



2.1 Early Learning Enrolment and Orientation Policy

Mandatory – Quality Area 6

1. PURPOSE

This policy will outline:

- the criteria for enrolment at The Geelong College Early Learning
- the process to be followed when enrolling a child at The Geelong College Early Learning,
- the basis on which places within the programs will be allocated
- procedures for the orientation of new families and children into The Geelong College Early Learning
- processes to ensure compliance with legislative and DET funding requirements in relation to the enrolment of children in early childhood education and care services.

The Geelong College Early Learning (EL) is the first entry point to the school. Early Learning currently offers four classes: two classes for 3-4 year olds (EL3), and two classes for 4-5 year olds (EL4). Children spend between two and three years in Early Learning. On entry the Director of Early Learning and the Admissions Manager will advise you of your child's class placement depending on the date of birth and year of entry.

We offer flexible pathways through Early Learning to meet all children's needs. For example, your child may begin in EL3 and spend one or two years in the EL3 classes before entering EL4. Alternatively, your child may begin in EL4 and progress to Foundation the following year.

To begin in Early Learning children are required to have turned three years of age and need to be toilet trained. Children who turn three throughout the year may commence after their third birthday.

2. OUTSIDE SCHOOL HOURS CARE

Early Learning Children can attend the Outside School Hours Care Program at Early Learning in the morning from 8am to 9am and/or in the afternoon from 3:15pm to 6pm on school days.

3. TIMES

Full Day 9am – 3:15pm

- a) Children in both the EL3 and EL4 program will be required to attend a minimum of three days per week, but may choose to attend for four days
- b) For the three-day program, parents may choose to being with fewer than the required number of days, however the fee for the minimum number of days will apply
- c) In certain circumstances, where there is availability, one or two day places may be offered by the school. Please contact Admissions for more information
- d) Children may attend more than the recommended number of sessions up to a full time position (5 days per week). This is subject to availability.

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4. UNIFORM

Students at Early Learning wear The Geelong College Early Learning uniform, which is available through the College uniform shop. The uniform is designed to be child friendly, comfortable and practical for active play. In addition, the uniform promotes a strong sense of identity and belonging of the beginning of the children's involvement at The Geelong College.

5. VALUES

The Geelong College is committed to:

- equal access for all eligible children
- meeting the needs of the local community
- supporting families to meet the requirements for enrolment through the provision of information
- maintaining confidentiality in relation to all information provided on enrolment forms
- ensuring all families are welcomed and receive an effective orientation into the service.

6. SCOPE

This policy applies to the Approved Provider, Persons with Management and Control, Nominated Supervisor, early childhood teachers, Persons in Day to Day Charge, educators, staff and parents/guardians who wish to enrol or have already enrolled their child at The Geelong College.

7. BACKGROUND AND LEGISLATION

7.1 Background

The *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011* require approved services to have a policy and procedures in place in relation to enrolment and orientation (Regulation 168(2)(k)).

It is intended that all eligible children (refer to *Definitions*) will have access to at least two years of kindergarten before commencing school. However, a shortage of places in some areas can limit choices. Where demand is higher than availability, The Geelong College must adhere to their eligibility and priority of access criteria (refer to *Definitions* and *Attachment 1*) policy in order to allocate the available places. The criteria used to determine the allocation of places takes account of the requirements set out in *the Kindergarten Guide* (refer to *Sources*), the service's philosophy, values and beliefs, and the provisions of the *Equal Opportunity Act 2012*.

The Victorian Government requires funded organisations to ensure that their policies and procedures promote equal opportunity for all children.

Childcare services providing approved child care (refer to *Definitions*) must abide by the *Family Assistance Legislation Amendment (Jobs for families childcare package) Act 2017* (refer to *Legislation and standards*) and the Commonwealth Government's *Priority for allocating places in child care services* (refer to *Sources*).

Immunisations are an effective means of reducing the risk of vaccine preventable diseases. Early childhood education and care services which are regulated under the *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010* have legislative responsibilities under the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008* to only offer a confirmed place in their programs to children with an Australian Immunisation Register (AIR) Immunisation History Statement (refer to *Definitions*). To meet the Child Care Subsidy immunisation requirements, children must be immunised according to the National

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Immunisation Program Schedule (refer to Sources) set out by the Australian Government Department of Health.

7.2 Legislation and standards

Relevant legislation and standards include but are not limited to:

- a) *A New Tax System (Family Assistance) Act 1999*
- b) *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* (Vic)
- c) *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* (Vic)
- d) *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005* (Vic)
- e) *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cth)
- f) *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010*
- g) *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011*: Regulations 160, 161, 162, 177, 181, 183
- h) *Equal Opportunity Act 2010* (Vic)
- i) *Family Assistance Legislation Amendment (Jobs for Families Child Care Package) Act 2017*
- j) *National Quality Standard, Quality Area 6: Collaborative Partnerships with Families and Communities*
- k) *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008* (Vic)
- l) *Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations 2015* (Vic)
- m) *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* (Cth)

8. DEFINITIONS

The terms defined in this section relate specifically to this policy. For commonly used terms e.g. The Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, Regulatory Authority etc. refer to the *General Definitions* section of this manual.

Australian Immunisation Register (AIR) Immunisation History Statement: is the only form of acceptable evidence of immunisation. The AIR is a national register administered by Medicare that records all vaccinations given in Australia, including to children. Parents/carers must provide a copy of their most recent AIR Immunisation History Statement, which shows that the child is up to date with their immunisations upon enrolment and when a child has received or been due to receive a vaccination while attending the service. In the case of medical contraindication, an authorised medical practitioner completes and signs a Medical Exemption Form, and supplies it to the AIR. In order to confirm enrolment, the Immunisation History Statement must show the child is up to date with the vaccines they can have, medical contraindication and indicate the due date for the next vaccinations the child is able to receive in the future if applicable.

Approved child care providers: providers that operate services that have Australian Government approved to receive Child Care Subsidy (refer to Definitions) on behalf of eligible parents. Approved child care providers includes centre based day care, including long day care and occasional care, family day care, outside school hours care and in home care.

Authorised nominee: (In relation to this policy) is a person who has been given written authority by the parents/guardians of a child to collect that child from the education and care service. These details will be on the child's enrolment form.

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The National Law and National Regulations do not specify a minimum age limit for an authorised nominee. Each service will need to determine if a person under the age of 18 is able to be an authorised nominee and, if so, what constitutes the minimum acceptable age at that service.

Child Care Subsidy (CCS): A Commonwealth Government means tested subsidy to assist eligible families with the cost of child care. Payments are paid directly to approved child care providers (refer to Definitions). Further information can be found at: <https://www.education.gov.au/child-care-subsidy-0>

Children with additional needs: Children whose development or physical condition requires specialist support or children who may need additional support due to language, cultural or economic circumstances (refer to *Inclusion and Equity Policy*).

Eligible child: as defined by the Kindergarten Funding Guide; a child that is at least four years old on April 30th in the year of enrolment; enrolled for at least 15 hours per week or 600 hours per year in a 4-year-old program; and not enrolled at a funded kindergarten program at another service. Or a child that is at least three years old on April 30th in the year of enrolment and is enrolled in a funded 3-year-old kindergarten program. Any child that is enrolled in an early childhood and education and care service must have an AIR Immunisation History Statement that indicate that the child is fully vaccinated for their age or who qualify for the 16-weeks grace period.

Enrolment application fee: A payment to cover administrative costs associated with the processing of a child's enrolment application for a place in a program at the service.

Enrolment application form: A form to apply for a place at the service.

Enrolment record: The collection of documents which Contains information on each child, as required under the National Regulations (Regulations 160,161,162), including but not limited to parent details, emergency contacts, authorized nominee, details of any court orders, and health information including immunisation status.

Fees: A charge for a place within a program at the service.

Grace period: allows specific categories of children of families experiencing vulnerability and disadvantage to enrol and attend the service without an AIR Immunisation History Statement (refer to Definitions) or when the statement is assessed as not being up-to-date. Services complete the grace period eligibility form with families during enrolment, and keep a copy with the child's enrolment record. The 16-week grace period starts on the first day of the child's attendance at the service. During the grace period, the service is required to take reasonable steps to obtain the AIR Immunisation History Statement (refer to Definitions) and to encourage families to access immunisation services.

Priority of access: in instances where more eligible children apply for a place at a service than there are places available, the service must allocate spaces using the criteria outlined in *The Kindergarten Guide* (refer to *Sources*), or if in receipt of the CCS, comply with the Commonwealth Government's policy for allocating places.

Vulnerable Children/Families: Children are vulnerable if the capacity of parents and family to effectively care, protect and provide for their long-term development and wellbeing is limited. Some factors which may contribute to a child being vulnerable include: a child with a disability; living in a family with a low income, or one which is experiencing problems with housing, domestic violence, known to Child Protection, Out of Home Care, substance abuse, or mental health; Aboriginal and/or

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Torre Strait Islander, having a culturally and linguistically diverse background; having a young or sole parent, or a parent with a disability (adapted from the Kindergarten Funding Guide)

9. SOURCES AND RELATED POLICIES**9.1 Sources**

1. Australian Childhood Immunisation Register:
www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/services/medicare/australian-childhood-immunisationregister
2. Australian Government Department of Health, *National Immunisation Program Schedule*:
<https://www.health.gov.au/health-topics/immunisation/immunisation-throughout-life/national-immunisation-program-schedule>
3. Department of Health and Human Services, *Immunisation enrolment toolkit for early childhood education and care services*
www2.health.vic.gov.au/about/publications/policiesandguidelines/immunisation-enrolment-toolkit
4. *Guide to the Education and Care Services National Law and the Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011*:
www.acecqa.gov.au/
5. *Guide to the National Quality Standard*: www.acecqa.gov.au/
6. Priority of Access Guidelines for child care service:
<https://www.dese.gov.au/uncategorised/resources/priority-access-guidelines-child-care-services>
7. The Family Assistance Law as the basis for Commonwealth child care fee assistance including the Child Care Subsidy (CCS) and Additional Child Care Subsidy (ACCS):
<https://www.education.gov.au/child-care-legislation>
8. *The Kindergarten Guide (Department of Education and Early Childhood Development)*:
<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/providers/funding/Pages/default.aspx>
9. *Victorian Department of Health*: www.health.vic.gov.au/immunisation

9.2 Service policies

- 1) *Acceptance and Refusal of Authorisations Policy*
- 2) *Complaints and Grievances Policy*
- 3) *Dealing with Infectious Disease Policy*
- 4) *Fees Policy*
- 5) *Inclusion and Equity Policy*
- 6) *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy*

10. ENROLMENT PRIORITY CRITERIA

1. Children with older siblings currently attending The Geelong College and who intend to continue to Prep
2. Children of Old Collegians who intend to continue to Prep
3. Others in order of date of registration who intend to continue to Prep
4. Preference within each category will be based on date order of registration. Waiting lists will also reflect the same order of priority

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There may be a limited number of places available for children not intending to go onto Prep. These children will be offered a place for the calendar year only once acceptances have been received from applicants who meet the above enrolment criteria. Children not intending to go onto Prep will need to re-apply every twelve months.

11. PROCEDURES**The Approved Provider or Persons with Management and Control is responsible for:**

1. determining the criteria for priority of access to programs at The Geelong College, based on funding requirements and the service's philosophy
2. considering any barriers to access that may exist, developing procedures that ensure all eligible families are aware of, and are able to access, an early childhood program
3. complying with the *Inclusion and Equity Policy*
4. appointing a person to be responsible for the enrolment process and the day-to-day implementation of this policy (refer - attachment 1 General enrolment procedures)
5. providing opportunities (in consultation with the Nominated Supervisor and educators) for interested families to attend the service during operational hours to observe the program and become familiar with the service prior to their child commencing in the program
6. providing parents/guardians with information about the requirements of the law for enrolment, locating and accessing immunisation services and obtaining the AIR Immunisation History Statement (refer to *Definitions*) required for enrolment
7. ensuring parents/guardians are only offered a tentative place until the AIR Immunisation History Statement (refer to *Definitions*) has been assessed as being acceptable or the child has been assessed as eligible for the grace period
8. assessing the child's immunisation documentation as defined by the Immunisation Enrolment toolkit for early childhood education and care services **prior to enrolment** to determine if the child's vaccination status complies with requirements or whether the child is eligible for the 16 week grace period
9. ensuring that only children whose AIR Immunisation History Statement (refer to *Definitions*) has been assessed as being acceptable or who are eligible for the grace period (refer to *Definitions*) have a confirmed place in the program
10. advising parents/guardians who do not have an AIR Immunisation History Statement (refer to *Definitions*) and who are not eligible for the grace period that their children are not able to attend the service and referring them to immunisation services
11. taking reasonable steps to obtain an up to date AIR Immunisation History Statement (refer to *Definitions*) from a parent/guardian of a child enrolled under a grace period within the 16 weeks from when the child begins attending (Note: the child can continue to attend the service if acceptable immunisation documentation is not obtained)
12. taking reasonable steps to obtain an up to date AIR Immunisation History Statement (refer to *Definitions*) from all parents/guardians after enrolment, twice per calendar year, timing reminders to comply with the maximum seven-month interval (Public Health and Wellbeing Regulation 107, Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 Section 143E)
13. ensuring that enrolment forms (refer to *Definitions*) comply with the requirements of Regulations 160, 161, 162 and that it effectively meets the management requirements of the service

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14. ensuring that enrolment records (refer to *Definitions*) are stored in a safe and secure place, and kept for three years after the last date on which the child was educated and cared for by the service (Regulation 183 (1a) (2d))
15. ensuring that the orientation program and plans meet the individual needs of children and families, and comply with DET funding criteria
16. reviewing the orientation processes for new families and children to ensure the objectives of this policy are met
17. ensuring that parents/guardians of a child attending the service can enter the service premises at any time whilst the child is being educated and cared for, except where this may pose a risk to the safety of children or staff, or conflict with any duty of Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor or educators under the Law (Regulation 157).
18. taking reasonable steps to contact non attending families prior to the cancellation of their enrolment (refer to Attachment 5)

The Nominated Supervisor, Persons in Day to Day Charge and early childhood teachers are responsible for:

1. reviewing enrolment applications to identify children with additional needs (refer to *Definitions* and the *Inclusion and Equity Policy*)
2. responding to parent/guardian enquiries regarding their child's readiness for the program that they are considering enrolling their child in
3. discussing the individual child's needs with parents/guardians and developing an orientation program to assist them to settle into the program
4. encouraging parents/guardians to:
 - a) stay with their child as long as required during the settling in period
 - b) make contact with educators at the service, when required
5. assisting parents/guardians to develop and maintain a routine for saying goodbye to their child
6. sharing information with parents/guardians regarding their child's progress with regards to settling in to the service
7. discussing support services for children with parents/guardians, where required
8. taking reasonable steps to contact non attending families prior to the cancellation of their enrolment (refer to Attachment 5)

All Educators are responsible for:

1. responding to enrolment enquiries on a day-to-day basis and referring people to the person responsible for the enrolment process, as required
2. providing parents/guardians with information about the requirements of the law for enrolment, locating and accessing immunisation services and obtaining AIR Immunisation History Statement (refer to *Definitions*) required for enrolment
3. developing strategies to assist new families to:
 - a. feel welcomed into the service
 - b. become familiar with service policies and procedures
 - c. share information about their family beliefs, values and culture
 - d. share their understanding of their child's strengths, interests, abilities and needs
 - e. discuss the values and expectations they hold in relation to their child's learning

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4. providing comfort and reassurance to children who are showing signs of distress when separating from family members
5. complying with the service's *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy* in relation to the collection and management of a child's enrolment information
6. making reasonable attempts to contact non attending families (refer to Attachment 5) and consult with the Nominated Supervisor of outcomes.

Parents/guardians are responsible for:

1. reading and complying with this *Enrolment and Orientation Policy*
2. completing the enrolment application form and the enrolment form prior to their child's commencement at the service and providing AIR Immunisation History Statement (refer to *Definitions*) of their child's immunisation status
3. where a child is eligible for the 16 weeks grace period, ensuring that the child's immunisations are updated and in line with the schedule and providing an up to date AIR Immunisation History Statement (refer to *Definitions*) to the service
4. ensuring that all required information is provided to the service
5. updating information by notifying the service of any changes as they occur.
6. notify The Geelong College in writing if they wish to cancel their enrolment.

Volunteers and students, while at the service, are responsible for following this policy and its procedures.**12. EVALUATION**

In order to assess whether the values and purposes of the policy have been achieved, The Geelong College will:

- regularly seek feedback from everyone affected by the policy regarding its effectiveness
- monitor the implementation, compliance, complaints and incidents in relation to this policy
- keep the policy up to date with current legislation, research, policy and best practice
- revise the policy and procedures as part of the service's policy review cycle, or as required
- notify parents/guardians at least 14 days before making any changes to this policy or its procedures.

13 ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1: General enrolment procedures

14. AUTHORISATION

This policy was adopted by the Executive of The Geelong College on 2 March 2017

15. REVIEWED: May 2021

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- Enrolment applications will be accepted any time
- Enrolment application forms are available via the website
- A separate application form must be completed for each child
- To facilitate the inclusion of all children into the program, enrolment applications should clearly identify any additional or specific needs of the child (refer to *Inclusion and Equity Policy*).
- A copy of the child's birth certificate must be submitted with all applications.
- All applications must be accompanied by an enrolment application fee of \$500. This fee is to cover administrative costs associated with the processing of a child's enrolment application and is not refundable.
- Completed enrolment application forms are to be completed online and forwarded to the Admissions Manager
- Access to completed enrolment application forms will be restricted to the Admissions Manager, The Geelong College, Nominated Supervisor and educators at the service, unless otherwise specified by The Geelong College.
- Applications will be entered on the waiting list using the eligibility priority criteria.
- Early registration is strongly encouraged. Regular Friday tours will be held throughout the year, please contact Early Learning for further details. These tours will enable parents to make an informed decision about enrolling their child in Early Learning. Offers of place are generally made by Term 3 in the year prior to attendance.

2. Offer of places

- Places will be allocated to applicants in accordance with the enrolment priority criteria
- Applicants who are successful will be notified in writing of a confirmed place.
- Parents/guardians who do not wish to accept the offer of a place, or intend to withdraw their enrolment, are requested to notify the Admissions Manager in writing as soon as possible.