

2021 Fee Information for Families

1. General Information

The Department of Education and Training (DET) provides funding for each child enrolled and attending kindergarten in the year before school as a contribution toward the costs of providing the program. Services meet the balance of costs through charging fees and fundraising activities.

DET provides a Kindergarten Fee Subsidy (see below) that enables children from eligible families to attend a kindergarten program free of charge in the year before school.

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.

Wilson Street Kindergarten provides a range of support options to parents/guardians experiencing difficulty with payment of fees.

2. How Fees Are Set

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

- the financial viability of the service
- 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 and Training)* is available under *early childhood / service providers on the DET website: www.education.vic.gov.au).*

Once fees are set for the year, they will only be reviewed in extraordinary circumstances, for example, if enrolments drop and the service is at risk of not being able to meet its expenses.

3. Other Charges

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

- **Enrolment Acceptance Deposit (EAD):** This payment secures a child's place in the kindergarten program and is payable on acceptance of enrolment. The EAD is held by the kindergarten and will be applied as part payment of the term 4 fees in the year of the child's attendance. If a child who has accepted a place that has been offered does not commence kinder in the proposed year of attendance or withdraws before the commencement of term 4 in the year of attendance, the EAD will be retained by the centre. Families eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy (see below) are not required to pay the deposit. Families experiencing hardship should also discuss any difficulties with the service.
- **Enrolment Application Fee:** This payment is non-refundable and is required on submission of the enrolment application form for a place at the service. Any families experiencing financial difficulties may discuss this with the Enrolment Officer.
- **Excursion/Service Event Charge:** On occasion an additional charge may be 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 service 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). Events that are planned ahead are included as an expenditure item in the service's budget and do not incur this additional charge.

- **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.
- **Late Payment Penalty:** If fees are not received by the due date a Late Payment Penalty may be implemented unless prior arrangement has been made with the Fee Treasurer.
- **Special Purpose Donation:** A charge may be introduced to raise funds for a major expenditure item such as playground redevelopment. This would be implemented over more than one budget period
- **Working Bee Levy:** This levy pays for replacing volunteer labour with paid labour / services. The levy is refunded provided a family member participates in one working bee during the year. If you cannot attend your group's working bee you may attend one of the other groups. Alternatively, you may speak to the maintenance officer about other duties that may be available. Only one Working Bee Levy is payable per family.
- **Wilson Street Kindergarten Membership:** If you accept a place at Wilson Street Kindergarten each family must become an annual member of Wilson Street Kindergarten Incorporated. To become a member of the Kindergarten you are required to complete an 'Application to Register as a Member' Form on enrolment for each year of attendance and pay a non-refundable entrance and membership fee of \$1.00.

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 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 Kindergarten Fee Subsidy (four-year-old programs only)

The Kindergarten Fee Subsidy is provided by DET and enables eligible children to attend 15 hours of kindergarten free of charge. 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).

Families may be eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy in the year before school if their child:

- is Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander; or
- holds, or has a parent/guardian who holds a Humanitarian or refugee Visa; or
- is a multiple birth child (triplets or more); or
- holds, or has a parent who holds a Commonwealth Health Care Card, Pensioner Concession Card or Veteran's Affairs Card.

Exclusions and exceptions: Not available for approved childcare services in receipt of Commonwealth Child Care Subsidy.

Where a child is identified by a parent, carer or legal guardian as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, no verification is required.

In all other instances, supporting documentation should be sighted by the service on acceptance of a place or on commencement in the program, however where there are delays, such as in obtaining health care cards for children in out-of-home care, the delay should not provide a barrier to the child accessing the Kindergarten Fee

Subsidy. Families are eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy for the full term in which their concession is valid. Contact the service for further information.

6.2 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 kindergarten 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.

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

8. Unpaid Fees

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

- An initial reminder notice will be sent to parents/guardians with an updated specified payment date, before the late payment penalty of \$20 will be applied.
- Where payment is still not received, families will be invited to discuss the range of support options available and establish a payment plan.
- Failure to agree to discuss, and continued non-payment may result in a second and final notice 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.
- No further enrolments of children from the parents/guardians will be accepted until all outstanding fees have been paid.

9. Refund of Fees

If a family becomes eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy during a term, a full refund of the applicable term fees (including the Enrolment Acceptance Deposit) will be provided. Fees may still apply for programs offering more than the required minimum hours per week.

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 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. Withdrawal of a Kindergarten Place

Kindergarten places are offered for the entire year. However, the Committee understands that a family's circumstances may change during that time. Written notice of withdrawal of a child from the kindergarten program is required a full term prior to the date of withdrawal. If a full term's notice is not possible, the following term's fees are payable in place of the notice requirement. Notice should be given to both the Operations Manager and the Enrolments Manager.

Should the situation arise where multiple vacancies exist across a year level, irrespective of which group, as vacant positions are refilled with an incoming family, any applicable refunds will be applied to exiting families in the order of date of withdrawal.

11. Children Turning Three During the Year of Enrolment

Full payment prior to the commencement 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. Children may (at the parent's/guardian's discretion) attend Wilson Street Kindergarten before they have turned three in the following circumstances:

- relevant social and welcoming events run by Wilson Street Kindergarten; and
- official photograph sessions.

12. Support Services

Families experiencing financial hardship often require access to family support services. Information is available on these services from the kindergarten and a list can be supplied to those families who require it.

13. Notification of Fee Change 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 fees increase and will be offered the option to request a payment plan.