

Wilson Street Kindergarten 2023 Fee Information

1. General information

The Department of Education and Training (DET) provides funding for each child enrolled and attending kindergarten in the two years 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 two years before school.

DET also provides Early Start Kindergarten funding to assist eligible three-year-old Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, from a refugee or asylum seeker background or 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 (see below).

Please refer to our website for 2023 session times and groups.

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 and Early Start Kindergarten
- 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 Funding Guide (Department of Education and Training) available from 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 at the service and is payable on acceptance of enrolment. The deposit is retained as part payment on term 4 fees. Children/families experiencing vulnerability and/or disadvantage and families eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy (see below) are not required to pay the deposit. Families experiencing hardship should discuss any difficulties with the service. This exemption only applies to families enrolled in a fully funded program – 3YO or Green Group 4YO.

If a child who has accepted a place that has been offered does not commence kindergarten 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.

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 hardship may discuss this with the Enrolment Manager.

Excursion/service event charge: At times throughout the year an additional excursion(s) or event(s) may be arranged where it is considered relevant to the service's program and the children's interests. At this time any additional costs to families are taken into consideration before a decision is made (*refer to Excursions and Service Events Policy*).

Additional hours fees: Wilson Street Kindergarten offers families hours above the set funded 15 hours per week in some groups. The additional hours fee is determined by the hourly program rate based on the scheduled 2023 fee and any other additional costs associated with the additional hours (including the costs of regular incursions and excursions).

Non-refundable levy: This levy is retained by the service and is included in the total fees charged by the 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.

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 Fees Manager.

Working Bee Levy: This levy pays for replacing volunteer labour with paid labour / services. The levy is charged to all families and then 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 Operations Manager about other duties that may be available. Only one working bee levy is payable per year per family.

4. Statement of fees and charges

A statement of fees and charges for three-year-old kindergarten and/or four-year-old will be provided to families with their offer and families need to agree to the fees and charges to accept the place offered.

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

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.

Your child is eligible for the kindergarten fee subsidy:

- if your child identifies as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander
- if your child is identified on their birth certificate as being a multiple birth child (triplets or more).

or if your child holds or has a parent or guardian who holds, one of the following:

- a Commonwealth Health Care Card
- a Commonwealth Pensioner Concession Card
- a Department of Veterans Affairs Gold Card or White Card
- Refugee or Asylum Seeker visa (200-204, 786 or 866)
- Bridging visas for any of the above Refugee or Asylum Seeker visas

If your family or child has a humanitarian or refugee visa listed by the Department of Immigration and Border Protection which is not included in the above list, your child may still be eligible for the kindergarten fee 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.

6.2 Early Start Kindergarten

Early Start Kindergarten gives eligible children 15 hours of free or low-cost kindergarten a week for two years before starting school.

To be eligible, the child must be three by 30 April in the year they start kindergarten and meet one of the following criteria:

be from a refugee or asylum seeker background
identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
your family has had contact with Child Protection.

Children can also access free or low cost Four-Year-Old Kindergarten through the Early Start Kindergarten Extension Grant. 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 fee payments where requested.

Parents/guardians experiencing difficulty in paying fees are requested to contact the Fee 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 a specified payment date, and will include information on a range of support options available for the family.
- A second reminder and email will be sent to parents/guardians asking them to contact the Fees Manager immediately.
- A phone call from the Fee Manager requesting immediate payment otherwise a late payment fee will be applied. For families who do not pay within 24 hours of receiving a phone call will have \$20 deducted from their EAD refund in term 4.
- 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 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. o 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 (and fee deposit, where appropriate) 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 of Management 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 requirements. Notice should be given to both the Operations Manager and Fees manager.

If WSK is able to fill the position, then fees may be refunded (this may be prorated for part of the term). This is only applicable when all positions in the kindergarten are full. Should a situation arise where multiple vacancies exist across a year level, irrespective of which group, as vacant positions are filled with incoming families, any application refunds will be applied to existing families in the order of date of withdrawal.

11. Support services

Families experiencing financial hardship often require access to family support services. Information on these services may be available from the kindergarten service provider or alternatively families may contact the 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.

13. Children turning three during the year of enrolment

Children can only commence the program at Wilson Street Kindergarten once they have turned three. Wilson Street Kindergarten will not charge fees for the child prior to their 3rd Birthday and start of attendance. Fees will be billed pro-rata in accordance with the billing schedule listed in the statement of fees and charges. Children enrolled who turn three after the end of term 1 will be required to pay Term 2 fees in advance to confirm a place. Invoices will be sent in Term 4 the year prior

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 WSK; and
- official photograph sessions