

# FREE KINDERGARTEN FEES POLICY

QUALITY AREA 7 | ELAA version 1.0



## PURPOSE

This policy will provide clear guidelines for:

- free kindergarten funding for funded sessional kindergarten programs
- the application of surplus funding within North Brighton Kindergarten ensuring it is only used to ensure the quality of program delivery and development of children enrolled in the service
- the setting, payment and collection of additional hours fees.



## POLICY STATEMENT

### VALUES

North Brighton Kindergarten is committed to:

- supporting the Victorian Government's Free Kindergarten initiative
- increasing access to quality kindergarten programs for all Victorian children
- 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.

### SCOPE

This policy applies to the approved provider, persons with management or control, nominated supervisor, persons in day-to-day charge, early childhood teachers, educators, staff, parents/guardians attending North Brighton Kindergarten.

RESPONSIBILITIES					
Contractors, volunteers and students	Parents/guardians	Early childhood teacher, educators and all other staff	Nominated supervisor and persons in day-to-day charge	Approved provider and persons with management or control	
R indicates legislation requirement, and should not be deleted					
	✓	✓		R	Implementing and reviewing this policy in consultation with parents/guardians, the Nominated Supervisor and staff, and in line with the requirements of DET's Free Kindergarten initiative ( <i>refer to Definitions</i> )

Reimbursing families in full for enrolment deposits that have already been paid upon acceptance of enrolment. With the provision to donate this application fee.	R	√			
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 <b>nominate and document</b> that their child will participate in the funded kindergarten program at North Brighton Kindergarten	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 Free Kindergarten Fee Policy is readily accessible at the service ( <i>Regulation 171</i> )	R	√			
Providing all parents/guardians with information about Free Kindergarten ( <i>refer to Attachment 1</i> )	R	√			
Providing all parents/guardians with a statement of additional hours fees and charges ( <i>refer to Attachments 2</i> ) upon enrolment of their child, if applicable	R	√			
Providing all parents/guardians with an additional payment fee agreement ( <i>refer to Attachments 3</i> ), if applicable	R	√			
Reading the North Brighton Kindergarten Free Kindergarten information for families ( <i>refer to Attachment 1</i> ), the Statement of Additional Hours Fees and Charges ( <i>refer to Attachments 2</i> ), and the Additional Hours Fee Payment Agreement ( <i>refer to Attachments 3</i> ) if applicable				√	
Signing and complying with the Additional Hours Fee Payment Agreement ( <i>refer to Attachments 3</i> ), if applicable				√	
Notifying the approved provider if experiencing difficulties with the payment of additional hours fees				√	
Providing agreement in writing if any additional payments are made to the North Brighton Kindergarten				√	
Complying with the service's <i>Privacy and Confidentiality Policy</i> regarding financial and other information received,	R	√	√	√	

including in relation to the payment/non-payment of additional hours fees					
Notifying parents/guardians a minimum of 14 days of any proposed changes to the additional hours fees charged, or the way in which the fees are collected ( <i>Regulation 172(2)</i> ), ideally providing one term's notice.	R	✓			
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

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.

**Approved child care:** Approved child care services are services that have Australian Government approval to receive the Child Care Subsidy (*refer to Definitions*) on behalf of eligible parents. Approved child care includes centre-based day care, including long day care and occasional care, family day care, outside school hours care and in-home care.

**Child care subsidy (CCS):** A Commonwealth Government means tested subsidy to assist eligible families with the cost of child care. Payments are paid directly to approved child care providers. Further information can be found at: [www.education.gov.au/child-care-subsidy](http://www.education.gov.au/child-care-subsidy)

**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](http://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.

**Enrolment application fee:** A fee for when families register their child with North Brighton Kindergarten. This fee can be refunded or donated to North Brighton Kindergarten as part of their voluntary contribution. If the child does not start kindergarten or enrol completely this fee is 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 program hours over and above the 15 funded hours per week (600 per year) and/or extended care.

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

**Enrolment deposit:** A charge to secure a place that has been offered in a program at the service. This should not act as a barrier to enrolling for any families. Services must ensure that families understand that the enrolment deposits will only be refunded if the child commences in the service.

**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.

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

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## SOURCES AND RELATED POLICIES

### SOURCES

- Best Start Best Life: <https://www.vic.gov.au/give-your-child-the-best-start-in-life>
- The Kindergarten Funding Guide (Department of Education and Training): [www.education.vic.gov.au](http://www.education.vic.gov.au)



- Resources for Funded Kindergartens: <https://www.education.vic.gov.au>
- The constitution of North Brighton Kindergarten

#### RELATED POLICIES

- Compliments and Complaints
- Delivery and Collection of Children
- Enrolment and Orientation
- Excursions and Service Events
- Governance and Management of the Service
- Inclusion and Equity
- Privacy and Confidentiality



#### 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
- keep the policy up to date with current legislation and government policy, research, policy and best practice
- revise the policy and procedures as part of the service's policy review cycle, or as required
- notifying all stakeholders affected by this policy at least 14 days before making any significant changes to this policy or its procedures, unless a lesser period is necessary due to risk (*Regulation 172 (2)*).



#### ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1: Free Kindergarten information for families
- Attachment 2: Statement of additional hours and/or wrap around fees
- Attachment 3: Additional hours and/or extended care fee payment agreement



#### AUTHORISATION

This policy was adopted by the approved provider of North Brighton Kindergarten on October, 2022.

**REVIEW DATE:** July, 2023

## ATTACHMENT 1. FREE KINDERGARTEN INFORMATION FOR FAMILIES

### North Brighton Kindergarten [Year]

#### 1. General information

Kindergarten programs for four-year-old and eligible three-year-old children in Victorian Government funded services will be free as part of the Best Start, Best Life reform.

This investment will save families up to \$2,500 for each child enrolled in a participating funded kindergarten program.

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.

#### 2. What free kindergarten means at our service

North Brighton Kindergarten has opted in to the Free Kindergarten initiative. Applicable parent fees are outlined below:

- Funded sessional kindergarten for 3-year-old children (up to 15 hours per week) – no parent fee
- Funded sessional kindergarten for 4-year-old children (15 hours per week) – no parent fee

North Brighton Kindergarten will reimburse families in full for any kindergarten application fee deposit (*refer to Definitions*) payments that have already been made upon acceptance of enrolment, excluding any voluntary parent donations/payments that you agree to in writing. If your child does not take their position at North Brighton Kindergarten or fully enrol and start the kindergarten program this application fee is non-refundable.

#### 3. Other charges

Other charges levied by North Brighton Kindergarten are included on the Statement of Fees and Charges, that will be provided to families upon enrolment.

These include:

- **Excursion/service event charge (outside of the 15 hours per week program):** 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*).
- **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. Additional hours and/or extended care fees

North Brighton Kindergarten offers 4-year-old families 7.5 hours above the set 15 hours per week (600 hours per year). This is the Wattle Group on Fridays. This fee is applicable to all families that have requested enrolment in Wattle Group.

North Brighton Kindergarten offers extended care outside of the 15 hours per week (600 hours per year) sessional kindergarten program.

There are no concession rates applicable to these extended care or additional hours

#### 5. Fundraising and voluntary parent payment/donations

While **participation in fundraising/donation is voluntary**, the support of every family is encouraged. Fundraising activities are also an opportunity for families and communities to come together.

#### 6. Payment of fees for additional hours/extended care

Fees are payable for hours over and above 15 hours per week (600 hours per year) and/or extended care.



The Committee of Management will 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 Leeann Weir (our Bookkeeper; nbk.bookkeeper145@gmail.com) 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.

## **7. Unpaid fees for extended hours/extended care**

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 receive a phone call to discuss the range of support options available and establish a payment plan.
- Failure to participate in a phone call and continued non-payment may result in a second and final letter notifying parents/guardians that the child's place in the additional session/extended care may be withdrawn unless payment is made or a payment plan is entered into within a specified period of time, including an invoice for late payment fees of 10% of outstanding fees. 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 in the additional session/extended care, 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.

## **8. Refund of fees**

The enrolment application fee (*refer to Definitions*) will be fully refunded to families only when the child commences at the service. There is the option to donate this fee as a part of the voluntary contribution.

In any other case, additional hours are non-refundable (exceptional circumstances may apply – these are at the discretion of the Committee of Management. There will be no refund of these fees in the following circumstances:

- a child's short-term illness
- public holidays (out of good faith, we have not charged for these sessions)
- 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.

## **9. 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.

## **10. Notification of fee changes during the year for extended hours/extended care**

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 ADDITIONAL HOURS AND OR EXTENDED CARE FEES

North Brighton Kindergarten

Fee schedule 2023 First Term: Additional hours and extended care program

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### Extended Care - 3 and 4-year-old

	Monday 7 sessions <hr/> Lorikeets	Tuesday 8 sessions <hr/> Possums Platypus	Wednesday 8 sessions <hr/> Lorikeets	Thursday 8 sessions <hr/> Possums Platypus	Friday 7 sessions <hr/> Platypus
2:15pm - 3:15pm		\$120		\$120	
2:15pm - 5:30pm		\$390		\$390	
4pm - 5:30pm	\$157.50	\$180	\$180	\$180	
12pm - 4pm					\$420

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### Wattle Group 4-year-old additional hours Friday: 8:30am - 4:00pm - \$850 (Term 1)

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#### Payment of fees

Invoices will be issued prior to the beginning of term and must be paid 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 (*refer to Free Kindergarten Information for Families*).

No concession rate are applicable to these extended care and additional hours

### ATTACHMENT 3. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF EXTENDED CARE RULES (FEE PAYMENT AGREEMENT)

2023

Please sign this form for North Brighton Kindergarten (at the bottom of the Extended Care Booking form)

- I understand that I will be invoiced and book per term. If my child is unwell or we go on holidays or for some other reason do not attend kindergarten on our enrolled day, I am not entitled to a refund or make up session.
- I understand that there is a minimum number of enrolments that are required for these sessions to be run. Therefore if not enough children enrol to attend a session North Brighton Kindergarten are not obligated to provide the extended care session for the term.
- I am not obliged to enrol my child any longer than 1 term.
- I will pay my invoice prior to the term beginning. For each week payment is late, North Brighton Kindergarten will add 10% to the invoice.
- There are no concession rates available for this extended care , as it is above the 15 hours of funded kindergarten.

Signature (parent/guardian):

Date:

Note: Invoices, receipts and collection of fees will be in accordance with the North Brighton Kindergarten Free Kindergarten Fee Policy.

### ATTACHMENT 3. REQUEST FOR VOLUNTARY CONTRIBUTIONS

This email explains NBK's need for voluntary contributions to support our financial viability under the State Government's new 'Free Kinder' scheme.

NBK's Committee of Management has formally resolved to opt into the "Free Kinder" scheme for 2023.

This means NBK becomes eligible for additional funding for each child, and the committee is conscious of the significant cost savings this will pass on to our families.

Unfortunately, funding received under the "Free Kinder" scheme is not sufficient to cover the costs of NBK's program in full.

So, to make the scheme work and for NBK to remain a financially viable not-for-profit entity, the Committee has resolved that all families will be asked to make a voluntary contribution to NBK.

All NBK families are asked to pay an annual voluntary contribution of \$880 per child.

This contribution to your community-run, not-for-profit kinder will cover administration support, kinder materials, additional activities and general upkeep and maintenance requirements.

Contributions can be made via this link:

[Fundraising Page | North Brighton Kindergarten - Voluntary Contribution 2023](#)

Your payment of these voluntary contributions will ensure that NBK remains financially viable under the government's "Free Kinder" scheme. Whilst the payment of these levies is required to be voluntary under the government's scheme, if NBK does not receive sufficient payment of these voluntary contributions we may need to revisit the decision to opt in to the "Free Kinder" scheme in future years.

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We would like to remind families of the importance of making voluntary contributions to support the financial viability of North Brighton Kindergarten. North Brighton Kindergarten is your kindergarten. We are a not-for-profit kinder run by the community of families whose children attend. We are not run by the council, the government or a private provider. Therefore everything that happens at our kindergarten is created by the dedicated staff, the families and most importantly the children. All money is reinvested back into the kindergarten program.

The \$880 per year, breaks down to:

4 year old average session cost is \$11 per session over a 10 week term

3 year old average session cost is \$8 per session over a 10 week term.

This contribution supports the purchasing of resources (especially for a whole new room); additional activities; general upkeep and maintenance requirements; the ability for us to keep class sizes at 22 (rather than 33 children); it enables the kinder to employ admin support and a bookkeeper (roles that would otherwise be the responsibility of volunteer committee members).

The transition to 'Free Kindergarten' is an important initiative by the State Government to encourage more children to attend two years of valuable pre-school education, but the funding model is still being refined. To enable North Brighton Kindergarten to deliver the quality program that 'exceeds' the requirements of the National Quality Standards, and keep our experienced and dedicated teachers and staff we need contributions from families.