

Procedure

Preschool enrolment procedure

Please note this procedure is mandatory and staff are required to adhere to the content.

Summary

This procedure sets out the steps which all preschools must comply with when offering enrolments, to support children being offered a place within their local or preferred preschool.

Table 1 - Document details

Publication date	16 November 2016
File number	16/06967
Related legislation	Children's Services Act 1985 Education Act 1972 Education and Care Services National Regulations South Australian Education and Early Childhood Services (Registration and Standards) Act 2011
Related policies, procedures, guidelines, standards, frameworks	Preschool enrolment policy Developing and implementing a priority of access policy for Preschools
Version	1.0
Replaces	
Policy officer (position)	Policy officer, Preschool Policy and Programs
Policy officer (phone)	8226 7900
Policy sponsor (position)	Manager, Preschool Policy and Programs
Executive director responsible (position and office)	Executive director, Statewide Services and Child Development
Applies to	All preschool staff
Key words	Preschool enrolment, preschool staffing allocation, registration
Status	Approved
Approved by	Senior Executive Group
Approval date	8 September 2016
Review date	6 July 2018

Table 2 - Revision record

Date	Version	Revision description
8 September 2016	1.0	New procedure developed to ensure a consistent approach to offering enrolments within government preschools.

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1. Title

Preschool enrolment procedure

2. Purpose

The department is committed to ensuring that all children who wish to access a government preschool can do so, while ensuring that resources are allocated as efficiently as possible.

The objectives of this procedure are to ensure:

- children are offered a place within their local or preferred preschool where available places exist
- where a child is not able to be placed within their local or preferred preschool, that the family is supported to access an alternative nearby government preschool
- preschool enrolments align as closely as possible to 1 educator to 10 children per session in category 1 preschools, and 1 educator to 11 children per session in category 2 and 3 preschools.

The outcome of this process is to place approximately 18,000 eligible preschool children into government preschools on an annual basis.

3. Scope

This procedure applies to all staff working in government preschools.

4. Procedure detail

4.1 Policy and legislative context

In accordance with the department's [preschool enrolment policy](#) children are entitled to access 4 terms of preschool in the year before they start school. There is one intake at the beginning of each year for children who turn 4 years of age before 1 May. Some groups of children are eligible to commence preschool throughout the year.

All preschools must endeavour to provide places for children living within the local geographical catchment area of the preschool as a priority. The [department's developing and implementing a priority of access policy for preschools guideline](#) outlines the key criteria that are to be considered by services when developing a site priority of access policy, to manage enrolments when the demand for places exceeds a service's capacity. Preschools may accept children outside their local geographic catchment area, where there are available places.

Preschools are required to comply with the educator to child ratios outlined in the Education and Care Services National Law and Regulations (Refer to *National Law Section 169 and National Regulations 121 - 123*). When enrolling children, preschools are to ensure that the educator-to-child ratios are aligned as closely as possible to 1 educator to 10 children per session in category 1 preschools, and 1 educator to 11 children per session in category 2 and 3 preschools.

4.2 Registering interest to enrol in a public preschool

Preschools will implement a range of strategies to encourage families within their local community to

register their interest to enrol their child(ren) at the service by the end of July in the year prior to the child being eligible to commence preschool.

Site leaders are responsible for providing advice to families on the process for enrolling a child in a government preschool (refer to Appendix 1: [preschool enrolment information for families](#)).

Families are able to register their interest in attending the local preschool and/or preferred preschool(s), by lodging a [preschool enrolment registration form](#) at the preschool. Where a family register an interest in attending a preschool other than their local preschool, site leaders are to encourage the family to also lodge a preschool enrolment registration form at their local preschool, as an offer of enrolment at their first choice of preschool cannot be guaranteed.

At the site leader's discretion, a family may be asked to complete a [preschool enrolment form](#) in lieu of a preschool enrolment registration form to streamline the enrolment process (eg where there is no other nearby alternative preschool option).

4.3 Staffing allocation and enrolment cap

4.3.1 Staffing allocation

All preschools will be notified of their initial staffing allocation and corresponding enrolment cap for the following year early in term 2 each calendar year. This staffing allocation will be determined on the basis of the site's eligible enrolments in term 1, which is captured in the term 1 preschool data collection.

A preschool's staffing allocation will be aligned as closely as possible to the nearest 1:10 and 1:11 educator-to-child ratios. Where there is demand for a preschool that does not align to the ratios of 1:10 or 1:11 per session by five or less children, the enrolment cap for these preschools will be rounded down.

Example: A category 3 preschool with eligible enrolments of 71 in term 1 2016, will have an enrolment cap rounded down to 66 for 2017. The preschool may confirm the enrolment of up to 66 children, and liaise with the early childhood leader for advice regarding any remaining enrolment requests.

Note: Services that choose to offer enrolments over their enrolment cap without prior endorsement by the education director or delegate, will be required to fund the additional staffing through the preschool's own resources, unless this amendment to staffing is subsequently approved by the education director.

4.3.2 Amendments to a service's staffing allocation

The education director or delegate may approve an increase to a preschool's staffing allocation to ensure the placement of all children seeking to enrol in a government preschool (refer to 4.5.2).

A preschool's eligible full time equivalent (FTE) enrolments* are monitored following the completion of preschool data collections. Human resources may reduce a preschool's staffing allocation where there is a significant reduction in their enrolment FTE. Note however, this reduced staffing allocation may not be enacted upon in circumstances where eligible enrolments are anticipated to increase during the year, or permanent staff cannot be placed elsewhere. Refer to the [preschool resource entitlement statement supporting information](#) (RES) for further information.

*An enrolment FTE will be calculated for each child based on the actual hours they are enrolled. For example, a child eligible for 15 hours per week who is enrolled for 6 hours per week, would be calculated as 0.4FTE of an enrolment.

4.4 First enrolment offers

Preschools may commence offering enrolments to families residing in the preschool's designated geographic catchment area using their service's priority of access guidelines, and up to their staffing allocation and enrolment cap, from the beginning of August. Refer to [developing and implementing a priority of access policy for preschools](#).

In rural communities where there is no alternative government preschool, all eligible preschool enrolments may be confirmed, noting that a [preschool staffing adjustment form](#) (Appendix 3) must be submitted to human resources via DECD.HR@sa.gov.au, if additional staffing is required to ensure compliance with the national educator-to-child requirements.

Preschool services are to inform families of the offer of a place in writing (via letter or email), and of the need to confirm their acceptance by the specified date, in order to secure a place for their child(ren). Refer to Appendix 4: [example letter/email – notification of preschool enrolment offer](#).

A family is able to confirm their acceptance of a place by completing and returning the confirmation of enrolment acceptance slip. Alternatively, the site leader may record whether a family accept or decline an offer verbally on the preschool enrolment registration form or the preschool's log book.

4.5 Enrolment of children unplaced after first enrolment offers

4.5.1 Enrolment update

Site leaders are required to notify their early childhood leader of the status of their preschool's enrolments by the end of week 5, term 3. This will include:

- the number of places offered (confirmed / unconfirmed)
- the number of remaining available places within the preschool's enrolment cap
- the number of children remaining on the preschool's enrolment registration list, who have not been offered a placement (specifying the number of children residing within the service's catchment area and number of children outside the service's catchment area who have indicated a preference to enrol at the preschool).

4.5.2 Identification of alternative preschool options and sites requiring additional staffing

Early childhood leaders in consultation with site leaders will consider available preschool options and additional staffing requirements within their partnership, to accommodate all children unplaced at the end of first enrolment offers. This may involve amending the staffing allocation to some preschools, and/or referring unplaced children to a nearby preschool with available places.

A significant level of collaborative practice amongst site leaders and with early childhood leaders and education directors is required at this stage of the enrolment process to consider:

- the placement of children in their preferred preschool where available places exist
- the most efficient use of available staffing resources
- compliance with educator to child ratio requirements.

Consideration of alternative session configurations by the site leader may be required.

Example: A part time category 1 rural preschool has 31 enrolments. The preschool may increase their sessions from 5 to 6, with an increased staffing allocation of 0.5 FTE to 0.6 FTE for the director, teacher and early childhood worker respectively to accommodate all children enrolled.

The education director or their delegate is responsible for approving all requests to amend a preschool's staffing allocation. Refer to Appendix 4: [preschool staffing adjustment form](#).

These forms are to be forwarded to human resources via DECD.HR@sa.gov.au, by the end of week 8, term 3. Human resources will confirm changes to a service's enrolment cap and staffing allocation, and ensure the adjustments are made to the preschool's Resource Entitlement Statement (RES) for term 1. Note: additional staffing will initially be allocated for term 1, with allocation for the remainder of the year subject to confirmation of a services enrolment FTE in the term 1 preschool data collection.

Note: To accommodate all eligible preschool children, some preschool services' staffing and enrolment cap may be amended, and/or some children may be offered enrolment at a nearby preschool with available places.

4.6 Second round enrolment offers

Based on the early childhood leader's advice regarding enrolment options available within the partnership, preschools may commence offering second round enrolment offers for any unplaced children and children residing outside of a preschool's designated geographic catchment area from the last week of September (week 10, term 3).

When a site leader confirms the enrolment of a child, it is recommended that they enquire if the family has previously accepted a place with another preschool. This will enable the site leader to contact the other preschool to update them about the child's enrolment in their preferred preschool, and for the place to be offered to another child, should demand exist.

Any final adjustments to a service's staffing allocation and enrolment cap must be submitted to human resources by the end of week 6, term 4 in order for this to appear in the preschool's January RES. Approved adjustments received by human resources after this date will appear as a supplementation in the preschool's future RES.

4.7 Enrolments throughout the year

Children may commence preschool throughout the year, in accordance with the [preschool enrolment policy](#). Preschools can continue to accept all enrolments up to their staffing allocation and corresponding enrolment cap during the year.

When a preschool is unable to accommodate an eligible preschool child within their staffing allocation, the site leader must liaise with their early childhood leader to identify where the child is able to be placed (either to remain as an enrolment at the preschool with a staffing amendment or redirected to an alternative preschool).

5. Roles and responsibilities

Table 3 – Roles and responsibilities

Role	Authority/responsibility for
Executive director, Statewide Services and Child Development	Approved Provider responsibilities under the Education and Early Childhood Services (Registration and Standards) Act 2011
Director, Early Childhood Services	Endorses preschool enrolment policies and procedures
Preschool Policy and Programs unit	Supports preschool enrolment data collection processes and monitors preschool enrolments Advises early childhood leaders and site leaders on the enrolment policy and procedure Develops and reviews the enrolment procedure Develops statewide preschool promotional strategies
Human resources	Advises preschools of their staffing allocation and associated enrolment cap Confirms any future staffing adjustments
Education director	Approves the designated geographic catchment areas for preschools within the partnership Approves preschool staffing adjustments
Early childhood leader	Assists the development of agreed designated geographic catchment areas for preschools in the partnership Advises education directors and site leaders regarding additional staffing requirements and enrolment offers to ensure that resources are allocated as efficiently as possible Approves preschool staffing adjustments if delegated by the education director Supports site leaders to consider session configurations and staffing options Develops collaborative practices across preschools to manage enrolment pressures Assists site leaders to respond to complex enrolment enquiries
Site leader	Disseminates information about preschool enrolment within their local community Advises families on the preschool enrolment procedure Maintains records of enrolment registrations, enrolment offers and responses Advises the early childhood leader of enrolment demands, and the status of confirmed enrolments and available places Consults with the governing council to develop a local priority of access policy

Role	Authority/responsibility for
Site leader (continued)	Supports families to access an alternative government preschool when the service is unable to accommodate an eligible preschool child Supports families to access an alternative preschool when this is required to assist a child to access a preschool program
Preschool and school governing councils	Assists development of the service's local priority of access policy
Educators, teachers, early childhood workers, school support officers and administration staff	Provides information to families about enrolment processes consistent with this procedure

6. Monitoring, evaluation and review

The impact of the 'preschool enrolment procedure' will be monitored on an ongoing basis by the Early Childhood Services directorate in collaboration with human resources, early childhood leaders and site leaders. The procedure will be reviewed in 2018 following the 2017 enrolment process, or earlier if required. Key stakeholders will be consulted as part of the review process.

7. Definitions and abbreviations

Table 4 - Definitions and abbreviations

Term	Meaning
Enrolment cap	Refers to the number of places that a preschool may accept enrolments for, based on the service's approved staffing allocation.
Human resources	People and Culture Operations, Schools and Preschools
Local preschool	The child's primary place of residence falls within the preschool's designated geographic catchment area.
Designated geographic catchment area	Refers to the designated area surrounding the preschool from which the preschool accepts its priority intake of enrolments. Geographic areas should be determined by preschool leaders in collaboration with neighbouring government preschools, early childhood leaders and endorsed by the relevant education director(s).

8. Supporting documents

[Developing and implementing a priority of access policy for preschools](#)

[Preschool enrolment policy](#)

[Preschool resource entitlement statement supporting information](#)

[Preschool staffing adjustment form](#)

9. References

[Preschool assigned physical capacity fact sheet](#)

Appendix

Appendix 1: [Preschool enrolment information for families](#)

Appendix 2: [Preschool enrolment registration form](#)

Appendix 3: [Preschool staffing adjustment form](#)

Appendix 4: [Example letter/email – notification of preschool enrolment offer](#)