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1. Purpose

This policy establishes clear, equitable, and inclusive guidelines for the application, enrolment, and orientation processes at Meli Kindergarten Services (MKS). It is designed to:

- Ensure all children and families experience a welcoming and supportive transition into kindergarten, regardless of background or circumstance.
- Provide transparent procedures for applying, accepting, and enrolling in kindergarten, with a focus on accessibility and simplicity for families.
- Proactively support the participation of vulnerable and disadvantaged children, ensuring barriers to access are identified and addressed.
- Guarantee equitable access for early entry applicants and prioritise enrolment in accordance with Department of Education criteria and locally agreed priorities.
- Promote Meli's commitment to inclusion, respect, and continuous improvement in early childhood education.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all individuals and groups involved in the delivery, management, and participation in Meli Kindergarten Services (MKS) programs and activities. This includes:

- All management, staff and educators.
- Students, volunteers, and contractors.
- Parents, guardians, and children enrolled in or attending MKS programs.
- Any other persons participating in or present during MKS activities, including offsite excursions and events.

The policy is applicable across all MKS settings and locations, ensuring consistent standards and expectations for enrolment and orientation processes, regardless of the context or environment.

3. Background

The Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011 require approved services to have policies and procedures in place for enrolment and orientation. These processes ensure that all eligible Victorian children can access two years of Free Kinder before commencing school, with priority given according to Department of Education criteria and local guidelines.

Meli Kindergarten Services is committed to promoting equal opportunity and inclusion for all children, particularly those experiencing vulnerability or disadvantage. The allocation of places is guided by the service's philosophy, values, and the provisions of the Equal Opportunity Act 2010, ensuring fair and transparent access for families.

Immunisation requirements are a key aspect of enrolment, with services responsible for verifying each child's status through the Australian Immunisation Register. This supports public health and ensures compliance with relevant legislation and best practice standards.

4. Definitions

Access to Early Learning (AEL) – refers to an early intervention programme for eligible three-year-old children, providing intensive support to families with complex needs to access universal kindergarten programmes.

Approved Provider – refers to the legal entity responsible for the operation and overall management of the kindergarten service.

Authorised Nominee – refers to a person who has been given written authority by a parent or guardian to collect a child from the education and care service.

Children/families experiencing vulnerability and/or disadvantage – refers to children and families whose capacity to care for and support long-term development and wellbeing is limited by factors such as disability, low income, housing instability, family violence, substance abuse, mental health issues, or involvement with child protection.

Early Start Kindergarten (ESK) – refers to a programme providing eligible three-year-old children with free kindergarten led by a qualified early childhood teacher.

Educator – refers to any person engaged to educate and care for children at the service, including early childhood teachers and assistants.

Enrolment – refers to the formal arrangement for a child to attend the service, confirmed once all required information has been received.

Enrolment Record – refers to the collection of documents containing information on each child as required under the National Regulations, including parent details, emergency contacts, authorised nominees, and health information.

Free Kinder – refers to the Victorian Government initiative providing funded kindergarten programmes for eligible three- and four-year-old children.

Immunisation Exemption – refers to the process by which a medical practitioner certifies a child's exemption from immunisation requirements due to medical contraindication.

Local Government Area (LGA) – refers to a geographic area governed by a local council or shire.

Nominated Supervisor – refers to the person designated with day-to-day responsibility for the operation of the service.

Orientation – refers to the process of supporting a child's transition to the service, including opportunities for families to spend time at the service before the child attends independently.

Parent/Guardian – refers to the person(s) legally responsible for the care and wellbeing of the child.

Pre Prep – refers to a programme available from 2026 for priority cohort children, providing extended hours of early childhood education prior to school entry.

Priority Cohort – refers to groups identified for priority access to kindergarten, such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children in out-of-home care, and children from refugee or asylum seeker backgrounds.

Priority of Access – refers to the criteria and processes used to allocate kindergarten places when demand exceeds availability, in line with Department of Education and local guidelines.

School Readiness Funding – refers to funding provided to support programmes and initiatives that build the capacity of services, educators, and families to support children's learning and development.

Statutory Out-of-Home Care – refers to care arrangements for children under child protection orders, including foster care, kinship care, and residential care.

Support Period – refers to the temporary enrolment period for eligible children without up-to-date immunisation documentation, during which services support families to meet immunisation requirements. This is also referred to as a 'grace period'.

5. Policy

Meli Kindergarten Services (MKS) is committed to providing an equitable, inclusive, and transparent approach to application, enrolment, and orientation. Our aim is to ensure that every child and family feels respected, safe, and supported throughout these processes.

To achieve this, MKS is committed to:

- Promoting fair and accessible enrolment opportunities for all children, with particular attention to those experiencing vulnerability or disadvantage.
- Embedding clear, consistent procedures for application, enrolment, and orientation, ensuring families understand each step and can participate fully.
- Supporting children's transition into kindergarten through tailored orientation programmes that recognise individual needs and family circumstances.
- Maintaining confidentiality and privacy in all aspects of application and enrolment.
- Engaging families as partners in the enrolment and orientation process, encouraging feedback and collaboration.
- Ensuring compliance with all relevant legislative and regulatory requirements, as outlined in the dedicated section of this policy.
- Continuously reviewing and improving our practices to reflect current research, sector guidance, and feedback from stakeholders.
- Monitoring the implementation and effectiveness of enrolment and orientation practices, and seeking feedback from families, staff, and other stakeholders to inform ongoing improvement.

6. Delegations and Responsibilities

The **CEO** is responsible for:

- Ensuring organisational compliance with relevant legislation, regulations, and standards.
- Approving this policy and ensuring alignment with Meli's strategic objectives.
- Promoting a culture of accountability, inclusion, and continuous improvement across all kindergarten services.

The **Executive Director – Services** is responsible for:

- Providing operational leadership to ensure policy implementation across all Meli Kindergartens.
- Overseeing development, implementation, and review of enrolment and orientation procedures, risk assessments, and staff training.
- Monitoring compliance through internal audits, incident reporting, and service-level reviews.

The **Program Director** and **Managers** are responsible for:

- Supporting educators and staff to implement policy requirements in daily operations and curriculum planning.
- Ensuring staff and volunteers have appropriate knowledge and training in enrolment, orientation, and inclusion practices.
- Maintaining records of enrolment, orientation, and any incidents related to these processes.
- Communicating with families about enrolment and orientation procedures, including opportunities for involvement and feedback.
- Developing risk management plans where enrolment or orientation practices intersect with cultural or community considerations.

Early Childhood Teachers, Educators and **All Other Staff** are responsible for:

- Implementing enrolment and orientation procedures in daily routines and learning experiences.

- Role-modelling inclusive and supportive behaviours and supporting children's transition into the service.
- Ensuring environments support children's engagement and wellbeing during orientation.
- Participating in training and professional development related to enrolment and orientation.
- Collaborating with families to promote consistent practices between home and the service.
- Seeking to understand, respect and respond to the culture, values and beliefs of families, and incorporate their decision-making in their child's learning and development.

Parents/Guardians are responsible for:

- Providing accurate information during the application and enrolment process.
- Supporting their children's transition and engagement with orientation activities.
- Engaging with the service's enrolment and orientation procedures and providing feedback or suggestions.
- Informing educators of any cultural or personal considerations that may influence enrolment or orientation.

Contractors, Volunteers and **Students** are responsible for:

- Complying with this policy and following staff instructions during enrolment and orientation activities.
- Completing induction or training as required.
- Reporting any risks or concerns to a staff member immediately.

7. Policy Application

To ensure the values and objectives of this policy are achieved, Meli Kindergarten Services will:

- Seek regular feedback from educators, staff, families, and other stakeholders on the effectiveness of application, enrolment, and orientation practices.
- Monitor implementation and compliance, including the handling of incidents, complaints, and concerns related to application, enrolment, and orientation.
- Review and update the policy to reflect changes in legislation, sector guidance, research, and best practice in early childhood education.
- Undertake scheduled policy reviews every three years as part of the service's continuous improvement cycle, or earlier if required due to emerging risks or incidents.
- Notify all affected stakeholders of any significant changes to this policy or its procedures at least 14 days in advance, unless a shorter timeframe is necessary to manage risk.
- Feedback can be submitted via policy@meli.org.au.

8. Legislation, Acts, Standards

This policy is informed by the following legislation, regulations, and standards:

- Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010
- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011
- National Quality Standard – Quality Area 6: Collaborative Partnerships with Families and Communities
- Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic)
- Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)
- Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic)
- Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 (Vic)
- Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations 2019 (Vic)
- Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth)
- Department of Education Kindergarten Funding Guide

These references ensure that application, enrolment, and orientation practices at Meli Kindergarten Services are evidence-based, developmentally appropriate, and compliant with national and state requirements.

9. Related Documents

Sources

- Australian Childhood Immunisation Register: www.servicesaustralia.gov.au
- Australian Government Department of Health, National Immunisation Program Schedule: www.health.gov.au
- Department of Health, Immunisation enrolment toolkit for early childhood education and care service: www2.health.vic.gov.au
- Department of Education, Arrival: Information for sessional services: <https://www.vic.gov.au/arrival-information-sessional-kindergarten#more-information>
- Department of Education: [Stating age calculator](#)
- Department of Education: [Early Childhood Language Services](#)
- Department of Education: [Supporting CALD families to engage in kindergarten](#)
- Department of Education: [Information about kindergarten in your language](#)
- Department of Education, Resources for funded kindergartens: www.vic.gov.au/resources-funded-kindergartens
- Guide to the Education and Care Services National Law and the Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011: www.acecqa.gov.au
- Guide to the National Quality Standard: www.acecqa.gov.au
- The Kindergarten Funding Guide (Victorian Department of Education): www.education.vic.gov.au

Related policies

- Acceptance and Refusal of Authorisations Policy
- Code of Conduct Policy
- Compliments and Complaints Policy
- Dealing with Infectious Disease Policy
- Dealing With Medical Conditions Policy
- Delivery and Collection of Children Policy
- Free Kindergarten Fees Policy
- Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy
- Inclusion and Equity Policy
- Privacy and Confidentiality Policy

10. Document History

Version	Approved By	Approval Date	Effective Date	Sections Modified	Updated By
1.00	CEO	10/12/2025	10/12/2025	New policy	Cassandra Gallop