

# KINDERGARTEN ENROLMENT POLICY



## MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

### PURPOSE

This policy outlines a clear framework for:

- providing information to families about enrolling in sessional kindergarten at ECMS
- managing the enrolment of families into sessional kindergarten programs
- supporting equitable access to our programs for families through observing the priority of access.

### SCOPE

This policy applies to:

- The Approved Provider, persons with management or control, Centre Director, Nominated Supervisor, and persons in day-to-day charge.
- Early Childhood teachers, educators, staff, contractors, students, volunteers, parents/guardians, children, and others enrolled and participating in ECMS programs and services, including during offsite excursions and activities.
- All ECMS-operated Early Learning Centres and Kindergarten programs.

This policy supports us in:

- responding to the needs of local communities.
- complying with Department of Education and Training (DET) eligibility requirements for enrolment in government-funded kindergarten programs.
- operating in alignment with the Department of Education and Training's Early Years Management Framework.
- upholding Privacy and Human Rights legislation.

### POLICY STATEMENT

- Sessional kindergarten services are a critical component of early childhood education. Priority will be given to manage demand and ensure equitable access based on specific criteria outlined below. This policy aims to provide a clear framework for allocating kindergarten places and ensuring that the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children receive the support they need.

### POLICY PRINCIPLES

The following principles underpin all ECMS policies:

- Our policies reflect our purpose

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- We use evidence to guide decisions
- Our policies are clear, accessible and purposeful
- Safety, equity and inclusion are non-negotiable
- We are accountable, transparent and always learning

Alongside ECMS’s overarching principles, the following principles provide specific guidance for this policy:

- **Child-centred:** Enrolment processes are designed around the best interests of each child. Decisions prioritise children’s wellbeing, safety, developmental needs, and continuity of learning, with flexibility to support inclusion and smooth transitions (including ESK and Pre-Prep). Family input is valued and considered, while the child’s rights and outcomes remain central, in line with Regulations 155–157 of the Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011.
- **Culturally safe and inclusive:** ECMS is committed to culturally safe, respectful, and inclusive enrolment practices that are free from discrimination. We welcome Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, refugees, and families from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds through culturally responsive practices, language support where needed, and acknowledgement of Country. Priority of Access is applied to promote inclusion and reduce barriers, in accordance with the Equal Opportunity Act 2010.
- **Equity:** ECMS promotes equitable access by applying Priority of Access consistently and supporting children and families who may experience vulnerability. Local criteria (such as siblings or proximity) are considered only after priority groups are applied. No child is excluded unlawfully, and enrolment and orientation processes are adapted where needed to address barriers such as technology, language, documentation, or immunisation requirements.

## POLICY

### Kindergarten Enrolment

- Families will waitlist their child(ren) for a place either with their local government area (LGA) or directly with ECMS via our website. Places are allocated to eligible children according to the group allocation procedure.
- Families who receive a place are then sent an offer to complete an enrolment form by the ECMS enrolments team before they can attend.
- There is no deadline or closure for enrolments, though all programs have a set number of places for children available.
- If a family or guardian needs assistance to obtain a suitable form of ID for a child, the Enrolments team can support this process. They can be contacted via [enrolments@ecms.org.au](mailto:enrolments@ecms.org.au) or 03 3841 1117.

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- Families can only enrol their child in one Free Kinder program at a time and will nominate which service receives their Free Kinder funding by completing a Funding Declaration Form, which will be provided to them by ECMS.
- As part of enrolment, ECMS collects School Family Occupation and Education (SFOE) data, as required by the Victorian Department of Education. This data is used to calculate School Readiness Funding, which helps ECMS support children who may need additional assistance. Collection is governed by the *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 (Vic)*.

### Program schedule and planned closures

Program days and times are published on the ECMS website at [ecms.org.au](http://ecms.org.au). Upon confirming enrolment, families can access their booked sessions (aligned to Victorian Government school term dates) via their online portal. Families will be notified in writing with reasonable notice of any planned closures outside of standard term dates, including professional development days.

### Free Kinder

Through the Victorian Government’s Free Kinder initiative, families at ECMS services can access up to 15 hours of funded kindergarten at no cost for sessional programs, or a reduced cost in long day care settings where the child enrolls in integrated kindergarten.

Free kinder is for everyone, and families are not required to show a Health Care Card, Pension Card, or Australian citizenship (or similar) to be eligible. However, ECMS may still collect this information to monitor participation for vulnerable and disadvantaged children.

Here is how the Free Kinder funding applies:

- **Sessional kindergarten:** Families pay no fees for up to 15 funded hours per week. Pre-prep eligible families will access between 15 and 25 hours of free kindergarten per week from 2026.
- **Long day care kindergarten:** ECMS receives up to **\$2,101 per child annually**, which is directly applied to offset fees for the kindergarten component of the program.

### Three-Year-Old Kindergarten

The Victorian Department of Education and Training funds free three-year-old kindergarten state-wide, so each child can access a minimum of five hours and up to fifteen hours a week led by a Bachelor-trained educator.

- All ECMS kindergartens run three-year-old programs.
- In the absence of a Bachelor-trained educator to run the program, three-year-old groups may run as an Activity Group. In this instance, families will be notified of the change.

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- Activity groups are aligned under the Early Years Learning Framework and the National Quality Standards and are consistent with the ECMS Educational Program Development Policy and Procedure.

### Eligibility for three-year-old kindergarten

According to the Department of Education and Training (DET) Kindergarten Funding Criteria, the following children are eligible to attend the 3-year-old kindergarten program:

- **Eligibility age:** A child must turn three by 30 April in the year they are eligible to access a funded kindergarten program (two years before school).
- **Commencement:** A child must have turned three before starting the program. Children cannot commence in the funded program until their third birthday. A place will be held for your child until they are eligible to begin.

### Important considerations for families with children born between 1 January and 30 April

Families with children born between 1 January and 30 April are encouraged to consider when their child should start kindergarten carefully. Once a child begins attending the service, they are accessing their funded year of 3-year-old kindergarten and are expected to progress to the 4-year-old funded program the following year.

Your child's kindergarten start date directly impacts the age at which they will begin primary school. When enrolling in 3-year-old kindergarten, we recommend that families plan and consider their preferred starting age for primary school.

### Early Start Kindergarten (ESK)

All 3-year-old children are now eligible for Free Kinder. ECMS will continue to note children eligible for Early Start Kindergarten (ESK) as it contributes to how School Readiness Funding is calculated and ensures additional targeted support is provided. Eligible children will be enrolled and funded as an ESK enrolment.

Eligible children must be 3 by 30 April in the year they start kindergarten and:

- from a refugee or asylum seeker background, or
- identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, or
- have had contact with child protection.

### Four-Year-Old Kindergarten

The Victorian Department of Education and Training funds free four-year-old kindergarten state-wide so that each child can access fifteen hours per week led by a Bachelor-trained educator.

Each kindergarten must provide 600 hours throughout the calendar year, aligned to Victorian Government School terms.

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## Eligibility for four-year-old kindergarten

According to the Department of Education and Training (DET) Kindergarten Funding Criteria, the following children are eligible to attend the 4-year-old kindergarten program:

- **Eligibility age:** A child must turn four by 30 April in the year they are eligible to access a funded kindergarten program
- **Minimum attendance:** Children must be enrolled for at least 15 hours per week or 600 hours annually.

## Pre-prep

In 2026, eligible children will receive between 16 to 25 hours of free kindergarten across all local government areas.

These children can access up to 22.5 hours per week at all ECMS services:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children
- Children from a refugee or asylum seeker background
- Children who have had contact with child protection services

## Second year of funded three- or four-year-old kindergarten

Children may be eligible for a second year of funded kindergarten when a child shows delays under the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework. Further information on how to apply for a second year of funded kindergarten can be found on the Victorian Department of Education and Training website.

Services will work with families to determine whether a child will achieve better outcomes at kindergarten than if they go to school.

Children who turn six during the kindergarten year must seek an [exemption from school](#).

## Important considerations for families with children born between 1 January and 30 April

Families with children born between January and April can choose which year to start at Three-Year- Old Kindergarten. These children can start in the same year they turn three, or in the year they turn four years of age.

## Immunisation

In 2016, amendments were made to the Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 (known as the 'No Jab, No Play' policy) to require children to be up to date with immunisations for their age to enrol in early childhood education services.

To finalise a child's enrolment, families will provide:

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- a current immunisation history statement from the Australian Immunisation Register (AIR) that shows the child is up to date with all the immunisations due for their age or
- a current immunisation history statement from the Australian Immunisation Register (AIR) that shows the child is on a recognised catch-up schedule if they have fallen behind or
- documentation that details the child's exemption under the 'grace period provisions'. A grace period of 16 weeks from the first day of the child's attendance at the service may apply to children from families experiencing vulnerability and disadvantage.

### Priority of Access (PoA)

- All kindergarten places across ECMS services are allocated according to [Priority of Access criteria](#) as part of our commitment to ensuring equitable access to our programs.

### High Priority Children:

- The groups below are given the highest priority for kindergarten places:
  - **Children at risk of abuse or neglect, including children in Out-of-Home Care:** Children identified as being at risk of significant harm or neglect, including those in out-of-home care or those with a history of abuse.
  - **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children:** As part of our enrolment process, families are respectfully asked if they identify their child as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.
  - **Asylum seekers and refugee children:** Identified through documentation such as visas or ImmiCards or referred by outreach workers.
  - **Children eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy (KFS):** Includes children of families holding Commonwealth Health Care Cards, Pensioner Concession Cards, Veteran's Affairs Cards, or multiple birth children (e.g., triplets or quadruplets).
  - **Children with additional needs:** Holds a child disability health care card has previously been approved for Kindergarten Inclusion Support (KIS) package or referred by the National Disability Insurance Scheme, Early Childhood Intervention Service, Preschool Field Officer, or Maternal and Child Health nurse.

### Locally agreed criteria for children not identified as high priority

- After high-priority children have been allocated places, remaining spots are offered based on locally agreed criteria, such as:
  - Proximity to the kindergarten
  - Sibling enrolments

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- Families attending in the previous year
- Strong community or family connections to the service
- Priority of access children are given priority over all other children regardless of the hours they attend.
- To ensure equity, ECMS applies the above criteria to three- and four-year-old programs separately. In mixed-age groups, children are prioritised equally according to the criteria above, regardless of age.

### **Group Allocation**

Where the council manages waitlists, families will be allocated to groups through the Central Registration Scheme (CRES). The ECMS enrolments team will send families enrolment offers indicating the allocations by council.

For some of our services, the ECMS enrolments team will allocate families to groups following our group allocation procedure, which applies Priority of Access (PoA).

### **Extended Absences**

Enrolled families that are planning or require extended leave of more than 4 weeks should notify the kindergarten and or the ECMS enrolments team in writing.

Please include:

- the last date of attendance
- the expected return date
- reason for the extended leave.

### **Cancellations**

We understand that families may need to withdraw their child(ren) from our kindergarten program due to personal circumstances. Families must provide written notice before withdrawing their child from the kindergarten program. To cancel a place, families need to notify the enrolments team in writing.

- If a child will not be returning after a term break notice should be given before the end of the current term.
- If a child is absent for consecutive days/weeks without notification the kindergarten may assume withdrawal and contact the family to confirm.

### **Re-enrolment and Future Admission**

If a family decides to re-enrol their child later admission will depend on available space.

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## Contact Information

For all cancellations enquiries families may reach out to the enrolments team [enrolments@ecms.org.au](mailto:enrolments@ecms.org.au)

## Feedback and Complaints

All complaints and feedback submitted by families will be managed fully, fairly and within a reasonable time frame by ECMS. Families will not be adversely affected by raising and lodging complaints.

Families can find detailed information on this in the ECMS *Complaints and Feedback Policy* on the ECMS website

## Monitoring, Review and Continuous Improvement

ECMS reviews and assesses this policy for effectiveness, adequacy and relevance every three years, or earlier if legislation, Child Safe Standards, or organisational priorities change. The review and update process will be aligned to legislative and regulatory changes, and interim updates may be made sooner, if significant changes occur, with regard to new regulatory obligations, or as a result of incident findings, audit outcomes or organisational restructure. Feedback from children, families, educators, and leaders informs learning and opportunities for continuous improvement to inform training, practice improvement and policy review. Insights are used to strengthen and implement improvement strategies through practice and systems, ensuring children remain safe, seen and heard.

## BACKGROUND AND LEGISLATION

### BACKGROUND

Enrolment in ECMS kindergarten meets the requirements of the Victorian Department of Education and Training, the Federal Department of Education, Skills and Employment, and the *Public Health Amendment (No Jab, No Play) Act*.

Universal access to high-quality early learning helps children get a good start in life and has positive effects across society, consistent with ECMS's purpose to foster lifelong learning. This policy is aligned to legal obligations stipulated under relevant Commonwealth and Victorian legislation, regulations and standards, including the *Education and Care Services National Law Act (2010)*, *Education and Care Services National Regulations (2011)*, *Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)*, *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)*, *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 (Vic)*, *Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations 2019 (Vic)*, the National Quality Framework, Child Safe Standards (Vic), and associated relevant legislation, regulation and standards.

### LEGISLATION AND STANDARDS

Relevant legislation and standards include but are not limited to:

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- Education and Care Services National Law Act (2010) and Regulations 2011 (Vic)
- Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)
- Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)
- Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic)
- Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 (Vic) and Regulations 2019 (Vic)
- Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 (Vic)
- Working with Children Act 2005 (Vic) and Regulations 2006 (Vic)
- National Quality Standards – Quality Area 6: Collaborative partnerships
- Child Safe Standards (Vic) – Standard 4: Families and communities
- Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (VIC)

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)

## SOURCES AND RELATED POLICIES

### SOURCES

- ACECQA: QA7 – [Development of child enrolment record](#)
- Australian Department of Education: [Early childhood and care laws](#)
- Vic Department of Health: [No Jab, No play for early childhood education and care services](#)
- Vic Government: [Priority of access criteria for early childhood education](#)
- Vic Government: [Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework](#)
- Vic Government: [Kindergarten Funding Guide](#)
- Vic Government: [Free kinder guidelines for services](#)
- Vic Government: [Early Start Kindergarten](#)
- Vic Government: [Additional year of funded four-year-old kindergarten](#)
- Vic Government: [Going to kindergarten if your child is 6 years old](#)

### ECMS FRAMEWORKS

- Assurance Framework
- Compliance Management Framework
- Financial Management Framework
- Policy Governance Framework
- Risk Management Framework

### RELATED POLICIES

- Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy
- Code of Conduct
- Complaints & Feedback Policy
- Kindergarten Enrolment Policy
- Payment of Fees Policy
- Orientation Policy

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- Privacy and Confidential Information Policy
- Supervision of Children Policy

#### RELATED PROCEDURES

- Group Allocation Procedure

#### EVALUATION

To assess whether the values and purposes of the policy have been achieved, ECMS will:

- regularly seek feedback from everyone 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 the service’s policy review cycle, or as required
- notify all stakeholders affected by this policy at least 14 days before making any significant changes to this policy or its procedure, unless a lesser period is necessary due to risk (*Regulation 172 (2)*).

#### ATTACHMENTS

- **Appendix 1:** Roles & Responsibilities
- **Appendix 2:** Definitions

#### DOCUMENT VERSION HISTORY

| Document Version History |  |  |             |
|--------------------------|--|--|-------------|
| Version                  | Reason for Amendment   | Approved by                            | Review date |
| 2.0                      | Policy updated   | ECMS Executive                         | March 2026  |
| 3.0                      | Policy updated to include content about program delays, SFOE data and Funding Declaration Form | Director of Marketing & Communications | May 2026    |

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## APPENDIX 1: ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

This section outlines the key roles and responsibilities required to implement and uphold this policy.

| ROLE   | RESPONSIBILITIES  |
|--|---|
| Approved Provider/<br>Executive Team   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Oversee policy governance, implementation and compliance.</li> <li>Ensure systems are in place to implement this policy consistently across all ECMS services.</li> <li>Provide resources, training, and support to services.</li> </ul>   |
| Area Managers  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement and comply with this policy.</li> <li>Liaise with Local Government.</li> </ul>   |
| Enrolments Team  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Apply priority of access criteria and effectively allocating places.</li> <li>Liaise with Local Government on registration and enrolment processes.</li> <li>Collect completed enrolment forms and supporting documents (e.g. Immunisation History, Health Care Card, Confirmation of Kindergarten Funding, etc.)</li> </ul> |
| Educators, Staff,<br>Students on Placement,<br>Volunteers and<br>Contractors | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assist families to access enrolment and supporting documents.</li> <li>Discuss concerns about enrolment processes or submitted documents with Nominated Supervisors.</li> <li>Liaise with families about enrolment, entry age, and second-year applications.</li> </ul>  |
| Nominated Supervisors  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure the ECMS <i>Immunisation Policy</i> and Procedures is followed.</li> <li>Support Educators and families with enrolment, entry age, and second-year applications.</li> </ul>   |
| Parents/Guardians  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Follow enrolment processes and provide relevant documents (e.g. Immunisation History, Health Care Cards, etc)</li> <li>Discuss any additional needs with the team at their service.</li> </ul>   |

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## APPENDIX 2: DEFINITIONS

The terms defined in this section relate specifically to this policy. For regularly used terms, refer to the Definitions file of the ECMS Policy Catalogue.

| Term  | Definition  |
|---|---|
| <b>Approved Provider</b>  | The person or entity approved under the <i>Education and Care Services National Law 2010</i> to operate an education and care service.  |
| <b>Australian Immunisation Register (AIR)</b>                           | The AIR is a national register administered by Medicare that records all vaccinations given in Australia, including to children. In the case of medical contraindication, an authorised medical practitioner completes and signs a Medical Exemption Form and supplies it to the AIR (previous forms of documentation, for example a letter from a GP or local council, are no longer acceptable).  |
| <b>Central Registration and Enrolment Scheme (CRES)</b>                 | Central Registration and Enrolment Scheme (CRES) is a best practice model for local councils and other organisations to support families and carers to secure a kindergarten place for their child.   |
| <b>Children/families experiencing vulnerability and/or disadvantage</b> | 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 Torres Strait Islander, having a culturally and linguistically diverse background; having a young or sole parent, or a parent with a disability. |
| <b>Enrolment</b>  | An enrolment occurs when the provider has an arrangement with an individual or organisation to provide care to a child and the provider submits an enrolment notice in the Child Care Subsidy System. It is a requirement under Family Assistance Law for all children who attend childcare (or have an arrangement for care) to have an enrolment notice regardless of their Child Care Subsidy eligibility status.  |
| <b>ESK (Early Start Kindergarten)</b>                                   | <p>Early Start Kindergarten grants enable families to attend 15 hours of funded kindergarten each week.</p> <p>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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• from a refugee or asylum seeker background, or</li> <li>• Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, or</li> <li>• known to child protection</li> </ul>   |

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| <b>Kindergarten Inclusion Support (KIS)</b> | The Kindergarten Inclusion Support (KIS) program provides capacity building support to Victorian funded kindergarten programs so they can respond to the individual abilities, interests, and needs of children with a disability, developmental delay, or complex medical needs.   |
| <b>Orientation</b>                          | Process to support the child's transition to the service, whereby families spend time at the service with the child a few times before leaving the child on their own. The time required for orientation and settling in will vary for each child and their family.   |
| <b>Pre-prep</b>                             | <p>From 2025, Four-Year-Old Kindergarten will gradually transition to Pre-Prep, with programs across Victoria increasing from 15 to 30 hours each week.</p> <p>In 2026, Pre-Prep will be available statewide for Victorian children who meet certain eligibility criteria.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander</li> <li>• from a refugee or asylum seeker background</li> <li>• who have had contact with Child Protection</li> </ul> |
| <b>Priority of Access (PoA)</b>             | The Priority of Access (PoA) criteria support kindergarten services to prioritise children for enrolment when there are more applications than places available.  |

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