

## ATTACHMENT 1

### Fee information for families

#### Gray Court Pre-School 2021

##### 1. General information

The Department of Education and Training (DET) provides funding for each child enrolled and attending kindergarten in the year before school as a contribution toward the costs of providing the program. Services meet the balance of costs through charging fees and fundraising activities.

DET provides a Kindergarten Fee Subsidy (see below) that enables children from eligible families to attend a kindergarten program free of charge in the year before school. Families eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy may still be required to pay certain levies.

DET also provides funding to assist eligible three-year-old Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, and children known to Child Protection, to access kindergarten programs.

Gray Court Pre-School provides a range of support options to parents/guardians experiencing difficulty with payment of fees (see below).

##### 2. How fees are set

As part of the budget development process, the Committee of Management sets fees each year for the programs of the service, taking into consideration:

- the financial viability of the service
- the level of government funding provided for the program, including the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy
- the availability of other income sources, such as grants
- the fees charged by similar services in the area
- the capacity of parents/guardians to pay fees
- reasonable expenditure in meeting agreed program quality and standards
- requirements of *The Kindergarten Funding Guide* (Department of Education and Training) available from the DET website: [www.education.vic.gov.au](http://www.education.vic.gov.au)

The Committee of Management will review the fees and other charges each year. As a guide, the Committee of Management may increase fees by approximately 2% each year for the 4-year-old unfunded kindergarten program, however the fee amount may increase or decrease based on the above considerations.

Once fees are set for the year, they will only be reviewed in extraordinary circumstances, for example, if enrolments drop and the service is at risk of not being able to meet its expenses.

##### 3. Other charges

Other charges levied by Gray Court Pre-School are included on the Statement of Fees and Charges. These include:

- **Enrolment fee:** This payment covers administrative costs associated with the processing of an application and secures a child's place at the service. The enrolment fee is payable on acceptance of enrolment and is retained as part payment on term fees. **Families eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy (see below) are not required to pay the enrolment fee.** Families experiencing hardship should discuss any difficulties with the service.
- **Kindergarten Fee Deposit:** This is the first instalment of term fees, which serves as a deposit to secure a place that has been offered in a program at the service. The first instalment is payable by the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the year prior to the child's commencement in the program and is non-refundable.

- **Incursions/excursions levy:** This charge is required to cover the cost of incursions, excursions or special events that are included as part of the program and occur throughout the year where it is considered relevant to the service's program and the children's interests. Affordability and relevance are taken into consideration when decisions are made that require families to pay this charge.
- **Excursion/service event charge:** At times throughout the year an additional excursion(s) or event(s) may be arranged where it is considered relevant to the service's program and the children's interests. At this time any additional costs to families are taken into consideration before a decision is made (refer to Excursions and Service Events Policy).
- **Participation levy (refundable):** The participation of parents/guardians is encouraged by the service and can help to keep costs more affordable. As not all families are able to assist at the service, a refundable levy system has been introduced to replace some volunteering or fundraising activities. Payment will be refunded to parents/guardians on participation in specified activities, which may include volunteering for working bees, additional maintenance, open days, Committee positions, etc. Involvement in one such specified activity will result in a \$25 credit while involvement in two or more activities will result in a maximum credit of \$50. The levy is not intended to be a barrier to enrolment at Gray Court Pre-School and families experiencing difficulties should discuss this with the service.
- **Late collection charge:** The Committee of Management reserves the right to implement a late collection charge when parents/guardians are frequently late in collecting a child from the service. This charge is set at a level determined by the Committee of Management and is currently \$5 for every 10 minutes, or part thereof, from the conclusion of the child's session.

#### 4. Statement of fees and charges

A statement of fees and charges for the program will be provided to families prior to the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the year prior to the child's commencement in the program.

#### 5. Fundraising

Not all service costs are covered by DET per capita funding and the fees charged. Fundraising is undertaken to meet the balance and/or pay for additional items for the service. While participation in fundraising is voluntary, the support of every family is encouraged. Fundraising activities are also an opportunity for families and communities to come together.

#### 6. Subsidies

##### 6.1 Kindergarten Fee Subsidy (four-year-old programs only)

The Kindergarten Fee Subsidy is provided by DET and enables eligible children to attend 15 hours of kindergarten free of charge. Eligibility conditions may change from time-to-time and must be checked in the most recent edition of the *Kindergarten Funding Guide* (refer to *Sources*). Families eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy may still be required to pay certain levies.

Families may be eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy in the year before school if their child:

- is Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander; or
- holds, or has a parent/guardian who holds a Humanitarian or refugee Visa; or
- is a multiple birth child (triplets or more); or
- holds, or has a parent who holds a Commonwealth Health Care Card, Pensioner Concession Card or Veteran's Affairs Card.

Exclusions and exceptions: Not available for approved child care services in receipt of Commonwealth Child Care Subsidy.

Where a child is identified by a parent, carer or legal guardian as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, no verification is required.

In all other instances, supporting documentation should be sighted by the service on acceptance of a place or on commencement in the program, however where there are delays, such as in obtaining health care cards for children in out-of-home care, the delay should not provide a barrier to the child accessing the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy. Families are eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy for the full term in which their concession is valid. Contact the service for further information.

## **6.2 Early Start Kindergarten fee subsidy**

Three-year-old Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and children known to Child Protection are eligible to attend a funded early childhood program that is planned and delivered by a qualified early childhood teacher free of charge. The service receives funding for children who meet the eligibility criteria. Families eligible for the Early Start Kindergarten Fee Subsidy may still be required to pay certain levies. Contact the service for further information.

## **7. Payment of fees**

The Committee of Management will regularly review payment options and procedures to ensure that they are inclusive and sensitive to families' cultural and financial situations.

Fees will be invoiced to parents/guardians directly and must be paid by the date indicated on the invoice. Each invoice will be accompanied by payment instructions. The first term's fees must be received in full prior to the child commencing at the service. For children enrolled after the commencement of a term, a pro rata invoice will be issued and must be paid in full within 14 days of the child's commencement at the service. Receipts will be provided for all fee payments.

Parents/guardians experiencing difficulty in paying fees are requested to contact the Accounts Manager to arrange a suitable alternative payment plan. The *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy* of the service will be complied with at all times in relation to a family's financial/personal circumstances.

## **8. Unpaid fees**

### **Enrolment Fee**

- If the enrolment fee is not paid within 14 days of the offer of a place in the program, Gray Court Pre-School will contact the parent/guardian to remind them to make payment. If the enrolment fee remains unpaid, the offer of a place will be withdrawn and the vacant position will be offered to the first family on the wait list.

### **Kindergarten Fee Deposit (first fee instalment) 4-year-old program only**

- If the Kindergarten Fee Deposit (first instalment of fees) is not paid by the Annual General Meeting (AGM), Gray Court Pre-School will contact the parent/guardian to remind them to make payment. If the deposit remains unpaid, the enrolment will be withdrawn and the vacant position will be offered to the first family on the wait list. The enrolment fee paid upon acceptance of a place in the program is non-refundable.

### **Term fees**

If subsequent term fees (due Term 1, Term 2 and Term 3) for the 3-year-old or 4-year-old program are not paid by the due date, the following steps will be taken:

- an initial reminder email and/or SMS will be sent to the parent/guardian to request payment of outstanding fees
- if payment is not received within 14 days of the initial reminder email and/or SMS, a letter will be sent to parents/guardians with a specified payment date and will include information on a range of support options available for the family
- continued non-payment may result in a second and final letter notifying parents/guardians that the child's place at the service may be withdrawn unless payment is made or a payment plan is entered into within a specified period of time, usually within 14 days. This letter will also include information on a range of support options available for the family

- the Committee of Management will continue to offer support and will reserve the right to employ the services of a debt collector
- if a decision is made to withdraw the child's place at the service, the parents/guardians will be provided with 14 days' notice in writing
- no further enrolments of children from the parents/guardians will be accepted until all outstanding fees have been paid

### **9. Refund of fees**

If a family becomes eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy during a term, a full refund of the applicable term fees (and fee deposit, where appropriate) will be provided. Fees may still apply for programs offering more than the required minimum hours per week.

In any other case, fees are non-refundable (exceptional circumstances may apply – these are at the discretion of the Committee of Management). There will be no refund of fees in the following circumstances:

- a child's short-term illness
- public holidays
- family holiday during operational times
- closure of the service for one or more days when a qualified educator is absent and a qualified reliever is not available
- closure of the service for staff training days
- closure of the service due to extreme and unavoidable circumstances.

In addition, there will be no refund where a family chooses not to send their child to the program for the maximum number of hours for which they are enrolled.

### **10. Children turning three during the year of enrolment**

Children are eligible for attendance in the three-year-old program providing they turn three by 31<sup>st</sup> January of the year of commencement.

### **11. Support services**

Families experiencing financial hardship often require access to family support services. Information on these services may be available from the kindergarten service provider or alternatively families may contact the local council.

### **12. Notification of fee changes during the year**

Fees set for the year would only be reviewed in extraordinary circumstances, for example, if attendance rates fall below the budget 'break even' point. Parents/guardians will be notified one term in advance of any required fee increase and will be offered the option to request a payment plan.