

Three-Year-Old Kindergarten

To dream big, our kids need the best start in life



3-YEAR-OLD KINDER

Best Start

Best Life

Where can my child attend Three-Year-Old Kindergarten?

Children can attend a three-year-old program at either a long day care (childcare) centre or at a sessional (standalone) kindergarten. These services might also offer a four-year-old kindergarten program.

No matter where your child goes to kindergarten, qualified teachers and educators will lead the program.

A long day care centre can offer a full day of education and care, including a kindergarten program. The teacher-led kindergarten program is integrated with additional hours of education and care. For many families, this can make kindergarten more convenient.

At a sessional service, a kindergarten program will only run on certain days and at specific times. These days and hours are set by the kindergarten service.

To find a service visit education.vic.gov.au/findaservice

What are the benefits of attending Three-Year-Old Kindergarten?

Research shows that play-based learning is a powerful way to support children's development. And these benefits last into the school years and beyond.

The evidence also shows that two years are better than one when it comes to early learning.

A quality kindergarten program will have more of an impact for children who start at age three rather than four. The benefits are even greater for children who are in vulnerable circumstances.

A child who has attended two years of a quality kindergarten program will, on average:

- have better cognitive and social skills when they start school (including better development in language, pre-reading, early number concepts, non-verbal reasoning, independence, concentration and social skills)
- have higher exam scores at 16, including better grades in English and maths
- have better social and emotional outcomes at age 16
- be more likely to take more final year exams and to go on to higher academic study.¹
- children in Year 3 who attended kindergarten were also 15 to 20 weeks ahead of those who did not.²



Young children learn about the world through play

They learn how to get along with others, share, listen, and manage their emotions

In a kindergarten program, children use play to build their language skills and learn about numbers and patterns

Teachers and educators help children become curious, creative and confident about learning

¹ *Effective Pre-School, Primary and Secondary Education Project*, Department for Education, United Kingdom.

² E4KIDS, University of Melbourne.

How do I enrol my child?

Choosing a quality kindergarten service will ensure your child gets the most out of their time at kindergarten. You can look at service quality ratings by visiting www.startingblocks.gov.au

Deciding where to send your child might depend on which services are available in your community, and what works best for your family and child.

To help you decide, you can visit centres to meet staff and take a tour.

Most services have an enrolment process that opens the year before a child starts kindergarten, so you should think about enrolling when your child turns two years old.

Talk to your local council or kindergarten service about their enrolment process and timelines.

Find out more at www.vic.gov.au/kinder

What does 'funded' mean? What will I need to pay?

The Victorian Government will fund services to provide Three-Year-Old Kindergarten programs led by qualified early childhood teachers. This will mean reduced costs for many Victorian families and greater access to early learning for all children. This is the same way that Four-Year-Old Kindergarten is funded.

All services charge fees to help meet the cost of running kindergarten programs. These fees are set by the individual service and will vary between services.

Sessional kindergarten

Families can access a sessional kindergarten service at low or no cost if the child:

- identified by a parent, carer or legal guardian as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander
- is known to Child Protection
- is a triplet or quadruplet
- is covered by a Health Care Card
- holds an eligible concession card or refugee, humanitarian or asylum seeker visa, or their parent or guardian does.

Long day care

In a long day care service, the kindergarten program is usually integrated with additional hours of education and care.

Victorian Government kindergarten funding will ensure kindergarten programs at these services are led by a qualified teacher.

The cost of long day care varies based on the service's fees and your family's circumstances.

Early Start Kindergarten

Early Start Kindergarten currently means 15 hours of free or low-cost kindergarten per week for all eligible children in both sessional and long day care services.

This program will continue while Three-Year-Old Kindergarten is being rolled out. It is really important that all eligible children continue to be enrolled through this program so they can receive the full 15-hour program they are entitled to.

A child is eligible for Early Start Kindergarten if they are aged three by 30 April in the year they start kindergarten, and:

- identifies as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, or
- is known to Child Protection.

Professionals working with families can contact your preferred service directly to refer your child to Early Start Kindergarten. These include maternal and child health nurses, Child FIRST and family services practitioners and supported play group facilitators. Parents can also talk to their local kindergarten services directly about their eligibility.

