**Operational policy settings to apply from 2026**

| **Topic** | **Operational policy setting** | **Further information** |
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| **Delivering Pre-Prep programs** |
| Minimum requirement of 16 hours per week | From 2026, children eligible for Pre-Prep must be enrolled for a minimum of 16 hours per week for 40 weeks of the year (or 640 hours per year) to be eligible for Pre-Prep funding.Services in roll-out LGAs that do not meet this requirement will not be eligible for funding for 4-year-old programs, unless there are exceptional circumstances. | If your service or families at your service are experiencing exceptional circumstances that mean you are not able to deliver at least 16 hours per week (or 640 hours per year) of Pre-Prep to eligible children, you are encouraged to contact your [local Early Childhood Improvement Branch](https://www.vic.gov.au/contact-early-childhood-improvement-branch) as soon as possible.  |
| Pre-Prep program hours | Services have the flexibility to choose program hours, between a minimum of 16 hours per week for 40 weeks of the year (or 640 hours per year) and the maximum number of hours specified in the roll-out schedule. | Children will be funded for Pre-Prep based on the hours of the Pre-Prep program they are enrolled in. Services should ensure that the provision of Pre-Prep and Three-Year-Old Kindergarten reflects the needs of their local community.Where places are limited, access to a funded kindergarten program should be prioritised over the number of weekly program hours delivered. |
| One funded place | A child can only access a funded Pre-Prep program at 1 service at any 1 time, unless there are exceptional circumstances that may warrant a child accessing a funded place at 2 services.  | If a child is enrolled at 2 services, the parent, carer or legal guardian must nominate which service will receive kindergarten funding for the child. Where exceptional circumstances may warrant a child accessing a funded place at 2 services, you should contact your [local Early Childhood Improvement Branch](https://www.vic.gov.au/contact-early-childhood-improvement-branch) for funding advice. |
| Delivering Pre-Prep to children from a priority group | Children from a priority cohort can be enrolled in more than 1 group at a single service (including 4-year-old, mixed age, and 3-year-old groups). |  |
| Workforce requirements | Pre-Prep programs must be developed and delivered by a VIT-registered ECT. | The requirements for teaching qualifications, standards and workforce practices for funded kindergarten programs as outlined in the [Kindergarten Funding Guide](https://www.vic.gov.au/kindergarten-funding-guide), as amended from time to time, will apply to Pre-Prep.Alternative funding arrangements for services that are not able to have a VIT-registered ECT deliver a Pre-Prep program due to exceptional circumstances (for example, Funding by Exception) will be outlined in the [Kindergarten Funding Guide](https://www.vic.gov.au/kindergarten-funding-guide). |
| **Managing 4-year-old enrolments** |
| Prior notification required to reduce 4-year-old enrolments | Services proposing to reduce the number of 4-year-old places offered to below current enrolments to accommodate Pre-Prep must notify the department. | Service providers will be informed when a risk emerges that children in a service’s local area may not be able to access a funded Pre-Prep place. In these circumstances, the department will work with services in that local area to increase the number of enrolments, which may include developing options for new or expanded facilities, and reducing program hours in the interim if required.The process and timeline for notifying the department of an intention to reduce 4-year-old places offered will be made available in due course. |
| **Priority of access** |
| Priority of access | In Pre-Prep roll-out LGAs, children residing in the LGA and children residing outside the LGA whose closest service is located within the LGA will be prioritised a place over other children from outside the LGA. | Where there are places available after these children are placed in a program, children from outside the roll-out LGA can be allocated a place.The department will work closely with you to support children who live outside of a roll-out area, but whose ‘local’ service is in the roll-out area, to enrol in a funded Pre-Prep program. |
| **Three-Year-Old Kindergarten** |
| Three-Year-Old Kindergarten roll-out schedule | Service providers in Pre-Prep roll-out LGAs can commence offering Pre-Prep before they offer a 15-hour-per-week Three-Year-Old Kindergarten program. |  |
| Implications for Three-Year-Old Kindergarten | Service providers cannot reduce Three-Year-Old Kindergarten hours or enrolments to accommodate Pre-Prep or increase Pre-Prep program hours, without seeking prior approval from the department. | Further information about the process for seeking approval from the department will be made available shortly. |
| **Additional year of funded kindergarten** |
| Additional year of funded kindergarten | From 2026, across Victoria, children who meet the eligibility requirements due to their learning or developmental needs can access an additional year of either:* Three-year-Old Kindergarten; or
* Pre-Prep (or Four-Year-Old Kindergarten for children not eligible for Pre-Prep),

but not both.  | Information for early childhood education professionals on how to determine if a child is eligible for an additional year of funded kindergarten will be updated by mid-2025. |