CatholicCare
DIOCESE OF BROKEN BAY

Children's Services ELC / Preschool Fee Policy

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What do we believe?

At CatholicCare Diocese of Broken Bay, we are committed to the safety and wellbeing of children and hold this at the centre of our decision making and practice. We believe in the principle of paramountcy of the safety of children. This means that the safety, wellbeing, and best interests of the child are the primary consideration in all decisions, actions, and practices. Where there is a conflict between the interests of a child and those of adults or the organisation, the child's safety and wellbeing will always come first.

We believe that access to high-quality education and care should be supported by fair, transparent and equitable fee practices. As a not-for-profit organisation, we are committed to keeping fees as affordable as possible while ensuring the delivery of safe, high-quality education and care that meets all legislative, regulatory and operational requirements. We recognise that every family's circumstances are different and are committed to working respectfully and collaboratively with families, providing clear information about fees, Start Strong Funding, Child Care Subsidy, payment expectations and available support to promote ongoing access to our services wherever possible.

What are we going to do?

We will establish and administer fees in a fair, transparent and consistent manner that complies with all relevant legislation, start strong funding and Child Care Subsidy requirements. We will provide families with clear information about fee schedules, payment methods, invoicing, subsidies, deposits, notices and any additional charges before enrolment and throughout their child's attendance. We will maintain accurate financial and attendance records, communicate promptly regarding any changes to fees or outstanding accounts, and work collaboratively with families experiencing financial hardship to explore appropriate support and payment arrangements where possible. Through responsible financial management and open communication, we will support the ongoing sustainability of our services while ensuring children continue to have access to high-quality education and care.

How will it be done?

Setting of fees

CatholicCare works to keep fees as affordable as possible. However, there are times, due to rising costs and changing funding provisions by government, that fees need to be raised. When this is the case, we will advise you in writing prior to any increase taking effect.

Early Learning Centres with 'preschool' hours are funded by the State government. Fees are outlined in the Fee Schedule with no further reductions. Early Learning Centres with Long Day Care/Extended Hours are funded by the Federal Government and eligible families will receive Child Care Subsidy.

Fees are determined by location, size of service, age range of children, required staffing and administrative requirements and application of any State or Federal Funding.

A one-off administration fee is charged at the time of enrolment; please refer to the services fee schedule which can be found in your enrolment pack. Any subsequent children of the same family being enrolled will be charged a smaller administration fee.

For services transferring to CatholicCare, a reduced administration fee will be charged for families already enrolled; new families will be charged the full fee.

Change of fees

CatholicCare reviews fees throughout the year and fees are subject to change at any time provided a minimum of two weeks written notice is given to all families. CCS hourly rate caps may be increased by the CPI at the commencement of each financial year; any CCS hourly rate increases are governed by CCS and are automatically adjusted through the CRM system. Start Strong Funding is reviewed and changed by the State Government annually.

Payment of fees

A holding deposit is payable for all families enrolling in all the Early Learning Centres when enrolling their child at the beginning of each year. This holding deposit will represent two (2) weeks of your child's scheduled fee. The maximum two (2) week holding fee will be capped at $250. Please refer to the service fee schedule for the holding deposit rate. If a parent subsequently chooses not to take the placement, the deposit is refundable with two (2) weeks written notice. If written notice is not provided, the deposit will be non-refundable. The deposit is held until the end of your child's enrolment and allocated against the final invoice. In Term 4, any notice of early leaving before the designated final day, must be received in writing before the 1st of November of that year. You will still be required to pay any gap fee up to the 2 weeks prior to the end of Term 4 if you do not give notice of final day.

Fees are invoiced fortnightly in advance and payments must be paid according to the due date listed.

What will be charged	Fees are charged for each session of care and gap fees will vary dependant on individual family eligibility for Child Care Subsidy (CCS) where this is applicable.
Compliance Written Agreement (CWA)	To receive CCS payments, the service is responsible for creating a Compliance Written Agreement (CWA) with the parent of or individual responsible for the fees. Confirmation of the Compliance Written Agreement (CWA) is generated by the CRM System and is signed by the parent/individual. Any change to this agreement must be in writing and be reflected on the current CWA.
Enrolment Notice	The service then submits an 'enrolment notice' in the Child Care Subsidy system when the above arrangement has been entered into and must report the attendance of the child. This is done through The CRM System. If a family disagrees with the details of the enrolment, they will notify the service via their Centrelink online account to correct any errors or resolve matters. CCS payments will not be processed until the matter is resolved and the enrolment is confirmed.
Who gets the CCS payment	CCS is paid directly to CatholicCare Children's Services and applied to the family's fortnightly fee (visible on a family's statement).
Who gets the Start Strong Funding	Start Strong funding is available to eligible children attending a participating community or mobile preschool service in NSW, subject to the program's eligibility requirements.
Gap Fee	Families are required to pay the difference – the Gap Fee - between the fee charged and the CCS amount. All payments must be made through electronic transfer mode. Fees must be kept two (2) weeks in advance of a child's attendance. Families are provided a fortnightly invoice, reflecting payments charged, CCS payment applied, and Gap fee invoiced for payment. A dated receipt is provided for each payment via email.
Statements Issued to Families	Families will be issued with a Statement on a fortnightly basis in accordance with fee payment and Regulatory requirements. The Statement will include details of the sessions of care provided and the amount of fee reductions through CCS entitlements. The Statement is generated using the CRM System which meets all requirements as per Family Assistance Law legislations.

Fees paid through Direct Debit	Fees are to be paid fortnightly through a direct debit system. Alternatively, and by prior arrangement, fees may be paid through BPAY/Credit Card, but only for specific circumstances. If families wish to pay fees on a weekly or monthly basis, it is a requirement that the family pay in advance and are not in arrears. Fees and charges associated with direct debit system are outlined upon enrolment. A dishonour fee will apply for direct debit transactions where there are insufficient funds to cover the fees. Additional fees may be charged by your card provider or bank.
Invoicing	Invoices are emailed to families every fortnight showing the current balance and fees required for the following fortnight in advance. Fees are to be paid fortnightly, via Direct Debit or by BPay. Invoicing dates are shared with families at the beginning of each year. Dates for the fee period are printed on the invoice.
Two weeks in Advance	Fees are payable for two (2) weeks in advance for every session that a child is enrolled. This includes pupil free days, sick days, and family holidays but excludes periods when the Service is closed across the Christmas period. The Service may be directed to close due to periods of local emergency such as bushfire, flood or a pandemic.
Public Holidays	If a session within in the term falls on a public holiday, families are required to pay normal fees.
Full session charged	Fees are charged for full sessions only (regardless of the actual attendance hours any day).

Overdue fees

If fees are overdue by more than two (2) weeks, the Director will request immediate payment to ensure your child's enrolment is not cancelled. If there are outstanding fees by more than two (2) weeks after receiving the invoice, parents will receive the first overdue notice. If payment has not been received within the following fortnight, then a second notice of nonpayment will be sent. **Parents are informed that their child's enrolment will be terminated if payment of fees in arrears is not met in the specified time frame.**

Parents should advise the Director at the earliest possible opportunity if they have difficulty in paying fees. Payment Plans can be made available for families experiencing financial hardship.

Additional Child Care Subsidy (ACCS)

The Additional Child Care Subsidy (ACCS) provides extra help with the cost of early childhood education and care to families facing difficult or challenging circumstances. ACCS will usually cover all a child's early childhood education and care fees.

To get ACCS you must be eligible for CCS, and you need to be 1 of the following:

- An eligible grandparent getting an income support payment
- Transitioning from certain income support payments to work
- Experiencing temporary financial hardship
- Caring for a child who is vulnerable or at risk of harm, abuse or neglect.

Families cannot apply for ACCS themselves. Where a child or family is identified as needing support, the approved provider may apply for the subsidy on behalf of the family.

The provider will discuss support options with the family, establish eligibility and complete the required application and supporting documentation. The provider may also be required to refer the family to an appropriate support agency in accordance with Family Assistance Law.

Families generally need to have a Child Care Subsidy (CCS) claim lodged and be assessed as eligible for CCS before ACCS can be paid. In limited circumstances, the provider may be able to apply under a Provider Eligible Arrangement where a CCS eligible parent or carer cannot be identified.

Where approved, ACCS is paid directly to the approved provider and applied to the family's childcare account as a fee reduction.

Families who believe they may be eligible should speak with their Service Coordinator to discuss their circumstances and available support.
caring for a child who is vulnerable or at risk of harm, abuse or neglect

Child Care Subsidy System (CCS)

- Our service will comply with the Australian Government requirements to be an approved education and care service for the purposes of Child Care Subsidy (CCS), reporting requirements and any other requirements for claiming and administering CCS will be maintained by the service.
- Families should be aware that Services Australia may withhold a percentage of their Child Care Subsidy entitlement to reduce the likelihood of overpayments at the end of the financial year. Any questions regarding CCS withholding should be directed to Services Australia.
- It is the enrolling parent/guardian's responsibility to register for CCS through their myGOV account, provide their projected annual income, activity levels and the name of our service.
- All fees are charged at the full rate. Each family's eligibility for CCS is then calculated, and the service forwards these funds. Deductions may then be made to each individual family's accounts.
- Any changes in a family's financial circumstances may result in changes or cancellation of CCS. It is the family's responsibility to keep their details on myGov up to date and to contact Services Australia. if they wish to dispute assessments or discuss it further.
- Families will only be eligible for CCS if child care attendance records are accurately completed and signed by the parent/guardian or other responsible adult, and other eligibility requirements are met.
- Families are entitled to forty-two (42) allowable absence days for each registered child in each financial year. CCS is paid for these days, provided that the child would normally have attended on that day, and fees have been charged.
- Additional absences can be claimed when the first 42 days have been used. Supporting documentation may be required for approval of additional absences.
- All documentation pertaining to CCS will be kept for the specified period of time and made available to Australian Government Officers on request.
- Additional funding possible via the Disability inclusion support funding if applicable.

Document Retention

Itemised individual ACCS and CCS documents and retention regulations

CCS Documents	Dates required for retention
• A record of attendance for each child for whom care is provided (regardless of eligibility for Child Care Subsidy), including records of any absences from care • Statements or documents demonstrating that additional absence days more than the initial 42 absence days satisfy requirements (see Reporting absences) • Copies of invoices and receipts issued for the payment of childcare fees	Records are to be retained for 7 years from the end of the year the care was provided.

CCS Documents	Dates required for retention
• Copies of all Statements of Entitlement issued, and any statements issued to advise that there was a change of entitlement.	
Complaints made relating to Family Assistance Law	To be kept at the service and accessible when required
ACCS Documents	Records are to be retained for 7 yeasts from the end of the year the care was provided.
The CRM System	All records on the CRM system software are retained and available to the service when required.

Start Strong Grants and Funded Program

The Start Strong for Community Preschools program provides funding to deliver affordable, quality preschool education for children aged 3 years and above who are enrolled in eligible community and mobile preschools in NSW. This funding is designed to significantly reduce preschool fees and make 600 hours of early childhood education more affordable for families.

The NSW Government provides fee relief to families through the 2026 Start Strong for Community Preschools program. Funding for fee relief is provided directly to our service and passed on to families as a reduction to fees. In 2026, there are two categories of fee relief payment - children eligible for the maximum fee relief rate can receive up to $4,456, See guidelines for details. All other eligible children can receive up to $3,565, See guidelines for details.

Please also note that:

- Fee relief can only be claimed for a child at one early childhood education and care service at a time
- Fee relief is generally applied as a reduction to fees across the calendar year
- One completed 2026 Start Strong fee relief declaration and consent form is required for each enrolled child before fee relief can be applied
- Children must be at least 3 years old on or before 31 July 2026 and enrolled in an eligible community preschool to access fee relief.

If your child attends another service that offers Start Strong fee relief, such as another community preschool, mobile preschool or long day care service, you must choose which one service will receive the fee relief for that child.

Fee relief will not be applied for eligible children where:

- A completed fee relief declaration and consent form has not been received for the child
- The completed declaration indicates that fee relief is being claimed for the child at another service
- The child does not meet the eligibility requirements for the program
- Where fee relief cannot be applied, the family will be charged the applicable preschool fee in accordance with the service's fee schedule

Declaration and consent forms allow our service to apply fee relief and share required information with the NSW Department of Education so funding and related supports can be administered in accordance with program requirements.

Our service will request a new declaration and consent form for each child each year they attend, and earlier if any relevant details need to be updated.

Late pickup fees

If you are delayed and cannot get to the service in time for closing, please arrange for an alternate authorised person to pick up your child/ren and call the service to let them know. Two (2) staff are required to remain at the service after hours if a child has not been picked up. If families arrive after closing time a late fee will be charged.

Children must be collected no later than the advertised closing time. Please see example below for charges. This time will be calculated by the time listed through the Electronic Sign In on a per family basis.

To ensure appropriate staffing arrangements are maintained after the service closes, the following late collection fees will apply:

- $25 for the first 15 minutes after the service closes.
- An additional $10 will be charged for every subsequent 5-minute period (or part thereof) until the child is collected.

Example:

Closing Time 18:00	Charge
18:00 – 18.15	$25
18:20	$10 added to initial $25
18:25	$20 added to initial $25

Casual childcare days

Vacancies permitting, extra days may be available to families on a casual basis charged in addition to your permanent booking. Please see the Director if you require any extra days. To ensure a space at the service a permanent booking is advised. **A casual position is not secured without prior written confirmation.**

Note: The fees for casual days must be paid in addition to your permanent bookings and may not be swapped for permanent days. Please refer to the service fee schedule for rates. Once booked, a casual day requires a 24 hours' notice for cancellation of the booking.

Eligible children enrolled in the preschool program at participating Early Learning Centres may receive NSW Government Start Strong Fee Relief. In 2026, the fee relief is calculated as an annual amount per eligible enrolment and is applied towards the family's fees after Child Care Subsidy (CCS) has been applied. The amount of fee relief available varies depending on the child's eligibility and the service's circumstances. Families are responsible for paying any remaining fees. Please refer to your fee schedule for applicable daily rates.

Children, aged 3 and children aged 4 and above, who attend pre-school program in a Long Day Care/Extended Hours ELC will receive a set amount of State Government Start Strong Fee Relief which is used to reduce your Gap Fee.

Changes to permanent bookings

Changes to enrolments in Early Learning Centres, including termination of your child's enrolment, require four (4) weeks written notice to be provided to the service Director. Remaining fees are still payable for this four-week period. When booking enrolments for the following year that have been confirmed by the service Director in writing, any cancellation of the enrolment will incur the full four (4) week notice period or loss of the holding deposit.

Permanent booked days cannot be swapped or changed during the notice period for the purpose of avoiding notice period fees. For example, if a family cancels a Monday booking and requests a Thursday booking instead, the two-week notice period and applicable fees for the original Monday booking will still apply.

Holidays & Public Holidays

Service opening hours and closure periods are indicated in the parent handbooks, listed on the service website and available at www.startingblocks.gov.au.

Fees apply for the days your child is permanently booked into the service (including public holidays that fall within the school Term dates). This includes days when children are away on holidays during term time and days when children are away due to ill health.

Parents receiving Child Care Subsidy can use their Absences during this time.

Third Party provider

CatholicCare Children's Services uses a CRM system to manage enrolments, attendance records, fee administration and Child Care Subsidy (CCS) requirements.

The CRM System is used to:

- Manage enrolment information and arrangements for care;
- Record attendance and absences;
- Submit required CCS enrolment notices and session reports;
- Issue Statements of Entitlement, invoices and receipts; and
- Provide families with secure electronic sign in and sign out using a unique access code.

Childcare fees are collected via the payment methods approved by CatholicCare, including direct debit, BPAY and credit card. Child Care Subsidy (CCS) payments are received directly from Services Australia and applied to each family's account. Eligible families may also receive NSW Government Start Strong Fee Relief, which is applied as a reduction to the family's session fee or gap fee after CCS has been applied. Start Strong Fee Relief is available to eligible children enrolled in participating long day care preschool programs and is subject to the relevant eligibility requirements and completion of the required Fee Relief Declaration and Consent Form.

CatholicCare maintains appropriate security measures, record keeping practices and auditing processes to ensure compliance with the Family Assistance Law and all applicable legislative requirements. Access to the is restricted to authorised staff who have received appropriate training and are responsible for administering enrolments, attendance and fee management.

Handling money

CatholicCare Children's Services is committed to ensuring that all financial transactions are managed safely, securely and in accordance with organisational financial procedures.

Fee Payments

Families are required to pay childcare fees electronically via Direct Debit, BPAY or credit card. Cash payments for childcare fees are not accepted.

Educators working directly with children are not responsible for processing fee payments. Fee administration is managed by authorised staff in accordance with CatholicCare financial procedures.

Fundraising

Fundraising activities must have a clear purpose and be conducted in a manner that is ethical, inclusive and equitable for all children and families.

Families will be informed of the purpose of the fundraising activity and how the funds will be used. Where applicable, receipts will be issued for monies received.

All funds raised must be processed through CatholicCare's approved financial systems and banking processes. Cash received through fundraising activities must not be used for direct purchases or retained outside approved financial procedures.

All fundraising activities must be approved by the relevant Practice Manager and conducted in accordance with CatholicCare's Fundraising and Donations Policy.

Security and Financial Controls

Access to safes, financial records and any cash holdings is restricted to authorised staff only.

CatholicCare maintains appropriate financial controls, record keeping and auditing processes to ensure the secure management of all monies received by the service.

Who is responsible?

Roles	Responsibilities
Approved Provider	• Ensure the service operates in line with the Family Assistance Law and Education and Care Services National Law and Regulations • Reviewing the current budget to determine fee income requirements. • Developing a fee policy that balances the parent's/guardian's capacity to pay, with providing a high-quality program and maintaining service viability. • Considering any issues regarding fees that may be a barrier to families enrolling at the service and removing those barriers wherever possible. • Providing parents/guardians with a regular statement of fees and charges. • Ensuring that the Fees Policy is readily accessible at the service. • Notifying parents/guardians within 14 days of any proposed changes to the fees charged or the way in which the fees are collected.

Roles	Responsibilities
	• Ensuring a notice outlining the fees charged by the service is displayed prominently in the main entrance to the service. • Enter into a Complying Written Agreement (CWA) with a parent or guardian, to provide education and care services in exchange for fees. A CWA is an agreement between the education and care service and a parent or guardian. It will include: • The provider and parents contact names and details • The date the arrangement is effective from • The child or children's full name and date of birth • Session days and start/end times • Details of the fees to be charged • Update any changes to the Complying Written Arrangement (CWA) as required • The service's current fee schedule, including session types, session lengths and applicable fees, is available to families upon enrolment and on request. • Ensuring the service complies with the current Start Strong for Community Preschools program guidelines, including fee relief, declaration and record-keeping requirements. • Ensuring one completed fee relief declaration and consent form is obtained for each child before fee relief is applied. • Maintaining accurate records of fee relief applied and updating procedures when program requirements change.
Practice Manager	• Ensure the Fee Policy is implemented consistently across all Children's Services. • Monitor compliance with relevant legislation, Child Care Subsidy (CCS) requirements, organisational financial procedures and funding agreements. • Approve fundraising activities in accordance with CatholicCare's Fundraising and Donations Policy. • Support Directors and Coordinators in managing complex fee matters, outstanding accounts and financial hardship arrangements where required. • Monitor service fee administration practices to ensure accurate record keeping, financial accountability and compliance. • Support continuous improvement by reviewing fee management practices and implementing improvements where required.
Administration	• Accurately administer enrolments, Compliance Written Agreements (CWAs), CCS enrolment notices and attendance records through the approved CRM system. • Prepare and distribute invoices, statements, receipts and other fee related documentation in accordance with legislative and organisational requirements. • Process fee payments, direct debit arrangements and account reconciliations in accordance with CatholicCare financial procedures. • Maintain accurate financial and enrolment records, ensuring documentation is securely stored and retained for the required legislative timeframes. • Assist families with general enquiries relating to fees, payment options, Child Care Subsidy and account balances, referring complex matters to the Director, Coordinator or Practice Manager as appropriate. • Maintain confidentiality and ensure only authorised personnel access financial and family information. • Support Directors and Coordinators in monitoring outstanding accounts and implementing approved payment plans where required. • Monitor service fee administration practices to ensure accurate record keeping, financial accountability and compliance. • Support Directors and Coordinators in managing complex fee matters, outstanding accounts and financial hardship arrangements where required.
Nominated Supervisor	• Providing parents/guardians with a regular statement of fees and charges. • Collecting all relevant information and maintaining relevant documents regarding those with entitlement to concessions, where applicable. • Notifying parents/guardians within 14 days of any proposed changes to the fees charged or the way in which the fees are collected. • Ensuring a notice outlining the fees charged by the service is displayed prominently in the main entrance to the service.
Educators	• Referring parents'/guardians' questions in relation to this policy to the Approved Provider or Nominated Supervisors

Roles	Responsibilities
Parents / Guardians	• Reading this policy and referring any questions, queries or concerns to the nominated supervisor. • Obtain a Customer Reference Number from Services Australia (Centrelink)as soon as practical before enrolment at the service. • Record the arrival and departure times of their child or children attending care. • Pay for any booked day of education and care which falls on a public holiday.

National Quality Standards (NQS)

Quality Area 7: Governance & Leadership		
7.1	Governance	Governance supports the operation of a quality service that is child safe
7.1.2	Management Systems	Systems are in place to manage risk and enable the effective management and operation of a quality service that is child safe
7.1.3	Roles and Responsibilities	Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined, and understood and support effective decision making and operation of the service

Education and Care Services National Law and National Regulations	
S. 2A	Paramount consideration—safety, rights and best interests of children
S. 3A	Paramount consideration
111	Administrative space
168	Education and care services must have policies and procedures
111	Administrative space
168	Education and care services must have policies and procedures
170	Policies and procedures to be followed
171	Policies and procedures to be kept available
172	Notification of change to policies and procedures
181	Confidentiality of records kept by approved provider
183	Storage of records and other documents
184	Storage of records after service approval transferred

Related documents

CatholicCare policy

- *Financial Management Policy*
- *Fraud Prevention Policy*

Children's Services policies

- *Enrolment, Waiting List, Orientation and Termination Policy*

Forms

- *ELC / ELCC Direct Debit Form*
- *First Notice of Non-payment Letter*
- *Second and Final Notice of Non-payment Letter*

Resources

External

- *Child Care Subsidy | myGov*
- *Guide to Additional Child Care Subsidy child wellbeing - Department of Education, Australian Government*
- *Services Australia*
- *Child Care Subsidy - Services Australia*
- *Centrelink Online Account Help - Child Care Subsidy*
- *Department of Human Services*
- *A New Tax System (Family Assistance) Act 1999*
- *A New Tax System (Family Assistance) (Administration) Act 1999*
- *Family Assistance Legislation (Jobs for Families Child Care Package) Act (2017)*

Glossary

ACECQA – Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authorities

The independent national authority that works with all regulatory authorities to administer the National Quality Framework, including the provision of guidance, resources and services to support the sector to improve outcomes for children.

ACCS

Additional Child Care Subsidy

CCS

Child Care Subsidy

Child Paramountcy

Child paramountcy refers to the obligation to ensure that the best interests, safety, and wellbeing of children are paramount above all other considerations. All decisions, practices, and actions must prioritise the protection and wellbeing of children, particularly where competing interests exist.

DCJ

Department of Communities & Justice

ELC

All centre-based services for children aged 0-5 years including Long Day Care and Preschool services.

MFA

Multi Factor Authentication – is a process which requires multiple methods of authentication from independent categories of credentials to verify a user's identity for a login or other transaction.

Practice Manager

A practice manager oversees and supports a cluster of services within a local area. They work with the Nominated supervisor to ensure services operate safely, meet legal and quality requirements, and follow organisational policies. They do not work directly with children day to day.

PRODA

Provider Digital Access – is an online verification and authentication system, enabling secure access to government online services.

Risk Assessment

A systematic process of evaluating the potential likelihood and consequences of risks that may be involved in a projected activity or undertaking.

Technology One (TechOne)

CatholicCare's Enterprise Resource Planning software system for accounting.

Sign off and review

This document remains valid until it is either superseded by a new version or officially revoked.

CatholicCare values your input and welcomes feedback on this policy. Your suggestions help us improve and better support your work. Please send any feedback to policy.updates@catholiccaredbb.org.au.

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