

Preschool Fee Policy & Procedure

Introduction

Learning Links has a commitment to ensuring our fees are as affordable as possible and that all families have access to any subsidies that are available to reduce fees in accordance with funding guidelines.

The Preschool Fee Policy and Procedure outlines the fee payment terms, conditions and procedures for Learning Links staff and families accessing services from the Preschool and includes procedures on:

- Collecting Fees Payable
- Accessing Fee Subsidies
- Using funding packages
- Withdrawing enrolment
- Charing for late collection of children.

Policy

To enable Learning Links to provide high quality early education and care for children we ensure that the Preschool remains financially viable.

The Preschool’s financial health and access to our program will be maximised by:

- Regular reviews of fees to ensure the Preschool is financially viable, competitive in the market place and compliant with funding program guidelines.
- Families being provided with accurate fee statements and clear information regarding fee payment processes.
- Following the appropriate priority of access requirements.
- Managing fee collection to avoid overdue accounts and bad debtors.
- Families being informed of any changes to this policy and procedure 14 days prior to changes coming into effect.

All funding received, and monies collected as fees or fundraising are used directly to run and resource the Preschool.

Learning Links Preschool receives funding from the Department of Education including funding under the Start Strong funding program.

Definitions

Term	Definition
Start Strong	Start Strong aims to improve affordability of early childhood education and increase the number of children participating for 600 hours in a quality early education program in the year before school, with priority given to reducing fees for children from low income and Aboriginal families.

Eligibility

The Preschool Fee Policy and Procedure outlines the fee payment terms, conditions and procedures for Learning Links staff and families accessing services from the Preschool.

Responsible

Responsibilities for the policy are:

Person	Responsible for:
Nominated Supervisor / Preschool Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring the Preschool operates in line with the Education and Care Services National Law and Regulations 2011. • Ensuring compliance with all relevant NSW Government funding agreements. • Ensuring vacant preschool places are filled under the priority of access guidelines detailed in the NSW Government Start guidelines (refer to definition table). • Reviewing the current budget to determine the required fee level to meet budget prediction for the year. • Developing a fee policy that balances the parent's/guardian's capacity to pay, with providing a high-quality program and maintaining service viability. • Considering any issues regarding fees that may be a barrier to families enrolling at the Preschool and removing these barriers wherever possible. • Providing parents/guardians with a regular statement of fees and charges. • Ensuring the Fee Policy and Procedure is readily accessible and fully communicated to families during the enrolment process. • Notifying parents/guardians within 14 days of any proposed changes to the fees charged or the way in which the fees are collected. • Ensuring a notice outlining the fees charged by the service is displayed prominently in the main entrance to the service. • Collecting all relevant information and maintaining relevant documents for families with entitlement to concessions, where applicable.
Early Childhood Educators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Referring parents'/guardians' questions in relation to this policy to the Nominated Supervisor/Preschool Manager.
Families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading this policy and procedure and referring any questions, queries or concerns to the Nominated Supervisor/Preschool Manager. • Making deposit payment by the agreed due date to confirm their child's enrolment to the preschool. • Completing the Direct Debit form ensuring all details are correct, authorisations are signed and Learning Links can access direct debit through the relevant financial institution. • Notifying Learning Links in advance of any changes related to Direct Debit payments. • Ensuring there are sufficient funds available to cover the fees on the due date. • Ensuring required fees are paid 2 weeks in advance at all times. • Providing 4 weeks' notice in term time of withdrawal from service. Fees are charged if the child fails to attend during the 4-week notice period. • Notifying the Nominated Supervisor/Preschool Manager if experiencing difficulties with the payment of fees.
Learning Links Accounts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Debit Fees from the nominated bank account or credit card. • Debit Fees as per the agreed frequency and amount (including arrears) as documented on the Direct Debit form. • Where the payment date falls on a non-business day, to debit the bank account on the next business day. • Cease the payment arrangement when the child leaves the Preschool program and the required notice has been given. • Refund any deposits paid at the end of enrolment provided all Fees are paid.

Related documents

Forms:

- Late Collection Form
- Withdrawal Form
- Preschool Direct Debit Form

Related legislation:

- Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010.
- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011: Regulation 168(2)(n).
- Family Law Act 1975 (Cth), as amended 2011.

Related guidelines, standards, frameworks:

- National Quality Standard, Quality Area 7: Leadership and Service Management – Standard 7.3.

Sources:

- ACECQA www.acecqa.gov.au
- Community Early Learning Australia (CELA)

Priority criteria for enrolment

Priority of access to preschool positions under the NSW Government Start Strong Funding guidelines prioritises enrolment for:

- Children who are at least 4 years old on or before the 31 July in that preschool year.
- Children who are at least 3 years old on or before 31 July and from low income or from Aboriginal families.
- Children with English Language needs.
- Children with disabilities who are at least 3 years old on or before 31 July in that preschool year.
- Children who are at risk of significant harm (from a child protection perspective).

There is no order of priority assigned to the list of points above.

Preschool Fee Charges

The Preschool Fee and charges are as follows:

Fee	Details
Daily attendance fee	Children who are at least 3 years old on or before 31 July and from low income or from Aboriginal families.
	Children who are at least 4 years old on or before the 31 July in that preschool year.
	Children who are 3 years old on or before 31 July in that preschool year.
Learning Links Membership fee	Annual fee per family accessing services from Learning Links.
Building and Maintenance Levy	Annual fee per family accessing services from Learning Links Preschool. This payment forms part of the initial Direct Debit payment on commencing enrolment in the program.
Preschool Late Collection fee charge.	Where a child has not been collected by 4pm a late collection charge of \$30 will apply for the first 10 minutes after 4pm, then \$10 for every 10 minutes following this (or part thereof). For more detail refer to the Procedure for Late Collection section of this policy.

Procedure for the collection of Fees Payable

The required fee payment method for Preschool Fees is Direct Debit. Families can opt to have deductions made either:

- a) Fortnightly; or
- b) Monthly (to be taken on the 17th of each month in advance).

Payments commence on the Monday 2 weeks prior to commencement in the Preschool program.

Step	Action
1	Preschool Manager to supply parents/guardians of new enrolments with information about the Fee Policy and Procedure and a Direct Debit form in advance of their commencement in the program.
2	Parents/guardians to return the completed Direct Debit form prior to their child's commencement in the Program.
3	CSO to add payment method to Salesforce Bookings, record details on spreadsheet and forward original to Accounts Department.
4	Accounts Department to set up Direct Debit. Accounts Department to contact parent/guardian if any difficulties arise with Direct Debit.

Procedure Fee Subsidy

To be eligible for fee subsidy the child enrolling must be at least 3 years old on or before 31 July and from a low-income family (i.e. the child's family must be holders of a Health Care Card or Pensioner Concession where the child is a named dependant on the card) and/or Aboriginal family.

Children with their own Health Care Card will not be eligible for fee subsidy. This includes Foster Care Health Care Cards and Health Care Cards for children with a disability.

Step	Action
1	At the time of application to the Preschool, the parent should identify on the Application Form if they meet the criteria for Fee Subsidy and provide a current copy of their Low-Income Health Care or Pensioner Concession Card to the Nominated Supervisor/Preschool Manager.
2	The Preschool Manager will prioritise the enrolment of children who are 3 years old by 31 st July in the year of enrolment and eligible for Fee Subsidy.
3	A copy of the families Low Income Health Care Card or Pensioner Concession Card will be stored confidentially in the child's preschool record.
4	Preschool Manager will create a Funding Assignment on Salesforce for children who are eligible for reduced fees.

Procedure for use of funding packages

NDIS funding approved within a child's NDIS Plan can be used to pay for a package of services provided by the Preschool. This does not apply to the payment of Preschool enrolment fees.

The fee payments are made direct to Learning Links on parents' behalf once written consent is given to access payment from your child's funding package.

Step	Action
1	At the time of application to the Preschool, the Preschool Manager/Nominated Supervisor will provide the parent/guardian with information about the use of various funding packages at Learning Links.
2	Parent/guardian to provide written consent for Learning Links to access payment from their child's funding package using the Client Consent Form and Early Intervention Service Delivery Record Form.

Procedure for withdrawing enrolment

Learning Links requires 4 weeks written notice (in term time) from the child's parents/guardians of the intent to withdraw their child's enrolment from the program. Following 4-weeks' notice having been provided, the deposit will be refunded to the parent/guardian when the child concludes attendance and the fee account is up to date.

The latest date for withdrawal from the program each calendar year is the final date of Term 3. Fees will be payable to the end of the calendar school year for enrolment withdrawn during Term 4.

Step	Action
1	Parent to complete a Withdrawal from Preschool Enrolment form to the Preschool Manager/Nominated Supervisor providing 4 weeks term time (or by the final date of Term 3 where the child will withdraw during the preschool calendar year).
2	The Preschool Manager will arrange a final fee statement and provide this to the parent/guardian.
3	On conclusion of the child's attendance in the program and when fees have been paid in full, the Preschool Manager will authorise the Preschool deposit reimbursement to the parent/guardian.

Procedure for late collection charge

Learning Links Preschool reserves the right to implement a late collection charge when parents/guardians have not collected their child/ren from the Preschool by closing time (4pm). This charge will be set at a level determined by the Management of Learning Links and based on the need to recoup expenses incurred in employee wages.

Step	Action
1	Where a parent/guardian/authorised person is running late to collect their child they are requested to contact the Preschool to advise of the situation and anticipated arrival time (otherwise, the Delivery and Collection of Children Policy and Procedure relating to the Non-Collection of Preschool Children may be followed).
2	Where a child has not been collected by 4pm a late collection charge of \$30 will apply for the first 10 minutes after 4pm, then \$10 for every 10 minutes following this (or part thereof).
3	On the parent/guardian/authorized person's arrival, the Responsible Person will complete a Late Collection Form documenting the late time of arrival and corresponding late collection form. The form will be cosigned by the parent/guardian/authorized person at this time.
4	The late collection charge as documented on the Late Collection Form will be added to the child's term fees and direct debit amount adjusted to include this payment.

Document control

This table outlines the control details for this document.

Element	Details
Document Name	Fees Policy and Procedure
Document Owner	Sarah Herbert
Version Number	1.2
Effective Date	26 March 2019
Review Date	26 March 2021
Authorisation	Diane Peacock-Smith