



South Gippsland
Shire Council



South Gippsland Frequently Asked Questions



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What is Kindergarten

Kindergarten (also called preschool) is a program for young children delivered by a qualified early childhood teacher. Kindergarten is an important step for young children and is strongly recommended for all children. Research shows that attending a kindergarten program improves a child's health and wellbeing, helps them to develop strong social skills and encourages a love of learning. Children who go to kindergarten are more independent and confident and are more likely to make a smooth transition to primary school (Prep).

What happens at kindergarten?

A high-quality kindergarten program will offer your child a range of learning experiences and activities that are both stimulating and fun. 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.

Your child will:

- learn to work with others and make friends through group activities and cooperative play
- express their creativity, for example, through dance, movement and art
- build their communication skills by listening to and having conversations with the educators and other children
- develop the skills that they need for reading, writing and mathematics

Where can I find a kindergarten?

Some kindergartens run as stand-alone services (for example, community kindergartens). Other kindergarten programs are run through long day care centres. Council operates a kindergarten central enrolment scheme within the municipality. [A full list of kindergartens is available on Councils website.](#)

To view all of the available funded kindergarten programs including those offered in long daycare centres visit the [Department of Education and Training - Find a Service website.](#)

What to look for in a kindergarten

- Welcoming environment - high-quality kindergarten programs are based on a partnership between families and educators
- Educators that are interested in your child and your family, and respond to your questions and concerns.
- A variety of fun and challenging learning opportunities that celebrate the cultures of the children who use the service
- Places for play with others or alone and spaces where children can go to be quiet.

Choosing a kindergarten program

Every family is different. This means the kindergarten program you choose should be a good fit with your child and family. Once you have a shortlist of kindergarten programs, contact the services to find out if they are holding open days or information sessions, or make an appointment to visit.

http://www.southgippsland.vic.gov.au/homepage/244/kindergarten_open_days

This is a great way to get a 'feel' for each program, to ask questions and to share information about your child. You can also find out about the days and times the kindergarten program runs, how to enrol your child and any fees charged and subsidies available. Visit more than one program if you can and try not to rely only on what other families say.

Types of Kindergarten Programs

Sessional Kindergarten in a stand-alone kindergarten

Sessional Kindergarten usually refers to a Kindergarten program that operates for specific days and hours each week. In most instances, the same children attend on the same days. For example Kindergarten may be Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 9:00am - 2:00pm each week.

Sessional Kindergarten within a Long Day Care service

Sessional Kindergarten within a long day care centre usually means the hours of kindergarten are the same each day but families can choose the days they would like to attend. Before and after kindergarten care is also available for those who require this

option on one or more days (at an additional cost). For example Kindergarten may operate from 9:00am - 2:00pm each day with children attending three days. For each family the days may be different meaning your child could be with different children on different days. The before and after kindergarten care means that you are able to drop off and pick up after the designated kindergarten times.

Integrated kindergarten and long day care

Integrated Kindergarten usually refers to kindergarten within a long day care facility. The hours are generally longer and charged by the day with a government child care subsidy instead of term fees. For example; Kindergarten hours may be 8:30am - 4:00pm with a qualified educator, before and aftercare is included and you will be charged the daily rate of the centre and be able to claim your child care subsidy.

How do I choose the right kindergarten

The kindergarten that is closest to your residence is usually the best option. This ensures that the child builds a good community connection and will likely know children when transitioning into primary school. However regardless of proximity, kindergarten is a personal choice based on what each kindergarten offers within their program room and outside in the play area. It is recommended that you visit kindergartens of interest to compare and assist you in deciding which would be more suitable for your child.

Suggested questions to ask a potential kindergarten

- How will the educators work with you to support your child's learning?
- What opportunities will there be to discuss your child's progress?
- How does the program encourage positive behaviour?
- Does the service have a kindergarten certificate on display? This certificate shows that a kindergarten program receives funding from the Victorian Government and is taught by a qualified early childhood educator.
- Is there a waiting list for places?



How old should my child be when they start kindergarten?

It is usual for children to attend a kindergarten program in the year before they start primary school. This is often called 'four-year-old kindergarten'.

Four-year-old Kindergarten

To attend a four-year-old kindergarten program, children must turn four on or before 30 April in the year they will be attending. Parents of children turning four in the months of January through April, have the choice of which year to enrol their child. If your child will not be four years of age at the start of his/her four-year-old kindergarten year, you will need to consider whether your child will benefit from attending kindergarten in the year of eligibility or the following year. It is common for children who are born between January and April to wait until the year after they turn four before starting kindergarten. A second year of kindergarten will only be approved for those children who have a proven developmental delay.

If your child was born between	Earliest year eligible to attend school	Earliest year eligible to attend funded 4 year old kindergarten
1/05/2014 - 30/04/2015	2020	2019
1/05/2015 - 30/04/2016	2021	2020
1/05/2016 - 30/04/2017	2022	2021

Early Start kindergarten

Research shows an early start and more time at kindergarten prepares children for success at school and has a positive impact later in life.

Early Start Kindergarten provides free or low cost kindergarten to eligible three year old children where programs are offered by a qualified teacher. Some services will be able to offer your child a place in a program for four year olds or a mixed age group.

Your child is eligible if they are aged three by 30 April in the year they will be attending kindergarten, and:

- **Your family has had contact with Child Protection (or been referred to Child FIRST), or**
- **Your child is Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander**

Children attending kindergarten under the Early Start program will have a second year of kindergarten known as funded four year old kindergarten or year before school kindergarten. Ask your child's kindergarten for more information about free kindergarten programs for three-year-olds or contact Councils' Preschool Field Officer for information and advice on 5662 9200.

Where can I get advice on the best time to start kindergarten?

If you are unsure about the best time for your child to start a kindergarten program, you can ask:

- **A kindergarten educator/long day care** provider for advice. Find out how the kindergarten program can support your child's learning and development.
- **The principal or an educator at the school** that your child is likely to attend. Talk about the best time for your child to start Prep. Find out how the Prep program can support your child learning and development.
- **Your child's Maternal and Child Health nurse, Pre-School Field Officer, family doctor and any other professionals** your child sees (for example, speech therapist, physiotherapist or pediatrician).

How many hours a week can my child go to kindergarten?

Funded four-year-old kindergarten programs are offered for 15 hours a week.



Transition from three-year-old kindergarten to four-year-old kindergarten

To enrol in four-year-old kindergarten, you will need to enroll using the central enrolment process, regardless of whether your child was enrolled in three-year-old kindergarten

Can my child go to kindergarten for more than one year?

Children who are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, known to Child Protection or referred Child Protection to Child FIRST can go to kindergarten for free or at low cost for two years before they start primary school, usually starting when they are three years old. Some children with developmental delays who complete four-year-old kindergarten may benefit from completing a second year of funded kindergarten before going on to school.

If you would like to know more about these options, talk to a kindergarten educator or Councils' Preschool Field Officer for information and advice on 5662 9200.

Do we have to live in the shire to attend a kindergarten in South Gippsland Shire Council?

No you do not need to live in South Gippsland to attend a kindergarten program. It is understood families choose a kindergarten program for many reasons eg; close to home/work, days and times meet family needs.

Enrolment Information

What is central enrolment for kindergarten?

Council uses an equitable application and allocation process for families to access kindergartens within the municipality. Using the central enrolment system, families apply for a funded kindergarten place, and can identify up to 3 local kindergartens of their choice and participate in the allocation process. This provides a streamlined, transparent and fair allocation process.

What can you expect from the kindergarten central enrolment scheme?

The central enrolment scheme for funded kindergarten programs is provided on behalf of participating committee of management, cluster and privately owned kindergarten service providers within the South Gippsland Shire Council.

The scheme aims to:

- ensure the maximum number of children receive their kindergarten preference
- provide a transparent and equitable allocation process
- support the enrolment and provision of funded kindergarten places
- capture relevant data to ensure the effective future planning of services

Applying for a kindergarten program

You can apply directly online using Council's Kindergarten Enrolment System. Enrolments must have supporting documentation of proof of age, Immunisation Status and Health Care Card/Pension Card if applicable. If you are having difficulties accessing our Online forms you can visit your local library or contact Council for assistance.

When do enrolments close for kindergarten

Applications for the first round close 30 June the year prior to attending. Any enrolments received after this date will be placed on hold until the first round offer process has been completed. All enrolments will then be processed and offered as required.

- 1st Round** **Open 1 May - close 30 June**
- 2nd Round** **Open 1 July - close 18 August**
- 3rd Round** **On an as needs basis**



Immunisation

Immunisation programs in Victoria have been extremely effective in reducing the risk of vaccine preventable diseases. However, diseases such as measles and whooping cough continue to occur in the community, indicating that immunisation levels are not optimal.

Victorian Law

In an effort to improve childhood immunisation rates, the Victorian Government has amended the Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008. The amendments mean that early childhood education and care services cannot confirm enrolment of a child unless the parent/carer has provided documentation that shows the child:

- is fully vaccinated for their age; or
- is on a recognised catch-up schedule if their child has fallen behind with their vaccinations; or
- has a medical reason not to be vaccinated

'Conscientious objection' to vaccination is not an exemption. In the past, early childhood education and care services have only been required to request that parents/carers provide the immunisation status of their child, and to keep a record of that information; however there was no barrier to enrolment if the information was not provided. Under the new law, services will also need to assess the documentation to determine if the child's vaccination status complies with requirements. The child cannot attend the service until acceptable documentation is provided. For more information:

<https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/campaigns/no-jab-no-play>

Immunisation Documentation

Proof of immunisation for the purpose of enrolling in childcare and kindergarten

The document to prove immunisation status for the purpose of enrolling at childcare or kindergarten is an Immunisation History Statement from the Australian Immunisation Register (AIR).

You can get copy of your child's most recent Immunisation History Statement from the AIR as evidence of your child's immunisation. To request an Immunisation History Statement contact AIR:

- phone 1800 653 809
- email acir@humanservices.gov.au
- visit Medicare Australia online <https://my.gov.au>

Please note, this is the quickest way to obtain your Child's Immunisation Statement

- visit a Medicare or Centrelink office

For help in obtaining your child's Immunisation History Statement, please see link below:

<https://www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/online-help/medicare/getting-your-immunisation-history-statement-using-your-medicare-online-account>

If your child is not fully immunised (or if you are not sure if your child is fully immunised, or you're interested to find out more) you may wish to:

- consult South Gippsland Shire Council's Immunisation Department on 5662 9200
- read [Immunisation - Childhood Immunisation](#) to find out what vaccines are due.
- read [Immunisation - Questions about vaccination](#) if you have concerns about vaccine safety.
- view the [No Jab No Play frequently asked questions](#)
- read the brochure [Starting childcare or kindergarten?](#)

Immunisation information for parents enrolling a child', also available in a [range of languages](#).

What if my child cannot be vaccinated for medical reasons?

Medical contraindication to vaccines.

A medical doctor determines if a child has a medical reason (for example anaphylactic reaction to a vaccine ingredient) for not receiving a specific vaccine/s. This is known as medical contraindication.

A doctor completes, signs and submits an Immunisation Medical Exemption Form to the AIR. The AIR updates the child's records and, on request from the parent/carer, will issue an Immunisation History Statement that shows which vaccine/s the child is unable to receive and indicates the due date for other vaccinations the child is able to receive. This statement can be provided to your service as proof of immunisation status for the purposes of enrolment.

Overseas vaccines

Children who were vaccinated overseas must have their vaccine records assessed and be offered vaccination as required. Record overseas vaccines to AIR by submitting the AIR Immunisation History form. This can be completed and submitted by your Immunisation Provider/GP. The AIR updates the child's records and the parents can request an Immunisation History Statement from the AIR. The statement will indicate any due dates for future vaccinations if required. This statement can be provided to the service as proof of immunisation status for the purposes of enrolment



Fees

How much are the fees and when and how do I pay?

The yearly kindergarten enrolment fees are paid to the kindergarten service provider. The fees at each kindergarten may differ as each kindergarten may have different running costs; offering varying programs. A list of all Kindergartens and fees are listed in the Information Booklet as a guide for families. All fee enquiries and payments need to be directed to your kindergarten or cluster manager. Council does not govern kindergarten costs or collect payment for any program fees.

Kindergarten fee subsidy

Your child may be eligible for free or low-cost kindergarten as part of the Victorian Government's commitment to provide all children with access to a high-quality kindergarten program in the year before starting school.

The kindergarten fee subsidy provides eligible four-year old children with access to a kindergarten program for up to 15 hours per week.

To find out if you're eligible go to <https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/childhood/providers/comms/kinderfeesub.pdf> or speak to the Central Enrolment Officer or Kindergarten Service Provider.

Preschool exemption to the Child Care Subsidy Activity Test

Please see the fact sheet that explains the Child Care Subsidy activity test exemption that may apply where a child attends an early educational program (such as preschool or kindergarten program) at a Centre Based Day Care Service.

https://docs.education.gov.au/system/files/doc/other/activity_test_preschool_exemption.pdf

Who gets priority for kindergarten places?

Places are allocated according to priorities set by the Department of Education and Training (DET), which includes children who are at risk, children with additional needs and children who require a second year of funded kindergarten.

Working in collaboration with representatives of all the kindergartens, Council uses the Priority of Access criteria set out by both State and Federal Government these include but are not limited to:

- Children at risk of abuse or neglect, including children in out of home care
- Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children
- Asylum seeker and refugee children
- Children with additional needs
- Children eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy

For families wishing to apply for a kindergarten program within a long day care centre an additional priority is applied for parents who both satisfy the work/training/study test under Section 14 of the 'A New Tax System (Family Assistance) Act 1999'.

'Priority of access' is applied to each enrolment based on information provided on your enrolment application. Places begin to be offered via a first round offer in mid-August. A computerised program will offer places in order of highest priority to lowest. When there are numerous enrolments on the same priority, the program randomly selects based on the available kindergarten places.

A second round is offered in early September once all offered positions have been either accepted or declined using the same process. This offer process will continue until all enrolments have been offered one of their preferences or an available place at an alternative kindergarten.

Most children will be allocated a place at their first preference kindergarten. You should only list those kindergartens for which you are happy to accept a place.

Can I change my preferences?

You can change your preferences until 30 June in the year prior to your child starting at kindergarten. Changes after this date are subject to availability of places.

If you want to change your preference after you have accepted an offer you will need to contact the Kindergarten Central Enrolment Officer to be advised of vacancies in your new preferred kindergarten and to explain the process.

What happens if my child misses out on our first preference?

You will be notified that your child has not been offered a place at the first preference and the computer will allocate a place based on your other preferences. You will be offered the opportunity to remain on the waiting list for your preferred kindergarten, accept the alternative preference offered or change your kindergarten preference to another kindergarten with a vacancy.

What if I don't want to change my preference and only want my first preference?

Your child will remain in the allocation group and be involved in a ballot for any available places that may arise at your preferred kindergarten as they become vacant.

There is no guarantee that places will become available and you may not be the only enrolment waiting for any positions that become available.

Can I find out where I am on the waiting list for my first preference?

Unfortunately we cannot provide this as the waiting list is constantly changing. We are unable to predict how many parents will accept offers and therefore have no idea how many offers will become available for any particular kindergarten in rounds two and onwards. There is a lot of movement between round offers due to family circumstances changing (e.g moving in and out of the municipality) or cancellations and deferments of kindergarten offers made.

What if there are not enough kindergarten places?

The majority of families will receive a kindergarten place at a kindergarten of their choice. There will be other places available for your child to attend a program at alternative kindergarten across the shire. In areas where kindergarten places are limited, there may be difficulty in allocating places at the preferred kindergarten irrespective of the enrolment process. Council will continue to monitor demand and work with both kindergartens and the Victorian Government to consider further infrastructure requirements for the provision of kindergarten across the municipality.



Offers

How do kindergarten offers get made?

Working in collaboration with representatives of all the kindergartens as well as government guidelines for enrolment, Council uses the Priority of Access criteria set out by both State and Federal Government these include but are not limited to:

- Children at risk of abuse or neglect, including children in out of home care
- Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children
- Asylum seeker and refugee children
- Children with additional needs
- Children eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy

For families wishing to apply for a kindergarten program within a long day care centre an additional priority is applied for parents who both satisfy the work/training/study test under Section 14 of the 'A New Tax System (Family Assistance) Act 1999'.

'Priority of access' is applied to each enrolment based on information provided on your enrolment application. Places begin to be offered via a first round offer in mid- August. Places will offered in order of highest priority to lowest. When there are numerous enrolments on the same priority, a ballot, based on the available kindergarten places is completed.

A second round is offered in early September once all offered positions have been either accepted or declined using the same process. This offer process will continue until all enrolments have been offered one of their preferences or an available place at an alternative kindergarten.

Most children will be allocated a place at their first preference kindergarten. You should only list those kindergartens for which you are happy to accept a place.

How are offers decided?

Where there is a higher demand than number of places available for first preferences, priority of access guidelines weightings will be applied to each application received for the relevant kindergarten(s). Places are allocated (via a computer generated selection process) in order of highest priority which includes, but not limited to:

- Children at risk of abuse or neglect, including children in out of home care
- Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children
- Asylum seeker and refugee children
- Children with additional needs
- Children eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy
- second year places as identified from previous year
- high priority children as outlined in the current Department of Education and Training publication.

For families wishing to apply for a kindergarten program within a long day care centre an additional priority is applied of parents who both satisfy the work/training/study test under Section 14 of the 'A New Tax System (Family Assistance) Act 1999'.

For more information read our Kindergarten Enrolment Policy: http://www.southgippsland.vic.gov.au/downloads/file/1267/central_enrolment_policy

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I have been allocated my first preference - what now?

I accept an offer

If you have received an offer and choose to accept it, you will secure a place and be contacted by the kindergarten or cluster manager to complete enrolment details and be given program information to complete and return to the kindergarten. All communication will now be with your kindergarten or cluster manager. For any information regarding timetables or group information please refer directly to your kindergarten's website.

I choose to defer an offer

If you choose to accept and withdraw (defer) your place, you will be given priority for your place in the following year. You will need to complete a new online enrolment form in the following year, as government requirements can change and additional information may be required. You may then choose for your child to attend a three-year-old program.

I decline an offer

If you decline your place we will make your kindergarten enrolment inactive. You will not receive another offer the following year. However, if your circumstances change contact us on 5662 9200

I have not been allocated my first preference

In addition to the other options, the following would need to be considered if you do not receive your first preference.

What happens when I accept the offer and remain on the waiting list for my preferred centre?

You will remain on the waiting list for your preferred kindergarten. If a place is declined for that year in the kindergarten of preference, places will be offered in the second round as per the computer generated allocation process. A kindergarten place is guaranteed for the offered year, at either your preferred or alternative kindergarten.

What happens when I decline the offer and remain on the waiting list for my preferred centre?

If you did not receive your first preference you may decide to decline your offer and remain on the waiting list for your preferred kindergarten; however you cannot hold the place that was originally offered at the alternative kindergarten. When another child declines a place for that year in your kindergarten of preference, places will be offered in the second round as per the government priority of access of highest to lowest.



Can I keep the kindergarten offer for the next year instead?

Yes. If you decide before the start of the kindergarten year, to defer your child's attendance until the following year, you will retain your original date and conditions of the allocation. This option generally only applies to children born January to April, unless there are special circumstances. It is best to make that decision early.

Support and information around deferring is available from kindergarten educators, information sessions and if you have developmental concerns you may also wish to speak to your MCH nurse.

What happens if I do not respond to my offer?

If you do not respond to your email offer, a courtesy telephone call will be made prior to the child's place being cancelled. This means they will not receive any further offers at preferred or other preference kindergartens. It is important that we have your correct contact details to ensure your place is not forfeited.

When does kindergarten start?

Kindergarten starts the same week as school terms. You will be advised of your days and times by your kindergarten or cluster manager. Any questions around your program should be directed to them.

2020

Term 1: 28 January (school teachers start) to 27 March*

Term 2: 14 April to 26 June

Term 3: 13 July to 18 September

Term 4: 5 October to 18 December

** The first day of Term 1 is a student-free day in all government schools to allow for appropriate planning to take place for the arrival of students. Each year government schools are provided with four student-free days for professional development, school planning and administration, curriculum development, and student assessment and reporting purposes. The remaining three student-free days are determined by each individual school, so contact your school for details.*

