

# Enrolment Policy – Kindergarten

## Purpose

This policy outlines a clear framework for:

- providing information to families about enrolling in sessional kindergarten at ECMS
- managing the enrolment of families into sessional kindergarten programs
- supporting equitable access to our programs for families through observing the priority of access

## Scope

This policy applies to all ECMS employees, including educators providing information or supporting the enrolment process. It also governs the systems and procedures for managing registrations and enrolments across ECMS kindergarten programs.

This policy supports us in:

- responding to the needs of local communities.
- complying with Department of Education and Training (DET) eligibility requirements for enrolment in government-funded kindergarten programs.
- operating in alignment with the Department of Education and Training's Early Years Management Framework.
- upholding Privacy and Human Rights legislation.

## Background

Enrolment in ECMS Kindergarten meets the requirements of the Victorian Department of Education and Training, the Federal Department of Education, Skills and Employment, and the Public Health Amendment (No Jab, No Play) Act.

Universal access to high-quality early learning helps children get a good start in life and has positive effects across society, consistent with ECMS's purpose to foster lifelong learning.

## Kindergarten Enrolment

- Families will waitlist their child(ren) for a place either with their local government area (LGA) or directly with ECMS via our website. Places are allocated to eligible children according to the Allocation Procedure.

- Families who receive a place are then sent an offer to complete an enrolment form by the ECMS enrolments team before they can attend.
- There is no deadline or closure for enrolments, though all programs have a set number of places for children available.
- If a family or guardian needs assistance to obtain a suitable form of ID for a child, the Enrolments team can support this process. They can be contacted via [enrolments@ecms.org.au](mailto:enrolments@ecms.org.au) or 03 3841 1117.
- Families can only enrol their child in one Free Kinder program at a time and will nominate which service receives their Free Kinder funding.

## Free Kinder

Through the Victorian Government's **Free Kinder** initiative, families at ECMS services can access up to 15 hours of funded kindergarten at no cost for sessional programs, or a reduced cost in long day care settings where the child enrolls in integrated kindergarten.

Free kinder is for everyone, and families are not required to show a Health Care Card, Pension Card, or Australian citizenship (or similar) to be eligible. However, ECMS may still collect this information to monitor participation for vulnerable and disadvantaged children.

Here's how the Free Kinder funding applies:

- **Sessional Kindergarten:** Families pay no fees for up to 15 funded hours per week.
- **Long Day Care Kindergarten:** ECMS receives up to **\$2,050 per child annually**, which is directly applied to offset fees for the kindergarten component of the program.

## Three-year-old Kindergarten

The Victorian Department of Education and Training funds free three-year-old kindergarten state-wide, so each child can access a minimum of five hours and up to fifteen hours a week led by a Bachelor trained educator.

- All ECMS kindergartens run three-year-old programs.
- In the absence of a Bachelor-trained educator to run the program, three-year-old groups may run as an Activity Group. In this instance, families will be notified of the change.
- Activity Groups are aligned under the Early Years Learning Framework and the National Quality Standards and are consistent with the ECMS Educational Program Development Policy and Procedure.

## Eligibility for three-year-old kindergarten

According to the Department of Education and Training (DET) Kindergarten Funding Criteria, the following children are eligible to attend the 3-year-old kindergarten program:

- **Eligibility Age:** A child must turn three by 30 April in the year they are eligible to access a funded kindergarten program (two years before school).
- **Commencement:** A child must have turned three before starting the program. Children cannot commence in the funded program until their third birthday. A place will be held for your child until they are eligible to begin.
- **Single Funded Year:** Children are entitled to one funded year of 3-year-old kindergarten. There is no provision for a second funded year.

## Important considerations for families with children born between 1 January and 30 April

Families with children born between 1 January and 30 April are encouraged to consider when their child should start kindergarten carefully. Once a child begins attending the service, they are accessing their funded year of 3-year-old kindergarten and are expected to progress to the 4-year-old funded program the following year.

Your child's kindergarten start date directly impacts the age at which they will begin primary school. When enrolling in 3-year-old kindergarten, we recommend that families plan and consider their preferred starting age for primary school.

## Early Start Kindergarten (ESK)

All 3-year-old children are now eligible for Free Kinder. ECMS will continue to note children eligible for Early Start Kindergarten (ESK) as it contributes to how School Readiness Funding is calculated and ensures additional targeted support is provided. Eligible children will be enrolled and funded as an ESK enrolment.

Eligible children must be 3 by 30 April in the year they start kindergarten and:

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

## Four-year-old Kindergarten

The Victorian Department of Education and Training funds free four-year-old kindergarten state-wide so that each child can access fifteen hours per week led by a Bachelor trained educator.

Each kindergarten must provide 600 hours throughout the calendar year, aligned to Victorian Government School terms.

## Eligibility for four-year-old kindergarten

According to the Department of Education and Training (DET) Kindergarten Funding Criteria, the following children are eligible to attend the 4-year-old kindergarten program:

- **Eligibility Age:** A child must turn four by 30 April in the year they are eligible to access a funded kindergarten program
- **Minimum Attendance:** Children must be enrolled for at least 15 hours per week or 600 hours annually.

## Second year of funded four-year-old kindergarten

Children may be eligible for a second year of funded kindergarten when a child shows delays under the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework. Further information on how to apply for a second year of funded kindergarten can be found on the Victorian Department of Education and Training website.

Services will work with families to determine whether a child will achieve better outcomes at kindergarten than if they go to school.

Children who turn six during the kindergarten year must seek an exemption from school.

## Important Considerations for families with children born between 1 January and 30 April

Families of children with birth dates between 1 January and 30 April have a choice about whether their child will commence school in the year they turn five or the following year. Therefore, whether they commence kindergarten in the year they turn four or the year they turn five.

## Immunisation

In 2016, amendments were made to the Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 (known as the 'No Jab, No Play' policy) to require children to be up-to-date with immunisations for their age to enrol in early childhood education services.

To finalise a child's enrolment, families will provide:

- a current immunisation history statement from the Australian Immunisation Register (AIR) that shows the child is up to date with all the immunisations due for their age or
- a current immunisation history statement from the Australian Immunisation Register (AIR) that shows the child is on a recognised catch-up schedule if they have fallen behind or
- documentation that details the child's exemption under the 'grace period provisions'. A grace period of 16 weeks from the first day of the child's attendance at the service may apply to children from families experiencing vulnerability and disadvantage.

## Priority of Access (PoA)

All kindergarten places across ECMS services are allocated according to Priority of Access criteria as part of our commitment to ensuring equitable access to our programs.

### High Priority Children:

The groups below are given the highest priority for kindergarten places:

1. **Children at risk of abuse or neglect, including children in Out-of-Home Care:** Children identified as being at risk of significant harm or neglect, including those in out-of-home care or those with a history of abuse.
2. **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children:** As part of our enrolment process, families are respectfully asked if they identify their child as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.
3. **Asylum seekers and refugee children:** Identified through documentation such as visas or ImmiCards or referred by outreach workers.
4. **Children eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy (KFS):** Includes children of families holding Commonwealth Health Care Cards, Pensioner Concession Cards, Veteran's Affairs Cards, or multiple birth children (e.g., triplets or quadruplets).
5. **Children with Additional Needs:** Holds a Child Disability Health Care Card has previously been approved for Kindergarten Inclusion Support Package or referred by the National Disability Insurance Scheme, Early Childhood Intervention Service, Preschool Field Officer, or Maternal and Child Health nurse.

### Locally agreed criteria for children not identified as high-priority

After high-priority children have been allocated places, remaining spots are offered based on locally agreed criteria, such as:

- Proximity to the kindergarten
- Sibling enrolments
- Strong community or family connections to the service

Priority of access children are given priority over all other children regardless of the hours they attend.

To ensure equity, ECMS applies the above criteria to three- and four-year-old programs separately. In mixed-age groups, children are prioritised equally according to the criteria above, regardless of age.

## Group allocation

Where the Council manages waitlists, families will be allocated to groups through the Central Registration Scheme. The ECMS enrolments team will send families enrolment offers indicating the allocations by Council.

For some of our services, the ECMS enrolments team will allocate families to groups following our Group Allocation Procedure, which applies Priority of Access.

## Feedback and complaints

All complaints and feedback submitted by families will be managed fully, fairly, and within a reasonable time frame by ECMS. Families will not be adversely affected by raising and lodging complaints.

Families can find detailed information on this in the Complaints and Feedback policy on the ECMS website.

## Monitoring and Compliance

ECMS complies with Victorian Government requirements for access to Free Kinder. We maintain accurate records and provide reports to ensure all benefits are passed on to families.

This policy will be reviewed regularly to reflect current regulations and ECMS's commitment to accessible, equitable, high-quality early childhood education.

For more information, visit [www.ecms.org.au](http://www.ecms.org.au).

## Roles & Responsibilities

<p><b>Director of Early Childhood Education Area Managers</b></p>	<p>Accountable for implementing and complying with this policy</p>
<p><b>ECMS Enrolments Team</b></p>	<p>Responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implementing and complying with this policy</li> <li>• Liaising with Local Government</li> </ul>
<p><b>Centre Directors and Nominated Supervisors</b></p>	<p>Responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• applying priority of access criteria and effectively allocating places.</li> <li>• Liaising with Local Government on registration and enrolment processes.</li> <li>• Collecting completed enrolment forms and supporting documents (e.g. Immunisation History, Health Care Card, Confirmation of Kindergarten Funding, etc)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Employees, Volunteers, Contractors, and Student Placement Workers</b></p>	<p>Responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensuring the ECMS Immunisation Policy and Procedure is followed</li> <li>• Supporting educators and families with enrolment, entry age, and second-year applications</li> </ul>
<p><b>Families</b></p>	<p>Responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assisting families to access enrolment and supporting documents</li> <li>• Discussing concerns about enrolment processes or submitted documents with Nominated Supervisors and Centre Directors</li> <li>• Liaising with families about enrolment, entry age, and second-year applications</li> </ul>
	<p>Responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Following enrolment processes and providing relevant documents (e.g. Immunisation History, Health Care Cards, etc)</li> <li>• Discussing any additional needs with the team at their service.</li> </ul>

## Sources

<b>Related Policy and Procedure</b>	ECMS allocation of kindergarten places procedure Child Safe Culture Policy Child Safe Policy and Procedure Code of Conduct Policy Confidential Information Policy Early Learning Centre Fees Policy Immunisation Policy and Procedure Orientation Policy Privacy Policy Privacy Collection Statement
<b>Relevant Legislation</b>	Child Safe Standards Children, Youth, and Families Act 2055 (VIC) Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (VIC) Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (VIC) Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010 (Vic): Sections 168, 169, 172, 173 and 175 Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011 (VIC): Regulations 73-76, 84, 155 – 157, and 158 – 162 Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (VIC): Sections 39, 40, 41, 42 and 43 Working with Children Act 2005 (VIC) Working with Children Regulations 2006 (VIC)
<b>Sources and Further Reading</b>	<a href="#"><u>Priority of access criteria for early childhood education</u></a> <a href="#"><u>Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework</u></a> <a href="#"><u>Kindergarten Funding Guide</u></a> <a href="#"><u>Free kinder guidelines for</u></a>



[services](#)

[Early Start Kindergarten](#)

[Second year of funded four-year-old kindergarten](#)

[Going to kindergarten if your child is 6 years old](#)

Kindergarten Enrolments Policy

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