kindergarten program
- Attachment 5: Fee Payment Agreement – Three-year-old (funded) kindergarten program

AUTHORISATION

This policy was adopted by the Approved Provider of Gordon Street Pre School on 30th September 2021.

REVIEW DATE: 30TH AUGUST 2022

ATTACHMENT 1

Fee information for families



Gordon Street Pre School

1. General Information

The Department of Education and Training (DET) provides funding for each child enrolled and attending kindergarten in the year before school as a contribution toward the costs of providing the 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 kindergarten program free of charge in the year before school.

DET also provides funding to assist eligible three-year-old Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, and children known to Child Protection, to access kindergarten programs.

Gordon Street Pre School 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 Funding Guide* (Department of Education and Training) available from the DET 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 Gordon Street Pre School are included on the Statement of Fees and Charges. These include:

- **Enrolment Acceptance Fee:** This fee secures a child's place at the service and is payable on acceptance of enrolment. The fee is retained and is not refundable. Families eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy (see below) are not required to pay the deposit. Families experiencing hardship should discuss any difficulties with the service.
- **Late Payment Charge:** A late payment charge of \$10 per week will be applied when fees are not received by the due date and where the family has not contacted the kinder/entered into a suitable payment plan.
- **Late Collection Fee Charge:** The Committee of Management reserves the right to implement a late collection charge of \$50 per hour when parents/guardians are frequently late in collecting a child from the service. The Committee of Management will determine when this fee will be charged.
- **Working Bee Levy:** A non refundable \$100 working bee levy will be charged with your child's term 1 kinder fees, and replaces voluntary labour with paid labour to tidy our grounds and carry out other maintenance tasks. We ask that at least one member of each family attends one of two scheduled

working bees each year. As we are a Community Kindergarten, we cannot maintain the grounds and surrounding areas without participation from families.

4. Statement of fees and charges

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

5. 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.

6. Subsidies

6.1 Kindergarten Fee Subsidy

The Kindergarten Fee Subsidy is provided by DET and enables eligible children to attend 15 hours of kindergarten free of charge. Eligibility conditions may change from time-to-time and must be checked in the most recent edition of the *Kindergarten Funding Guide* (refer to *Sources*).

Families may be eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy in the year before school if their child:

- is Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander; or
- holds, or has a parent/guardian who holds a Humanitarian or Refugee Visa; or
- is a multiple birth child (triplets or more); or
- holds, or has a parent who holds a Commonwealth Health Care Card, Pensioner Concession Card or Veteran's Affairs Card.

Where a child is identified by a parent, carer or legal guardian as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, no verification is required.

In all other instances, supporting documentation should be sighted by the service on acceptance of a place or on commencement in the program, however where there are delays, such as in obtaining health care cards for children in out-of-home care, the delay should not provide a barrier to the child accessing the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy. Families are eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy for the full term in which their concession is valid. Contact the service for further information.

6.2 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. 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 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. Receipts will be provided for all fee payments.

Parents/guardians experiencing difficulty in paying fees are requested to contact the Compliance 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.

8. Unpaid fees

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

- A late payment charge of \$10 per week will be applied when fees are not received by the due date and where the family has not contacted the kinder/entered into a suitable payment plan.
- 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

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
- 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.

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

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

Statement of Fees and Charges Four-year-old program



Gordon Street Pre School Fee schedule 2022

Four-year-old (funded) kindergarten program

Hours: 15 hours per week

	Term Fees (\$)	Other charges (\$)	Total (\$)	Families eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy		
				Fees (\$)	Other charges (\$)	Total (\$)
Enrolment Acceptance Fee		\$100	\$100	–	–	–
Term 1	\$740	\$100*	\$840	–	–	–
Term 2	\$740	–	\$740	–	–	–
Term 3	\$740	–	\$740	–	–	–
Term 4	\$740	–	\$740	–	–	–
Total	\$2,960	\$200	\$3,160	–	–	–

Payment of fees

Invoices will be issued and must be paid by the due dates listed below:

Term 1 due 12th November 2021

Term 2 due 15th April 2022

Term 3 due 1st July 2022

Term 4 due 23rd September 2022

Enrolment Acceptance Fee

Parents/guardians are required to pay a \$100 acceptance fee on offer of a place at the service. This payment is non refundable and not deducted from fees. Payment will secure the child's place in the four year-old (funded) kindergarten program.

Kindergarten Fee Subsidy

Families who are eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy (refer to Fee information for families) will not be required to make fee payments.

Late Payment Charge

A late payment charge of \$10 per week will be applied when fees are not received by the due date and where the family has not contacted the kinder/entered into a suitable payment plan.

Working Bee Levy: A non refundable \$100 working bee levy will be charged with your child's term 1 kinder fees, and replaces voluntary labour with paid labour to tidy our grounds and carry out other maintenance tasks. We ask that at least one member of each family attends one of two scheduled working bees each year. As we are a Community Kindergarten, we cannot maintain the grounds and surrounding areas without participation from families.

ATTACHMENT 3

Statement of Fees and Charges Three-year-old program



Gordon Street Pre School Fee schedule 2022

Three-year-old (partly funded) kindergarten program

Hours: 10 hours per week (5 hours funded)

	Term Fees (\$)	Other charges (\$)	Total (\$)	Families eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy		
				Fees (\$)	Other charges (\$)	Total (\$)
Enrolment Acceptance Fee		\$100	\$100	–	–	–
Term 1	\$590	\$100*	\$690	–	–	–
Term 2	\$590	–	\$590	–	–	–
Term 3	\$590	–	\$590	–	–	–
Term 4	\$590	–	\$590	–	–	–
Total	\$2,360	\$200	\$2,560	–	–	–

Payment of fees

Invoices will be issued and must be paid by the due dates listed below:

Term 1 due 12th November 2021

Term 2 due 15th April 2022

Term 3 due 1st July 2022

Term 4 due 23rd September 2022

Enrolment Acceptance Fee

Parents/guardians are required to pay a \$100 acceptance fee on offer of a place at the service. This payment is non refundable and not deducted from fees. Payment will secure the child's place in the three-year-old (funded) kindergarten program.

Kindergarten Fee Subsidy

Families who are eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy (refer to Fee information for families) will not be required to make fee payments.

Late Payment Charge

A late payment charge of \$10 per week will be applied when fees are not received by the due date and where the family has not contacted the kinder/entered into a suitable payment plan.

Working Bee Levy: A non refundable \$100 working bee levy will be charged with your child's term 1 kinder fees, and replaces voluntary labour with paid labour to tidy our grounds and carry out other maintenance tasks. We ask that at least one member of each family attends one of two scheduled working bees each year. As we are a Community Kindergarten, we cannot maintain the grounds and surrounding areas without participation from families.

ATTACHMENT 4

Fee Payment Agreement Four-year-old program



Note: Fee payment agreement is accepted through Enrol Now when completing your child's enrolment form.

Four-year-old (funded) kindergarten program

- 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. 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 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 Committee President 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.

ATTACHMENT 5

Fee Payment Agreement Three-year-old program



Note: Fee payment agreement is accepted through Enrol Now when completing your child's enrolment form.

Three-year-old (partly funded) kindergarten program

- I/we acknowledge that that three-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. 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 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 Committee President 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.