

Title	Kindergarten Fees Policy for 2024 Families
Policy Category	Childrens Programs
Policy Type	Mandatory
NQF Standard	NQS: Quality Area 7
Related Legislation	See legislation map

Background and Context

In 2023, the Victorian Government committed \$9 billion to expand kindergarten programs across the state.

This means that:

- From 2023, free kindergarten was made available for all Victorian three and four year old children at participating services in both standalone (sessional) services and long day care (childcare) settings.
- Over the next decade, four-year-old kindergarten will transition to 'Pre-Prep' – increasing to a universal 30-hour a week program of play-based learning for every four-year-old child in Victoria.
- 50 Victorian government-owned and affordable childcare centres will be established. These centres will be built in areas that have unmet demand and will make it easier for families to access childcare. The first of the centres will be available in 2025.

These major new initiatives are in addition to the roll-out of three-year-old kindergarten across the state. The Victorian Government is investing \$5 billion over the decade to deliver 15 hours per week of three-year-old kindergarten for every child.

Glen Education is committed to:

- advising users of the service about priority of access
- responsible financial management
- setting fees for unfunded places
- 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
- providing a fair and manageable system for dealing with non-payment and/or inability to pay outstanding fees for unfunded places
- maintaining confidentiality in relation to the financial circumstances of families.

Scope

This policy applies to Glen Education staff and families with an enrolled child at a Glen Education service.

Definitions

Early Start Kindergarten: A funding program that enables eligible children priority of access to 15 hours a week of free or low-cost kindergarten for two years before starting school. (Details are available at: www.education.vic.gov.au). To be eligible, your child must be three by 30 April in the year they start kindergarten, and meet one of the following criteria:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children
- children from a refugee or asylum seeker background
- children known to Child Protection or have been referred by Child Protection to Child FIRST

Enrolment application fee: Payable to local government to cover the administrative costs associated with the processing of a child's enrolment application for a place in a program.

Extended hours: Attendance within a first or second year program beyond the funded component.

Fees: A fee is charged per term for children attending for more than the Government funded hours (i.e., extended hours).

First Year of Kindergarten: A child is eligible to attend a first year program if they turn 3YO by the 30 April, in the year of attendance (also referred to as '3YO kindergarten' by the Department of Education)

Glen Education Leader: A person who is nominated by Glen Education Management to provide leadership and mentoring (operational and educational) across the organisation that aligns with the National Early Years Framework and who actively promotes and ensures adherence to all Glen Education practices, policies, and procedures

Health Care Card (HCC): A Commonwealth Government entitlement providing concessions for low-income earners and other eligible people. Details are available at: www.humanservices.gov.au

Holding Deposit (\$100): Families are required to pay a \$100 holding deposit on offer of a place. This one off deposit payment (per child) is retained and refunded on commencement of kindergarten. Payment will secure the child's place in the kindergarten program. If a place is cancelled prior to the child attending, this deposit WILL NOT be refunded. There is no deposit required for families who are eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy, Early Start Kindergarten fee subsidy or who select to defer the offer.

Kindergarten Fee Subsidy (KFS): A state government subsidy paid to organisations that ensures priority of access for vulnerable children.

Kindergarten Funding Guide: The Kindergarten Funding Guide provides detailed information about:

- the types of kindergarten funding available
- eligibility criteria
- how to apply for funding
- how to comply with operational requirement.

The guide is designed to assist services that provide kindergarten programs funded from the Department of Education (DE). Further information can be found at:

<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/providers/funding/Pages/kinderfundingcriteria.aspx>

KIMS: The Kindergarten Information Management System which is operated by the DE.

Late Fee (Form): A fee charged to families that are consistently late to collect their child from a program after the scheduled time. The fee is calculated on the length of time the child is in attendance after the program has concluded.

Nominated Supervisor: A person who has been nominated by Glen Education under Part 3 of the Act and who has consented to that nomination in writing can be the Nominated Supervisor. All services must have a Nominated Supervisor(s) with responsibility for the service in accordance with the National Regulations (Section 5 and 161).

Second Year of Kindergarten: A child is eligible to attend a second year program if they turn 4YO by the 30 April in the year of attendance (referred to as '4YO kindergarten' by the Department of Education).

Voluntary Contribution Fee: Each term, families are asked to pay a contribution of \$50 to Glen Education's Inclusion Fund. This fee is per child and is completely voluntary.

Guidelines

1. Payment of fees for extended hours

Where there are vacancies, Glen Education may offer families additional hours above the Government's funded program. These additional hours are fully funded by families. Fees for extended hours are available on the Glen Education website (gleneducation.org.au).

Fees for extended hours will be invoiced to families directly and must be paid by the due date indicated on the invoice. Each invoice will be accompanied by payment instructions. Payment of the fee for the term of attendance must be received in full, **prior to the child commencing at the service**. A pro-rata invoice, if commencing during the term will be issued, and must be paid prior to the child's commencement date. A child's enrolment status does not move to 'approved' until all fees have been paid and all enrolment paperwork completed.

2. Unpaid fees for extended hours

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

- An overdue reminder and copy of the invoice is sent to families (the person nominated as responsible for the fee in the enrolment documentation).
- Reminders are sent three days prior to the due date of an invoice with a link to the invoice and payment options.
- Reminders are sent when an invoice is three days overdue with a link to the invoice and payment options.
- Reminders are sent when an invoice is six days overdue with a link to the invoice and payment options.
- A member of the Customer Relations team will contact the family to seek payment on day seven after the due date and provide 48 hours to process the payment.
- **If the invoice remains outstanding the day prior to the child commencing kindergarten OR if the invoice remains outstanding on day 14 after the due date (whichever comes first), the Customer Relationships Manager will seek immediate payment within 24 hours. If fees remain unpaid, it will be escalated to the Executive Management Team and a decision may be made to withdraw the child's extended hours place at the service. They will still be able to access the 15 hours of free kindergarten.**

3. Refund of fees for extended hours

Four weeks' notice prior to term commencement (in writing to enrolments@gleneducation.org.au) is required to withdraw a child from their extended hours. If no such notice is given, term fees are non-refundable.

If exceptional circumstances apply – refunds are at the discretion of the CEO.

There will be no refunds 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 or unavoidable circumstances
- closure or limitations to the offerings at the service due to Government directives
- Once eligibility of the refund is confirmed, Glen Education will reach out to the family to collect bank details. Payment will be made within 14 days of receiving correct bank details.

4. Refund of voluntary contribution fee

Four weeks' notice prior to term commencement (in writing to enrolments@gleneducation.org.au) is required to withdraw a child from their kindergarten place and receive a refund of the voluntary contribution fee of \$50 (if applicable).

If no such notice is given, the voluntary contribution fee is non-refundable.

Responsibilities

Glen Education is responsible for:

- developing a fee policy that balances factors such as family's capacity to pay with the provision of a high-quality program and maintaining service viability (refer to Glen Education's fee setting policy available at gleneducation.org.au).
- ensuring that any funded child is recorded in KIMS.
- collecting all relevant information regarding those with entitlement to concessions and recording it on the KIM system.
- clearly communicating this policy and payment options to families in a culturally sensitive way, and in the family's first language where possible.
- providing families accessing extended hours with a statement of fees and charges upon enrolment of their child.
- providing all families with payment fee information.
- ensuring fees for extended hours are collected and receipted prior to a child's commencement in a program.
- reviewing the effectiveness of the procedures for late payment and support offered.
- considering options for payment when affordability is an issue for families.

- complying with the service’s Privacy and Confidentiality Policy regarding financial and other information received, including in relation to the payment/non-payment of additional hours fees.
- notifying families, 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.
- implementing and reviewing this policy in consultation with families and Glen Education staff, and in line with the requirements of DE’s *Kindergarten Funding Guide*.

Nominated Supervisors/Glen Education Leaders, and other educators are responsible for:

- notifying the Customer Relations Manager of any complaints or concerns that have been raised regarding fees at the service.
- referring questions from families, in relation to this policy, to the Customer Relations Manager or a member of the Glen Education Management team.
- Completing the Late Fee Form with any family that consistently collects their child after the conclusion of the scheduled program.
- Informing the Finance team of late fees applicable to families that are consistently late in collecting their child and then forwarding the Late Fee Form to Finance for processing.

Parents/guardians are responsible for:

- reading the Glen Education Fees and Charges information available on the Glen Education website
- paying any applicable term fees by the payment date.
- signing and complying with the Fee Payment Agreement (where applicable), including nominating someone responsible for the payment of fees (also on the enrolment form).
- understanding that non-payment of fees for extended hours in advance of the term means that a child cannot attend the program.
- nominating Glen Education as the **only provider** of their child’s funded place.
- notifying the Customer Relations Manager if experiencing difficulties with the payment of extended hours fees, and discussing the reasons for difficulties, ahead of the due date for fees.

Approvals and Revision

Date	Version	Author	Revision Description
Q3 2012	1.00	Glen Education Management	New Policy
Q2 2022	5.00	Glen Education Management	Policy updated due to rebranding May 2022
Q1 2023	5.10	Glen Education Management	Policy updated for 2024