

ENROLMENT AND ORIENTATION POLICY

Mandatory – Quality Area 6



PURPOSE

This policy outlines:

- the process to be followed when registering and enrolling a child at Highmount Preschool
- the criteria for enrolment at Highmount Preschool
- the basis on which places within the programs will be allocated
- procedures for the orientation of new families and children into Highmount Preschool
- processes to ensure compliance with legislative and DET funding requirements in relation to the enrolment of children in early childhood education and care services.
- Working collaboratively with the City of Monash Central Enrolment Scheme to ensure the best outcome for children and families

POLICY STATEMENT

1. VALUES

Highmount Preschool is committed to:

- equal access for all eligible children
- meeting the needs of the local community
- supporting families to meet the requirements for enrolment through the provision of information
- maintaining confidentiality in relation to all information provided for enrolment
- ensuring all families are welcomed and receive an effective orientation into the service.

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to the Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, early childhood teachers, educators, staff and parents/guardians who wish to enrol or have already enrolled their child at Highmount Preschool.

3. BACKGROUND AND LEGISLATION

Background

The *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011* 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, Approved Provider's must adhere to their eligibility and priority of access criteria (refer to *Definitions* and *Attachment 1*) policy in order to allocate the available places. The criteria used to determine the allocation of places takes account of the requirements set out in *The Kindergarten Guide* (refer to *Sources*), the 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. Services participating in central enrolment schemes are required to comply with the enrolment procedures of that scheme.

Childcare services providing approved childcare (refer to *Definitions*) must abide by the *Family Assistance Legislation Amendment (Jobs for families childcare package) Act 2017* (refer to *Legislation and standards*) and the Commonwealth Government's *Priority for allocating places in child care services* (refer to *Sources*).

Immunisations are an effective means of reducing the risk of vaccine preventable diseases. Early childhood education and care services which are regulated under the *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010* have legislative responsibilities under the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008* to only offer a confirmed place in their programs to children with acceptable immunisation documentation (refer to *Definitions*).

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)
- *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* (Vic)
- *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005* (Vic)
- *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cth)
- *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010*
- *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011*: Regulations 160, 161, 162, 168, 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
- *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008* (Vic)
- *Public Health and Wellbeing Amendment (No Jab, No Play) Regulations 2015* (Vic)
- *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 – Federal Register of Legislation: <https://www.legislation.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.

Acceptable immunisation documentation: documentation as defined by the *Immunisation Enrolment Toolkit for early childhood education and care services* as acceptable evidence that a child is fully vaccinated for their age, or is on a recognised catch-up schedule if their child has fallen behind their vaccinations; or has a medical reason not to be vaccinated; or has been assessed as being eligible for a 16 week grace period.

Approved childcare: Approved childcare services are services that have Australian Government approved to receive Child Care Subsidy (refer to *Definitions*) on behalf of eligible parents. Approved childcare includes centre based day care, including long day care and occasional care, family day care, outside school hours care and in-home care.

Authorised nominee: (In relation to this policy) is a 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. Each service will need to consider a risk assessment on an individual basis to determine if a person under the age of 18 is able to be an authorised nominee and, if so, what constitutes the minimum acceptable age at that service.

Child Care Subsidy (CCS): A Commonwealth Government means tested subsidy to assist eligible families with the cost of childcare. Payments are paid directly to approved childcare providers. Further information can be found at: <https://www.education.gov.au/child-care-subsidy-0>

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 is officially withdrawn from a service prior to the April data collection. DET considers that this child has not accessed a year of funded kindergarten and is therefore eligible for DET funding in the following year.

Eligible child: A child attending an early childhood education and care service as described in the *Immunisation enrolment toolkit for early childhood education and care services* or a child in a kindergarten program who meets the requirements of both *The Kindergarten Guide* and the *Immunisation enrolment toolkit for early childhood education and care services*.

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 the service.

Enrolment application form: A form to apply for a place at the service (see *Attachment 3: Sample Enrolment Application Form*) – **NOT APPLICABLE**

Enrolment form: A form that collects contact details, and personal and medical information from parents/guardians about their child. The information on this form is placed on the child's enrolment record (see below) and is kept confidential by the service.

Enrolment record: The collection of documents which contains information on each child as required under the National Regulations (Regulations 160, 161, 162) including the enrolment form; details of any court orders; and immunisation documentation as specified in the *Immunisation Enrolment Toolkit for early childhood education and care services*. Enrolment records are stored securely in the service due to their confidential nature.

Fee: A charge for a place within a program at the service.

Priority of access: in instances where more eligible children apply for a place at a service than there are places available, the service must allocate spaces using the criteria outlined in *The Kindergarten Guide* (refer to *Sources*), or if in receipt of the CCS, comply with the Commonwealth Government's policy for allocating places.

5. SOURCES AND RELATED POLICIES

Sources

- Australian Childhood Immunisation Register: www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/services/medicare/australian-childhood-immunisation-register
- Child Care Benefit (Eligibility of Child Care Services for Approval and Continued Approval) Determination 2000: www.legislation.gov.au/Series/F2006B01541
- *Guide to the Education and Care Services National Law and the Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011*: www.acecqa.gov.au/
- *Guide to the National Quality Standard*: www.acecqa.gov.au/
- *Priority for allocating places in child care services*: <http://education.gov.au/priority-allocating-places>

- *The Kindergarten Guide (Department of Education and Training):* www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/providers/funding/Pages/kinderfundingcriteria.aspx
- *Immunisation enrolment toolkit for early childhood education and care services 2015:* www2.health.vic.gov.au/about/publications/policiesandguidelines/immunisation-enrolment-toolkit
- Victorian Department of Health: www.health.vic.gov.au/immunisation

Service policies

- *Acceptance and Refusal of Authorisations Policy*
- *Complaints and Grievances Policy*
- *Dealing with Infectious Disease Policy*
- *Fees Policy*
- *Inclusion and Equity Policy*
- *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy*

PROCEDURES

The Approved Provider is responsible for:

- determining the criteria for priority of access to programs at Highmount Preschool, based on funding requirements and the service's philosophy (refer also to Attachment 2 – Eligibility and priority of access criteria)
- considering any barriers to access that may exist, developing procedures that ensure all eligible families are aware of, and are able to access, an early childhood program
- 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 (refer also to Attachment 1 – General enrolment procedures)
- providing opportunities (in consultation with the Nominated Supervisor and educators) for interested families to attend the service during operational hours to observe the program and become familiar with the service prior to their child commencing in the program
- providing parents/guardians with information about the requirements of the law for enrolment, locating and accessing immunisation services and obtaining acceptable immunisation documentation required for enrolment
- ensuring parents/guardians are only offered a tentative place until the child's immunisation documentation is assessed as being acceptable
- assessing the child's immunisation documentation as defined by the *Immunisation Enrolment Toolkit for early childhood education and care services* **prior to enrolment** to determine if the child's vaccination status complies with requirements or whether the child is eligible for the 16-week grace period
- ensuring that only children who have acceptable immunisation documentation have a confirmed place in the program
- advising parents/guardians who do not have acceptable immunisation documentation that their children are not able to attend the service and referring them to immunisation services (see Attachment 3 – Letter for parents/guardians without acceptable immunisation documentation)
- taking reasonable steps to obtain acceptable immunisation documentation from a parent/guardian of a child enrolled under a grace period within the 16 weeks from when the child begins attending (Note: the child can continue to attend the service if acceptable immunisation documentation is not obtained).
- ensuring that the enrolment form (refer to *Definitions*) complies with the requirements of Regulations 160, 161, 162 and that it effectively meets the management requirements of the service
- 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 DET 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 the service can enter the service 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 Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor or educators under the Law (Regulation 157).

The Nominated Supervisor and early childhood teachers are responsible for:

- reviewing enrolment applications to identify children with additional needs (refer to *Definitions* and 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
- 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 the service, when required
- assisting parents/guardians to develop and maintain a routine for saying goodbye to their child
- sharing information with parents/guardians regarding their child's progress with regard to settling into the service
- discussing support services for children with parents/guardians, where required.

All 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
- providing parents/guardians with information about the requirements of the law for enrolment, locating and accessing immunisation services and obtaining acceptable immunisation documentation required for enrolment
- developing strategies to assist new families to:
 - feel welcomed into the service
 - 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
- providing comfort and reassurance to children who are showing signs of distress when separating from family members
- complying with the service'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 the enrolment application form and the enrolment form prior to their child's commencement at the service and providing acceptable immunisation documentation of their child's immunisation status
- where a child is on an immunisation catch-up schedule, ensuring that the child's immunisations are updated in line with the schedule and providing acceptable immunisation documentation to the service
- ensuring that all other required information is provided to the service
- updating information by notifying the service 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:

- 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 parents/guardians at least 14 days before making any changes to this policy or its procedures.

ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1: Eligibility and priority of access criteria
- Attachment 2: General enrolment procedures
- Attachment 3: Letter for parents/guardians without acceptable immunisation documentation

AUTHORISATION

This policy was adopted by the Approved Provider of Highmount Preschool Association on OCTOBER 2020.

REVIEW FREQUENCY: ANNUALLY OR AS REQUIRED

ATTACHMENT 1

Eligibility and priority of access criteria

1. Eligibility and priority of access criteria for the funded kindergarten program

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

- children who have been granted approval to receive funding for a second year of kindergarten in accordance with *The Kindergarten Guide* available at: www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/providers/funding/Pages/kinderfundingcriteria.aspx
- children who were eligible to attend in the previous year, but:
 - deferred
 - withdrew from the service prior to the April data collection
- 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 DET (refer to *The Kindergarten Guide*, available at: <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/providers/funding/Pages/default.aspx>)
- 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 DET, 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 DET. 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 DET 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/childhood/providers/funding/Pages/kinderfundingcriteria.aspx.

When demand exceeds availability, the Approved Provider will refer to the service's values, philosophy and *Inclusion and Equity Policy* to determine the priority of access. This will include:

- children who have received funding for a second year of kindergarten
- children who were eligible to attend in the previous year but deferred or withdrew from the service prior to the April data collection.
- priority of access criteria as outlined in *The Kindergarten Guide* available at: www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/providers/funding/Pages/kinderfundingcriteria.aspx

Other considerations may include date of application, siblings already enrolled at the service, attendance in the three-year-old program and local community zoning.

If participating in a central enrolment scheme, the priority of access for that scheme will be implemented. Childcare services providing approved childcare (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 childcare services* (refer to *Sources*).

2. Eligibility and access criteria for the three-year-old program

The Victorian Government does not fund three-year-old kindergarten. Exemptions apply if children are eligible for the Early Start Kindergarten Grant.

Children are eligible for attendance in the three-year-old program provided they have turned three prior to 30th April in the year of attendance.

A child must be 3 years of age before they can commence the program. Families with a child not yet 3 years old, who wish to hold a place in 3-year-old group until the child's birthday, are required to pay the full-term fees until such time as the child turns 3 and can attend the program. *Please refer to the Fee Policy.*

Children will only be able to attend a second year of three-year-old kindergarten in exceptional circumstances (after consideration by the Approved Provider) or when all eligible children on the waiting list have been offered a place.

A second year of three-year-old kindergarten will **not be guaranteed** and will only be granted to a child observed to display delays in key areas of learning and development following careful consultation and assessment between the educators and the parents.

The following criteria will apply to determine the priority of access into the 3-year-old program, taking into account the service's values, philosophy and Inclusion and Equity Policy;

- Children residing within the City of Monash or children of ratepayers of the City of Monash;
- Children recommended by an educator for an additional year in the three-year-old program;
- Sibling attended at the service;
- Closest proximity to the kinder (in a straight line - "as the crow flies")
- Other special circumstances considered by the Committee of Management
- Children of non-City of Monash residents or ratepayers

If places are still available, offers will then be made to children on the waiting list whose applications were received after 30 June in the preceding year. These places will be offered in the order that their Application for Enrolment form was received by Council, until all places are filled.

ATTACHMENT 2

General enrolment procedures for three-year-old and four-year-old programs

1. Application for a place

- In accordance with the Central Enrolment Scheme, enrolment applications will be accepted by the City of Monash any time after the child has turned 18 months of age.
- A separate application must be completed for each child, and for each proposed year of attendance at the service.
- The application for enrolment form is available from the City of Monash website. This form caters for enrolment in either or both three-year-old and four-year-old programs. Information on enrolment is provided by the service and Maternal Child Health Nurse.
- To facilitate the inclusion of all children into the program, the enrolment application form should clearly identify any additional or specific needs of the child (refer to *Inclusion and Equity Policy*).
- Parents/guardians of children applying for a second year of funded kindergarten or currently attending a three-year-old program must also submit an enrolment application form for the following year.
- A copy of the child's birth certificate and proof of address must be submitted with all applications.
- All enrolment application forms must be accompanied by an Enrolment application fee set by the City of Monash.
- Applications will be entered on the waiting list maintained by the City of Monash Preschool Support Officer using the eligibility and priority of access criteria.

2. Procedure for a late application for enrolment

Applications after the closing date will be considered after all applicants have been offered a place, in line with the eligibility and access criteria of the City of Monash under the Central Enrolment Scheme

3. Offer of places

- The City of Monash Preschool Support Officer will determine the timing of the first round offers. Offers usually begin in late July in the year preceding attendance.
- Places will be offered to eligible children who are on the waiting list in accordance with eligibility and selection criteria of the Council and Highmount Preschool. Places will be offered by way of email from the City of Monash to the applicant family.
- Tentative places will be offered in writing to applicants in accordance with the eligibility and priority of access criteria of the service making clear that confirmation of places is not final until immunisation documentation has been received, assessed and found acceptable.
- To secure a place, a payment of the Non-Refundable deposit is required, in accordance with Highmount Preschool's Fee Policy. This fee will be deducted from Term 1 fees.
- An enrolment form and other relevant information will be provided by Highmount Preschool to the parent/guardian after a confirmed place has been accepted and the non-refundable deposit has been paid.
- Highmount Preschool requires parents/guardians who have been offered a tentative place to submit at the Annual General Meeting (AGM):
 - Highmount Preschool Enrolment Form
 - Child Background Information Sheet
 - Funding Agreement (4YO ONLY)
 - Fee Payment Agreement Form
 - Immunisation History Statement
- Highmount Preschool requires parents/guardians who have been offered a tentative place to provide acceptable immunisation documentation for assessment two months prior to the child first attending the service in order that a confirmed place can be offered.

- The documentation is assessed as outlined in the *Immunisation enrolment toolkit for early childhood education and care services* by the person responsible for the enrolment process on behalf of the Approved Provider. The Key Dates work form in the *Immunisation enrolment toolkit for early childhood education and care services* is used to determine the date at which immunisations must be up to date. The toolkit also provides guidance on assessing immunisation documentation to determine if a child is up to date or qualifies for an exemption. The following documents and resources can be accessed from <https://www2.health.vic.gov.au>:
 - The *Immunisation enrolment toolkit for early childhood education and care services* (search 'Immunisation enrolment toolkit')
 - The Key Dates work form (search 'Key Dates work form')
 - Hard copies of the immunisation resources (search 'immunisation resources order form')
- The acceptable outcomes of the assessment for offering a confirmed place are:
 - That the next due vaccine for the child on the ACIR Immunisation History Statement or the Immunisation Status certificate is within the acceptable timeframe for an enrolment, or;
 - That the child is on a recognised catch-up schedule if they have fallen behind with their vaccinations, or;
 - That the child has a medical reason not to be vaccinated, or,
 - That the child has been assessed by Highmount Preschool as being eligible for a 16 week grace period
- Parents/guardians who do not have acceptable immunisation documentation cannot be offered a place and are referred to Australian Childhood Immunisation Register or to an immunisation provider (refer to Appendix 4 – Letter for parents/guardians who do not have acceptable immunisation documentation).
- Offer of places in the three-year-old program and the funded kindergarten program will be made at the same time.
- Parents/guardians who do not wish to accept the offer of a tentative or confirmed place, or intend to withdraw their enrolment, are requested to notify the Approved Provider, or the person responsible for managing the enrolment process at the service, in writing as soon as possible.
- Each family will receive an information package at the AGM. This information package will include the child's group details, orientation details and session times for the first term.
- Access to enrolment information will be restricted to the Enrolment Officer, the Administration Officer, the educators, the President, the Vice-President, the Secretary, the Treasurer unless otherwise specified by the Committee.

Note: Places will not be allocated to children until any outstanding fees 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. Declining the Offer of a Place

Parents/guardians who do not wish to accept the offer of a tentative or confirmed place, or intend to withdraw their enrolment, are requested to notify the Enrolment Officer by telephone, mail or e-mail before the due date on the letter of offer.

Any family that does not respond to their Letter of Offer by the due date stated in the letter, will be removed from the waiting list. Any such family can contact Highmount Preschool and reaffirm their interest in a place. If this occurs, they will be placed back on the waiting list by order of their original order of offer. There is no guarantee that such families will be offered another place as this will depend on the number of places still vacant.

5. Withdrawal of Place/Non-Attendance

Where an offer of a place has been made and accepted, but the child subsequently fails to attend at the service, the following process will apply:

- the Enrolment Officer will attempt to contact the applicant to discuss non-attendance;
- if, after 14 days following non-attendance and non-communication from the applicant, the Enrolment Officer will formally notify the applicant that their place at the service has been withdrawn and their place will be offered to the next applicant on the waiting list;
- Any Deposit paid by the applicant is non-refundable;
- The Enrolment Officer will offer the place to the next applicant on the waiting list.

6. Allocation within groups

Allocation to groups will occur at the time of offer of a kindergarten place. Parents will be invited to login into the City of Monash Central Enrolment Scheme Parent Portal and nominate their group preference. The City of Monash Central Enrolment Scheme will allocate group preferences based on the weighting a family has been given by the Priority of Access criteria. This is the same criteria currently used for allocations.

ATTACHMENT 3

Letter for parents/guardians without acceptable immunisation documentation

[Service Name]

[Address]

[Insert date]

Dear [insert name]

Re: Enrolment at [Service Name] for [insert year]

I am contacting you regarding your tentative place for [insert child's name] at [Service Name] in the [insert 3 year old or 4 year old program] in [insert year].

Under the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008* early childhood education and care services cannot enrol a child unless the parent/guardian has provided acceptable immunisation documentation.

Acceptable immunisation documentation includes evidence that your child:

- is fully vaccinated for their age
- is on a recognised catch-up schedule
- has a medical reason not to be vaccinated
- has been assessed by our service as being eligible for a 16-week grace period.

As we have not received acceptable immunisation documentation for [insert name of child] by the due date, we are unable to confirm a place at our service for [insert year] and your child's name has been removed from our list.

Immunisation programs are effective in reducing the risk of vaccine preventable diseases. Immunisation from an early age helps protect your child against serious childhood infections. Further information about immunisations for your child is available from:

- your doctor
- [insert details of local government immunisation service]
- National Immunisation Information Line Tel. 1800 671 811
- Australian Childhood Immunisation Register Tel 1800 653 809
- Better Health Channel website: <https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/no-jab-no-play>

Should you wish to re-apply for a place for [insert child's name], we are happy to accept a new enrolment application accompanied by acceptable immunisation documentation. The new application would be considered in line with [Service Name]'s Enrolment and Orientation policy.

Yours sincerely

[Insert name]

[Insert title]

[Service Name]