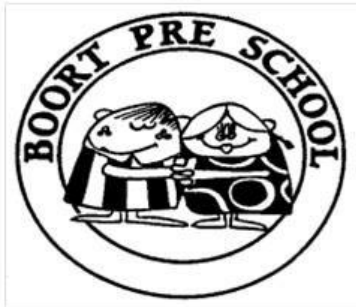




Kindergarten

Enrolment Guide

2025



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Introduction

Loddon Shire Council is the Early Years Manager (EYM) for the five (5) kindergartens within the Loddon Shire. Council provides central enrolment for all kindergarten services across the municipality. The system supports access and participation of all children in both Four-Year-Old Kindergarten and Three-Year-Old Kindergarten programs.

Kindergarten aims to advance each child's learning and to optimise the development of key skills.

Kindergarten programs are designed to:

- Engage each child as an effective learner
- Promote communication, learning and thinking
- Build positive relationships
- Enhance identity

Participation in a Kindergarten program gives parents and families the opportunity to be a part of a community focused on children's wellbeing.

The Kindergarten program also provides a place for parents to get to know other families and to share their experiences and information with early childhood professionals.

Kindergarten Enrolment Timeline

Key Dates	
22 April 2024	Enrolments for 2025 open
22 April to 26 July 2024	Loddon Shire Council receives kindergarten enrolments
26 July 2024	Enrolment period closes (please note enrolments not received by this date will be processed in the second and subsequent round offers)
From 19 August 2024	First round offers sent to families
From 16 September 2024	Second round offers sent out to families
From October 2024 Onwards	Offers will be made on a fortnightly basis Families will begin receiving information regarding enrolments, session times, start dates, orientation days and fee information.

Offers and Enrolment

A letter of offer for a Kindergarten place will be sent to families after the enrolment period has closed. Families are required to return the acceptance form by the nominated date, or the position will be forfeited.

If an applicant's first preference for a Kindergarten is not available they will be offered their nominated second or third preference Kindergarten.

Applicants can also request to be placed on a waiting list at their preferred kindergarten.

Once the kindergarten placement acceptance form has been completed and returned families will begin receiving information regarding session times, start dates, orientation days and permission forms to complete.

Please ensure you have the documents listed below to attach to your enrolment:

- Proof of birth (Birth certificate, Medicare Card, Passport)
- Immunisation History Statement (obtained from Medicare)
- Any other relevant documentation (Health Care Card, Pension Card, Visa etc.)

For families with any questions or difficulties completing the online enrolment form please contact council's early years team on (03) 5494 1200.

Priority of Access

Where applications exceed the kindergartens' current capacity, places within the program will be allocated in accordance with the DE Kindergarten Funding Guide Priority of Access Criteria and Loddon Shire Council Inclusion and Equity Policy and will be determined by the Manager Community Services.

In accordance with Victorian Government Kindergarten Criteria, children are eligible for priority access if they are vulnerable, have a disability or developmental delay, and/or have qualified for a second year of funded kindergarten. If there are an equal number of places than applications received then all applicants will receive an offer according to their preference. If there are more applicants than places then the Commonwealth Priority of Access Guidelines and State Government Service funding policies will be implemented, as follows:

High priority children:

- at risk of serious abuse or neglect including children in Out-of-Home Care
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children
- asylum seeker and refugee children
- children eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy
- children with additional needs defined as children who:
 - require additional assistance in order to fully participate in the kindergarten program
 - require a combination of services which are individually planned and
 - have an identified specific disability or developmental delay.

Having satisfied the requirements of Commonwealth Priority of Access Guidelines, remaining places will be allocated utilising the following Priority of Access guidelines:

- Children who have received funding for a second year of kindergarten;
- Children who were eligible to attend in the previous year but deferred or withdrew from the service prior to the April data collection.

Other considerations may include date of application, siblings already enrolled at the service, attendance in the three year old program and local community zoning.

Kindergarten in Loddon

Kindergarten (also called preschool) is a program for young children delivered by a qualified early childhood teacher. In Victoria, children can attend Three & Four-Year-Old Kindergarten in the two (2) years prior to starting primary school. Loddon Kindertartens' run a combined Three & Four-Year-Old Kindergarten program for 15 hours per week across 3 days. See table below for more details.

Is my child eligible for Three-Year-Old kindergarten?

The Department of Education provide funding for the following children to attend Three-Year-Old kindergarten:

- Children who turn three (3) years old on or before the 30 April in the year they will be attending Three-Year-Old Kindergarten.
- Children who turn three (3) years of age in the year they will attend kindergarten can not commence until they have turned three years old.
- Children can not attend two (2) years of Three-Year-Old Kindergarten

Please note: children do not need to be toilet trained to attend kindergarten; however independent toileting skills are encouraged.

Is my child eligible for Four-Year-Old kindergarten?

As per Department of Education (DE) funding criteria, the following children are eligible to attend Four-Year-Old Kindergarten:

- Children who turn four (4) years old on or before the 30 April in the year they will be attending Four-Year-Old Kindergarten.
- Children who have been approved to receive a second year of Four-Year-Old Kindergarten.
- Children who are turning six (6) years of age in their year of kindergarten who have been granted an exemption from school entry age requirements by their regional Department of Education (DE) office.

Please note: children do not need to be toilet trained to attend kindergarten; however independent toileting skills are encouraged.

Kindergarten Fees

Three and Four-Year-Old Kindergarten is fully funded by the State Government of Victoria under the Best Start, Best Life reform. Funding for your child's free kinder program is provided to our service directly from the Victorian Government so you will not be required to make any fee payments for Three and Four-Year-Old Kindergarten program.

Kindergarten Fee Subsidy

Eligibility for Kindergarten Fee subsidy is as follows:

- the child is identified by a parent, carer or legal guardian as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander
- the child is identified on their birth certificate as being a multiple birth child (triplets or more)

The child individually holds, or has a parent or guardian who holds one of the following:

- a Commonwealth Health Care Card or a Commonwealth Pensioner Concession Card
- a Department of Veterans' Affairs Gold Card or White Card
- Refugee visa (subclass 200) 3 In-country Special Humanitarian visa (subclass 201)
- Global Special Humanitarian visa (subclass 202)
- Temporary Humanitarian Concern visa (subclass 786)
- Protection visa (subclass 866)
- Emergency Rescue visa (subclass 203)
- Woman at risk visa (subclass 204)
- Bridging visas A-E.

Loddon Shire Council EYM may also use KFS information to assist in priority placement of children in a kindergarten service.

A second year of Four-Year-Old funded kindergarten

During the Four-Year-Old Kindergarten year, the early childhood teacher and the child's parents and/or guardians will work together to plan for the child's transition to school. Children attending a funded Three-Year-Old Kindergarten program are not eligible to access a second year of Three-Year-Old Kindergarten.

A second year of funded Four-Year-Old Kindergarten may be considered when a child shows delays in learning and development outcome areas in the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework, and when:

- the kindergarten program is deemed to be the most appropriate learning program, and
- the child will achieve better outcomes at kindergarten than if they go to school.

A second-year assessment process must be carried out for each child by an early childhood teacher when a second year is being considered. This process includes the following:

- Term Three Plan for Learning and Development
- Second Year eligibility discussion with the child's family and other early childhood professionals (if appropriate)
- Declaration of Eligibility for a second year of kindergarten
- Second Year Statement.

Early Start Kindergarten (ESK)

Early Start Kindergarten (ESK) provides eligible children with 15 hours of free kindergarten each week led by a qualified early childhood teacher.

ESK is available to children who are at least three years old by 30 April in the year they are enrolled to attend the program and are:

- from a refugee or asylum seeker background, or
- Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, or
- known to child protection.

Professionals working with families including Maternal and Child Health nurses, Aboriginal services, Child FIRST / Family Services practitioners, Multicultural organisations, bicultural workers, and Supported Play Group facilitators can refer to Early Start Kindergarten by confirming children's eligibility directly with the relevant early childhood service provider. Parents can also notify early childhood services about their eligibility.

Kindergarten Inclusion Support

Support is available for funded kindergartens to plan and implement a program that is responsive to the individual abilities, interests and needs of children with a disability, developmental delay or complex medical needs.

The Kindergarten Inclusion Support Program (KIS)

- provides assistance to complement early childhood teacher knowledge and skills, while acknowledging their expertise in supporting children's learning and development
- supports early childhood teachers to build their capacity to develop and implement an inclusive program
- supports early childhood teachers to contribute to positive outcomes for children, as defined in the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework
- responds to the child's abilities and strengths, as well as their needs by supporting the kindergarten to enhance their learning and development.

Inclusive programs encourage and allow all children genuine opportunities to access and participate in kindergarten programs.

Preschool Field Officer Program (PSFO)

The role of the Preschool Field Officer program is to support the access and participation of children with additional needs in State Government funded Kindergarten programs and to build the capacity of educators working with children.

The program supports children with a range of developmental and additional needs who are not receiving supports from Early Childhood Intervention Services or Kindergarten inclusion support services.

Parents and guardians are encouraged to discuss any concerns about the child with their Kindergarten teacher. Once a referral is received, a Preschool Field Officer will contact the Kindergarten to discuss support options, as this is often individual to each educator and child.

A visit to the service is then usually organised to observe the child & environment, and work with educators to increase their skills and knowledge to help ensure the delivery of an inclusive program. The PSFO will also assist with parent meetings and linking children and families in with any relevant community or specialist services who can provide further support or assessments

National Quality Framework

The National Quality Framework applies to kindergartens, long day care, family day care and outside school hours care services across Australia. These services are now required to operate under the Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010 and meet the National Quality Standard.

The Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority will oversee the National Quality Framework and ensure the consistent and effective implementation of the system

National Quality Standard

The National Quality Standard sets a national benchmark for the quality of education and care services.

The National Quality Standard is divided into seven Quality Areas:

- Educational program and practice
- Children's health and safety
- Physical environment
- Staffing arrangements
- Relationships with children
- Collaborative partnerships with families and communities
- Leadership and service management

National Quality Rating and Assessment Process

Approved Services will be assessed and rated against each of the seven Quality Areas of the National Quality Standard and the National Regulations. They will also be given an overall rating. The rating and assessment process aims to drive continuous quality improvement at services and provide families with better information for making choices about their children's education and care.

No Jab No Play

Under the 'No Jab, No Play' legislation, before completing an enrolment into Kindergarten, Council must first obtain a **current Immunisation History Statement from the Australia Immunisation Register (AIR)** which shows that the child is up to date with all vaccines due for their age, or that they are able to receive.

Immunisation History Statements can be downloaded from your MyGov account, by calling the Australian Immunisation Register on 1800 653 809 or by visiting your local Medicare office.

A valid medical exemption for children who are not able to be fully vaccinated includes:

- An anaphylactic reaction to a previous dose of a particular vaccine OR
- An Anaphylactic reaction to any vaccine component.
- Has a disease which lowers immunity (such as leukaemia, cancer, HIV/AIDS SCID) OR
- Is having treatment which lowers immunity (such as chemotherapy)

If a child has a medical reason they cannot be vaccinated, a GP or immunisation nurse would need to complete and sign a Medicare Immunisation Exemption Medical Contraindication Form and send to the Australia Childhood Immunisation Register (ACIR).

The screenshot shows a Medicare Immunisation History Statement for a child. The document is titled 'Immunisation history statement' and includes the following details:

- As at:** 01 February 2023
- For:** Alex, 10/12/2019
- Date of birth:** 01 January 2021
- MRB immunisation history:** up to date

The statement lists several immunisation events:

Schedule	Date given	Immunisation	Brand name given
2 months	12 Feb 2021	Diphtheria Tetanus Pertussis Hib Hepatitis B Poliovaccine	Inferon Heus
		Prophylactic	Prevalar 13
		Rotavirus	Rotarix
4 months	04 May 2021	Diphtheria Tetanus Pertussis Hib Hepatitis B Poliovaccine	Inferon Heus
		Prophylactic	Prevalar 13
		Rotavirus	Rotarix
6 months	08 Jul 2021	Diphtheria Tetanus Pertussis Hib Hepatitis B Poliovaccine	Inferon Heus
12 months	17 Jan 2022	Meningococcal ACWY	Menveo
		Prophylactic	Prevalar 13
18 months	17 Aug 2022	MV	Avaxim
		Diphtheria Tetanus Pertussis	Inferon
		Meningococcal ACWY	Menveo
Other	08 Jul 2021	Influenza	FluGuard
	12 Aug 2022	Influenza	FluGuard
	21 Sep 2022	Meningococcal B	Menveo
	23 Nov 2022	Meningococcal B	Menveo

At the bottom, it shows the 'Next MRB immunisation due' on 01 Jan 2025 and the 'Date due' on 01 Jan 2025.

Only histories from the AIR will be accepted – please DO NOT attach a statement from a medical professional, GP or your child’s Maternal and Child Health Green Book.

‘Conscientious objection’ is not an exemption under the ‘No Jab No Play’ legislation.

For further information please visit: <https://www.health.vic.gov.au/immunisation/no-jab-no-play>

What happens next?

Once all required enrolment documentation has been received, Loddon Shire Council EYM will contact you with arrangements for Orientation day.

Orientation day is an opportunity for you and your child to visit the kindergarten they will be attending in the following year, meet the Educators, and familiarise themselves with the kindergarten environment. A parent must stay with the child for the entirety of the Orientation session.

A session letter will be sent to families regarding session dates and times for the kindergarten year.

If you have any questions regarding the enrolment of your child at kindergarten please contact the Loddon Shire Council Early Years Team.

Loddon Shire Council Early Years Team

For more information regarding kindergarten enrolments or to arrange a visit to one of the kindergarten services please contact Council’s Early Years team on (03) 5494 1200

Council’s Early Years Team

P: (03) 5494 1200

earlyyears@loddon.vic.gov.au