

FEES POLICY

Mandatory – Quality Area 7

Canterbury Gardens Kindergarten (“**CGK**”) has opted in to the Victorian Government’s Free Kindergarten scheme as detailed in the document “Free Kinder: guidelines for service” (www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/childhood/providers/funding/Service-Guidance-Free-Kinder-2023.pdf)

PURPOSE

This policy will provide clear guidelines for:

- free kindergarten subsidies for funded sessional kindergarten programs
- the setting, payment and collection of fees
- ensuring the viability of CGK by setting appropriate fees and charges
- the application of fees across the programs provided by CGK.

POLICY STATEMENT

1. VALUES

CGK is committed to:

- supporting the Victorian Government’s Free Kindergarten initiative
- 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
- providing 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

2. 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 CGK.

3. BACKGROUND AND LEGISLATION

Background

The Department of Education and Training (“**DET**”) provides per capita funding and Free Kindergarten funding to cover the costs of the three and four-year-old kindergarten programs. Income from other sources, primarily fees for unfunded hours attended and voluntary contributions from families, is required to meet all the additional costs incurred by CGK. As CGK has opted into the Free Kindergarten scheme, the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy no longer applies.

DET also funds Early Start Kindergarten for 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 Guide* (refer to *Sources*).

Regulation 168(2) (n) of the *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011* requires that funded services 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. The fees charged must be

responsive to the local community and the viability of the service. *The Kindergarten Guide* (refer to *Sources*) outlines the criteria to be covered in the policy.

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*, including Quality Area 7: Governance and Leadership

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

- Victorian Legislation – Victorian Law Today: <http://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/>
- Commonwealth Legislation – ComLaw: <http://www.comlaw.gov.au/>

4. 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*.

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. 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 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 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).

Free Kindergarten: Kindergarten programs for four-year-old and eligible three-year-old children in Victorian Government funded services as detailed in the document "Free Kinder: guidelines for service" (www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/childhood/providers/funding/Service-Guidance-Free-Kinder-2023.pdf).

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

Kindergarten fee deposit: A charge to secure a place that has been offered in a program at the service. This deposit is refunded upon the commencement of Term 1.

5. SOURCES AND RELATED POLICIES

Sources

- *Free Kinder 2021 - Information for Service Providers*
<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/providers/funding/Pages/freekinder2021.aspx>
- *Free Kinder 2021 – Frequently asked questions about Free Kinder 2021*
<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/providers/funding/Pages/freekinder2021.asp>
- *The Kindergarten Funding Guide (Department of Education and Training:*
www.education.vic.gov.au
- The constitution of CGK

Service policies

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

PROCEDURES

The Approved Provider is responsible for:

- reviewing the current budget to determine fee income requirements
- 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 (refer to Definitions).
- considering any issues regarding fees that may be a barrier to families enrolling at CGK and removing those barriers wherever possible
- reviewing the number of families experiencing financial hardship and the effectiveness of the procedures for late payment and support offered
- ensuring families are only charged for kindergarten programs hours that are over and above the 15 funded hours per week (600 hours per year)
- ensuring families that attend both sessional kindergarten and a long day care service nominate which service the child will participate in the funded kindergarten program
- ensuring families are not charged any compulsory out-of-pocket levies or maintenance fees (voluntary fundraising and payments/donations are permitted)
- providing all parents/guardians with information about fees and Free Kindergarten (refer to Attachment 1)
- providing all parents/guardians with a statement of additional hours fees and charges (refer to Attachment 2) upon enrolment of their child, and ensure that the *Fees Policy* is readily accessible at the service (Regulation 171)
- providing all parents/guardians with an additional fee payment agreement (refer to Attachment 3 and 4)
- collecting and receipting all fees
- collecting all relevant information and maintaining relevant documentation regarding those with entitlement to concessions, where applicable
- complying with the service'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)).

The Nominated Supervisor is responsible for:

- assisting the Approved Provider in developing this policy, and ensuring that this policy is based on the DET's Free Kindergarten initiative (refer to Definitions)
- considering any issues regarding fees that may be a barrier to families enrolling at CGK and removing those barriers wherever possible
- reviewing the number of families experiencing financial hardship and the effectiveness of the procedures for late payment and support offered
- ensuring families that attend both sessional kindergarten and a long day care service nominate which service the child will participate in the funded kindergarten program
- ensuring families are not charged any compulsory out-of-pocket levies or maintenance fees (voluntary fundraising and payments/donations are permitted)
- providing all parents/guardians with information about fees and Free Kindergarten (refer to Attachment 1)
- providing all parents/guardians with a statement of additional hours fees and charges (refer to Attachment 2) upon enrolment of their child, and ensure that the *Fees Policy* is readily accessible at the service
- providing all parents/guardians with an additional hours fee payment agreement (refer to samples in Attachment 3 and 4)
- collecting and receipting all fees
- collecting all relevant information and maintaining relevant documents regarding those with entitlement to concessions, where applicable
- complying with the service'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.

Educators and all other staff are responsible for:

- 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

Parents/guardians are responsible for:

- reading the CGK Fee information for families (refer to Attachment 1), the Additional Hours Fee Payment Agreement (refer to Attachments 3 and 4) and the Statement of Additional Hours Fees and Charges (refer to Attachments 2)
- signing and complying with the Additional Hours Fee Payment Agreement (refer to Attachments 3 and 4)
- notifying the Approved Provider if experiencing difficulties with the payment of fees

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 service because of their inability to pay fees
- keep the policy up to date with current legislation, government policy, research, policy and best practice

- revise the policy and procedures as part of the service’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 Additional Hours Fees and Charges – Fee schedule 2024
- Attachment 3: Fee Payment Agreement – Four-year-old kindergarten program
- Attachment 4: Fee Payment Agreement – Unfunded kindergarten program

AUTHORISATION

This policy was adopted by the Approved Provider of CNBK on **06/10/2023**.

REVIEW DATE: 1 OCTOBER 2024

ATTACHMENT 1

Fee information for families

CGK 2024

1. What Free Kindergarten means at CGK

DET provides per capita and Free Kindergarten funding to cover the costs of providing a three and four-year-old kindergarten program.

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

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. Why fees are necessary

In addition to the above CGK meets the balance of its costs through charging fees for unfunded hours, voluntary contributions and fundraising activities.

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

3. Other charges

Other charges levied by CGK are included on the Statement of Fees and Charges. These include:

- **Kindergarten fee deposit:** This payment secures a child's place at the service and is payable on acceptance of enrolment. The deposit will be refunded as soon as reasonably practicable following the commencement of term 1. Families eligible for Early Start Kindergarten are not required to pay the deposit. Families experiencing hardship should also discuss any difficulties with the service. The deposit is non refundable for children who change their enrolment to another service, with the exception of concession card holders.
- **Excursion/service event charge:** A basic charge for annual excursions, events and extras is requested at the beginning of the year, should this amount not be used in full a refund will be provided to families in term 4. Eligible concession card holders will not be required to pay this charge. The charge is not intended to be a barrier to participation and families experiencing difficulties should discuss this with service.
- **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/Board.
- **Additional hours /fees:** 4 year old kindergarten is fully funded up to 15 hours per week. The additional hours fee covers the additional 4.5 hours offered as part of the Canterbury Gardens 4 year old kindergarten program. Families can opt for a child not to take up the additional unfunded 4.5hrs. In this circumstance the daily core hours will be 830-130pm.
- **Unfunded positions:** CGK can offer an unfunded enrolment position in the service to children not eligible for per capita or Free Kindergarten funding. These positions can only be offered if there are unallocated spaces in the services enrolment as of 1 December in the year preceding the year of attendance at the service. Allocation of these spaces is at the full discretion of the Committee of Management and will be offered generally in the order of request made with central enrolment. The fees charged for unfunded positions will be required to cover the funding normally provided for a child under per capita and Free Kindergarten funding.

4. 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.

5. Fundraising

Not all service costs are covered by DET per capita and Free Kinder"garten 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.

6. Subsidies

6.1 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 service receives funding for children who meet the eligibility criteria. Contact the service for further information.

7. 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.

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 the Treasurer (treasurer@canterburygardenskinder.com.au) 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.

8. 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 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 service, the parents/guardians will be provided with 14 days' notice in writing.

9. Refund of fees

Fees are non-refundable (exceptional circumstances may apply – these are at the discretion of the Committee of Management/Board). 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
- 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.

10. Children turning three during the year of enrolment

Full payment from the first day of Term 1 is required if a place is to be reserved for a child in the three-year-old kindergarten program. Children can only commence the program when they have turned three.

11. Support services

Families experiencing financial hardship often require access to family support services. Information on these services is available from the kindergarten service provider and a list can be supplied to those families who require it. If your service does not already have this information a good place to start is with your local council.

12. Notification of fee changes during the year

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 Fees and Charges

2024 Annual Statement of Fees and Contributions

2024	Four-year-old class 19.5 hours per week	Three-year-old class 15 hours per week
15 hrs Free Kinder	\$0	\$0
Gap Fee for Unfunded Hours	\$1,400	\$0
Parent Contribution (voluntary)	\$1,000	\$1,000
Excursions/Events Charge	\$100	\$100
Enrolment Fee	\$100	\$100
Annual	\$2,600	\$1,200

2024 Statement of Fees and Contributions Per Term

2024	Four-year-old class 19.5 hours per week	Three-year-old class 15 hours per week
Deposit	\$300	\$300
Term 1	\$650	\$300
Deposit Refund (upon commencement)	-\$300	-\$300
Term 2	\$650	\$300
Term 3	\$650	\$300
Term 4	\$650	\$300
Annual Fee	\$2,600	\$1,200

Deposit: Parents/guardians are required to pay the deposit on offer of a place. Payment is required by the due date to secure the child's place in the three-year-old kindergarten program. This payment is non-refundable until the child takes up the place at kindergarten. Deposits are refunded after commencement of the child at kindergarten.

4 year old gap fee: 4 year old kindergarten is fully funded up to 15 hours, the gap fee covers the additional 4.5 hours offered as part of the Canterbury Gardens 4 year old kindergarten program. Should you wish for your child not to take up the additional unfunded 4.5hrs the daily core hours will be 830-130pm.

Payment of charges: Invoices will be issued in the last month of the preceding term via email and must be paid by the due date. Please ensure your email address is current. Parents are welcome to pay the full amount upfront at the beginning of the year if they prefer.

Parent Contribution: Canterbury Norwood requests an annual parent contribution from families to compensate for the shortfall between the “Free Kinder” funding and the actual running costs of the kindergarten. This contribution is entirely voluntary. We ask for this contribution to allow us to continue to offer our current program whilst continuing to opt-in to the “Free Kinder” program.

Excursion Charges: A basic charge for annual excursions, events and extras is requested at the beginning of the year, should this amount not be used in full a refund will be provided to families in term 4. We do not wish to exclude children from excursions unnecessarily. Should you be unable to pay this charge due to financial hardship please contact the treasurer directly.

Enrolment Fee: An enrolment fee is charged in Term 1 to cover the administrative costs of processing enrolments. This fee is non-refundable.

Children turning three during the year: Full payment from the first day of term 1 is required if a place is to be reserved for a child in the three-year-old kindergarten program, however children can only commence the program when they have turned three. Please Note: children who have not yet turned three at the commencement of the kinder year are welcome and encouraged to attend the first day scheduled as orientation day.

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 Fees Policy for Families).

Concession Cards: Exemptions are applied to the parent contributions and excursions fees for concession card holders, contact the Treasurer at Treasurer@canterburygardenskinder.com.au for more details.

Changes to Fees: DET funding and VECTEA pay scales have not been confirmed for 2024. The Committee of Management reserves the right to change the fees if these are significantly outside of budget when posted.

ATTACHMENT 3 Fee Payment Agreement

2024

Four-year-old (funded) kindergarten program

Please complete this form and return to CGK

Fee payment contract

Child's full name: _____

Parent's/guardian's full name: _____

- I/we acknowledge that the four-year-old 15 hours per week (600 hours per year) funded kindergarten program is funded by the state government, with the balance of additional hours over and above coming from fees paid by parents/guardians.
- I/we agree to pay any additional fees for services above the 600 hours by the due date on the invoice.
- I/we acknowledge that agreement in writing is required if my/our child is to attend the fully funded 15 hours only thereby incurring no fees.
- 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 for additional hours are not paid by the due date, the Committee of Management will implement the late payment of fees procedures, as outlined in the *Fees Policy*, which could result in the withdrawal of my/our child's place at the service.
- 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 Treasurer 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.

Signature (parent/guardian)

Date

Note: Invoices, receipts and collection of fees will be in accordance with the CGK *Fees Policy*.

ATTACHMENT 4 Fee Payment Agreement

2024

Unfunded kindergarten program

Please complete this form and return to CGK

Fee payment contract

Child's full name: _____

Parent's/guardian's full name: _____

- I/we acknowledge that my/our child's position in this service is not funded by the state government's per capita or Free Kindergarten funding and that we are required to pay fees to replace the funding normally received for a child attending this service.
- I/we agree to pay fees by the due date on the invoice.
- 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 *Fees Policy* which could result in the withdrawal of my/our child's place at the service.
- I/we understand that term fees are non-refundable.
- 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 Treasurer 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 procedures for payment of fees.

Signature (parent/guardian)

Date

Note: invoices, receipts and collection of fees will be in accordance with the CNBK *Fees Policy*.

Early Start Kindergarten

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 service receives funding for children who meet the eligibility criteria. Contact the service for further information.