

HOBSONS
BAY CITY
COUNCIL



Kindergarten Central Registration Scheme

Policy & Procedures

Updated March 2024

Acknowledgment of Country

Council acknowledges the Bunurong People of the Kulin Nation as the Traditional Owners of these municipal lands and waterways, and pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

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1. Purpose

This policy and procedure outlines the criteria, processes and priorities used when registering a child for funded three and four-year-old kindergarten programs through Hobsons Bay City Council's Kindergarten Central Registration Scheme (CRS).

Central kindergarten registration allows local government areas to establish strong links with support services, and to work closely with the Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Service, to identify and engage children and families who may need more support to access a kindergarten program.

Hobsons Bay City Council supports the administration of a centralised kindergarten registration process to ensure that all eligible children have access to quality early years programs.

2. Scope

This policy applies to families who wish to register their children for a kindergarten program participating in Hobsons Bay City Council's Central Registration Scheme (CRS), Kindergarten Providers, and Council officers involved in the administration of Council's CRS.

3. Related Legislation & Policies

The policy and scheme procedures are underpinned by the following relevant legislation and standards include but are not limited to:

Local Government:

- A Fair Hobsons Bay for All
- Hobsons Bay City Council Plan

State Government (Victoria):

- Department of Education 'Best Start, Best Life' Reform
- Kindergarten Funding Guide
- Kindergarten Early Years Management Framework
- Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic)
- Information Privacy Act 2000 (Part four Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 (Vic)
- Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework
- Department of Education 'Kindergarten Central Registration and Enrolment Scheme CRES Practice Guide' 2023
- Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010
- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011

Federal Government (Australia):

- National Quality Framework
- National Early Years Learning Framework
- Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010
- Education and Care Services National Regulations

4. Definitions

Kindergarten Central Registration Scheme (CRS)	A best-practice model that streamlines the process of registering children in kindergarten programs for families and service providers, ensuring the process is consistent, inclusive, and equitable.
Department Education (DE)	State Government Department of Education.
Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC)	Services provided to children in the years before primary school that develops a child's social, emotional, cognitive, and physical abilities, building a solid foundation for future learning.
Eligible Child	A child who is eligible to be allocated a kindergarten place in a participating Hobsons Bay City Council kindergarten (refer to item 7.).
Enrolment	Completed by families with the Kindergarten Provider. In-depth information collection in line with state legislation for a child soon to begin kindergarten. This includes ensuring the service provider has the health and emergency information to provide a safe experience for children and informs state government planning and subsidies.
Early Start Kindergarten (ESK)	15 hours of free or low cost kindergarten per week for eligible three-year-old children (refer to item 7.4 for eligibility criteria)
Kindergarten Fee Subsidy (KFS)	<p>Kindergarten Fee Subsidy (KFS) is only available at services who are not participating in Free Kinder. KFS promotes kindergarten participation by enabling eligible children in funded three and four-year-old groups to access up to 15 hours of kindergarten delivered by a qualified early childhood teacher free of charge or at low cost.</p> <p>A child enrolled in a long day care service is not eligible for KFS where approved Commonwealth Childcare subsidy is applied.</p>
Free Kinder	<p>Free Kinder is available for all Victorian three and four-year-old children at participating services in both</p> <p>standalone (sessional) services and long day care (childcare)</p> <p>settings. This gives a saving of over \$2,5063 per child in sessional services and up to \$2,050 per child in childcare services.</p>

Integrated Kindergarten (Long Day Care)	<p>Children access their funded kindergarten program as part of their time in an integrated long day care service.</p> <p>An early childhood educational program delivered by a qualified, VIT registered early childhood teacher to children in the two years before school. The term “preschool” is used nationally and in some municipalities.</p>
Kindergarten	<p>In Victoria, a “funded kindergarten program” is a program that complies with applicable requirements as set out in the Kindergarten Funding Guide and provides a program in accordance with the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework.</p> <p>Funded kindergarten programs may operate in a variety of settings, including long day care centres, standalone services, schools, or community centres, and are operated by a variety of Early Years service providers, including the community.</p>
Kindergarten Funding Guide	<p>Information from DE for funded kindergarten service providers about the range of funding that is available, eligibility criteria and the obligations and accountability in receiving funding.</p>
Parent Portal	<p>Council’s online Parent Portal which enables families to register their children for three and four-year-old kindergarten programs online. Through the online portal families can also monitor their registrations progress, update their contact information, change their kindergarten group preferences, and action kindergarten placement offers.</p>
Priority of Access	<p>The detailed priorities referred to when allocating places in a kindergarten program participating in Council’s Kindergarten Central Registration Scheme (see Table 2).</p>
Proximity to Service	<p>Is a criterion considered in Council’s Priority of Access (see Table 2) for determining a child’s access to a kindergarten place in a funded kindergarten program that is closest in proximity to the family’s residence.</p>
Registration	<p>The process of families and carers providing Council basic details, group/centre preferences and consent to participate in the Group Allocation process. Registration is completed either via the Parent Portal or using Council’s hardcopy form and occurs prior to Enrolment completed by the Kindergarten Provider.</p>
Reserved Places	<p>The reserving of kindergarten places for four-year-old children likely to do a second year and known high</p>

	priority children that Council is aware of but have not yet submitted their registration.
Safety Places	The reserving of kindergarten places in each kindergarten group to support access and inclusion of high priority children, so that they can still attend a program even if they miss registration or service enrolment dates.
Second year of funded four-year-old kindergarten	Children enrolled in a funded four-year-old kindergarten program may be eligible to access a second year of funded kindergarten, based on the early childhood teacher's assessment during their first year of four-year-old kindergarten (refer to item 7.6. for criteria).

5. Policy

Hobsons Bay City Council is committed to:

- Working in partnership with Kindergarten Providers to oversee the central registration and allocation of places for eligible children in funded three-year-old and/or four-year-old kindergarten programs.
- Ensuring fair and equitable access for families to kindergarten programs in line with the priorities of access outlined in this policy.
- Implementing an effective, efficient, and accessible registration process that enables families to access high quality funded kindergarten programs for their children in the years before starting primary school.

5.1. Participating Kindergarten Services

- Altona Early Years Hub
- Altona Gate Kindergarten
- Altona Kindergarten
- Altona Meadows Kindergarten
- Altona North Children's Centre
- Cooraminta Children's Centre
- Emma McLean Kindergarten & Daycare
- Home Road Kindergarten
- Laverton Community Children's Centre
- Laverton/Cooraminta North Kindergarten
- Newport Gardens Early Years Centre
- Robina Scott Kindergarten – Ferguson Street
- Robina Scott Kindergarten – Cecil Street
- Russell Court Kindergarten
- Seabrook Kindergarten
- Seaholme Kindergarten
- Somers Parade Kindergarten
- South Kingsville Pre-School
- The Range Children's Centre

5.2. Non-Participating Kindergarten Services

See <https://www.startingblocks.gov.au/>

6. Background

The Victorian Government has committed \$14 billion over the next decade to expand funded kindergarten programs across the state through the governments Best Start Best Life reforms.

The reforms include:

- Free Kinder: From 2023, Free Kinder is available for Victorian 3 and 4-year-old children at participating services in both standalone (sessional) services and long day care (childcare) settings – a saving of up to \$2,500 per child, every year.
- Pre-Prep: Over the next decade, Four-Year-Old Kindergarten will transition to 'Pre-Prep' – increasing to a universal 30-hour a week program of play-based learning for four-year-old children in Victoria by 2032.
- Three-Year-Old Kindergarten: The roll-out of Three-Year-Old Kindergarten continues, programs will increase to 15 hours a week across the state by 2029 – providing Victorian children with two years of a quality kindergarten program before school.
- Early Learning Centres: The establishment of 50 Victorian government-owned and operated early learning centres. These centres will be built in areas with the greatest need and will make it easier for families to access childcare. The first of the centres will be available in 2025.
- Kindergarten infrastructure: Significant investment in infrastructure across the state, including new kindergartens on or near school sites. Substantial grants are available to build, expand and maintain kindergarten services.
- Kindergarten workforce: Increased investment to attract, upskill and retain early childhood teachers and educators – scholarships, incentives, traineeships, and career advancement programs are available to support our skilled workforce.

Free Kinder supports every Victorian child to get the best start in life no matter where they live. It is strongly encouraged that all children attend kinder programs for two years before school as a crucial part of their educational journey.

For more information see <https://www.vic.gov.au/give-your-child-the-best-start-in-life>.

7. Eligibility Criteria

7.1. Three-year-old kindergarten program eligibility

The following children are eligible for one year of funded three-year-old kindergarten:

- High priority children outlined in the Priority of Access (refer to Table 2.).
- Hobsons Bay children who are at least three years of age on or before 30 April of the year of kindergarten attendance (please note, due to staffing ratio requirements, some services may ask that children start attending kindergarten only after their third birthday).
- Hobsons Bay children who were eligible to attend a three-year-old kindergarten program in the previous year but delayed commencement.

- Non-residents who are working, studying or have childcare arrangements in the municipality, who would otherwise meet the criteria above, who will be assessed on a case-by-case basis in October of the year prior they wish to attend.
- Non-residents who do not meet the above criteria, who will be assessed on a case-by-case basis in October of the year prior they wish to attend.

7.2. Four-year-old kindergarten program eligibility

The following children are eligible for one funded year of four-year-old kindergarten place:

- High priority children outlined in the Priority of Access (refer to Table 2.).
- Hobsons Bay children who are at least four years of age on or before 30 April of the year of kindergarten attendance.
- Hobsons Bay children turning six years of age during the kindergarten year who have been granted an exemption from school entry age requirements by their regional DE office.
- Hobsons Bay children who are younger than the eligible age but whose parents/guardians have submitted a written request to their regional DE office and have been approved for their child to attend kindergarten the following year.
- Children eligible for Early Start Kindergarten.
- Children who have received funding for a second year of four-year-old kindergarten.
- Non-residents who are working, studying or have childcare arrangements in the municipality who would otherwise meet the criteria above, who will be assessed on a case-by-case basis in October of the year prior they wish to attend.
- Non-residents who do not meet the above criteria, who will be assessed on a case-by-case basis in October of the year prior they wish to attend.

7.3. When to start kindergarten

Children are eligible to attend one year of funded three-year-old kindergarten and one year of funded four-year-old kindergarten (unless they are eligible for a second year of four-year-old kindergarten) prior to starting primary school.

The year each child starts at kindergarten directly relates to the age they will start at primary school. Families are encouraged to consider the year they would like their child to start primary school when deciding on when their child will start kindergarten. The expectation is that children move on to their four-year-old kindergarten after completing their three-year-old kindergarten year. A second year of three-year-old kindergarten is not available.

Families are encouraged to speak with their Maternal & Child Health nurse, a kindergarten educator or health professional about the best time for their child to start at three-year-old kindergarten.

Please refer to the Department of Education (DE) Starting Age Calculator, families enter their child's birth date to find out what year their child can start three and four-year-old kindergarten <https://www.vic.gov.au/give-your-child-the-best-start-in-life>.

Children born between January and April

Families who have children born between 1 January and 30 April can choose which year their child starts three-year-old kindergarten. Children born between 1 January and 30 April can start in the same year they turn three, or in the year they turn four years of age.

Due to staffing requirements, some services may ask that children start attending kindergarten only after their third birthday. This may mean that some children may not start attending their kindergarten program until part-way into Term 1 or even Term 2.

For children who will turn six in late December (between the last day of the kindergarten year and 31 December), they can attend four-year-old kindergarten in that year and attend school the following year.

7.4. Early Start Kindergarten

Early Start Kindergarten (ESK) provides eligible three-year-old children with 15 hours of free or low-cost kindergarten each week, planned and delivered by a qualified and VIT registered Early Childhood Teacher in the two years before they start school. To be eligible for ESK a child must turn three on or before 30 April and meet one of the following criteria:

- from a refugee or asylum seeker background, or
- identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, or
- from a family that has had contact with child protection.

A child from a refugee or asylum seeker background is eligible for ESK if the child holds or has a parent or guardian who holds one of the following:

- Refugee visa (subclass 200)
- In-country Special Humanitarian visa (subclass 201)
- Global Special Humanitarian visa (subclass 202)
- Emergency Rescue visa (subclass 203)
- Woman at Risk visa (subclass 204)
- Humanitarian Stay visa (subclass 449)
- Temporary Protection visa (subclass 785)
- Temporary (Humanitarian Concern) visa (subclass 786)
- Safe Haven Enterprise visa (subclass 790)
- Protection visa (subclass 866)
- A Bridging visa and is in the process of applying for one of the above Refugee or Humanitarian visas
- Current or expired ImmiCard
- An approved exemption from the department

Children accessing Early Start Kindergarten can be enrolled in a three-year-old group, a mixed age group, or a four-year-old group, and can be enrolled in multiple groups in order to access up to 15 hours per week.

Families who think they are eligible for Early Start Kindergarten are encouraged to contact the Kindergarten Central Registration Team or talk with their Maternal & Child Health Nurse to confirm their eligibility.

Referrals for ESK can also be made by families, Kindergarten Providers, health and allied health professionals or Child Protection and associated agencies, by emailing kindergarten@hobsonsbay.vic.gov.au with the registrant's permission.

For eligible children who have completed their Early Start Kindergarten year, families are not required to submit a registration for their child's funded four-year-old kindergarten year the following year.

To ensure the child receives priority of access for the following year families and/or Kindergarten Providers can notify Council that the child is eligible for Early Start Kindergarten.

7.5. Early Entry to kindergarten

Early entry to Four-Year-Old Kindergarten may be appropriate for some gifted children where families are seeking an early entry to school for their child i.e. the child will not be 5 years of age before 30 April in the year of school commencement. Early entry to school is approved only when exceptional circumstances apply and is subject to an application process and rigorous eligibility criteria.

Should parents, carers or legal guardians decide to request early entry to Four-Year-old Kindergarten for their child, the following requirements must be met:

- the child must be at least 3 years and 6 months on or before 30 April in the year they attend the funded kindergarten program. Parents, carers or legal guardians must make a written request for early entry to school to their local Area Executive Director or directly to the principal of a non-government school dependent on whether the child is intending to attend a government or non-government school
- parents, carers or legal guardians must provide the kindergarten service provider with a written response from the department or the nongovernment school acknowledging the family has requested early entry to school
- the kindergarten service provider must keep a copy of the written response from the department or non-government school with the child's kindergarten enrolment records.

Families must be aware that early entry into kindergarten does not guarantee early entry into school. If the request for early entry to school is not approved by the department they will not be able to access another year of funded Four-Year-Old Kindergarten, unless approved by DE.

7.6. Second year of four-year-old kindergarten funding

A child is eligible to receive a second year of funded four-year-old kindergarten if:

- a) The child is observed as having delays in at least two outcome areas of learning and development detailed in the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework, and
- b) the kindergarten program is deemed to be the most appropriate learning program and environment for that individual child; the child will achieve better outcomes at kindergarten than if they go to school.

The early childhood teacher is responsible for determining a child's eligibility to receive a second year of funded four-year-old kindergarten.

Please note: If the child will turn six years of age in their second year of funded Four-Year-Old Kindergarten, the family must get an exemption from starting school from DE. The Kindergarten Provider must provide Council with the number of estimated second

year places before the cut-off for Round One in the year prior to the second year of kindergarten attendance.

To confirm the second year of funded four-year-old kindergarten place Educators and families will be required to complete Council's 'Second Year of Kindergarten – Group Placement' form. Kindergartens are then required to return the completed form to Council by the date requested by Council, the year prior to the second year of attendance.

7.7. Self-funded second year of four-year-old kindergarten

When a child does not meet the DE eligibility criteria for a second year of funded Four-Year-Old Kindergarten, and does not require an exemption from school due to attending a funded kindergarten program, but a family wishes to access a second year of four-year-old kindergarten without receiving Per Capita and Free Kindergarten funding from DE (full paying fee).

These potential registrations will only be considered after the allocation process has concluded (at the end of January in the year requested). Placement is subject to availability, negotiation with the individual kindergarten services and Council regarding the placement. All requests must be submitted in writing to Council.

Families need to be aware if an eligible child requires a place at the centre, they will take priority over a self-funded place even after a child has commenced their second year of self-funded four-year-old kindergarten.

Requests for any other self-funded places will be considered by Council on a case-by-case basis.

7.8. Exemption from school enrolment due to attendance in a funded kindergarten program,

If a child will turn 6 years of age before or while they're in their first or second year of funded four-year-old kindergarten, families must seek an **exemption from school**, from the Department of Education.

An exemption is granted in situations where a child is eligible for a funded kindergarten place.

If it is the child's first year of funded Four-Year-Old Kindergarten: Families can apply for an exemption from their child attending primary school the following year if one or more of these circumstances apply:

- The family has moved from interstate or overseas where the school entry age is different to Victoria.
- The child's early education has been delayed due to chronic illness, disability, or developmental delay.
- The child is a refugee or asylum seeker who has suffered trauma and would benefit from a year of kindergarten before starting school.
- The child has not been able to access kindergarten because of transient family circumstances.
- Other special considerations.

Families need to obtain written confirmation from a professional (such as a kindergarten teacher, doctor, or an allied health professional) to confirm the circumstance. The

professional must also explain why it's best for the child to attend four-year-old kindergarten instead of starting primary school.

If it is the child's second year of funded Four-Year-Old Kindergarten: Families can apply for an exemption from school if a *'Declaration of Eligibility for a Second Year of funded Four-year-old Kindergarten'* form has been completed by the child's early childhood teacher and is provided to the DE with the **'Exemption from School due to Attendance at a Kindergarten Program' form** if required.

Families should confirm with their child's kindergarten service that the Declaration of Eligibility for a Second Year of Funded Four-Year-Old Kindergarten form has been submitted.

It is the family's responsibility to complete and send the **'Exemption from School due to Attendance at a Kindergarten Program' form** to their closest Department of Education regional office.

For more information see <https://www.vic.gov.au/going-kindergarten-if-your-child-six-years-old>.

7.9. Preschool Field Officer Program

The Preschool Field Officer (PSFO) program is a targeted and time-limited capacity-building program. All Victorian funded kindergarten programs are eligible to receive PSFO service to support the access, inclusion, and participation of children with additional needs in a kindergarten program.

This includes children enrolled in funded four-year-old kindergarten, funded three-year-old kindergarten, and Early Start kindergarten. For more information see <https://www.vic.gov.au/preschool-field-officer-program>.

Referrals to Council's PSFO service must be completed by Educators and families together. For more information call 9932 1540 or email psfo@hobsonsabay.vic.gov.au.

7.10. Ensuring all children access and benefits from kindergarten participation

To help more children access kindergarten and get the best start in life, the Victorian Government provides extra funding to programs to ensure children experiencing disadvantage and children with a disability get the support they need.

7.10.1. Pre-purchased places

A Pre-Purchased Place (PPP) is a kindergarten place funded by the department and reserved for vulnerable or disadvantaged children who present outside normal enrolment periods.

7.10.2. Kindergarten Inclusion Support

Kindergarten Inclusion Support (KIS) is support available for funded kindergartens to plan and implement a program that is responsive to the individual abilities, interests and needs of children with a disability, developmental delay, or complex medical needs. Families are encouraged to discuss their child's needs and eligibility for KIS funding with their allocated kindergarten. For more information see <https://www.vic.gov.au/kindergarten-inclusion-children-disabilities>.

7.11. Wrap Around Care

Some Kindergarten Services may provide wrap around care, this is a paid component of childcare offered prior to and/or after the kindergarten session. Families will be informed by the kindergarten service if there is the option to access wrap around care and the fees payable for this service.

7.12. Immunisation Status - No Jab, No Play

The Victorian Government amended the Public Health & Wellbeing Act 2008, effective January 2016. The amendments mean that early childhood education and care services cannot confirm enrolment of a child unless the family has provided documentation that shows the child:

- is fully vaccinated,
- 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.

Upon formal enrolment with the kindergarten service, families are required to provide an up-to-date Immunisation History Statement to the Kindergarten Provider.

Families can download a copy of their child's Immunisation History Statement online from the Australian Immunisation Register (AIR), by accessing their Medicare online account on the Medicare mobile app or through MyGov. Alternatively, families can:

- Ask their vaccination provider to print a copy from the AIR site
- Call the AIR on 1800 653 809 (between 8am-5pm, Monday to Friday) and request a copy to be mailed to them (this can take up to 10 business days), or
- Request a copy at a Services Australia Service Centre.

In some circumstances, a 16 week 'support period' (also known as the 'grace period') can be applied, so eligible children experiencing vulnerability or disadvantage can start at the kindergarten while the family makes arrangements to obtain a statement. For more information visit [Before enrolment - 'No Jab, No Play' requirements \(health.vic.gov.au\)](#)

Children enrolled in ESK are eligible to enrol immediately, without proof of up-to-date immunisations. A 16 week grace period from the date children first attend the service allows the family to continue to access kindergarten while they obtain an Immunisation History Statement. The service should assist the family as much as possible through this process.

8. Registrations

8.1. Key Dates

Families can register their child early from the age of one year onwards to attend a three and four-year-old kindergarten program in Hobsons Bay through Council's CRS.

Registrations remain open, kindergarten places are allocated in rounds according to the cut off dates below until all available places are filled.

Thursday 28 March 2024	Kindergarten Providers confirm 2025 session times with Council.
Monday 22 April 2024	Kindergarten group selection open.
Friday 31 May 2024	Registrations for first round offers for three and four-year-old Kindergarten close. Cut-off date for all three and four-year-old kindergarten registrants who registered before group selection was available to provide group preference selections and any required supporting documents.
June 2024	First round offers for three and four-year-old Kindergarten are emailed. Families required to respond to offer by the advised due date.
Friday 12 July 2024	Registrations for second round offers for three and four-year-old Kindergarten close. Cut-off date for all outstanding three and four-year-old kindergarten registrants to provide group preference selections and any required supporting documents.
Late July 2024	Second round offers for three and four-year-old Kindergarten are emailed. Families required to respond to offer by the advised due date.
September 2024 onwards	Kindergarten Providers receive registration details for all accepted places from Council. Prior to Term 3 holidays.
October 2024 onwards	Registrations are allocated to available places according to the priority of access see Table 2. Non-resident registrations are assessed on a case-by-case basis.

Families are contacted directly by Kindergarten Providers to complete their formal enrolment in the kindergarten service.

8.2. Registration Submission

Families are required to complete one registration per child for each year of kindergarten i.e., three-year-old kindergarten and for four-year-old kindergarten.

Families can:

- Register their child to attend a three-year-old kindergarten program, from when their child turns one year of age.
- Register their child to attend a four-year-old kindergarten program, from when their child turns two years of age.

To be considered in the first round of kindergarten placement offers for three and four-year-old kindergarten, registrations must be submitted by **midnight Friday 31 May 2024**.

8.3. Completing a registration online via the Parent Portal

Families are encouraged to complete their registration online through the Parent Portal kinders.hobsonsabay.vic.gov.au. Registering online enables families to monitor the progress of registrations in real time, change group preferences and update contact details during the registration process.

Before group selections are available (Before 22 April 2024)

1. Access the Parent Portal: kinders.hobsonsabay.vic.gov.au
2. Create a Parent Profile (only required for first-time users of the Parent Profile)
3. Enter in required personal information & upload supporting documentation
4. Select preferred Kindergarten services (Parents will be unable to select groups at this stage, they will be prompted via email to do this at a later date)
5. Submit registration

When group selections are available (from 22 April 2024)

1. Access the Parent Portal via this link kinders.hobsonsabay.vic.gov.au
2. Create a Parent Profile (only required for first-time users of the Parent Profile)
3. Enter in required personal information & upload supporting documentation
4. Select preferred Kindergarten services and groups
5. Submit registration

8.4. Completing a hard copy registration form

Families can obtain a hard copy registration form from Council offices and Council+ sites/ service centre locations (Table 1), participating Kindergarten services and Maternal & Child Health Services. Registration forms can also be downloaded from Council's website [here](#)

<https://www.hobsonsabay.vic.gov.au/Community/Community-services/Families-children/Kindergarten/Kindergarten-Central-Registration>

Hard copy registration forms can be returned to Council via mail to Hobsons Bay City Council PO Box 21, Altona 3018, by email to kindergarten@hobsonsbay.vic.gov.au or submitted in person at a Council office and service centre see Table 1.

Table 1. Council and Council+ Service Centre Locations:

Location	Address
Altona Library	123 Queen Street, Altona
Altona Meadows Library and Learning Centre	2 Newham Way, Altona Meadows
Altona North Community Library	Corner Millers & McArthurs Road, Altona North
Civic Centre	115 Civic Parade, Altona
Laverton Community Hub	95-105 Railway Avenue, Laverton
Newport Community Hub	13-14 Mason Street, Newport
Seabrook Community Centre	15 Truganina Avenue, Seabrook
Williamstown Library	104 Ferguson Street, Williamstown

8.5. Support needed to complete a kindergarten registration

Council's Maternal & Child Health Service (MCH) and CALD Engagement Officer play an important role supporting families who are experiencing vulnerability and disadvantage, and families from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds, particularly those from newly arrived and refugee backgrounds to engage in funded kindergarten programs. This includes those who are eligible for Early Start Kindergarten see item 7.4.

Assistance is available to families to support them to register their children in a funded kindergarten program. To request assistance directly or on behalf of a family please contact the Kindergarten Central Registration Team via email kindergarten@hobsonsbay.vic.gov.au or call 9932 1534.

8.6. Supporting Documents

All registrations require:

- Proof of child's date of birth (for example, Birth Certificate, passport)

Hobsons Bay resident registrations require:

- Evidence of residency or rate payer (rates notice, current utility bill).

Priority access to kindergarten registrations require:

- Families and/or support services must provide the supporting documentation detailed in the Priority of Access (Table 2).
- If registering for four-year-old kindergarten, families to advise of the three-year-old kindergarten service their child is currently attending.
- If applicable, the name and year of attendance of the child's sibling who attended the families first preference kindergarten within the last two years.

Non-resident registrations require:

- For non-residents moving to Hobsons Bay, provide a copy of home contract of sale or lease agreement.
- For non-residents working or studying accessing childcare in Hobsons Bay:
 - Letter from employer or educational Institution.
 - Formal Care - i.e., Long Day Care. Letter from Childcare or another Provider.
 - Informal Care - i.e., care provided by grandparent/carer. Statutory Declaration and evidence of informal care residency.

Families who register before kindergarten group selection is available

Council will email families who register their child for a three or four-year-old kindergarten program before group selection is available in April the year prior to the child's kindergarten year, to advise that kindergarten group selection is available and the next steps in the registration process.

Families who register their child for a three or four-year-old kindergarten program before kindergarten group selection is available will need to:

- Select their preferred kindergarten groups prior to the advertised cutoff date for round one, by logging into the Parent Portal <https://kinders.hobsonsbay.vic.gov.au> and updating their preferences or emailing up to five kindergarten group preferences to kindergarten@hobsonsbay.vic.gov.au.
- Provide any required supporting documents again, prior to the advertised cut-off date for round one, i.e., change of address utility or rates notice, renewed Health Care Card (see Table 2), before the advertised cut-off date.
- Advise Council in writing via email to kindergarten@hobsonsbay.vic.gov.au if they no longer require a kindergarten place for their child.

To be eligible to receive an offer in the first-round families must provide supporting documents and kindergarten group preferences by the advertised round one offers cutoff date.

If they fail to provide supporting documents and kindergarten group preferences by the advertised round one offers cutoff date:

- Their registration will not be processed in the first round of offers and will be processed the second round of offers provided the family's kindergarten group preferences and required supporting documentation is provided.

If families fail to provide the required supporting documents and kindergarten group preferences by the advertised round two offers cutoff date:

- Their registration will not be processed in the second round of offers and will be processed after the round offers have been completed provided the family's kindergarten group preferences and required supporting documentation is provided.

If families fail to provide the required supporting documents and kindergarten group preferences after the round offers have been completed:

- Their registration will be cancelled.

Council will make additional attempts to contact families of High Priority Children to complete their registrations.

8.7. Receipt of registration

Families will receive an email from Council's Kindergarten Central Registration Team acknowledging receipt of their registration and advising of the next steps in the registration process.

8.8. Incomplete registrations

If a registration is submitted that is deemed incomplete, the family will be requested via email to provide any outstanding documentation and/or information.

Incomplete registrations include not providing required supporting documentation or information, group selection/preferences not provided.

Incomplete registrations will not progress until all required documentation/information has been received, failure to provide required information may result in the registration being cancelled.

Council will make additional attempts to contact families of High Priority Children to complete their registrations.

8.9. Registration & Placement Enquiries

Families must refer all registration and placement enquires directly to Council's Kindergarten Central Registration Team via email to kindergarten@hobsonsbay.vic.gov.au or by calling 9932 1534.

Families who contact Kindergarten services regarding their registration and placement enquiries will be directed to contact Council. Kindergarten services do not have access to live registration data and will not be able to provide accurate advice regarding group vacancies.

9. Priority of Access

In instances where more eligible children are seeking a place in a kindergarten than there are places available, kindergarten services and Council central registration services must:

- Prioritise children based on the criteria listed below which includes the Department's Priority of Access (Priority 1 - applied first) and Council's local Priority of access (Priority 2-5 applied subsequently)
- Work with other local kindergarten services and the regional Department of Education office to ensure all eligible children have access to a kindergarten place.

To ensure equity for both three and four-year-old children, allocations for each program (three-year-old and four-year-old kindergarten) will have the Priority of Access applied to each age cohort separately.

Where multiple children meet the Priority One criteria and there are limited places available, registrations will be weighted, based on the number of Priority of Access criteria that the registrant meets. In the event that multiple children are weighted equally for a limited number of places, Council will operate a random ballot for the equally ranked children to determine allocation. Subsequently, the same process will apply for children in Priorities Two to Five.

This priority of access criteria must be used when prioritising registrations.

Table 2. Priority of Access

Priority 1 - High Priority Children (<i>DE Criteria</i>)	Eligibility and process used to verify needs
Children at risk of abuse or neglect, including children in Out-of-Home Care	<p>The child</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is eligible for Early Start Kindergarten (ESK) or Access to Early Learning (AEL) • is referred by one or more of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Child Protection. ○ Child and family services (family services referral and support team, Child FIRST/integrated family services/Services Connect case worker). ○ Maternal and Child Health nurse. ○ Out-of-Home Care provider. • is identified by the parent of carer as being known to Child Protection or in Out -of-Home Care.
Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children	Family identifies the child as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.
Asylum Seeker and/or Refugee children	<p>If available an appropriate visa or supporting documentation and information, identifying the child and/or parents as a refugee or asylum seeker or having a refugee or asylum seeker experience/ background.</p> <p>Referred as a refugee or asylum seeker by a CALD outreach worker.</p>
Children known to Child Protection or child's family has had contact with Child Protection eligible for Early Start Kindergarten	<p>A child who meets both of the following criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the child is three years old by 30 April in the year in which they are enrolled to attend the funded Kindergarten program, and • the child is known to Child Protection, meaning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ a child who has a current, or a history of, involvement with Child Protection, including those in out-of-home care, or ○ a child who has been referred by Child Protection to Child FIRST. <p>A child's eligibility can be advised by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a parent or carer who self-identify (verbally / in writing) that their child is currently supported by Child Protection or Child FIRST services or has been supported in the past, or • a Child Protection or Child FIRST professional in writing.
Aboriginal/ Torres Strait Islander children eligible for Early Start Kindergarten.	<p>A child who meets both of the following criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the child is three years old by 30 April in the year in which they are enrolled to attend the funded Kindergarten program. • the child has been identified as being Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. <p>Advice of eligibility may be verbal (from a parent or carer) or written from a professional such as a Koorie Engagement Support Officer (KESO).</p>
Children of a Refugee or Asylum Seeker background eligible for Early Start Kindergarten	<p>A child who meets all of the following criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the child is three years old by 30 April in the year in which they are enrolled to attend the funded Kindergarten program the child and or parents have been identified as a refugee or asylum seeker or having a refugee or asylum seeker background/experience. • Advice about eligibility is via an appropriate visa /referral letter from case worker or verbal verification from parent / guardian.

<p>Children with additional needs, defined by Department of Education as children who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have an identified specific disability or developmental delay. • Require additional assistance in order to fully participate in the kindergarten program. • Require a combination of services which are individually planned. 	<p>The child:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • holds Child Disability Health Care Card, and/or • has previously been approved for Kindergarten Inclusion Support (KIS) program, and/or • has been referred by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ the National Disability Insurance Scheme ○ Early Childhood Intervention Service ○ Preschool Field Officer ○ Maternal and Child Health nurse ○ General Practitioner, treating Doctor, and/or • is assessed as having delays in two or more areas and is declared eligible for a second funded year of kindergarten.
<p>Children that meet the eligibility criteria for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy</p>	<p>A child or parent holds a Commonwealth Health Care Card, Pensioner Concession Card, Veteran's Affairs Card, and/or</p> <p>The child is identified on their birth certificate as one of a set of triplets, quadruplets or more.</p>
<p>Priority 2 (Local criteria)</p>	
<p>Children of Hobsons Bay residents where the parent / guardian or child has a life threatening or debilitating illness, or disease.</p>	<p>Verification document required:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A copy of a signed letter from a General Practitioner or other treating Doctor.
<p>Children of Hobsons Bay residents where a parent / guardian has a disability.</p>	<p>Verification documents will be one of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A copy of a signed letter from a General Practitioner. • A copy of a signed letter from a disability support agency.
<p>Children of Hobsons Bay who have attended or have a sibling who previously attended the family's preferred kindergarten program.</p>	<p>Child who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attended or has a sibling that has previously attended the families preferred kindergarten in the last two years (2023 or 2024 only). <p>Eligibility is confirmed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upon completion of kindergarten registration. • Verification completed by Council when the registration is processed.
<p>Priority 3 (Local criteria)</p>	
<p>Resident/Ratepayer of Hobsons Bay – parents/ guardians who currently (or soon will) live in Hobsons Bay</p>	<p>Families who select their closest service as a first preference will be prioritised over those who do not.</p> <p>Verification documents will be in the form of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of living in the municipality or being a rate payer. • Contract of Sale document.

Priority 4 (Local criteria)	
<p>Non-resident children who have a connection to Hobsons Bay and meet one or more of the following criteria.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child's parent/guardian is working or studying within Hobsons Bay, minimum of 2 days per week. • Child is attending formal or informal care in Hobsons Bay, minimum of 2 days per week. 	<p>Registrations are assessed on a case-by case basis in October onwards the year prior to the child's kindergarten year.</p> <p>Verification documents will be in the form of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letter from employer or educational Institution. • Formal Care - i.e., Long Day Care. Letter from Childcare or other Provider. • Informal Care - i.e., care provided by grandparent/carer. Statutory Declaration and evidence of informal care residency.
Priority 5 (Local criteria)	
<p>Non-residents of Hobsons Bay</p>	<p>Families who reside outside of the municipality who do not meet any other Priority categories.</p> <p>Registrations assessed on a case-by-case basis from October onwards the year prior to the child's kindergarten year.</p>

10. Process

10.1. Reserving Safety Kindergarten Places

Kindergarten places will be kept as Safety Places for high priority children outlined in Table 2. Priority of Access.

Any remaining places not filled will be made available to wait listed families in January.

10.2. Group Preferences

Families are encouraged to indicate up to five (5) kindergarten service / group preferences. Preferences must be listed in order from 1 (most preferred) to 5 (least preferred). Preferences should only be selected where the family is willing to accept a place if offered.

Families who submit their registration before group selection is available on 22 April 2024, will be contacted via email and prompted to submit their kindergarten group preferences by the cut-off date.

Please note: Kindergarten groups, session times and the composition of groups (mixed age group / single age group / rotational model) are subject to change. If changes are made, this information will be promptly communicated to families via telephone and/or email.

10.3. Round Offers

All registrations received prior to the advertised closing date for Round One will be processed in the first round. Registrations received after the Round One advertised closing date will be processed in Round Two.

All registrations received prior to the advertised closing date for Round Two will be processed in the second round. Registrations received after the Round Two advertised closing date will be processed after placement offers have been finalised and all Round Two registrations processed.

Registrations received after the round offers will be processed on a weekly basis and allocated to the remaining kindergarten group places in the municipality.

10.4. Allocation

Kindergarten places will be allocated for each cohort (three and four-year-old kindergarten) according to the Priority of Access (Table 2) and the family's kindergarten preferences through a computerised priority system.

If the number of registrations received for a kindergarten group outnumbers the number of kindergarten places available in the kindergarten group, a ballot system will be used to allocate places after the Priority of Access (Table 2) has been applied.

Where registration numbers exceed the number of places available in the families first preference kindergarten group, children will be allocated to the families second, third or subsequent preference based on availability of places.

Council will continue to allocate kindergarten places until all available places are filled. In the event there are no places available in any of the family's preferred kindergarten groups or if the family declines an available vacancy within the offered kindergarten group, children will be placed on the waitlist for the family's preferred kindergarten group according to their priority.

Council reserves the right to consider factors such as group size, group dynamics and other special circumstances when allocating kindergarten places.

10.5. Non-residents

Registrations for families who reside outside of Hobsons Bay (non-residents) will be assessed on a case-by-case basis from **October onwards** the year prior to the child's kindergarten year.

An offer of placement to non-residents is determined by Council and will be based on the Priority of Access (Table 2), the availability of kindergarten places at the time and will be informed by Council's service planning for the provision of kindergarten places.

Non-residents who have accepted a placement for their child's three-year-old kindergarten year are not guaranteed access to four-year-old placement the following year. Normal non-resident processes will still apply.

Families who move outside of the Hobsons Bay municipal boundary prior to the commencement of the kindergarten year will be deemed to be non-residents.

Families who move into the Hobsons Bay municipal boundary prior to or during the kindergarten year will be deemed residents and their registrations will be assessed accordingly.

11. Offers

11.1. Responding to offers

Families are required to respond to a kindergarten placement offer within the nominated timeframe. Offers are sent to families via email:

- Families who submitted their registration online via the Parent Portal will be prompted to log into the portal to select their response.
- Families who submitted a hard copy registration form will be prompted to advise of their response via email to kindergarten@hobsonsabay.vic.gov.au.

Accept	Accept the kindergarten group placement offer for their child.
Accept & Wait	<p><i>Accept the place offered and be placed on a waitlist</i> for their preferred kindergarten group. Children will be placed on the waitlist in order of priority, followed by waitlist request date. Families who select this option will be listed as 'Placed and Waiting' in the Parent Portal.</p> <p>If a kindergarten place has not become available in the preferred group by 6 December 2024 families will be required to advise Council if they would like to remain placed in the accepted kindergarten group and be removed from the wait list; or decline the accepted place and remain on the wait list for the preferred group.</p> <p>Families who fail to notify Council by 6 December 2024 will continue to be placed in the allocated and accepted kindergarten group and will be removed from the waiting list.</p>
Decline & Wait	<p><i>Decline the place offered and be placed on the waitlist</i> for their preferred kindergarten group. Children will be placed on the waitlist in order of priority, followed by waitlist request date. Families on the waitlist will be offered a kindergarten place if a vacancy arises.</p>
Defer	<p>Families who have children born between 1 January and 30 April can choose which year their child starts three-year-old kindergarten either in the same year they turn three, or in the year they turn four years of age.</p> <p>By selecting this option, the family has decided to delay the year their child will start three-year-old kindergarten.</p> <p>Families will not be required to re-register their child for three-year-old kindergarten the following year. Families will be required to select their preferred kindergarten groups and may need to provide updated supporting documents.</p>
Withdraw	By selecting this option, the family has decided to withdraw their child's kindergarten registration. The registration will be cancelled.

11.1.1. Late Responses

Families who fail to respond to kindergarten group placement offers within the nominated timeframe will be contacted via email in the first instance and prompted to respond.

Council will make two attempts/requests for response, kindergarten placement offers will then be withdrawn and the family will be notified in writing via email/letter.

11.2. Changing group preference

During round offers, changes to kindergarten preferences must be submitted with Council through the Parent Portal or in writing via email to kindergarten@hobsonsbay.vic.gov.au prior to the advertised closure of round one, to be considered in first round offers.

Any requests for change of group preference received after the round offers have been completed will be accommodated where vacancies permit.

Please note: All enquiries and requests must be submitted to directly Council, families who contact Kindergarten services regarding changing their group preferences will be directed to contact Council. Kindergarten services do not have access to live registration data and will not be able to provide accurate advice regarding group vacancies.

11.3. Requesting group transfers

Families who have accepted a kindergarten group for their child wanting to transfer to another Kindergarten group must submit their request in writing to Council via email to kindergarten@hobsonsbay.vic.gov.au.

Council will advise the family of available vacancies in their preferred Kindergarten group and will explain the process which may change depending on the time of year the request is made. Requests will be granted provided a kindergarten place is available in the preferred kindergarten group.

Please note: All enquiries and requests must be submitted to directly Council, families who contact Kindergarten services to request a group transfer will be directed to contact Council. Kindergarten services do not have access to live registration data and will not be able to provide accurate advice regarding group vacancies.

11.4. Kindergarten group swap process

In the event that all kindergarten places within a service have been allocated, and families have expressed interest to Council in changing groups within a Kindergarten service. Council may at its discretion, implement a group swap process, in Term 4, the year prior to the child's kindergarten year. This process will occur in collaboration with the Kindergarten Provider involved.

11.5. Updating contact information

Families must ensure that their contact information remains up to date throughout the registration process.

Families can update their contact details in the Parent Portal kinders.hobsonsbay.vic.gov.au or by advising Council in writing via email to kindergarten@hobsonsbay.vic.gov.au.

Families contact information is used to send them information and offers of kindergarten placement.

After allocation from October onwards, families contact information is used by the allocated Kindergarten Service to contact with families to formalise their child's enrolment in their service.

11.6. Cancellation of Registration

Families can cancel their child's kindergarten registration at any time. Cancellations must be submitted in writing to Council via email to kindergarten@hobsonsabay.vic.gov.au. Any offers made, accepted placements and/or wait list placements will be withdrawn and the registration cancelled.

11.7. Formal Enrolment in the Kindergarten Service

In September Council will forward Kindergarten Service Providers the central registration data for all accepted kindergarten group placements.

From October onwards Kindergarten Service providers will make contact with families to provide them with information about the kindergarten program, orientation and to invite them to formally enrol their children in the kindergarten service.

12. Responsibilities

12.1. Council

Service Planning

- Work in partnership with the Department of Education and Kindergarten Service Providers to plan and undertake advocacy for the provision of Early Years infrastructure to meet the needs of the community.
- Work in partnership with Kindergarten Service Providers to plan kindergarten service provision to meet current and future demand for funded kindergarten places in Hobsons Bay.

Promotion

- Promote Kindergarten Central Registration in the community via Council's website, local advertising, Council's social media platforms, through the distribution of promotional materials and at community events. Communicating, eligibility, key registration dates, how to register and participating services.
- Provide Kindergarten Service Providers with advertising materials and information regarding Kindergarten Central Registration for promotion with families connected to the kindergarten service.
- Support the engagement of vulnerable high priority children in kindergarten programs by working closely with Maternal and Child Health Service, Preschool Field Officers, Early Years and other key support services and agencies to promote Kindergarten registration and assist families to register their child for a kindergarten place.
- Work in partnership with Kindergarten Service Providers to promote Kindergarten open nights and other events hosted by the kindergarten in the community.

Central Registration

- Deliver a best-practice model of Central Kindergarten Registration in partnership with Hobsons Bay Kindergarten Providers and in line with this policy. Streamlining a

simple, consistent, inclusive, and equitable process for families registering children in kindergarten programs.

- Deliver an effective and efficient Kindergarten Central Registration service that records registration data and allocates registered places, in compliance with the Priority of Access Guidelines.
- Communicate key information related to the allocation of kindergarten places with Kindergarten Service Providers throughout the process.
- Provide Kindergarten Services with timely and accurate registration data to enable them to contact families to invite them to formally enrol their children in the service.

12.2. Kindergarten Service Providers

Service Planning

- Work in partnership with Council and the Department of Education to plan kindergarten service provision to meet current and future demand for funded kindergarten places in Hobsons Bay.
- Work in partnership with Council to set appropriate operating capacities and increase places available, if required, to meet demand of three and four-year-old kindergarten places.
- Provide Council with the details of three and four-year-old kindergarten groups to be offered, group names and session times by the due date provided the year prior to the kindergarten year.
- Advise Council of all fee schedules if applicable for fees payable by families for kindergarten groups offered in excess of the funded 15 hours and for additional wrap around childcare.
- Advise Council of the number of anticipated funded second year places to be reserved for the following year (four-year-old kindergarten) by the date advised by Council.
- Advise the Council of the anticipated number of pre-purchased places applied for or allocated by DE for the following year.

Promotion

- Promote, display, and distribute Council's Kindergarten Central Registration promotional materials with families and the kindergarten community.
- Work in conjunction with Council to hold/participate in open days/events for the community.
- At its own cost, produce and distribute its own promotional material about open nights and events.

Central Registration

- Provide families with advice and support to access Council's Central Registration process.
- Accept registrations for enrolment exclusively through the Kindergarten Central Registration Scheme.
- Direct queries regarding registrations, placements, vacancies, waitlists, and cancellations to Council's Kindergarten Central Registration team.
- Advise Council on Second Year of Kindergarten placements, by the due date provided the year prior to the second year of attendance.
- Advise Council on ESK enrolments by the due date provided the year prior to the child's kindergarten attendance.

- Adhere to this policy and the procedures of the Kindergarten Central Registration Scheme.

Kindergarten Enrolment

- Communicate in a timely and effective manner with families who have accepted a place at the service regarding details for completing enrolment, orientation schedule and key dates for the year of attendance.
- Ensure parents/guardians complete the necessary service specific service enrolment forms after they have been allocated a registered place at the service, and before the child attends.
- Ensure all appropriate processes have been followed in line with the funding criteria for Early Start Kindergarten and Second Year of four-year-old kindergarten registrations (This includes completing ESK funding submissions through the Kindergarten Information Management System).
- Respond to all questions and queries from families in relation to the kindergarten service operations including session planning and the education program and any additional services if offered by the provider i.e., childcare.

13. Grievance

To provide feedback or seek additional information on any matter in regards to Kindergarten Central Registration, please contact the Kindergarten Central Registration Team at Council via email eyfeedback@hobsonsbay.vic.gov.au or by phone on 9932 1534.

If the grievance is not satisfactorily resolved after such contact, the grievance is to be made in writing to the Manager Community Life, PO Box 21 Altona, VIC, 3018.

14. Privacy & Confidentiality

Hobsons Bay City Council is strongly committed to protecting and preserving an individual's right to privacy and to the responsible and fair handling of their personal, sensitive and health information. Council is committed to full compliance with its obligations under the Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 and the Health Records Act 2001 as detailed in each of the Information Privacy Principles (IPP's) and the Health Privacy Principles (HPP's).

All personal information requested through the central registration process is collected for the purpose of kindergarten allocation and is used to inform the planning and provision of kindergarten and/or Early Years Services in the municipality. Access to completed registrations will be restricted to the Early Years Officers, and other relevant Council Officers, in accordance with Council's Information Privacy Policy. Information provided through registration will be shared with the allocated Kindergarten to enable them to engage families to formally enrol children in the Kindergarten Service. Further sharing of information will only occur with the consent of the registering parent/guardian or if required by law.

If you have a privacy question or require assistance with a privacy matter, such as the writing of a Privacy Collection Statement, please contact Council's Privacy Officer on 9932 1047.

15. Modification to Procedures

While Hobsons Bay City Council will adhere to this policy in relation to kindergarten registrations it may, at its discretion, make modifications to the procedures where extenuating circumstances apply.

16. Further Information

For further information regarding this policy please contact Council on 9932 1534 or email kindergarten@hobsonsbay.vic.gov.au.