

KINDERGARTEN POLICY

Mandatory – Quality Area 2

Precious Gems Childcare Pty Ltd trading as "Kids Haven Childcare"

Quality Area 7

PURPOSE

This policy provides a clear set of guidelines for:

- the setting, payment and collection of fees
- ensuring the viability of Kids Haven Childcare, by setting appropriate fees and charges
- the equitable and non-discriminatory application of fees across the programs provided by Kids Haven Childcare.

POLICY STATEMENT

1. VALUES

Kids Haven Childcare 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
- Provide 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
- Provide equitable access for families eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy and/or Early Start Kindergarten.

2. 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 Kids Haven Childcare

3. SUBSIDIES

3.1 Kindergarten Programs and Fee Subsidy

The Victorian Government provides funding to support children to access a high-quality kindergarten program in the year before they start school. The funding is a contribution towards meeting the cost of the kindergarten program. Children are required to attend 15 hours per week/600 hours per year for the Kinder Program. 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*).

Kids Haven Childcare Kindergarten programs will run from Monday to Friday from 9:00 am to 4:30 pm. Children will have to attend a minimum of two days per week. The age eligibility: Children who turn four years old by the 30th of April the year before they start primary school or for the children who are applying for early entry to Kindergarten.

guardians with an enrolled child, or who wish to enrol a child at Precious Gems Childcare Pty Ltd.

4. SOURCES AND RELATED POLICIES

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*

5. **NO Jab NO Play**

Before confirming a child's enrolment, early childhood services are required to obtain evidence that the child:

- is fully vaccinated for their age, or
- is on a recognised catch-up schedule if the child has fallen behind with their vaccinations, or
- has a medical reason not to be vaccinated.

Precious Gems Childcare have linked with Hume City Council and aligned with the municipal early year's plans. We intend to that parents who are within the area proximity and enrol on the registrar with Hume city council enrolments are referred to the trading service Kids Haven Childcare.

- Proof of Child's birth. Please provide **one** of the following:
 - A copy of the child's birth certificate
 - A copy of the child's passport
 - An Australian Immunisation Register (AIR) from the [Services Australia](#) website.

6. Early Start Kindergarten Grant

Three-year-old Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children in out of home care 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. We will work with the ccs to reduce families fees. Please contact us for further information.

Families who have been referred to a service connect case worker have been added to the list of those eligible for an Early Start Kindergarten grant.

Early Start Kindergarten gives eligible children 15 hours of free or low-cost kindergarten a week for two years before starting school. Minimum of two days a week.

To be eligible, your child must be three by 30 April in the year they start kindergarten, and:

- is from a refugee or asylum seeker background, or
- identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, or
- your family has had contact with child protection.

Children can also access free or low cost Four-Year-Old Kindergarten through the Early Start Kindergarten Extension Grant.

7. Early age entry

Where a student is younger than 5 years of age on 30 April in the year of enrolment and does not meet one of the exceptions listed above, an exemption from the minimum age requirements is required. Early age entry or exemption from the minimum age requirements must be:

- requested in writing to the school by their parent/carers
- considered by the principal, who must make a written recommendation for consideration by the Regional Director
- forwarded to the relevant Regional Director, with all supporting documentation attached, via email
- assessed by the Regional Director, who must consider eligibility, the principal's recommendation and all other relevant circumstances, and make a decision regarding the application
- approved or not approved in writing by the relevant Regional Director. The regional office should notify both the parent or carer and school of the decision in a timely manner

To be eligible for an exemption from the minimum age requirements a child must meet both of the following criteria:

- the child possesses suitable academic ability; and
- it is in the child's best interests to be enrolled at or attend a government school

Applications that do not address the requirements for both criteria will not be eligible for approval.

Suitable academic ability

The Department's preferred evidence of suitable academic ability is:

- a report from a psychologist confirming that the child has been assessed as ≥ 130 Full Scale IQ (2 standard deviations, or more above the mean), preferably using the Wechsler Preschool and Primary Scale of Intelligence, Fourth Edition, Australian and New Zealand (WPPSI-IV A&NZ), including the 10 sub-tests required to calculate the Full Scale score and Primary Index Scales, conducted after the child has attained the age of 4 years; or:
- where a child is transferring from a school in another state or country after more than one term of enrolment and attendance, evidence from that school confirming that the child has suitable academic ability to attend school

Where a child does not fall into one of the above categories, the Department may also consider other evidence of suitable academic ability that:

- is provided by an authoritative independent source(s) — for example, a child psychologist registered with the Psychology Board of Australia, with experience in educational and developmental psychology; and
- clearly demonstrates that the child has suitable academic ability to attend school

It is the responsibility of the parent/carers to obtain all relevant cognitive assessment/s and/or other reports and evidence to support their child's application.

Applications based solely on parental observations will not be accepted.

Best interests

Schools must consider the entry assessment from kindergarten and informal observations to assess development, literacy, and numeracy, and academic, social and emotional needs in determining a student's school readiness.

Early entry to school is generally not considered to be in the best interests of a child unless the child is:

- at least 4 years 6 months of age on or before 30 April in the year of school commencement; and
- considered at risk of long term educational disadvantage by a childcare, kindergarten, allied health or other relevant professional if they do not commence at school

8. School Readiness Funding/Collection of SFOE data

School Readiness Funding is a permanent and ongoing part of the Victorian kindergarten funding model. It funds programs and supports that builds the capacity of kindergarten services, educators and families to support children's learning and development outcome.

The amount of School Readiness Funding each service receives is based on the level of need of children enrolled at the service. This is informed by parental occupation and education data (Student Family Occupation and Education data or SFOE) as this is considered an accurate predictor of educational disadvantage. Similarly, parental occupation and education data is used in schools to allocate 'needs-based' funding.

It is important that kindergarten services accurately collect parents' occupation and education information each year as part of the enrolment process. Service providers are required to enter this into the Kindergarten Information Management system as part of annual confirmation in August.

This information is necessary for the Department to understand the educational needs of children and services across Victoria, and determine how funding will be allocated in future years.

More information regarding School Readiness Program can be found on the DET website.

9. Transition learning and development statement

A child's transition learning and development statement summarises their abilities as they start school and identifies their individual approaches to learning. It is passed on to the child's future school. The transition learning and development statement (often referred to as the TLDS):

- summarises a child's learning and development
- identifies their individual approaches to learning and their interests
- indicates how the child can be supported to continue learning.

The transition learning and development statement is not a report card - the information in the statement helps Foundation teachers get to know the children starting in their class, and to plan appropriate learning and teaching programs.

It is a kindergarten funding requirement that every child transitioning to school has a transition learning and development statement.

A copy of the completed transition learning and development statement should always be provided to the family, and permission sought to share the final statement with the school. The child's parent or guardian may choose to opt out of sharing this information with the school.

Where a family provide permission, the transition learning and development statement can be shared with the school in three ways:

- online via the Insight Assessment Platform (IAP)
- emailed via secure mail to the school (if they are not listed in the Online TLDS tool)

- in hard copy.

Funded kindergarten providers must report on the completion of transition learning and development statements from the previous year through annual kindergarten data collection. Transitions statement will be completed by our Early Childhood Teachers.

10. Children born between January and April the year they start school

To start primary school in Victoria, children need to turn five years of age by 30 April of the year that they start school. Children must be at school in the year that they turn six years of age – this is the compulsory school starting age. Exceptions to this can be made.

When determining 'readiness' for starting kindergarten and subsequently school, children who turn 4 in their kindergarten year from January 1st until April 30th, have a choice about whether to commence kindergarten in the year that their child turns 4 or delay starting kindergarten until the following year when their child turns five. Children can only receive one year of funded kindergarten.

My child is considered 'young' for their kinder year level. How do I know if they are ready to start kinder?

Children born between January 1 and April 30 may be considered 'young' in comparison to the other children in their year level (this applies to kindergarten as well as school).

We recognise the confusion many parents face when deciding whether to send their child 'young' or whether they would benefit from waiting another year before attending a kindergarten program. This can be a challenging decision for families to make and we encourage them to talk to their child's 3 year old teacher, kindergarten teacher or contact the Primary School that they are planning to attend.

When considering 'readiness', it is best to think carefully about when your child is likely to be ready to start school (i.e. whether they will be better off turning five or six in Prep) and therefore when is the best time for the child to be able to have an enjoyable kindergarten experience. You may want to consider some of the following: their ability to separate happily from you, their ability to undertake self-care tasks with a level of independence, do they enjoy playing with others and making new friends, and are they able to cope with longer days in an educational setting and away from home.

Can my 'young' child have a second year of kindergarten if they are not ready for school?

Many parents are under the false understanding that, should their child not be ready for school after one year of four-year-old kindergarten, that their child will automatically receive a second year of funded kinder. A child will only be eligible to receive a second year of funded kinder if they are assessed as having at least two areas of significant developmental delay that are not age related i.e. If the child is exhibiting behaviour/s that is/are deemed consistent for their 'young' age they will not fit the funding criteria.

To receive the funding for a second year, your child's kinder teacher is required to meet specific requirements as outlined by the Victorian Government's Department of Education and Training, and to identify genuine developmental delays and to complete an assessment in conjunction with an independent Preschool Field Officer, along with other relevant reports from Early Childhood Professionals.

Research suggests that children who transition to school smoothly and experience early school success tend to maintain higher levels of long-term social competence and academic achievements. It is therefore important to look at whether children possess skills that promote their ability to successfully commence school, rather than look at their age.

11. Payment of fees

The Approved provider 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 each week and must be paid by the date indicated on the invoice. Each invoice will be accompanied by payment instructions. Receipts will be provided for all fee payments.

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

Fee exemption to support priority group children who cannot afford bond payments will be exempted.

For eligible families who receive the free 15-hour funding per week payments received will be taken off parent's fees post CCS.

12. 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 Approved provider **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.

13. Refund of fees

A bond will be paid to confirm a position at our service. This bond will be refunded with families give 2 weeks' notice. The bond will be applied to their accounts.

In any other case, fees are non-refundable (exceptional circumstances may apply – these are at the discretion of the Approved provider. 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

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.

14. 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.

15. BACKGROUND AND LEGISLATION

Background

The Department of Education and Training (DET) provides funding for each child who is enrolled and attending a funded kindergarten program in the year before school. Income from other sources,

primarily fees, is required to meet all the additional costs incurred by the service in the delivery of the children's program.

DET 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, 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

Precious Gems Childcare Pty Ltd will employ a qualified teacher that will be registered with the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT), or in the case of graduate teachers, be provisionally registered with the VIT and working towards full registration by demonstrating that they have met the required standards of professional practice and conduct.

In accordance with the National Quality Framework, the educator to child ratio that applies in Precious Gems Childcare is 1 educator to 11 children, for children from 36 months up to and including kindergarten age.

Where children are less than four years of age, a copy of the written request for early entry to school must accompany the child's application for kindergarten enrolment. Precious Gems Childcare must include a copy of this request in the child's enrolment record and upload the request to KIM.

16. 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.

Approved care: Approved child care services which have Australian Government approval to pass on Child Care Subsidy (refer to Definitions) as a reduction in child care fees: www.humanservices.gov.au (Note: There will be changes to child care assistance from 2 July 2018. More information about the New Child Care Package can be found at: www.education.gov.au)

Enrolment Bond: A bond of a weekly gap fee to be paid to confirm position at service. This is refunded when notice is given For eligible families in financial hardship please see Management.

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

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 of \$10 for first 5 min then \$1 for every minute after.

Registered carer: Registered child care is provided by individuals who are registered as carers with the Department of Human Services. A registered carer may include grandparents, relatives, friends, neighbours or nannies. In some cases, it can also include care provided by individuals in private preschools, kindergartens and some outside school hour services, including before and after school care, vacation care and holiday programs: www.humanservices.gov.au

More information about the New Child Care Package can be found at: www.education.gov.au)

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.

	Priority of Access
Children at risk of abuse or neglect, including children Children at risk of abuse or neglect, including children in Out-of-Home Care in Out-of-Home Care	The child is: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • attending a three year old kindergarten program through Early Start Kindergarten or Access to Early Learning, or is • referred by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Child Protection – Child and family services (family services referral and support team, Child FIRST/integrated family services/Services Connect case worker) – Maternal and Child Health nurse, or – Out-of-Home Care provider.
Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – As part of the enrolment process, service providers must respectfully ask families 'is your child Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander?' and record this information in KIM.
Asylum seeker and refugee children	An appropriate visa identifies the child and/or parents as a refugee or asylum seeker.
Children eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A child or parent holds a Commonwealth Health Care Card, Pensioner Concession Card, Veteran's Affairs Card, or multiple birth children (triplets, quadruplets).
Children with additional needs, defined as children who: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • require additional assistance in order to fully participate in the kindergarten program • require a combination of services which are individually planned • have an identified specific disability or developmental delay 	The child: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is assessed as having delays in two or more areas and is declared eligible for a second funded year of kindergarten • holds a Child Disability Health Care Card • has previously been approved for Kindergarten Inclusion Support Package, or referred by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the National Disability Insurance Scheme – Early Childhood Intervention Service – Preschool Field Officer, or • Maternal and Child Health nurse.

17. Notification of fee changes during the year

Childcare fees will have an incremental increase that will be reviewed each year. This most likely this will occur at the start of the financial year in July. However, the approved provider may consider increments divided into two being first in July and second in January. This will be assessed and subject to competition fee rates and affordability for parents. 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.

18. 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.

AUTHORISATION

This policy was adopted by the Approved Provider of Precious Gems Childcare trading as Kids Haven Childcare on 22 June 2021.

Review date: **22/06/2022**

Four-year-old (funded) kindergarten program

Please complete this form and return to Precious Gems Childcare Pty Ltd by

Fee payment contract

Child's full name:

Parent's/guardian's full name:

- I/we acknowledge that the four-year-old kindergarten program is partly funded by the state government, with the balance of funds coming from fees paid by parents/guardians.
- I/we 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 Centre Manager 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.
- I/we acknowledge that my child is only accessing one funded kindergarten place at any one service.
- I/we acknowledge that my child will be accessing Kids Haven Childcare- Kindergarten Program only.

Kindergarten Fee Subsidy

Please advise if the child is Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Please tick: ☐ Yes ☐ No

Please indicate below which concession you are eligible for – the criteria is outlined on Attachment 1 Section 6.

Concession: _____

Except in the case of an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child, supporting documentation will need to be sighted on commencement at Precious Gems Childcare Pty Ltd by the Centre Manager.

Note: the eligibility of concessions may vary from time-to-time. Up-to-date information can be found in The Kindergarten Funding Guide (Department of Education and Training):

www.education.vic.gov.au