



Payment of Fees

Reviewed: 11/08/2021 Next Review: Term 3 2022

Education and care services regulation/s	Regulation 168(2)(n) Education and care service must have policies/procedures
NSW Department of Education policy, procedure or guidelines	The following department policies and relevant documents can be accessed from the preschool section of the department's website ; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preschool Class Fees in Government Schools Policy • Finance in schools handbook
National Quality Standard(s)	7.1.1: Service philosophy and purpose A statement of philosophy guides all aspects of the service's operations. 7.1.2 Management Systems Systems are in place to manage risk and enable the effective management and operation of a quality service.
Leading and operating department preschool guidelines	Leading and operating department preschool guidelines Page 96 (staff only)
School policy or procedure	Preschool class fees in government schools

Introduction:

The Department of Education policy applies to all NSW Government preschool classes. It outlines the general principles governing the fees processes, information on collecting fees, fee relief and/or exemption.

The NSW Department of Education and Communities operates preschool classes in 100 government schools. These classes were established to provide a preschool education for children one year before school entry in areas of disadvantage with a particular focus on children:

- Living in low socio-economic circumstances;
- Who are refugees or from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds;
- With disabilities;
- Who are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

In line with the Preschool Enrolment Policy schools are required to provide priority to the neediest children in the local community who are unable to access other early childhood services. At Oak Flats Public School Preschool at the discretion of the Principal a full fee exemption is currently in place based on these guidelines;

- All children attending preschool classes in schools with an ICSEA value of less than 699 will be fee exempt.
- In addition, in exceptional circumstances, the Principal will be able to exercise his/her discretion and grant a full fee exemption where the child would not otherwise be able to attend.
- Public school preschools serving the most disadvantaged communities in NSW will not charge preschool fees.

Fee Relief:

- The fee for children from low income families (as determined by a current Commonwealth Health Care Card) attending a preschool class in schools with an ICSEA value of 900 or more is set at 50% of the full fee unless they are eligible for exemption on either a short term or long term basis.
- The fee for Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children will be set at 50% of the full fee unless they are eligible for further fee relief or fee exemption.
- The fee for children from low income families (as determined by a current Commonwealth Health Care Card) attending a preschool class in schools with an ICSEA value of 700 to 899 is set at 10% of the full fee unless they are eligible for exemption on either a short term or long term basis.
- All children attending preschool classes in schools with an ICSEA value of less than 699 will be fee exempt.
- In addition, in exceptional circumstances, the principal will be able to exercise his/her discretion and grant a full fee exemption where the child would not otherwise be able to attend.

Responsibilities**Parents are required to:**

- Sign and agree to the Preschool Fees Agreement. The original is kept on the Preschool premises and a copy is given to the parents.
- Make regular payments for attendance of their child at the preschool class unless they are eligible for fee exemption. Fees should be kept up to date.
- Present the original current Health Care Card for verification to the school principal. A photocopy of the card is taken and stored with the child's enrolment details.
- Present a new Health Care Card when the current one expires before the start of a new term otherwise the full rate will be charged for the new term.
- Make an appointment with the Principal to discuss fee exemption or inability to pay fees.

The Principal is required to:

- Ensure that fees are collected in line with these procedures.
- Ensure the school prepares an invoice for the billing period. Families are billed per term.
- Ensure fee relief or fee exemption is provided for eligible families.
- Follow up fees that have been outstanding each term to develop a plan for fee recovery, fee relief or in exceptional circumstances fee exemption if the child would otherwise not be able to attend the preschool program.
- Retain records and information at the school in relation to fee relief (e.g. copy of the current Health Care Card) for the period in which a child's records are required.
- Forward all monies collected to the NSW Department of Education and Communities Cashier, Finance and Administration Directorate no later than seven (7) working days after the end of each school term.

Oak Flats Public School Preschool Fee:

- Full Daily Fee \$20
- Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Families \$10

- Commonwealth Health Care Card \$10

PRESCHOOL FEES - FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Question:

Why do I have to pay preschool fees in a Government (public school) preschool?

Answer:

The Government believes that every family should be able to access an affordable, high quality early childhood education for their child.

The department policy brings preschools in public schools in line with the wider early childhood sector in NSW where parents pay fees for their children to access a preschool education.

However, the Minister has been very clear that no child will be excluded from preschool in a public school because of the financial circumstances of their family.

Families that can afford to pay will be asked to pay the full preschool fee.

There will be different fees in different preschools throughout NSW in recognition of our diverse communities.

Question:

How much will I have to pay for preschool fees?

Answer:

The government has provided a range of fees for its preschools so that families who are experiencing financial hardship and/or who have a Commonwealth Health Care Card are entitled to fee relief. This means that some families will have a reduced fee and in some circumstances families may not have to pay a fee at all.

Your school principal will have more information about the preschool fees.

It is important that you make a time to have a confidential conversation with your school principal concerning any questions you may have about your eligibility for fee relief, so that an appropriate fee can be charged for your child's attendance at preschool.

Question:

What if I can't afford to pay fees?

Answer:

The Minister for Education has made it very clear that he does not want any families to miss out on preschool because of financial hardship. The fee structure that has been developed will protect low income and disadvantaged families.

Low income families who have a Commonwealth Health Care Card will get fee relief.

In exceptional circumstances, the school principal will be able to consider a full fee exemption on either a short or long term basis. Parents can be assured that they can discuss issues relating to fees with the principal in absolute confidentiality.

Question:

Won't this policy further disadvantage Aboriginal children? What about the Government's commitment to closing the gap between outcomes for Aboriginal children and non-Aboriginal children?

The review into Aboriginal education identified financial considerations and transport as the two biggest barriers to Aboriginal children accessing an early childhood education. Doesn't the department policy work against Aboriginal children attending preschool?

Answer:

This Government is committed to improving outcomes for Aboriginal people in NSW.

Accessing a high quality early childhood education helps to ensure the best possible start in life. That is why our new policy provides free access to public school preschool classes for

Aboriginal children living in our most disadvantaged communities and all other Aboriginal children are eligible for fee relief.

It is our intention to continue to increase the numbers of Aboriginal children accessing preschool.

Question:

When and how do I have to pay and how do I receive my invoice?

Answer:

Preschool fees are invoiced each term and are expected to be paid in a timely manner. Families have the option of paying their fees in a lump sum or by making regular repayments. Preschool fees are paid via the office or online. Your invoice will be handed out by the preschool staff each term. If you lose your invoice, another one can be obtained from the school office.

Question:

What happens if my fees are unpaid?

Answer:

If no effort is made to pay fees within a month, a letter requiring immediate payment or a meeting with the Principal will be sent home. If no payment is received your child's place at the preschool will be forfeited. Subsequent children in the family will be unable to attend the Preschool until all outstanding fees have been paid.

Question:

What happens if my child goes on holidays or is sick?

Answer:

There is no reduction or refund of fees in the case of absences. Your child's position will be held if fees are paid.

Question:

Will there be any other compulsory fees?

Answer:

No, the preschool classes will not have any other compulsory fees.

Question:

Will I be eligible for the Commonwealth Child Care Benefit or the Child Care Tax Rebate for preschool fees in government preschools?

Answer:

No, the Commonwealth Child Care Benefit and the Child Care Tax Rebate are only available to services that operate for extended hours (such as long day care) and the Department's preschool classes operate during school hours and do not provide extended hours.