

FEES POLICY

Mandatory – Quality Area 7

PURPOSE

This policy will provide clear guidelines for:

- the setting, payment and collection of fees
- ensuring the viability of Black Rock Pre School (BRPS), by setting appropriate fees and charges
- the equitable and non-discriminatory application of fees across the programs provided by Black Rock Pre School.

POLICY STATEMENT

1. VALUES

Black Rock Pre School is committed to:

- 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
- advising users of the service about program funding, including government support and fees to be paid by parents/guardians
- providing equitable access for families eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy.

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 Black Rock Pre School.

3. BACKGROUND AND LEGISLATION

Background

The Department of Education and Training (DET)

The Department of Education and Training (DET) provides funding for each child who is enrolled and attending a funded kindergarten program in the year before school. Income from other sources, primarily fees, is required to meet all the additional costs incurred by the service in the delivery of the children's program. In addition, the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy (refer to *Definitions*) enables eligible children to attend a funded kindergarten program **free of charge in the year before school**.

DET also funds Early Start Kindergarten for three-year-old Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, and children known to Child Protection, to access kindergarten programs as outlined in *The Kindergarten Funding Guide* (refer to *Sources*).

Regulation 168(2) (n) of *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011* requires that funded services have a comprehensive written fees policy, and the content of this policy must be communicated to families. The policy must include a written statement about the fees to be charged and the payment process. All families must be informed of applicable term and annual fees at the time of enrolment. Services must also advise eligible families of the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy arrangements. The fees charged must comply with the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy requirements (refer to *Definitions*), and be responsive to the local community and the viability of the service. *The Kindergarten Funding 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), as amended 2011
- *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005* (Vic), as amended 2012
- *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*, Quality Area 7: Governance & Leadership
 - Concept & descriptors 7.1.2: Systems are in place to manage risk and enable the effective management and operation of a quality service.

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* section of this manual.

Approved child care: Care given by a service provider that has been approved by the Family Assistance Office to receive Child Care Subsidy payments on behalf of eligible families. Most long day care, family day care, before-and-after school care, vacation care, some occasional care and some in-home care childcare services are approved providers. Details are available at www.familyassist.gov.au/payments/family-assistance-payments/child-care-benefit/

Child Care Benefit (CCB): A Commonwealth Government payment to help families who use either approved or registered childcare services. All eligible families can receive some Child Care Benefit. Details are available at www.familyassist.gov.au/payments/family-assistance-payments/child-care-benefit/

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 a specific number of hours. Details are available at www.education.vic.gov.au/ecsmanagement/careankinder/earlystart/

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.

Fees: A charge for a place within a program at the service.

Health Care Card: A Commonwealth Government entitlement providing concessions for low-income earners and other eligible people. Details are available at www.centrelink.gov.au/internet/internet.nsf/payments/conc_cards_hcc.htm

Kindergarten fee deposit: A charge to secure a place that has been offered in a program at the service.

Kindergarten Fee Subsidy (KFS): A state government subsidy paid directly to the funded service to enable eligible families to attend a funded kindergarten program at no cost (or minimal cost) to promote participation. Details are available at: www.education.vic.gov.au/.../funding/Kindergarten%20Guide%202015%20-%20acc...

Kindergarten Fee Subsidy – Fees Policy: Provides operational guidelines for services administering the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy and can be found in the *Victorian kindergarten policy, procedures and funding criteria* available at www.education.vic.gov.au/ecprofessionals/kindergarten/

Late collection charge: A charge that may be imposed by the Approved Provider when parents/guardians are late to collect their child/children from the program (refer to Attachment 1 – Fee information for families).

Voluntary parent/guardian contribution: A voluntary payment for items not directly related to the provision of the children’s program. Attendance at the service is not conditional on this payment.

5. SOURCES AND RELATED POLICIES

Sources

- The Kindergarten Guide 2015 – Victorian Government, Department of Education and Training document available at; www.education.vic.gov.au/.../funding/Kindergarten%20Guide%202015%20-%20acc...
- The constitution of Black Rock Pre School

Service policies

- *Complaints and Grievances Policy*
- *Delivery and Collection of Children Policy*
- *Enrolment and Orientation Policy*
- *Excursions and Service Events 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
- developing a fee policy that balances the parent’s/guardian’s capacity to pay, with providing a high-quality program and maintaining service viability
- implementing and reviewing this policy in consultation with parents/guardians, the Nominated Supervisor and staff, and in line with the requirements of *The Kindergarten Guide 2015 – Victorian Government, Department of Education and Training* (refer to sources)
- *The Kindergarten Guide 2015 – Victorian Government, Department of Education and Training* (refer to Sources)
- ensuring that this policy is based on the principles of the *Kindergarten Fee Subsidy – Fees Policy* (refer to *Definitions*)
- considering any issues regarding fees that may be a barrier to families enrolling at Black Rock Pre School 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
- considering options for payment when affordability is an issue for families
- clearly communicating this policy and payment options to families in a culturally-sensitive way, and in the family’s first language where possible
- providing all parents/guardians with a copy of the document containing fee information for families (refer to Attachment 1)
- providing all parents/guardians with a statement of fees and charges (refer to samples in Attachments 2 and 3) upon enrolment of their child, and ensure that the *Fees Policy* is readily accessible at the service (Regulation 171)

- providing all parents/guardians with a fee payment agreement (refer to samples in Attachments 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))
- ensuring a notice outlining fees charged by the service is displayed prominently in the main entrance to Black Rock Pre School.

The Nominated Supervisors are responsible for:

- assisting the Approved Provider in developing this policy, and ensuring that this policy is based on the principles of the *Kindergarten Fee Subsidy – Fees Policy* (refer to *Definitions*)
- implementing and reviewing this policy, in consultation with parents/guardians, the Approved Provider and staff, and in line with the requirements of *The Kindergarten Guide 2015 – Victorian Government, Department of Education and Training* (refer to *Sources*)
- considering any issues regarding fees that may be a barrier to families enrolling at Black Rock Pre School and removing those barriers wherever possible
- considering options for payment when affordability is an issue for families
- communicating this policy and payment options to families in a culturally-sensitive way and in the family's first language where possible
- have available a copy of the document containing fee information for families (refer to Attachment 1)
- providing all parents/guardians with a statement of fees and charges (refer to samples in Attachments 2 and 3) upon enrolment of their child, and ensure that the *Fees Policy* is readily accessible at the service
- providing all parents/guardians with a fee payment agreement (refer to samples in Attachments 3 and 4)
- 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
- ensuring a notice outlining fees charged by the service is displayed prominently in the main entrance to Black Rock Pre School.

Responsible persons and other educators 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
- assisting the Approved Provider, as required, in sighting supporting documentation for access to the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy.

Parents/guardians are responsible for:

- reading the Black Rock Pre School Fee information for families (refer to Attachment 1), the Fee Payment Agreement (refer to Attachments 4 and 5) and the Statement of Fees and Charges (refer to Attachments 2 and 3)
- signing and complying with the Fee Payment Agreement (refer to Attachments 4 and 5)
- notifying the Approved Provider if experiencing difficulties with the payment of fees
- providing the required documentation to enable the service to claim the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy for eligible families (refer to Attachment 1 – Fee information for families).

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, 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)).

ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1: Fee information for families
- Attachment 2: Statement of Fees and Charges – Fee schedule – Four-year-old (funded) kindergarten program
- Attachment 3: Statement of Fees and Charges – Fee schedule – Three-year-old kindergarten program
- Attachment 4: Fee Payment Agreement – Four-year-old (funded) kindergarten program
- Attachment 5: Fee Payment Agreement – Three-year-old kindergarten program

AUTHORISATION

This policy was adopted by the Approved Providers & BRPS Committee of Management and updated by Approved Providers in March 2019.

Review date: This policy will be reviewed every year and is next due in March 2020, unless deemed necessary earlier.

ATTACHMENT 1

Fee information for families

Black Rock Pre School

1. Why fees are necessary

The Department of Education and Training (DET) provides per capita funding as a contribution toward the costs of providing a four-year-old kindergarten 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 four-year-old kindergarten program free of charge, or at a minimal cost.

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.

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

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 2015 – Victorian Government, Department of Education and Training document available at: www.education.vic.gov.au/.../funding/Kindergarten%20Guide%202015%20-%20acc...)

Fees set for the year are only reviewed in extraordinary circumstances, for example, if attendance rates fall below the budget 'break even' point.

3. Other charges

Other charges levied by Black Rock Pre School are included on the Statement of Fees and Charges. These include:

- **Non-refundable enrolment fee:** This payment secures a child's place at the service and is payable on acceptance of enrolment. Families eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy (see below) are not required to pay the enrolment fee. Families experiencing hardship should also discuss any difficulties with the service.
- **Family Involvement levy (refer to Family Involvement Policy for more detail):** The participation of parents/guardians is encouraged by the service and can help to keep costs more affordable. However not all families are able to assist at the service. A refundable levy system has been introduced by the service and replaces voluntary labour with paid labour. Payment will be refunded to parents/guardians on participation of two (2) specified activities which may include working bees, maintenance and gardening etc.. The levy is not intended to be a barrier to participation and families experiencing difficulties should discuss this with service.

- **Late collection charge:** The Approved Providers & 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.
 - A letter will be sent to parents after the first late collection is registered in the late collection book on premises which will outline the fees and policy details for future late collection. This letter must be signed and returned to the service.
 - The late collection charge will be implemented on 2nd & subsequent late collections within each annual period, per child. The late collection fee begins once 15 mins after session pick up has passed. The fee is charged at \$15 for every 15min or part thereof. The fee will be invoiced to the family and must be paid within 14 days, the unpaid fees process will be implemented if payment is not made and may include the withdrawal of the child's place at the service.

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

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 kindergarten free of charge or at minimal cost. Eligibility conditions change from time-to-time – contact the service for further information.

Families who may be eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy (four-year-old programs only) include those who are:

- Health Care Card holders
- Pensioner Concession Card holders
- Department of Veterans' Affairs Gold Card holders
- Temporary Protection/Humanitarian Visas 447, 451, 785 or 786
- Asylum seekers on Bridging Visas A–F
- Refugee and Special Humanitarian Visa 200–217
- Resolution of Status (RoS) visa, Class CD, subclass 851
- Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children
- triplets or quadruplets attending a funded kindergarten program in the same year.

Supporting documentation must be sighted by the service on acceptance of a place or on commencement in the program. 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 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, including the family involvement levy, prior to the child commencing at the service. Each term's fees must be received in full prior to the child commencing the term. 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 Finance 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 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. A Late payment fee of \$10 for up to 2 weeks late and \$25 for 2-4 weeks late will be applied at this stage. 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. The cost of this service will be added to fees to be collected.
- 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

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 i.e. Extended Care.

In any other case, fees are non-refundable, exceptional circumstances may apply – these are at the discretion of the Committee of Management such as the child or an immediate family member suffering from a chronic illness or a death of an immediate family member which results in the child no longer attending Black Rock Pre School. 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.
- Departure in the final term

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.

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 1, 2 & 3 - Statement of Fees and Charges

Kindergarten Fees for 2022

2022 Fees

Red Rosella – Monday & Thursday 8.30-4.00 – \$570 per term

Yellow Gecko – Tuesday & Friday 8.30-4.00 – \$570 per term

Blue Dolphin – Wednesday 8.30-1.30 (5 hours) – \$225 per term

Purple Starfish – Wednesday 8.30-4.00 (7.5 hours) – \$380 per term

Fees are not applicable for Concession Card and Pension Card holders for the 3 or 4 year old program from 2022. The BRPS Operations Director can provide further details when enrolling your child. Fees are collected at the start of each term. Once enrolled you will receive an invoice for the designated fee for your child/ren. Payment of fees is made directly to the pre-school.

Terms & Conditions

- An enrolment deposit of \$75 is required to hold your child's position at the Kindergarten.
- Incursions (an excursion that comes to the kinder) are all inclusive in the fees and a great learning experience for all.
- If your child is not 3YO at the commencement of term, you may be asked to pay a \$100.00 while not attending Kinder
- ** An additional \$200 to be paid with first term fees for the Family Involvement Levy. The family involvement levy per child is refundable after you have attended two of the working bees/ fundraising events throughout the year. On most cases, each event or task is expected to be 2-3hrs of support. Payment will occur in Term 4 after approval of completion by EXEC COM & Treasurer.
- All fees can be paid annually as a lump sum or in term payments.
- Cheques/money orders should be made payable to "Black Rock Pre School Centre Inc." however Internet banking is preferred.
- Cash payments are not accepted at the Kindergarten for security reasons
- Families who are holders of a Health Care Card or Pensioner Health Benefit Card are entitled to a Department of Human Services rebate. When enrolling, please advise the Enrolments Officer who needs to sight the card for the family to receive this benefit.
- Children will not be able to attend if they are deemed sick or contagious. This is at the discretion of the staff. The state of health of the child must be declared by the parent/guardian on arrival.
- 2% surcharge on all cards (credit only Visa or MasterCard)
* Please note that fees are subject to change and will be communicated with plenty of notice J.

