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| Drafted by    | Charles Lie  |
| Approved on   | October 2023 |
| Review cycle  | 1 year       |
| Policy Number | QA 7         |
| Version       | 3            |

# Fee Policy

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## Purpose

This policy will provide clear guidelines for:

- the setting, payment and collection of fees
- ensuring the viability of Ewing Kindergarten, by setting appropriate fees and charges
- ensuring that the relevant Government funding instruments and programs are considered, and that as and when external funding changes are implemented, that the Ewing Kindergarten Fees Policy and Fees structure is reviewed
- the equitable and non-discriminatory application of fees across the programs provided by Ewing Kindergarten.

## Policy Statement

### Values

Ewing Kindergarten is committed to:

- Ensuring that our program remains sustainable, and that the funding available to the kindergarten, as well as the fees charged to families are transparently communicated on a periodic basis – at least annually
- providing responsible financial management of the kindergarten, including establishing fees that will result in a long-term financially viable kindergarten, while keeping user fees at the lowest possible level
- retaining non-for-profit status, ensuring that the kindergarten remains sustainable, without generating excessive surpluses. Save for planned capital expenditure, reasonable contingencies and adequate working capital – reinvestment of any surpluses back into the kindergarten
- providing a fair and manageable system for dealing with non-payment and/or inability to pay fees/outstanding debts, in order to ensure that our families can maintain compliance with our policies
- maintaining confidentiality in relation to the financial circumstances of parents/guardians
- advising users of the kindergarten 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 at Ewing Kindergarten

## Definitions

The terms defined in this section relate specifically to this policy.

**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: [Early Start Kindergarten | Victorian Government \(www.vic.gov.au\)](http://www.vic.gov.au/early-start-kindergarten)

**Enrolment application 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.

**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 Kindergarten'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.

**Free Kinder:** A Victorian Government Best Start, Best Life initiative providing Free Kinder programs for four-year-old and three-year-old children in funded services, that have opted into the initiative. Details are available at: <https://www.vic.gov.au/sending-child-kinder>

**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/customer/services/centrelink/health-care-card](http://www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/services/centrelink/health-care-card)

**Kindergarten fee deposit:** A charge to secure a place that has been offered in a program at the service. This is deducted from term fees.

**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, eligibility requirements and a calculator, are available in *The Kindergarten Guide (refer to Sources)*.

**Kindergarten Fee Subsidy – Fees Policy:** Provides operational guidelines for services administering the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy and can be found in *The Kindergarten 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).

**Registered care:** Care provided by nannies, grandparents, relatives or friends, individuals working within kindergartens, occasional care services and outside school hours care services that are registered with the Family Assistance Office. Eligible families can receive some reimbursement of costs when using a registered care provider. Details are available at: [www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/services/centrelink/child-care-benefit](http://www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/services/centrelink/child-care-benefit)

**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.

## Background and Legislative Requirements and Guiding Documents

### Background

The Department of Education and Training (DET) provides per capita funding as a contribution towards the costs of the three-year-old and four-year-old kindergarten programs. Income from other sources, primarily fees, is required to meet all the additional costs incurred by the kindergarten in the delivery of the children's program. In addition, the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy (refer to Definitions) enables eligible families to attend the 15 hours four-year-old kindergarten program free of charge in the year before school.

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 Kindergarten Funding Guide (refer to *Sources*).

DET requires that funded kindergarten 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. Kindergarten's 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 kindergarten. The Kindergarten Guide (refer to *Sources*) outlines the criteria to be covered in the policy.

### Legislative Requirements

**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, Quality Area 7: Governance and Leadership

The most current amendments to listed legislation can be found at:

Victorian Legislation – Victorian Law Today: [www.legislation.vic.gov.au](http://www.legislation.vic.gov.au)

Commonwealth Legislation – Federal Register of Legislation: [www.legislation.gov.au](http://www.legislation.gov.au)

### Procedures

**The Approved Provider is responsible for:**

- Ensuring that policies and procedures are in place for the payment of fees and the provision of a statement of fees charged by the service (Regulation 168), and take reasonable steps to ensure those policies and procedures are followed (Regulation 170)
- Providing communication to families explaining their access to one year of three-year-old and one of four-year-old funded kindergarten programs
- 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

- Ensuring that families are informed of the operating hours including term dates, planned closures and additional hours to account for closures
- Ensuring families are informed of the total annual fee amount, including any applicable fees for e.g. excursions, levies and any additional hours
- 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 Guide (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 at Ewing Kindergarten 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 kindergarten (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
- Providing all parents/guardians with a fee payment agreement (refer to samples in Attachments 3 and 4)
- 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 kindergarten'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 kindergarten is displayed prominently on the Ewing Kindergarten website.

### **The Nominated Supervisor is responsible for:**

- assisting the Approved Provider in developing this policy, and ensuring that this policy is based on the principles of the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy – Fees Policy (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 DE's The Kindergarten Funding Guide (refer to Sources)
- considering any issues regarding fees that may be a barrier to families enrolling at Ewing Kindergarten and removing those barriers wherever possible
- considering options for payment when affordability is an issue
- communicating this policy and payment options to families in a culturally-sensitive way and in the family's first language where possible
- 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 ensure that the Fees Policy is readily accessible at the kindergarten

- providing all parents/guardians with a fee payment agreement
- collecting all relevant information and maintaining relevant documents regarding those with entitlement to concessions, where applicable
- complying with the kindergarten'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.

### **Other staff are responsible for:**

- informing the Approved Provider of any complaints or concerns that have been raised regarding fees at the kindergarten
- referring parents'/guardians' questions in relation to this policy to the Approved Provider

### **Parents/Guardians are responsible for:**

- reading:
  - Ewing Kindergarten Fee Information for Families (refer to Attachment 1),
  - the Fee Payment Agreement (refer to Attachments 4 and 5)
  - the Statement of Fees and Charges (refer to Attachment 2)
  - signing and complying with the Fee Payment Agreement (refer to Attachments 4 and 5)
- 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).

## **Sources and Related Policies**

### **Related Policies**

- Compliments 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

### **References and Further Sources**

- The Kindergarten Funding Guide (Department of Education and Training):  
[www.education.vic.gov.au](http://www.education.vic.gov.au)
- The constitution of Ewing Kindergarten

### **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 kindergarten 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 kindergarten'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)) unless a lesser period is necessary because of a risk.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment 1: Fee information for families

Attachment 2: Statement of Fees and Charges – Fee schedule – All Programs

## **AUTHORISATION**

This policy was adopted by the Approved Provider of Ewing Kindergarten on 30/10/2023

## **REVIEW DATE**

**October 2024**

## **Attachment 1**

### **Fee information for families**

#### **Why fees are necessary**

The Department of Education and Training (DET) provides per capita funding as a contribution toward the costs of providing three-year-old and four-year-old kindergarten programs. The amount of funding varies for each program. Ewing Kindergarten meets the balance of costs in running the kindergarten program through charging fees and fundraising activities.

DET provides a Kindergarten Fee Subsidy (see below) that enables children from eligible families to attend a three-year-old or four-year-old kindergarten program free of charge, or at a minimal cost.

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.

Ewing Kindergarten provides a range of support options to parents/guardians experiencing difficulty with payment of fees (see below).

Ewing Kindergarten has not opted into the DE's "Free Kindergarten" program which was announced in late 2022. Ewing Kindergarten has determined that it would be unviable to continue to deliver the levels of service and experience to enrolled children if Ewing Kindergarten was unable to supplement government funding with parent contributions. Ewing Kindergarten's Committee of Management has again reviewed the sustainability and viability of the kindergarten throughout 2023, and has made a determination that Ewing Kindergarten will not opt into the Free Kindergarten program for the 2023/24 financial year. Therefore Ewing Kindergarten is continuing to receive the same level of funding received per child as in 2022 and in 2023, as we have maintained the level of fees.

#### **How fees are set**

**As part of the budget development process, the Committee of Management sets fees each year for the programs of the kindergarten, taking into consideration:**

- the financial viability of the kindergarten
- 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 Kindergarten Guide: (Department of Education) available under early childhood / service providers on the DET website: [www.education.vic.gov.au](http://www.education.vic.gov.au))

Fees set for the year are only reviewed in extraordinary circumstances, for example, if attendance rates fall below the budget 'break even' point. More information can be found at: Costs of kindergarten | Victorian Government ([www.vic.gov.au](http://www.vic.gov.au))

## Other charges

**Other charges levied by Ewing Kindergarten are included on the Statement of Fees and Charges.**

**These include:**

**Kindergarten waitlist fee:** This payment secures a child's place on Ewing Kindergarten's wait-list and is payable via the portal when registering.

**Kindergarten fee deposit:** This payment secures a child's place at the kindergarten and is payable on acceptance of enrolment. The deposit is retained and will be refunded against term 4 fees. Families experiencing hardship should discuss any difficulties with the Treasurer.

**Specific excursion/event charges:** From time to time, an additional charge is required to cover the cost of excursions or special events that occur throughout the year in response to emerging children's program needs and interests. Affordability and relevance to the children's interests and the kindergarten program will be taken into consideration before a decision is made that will require families to pay this additional charge (refer to Excursions and Service Events Policy). Where possible, events that are planned ahead are included as an expenditure item in the kindergarten's budget and do not incur this additional charge.

**Maintenance levy:** The participation of parents/guardians is encouraged by the kindergarten and can help to keep costs more affordable. However not all families are able to assist at the service. A refundable levy system has been introduced by the kindergarten and assists with replacing voluntary labour with paid labour if required. For the avoidance of doubt, all voluntary activities performed by families is taken into account when considering eligibility for levy refund, including participation on the Committee of Management, Class Representation and other activities such as Fundraising and Working Bees.

Payment will be refunded to parents/guardians on participation in specified activities which may include working bees, maintenance and gardening etc. The levy is not intended to be a barrier to participation and families experiencing difficulties should discuss this with the Treasurer. The fee is charged with Term 1 fees, and refunded in Term 4 if the eligibility criteria are met

**Late collection charge:** The Committee of Management reserves the right to implement a late collection charge. This charge will be added to the following term fees.

## 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.

## Fundraising

From time to time, Ewing Kindergarten will engage in fundraising activities and efforts, in order to raise funds for major capital works and specific initiatives. Fundraising contributions will not be used to offset the ordinary costs in running the Kindergarten. 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.

## Subsidies

### Kindergarten Fee Subsidy



The Kindergarten Fee Subsidy is provided by DET and enables eligible children to attend kindergarten free of charge or at minimal cost. Eligibility conditions change from time-to-time – contact the kindergarten for further information.

More information can be found at: [Costs of kindergarten | Victorian Government \(www.vic.gov.au\)](https://www.vic.gov.au/costs-of-kindergarten)

**Families who may be eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy include those who are:**

- Health Care Card holders
- Pensioner Concession Card holders
- Department of Veterans' Affairs Gold Card or White Card holders
- Bridging Visas A–E
- Refugee Visa (subclass) 200
- In-country Special Humanitarian visa (subclass 201)
- Global Special Humanitarian visa (subclass 202)
- Temporary Humanitarian Concern visa (subclass 786)
- Protection visa (subclass 866)
- Emergency Rescue visa (subclass 203)
- Woman at risk visa (subclass 204)
- ImmiCard
- 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 Director 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.

**NB: A 'Gap Fee' may apply and will be determined in the application process through DET.**

### **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 kindergarten receives funding for children who meet the eligibility criteria. Contact the kindergarten for further information.

### **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.

Ewing Kindergarten request that all families pay their fees by direct debit. This is the most efficient payment method for Ewing to collect fees and minimize the transaction costs associated with other payment methods. An email detailing direct debit instructions will be sent to all families within each term.

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 kindergarten.

Parents/guardians experiencing difficulty in paying fees are requested to contact the Treasurer to arrange a suitable alternative payment plan. The Privacy and Confidentiality Policy of the kindergarten will be complied with at all times in relation to a family's financial/personal circumstances.

### **Unpaid fees**

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

An initial reminder email will be sent to parents/guardians with a specified payment date.

Where payment is still not received, families will be invited to attend a discussion regarding the range of support options available and to establish a payment plan.

Failure to participate in the discussion 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 kindergarten, the parents/guardians will be provided with 14 days' notice in writing.

### **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.

It is expected that families and parents provide six weeks' notice if they would like to withdraw their child from Ewing Kindergarten throughout the calendar year. This provides adequate and reasonable time for the Director to arrange for a replacement to take the vacated position. A refund of fees will be arranged by the Treasurer for the remaining balance of term fees on a pro-rated basis. However a withdrawal fee will be charged to the withdrawing child's family to cover the administrative efforts in coordinating withdrawals and refunds. This administrative fee is set at \$200 for 2023.

If a suitable replacement is confirmed earlier than the six week notice period, then the refund would reflect this, on a pro-rated basis from the date which the replacement has paid their fee deposit.

If a child withdraws throughout the calendar year, then the fee deposit may also be refunded at the same time as the fee refund. The refund of the fee deposit and the timing of the refund is at the discretion of the Committee of Management.

**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 family chooses to leave the kindergarten mid-term or prior to the commencement of term
- a child's short-term illness
- public holidays

- family holiday during operational times
- closure of the kindergarten for one or more days when a qualified educator is absent and a qualified reliever is not available
- closure of the kindergarten for staff training days
- closure of the kindergarten 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.

### **Children turning three during the year of enrolment**

Full payment from the first day of the relevant term is required to reserve the place for a child in the three-year-old kindergarten program regardless of the date at which they commence attending the kindergarten.

### **Support services**

Families experiencing financial hardship often require access to family support services. Information on these services is available from the kindergarten provider and a list can be supplied to those families who require it. A good place to start is with your local council.

### **Notification of fee changes during the year**

Fees set for the year ahead 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.

It is the intention of the Committee of Management to set fees for the calendar year ahead prior to the commencement of services in Term 1. The Committee of Management is responsible for communicating all changes to the Fee Schedule and the Fees Policy with all parents and families transparently prior to the commencement of services in Term 1.

## Attachment 2

### Statement of Fees and Charges

|                          | Three-year-old kindergarten |                    |              | Four-year-old kindergarten |                    |              |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------|--------------|----------------------------|--------------------|--------------|
|                          | Fees (\$)                   | Other charges (\$) | Total (\$)   | Fees (\$)                  | Other charges (\$) | Total (\$)   |
| Kindergarten fee deposit |                             | 300                | 300          |                            | 300                | 300          |
| Term 1                   | 1,090                       | 140                | 1,230        | 1,520                      | 140                | 1,660        |
| Term 2                   | 1,090                       |                    | 1,090        | 1,520                      | -                  | 1,520        |
| Term 3                   | 1,090                       |                    | 1,090        | 1,520                      | -                  | 1,520        |
| Term 4*                  | 1,090                       | (440)              | 650          | 1,520                      | (440)              | 1,080        |
| <b>Total</b>             | <b>4,360</b>                | <b>-</b>           | <b>4,360</b> | <b>6,080</b>               | <b>-</b>           | <b>6,080</b> |

\* Assumes family meets maintenance levy waiver criteria for \$140, as well as refund of \$300 Kindergarten fee deposit

#### Payment of fees

Invoices will be circulated to parents at the commencement of each term, with seven-day payment terms by direct debit.

#### Kindergarten fee deposit

Parents/guardians are required to pay the fee deposit on offer of a place. This payment is retained and deducted from term 4 fees. Payment will secure the child's place in the Kindergarten program.

#### Kindergarten Fee Subsidy

Families who are eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy may have alternate funding and fee arrangements.

#### Children returning or repeating the same class

Separate arrangements will be made for children who are repeating the same Kindergarten level two years in a row. For those children repeating the three-year-old program in 2023, the same total funding received in 2022 (government funding plus out of pocket fees) will be charged as a fee for 2023.

#### Children enrolled in multiple kindergarten programs

Some families may have enrolled their children in multiple kindergarten programs. Please note that Government funding is only available for each child for one program. In such cases, these children may be required to pay full fees with Ewing Kindergarten (government funding plus out of pocket fees) if they are receiving the benefits of Government funding with another registered kindergarten provider.

Please note that Ewing Kindergarten will ask all enrolled families to positively elect Ewing as their nominated funded Kindergarten. This will ensure that Ewing receives the DET funding for each child, and does not need to charge additional out of pocket fees to make up the shortfall in funding. Please refer to the DET's published Kindergarten funding rates webpage for details on what shortfall amounts would be on an annualised basis if families opt not to elect Ewing as their nominated funded Kindergarten.  
(<http://www.Vic.gov.AU/kindergarten-funding-rates#table-1-%E2%80%93-core-per-child-funding-rates>)

#### **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 Fee Information for Fee information for families)