

## 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, children from refugee and asylum seekers backgrounds and children known to Child Protection, to access kindergarten programs.

Ascot Kindergarten 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 Funding Guide* (Department of Education and Training) available from the DET website: [www.education.vic.gov.au](http://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 Ascot Kindergarten are included on the Statement of Fees and Charges. These include:

- **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*).
- **Deposit Holding Fee:** Children who turn 3 during the year of enrolment cannot commence until they turn 3 years of age however families will be charged a deposit holding fee of \$50 upon enrolment. This deposit will be deducted from the fee invoice issued once the child commences kinder.
- **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. Please refer to the *Delivery and Collection of Children* policy.
- **Late payment charge:** The Committee of Management reserves the right to implement a late payment charge when parents/guardians have not paid kinder fees by the due date listed on their invoice. Please see below for procedures for unpaid fees and support options.

#### **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**

The Kindergarten Fee Subsidy is provided by DET and enables eligible children to attend 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.

##### **6.2 Early Start Kindergarten fee subsidy**

Three-year-old Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from a refugee or asylum seeker background and children known to Child Protection, are eligible to attend a funded early childhood program free of charge for 15 hours per week. The service receives funding for children who meet the eligibility criteria. Please contact the service for further information.

##### **6.3 Child Care Subsidy (CCS)**

Note: Ascot Kindergarten is not registered as an approved child care provider for the purpose of the Child Care Subsidy.

#### **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 by our bookkeeper 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 upon request.

Parents/guardians experiencing difficulty in paying fees are requested to contact the contact person listed on the invoice or the Administration Officer at the kinder, 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.

- If payment is not received 14 days after the due date, an initial reminder invoice will be sent with payment due in 14 days. This will include information on support options available for families and contact information.
- Where payment is still not received, a reminder invoice will be sent and will include a Late Payment Charge of \$20. This will include information on support options available for families and contact information. The

family will also be contacted by phone and/or email to discuss support options and establish a payment plan, if necessary.

- Where payment is still not received after 7 days and family has not contacted the service to arrange payment of fees, the family will be invited to attend a meeting in person to discuss a range of support options and establish a payment plan.
- Failure to attend the meeting and continued non-payment of fees, may result in a notification to the parents/guardians (in writing) that the child's place at the service may be withdrawn unless a payment plan is entered into, within a specified time frame. This letter will include information on a range of support options available to 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 (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. Children turning three during the year of enrolment**

Children who are not yet 3 at the commencement of term 1 are unable to attend the program until they have turned 3 years of age. Families will be charged a pro-rata term fee based on their child's starting date however, a deposit is required at the time of enrolment to confirm their place at the service. This deposit amount will be deducted from the term fee invoice that is issued at commencement.

### **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.