

ENROLMENT AND ORIENTATION POLICY

Mandatory – Quality Area 6

PURPOSE

This policy will outline:

- the criteria for enrolment at North Brighton Kindergarten
- the process to be followed when enrolling a child at North Brighton Kindergarten, and the basis on which places within the programs will be allocated
- procedures for the orientation of new families and children into North Brighton Kindergarten.

POLICY STATEMENT

1. VALUES

North Brighton Kindergarten is committed to:

- equal access for all children
- meeting the needs of the local community
- complying with DEECD funding requirements relating to the enrolment of children in government-funded kindergarten places
- complying with council requirements for central enrolment and with the conditions of our service agreement with council
- maintaining confidentiality in relation to all information provided on enrolment forms
- ensuring all families are welcomed and receive an effective orientation into the service.

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to the Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, Certified Supervisor, educators, staff and parents/guardians who wish to enrol or have already enrolled their child at North Brighton Kindergarten.

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, a priority system for access must be determined by the Approved Provider in order to allocate the available places. The criteria used to determine the allocation of places will vary from service to service, but is generally based on a 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. Criteria for access and inclusion are outlined in the *Victorian kindergarten policy, procedures and funding criteria* (refer to *Sources*). Services participating in central enrolment schemes are required to comply with the enrolment procedures of that scheme.

Childcare services providing approved care (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 child care services* (refer to *Sources*).

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), as amended 2011
- *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* (Vic), as amended 2011
- *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005* (Vic), as amended 2012
- *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cth)
- *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010*
- *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011*: Regulations 160, 161, 162, 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
- *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* (Cth)

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.

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, DEECD considers that this child has not accessed a year of funded kindergarten and is therefore eligible for DEECD funding in the following year.

Eligible child: A child who meets the criteria outlined in the *Victorian kindergarten policy, procedures and funding criteria*.

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 online application form: A form available online through the Bayside City Council website used to apply for a place at the service.

Enrolment form: A form that collects contact details, and personal and medical information from parents/guardians about their child. This is completed after a place has been offered by the service and accepted by the applicant. The information on this form is placed on the child's enrolment record (see below) and is kept confidential by the service.

Enrolment record: Contains information on each child, as required under the National Regulations, including contact details, names of authorised nominees (refer to *Definitions*), names of persons

authorised to consent to medical treatment or to authorise administration of medication, names of persons authorised to take the child outside the service, details of any court orders, personal and health information including specific healthcare needs, medical management plans and dietary restrictions etc. (Regulations 160, 161, 162). This information is kept confidential by the service.

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

5. SOURCES AND RELATED POLICIES

Sources

- *Child Care Benefit (Eligibility of Child Care Services for Approval and Continued Approval) Determination 2000*, included in the *Legislative Extracts*:
www.deewr.gov.au/EarlyChildhood/Programs/ChildCareforServices/Operation/Pages/InstructionSheets.aspx
- *Guide to the Education and Care Services National Law and the Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011*:
www.acecqa.gov.au/links-and-resources/national-quality-framework-resources/
- *Guide to the National Quality Standard*:
www.acecqa.gov.au/links-and-resources/national-quality-framework-resources/
- *Priority for allocating places in child care services*:
www.deewr.gov.au/Earlychildhood/Programs/ChildCareforServices/Operation/Pages/Priorityforallocatingplacesinchildcareservices.aspx
- *Victorian kindergarten policy, procedures and funding criteria*:
www.education.vic.gov.au/ecprofessionals/kindergarten/

Service policies

- *Acceptance and Refusal of Authorisations Policy*
- *Complaints and Grievances 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 North Brighton Kindergarten, based on funding requirements, council requirements and the service's philosophy
- developing procedures that ensure all eligible families are aware of, and are able to access, an early childhood program, and considering any barriers to access that may exist
- 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
- 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
- ensuring that enrolment forms (refer to *Definitions*) comply with the requirements of Regulations 160, 161, 162

- reviewing the enrolment form to determine its effectiveness in meeting the regulatory and 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 DEECD 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 person responsible for the enrolment process, the Enrolment Officer, is accountable for the following:

- advising people in regard to the online application process through Bayside City Council
- maintaining a waiting list
- collecting, and receipting enrolment fees where appropriate and ensuring they are received by banking officer
- offering places in line with this policy and criteria for priority access, and providing relevant paperwork to families in accordance with this policy
- providing a monthly report to the Approved Provider regarding the status of enrolments and any difficulties encountered
- storing completed enrolment application forms in a lockable file (refer to *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy*) as soon as is practicable
- complying with the *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy* of the service
- providing a summary of the *Enrolment and Orientation Policy* with all information accompanying enquiry handouts, and ensuring the full policy is available upon request.

The Nominated Supervisor, Certified Supervisor, Administration Officer and other 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
- reviewing enrolment applications to identify children with additional needs (refer to 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
- ensuring that enrolment forms are completed prior to the child's commencement at the service
- 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)
- 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
- discussing the individual child’s needs with parents/guardians and developing an orientation program to assist them to settle into the program
- discussing with parents/guardians strategies used for helping children to settle into the kindergarten program
- encouraging parents/guardians to 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
- providing comfort and reassurance to children who are showing signs of distress when separating from family members
- 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
- 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:

- complying with this *Enrolment and Orientation Policy*
- completing enrolment forms prior to their child’s commencement at the service
- ensuring that all 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: General enrolment procedures
- Attachment 2: Bayside City Council enrolment application form website link
- Attachment 3: Summary of enrolment and orientation policy
- Attachment 4: Allocation of confirmed children into session times
- Attachment 5: Offering vacant positions

AUTHORISATION

This policy was adopted by the Approved Provider of North Brighton Kindergarten on 1st September, 2014

REVIEW DATE: AUGUST 2015

ATTACHMENT 1

General enrolment procedures

1. Application for a place

- Online enrolment applications will be accepted via the Bayside City Council Central enrolment process commencing May 1 and concluding June 30 of each year after the child has turned the respective eligible age.
- Enrolment application must be performed online via the Bayside City Council website. ATTACHMENT 3 for a website link.
- A separate application form must be completed for each child, and for each proposed year of attendance at the service.
- To facilitate the inclusion of all children into the program, enrolment applications 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.
- All applications must be accompanied by an enrolment application fee specified by the Bayside City Council at the time of registering your enrolment. This fee is to cover administrative costs associated with the processing of a child's enrolment application and is not refundable.
- Completed enrolment application forms are to be forwarded to the person responsible for the enrolment process at Bayside City Council.
- Access to completed enrolment application forms will be restricted to the person responsible for the enrolment process, the Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, Administration Officer and educators at the service, unless otherwise specified by the Approved Provider.
- Applications will be entered on the waiting list using the eligibility and priority of access criteria.

2. Closing dates for enrolment applications

The closing dates for enrolment applications are:

- June 30, 2014 for children to attend the funded kindergarten program in 2015
- June 30, 2014 or children to attend the three-year-old program in 2015.

3. Procedure for a late application for enrolment

Applications received after the closing date will be considered after all other applicants have been offered a place, in line with the eligibility and priority of access criteria of North Brighton Kindergarten.

4. Allocation within groups

Where the service provides more than one funded kindergarten program or three-year-old program, places within the programs will be allocated by the service in line with the eligibility and priority of access criteria. Refer to ATTACHMENT 6 Allocation of confirmed children into session times.

5. Offer of places

- Places will be allocated to applicants in accordance with the eligibility and priority of access criteria of the service.
- Offer of places in the three-year-old program/s and the funded kindergarten program will be made at the same time.
- Applicants who are successful will be notified in writing of a confirmed place.

- Parents/guardians who do not wish to accept the offer of a 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.
- Second and third-round offers will be made 4-8 weeks after first-round offers.
- A non-refundable deposit of \$100 must be paid by cheque or credit card by the specified date outlined in the correspondence from North Brighton Kindergarten to hold the place for the following year.
- A copy of the child's birth certificate must be submitted to North Brighton Kindergarten with the acceptance of the offer of a place.
- An enrolment form and other relevant information will be provided when a place is offered.
- Annual fees are due in November and if not paid by the end of November the spot will be forfeited.

Note: Places will not be allocated to children until any substantial debt 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*). Families can also opt to pay per term in cases of financial hardship as agreed with the Treasurer.

6. 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 *Victorian kindergarten policy, procedures and funding criteria* (available at www.education.vic.gov.au/ecprofessionals/kindergarten/)
- children who were eligible to attend in the previous year but deferred
- 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 DEECD (refer to *Victorian kindergarten policy, procedures and funding criteria*, available at www.education.vic.gov.au/ecprofessionals/kindergarten/)
- 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 DEECD, 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 DEECD. 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 DEECD 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/ecsmanagement/careankinder/earlystart/
- North Brighton Kindergarten participates in the central enrolment scheme for Bayside City Council and the priority of access for that scheme will be implemented when there are more applications than places available. Should there still be a waiting list after the third round of council offers, the enrolment officer will refer to ATTACHMENT 5 Offering Vacant Positions.
- A child is eligible for a second year of funded kindergarten if the child is observed to have delays in at least two areas of learning development and the teaching staff believe a second year of kindergarten will help strengthen the development of skills in these areas and better facilitate transition to school.

- **IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT ELIGIBILITY FOR A SECOND YEAR OF FUNDED KINDERGARTEN**

Strict eligibility criteria apply to a second year of Kindergarten and children who are simply not ready for kindergarten or who are developmentally immature would not meet these criteria. In order to meet the criteria for a second funded year of kindergarten, the parents of the child and the educator must meet several times to discuss and complete the required forms. These forms include; the second year discussion form, a term 3 learning and development plan (which must also be evaluated and the declaration of eligibility for a second year of funded kindergarten.

The kindergarten Guide (2014) outlines the current requirements for applying for a second year of funded kindergarten. They are as follows:

- The early childhood teacher is responsible for determining a child's eligibility to receive a second year of funded kindergarten. The assessment for determining eligibility should factor in the teacher's ongoing observations over the time the teacher has spent with the child along with any more formal assessments that may have been undertaken and a declaration of eligibility for a second year of funded kindergarten is completed using the KIM system, the child is eligible to attend a second year of funded kindergarten.
- The early childhood teacher can declare that a child is eligible to receive a second year of funded kindergarten if:
 - The child is observed as having delays in a least two outcome areas of learning and development detailed in the Victorian 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 kindergarten to strengthen the learning and development of skills in these areas and better facilitate transition to school the following year.

Once an assessment of the child is undertaken and a declaration of eligibility for a second year of funded kindergarten is completed using the KIM system, the child is eligible to attend a second year of funded kindergarten.

7. Eligibility and access criteria for three-year-old children

Children are eligible for attendance in the three-year-old program provided they have turned three by January 31st of the kinder year.

ATTACHMENT 2

Bayside City Council – Enrolment Application Form

The following is the website link to the Bayside City Council Kindergarten Information area which includes a direct link to the Application Form

http://bayside.vic.gov.au/children_kindergarten.htm

The Bayside City Council Website has useful information about applying for kindergarten places in the Bayside area.

ATTACHMENT 3

SUMMARY OF ENROLMENT AND ORIENTATION POLICY

Enrolments for three and four year old groups are centralised through the local council (City of Bayside).

The enrolment period is between May 1 and June 30 in the year before the children attend preschool. Places are offered around August of the year prior to attendance. For further information on the enrolment process and the relevant forms please visit: www.bayside.vic.gov.au/children_kindergarten

Places are offered strictly in accordance with the enrolment waiting list maintained solely by the council. Once an offer is received from the council, the preference form is filled in and returned to the kindergarten. In the four-year-old program the choice of groups is on a first come first served basis. In situations where the make up of the class is considerably gender unbalanced, the enrolment officer, in consultation with the Nominated Supervisor of the Kindergarten reserve the right to allocate children appropriately.

Management of the Waiting List

- The Kindergarten will maintain the order of the waitlist provided to us by council.
- Once the waitlist has been exhausted the kindergarten will maintain its own waitlist.
- If there is more than one person on that waitlist we will follow the criteria as set by council. See Attachment 4.

ATTACHMENT 4

OFFERING VACANT POSITIONS

Once the Central Enrolment Process has been completed the priority by which a vacancy will be filled at North Brighton Kindergarten is as follows:

1. Bayside Residents that live within a 2-kilometre radius of the kinder
2. Bayside Residents that live outside a 2-kilometre radius of the kinder
3. Non-Bayside residents that live within a 2-kilometre radius of the kinder
4. Non-Bayside residents that live outside a 2-kilometre radius of the kinder.

If the situation arises that two or more applicants have the same priority, criteria in the following order will be taken into account.

1. Any children whose siblings have attended the kindergarten
2. If siblings attended the kinder, was a parent or parents on the committee
3. Any children where there are special family circumstances as determined by the enrolment officer, e.g. family illness where placement places less stress on the family, multiples etc.
4. Any remaining children in application date order.

If a family requests that their child only attend some of the sessions, not the full kinder program they will be put at the bottom of the waiting list regardless of the above criteria. This is to ensure that priority is given to those children whose families would like them to attend the full kinder program. Children who accept a place at the kindergarten and choose to not access all hours offered will still be required to pay full fees.

If a child on the waiting list accepts a position at another kinder, the enrolment officer has the discretion if necessary to remove that child from the waiting list at North Brighton Kindergarten.

If a child does not present at kinder for one week after their designated start date and after all reasonable attempts to get in contact with them with no contact made, their position can be declared vacant and can be offered to another child, at the discretion of the enrolment officer.

ATTACHMENT 5

ALLOCATION OF CONFIRMED CHILDREN INTO SESSION TIMES

Where possible North Brighton Kindergarten will allocate children into their preferred session times.

In situations where a child has been advised to defer or repeat kindergarten, then that child may be allocated into the most appropriate session time advised by the North Brighton Kindergarten teacher ie that child may stay with the same teacher in the following year.

In situations where the make up of the class is considerably gender unbalanced, the enrolment officer in consultation with the Director of the Kindergarten reserve the right to allocate children appropriately.

- Parents will be notified of the date on which group placements will be allocated by mail.
- On this date the enrolment officers will be available to accept parent's preferences for their child's session times.
- Allocation of groups will be made on the first come, first serve basis.
- If there is no particular group preference you are not required to attend the group allocation morning.