

ENROLMENT AND ORIENTATION POLICY

Mandatory – Quality Area 6

PURPOSE

This policy will outline:

- the criteria for enrolment at Gardiner Pre-School
- the process to be followed when enrolling a child at Gardiner Pre-School, and the basis on which places within the programs will be allocated
- procedures for the orientation of new families and children into Gardiner Pre-School.

POLICY STATEMENT

1. VALUES

Gardiner Pre-School is committed to:

- equal access for all children
- meeting the needs of the local community
- complying with DEECD funding requirements relating to the enrolment of children in government-funded kindergarten places
- maintaining confidentiality in relation to all information provided on enrolment forms
- ensuring all families are welcomed and receives an effective orientation into Gardiner Pre-School.

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to the Committee of Management, Nominated Supervisor, Certified Supervisors, educators, staff and parents/guardians who wish to enrol or have already enrolled their child at Gardiner Pre-School.

3. BACKGROUND AND LEGISLATION

Background

The *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011 2014* require approved services to have a policy and procedures in place in relation to enrolment and orientation (Regulation 168(2)(k)).

It is intended that all eligible children (refer to *Definitions*) will have access to one year of kindergarten before commencing school. However, a shortage of places in some areas can limit choices for parents/guardians. Where demand is higher than availability, a priority system for access must be determined by the Committee of Management in order to allocate the available places. The criteria used to determine the allocation of places will vary from service to service, but is generally based on a service's philosophy, values and beliefs, and the provisions of the *Equal Opportunity Act 2012*. The Victorian Government requires funded organisations to ensure that their policies and procedures promote equal opportunity for all children. Criteria for access and inclusion are outlined in the *Victorian kindergarten policy, procedures and funding criteria* (refer to *Sources*). Services participating in central enrolment schemes are required to comply with the enrolment procedures of that scheme.

Childcare services providing approved care (refer to *Definitions*) must abide by the *Family Assistance Legislation Amendment (Child Care Rebate) Act 2011* (refer to *Legislation and standards*) and the Commonwealth Government's *Priority for allocating places in child care services* (refer to *Sources*).

Legislation and standards

Relevant legislation and standards include but are not limited to:

- *A New Tax System (Family Assistance) Act 1999*
- *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* (Vic), as amended 2011
- *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* (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*: Regulations 160, 161, 162, 177, 183
- *Equal Opportunity Act 2010* (Vic)
- *Family Assistance Legislation Amendment (Child Care Rebate) Act 2011*
- *National Quality Standard, Quality Area 6: Collaborative Partnerships with Families and Communities*
 - Standard 6.1: Respectful and supportive relationships with families are developed and maintained
 - Element 6.1.1: There is an effective enrolment and orientation process for families
- *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* (Cth)

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

- *Victorian Legislation – Victorian Law Today*: <http://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/>
- *Commonwealth Legislation – ComLaw*: <http://www.comlaw.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, Regulatory Authority etc. refer to the *General Definitions* section of this manual.

Approved care: Care given by a service provider that has been approved by the Family Assistance Office to receive Child Care Benefit 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/

Authorised nominee: (In relation to this policy) is person who has been given written authority by the parents/guardians of a child to collect that child from the education and care service. These details will be on the child's enrolment form. *The National Law and National Regulations do not specify a minimum age limit for an authorised nominee.*

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/

Children with additional needs: Children whose development or physical condition requires specialist support, or children who may need additional support due to language, cultural or economic circumstances (refer to *Inclusion and Equity Policy*).

Deferral: When a child does not attend in the year when they are eligible for a funded kindergarten place, or officially withdraws from a service prior to the end of Term 2. DEECD considers that this child has not accessed a year of funded kindergarten and is therefore eligible for DEECD funding in the following year.

Eligible child: A child who meets the criteria outlined in *The Kindergarten Guide*.

Enrolment application form: A form to apply for a place at Gardiner Pre-School.

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 Gardiner Pre-School.

Enrolment form: A form that collects contact details, and personal and medical information from parents/guardians about their child. This is completed after a place has been offered by Gardiner Pre-

School and accepted by the applicant. The information on this form is placed on the child's enrolment record (see below) and is kept confidential by Gardiner Pre-School.

Enrolment record: Contains information on each child, as required under the National Regulations, including contact details, names of authorised nominees (refer to *Definitions*), names of persons authorised to consent to medical treatment or to authorise administration of medication, names of persons authorised to take the child outside Gardiner Pre-School, details of any court orders, personal and health information including specific healthcare needs, medical management plans and dietary restrictions etc. (Regulations 160, 161, 162). This information is kept confidential by Gardiner Pre-School.

Fees: A charge for a place within a program at Gardiner Pre-School.

5. SOURCES AND RELATED POLICIES

Sources

- *Child Care Benefit (Eligibility of Child Care Services for Approval and Continued Approval) Determination 2000:*
<http://www.comlaw.gov.au/Series/F2006Bo1541>
- *Guide to the Education and Care Services National Law and the Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011:*
www.acecqa.gov.au/links-and-resources/national-quality-framework-resources/
- *Guide to the National Quality Standard:*
www.acecqa.gov.au/links-and-resources/national-quality-framework-resources/
- *Priority for allocating places in child care services:*
<http://education.gov.au/priority-allocating-places>
- *The Kindergarten Guide (Department of Education and Early Childhood Development):*
<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/providers/funding/Pages/default.aspx>

Service policies

- *Acceptance and Refusal of Authorisations Policy*
- *Complaints and Grievances Policy*
- *Fees Policy*
- *Inclusion and Equity Policy*
- *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy*

PROCEDURES

The Committee of Management is responsible for:

- determining the criteria for priority of access to programs at Gardiner Pre-School, based on funding requirements and Gardiner Pre-School's philosophy
- developing procedures that ensure all eligible families are aware of, and are able to access, an early childhood program, and considering any barriers to access that may exist
- complying with the *Inclusion and Equity Policy*
- appointing a person to be responsible for the enrolment process and the day-to-day implementation of this policy
- providing opportunities (in consultation with the Nominated Supervisor and educators) for interested families to attend Gardiner Pre-School during operational hours to observe the program and become familiar with Gardiner Pre-School prior to their child commencing in the program
- ensuring that enrolment forms (refer to *Definitions*) comply with the requirements of Regulations 160, 161, 162
- reviewing the enrolment form to determine its effectiveness in meeting the regulatory and management requirements of Gardiner Pre-School

- ensuring that enrolment records (refer to *Definitions*) are stored in a safe and secure place, and kept for three years after the last date on which the child was educated and cared for by the service (Regulation 183)
- ensuring that the orientation program and plans meet the individual needs of children and families, and comply with DEECD funding criteria
- reviewing the orientation processes for new families and children to ensure the objectives of this policy are met
- ensuring that parents/guardians of a child attending Gardiner Pre-School can enter the Gardiner Pre-School premises at any time that the child is being educated and cared for, except where this may pose a risk to the safety of children or staff, or conflict with any duty of the Committee of Management, Nominated Supervisor or educators under the Law (Regulation 157).

The person responsible for the enrolment process is accountable for the following:

- providing enrolment application forms (refer to Attachment 2 – Sample Enrolment Application Form)
- collating enrolments
- maintaining a waiting list
- maintaining a record of enquiries received from families about Gardiner Pre-School that includes at least the name, contact details, reason for enquiry and child's birth date
- maintaining a record of every time that a family declines an offer of enrolment or withdraws after accepting an offer, that includes the reasons for declining/withdrawing.
- collecting, receipting and banking enrolment fees
- offering places in line with this policy and criteria for priority access, and providing relevant paperwork to families in accordance with this policy
- providing a report to the Committee of Management on a regular basis (at least monthly during term time) and at other times to the President when requested, regarding the status of enquiries, the waiting list, current enrolments and enrolments for the following year, and any difficulties encountered
- storing completed enrolment application forms in a lockable file (refer to *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy*) as soon as is practicable
- complying with the *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy* of Gardiner Pre-School
- providing a copy of the *Enrolment and Orientation Policy* with the enrolment application form.
- notifying families of successful offers to Gardiner via email and obtaining confirmation from families that that offer has been received, either via email or by telephone

The Nominated Supervisor, Certified Supervisor and other educators are responsible for:

- responding to enrolment enquiries on a day-to-day basis and referring people to the person responsible for the enrolment process, as required
- reviewing enrolment applications to identify children with additional needs (refer to the *Inclusion and Equity Policy*)
- responding to parent/guardian enquiries regarding their child's readiness for the program that they are considering enrolling their child in
- ensuring that enrolment forms are completed prior to the child's commencement at Gardiner Pre-School
- ensuring that parents/guardians of a child attending Gardiner Pre-School can enter the Gardiner Pre-School premises at any time that the child is being educated and cared for, except where this may pose a risk to the safety of children or staff, or conflict with any duty of the Committee of Management, Nominated Supervisor or educators under the Law (Regulation 157)
- developing strategies to assist new families to:
 - feel welcomed into Gardiner Pre-School
 - become familiar with service policies and procedures
 - share information about their family beliefs, values and culture

- share their understanding of their child’s strengths, interests, abilities and needs
- discuss the values and expectations they hold in relation to their child’s learning
- discussing the individual child’s needs with parents/guardians and developing an orientation program to assist them to settle into the program
- encouraging parents/guardians to:
 - stay with their child as long as required during the settling in period
 - make contact with educators and carers at Gardiner Pre-School, when required
- assisting parents/guardians to develop and maintain a routine for saying goodbye to their child
- providing comfort and reassurance to children who are showing signs of distress when separating from family members
- sharing information with parents/guardians regarding their child’s progress with regard to settling in to Gardiner Pre-School
- discussing support services for children with parents/guardians, where required
- complying with the Gardiner Pre-School’s *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy* in relation to the collection and management of a child’s enrolment information.

Parents/guardians are responsible for:

- reading and complying with this *Enrolment and Orientation Policy*
- completing enrolment forms prior to their child’s commencement at Gardiner Pre-School
- ensuring that all required information is provided to Gardiner Pre-School
- updating information by notifying Gardiner Pre-School of any changes as they occur.

Volunteers and students, while at the service, are responsible for following this policy and its procedures.

EVALUATION

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

- consider feedback received from anyone affected by the policy regarding its effectiveness
- monitor the implementation, compliance, complaints and incidents in relation to this policy
- keep the policy up to date with current legislation, research, policy and best practice
- revise the policy and procedures as part of Gardiner Pre-School policy review cycle, or as required
- notify parents/guardians at least 14 days before the commencement date of any updated version of this policy or its procedures.

ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1: General enrolment procedures
- Attachment 2: Approved absences and abandonment of place

AUTHORISATION

This policy was adopted by the Committee of Management of Gardiner Pre-School on 13 June 2017.

COMMENCEMENT DATE

This policy is to come into effect on 14 July 2017.

NEXT REVIEW DATE

30 June 2018 or earlier at the discretion of the Committee of Management.

Attachment 1 - General enrolment procedures

1. Application for a place

- Registration forms will be accepted any time after the child has turned 2 years of age.
- Registration forms are available from Gardiner Pre-School and/or the Gardiner Pre-School website.
- A separate registration form must be completed for each child.
- To facilitate the inclusion of all children into the program, registration applications should clearly identify any additional or specific needs of the child (refer to *Inclusion and Equity Policy*).
- All applications must be accompanied by a registration fee of \$50. This fee is to cover administrative costs associated with the processing of a child's registration and is not refundable.
- Completed enrolment application forms are to be forwarded to the person responsible for the enrolment process at Gardiner Pre-School or lodged via the website.
- Access to completed registration forms will be restricted to the Administration Officer, the Committee of Management, Nominated Supervisor and educators at Gardiner Pre-School, unless otherwise specified by the Committee of Management.
- Registration forms will be entered onto the Registration database using the eligibility and priority of access criteria (as outlined in Section 4 of this Policy).

2. Allocation within groups

Families enrolling in the 4 year old program will be offered places in either Group 1 or Group 2, based on their first preference where possible.

If there is more than one group in the 3 year old program, then:

- If the days and hours are the same across groups, families enrolling in the 3 year old program will be allocated places in either group; and
- If the days and hours differ across groups, families enrolling in the 3 year old program will be offered places in a group that is based on their first preference where possible.

3. Offer of places

- Places will be allocated to applicants in accordance with the eligibility and priority of access criteria outlined in Section 4.
- Applicants who are successful will be notified in writing via email of a confirmed place.
- Parents/guardians who do not wish to accept the offer of a place, or intend to withdraw their enrolment, are requested to notify the Committee of Management, or the person responsible for managing the enrolment process at Gardiner Pre-School, in writing via email by the date specified in the offer.
- Additional offers will be made as offers are declined by families.
- To accept an offer, the applicant must take both the following actions:
 - Promptly pay a non refundable deposit of \$450 for enrolments in the funded four year old kindergarten program or \$350 for enrolments in the three year old pre-school program, by internet transfer. Eligible concession card holders and families experiencing hardship should contact the service to discuss options regarding an extended time to pay the deposit or a reduced level of deposit. \$400 of this deposit for enrolments in the funded four year old kindergarten program or \$300 of the deposit for enrolments in the three year old pre-school program will be deducted from Term 4 fees of the year to which the deposit relates (but only if fees for Terms 1-3 have been fully paid) \$50 will be retained as an enrolment administrative fee.
 - Promptly return a properly completed and signed copy of the Fee Agreement to Gardiner Pre-School, either a physical copy or an electronic copy (e.g. scanned image). This Fee Agreement will only count as being returned once actually received by Gardiner Pre-School.

- If the applicant does not take both these actions by the date required, the offer is deemed to lapse without any further notice to the applicant, and the Pre-School may offer it to another family.

Note: Places will not be allocated to children until any debt owed to the service by the family is paid, or a payment plan is agreed to between the family and the service (refer to *Fees Policy*).

4. Eligibility and priority of access criteria for the funded four year old kindergarten program

The following children are eligible for attendance in the funded four year old kindergarten program:

- children who have been granted approval to receive funding for a second year of kindergarten in accordance with the *Victorian kindergarten policy, procedures and funding criteria* (available at www.education.vic.gov.au/ecprofessionals/kindergarten/)
- children who were eligible to attend in the previous year, but:
 - deferred
 - withdrew from Gardiner Pre-School on or before the last day of Term 2 and have completed the *Kindergarten withdrawal and deferment form* (available from Gardiner Pre-School)
- children who turn four years of age by 30 April in the year they will attend kindergarten
- children turning six years of age at kindergarten who have been granted an exemption from school-entry age requirements by the regional office of DEECD (refer to *Victorian kindergarten policy, procedures and funding criteria*, available at www.education.vic.gov.au/ecprofessionals/kindergarten/)
- children who are younger than the eligible age, but whose parents/guardians have submitted an early age entry request for their child to attend school the following year. This written request is to be directed to the regional office of DEECD, or the non-government school the child will be attending. A copy of the approval must be attached to the kindergarten application. Parents/guardians should note that very few requests are approved by DEECD. If the child attends kindergarten early, but does not proceed to school in the following year, they will be unable to access a second year of kindergarten unless they are deemed eligible by DEECD for having recognised developmental needs
- three-year-old Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, and children known to Child Protection may be eligible for the Early Start Kindergarten program. This scheme provides funding to enable children 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/

When demand exceeds availability, the Committee of Management will refer to Gardiner Pre-School's values, philosophy and *Inclusion and Equity Policy* to determine the priority of access.

The Priority of Access Guidelines for 4 year old kindergarten at Gardiner Pre-School are as follows:

1. Children known to Child Protection or known to be at risk of harm.
2. Children who have been approved for a second year of funded kindergarten.
3. Children continuing on from the three year old program at Gardiner Pre-School.
4. Children who have had siblings attend Gardiner Pre-School (and have registered on the registration database), with priority in order of the date the registration form was received **and** the registration fee paid.
5. Children who are registered on the registration database, with priority in order of the date the registration form was received **and** the registration fee paid.
6. Children who live in the closest proximity to Gardiner Pre-School.
7. Children (other than children in priority categories 1 or 2 above) from families who at any time have abandoned a place (see Attachment 2).

For children in priority categories 1 and 2 above, Gardiner Pre-School will hold a total of two places until 31 October of the previous year.

5. Eligibility and access criteria for three year old program

Children are eligible for attendance in the three year old program provided they have turned three by 31st January of the year of attendance unless otherwise approved by the Nominated Supervisor or the Committee of Management.

When demand exceeds availability, the Committee of Management will refer to Gardiner Pre-School's values, philosophy and *Inclusion and Equity Policy* to determine the priority of access.

The Priority of Access guidelines for three year old kindergarten at Gardiner Pre-School are as follows:

1. Children known to children protection or known to be at risk of harm.
2. Children completing a second year of three year old Program at Gardiner Pre-School.
3. Children who have had siblings attend Gardiner Pre-School (and have registered on the registration database) with priority in order of the date the registration form was received **and** the registration fee paid.
4. Children who are registered on the registration database, with priority in order of the date the registration form was received **and** the registration fee paid.
5. Children who live in the closest proximity to Gardiner Pre-School.
6. Children (other than children in priority categories 1 or 2 above) from families who at any time have abandoned a place (see Attachment 2).

For children in priority categories 1 and 2 above, Gardiner Pre-School will hold a total of two places until 31 October of the previous year.

6. Withdrawal of offer due to non-payment of Term 1 fees by the due date

Gardiner Pre-School will issue an invoice for Term 1 fees, to be paid by the due date on the invoice (usually 14 days). This invoice will usually be issued in November of the prior year. If the Term 1 fees are not paid by the due date (or if the family states in writing that the fees will not be paid by that date), then Gardiner Pre-School may in its discretion and without further notice withdraw the offer, and offer that place to another family. If this occurs, any deposit paid by the applicant will not be refunded.

Attachment 2 – Approved absences and abandonment of place

1. Approved absences

Gardiner Pre-School may in its discretion approve a request for a child to be absent from the service. An approved absence means an extended period of time (typically 6 weeks or more) for which:

- The child continues to hold their place at the service, and so is allowed to recommence their place after the approved absence ends; and
- The fees payable in relation to the period of approved absence are 50% of the fees that would have been payable by the child if they were to attend during that period.

A request for an approved absence should be made by in writing at least 2 months before the requested start date. (The Pre-School may in its discretion consider requests received less than 2 months before the requested start date.) The request must state:

- The start date and end date of the requested period of approved absence; and
- The reason for the request.

The Pre-School will consider the request and make one of the following decisions in its discretion:

- Approve the request, subject to the prompt payment of an invoice;
- Decline the request, for any reason whatsoever (the Pre-School is not required to give the applicant a reason);
- Require more information about the request, before the Pre-School will decide.

Decisions by the Pre-School about absence requests will usually be made by the Committee of Management at a regular Committee meeting, or by a delegate of the Committee.

If the period of approved absence is only part of a Term, then the invoice that must be paid will be for the whole period, being partly reduced fees rate and partly normal fees for that child, on a pro-rata basis.

If the period of absence includes a period for which fees have already been paid, because fees are non-refundable (exceptional circumstances may apply – these are at the discretion of the Committee of Management).

If the period of absence is approved by the Pre-School, and the family later wishes to make a change relating to the period (for example, a change to the start date or end date), an additional request must be made relating to that change.

2. Abandonment of place

If a child has not attended the service for 4 consecutive weeks of term (either in the same term, or split over two terms), or the family has communicated in writing that the child will not attend the service for such a period; and if any fees remain unpaid after the due date for those fees, then:

- Gardiner Pre-School in its discretion can (without further notice) decide that the child's place at the service has been abandoned, withdraw the offer for that child for that year, and offer the place to another family;
- If the child is registered for a place for the following year, then the service in its discretion (without further notice) decide that that child will not be offered a place for that next year or (if an offer has already been made) withdraw such an offer; and
- The unpaid fees remain payable as a debt owed to the service.

If a child is expected to be absent for a period, then families should instead make a request for approved absence (see Part 1 above).