

A photograph of a young child with curly hair, wearing a dark cap and a patterned sweater, sliding down a light green slide. The child has their arms raised and a joyful expression. The background shows a wooden play structure and a brick wall.

Kindergarten Information for families

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is kindergarten?

Kindergarten (also called preschool) is a program for young children delivered by a qualified early childhood teacher. Your child's learning and curiosity will be encouraged through experiences and activities, such as exploring the natural world, being exposed to new ideas and solving problems.

Early childhood educators develop and implement a play-based curriculum for children, taking into account their current knowledge, culture, abilities, ideas, interests and individual needs. The Victorian Early Learning Framework and the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia guides the program's development. Key early learning and development outcomes include:

1. Children have a strong sense of identity
2. Children are connected to and contribute to their world
3. Children have a strong sense of wellbeing
4. Children are confident and involved learners
5. Children are effective communicators

For more information about how your chosen kindergarten implements the approved learning frameworks, please discuss with your child's educators.

When should my child attend kindergarten?

All Victorian children are eligible for a state-funded year of kindergarten in the year before they are due to start school. To be eligible, your child must have turned four years of age by 30 April in the year attending kindergarten. A child cannot attend more than one Victorian Government-funded kindergarten program at the same time.

We recognise that all children develop at different rates and we encourage families to consider their child's needs and development before accessing their one year funded four-year-old kindergarten year.

Children's social and emotional development are vital for children to have a strong transition to school. We encourage families to think about their child's school starting age and when the best time to access kindergarten would be.

Can my child attend 2 years of 4 year old kindergarten?

Children meeting the criteria for a second year of Four-Year-Old Kindergarten (when a child shows delays in at least two key outcomes of learning and development) will be eligible to access one additional year of kindergarten prior to starting school. This decision is made in conjunction with your child's teacher.

What if my child needs another year of kindergarten?

If your child has been professionally diagnosed with additional needs or you have any concerns these need to be raised with the educators as soon as possible. Options for referral and support strategies can then be put in place. Early childhood educators work with families to support children with additional needs and provide advice about options, including access to a second year of kindergarten.

Applications for a second year of four-year-old kindergarten will be discussed and completed by your child's teacher. This is then approved by Department Education and Training (DET).

Can my child start kindergarten early?

If a child is less than four years of age by 30 April in the year they are to attend a funded kindergarten program, the parents/guardians must first request approval for early school entry for their child to attend school in the following year. Please note that children granted early entry to kindergarten are not eligible to apply for another year of funded kindergarten in the following year if the child does not attend school.

A copy of the written request for early school entry must accompany the child's kindergarten registration form. This must be sighted and attached to the child's application form prior to confirmation of enrolment. Further information regarding early entry to kindergarten is available at www.education.vic.gov.au

My child is turning 6 next year – are they still eligible for kindergarten?

Children who turn six at any time during the kindergarten year need to complete a form exempting them from attending school.

Families must obtain an approved exemption before the child starts kindergarten by submitting an exemption from school form to the Department of Education and Training (DET). This must be provided prior to confirming

enrolment. For further information

www.education.vic.gov.au

How many hours/days each week will my child be able to attend?

Children attend kindergarten for 15 hours a week, during school term. Sessions, days and times vary, depending on each kindergarten's structure.

How much does it cost?

Four Year Old Kindergarten is funded by state government funding and family fees. Fees are charged on a term-by-term basis in advance.

Funding is available for 15 hours for four year olds.

Families may be eligible for a kindergarten fee subsidy due to various reasons. Refer to the information pertaining to priority access groups at www.education.vic.gov.au/parents/child-care-kindergarten/Pages/how-much-child-care-costs.aspx

My child is Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. Do I have to pay for kindergarten?

No. Your child is eligible for the kindergarten fee subsidy if your child identifies as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. Surf Coast Shire will apply for the fee subsidy on your behalf and your child may attend up to 15 hours per week at no cost.

Is my child eligible for Early Start Kindergarten ?

Early Start Kindergarten provides free or low cost kindergarten to eligible three year old children where programs are offered by a qualified teacher. You may be offered a place in a three year old, four year old or a mixed age group.

Your child is eligible for Early Start Kindergarten if they are aged three by 30 April in the year they will be attending a kindergarten program, and:

- is from a refugee or asylum seeker background or
- Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, or
- known to child protection

For more information please email centralapplication@surfcoast.vic.gov.au or go to www.education.vic.gov.au/parents/child-care-kindergarten/Pages/kindergarten-programs.aspx

Our family holds a Health Care Card/Pension Card. Do I have to pay for kindergarten?

No. If your child holds or has a parent or guardian who holds, one of the following, your family is eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy.

- a Commonwealth Health Care Card
- a Commonwealth Pensioner Concession Card
- a Department of Veterans Affairs Card
- Refugee or Asylum Seeker visa (200-204, 786 or 866)
- Bridging visas for any of the above Refugee or Asylum Seeker visas

Our family is in Australia on a Visa. Do I have to pay for kindergarten?

No. If your child holds or has a parent or guardian who holds, one of the following, your family is eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy.

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What is No Jab No Play?

'No Jab, No play' legislation became effective on 1 January 2016. This legislation requires children to be fully vaccinated for their age before they can be enrolled in a kindergarten program.

Conscientious objection is not an exemption.

Prior to your child's enrolment being confirmed, you need to provide:

- a current Immunisation History Statement from the Australian Immunisation Register (AIR); AND
- the statement must show that the child is up to date with all vaccinations that are due for their age, or that they are able to receive

The immunisation history statement from the Australian Immunisation Register (AIR) is the only document accepted for enrolments. Letters from GPs or local councils are not accepted.

You can find out more about No Jab No Play at <https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/campaigns/no-jab-no-playlink>

Families can print a copy of their child's Immunisation History Statement from their myGov account or:

- call the AIR on 1800 653 809 or visit a Medicare or Centrelink office.

How can I be involved?

Kindergartens encourage active family participation and value links with their local communities. If your Kindergarten has a Parent Advisory Group you can become involved through the Parent Advisory Group. You are also welcome to come along and take part in the program, including by sharing your skills and expertise with your child's group. To be involved in the program, you will need to have a Working with Children Check and fill out a Kindergarten Family Helper application.

To register **online**, email volunteering@surfcoast.vic.gov.au

We will email you the application documents and links you need.

To register using **hard copy**, phone 5264 9273.

We will send you the application documents you need.

How will I know how my child is going?

Early childhood educators maintain documentation about each child's development and learning goals. These are available in each room. Opportunities for parent/educator meetings will be provided and parents are always welcome to ask early childhood educators about their child's progress.

EDUCA- Educa provides an interactive online method of documentation and communication. It allows teachers and educators to highlight each child's individual learning while at kindergarten and gives parents, the advantage of being involved in their child's progress and special moments in a timely manner. With Educa, families are able to see the kindergarten program as it develops and its links to the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF).

Educa also provides a unique and interactive feature that allows teachers, educators and parents to give constructive feedback and/or comments on the curriculum and learning goals.

Transition Learning and Development Statements are developed for each child in preparation for their primary school orientation in term four. These statements include input from educators and family, and provide an insight into your child's progress over the kindergarten year.

Which kindergarten is best for children with additional learning needs?

Surf Coast Shire kindergartens provide an inclusive program for all children. Families are encouraged to provide details of any additional needs or medical requirements your child may have, during the application process.

Early childhood educators work with families to support children with additional needs and provide advice about their need, including discussing referral pathways and additional support.

How to apply

Online applications for Kindergarten in 2023 are open from 11 April 2022.

www.surfcoast.vic.gov.au/Kindergarten

Families have until 10 June 2022 to submit their form to be considered for first round offers. Applications received after 10 June 2022 will be processed in September 2022 once round one applications have been confirmed.

Kindergarten applicants will be notified before the end of Term Three.

Contact information

Kindergarten Engagement Officer – 5261 0585
centralapplication@surfcoast.vic.gov.au

Team Leader Kindergarten Programs -5261 0548

Prior to making your decision, you are invited to contact the Kindergartens directly to organise a convenient time to visit the service.

About the National Quality Framework and Standards

The Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority oversee the National Quality Framework and ensure the consistent and effective implementation of the National Quality Standards, learning frameworks, and relevant laws and regulations pertaining to early years learning.

The National Quality Standards set out national benchmarks for the quality of education and care services. They aim to promote:

- the safety, health and wellbeing of children,
- a focus on achieving outcomes for children through high quality educational programs, and
- families' understanding of what distinguishes a quality service.

The standards are divided into seven quality areas:

1. Educational program and practice
2. Children's health and safety
3. Physical environment
4. Staffing arrangements
5. Relationships with children
6. Collaborative partnerships with families and communities
7. Leadership and service management

National Quality Standards rating and assessment process

Approved services, such as Surf Coast Shire Council's early years learning programs, are assessed and rated against each of the seven quality areas. This process aims to drive continuous quality improvement and to provide families with better information for making choices about their child's education and care.

3 year old kindergarten

What is three year old kindergarten?

Three year old programs are an opportunity for children to learn in a flexible, play based environment where educators use a combination of child-led and intentional teaching to support each child's individual learning.

Three-Year-Old Kindergarten is a funded kindergarten program for all children to access.

Children must be three years old to attend Three-Year-Old Kindergarten.

Children will only be able to access one year of Government Funded Three-Year-Old Kindergarten.

Children accessing Three-Year-Old Kindergarten will transition to Four-Year-Old Kindergarten the following year.

Is my child ready?

To be eligible for a place in a Three-Year-Old Kindergarten, your child must have turned three years of age by 30 April due to ratio requirements.

Families are encouraged to consider the best time for their child to access a three-year-old program, and how this may impact on their one year of funded four-year-old kindergarten and their school starting age.

For further information

<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/childhood/professionals/profdev/information-for-parents.pdf>

How many hours/days each week will my child be able to attend?

Children attend three year old kindergarten for five hours per week. Provision of increased hours for three year old kindergarten in 2023 will be subject to enrolment confirmation and operational requirements. Sessions may be offered over one or two days depending on each kinders timetable. These are structured to make best use of the space available and to reflect community needs.

How much does it cost?

Three- Year- Old Kindergarten is funded by state government funding and family fees. Fees are charged on a term-by-term basis in advance.

Funding is available for 5 hours for three year olds. In 2023 children will be funded pro-rata for the hours they

are attending Kindergarten which will be subject to operational requirements.

Families may be eligible for a kindergarten fee subsidy due to various reasons. Refer to the information pertaining to priority access groups at www.education.vic.gov.au/parents/child-care-kindergarten/Pages/how-much-child-care-costs.aspx

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