

# FEES POLICY

Mandatory - Quality area 7



Document classification:	Version:	Date:
<b>Policy</b>	<b>2.8</b>	<b>19/05/2023</b>

## PURPOSE

This policy will provide clear guidelines for:

- the setting, payment and collection of fees
- ensuring the viability of Plenty Kids Early Learning Centre, by setting appropriate fees and charges

## POLICY STATEMENT

### 1 Values

Plenty Kids Early Learning Centre is committed to:

- being as financially accessible as possible to Christian and other families who wish to be part of the Plenty Kids Early Learning Centre community, in terms of its expressed identity as a Christian school in the CEN tradition.
- providing the best possible education to its students as unique and talented individuals, irrespective of their academic, socio-economic, or cultural background.
- ensuring that the financial burden on families with children attending this Service is borne equitably and fairly across the whole college community.
- always work with the community to ensure that the values of justice, fairness, inclusivity and respect are employed to protect the human dignity of all members of the community, especially in the very sensitive and delicate situations where families' financial circumstances change. The Principal is ultimately responsible for the policies and practices of the college.
- providing a mechanism for consideration of a revised fee payment plan where special circumstances warrant this.
- maintaining confidentiality in relation to the financial circumstances of parents/guardians. Information regarding the financial situation of any family or any special arrangements negotiated in accord with this policy remains confidential between the family, the Principal, and the officers of the college involved in the implementation of this arrangement.
- 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 and/or Early Start Kindergarten.

### 2 Scope

This policy applies to the approved provider, persons with management or control, nominated supervisor, persons in day-to-day charge and parents/guardians of children attending Plenty Kids Early Learning Centre.

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RESPONSIBILITIES	Approved provider and persons with management or control	Nominated supervisor and persons in day-to-day charge	Early childhood teacher, educators and all other staff	Parents/guardians	Contractors, volunteers and students
Reviewing the current budget to determine fee income requirements	R	✓			
Developing a fee policy that balances the parent's/guardian's capacity to pay, with providing a high-quality program and maintaining service viability	R	✓			
Implementing and reviewing this policy in consultation with parents/guardians, the nominated supervisor and staff, and in line with the requirements of DET's The Kindergarten Funding Guide ( <i>refer to Sources</i> )	R	✓			
Considering any issues regarding fees that may be a barrier to families enrolling at Plenty Kids Early Learning Centre and removing those barriers wherever possible	R	✓			
Reviewing the effectiveness of the procedures for late payment and support offered	R	✓			
Considering options for payment when affordability is an issue for families	R	✓			
Providing communication to families explaining their access to one funded kindergarten program per child, per year.	R	✓			
Clearly communicating this policy and payment options to families in a culturally-sensitive way, and in the family's first language where possible	R	✓			
Ensuring that the <i>Fees Policy</i> is readily accessible at the service ( <i>Regulation 171</i> )	R	✓			
Providing all parents/guardians with fee information ( <i>refer to Attachment 1</i> )	R	✓			
Providing all parents/guardians with a statement of fees and charges ( <i>refer to Attachment 2</i> ) upon enrolment of their child	R	✓			
Providing all parents/guardians with a fee payment agreement ( <i>refer to Attachment 3</i> )	R	✓			

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Ensuring fees are collected and receipted	<b>R</b>	✓			
Collecting all relevant information and maintaining relevant documentation regarding those with entitlement to concessions ( <i>refer to Definitions</i> )	<b>R</b>	✓		✓	
Complying with the service's <i>Privacy and Confidentiality Policy</i> regarding financial and other information received, including in relation to the payment/non-payment of fees	<b>R</b>	✓			
Notifying parents/guardians a minimum of 14 days of any proposed changes to the fees charged or the way in which the fees are collected ( <i>Regulation 172(2)</i> ), and ideally providing one term's notice	<b>R</b>	✓			
Addressing any complaints or concerns that have been raised regarding fees at the service in a timely manner	<b>R</b>	✓			
Reading the Plenty Kids Early Learning Centre Fee information for families ( <i>refer to Attachment 1</i> ), the Fee Payment Agreement ( <i>refer to Attachment 3</i> ) and the Statement of Fees and Charges ( <i>refer to Attachment 2</i> )				✓	
Signing and complying with the Fee Payment Agreement ( <i>refer to Attachment 3</i> )				✓	
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 and/or Early Start Kindergarten, if eligible ( <i>refer to Attachment 1</i> ).				✓	
BOLD tick ✓ indicates legislation requirement					

### 3 Background and legislation

#### Background

Department of Education and Training (DET) (*refer to Definitions*) provides funding for each child who is enrolled and attending a funded kindergarten program two years 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 two years before school.

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

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*Regulation 168(2) (n) of Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011* requires that funded kindergarten 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 (*refer to Definitions*) and/or or Early Start Kindergarten (*refer to Definitions*) arrangements. The fees charged must comply with the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy requirements (*refer to Definitions*) and/or or Early Start Kindergarten (*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)
- 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, Quality Area 7: Leadership and Service Management.

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

- Victorian Legislation – Victorian Law Today: [www.legislation.vic.gov.au](http://www.legislation.vic.gov.au)
- Commonwealth Legislation – Federal Register of Legislation: [www.legislation.gov.au](http://www.legislation.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, Notifiable Complaints, Serious Incidents, Duty of care refer to the *General Definitions* section located on the PVCC website.

**Children/families experiencing vulnerability and/or disadvantage (in relation to this policy):** children are vulnerable if the capacity of parents and family to effectively care, protect and provide for their long-term development and wellbeing is limited. Some factors which may contribute to a child experiencing vulnerability include: a child with a disability; living in a family with a low income, or one which is experiencing problems with housing, domestic violence, substance abuse, or mental health; known to child protection; in statutory out-of-home care; Aboriginal and/or Torre Strait Islander, having a culturally and linguistically diverse background; having a young or sole parent, or a parent with a disability (adapted from the Kindergarten Funding Guide)

**Concession:** A Commonwealth Government entitlement providing concessions for low-income earners and other eligible people. This includes 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
- Multiple Births (triplets or more)

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**Early Start Kindergarten (ESK):** Early Start Kindergarten provides eligible children with 15 hours of free or low-cost kindergarten each week led by a qualified Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) registered teacher. ESK is available to children who are at least three years old by 30 April in the year they are enrolled to attend the program and are:

- from a refugee or asylum seeker background, or
- Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, or
- known to child protection.

These children can also access free year-before-school kindergarten through the ESK Extension Grant regardless of whether they have accessed ESK in the previous year.

**Early Start Kindergarten extension grants:** provides a free or low cost year-before-school kindergarten program for children:

- not eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy
- who participated in Access to Early Learning in the previous year or are from a refugee or asylum seeker background, or Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, or known to child protection. A child is not required to access ESK in the previous year to access the ESK extension grant.

**High priority families:** as defined in the Kindergarten Guide this includes:

- Children at risk of abuse or neglect, including children in Out-of-Home Care
- Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children
- Asylum seeker and refugee children
- Children eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy
- A child or parent holds a Commonwealth Health Care Card, Pensioner Concession Card, Veteran's Affairs Card, or multiple birth children (triplets, quadruplets)
- Children with additional needs, defined as children who:
  - require additional assistance in order to fully participate in the kindergarten program
  - require a combination of services which are individually planned
  - have an identified specific disability or developmental delay.

**Kindergarten Registration 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, if applicable. High priority families (*refer to Definitions*) **should not be charged** any fees or levies, unless it is for outside the funded hours.

**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 a place within a program at the service.

**Kindergarten fee deposit:** A charge to secure a place that has been offered in a program at the service. This is deducted from term fees. This deposit should not act as a barrier for enrolment of vulnerable families.

**Kindergarten Fee Subsidy (KFS):** A state government subsidy paid in addition to per capita grants to subsidise the costs of parent fees and enable eligible children to attend a funded kindergarten for 15 hours free of charge (*The Kindergarten Funding Guide (refer to Sources)*).

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**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*).

**Wrap around care:** care that is provided by a kindergarten service to kindergarten children outside of the 15 hours per week program.

## 5 Sources and related policies

### Sources

- The Kindergarten Funding Guide (Department of Education and Training): [www.vic.gov.au/kindergarten-funding-guide](http://www.vic.gov.au/kindergarten-funding-guide)
- The constitution of Plenty Valley Christian College (PVCC)

### Related Policies

- Complaints and Grievances
- Delivery and Collection of Children
- Enrolment and Orientation
- Excursions and Service Events
- Inclusion and Equity
- Privacy and Confidentiality

## 6 Evaluation

In order to assess whether the values and purposes of the policy have been achieved, the approved provider will:

- regularly seek feedback from relevant stakeholders 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
- investigating what measures can be taken to reduce any barriers to access the program, especially for vulnerable and disadvantaged children
- 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
- notifying all stakeholders affected by this policy at least 14 days before making any significant changes to this policy or its procedures, unless a lesser period is necessary due to risk (*Regulation 172 (2)*).

## 7 Attachments

- Attachment 1: Fees information for families
- Attachment 2: Fee Schedule
- Attachment 3: Timetable
- Attachment 4: Authority to Claim Funding Form
- Attachment 5: PVCC Business Terms

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## DOCUMENT HISTORY AND VERSION CONTROL RECORD

<b>Name of document:</b>	PKELC Fees Policy
<b>Responsible officer:</b>	Centre Director (Nominated Supervisor)
<b>Approved by:</b>	Principal (Approved Provider)
<b>Assigned review period:</b>	Annually
<b>Date of next review:</b>	November 2023
<b>Category:</b>	Staff and Parents
<b>Previous title of document</b>	n/a

Version number	Version date	Responsible officer	Amendment details
0.1	04/12/2017	Centre Director	Initial issue as a controlled document.
1.0	20/04/2018	Principal	Approved policy.
2.0	25/01/2019	Business Manager	Update to Fee Schedule.
2.0	01/02/2019	Principal	Approved policy.
2.1	25/02/2019	Centre Director	Minor formatting changes.
2.1	25/02/2019	Principal	Approved policy.
2.2	02/04/2020	Centre Director	Minor changes to wording. Updated 2020 Fees Schedule.
2.2	02/04/2020	Principal	Reviewed and signed.
2.3	29/10/2020	Centre Director	Policy formatted in line with new style guide.
2.4	25/03/2021	Centre Director	Wording changes to more clearly explain Child Care Subsidy, Kindergarten Fee Subsidy, and free kindergarten.
2.4	25/03/2021	Principal	Reviewed and Signed.
2.5	03/03/2022	Centre Director and Business Manager	Reviewed and amended in line with ELAA and PVCC Business Manager's recommendations
2.6	26/04/2022	Principal	Reviewed and approved.
2.7	10/05/2023	Centre Administrator	Reviewed and amended in line with ELAA and PVCC Business Manager's recommendations
2.8	19/05/2023	Principal	Reviewed and signed.

Approved By:



John Metcalfe

Principal

Date 19/05/2023