



# Fact sheet for parents and carers

## Why is kindergarten important?

Kindergarten is an important step for children, providing a safe and happy environment to learn skills they will build on throughout life. Kindergarten programs are designed to improve children's development in the following key areas: social skills, self-awareness and respect for others, emotional skills, language literacy and numeracy skills, a joy for learning, and exposure to new ideas. For more information about the benefits of kindergarten, visit [education.vic.gov.au](http://education.vic.gov.au)

## Where can children attend kindergarten in Ballarat?

Kindergarten programs in the City of Ballarat operate in a variety of different models including Early Years Management providers (organisations that manage a number of kindergarten services), City of Ballarat-managed and private long day care centres as well as some independent schools. For a full list of kindergarten programs operating in the municipality, view the Kindergarten Provider List on the City of Ballarat website [ballarat.vic.gov.au](http://ballarat.vic.gov.au)

As well as reading this fact sheet, parents/guardians are encouraged to contact one or more kindergartens to make an appointment to visit or attend a Kindergarten Open Day.

## At what age do children go to kindergarten?

- In Victoria, kindergarten is typically the two years before school entry. Children are eligible to attend a funded, four-year-old kindergarten program for up to 15 hours per week if they turn four by 30 April in the year they will attend.
- In 2022, children are eligible to attend a funded, three-year-old kindergarten program for up to 5 hours per week if they turn three by 30 April in the year they will attend\*. This will extend to 15 hours per week by 2029.

*\* Kindergartens are required to have a different ratio of staff to children, depending on their ages. Some kindergartens might not have the necessary number of staff to accommodate two-year-olds and will require children to turn three before they attend kindergarten. You should still register if your child turns three by 30 April and you want them to start kindergarten that year as the service will hold your child's place until they are old enough to attend.*

## What is Early Start Kindergarten and who can attend?

Early Start Kindergarten (ESK) is free or low-cost kindergarten that enables eligible three-year-old children to access a funded four-year-old kindergarten program delivered by a qualified early childhood teacher, two years prior to commencing school. A child is eligible for ESK if they are aged three by 30 April in the year they will be attending a kindergarten program, and:

- the child is Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander; and/or
- the family has had contact with Child Protection (or been referred to ChildFIRST); and/or
- or the family is of refugee or asylum seeker background.

For more information, visit [www.education.vic.gov.au/parents/child-care-kindergarten/](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/parents/child-care-kindergarten/)

## Can a family delay or defer a child's start from a funded kindergarten program?

Parents/guardians need to make an informed choice about which year a child will commence school and therefore which year the child will attend a funded kindergarten program. Children are expected to complete a full year of four-year-old kindergarten in the year they enrol and begin attending kindergarten.

## Can a child be eligible for a second year of funded kindergarten?

An early childhood teacher can declare a child is eligible to receive a second year of funded four-year-old\* kindergarten if:

- The child is observed as having delays in at least two outcome areas of learning and development detailed in the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework, and
- There is evidence to suggest the child will achieve better outcomes if he/she attends a second year of four-year-old kindergarten to strengthen the learning and development of skills in these areas and better facilitate transition to school the following year.

*\*children can not receive a second year of funded three-year-old kindergarten.*

## What is the cost of kindergarten?

Three-year-old and Four-year-old kindergarten are partially funded by the Victorian Government. This funding is paid directly to the kindergarten.

Kindergarten fees are set by the provider with costs varied across programs. For example, some long day care programs offer sessional kindergarten and others charge long day care fees. For specific costs, contact the provider directly.

## Is there assistance to pay kindergarten fees?

The State Government provides a kindergarten fee subsidy to kindergartens towards reducing fees for eligible families. The kindergarten fee subsidy allows children to access three-year-old and four-year-old kindergarten for free or at low cost. A child is eligible in any of the following circumstances:

- if the child identifies as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander
- if the child is identified on their birth certificate as being a multiple birth child (triplets or more)
- if the child holds or has a parent or guardian who holds a:
  - Health Care Card
  - Pensioner Concession Card
  - Department of Veterans Affairs Card
  - Refugee or Humanitarian Visa.

## What is No Jab, No Play?

Under the 'No Jab, No Play' legislation, before a child can commence kindergarten it is the responsibility of that kindergarten/early childhood service to obtain evidence, in the form of an immunisation statement, that the child:

- is fully vaccinated for their age, or
- is on a recognised catch-up schedule if they are behind with their vaccinations, or
- has a medical reason not to be vaccinated.

For more information, visit [www2.health.vic.gov.au](http://www2.health.vic.gov.au)

## What happens if a child is not fully vaccinated for their age when they are about to commence kindergarten?

Under the 'No Jab, No Play' law, if a child's immunisation record is not up-to-date, enrolment cannot be confirmed and the child cannot attend kindergarten.

*NOTE: For vulnerable and disadvantaged families, where a child's immunisation is not up-to-date or the appropriate documentation has not been provided, the child may be able to be enrolled under the 'No Jab, No Play' grace period provisions.*

## Central Kindergarten Registration Scheme

### What is the City of Ballarat Central Kindergarten Registration Scheme?

The City of Ballarat's Central Kindergarten Registration (CKR) Scheme is an initiative to ensure the whole community has access to a fair, equitable and timely system for processing kindergarten registrations. Local families may submit a single registration form with preferences to many participating kindergartens in Ballarat.

### At what age can a child be registered using the CKR Scheme?

Registration forms for a child to attend a kindergarten service will be accepted from the beginning of the year prior to which a child will attend three-year-old kindergarten/ESK or two years prior to attending a four-year-old.

Date of Birth	Comments	2021	2022	2023	2024
21 December 2017 to 30 April 2018	Children can start school in 2023 or 2024	Three-year-old kinder/ESK	Three-year-old kinder	Four-year-old kinder	Prep
			Four-year-old kinder/ESK	Prep	Grade 1
1 May 2018 to 20 December 2018	Children will start school in 2025		Three-year-old kinder/ESK	Four-year-old kinder	Prep
21 December 2018 to 30 April 2019	Children can start school in 2024 or 2025		Three-year-old kinder/ESK	Three-year-old kinder	Four-year-old kinder
				Four-year-old kinder/ESK	Prep
1 May 2019 to 20 Dec 2019	Children will start school in 2026			Three-year-old kinder/ESK	Four-year-old kinder

*Note: Children who are eligible for ESK can receive 15 hours of funded kindergarten in a 4-year-old program in the year they are eligible for 3-year-old kindergarten.*

## How does the CKR process work?

Kindergarten registration applications can be completed online. If you require support please contact the City of Ballarat Central Kindergarten Registration officer on 5320 5720.

- To register online, visit <https://kinder.ballarat.vic.gov.au>

## When is the closing date for registrations?

Registrations can be submitted any time up to two years before your child attends four-year-old kindergarten, or the year before they attend three-year-old kindergarten.

We recommend completing your application before June 30 of the year before your child attends kindergarten.

Registration forms will be received until June 30 of the year before a child attends kindergarten. Applications will be received and processed after this date, however, it is advised a parent/guardian contacts the Central Kindergarten Registration officer on 5320 5720 to discuss further.

## How are kindergarten offers made?

Offers are made according to the selection criteria below. Parents/guardians will be notified of first round offers in August the year before a child is due to attend kindergarten.

For further details refer to the City of Ballarat Central Kindergarten Registration Policy, which can be found at [ballarat.vic.gov.au](http://ballarat.vic.gov.au) on the Kindergarten page.

### 1. First priority given to:

- Children eligible for ESK
- 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 to fully participate in the kindergarten program, require a combination of services which are individually planned, have an identified specific disability or developmental delay.

2. Other applications will be allocated offers based on the date of receipt of the Registration form.

### TIMELINES

First round letter offer	Beginning of August
Acceptance of offer due	Mid-August (two weeks after offer)
Second round letter offer	Beginning of September
Acceptance of offer due	Mid-September (two weeks after offer)
Subsequent offers	As vacancies become available

**For further information, contact the City of Ballarat Central Kindergarten Registration officer on 5320 5720.**