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ENROLMENT AND ORIENTATION POLICY

Mandatory – Quality Area 6

PURPOSE

This policy outlines:

- the criteria for enrolment at Bonbeach Pre-School
- the process to be followed when enrolling a child at Bonbeach Pre-School
- requirements in relation to No Jab No Play
- the basis on which places within the programs will be allocated
- procedures for the orientation of new families and children into Bonbeach Pre-School
- processes to ensure compliance with legislative and DET funding requirements in relation to the enrolment of children in early childhood education and care services.

POLICY STATEMENT

VALUES

Bonbeach Pre-School 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.
- supporting the Victorian Government's Free Kindergarten initiative

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 Bonbeach Pre-School.

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 by 2022 that all eligible children (refer to *Definitions*) will have access to two years 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*) 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 Funding Guide* (refer to *Sources*), the service's philosophy, values and beliefs, and the

provisions of the *Equal Opportunity Act 2010*. 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 child care (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* and *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011* have legislative responsibilities under the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008* to only offer a confirmed place in their programs to children with an Australian Immunisation Register (AIR) Immunisation History Statement (refer to *Definitions*). To meet the Child Care Subsidy immunisation requirements, children must be immunised according to the National Immunisation Program Schedule (refer to *Sources*) set out by the Australian Government Department of Health.

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, 170, 171, 177, 181, 183
- *Equal Opportunity Act 2010* (Vic)
- *Family Assistance Legislation Amendment (Jobs for Families Child Care Package) Act 2017*
- *National Quality Standard*, Quality Area 6: Collaborative Partnerships with Families and Communities
- *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008* (Vic)
- Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations 2019 (Vic)
- *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* (Cth)

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.

Australian Immunisation Register (AIR) Immunisation History Statement: is the only form of acceptable evidence of immunisation. The AIR is a national register administered by Medicare that records all vaccinations given in Australia, including to children. Parents/carers must provide a copy of their most recent AIR Immunisation History Statement, which shows that the child is up to date with their immunisations upon enrolment and when a child has received or been due to receive a vaccination while attending the service. In the case of medical contraindication, an authorised medical practitioner completes and signs a Medical Exemption Form, and supplies it to the AIR. In order to confirm enrolment, the Immunisation History Statement must show the child is up to date with the vaccines they can have, medical contraindication and indicate the due date for the next vaccinations the child is able to receive in the future if applicable.

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 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 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 (refer to *Definitions*). 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: as defined by the Kindergarten Funding Guide; a child that is at least four years old on April 30th in the year of enrolment; enrolled for at least 15 hours per week or 600 hours per year in a 4-year-old program; and not enrolled at a funded kindergarten program at another service. Or a child that is at least three years old on April 30th in the year of enrolment and is enrolled in a funded 3-year-old kindergarten program. Any child that is enrolled in an early childhood and education and care service must have an AIR Immunisation History Statement that indicate that the child is fully vaccinated for their age or who qualify for the 16-weeks grace period.

Enrolment application form: A form to apply for a place at 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 but not limited to parent details; emergency contacts; authorised nominee; details of any court orders; and health information including immunisation status. Enrolment records are stored securely in the service due to their confidential nature.

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*. This information is kept confidential by the service.

Fees: A charge for program hours over and above the 15 funded hours per week (600 per year) and/or wrap around care.

Grace period: allows specific categories of children of families experiencing vulnerability and disadvantage to enrol and attend the service without an AIR Immunisation History Statement (refer to *Definitions*) or when the statement is assessed as not being up-to-date. Services complete the grace period eligibility form with families during enrolment, and keep a copy with the child's enrolment record. The 16-week grace period starts on the first day of the child's attendance at the service. During the grace period, the service is required to take reasonable steps to obtain the AIR Immunisation History Statement (refer to *Definitions*) and to encourage families to access immunisation services.

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 Funding Guide* (see Attachment 1: Eligibility and priority of access criteria for a 3 and 4-year-old funder kindergarten program), or if in receipt of the CCS, comply with the Commonwealth Government's policy for allocating places (see Source).

Vulnerable Children/Families: 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 being vulnerable include: a child with a disability; living in a family with a low income, or one which is experiencing problems with housing, domestic violence, known to Child Protection, Out of Home Care, substance abuse, or mental health; 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 (adapted from the *Kindergarten Funding Guide*)

SOURCES AND RELATED POLICIES

Sources

- Australian Childhood Immunisation Register:
www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/services/medicare/australian-childhood-immunisation-register
- Australian Government Department of Health, *National Immunisation Program Schedule*:
<https://www.health.gov.au/health-topics/immunisation/immunisation-throughout-life/national-immunisation-program-schedule>
- Department of Health and Human Services, *Immunisation enrolment toolkit for early childhood education and care service*: <https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/immunisation/vaccination-children/no-jab-no-play/immunisation-enrolment-toolkit>
- *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 of Access Guidelines for child care service:
<https://www.dese.gov.au/uncategorised/resources/priority-access-guidelines-child-care-services>
- The Family Assistance Law as the basis for Commonwealth child care fee assistance including the Child Care Subsidy (CCS) and Additional Child Care Subsidy (ACCS): <https://www.education.gov.au/child-care-legislation>
- *The Kindergarten Funding Guide* (Department of Education and Training):
www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/providers/funding/Pages/kinderfundingcriteria.aspx
- 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 Bonbeach Pre-School, based on funding requirements and the service's philosophy (refer also to Eligibility and priority of access criteria in Attachments 1 and 2 – General enrolment procedures)
- 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 Attachments 1 and 2 – General enrolment procedures)
- 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 **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 meet the immunisation documentation requirements 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 5 – 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 and take in to account 'remote orientation' when necessary
- 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 in to 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 and 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
 - provide information for their child's eligibility/access to Bonbeach Primary School.
- 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 eligible for the 16 weeks grace period, ensuring that the child's immunisations are updated in line with the schedule and providing an up to date AIR Immunisation History Statement (refer to *Definitions*) 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.
- notify Bonbeach Preschool in writing if they wish to cancel their enrolment.

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 for 3 and 4-year-old funded kindergarten program
- Attachment 2: General enrolment procedures

AUTHORISATION

This policy was adopted by the Nominated Supervisor of Bonbeach Preschool on 1/07/2023.

REVIEW DATE: 1ST JULY 2024

ATTACHMENT 1

Eligibility and priority of access criteria for a funded kindergarten 3 and 4-year-old program

In instances where more eligible children apply for a place at a kindergarten service than there are places available, services must:

- prioritise children based on the DET criteria listed below
- work with other local kindergarten services and the regional Department office to ensure all eligible children have access to a kindergarten place.

These criteria must be used by the Approved Provider when prioritising enrolments. Funding guidance is available from the Department's regional offices if required.

Service providers should build flexibility into their enrolment processes that consider the circumstances of families from priority groups.

If participating in a central enrolment scheme, the priority of access for that scheme will be implemented.

Services must first apply the DET's Priority of Access criteria, and following this may apply locally developed criteria, as per examples below.

DET's Priority of Access criteria	Process that could be used to verify need(s)
Children at risk of abuse or neglect, including children in Out-of-Home Care	The child is: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• attending a three-year-old kindergarten program through Early Start Kindergarten* or Access to Early Learning, or is referred by:<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Child Protection– Child and family services (family services referral and support team, Child FIRST/integrated family services/Services Connect case worker)– Maternal and Child Health nurse, or– Out-of-Home Care provider
Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• As part of the enrolment process, service providers must respectfully ask families 'is your child Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander?' and record this information in KIM.
Children eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A child or parent holds a Commonwealth Health Care Card, Pensioner Concession Card, Veteran's Affairs Card, or• Multiple birth children (triplets, quadruplets).• Asylum seekers and refugee children
Children with additional needs, defined as children who: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• require additional assistance in order to fully participate in the kindergarten program• require a combination of services which are individually planned• have an identified specific disability or developmental delay	The child: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• is assessed as having delays in two or more areas and is declared eligible for a second funded year of kindergarten• holds a Child Disability Health Care Card• has previously been approved for Kindergarten Inclusion Support Package, or referred by:<ul style="list-style-type: none">– the National Disability Insurance Scheme– Early Childhood Intervention Service– Preschool Field Officer, or– Maternal and Child Health nurse.

Examples to consider for second priority
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • children who turn four years of age by 30 April in the year they will attend kindergarten; or • children who turn three 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 • children who have a sibling that has previously attended the same kindergarten as their first preference
Examples to consider for third priority
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • service for transient families e.g. RAAF, seasonal workers and tourism workers • date of application • local community zoning

Note: DET's Priority of Access (POA) guidelines are to ensure that kindergarten programs are available to those children who stand to benefit the most from attending early education. In mixed age groups, POA guideline will equally prioritise three and four-year-old children that are considered vulnerable. Where programs for three- and four-year old children are provided separately, the POA criteria will be applied separately for each age cohort.

* Early Start Kindergarten and Three-Year-Old Kindergarten
<p>During the roll-out of Three-Year-Old Kindergarten, Early Start Kindergarten (ESK) will continue to provide 15 hours a week of funded kindergarten for all eligible children up until 2029, when three-year-old children across the state will have access to 15 hours</p> <p>It is important to continue to enrol eligible children in ESK, even if funded Three-Year-Old Kindergarten is available at the service.</p> <p>This guarantees that children experiencing vulnerability will continue to be enrolled in the full 15 hours of kindergarten in all service settings, including long day care. It also ensures that service providers can continue to receive all funding entitlements.</p> <p>Service providers are expected to continue to provide the full 15 hours funded through Early Start Kindergarten, even in instances where three-year-old groups are being offered fewer than 15 hours.</p>

ATTACHMENT 2

General enrolment procedures – 3 and 4 year old funded kindergarten program

Eligibility and access criteria for the Bonbeach funded pre-school programs

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

Children turning 3 during the year of enrolment

Children can only commence the program when they have turned three. Families who choose to reserve a place in the 3 year old program until they turn three are required to attend once they turn 3.

1. Kingston City Council's Central Enrolment Scheme

Bonbeach Preschool's enrolment applications are managed through the Kindergarten Central Enrolment Scheme, administered by the City of Kingston. Children can apply for three or four year old pre-school from 1st May in the year prior to the child attending kindergarten, or as advertised by the City of Kingston.

- Application forms are completed online via the City of Kingston Website at www.kingston.vic.gov.au/Services-and-Support/Family-Youth-and-Children/Kindergarten-Preschool or by contacting the council for a printable form.
- Sessional Kindergarten Applications are prioritised based on the child's residential proximity and prior connection to the service of their first preference. Visit the City of Kingston website for information on their allocation process and enrolment policy at www.kingston.vic.gov.au/Services-and-Support/Family-Youth-and-Children/Kindergarten-Preschool.
- Parents/guardians will receive an allocated place from the City of Kingston and must complete and provide their acceptance to Bonbeach Pre-School within the required timeline set by the City of Kingston.
- Allocations made by the City of Kingston are not confirmed until enrolment and immunisation documentation has been received, assessed and found acceptable.

2. Acceptance of offer and enrolment

- Families accepting the City of Kingston allocation for a funded position at Bonbeach Pre-School will be provided with an Application form together with requirements of the law for enrolment, locating and accessing immunisation services, obtaining acceptable immunisation documentation and a copy of the Enrolment procedures from the *Enrolment and Orientation Policy*
- Parents/guardians will need to complete and upload the Application Form and provide a copy of the child's birth certificate, proof of address and AIR.
- The completed Application Form and documents should be uploaded together.
- Bonbeach Preschool requires parents/guardians who have been offered a tentative place to provide acceptable immunisation documentation for assessment no later than two months prior to the child first attending the service.
- Offers made for a place at the service are tentative and are not confirmed until all enrolment and immunisation documentation has been received, assessed and found acceptable.
- The Enrolment Officer advises the parent/guardian in writing whether a place is confirmed and the enrolment can proceed.
- 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 City of Kingston in writing as soon as possible.
- Relevant enrolment information will be provided by Bonbeach Preschool to the parent/guardian after a confirmed place has been accepted.
- Access to completed application forms will be restricted to the person responsible for the enrolment process, the Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor and educators at the service, unless otherwise specified by the Approved Provider.

3. Orientation

There is an orientation session provided for children and parent/guardians to attend. The sessions are scheduled for approximately one hour and are usually held in November and December. Families are asked to attend these orientation sessions as they are important in helping the preschool staff get to know each child and their family. They are also important in providing each child and their family with an experience of the

kinder and the range of activities that are offered. Families will be advised of orientation session times in their enrolment and orientation information.

4. Parent Information Evening

A Parent Information night is held every year for parents/guardians of children attending the following year. Families receive the Bonbeach Preschool parent information handbook via email and have previously filled in all enrolment forms prior to this session. Families attend a presentation about the preschool and have an opportunity to meet with teachers, peruse the preschool environment and ask any questions that they may have.