What is Early Start Kindergarten?

Why is kindergarten important?

Kindergarten programs help children with their language, development and self-confidence. Research shows an early start and more time at kindergarten prepares children for success at school and has a positive impact later in life.

What is Early Start Kindergarten?

Early Start Kindergarten provides free or low cost kindergarten to eligible three year old children where programs are offered by a qualified teacher. Some services will be able to offer your child a place in a program for four year olds or a mixed age group.

Applications for Early Start Kindergarten funding are made by the service on your behalf and the grant is paid directly to the service.

Is my child eligible?

Your child is eligible if they are aged three by 30 April in the year they will be attending kindergarten, and:

* Your family has had contact with Child Protection (or been referred to Child FIRST), or
* Your child is Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander (for more information, see the brochure Early Start Kindergarten for all Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children).

How do I enrol my child?

You can enrol your child by contacting a kindergarten service near you and asking to access Early Start Kindergarten. Alternatively your Child FIRST or Child Protection worker can do this on your behalf, or a Koorie Engagement Support Officer (KESO) in your nearest Department of Education & Training office can help you apply.

To find a kindergarten service or child care centre with a funded program visit the [Find a school or early childhood service page](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/findaservice) <www.education.vic.gov.au/findaservice> or contact your local council. You can find out the phone number for your local council by visiting the [Local Government Victoria page](http://www.localgovernment.vic.gov.au) <www.localgovernment.vic.gov.au>.

Should my child go to four year old kindergarten as well?

Yes, a kindergarten program in the year before school will build on the strengths your child will develop through Early Start Kindergarten.

Children who have accessed Early Start Kindergarten are also eligible for free or low cost four year old kindergarten. All Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children enrolled in sessional or integrated long day care services are eligible for 15 hours of free or low cost kindergarten.

Try to enrol your child for four year old kindergarten as early as possible to make sure your child gets a place as places at your preferred kindergarten are not guaranteed.

Where can I find more about Early Start Kindergarten?

For more information about Early Start Kindergarten, visit the [Early Start Kindergarten page](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/parents/kindergarten/pages/earlystart.aspx) <www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/parents/kindergarten/pages/earlystart.aspx>, contact your regional Department of Education & Training office (See the following page for contact details of regional offices), or see the brochure Early Start Kindergarten for all Aboriginal children.

Regional Office Contacts

| Regional Office  | Location  | Switchboard |
| --- | --- | --- |
| North-Eastern Victoria  | Benalla | 03 8392 9500 |
| North-Eastern Victoria  | Glen Waverley | 03 8392 9300 |
| North-Western Victoria | Bendigo | 03 5440 3111 |
| North-Western Victoria | Coburg | 03 9488 9488 |
| North-Western Victoria | Greensborough | 03 8469 9200 |
| South-Eastern Victoria | Dandenong | 03 8765 5600 |
| South-Eastern Victoria | Moe | 03 5127 0400 |
| South-Western Victoria | Ballarat | 03 5337 8444 |
| South-Western Victoria | Geelong | 03 5225 1000 |
| South-Western Victoria | Footscray | 03 8397 0300 |

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