



City of Ballarat

KINDERGARTEN



Fact Sheet for service providers updated January 2020



Kindergarten eligibility

At what age do children go to kindergarten?

In Victoria, kindergarten is the year before school entry and is often referred to as four-year-old kindergarten. Children are eligible to attend a funded, four-year-old kindergarten program for up to 15 hours per week (or 600 hours per year) if the child is four-years-old by 30 April in the year they will attend a kindergarten program. Many kindergartens also offer programs for three-year-old children.

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 kindergarten program for up to 15 hours per week (or 600 hours per year), delivered by a qualified early childhood teacher, two years prior to commencing school.

A child is eligible for ESK if they are three years old by 30 April in the year they will be attending a kindergarten program, and:

- the child is Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, or
- the family has had contact with Child Protection (or been referred to ChildFIRST).

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

Families need to make an informed choice about which year they would like their child to commence school, and therefore which year their child will attend a funded kindergarten program.

Services should advise families with children born between 1 January and 30 April to choose carefully. Children are expected to complete a full year of kindergarten in the year they enrol and begin attending kindergarten as, with the exception of families eligible for ESK, they are only funded for one year of four-year-old kindergarten.

However, there may be some circumstances where a child has commenced kindergarten and, following consultation between the child's family and teacher, and in line with funding eligibility, the decision is made to defer enrolment to the following year.

NOTE: This must occur during the early stages of Term 1 to be eligible for DET funding in the following year.



Kindergarten fees and subsidies

What is the cost of kindergarten?

Four-year-old kindergarten is partially funded by the State Government. This funding is paid directly to the kindergarten. Three-year-old kindergarten programs do not receive government funding and the full cost is covered by parent fees.

Kindergarten fees are set by the provider with cost 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 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 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, any of the following:
 - Commonwealth Health Care Card
 - Commonwealth Pensioner Concession Card
 - Department of Veterans Affairs Card
 - Humanitarian or Refugee Visa.

Exclusions and exceptions: Not available for long day care services in receipt of Commonwealth Childcare Benefit

The Ballarat Central Kindergarten Registration Scheme

What is the City of Ballarat Central Kindergarten Registration Scheme?

The Central Kindergarten Registration (CKR) scheme is a centralised system, administered by the City of Ballarat, to allocate kindergarten places on behalf of participating kindergarten services. The CKR scheme was established to ensure access to a fair, equitable and timely system for kindergarten enrolments for the general population, as well as focusing on priority of access for vulnerable families.

Do all kindergartens participate in the CKR Scheme?

Currently, 35 local kindergartens participate in the Central Kindergarten Registration Scheme. A Kindergarten Provider List is available at the City of Ballarat website: ballarat.vic.gov.au

When can a child be registered for kindergarten?

Application for 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 program.



Date of Birth	2020	2021	2022	2023
1 May 2015 to 30 April 2016	4-year-old kindergarten			
1 May 2016 to 30 April 2017	3-year-old kinder / ESK	4-year-old kindergarten		
1 May 2017 to 30 April 2018	Application for Registration accepted from 1 January	3-year-old kinder / ESK	4-year-old kindergarten	
1 May 2018 to 30 April 2019		Application for Registration accepted from 1 January	3-year-old kinder / ESK	4-year-old kindergarten
1 May 2019 to 30 April 2020			Application for Registration accepted from 1 January	3-year-old kinder / ESK

How does the City of Ballarat support vulnerable families to enrol in the Centralised Kindergarten Registration Scheme?

The CKR process prioritises vulnerable families to ensure, where possible, they receive their first preference for kindergarten.

For four-year-old kindergarten, first priority is given to:

- 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.

For three-year-old kindergarten first priority is given to:

- Children eligible for ESK
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

The quickest way to complete the enrolment process is online:

1. Visit <https://kinder.ballarat.vic.gov.au>
2. Fill in the child's details and the parent/guardian details
3. Nominate the preferred kindergarten
4. Click on submit.

Alternatively, you can complete the registration form in hard copy.

Children in priority categories (as described above) will receive written confirmation of a kindergarten place according to their preference. This bypasses completing a Kindergarten Placement Offer form, a step required by families that have not been given first priority.



When is the closing date for registration?

All families are encouraged to complete kindergarten registration application forms by 30 June in the year before a child attends kindergarten. Service providers are encouraged to support vulnerable families to register by this date, too. This helps ensure that families are allocated their first kindergarten preference. Applications will be received and processed after 30 June, however applicants are advised to contact the City of Ballarat Central Kindergarten Registration Officer on 5320 5720.

Are there any other steps in helping families register for kindergarten?

Following the allocation of a kindergarten place, the final step in the process is for parents/guardians to complete the necessary enrolment paperwork provided by the service where the child will attend kindergarten.

Under the new 'No Jab, No Play' legislation, the kindergarten/early childhood service must obtain evidence, in the form of an immunisation statement, that the child:

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

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

Under the 'No Jab, No Play' legislation, a vulnerable and disadvantaged family can enrol a child in a kindergarten program under a grace period of 16 weeks, without having provided proof of up-to-date immunisation. The grace period provisions allow a family to continue to access early childhood education and care services while receiving information and assistance to complete their child's immunisation requirements and to obtain the necessary immunisation documentation.

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

