

# Merri-bek Central Enrolment Scheme Policy

## Three and Four-Year-Old Kindergarten

### Rationale

The purpose of Merri-bek Kindergarten Central Enrolment Scheme is to:

- Provide a consistent and equitable centralised application enrolment process and policy for kindergartens in Merri-bek to improve access for families
- Enable Council to identify children's services demands and vacancies.

### Policy aim and objectives

The objectives of this policy are to provide the framework for a system that:

- Ensures places for 3 and 4-year-old kindergarten in the City of Merri-bek are allocated in accordance with determined priority.
- Enables the maximum number of families to receive their first preference.
- Ensures enrolment information is provided to kindergartens, enrolment officers and their Early Years Managers in an accurate and timely manner.
- Ensures enrolment data is collated and analysed for effective future planning of early years services.

### Access and inclusion

All children's services in Merri-bek will provide access for children and families in a way that considers individual needs and rights. Services will be actively inclusive of all cultures, backgrounds and abilities.

### Enrolment eligibility criteria

- Children turning 3 and 4-years-of-age by 30 April in the year of attendance can apply for kindergarten.  
**Note:** 3-year-old children can only attend the program once they have turned 3 years of age. Children can only access one funded 3-year-old program. Children are unable to access two years of funded 3-year-old kindergarten
- 2024 3 and 4-year-old kindergarten enrolments open Monday 3 April.
- The main enrolment intake period is between 3 April until 30 June. During the time, applications are assigned a set of points and proximity.
- Applications received from 1 July are processed in date of received order – no points given.
- From 3 April, parent/guardian can apply online through a Portal by visiting Council's website [www.merri-bek.vic.gov.au](http://www.merri-bek.vic.gov.au).
- Application forms will be sent to kindergartens to hand out to parents if they do not wish to apply online. The parent/guardian is to complete and return the application form with the required supporting documents to one of Council's Customer Services centres. Customer Service details are available on the form or website.
- Application forms will be available at Council Customer Service Centres and kindergartens. Parents can download an application form via the Merri-bek Council website.

## Kindergarten application process

### 2023 4-year-old kindergarten applications:

- Council will continue to accept and process 3yo and 4yo kindergarten applications for all kindergartens participating under the kindergarten central enrolment scheme. Applications will be processed based on availability of places at the kindergarten.
  - Kindergartens, Enrolment Officers or Early Years Managers (EYM) are to notify the Kindergarten Central Enrolment Officer of any cancellations by email and advise what group is available.
  - If Council receives a cancellation, a cancellation notice will be sent to the kindergarten/enrolment officer or EYM. The parent/guardian will be sent an email.
  - Prior to a child starting kindergarten, all kindergartens, enrolment officers and EYMs are to refer families to contact the Kindergarten Central Enrolment Officer regarding vacancies. All children **must be registered and enrolled** through Council's Kindergarten Central Enrolment system, prior to the child commencing the program. Council maintains a centralised enrolment system which lists all the kindergartens who have vacancies or waiting lists.
  - When applying through Council, the parent/guardian of the child is required include with the kindergarten application, the child's proof of age document e.g. birth certificate, passport, immunisation history statement or an immigration document (Note: only one document is required).
  - There is a non-refundable \$26 application fee for each child enrolled. This fee is exempt, if the child has a health care card or the parent/guardian has one of the fee Subsidy cards or immigration visa documents that is listed in the application form or on Council's website. Parent/guardian must include their current Fee Subsidy Card or Visa with their application. Children who are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander or doing ESK (Early Start Kindergarten) do not pay the application fee.
  - The parent/guardian will be advised of group availability and sent an email kindergarten offer with a response date.
  - Once the parent/guardian has accepted the offer, the Kindergarten Central Enrolment Officer will send to the kindergarten/enrolment officer/EYM the child's enrolment details, which includes the family details and the group preference (if this has already been discussed with the family).
- If no group is allocated, the kindergarten/enrolment officer or EYM will discuss with the family group availability and is to notify the Kindergarten Central Enrolment Officer of any groups left to offer. The parent/guardian will be sent a confirmation email.
- The kindergarten/enrolment officer/EYM will contact the family to advise when child can commence kindergarten.

## 2024 Enrolments: Three- and Four-Year-Old Kindergarten Applications

### Stage 1: Transfer of 3YO children into the 4YO Kindergarten program

Children who attend 3-year-old kindergarten will be given **PRIORITY** and transferred into the 4-year-old kindergarten program, without the parent/guardian having to reapply.

- During the month of February, Council's Kindergarten Central Enrolment Officer will contact the kindergarten/enrolment officer/EYM to check which 3-year-old children are attending.

Once this has been completed:

1. Council will contact the parent/guardian by email in March to check if they want their child to attend the same kindergarten for 4-year-old. If the parent/guardian says yes, the child will be automatically transferred over.
2. If the parent/guardian decides to send the child to a **different kindergarten** located in Merri-bek, they will be advised **to complete a new kindergarten application**. The parent/guardian will be advised the child's name will go on a waiting list until places are offered in July and August.
3. If a parent/guardian cancels their child from the 3-year-old program and wants to place the child's name back on the list for the same kindergarten for 4-year-old, the child's name will be placed back on the waiting list until allocations are done during July and August. The parent/guardian will be advised of this process.
4. Confirmed lists of these enrolled 4YO children will be sent to kindergarten/enrolment officer and Early Years Managers by the end of April. This will be the first enrolment list you will receive.

### Stage 2: Processing new 3yo and 4yo kindergarten applications received between 3 April – 30 of June

- The main enrolment intake period is from 3 April until the end of 30 June. Applications received during this period are assigned a set of points. Applications received from 1 July will be processed date of received order only – no points are given.
- Kindergartens/Enrolment Officers/EYM are to refer families to Council to enrol their children for 3yo or 4yo kindergarten. This is to ensure Council maintains an up-to-date central enrolment system and accurate information is given to the community, Kindergartens/Enrolment officers, EYM and DET.
- Families are to complete a separate application for each child they enrol. This can be done online by using a portal link on Council's website **[www.merri-bek.vic.gov.au](http://www.merri-bek.vic.gov.au)**. or by completing an application form.
- Families can choose up to three kindergarten preferences.
- There is a non-refundable \$26 application fee for each child enrolled. This fee is exempt, if the child has a health care card or the parent/guardian has one of the fee Subsidy cards or immigration visa documents that is listed in the application form or on Council's website. Parent/guardian must include their current Fee Subsidy Card or Visa with their application. Children who are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander or doing ESK (Early Start Kindergarten) do not pay the application fee.
- Proof of child's date of birth must be provided with the application form (e.g. birth certificate, passport, immunisation history statement or immigration document).
- Residents/ratepayers of Merri-bek must include with their application form current proof of their address. This can include Driver licence, a utility bill, rate notice or a property lease agreement.
- Non-residents of Merri-bek who have a link to Merri-bek, for example the parent/guardian studies, works or has children attending child care or school are to include with their application, current proof of documents to support their application. This can include a letter from their employer, education institution or a letter or fee invoice from their child care centre or school.

- Application forms can be mailed or hand delivered to one of Council's Customer Service Centres. Council's address details are listed on the application form.
- Applications will only be processed when all documentation has been provided and the fee paid (if applicable).
- Families will be notified by email or mail of incomplete applications and requested to provide additional material. An acknowledgment email confirming application received and listing kindergarten preferences will be emailed to families within five weeks of receipt of the application.
- Families who want to change their kindergarten preference should do so before 30 June. If change of preference request is received after this date, it will not be processed until the allocation process has been completed.
- The allocation process is done during the months of July and August. Families will receive an email by the end of August advising if their child has been offered a place or on a waiting list.
- Kindergartens/Enrolment officers/EYM will receive their confirmed lists by the end of August.

### **How the priority and point system applies**

Each application will be prioritised based on the total number of points allocated until 30 June. From 1 July, all applications will be processed in date of received order only – no points given.

#### **1. FIRST PRIORITY GROUPS**

**Council will give priority to the following categories:**

- **Children attending 3YO Kindergarten program**

These children will be given **Priority** to be transferred into the same 4YO kindergarten.

- **Deferred Enrolments**

Children who were allocated a 3 or 4-year-old kindergarten place can have their enrolment deferred until the following year, provided this is done before they start kindergarten.

- **Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Children**

- **Refugee/asylum seeker children**

- **Children listed below are eligible for the Early Start Kindergarten Program.**

These children can attend a 3-year-old or 4-year-old kindergarten program of 15 hours per week.

- Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children
- Refugee/asylum seeker
- Referrals received from Council's Kindergarten Outreach Worker, Uniting, Maternal and Child Health, Referral agencies, Child Protection or Out of Home Care Provider.

- **Children at risk**

Children who have been referred from a support agency as a child at risk of serious abuse or neglect.

- **Children with additional needs or a serious medical condition**

When a referral or support agency, kindergarten or Council's Kindergarten Outreach Officers has contacted Council in relation to a child with additional needs, the Kindergarten Central Enrolment Officer will prioritise the application. This may include consultation and discussions with the teacher, Preschool Field Officer, support worker and parent/guardian.

- **Parent/guardian with a disability**

Some parent/guardians may have mobility or access issues because of a disability and therefore require a particular kindergarten. They will be given priority in this case.

## 2. RESIDENTS AND RATEPAYERS OF MERRI-BEK

### • Resident/ratepayers are given 100 points

Priority will be given to residents/ratepayers. Proof of residency is required, such as:

- a copy of a rates notice
- a copy of a property of sale contract (only the section with the name of the purchaser and address and sale of property details is required).
- a copy of the property rental lease agreement
- a copy of a gas/electricity/water bill, addressed in the name of the parent/guardian at their street address (PO Box number is not acceptable).
- a copy of driver's licence

**Note:** Proof of residency documents must be in the name of the person(s) recorded on the application and must be current and dated within the past twelve months. Documents received in a company name or a different name will not be accepted.

## 3. NON-RESIDENTS

**Non-resident with a link to Merri-bek will be given:**

**50 points** if the parent/guardian work or study in Merri-bek, or they have a child attending one of these services

- a school
- a child care centre / family day care

Current documented proof needs to be included with the application and can be:

- a letter from parent/guardian's employer, educational institution, letter or fee invoice child's school or child care provider

**Note:** The child's name must be included in the letter from the school, child care provider or family day care provider. A copy of the child's fee invoice can be included. If the child care provider is not a registered business, for example a family friend, they will need to complete a **Statutory Declaration Form**. This form is to include information about the child care provider, including their name, address and contact details and the name of the child that is being cared for. A PO Box number is not considered an address.

## 4. SIBLINGS

**30 points is given if the application is received by 30 June**

If other children are attending or have attended the kindergarten which is listed on their application as their **first preference** (between the years of 2020 – 2023). The child's name, surname, name of the kindergarten and year attended is to be provided on the application.

## 5. MULTIPLE BIRTHS/BLENDED FAMILIES

**40 Points is given** to children of kindergarten age in a family unit whether by birth, adoption or from blended families and where possible, offered a place at the same kindergarten.

## 6. EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES

If there are extraordinary reasons why a child should be offered a place, then they may receive priority at the discretion of Council staff. This would occur if a kindergarten placement would seriously affect a family's functioning or welfare. The Kindergarten Central Enrolment Officer will discuss this case with Early Years Coordinator.

**Please Note:** Applications received from 1 July will not receive any points. Applications are processed in date of received order.

### **Nominating kindergarten preferences**

- Parent/guardian can choose up to three kindergarten preferences when applying for kindergarten.

- If a parent/guardian chooses to nominate one kindergarten preference and the nominated kindergarten is full, the child's name will be placed on that kindergarten's waiting list. The parent/guardian will be notified of the waiting list and will have the option to choose a kindergarten that is available or remain on the waiting list. If the parent/guardian chooses to leave the child's name on the waiting list, correspondence will be sent to the parent/guardian as the waiting list changes.
- If a parent/guardian chooses to nominate two kindergarten preferences and the first kindergarten preference is full, the parent/guardian will be advised by email and will have the option to accept the second kindergarten preference or remain on the waiting list of their first kindergarten preference.  
**Note:** The parent/guardian does not have the option to accept the place or remain on a waiting list at the same time.
- Once the parent/guardian has accepted a place, the child's name cannot remain on the waiting list of any other kindergarten.

### **Second year of 4-year-old kindergarten**

A second year of a State Government funded kindergarten program is available only to children who meet the criteria as set by the Department of Education and Training's Kindergarten Guide.

Parent/guardians and teachers need to complete and sign a Second Year Application Request Form and return this to Council by the end of term 3. During Term 2 and Term 3, the Kindergarten Central Enrolment Officer will email kindergartens/enrolment officers or the Early Years Manager to find out many second-year application forms are required and how many places to reserve. Kindergartens, enrolment officer or Early Years Manager is to inform Council if second year reserves change.

### **Allocation process**

- Prior to allocation, the Kindergarten Central Enrolment Officer will contact the kindergartens in relation to capacity numbers for the next year. This information is required to set up the central enrolment computer to allocate the correct number of places that will be offered to families.
- Families will receive their email offer between July and August. Email offers will have a return date for parent/guardian to respond by.
- If the parent/guardian is unable to be offered their first preference, they will be advised and offered their second or third preference. If a family refuses their second or third kindergarten preference offer, they may choose to stay on the waiting list of their first kindergarten preference. An email will be sent to them advising of their child's waiting number and contacted when a place becomes available.
- If the parent/guardian does not respond by the due date, the Kindergarten Central Enrolment Officer will attempt to contact the family by phone, text or email. If the family is unable to be contacted, the place will be cancelled. A cancellation email will be sent to the parent/guardian.
- All families who wish to register their children at any time (including after the kindergarten year has commenced) will need to apply via the above process.

### **Reserved places**

- Places will be held for children who will attend another year of 4-year-old kindergarten. Kindergartens/Enrolment Officers/Early Years Managers will advise the Kindergarten Central Enrolment Officer of approximate numbers by the end of term 2.
- **Kindergartens with Pre-Purchased places**  
These will be held at the kindergarten until the end of Term 2, 2023. These places will be used for children who are Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander, at risk, asylum seeker or refugee. Any unused pre-purchased places will be released for term 3.

## Updates on enrolments

- The Kindergarten Central Enrolment Officer will liaise regularly with the kindergarten teacher, enrolment officer or EYM.
- Kindertartens will receive regular enrolment documentation or reports via email once the allocation process commences.
- After the rounds of offer have been completed the Kindergarten Central Enrolment Officer will forward the relevant enrolment data (numbers and family details) to kindertartens or EYM, to enable them to do the relevant group allocation and to notify families.
- The Kindergarten Central Enrolment Officer will notify the kindergarten, enrolment officer or EYM of any cancellations, change of family details or new enrolments.
- The kindergarten, EYM or enrolment officer will notify the Kindergarten Central Enrolment Officer of any changes to their number of kindergarten places to be offered, cancellations, deferrals or change of family details.
- Council as requested by the Department of Education and Training (DET) and MAV will periodically provide them with enrolment data.

## Communication with kindertartens / enrolment officers / EYM

Kindergarten representatives are invited to attend the Kindergarten Central Enrolment Reference Group meetings to give feedback and to contribute to decisions about the system. This meeting is held three times a year. Invitations with meeting dates and times will be sent out by email.

### Council's Kindergarten Central Enrolment Officers:

#### Grace Di Geronimo and Sim Kirkpatrick

Email: [centralenrolments@merri-bek.vic.gov](mailto:centralenrolments@merri-bek.vic.gov).

Tel: 9240 2477

Website: [www.merri-bek.vic.gov.au](http://www.merri-bek.vic.gov.au)

#### Early Years Coordinator: Sophie Patitsas

Email: [spatitsas@merri-bek.vic.gov.au](mailto:spatitsas@merri-bek.vic.gov.au)

Tele: 9240 2333