

# PAYMENT OF FEES POLICY

Quality early education and care provides the foundation for children’s development and social engagement whilst supporting workforce participation of parents and carers. Gosford Pre-School Inc. (the Pre-School) is committed to providing quality education and care to all children at an affordable fee for families.

The Pre-School will have a clear and efficient system for the processing and payment of fees, including educational fees, security bond, Waitlist, Enrolment fees and Resource Levy.

## NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD (NQS)

<b>QUALITY AREA 7: GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP</b>		
7.1	Governance	Governance supports the operation of a quality service
7.1.2	Management Systems	Systems are in place to manage risk and enable the effective management and operation of a quality service
7.1.3	Roles and Responsibilities	Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined, and understood and support effective decision making and operation of the service

<b>EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES NATIONAL REGULATIONS</b>	
168	Education and care services must have policies and procedures
172	Notification of change to Policies and Procedures

## RELATED POLICIES

Arrival and Departure Policy Enrolment Policy Governance Policy Orientation of New Families Policy	Orientation of New Families Policy Privacy and Confidentiality Policy Withdrawal of a Child Policy
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## PURPOSE

For parents/carers to gain a clear understanding of the fee structure ensuring children’s fees are paid on time.

## SCOPE

This policy applies to children, families, staff, management and visitors of the Pre-School.

## IMPLEMENTATION

The Pre-School aims to ensure families understand the fee schedule and payment process required for education and care to be provided for their child. The Pre-School ensures the confidentiality and privacy of all personal information provided to the Pre-School about the enrolled child and family.

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The fee structure of the Pre-School includes:

1. Enrolment Fees
2. Educational Fees
3. Resource Levy

#### Enrolment Fees - Waitlist, Enrolment & Security Payments

- A non-refundable Waitlist Fee of \$20 is payable to place an eligible child on the Waitlist.
- A non-refundable Enrolment Fee of \$100 is payable on Acceptance of Offer of Enrolment. This fee must be paid prior to commencement at the Pre-School.
- A Security Deposit consisting of 2 weeks full fees is to be paid at the commencement of enrolment. The Security payment will be refunded by allocation to the last 2 weeks fees when the child leaves the Pre-School.

#### Educational Fees (Wednesdays only)

- Fees are charged on a daily basis and vary depending on the relevant fee category. There are 2 fee categories – full fee and equity fee. The Director will advise parents/carers and families the fee category that applies to them, based on their enrolment details and eligibility within the Start Strong Funding Guidelines.
- Fees can be paid in either of two ways:
  - ⊖ fortnightly through a direct debit system, commencing on the first day of each term, or
  - ⊖ on a term basis by invoice to be paid by the end of the first week of each term.
  - ⊖ If families wish to pay fees on a term basis, they must inform the director upon enrolment and ensure that fees are paid before the first day of each term.
- Fees are charged every Wednesday that a child is enrolled at the Pre-School. This includes sick days and family holidays **but excludes periods when the Pre-School is closed, including public and school holidays.**
- Fees are charged at full days only.

#### Resource Levy

Gosford Pre-School's main objective is to provide a quality education to all children enrolled with us. It is an expectation that all families who enrol at the Pre-School will invest financially in the education of their child or children.

With the introduction of the Affordable Preschool Program commencing from Term 1 2023, which will continue to provide fee free education for 600 hours per year to preschool children, and with rising operational costs, Gosford Pre-School will be introducing a mandatory Resource Levy of \$50 per Term per child (\$25 per Term per child for equity families), payable in Week 1 of each Term in line with the Affordable Preschool Program guidelines.

The levy collected by Gosford Pre-School will be used to assist in the provision of essential resources, materials, facilities, equipment, excursions and incursions.

The Resource Levy must be paid in full at the beginning of each term following receipt of an invoice from the Pre-School.

### **START STRONG FUNDING PROGRAM**

Gosford Pre-School Inc is partly funded by the Department of Education (DOE) Start Strong Program. Gosford Pre-School Inc. is committed to the Start Strong Funding Program, and its main objectives being to provide access to 600 hours of high-quality early learning and care to children in their year before school.

To be eligible for funding under Start Strong, a child will need to be:

- At least 4 years old on or before 31 July in that preschool year and not in compulsory schooling; and
- Attending the Preschool for at least 600 hours per year (two days per week, 40 weeks each year).

Under the Start Strong Priority of Access Guidelines, the Pre-School is required to give equal priority of access to:

- children who are at least 4 years old on or before the 31 July in that preschool year and not enrolled or registered at a school
- children who are at least 3 years old on or before 31 July in that preschool year and from low income and/or Aboriginal families
- children with English language needs
- children with disability and additional needs
- 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. However, priority must be given to the groups outlined above before any other groups, including non-equity three-year olds.

The Priority of Access guidelines are intended to assist the Pre-School with making enrolment decisions, in a way that seeks to allocate places to those in the greatest need. However, the particular community needs of the Pre-School will also be relevant during the enrolment process.

Enrolments will be accepted providing:

- The maximum daily attendance does not exceed the licensed capacity of the Pre-School.
- A vacancy is available for the booking required.
- The child attends for a minimum of two days per week, equal to 600 hours per year.
- The child is immunised.

Children with additional needs, including diagnosed disabilities will be enrolled, if in the opinion of the Director, the Pre-School can meet the child's needs. Additional resources and funding may be required. The Director will consult directly with the family to ensure all information is collected and additional support funding is available.

## **AFFORDABLE PRESCHOOL PROGRAM**

Commencing in 2023, the Affordable Preschool Program will provide 600 hours per year (the equivalent of 2 days per week) to all eligible children enrolled at Gosford Pre-School. This program will provide families with funding certainty, and will **replace** the **Start Strong Free Preschool funding**, which will cease at the end of 2022.

## **PAYMENT OF FEES**

- Fees are set up using the Pre-School's direct debit system.
- Families will be issued with a fee statement before the beginning of each term, and showing total fees payable for the term.
- A dishonour fee will apply for direct debit transactions where there are insufficient funds to cover the fees. If dishonoured, the payment will be re-debited in 3 days.

## **FINANCIAL DIFFICULTIES**

- If a family is experiencing financial difficulties, a suitable payment plan may be arranged with authorisation of the Director.

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## FAILURE TO PAY

- If a family fails to pay the required fees on time, a reminder letter will be issued after one week and then again after two weeks if the fees are still outstanding.
- A child's position may be terminated if payment has not been made after three weeks, for which the family will receive a final letter terminating the child's position.
- At this time, the Pre-School will initiate its debt collection process, following privacy and conditional requirements.

## LATE COLLECTION FEES

- The Pre-School is not licensed or insured to have children on the premises after hours. This is a breach in the Education and Care Regulations.
- It is unacceptable to pick children up late from the Pre-School. A late fee will apply where children are not picked up prior to closing time. Currently, a fee of \$15.00 per 15-minute block or part thereof will be incurred by the family. An invoice will be emailed and the late fee direct debited on the date of the invoice.
- A review of the child's enrolment will occur where families are consistently late with arrival and pick-up times and/or fee payments.

## CHANGE OF FEES

- Fees are subject to change at any time provided a minimum of four weeks written notice is given to all families.
- Fees for the year are set by the Pre-School in July/August for the following year, aiming to provide ample notice for any changes in fees.
- Changes in fees, including fee increases, may occur and are subject to the Department of Education Start Strong Funding Program.

## TERMINATION OF ENROLMENT

- Parents are to provide a minimum of four weeks written notice of their intention to withdraw a child from the Pre-School.

## RESPONSIBILITY OF MANAGEMENT

The Director is responsible for:

- ensuring all families are aware of our *Payment of Fees Policy*
- providing families with regular statement of fees payable
- notifying families of any overdue fees
- providing families with reminder letters as required
- terminating enrolment of children should fees not be paid
- discussing fee payment with families if required

## SOURCE

Australia Children's Education & Care Quality Authority (2018). *Guide to the National Quality Framework*.

Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment *Early Childhood and Care*

<https://www.education.gov.au/early-childhood-and-child-care-0>

Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment *Information for child care providers when a period of local emergency occurs*

Kearns, K. (2017). *The Business of Childcare* (4<sup>th</sup> Ed.).

Guide to the Education and Care Services National Law and the Education and Care Services National Regulations. (2017).

Guide to the National Quality Standard (2020)

Revised National Quality Standard. (2018)