



FEES POLICY

Quality Area 7: Governance and Leadership

POLICY STATEMENT

Quality early education and care provides the foundation for children's development and social engagement whilst supporting workforce participation of parents and carers. Our Service is committed to providing quality education and care to all children at an affordable fee for families.

As an approved childcare service, Child Care Subsidy (CCS) is available to reduce fees to eligible families. Our fee structure is based on our ability to provide the requirements of the Education and Care National Law and National Regulations, Family Assistance Law, the Australian Taxation Office and guidelines contained in the Child Care Provider Handbook.

Under the *Education and Care Services National Regulations*, an approved provider must ensure that policies and procedures are in place for the payment of fees and the provision of a statement of fees charged by the service and take reasonable steps to ensure policies and procedures are followed.

GOALS/WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO?

We prioritise good governance and quality management. Our fee structure is clear and transparent, and our systems and practices ensure that payments are processed correctly, and receipts and statements are provided to families.

Our Service ensures the confidentiality and privacy of all personal information provided to the Service about the enrolled child and family.

To enable our service to provide high quality early education and care for children our fees will be reviewed annually.

STRATEGIES AND PRACTICES

Our fee structure includes:

- An enrolment fee of \$100.00 is charged upon confirmation of enrolment. This fee must be paid prior to commencement at the Service. This fee is non refundable.
- A bond consisting of 1 week full fee is to be paid to hold a child's position at the Service. Should your weekly bookings increase at any time you will be required to pay the difference into your bond.
- The bond payment will be refunded within 4 week from the last day of attendance to families if all accounts are paid in full and no amount is outstanding when the child leaves the Service.
- Any other refunds or account credits will be refunded to the family by request and paid within 4 weeks of the request. This is to allow for any CCS reconciliation on the account.





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General Fees

- Fees are charged for each session of care and vary depending on the age of the child in care
- CCS is paid directly to Orchard Early Learning Centre, the CCS is used as a fee reduction (visible on a family's statement).
- Families are required to pay the difference between the fee charged and the subsidy amount- the 'gap' amount.
- Fees must be kept in advance of a child's attendance
- A dated receipt will be provided for each payment via email
- The fee schedule and fees payment policy will be fully explained to families during the enrolment process and families will receive a copy of this policy prior to enrolling.
- Fees are to be paid weekly through a direct debit system. If families wish to pay fees on a monthly basis, it is a requirement that the family pay in advance and are not in arrears.
- Fees are payable in advance for every session that a child is enrolled at the Service. This includes public holidays, sick days, and family holidays.
- If a session of care falls on a public holiday, families are required to pay normal fees. CCS may be paid for sessions that fall on public holidays
- If the Service is directed to close due to periods of local emergency such as bushfire or flood or a pandemic, in such cases we may choose to waive the gap fee.
- Fees are charged for full sessions only (regardless of the actual attendance hours any day).
- Fee Statements are issued weekly with debit occurring within the same week for the week in advance.
- The same fee will be charged to all families for equivalent care arrangements.
- A dated receipt, in accordance with Australian Government guidelines, will be provided for each payment.
- Casual days may be offered to families if available within the Service's license.
- Casual days are booked through the parent app.
- The Approved Provider will determine the required fee level to meet budget prediction for the year.
- Fees will be increased annually at our discretion and take into account increases associated with annual increases to costs such as employee wage increases, recruitment costs, rent annual reviews and food/consumables, inline sector market standards.
- For the safety of our staff, Orchard ELC will not accept cash payments.

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.
- 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.
- Parents/guardians are required to register for CCS through their myGov account linked to Centrelink and provide documentation to support the CCS payment
- Basic requirements that must be satisfied for an individual to be eligible to receive Child Care Subsidy.





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- The child must:
 - be a 'Family Tax Benefit child' or 'regular care child' and
 - be 13 or under and not attending secondary school and
 - meet immunisation requirements
- The person claiming the Child Care Subsidy, or their partner must:
 - meet residency requirements and
 - be liable to pay for care provided under a Complying Written Arrangement (their written agreement) with their childcare provider
- Families level of Child Care Subsidy will be determined by:
 - combined family income
 - activity test of parents
 - type of early learning and childcare Service.
- Child Care Subsidy will be provided directly to the Service and this amount deducted from the parent/family account.
- Families must regularly check their details are correct and report a change in circumstance to Centrelink (family income, activity levels, relationship changes or any other changes to their circumstances).
- 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 current and contact the Centrelink office if they wish to dispute assessments or discuss it further.
- Any disputes with CCS payments is the responsibility of the family. The family will be referred to contact Centrelink directly for any enquiries regarding CCS payments.
- Discounts will only be offered as outlined in the CCS Handbook.
- All fees are charged at the full rate. Each family's eligibility for CCS is then calculated and the service is then forwarded these funds.
- 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.
- All documentation pertaining to CCS will be kept for the specified period of time and made available to Australian Government Officers on request.

14 Week Rule (CCS)

- An enrolment will end for Child Care Subsidy purposes, if a child does not attend a session of care at our Service for 14 continuous weeks.
- This ensures that enrolments at our Service our current and do not remain open indefinitely in the Child Care Subsidy system.

Payment of Fees

- Fees are payable from the agreed commencement date and must be paid one week in advance.
- Fees are to be paid by electronic funds transfer or by direct deposit (internet banking).
- It is the parent's/guardian's sole responsibility to remain informed of the amount due and the date of payment.
- Any dishonour fees applied for direct debit transactions where there are insufficient funds to cover the fees will be incurred by the parent / guardian. Orchard Early Learning Centre is not responsible for covering dishonour fees on parent's accounts.
- Fees can only be paid by Credit Card or Direct Debit.





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- Payments may incur a processing fee which is outlined on our Direct Debit Payment Details form. It is the parent's/guardian's sole responsibility to read through the terms and conditions.
- All direct debit payments will be processed on a Friday weekly schedule.
- Orchard Early Learning Centre reserve the right to withdraw your children's enrolment position if fees remain outstanding past 7 days.
- Regardless of any requirement to withdraw your child/ren due to payment default, payment of fees for the period already invoiced is expected.

Absences

- Families are requested to contact the Service directly if their child is unable to attend
- Families must still pay the 'gap' fee to the Service if their child is unable to attend
- Under the Child Care Subsidy families are allowed 42 absence days per child, per financial year and may be entitled to additional absence days in certain circumstances.
- Additional absences can be claimed for the specified reasons as defined by the Family Assistance Law
- Records and evidence will be kept by the Service for each additional absence, where required
- Families can view their absence count through their Centrelink online account via [myGov](https://myGov.gov.au).
- In a period of local emergency, such as bushfire or pandemic, and or if our Service is temporarily shut down on public health advice, families *may* be provided with additional absence days as per Family Assistance Law legislation.
- If our Service is forced to close as a result of a public health directive, due to COVID-19, we may choose to waive gap fees in line with Family Assistance Law legislation.

Reducing or changing days of attendance

- Families who wish to reduce or change the number of days their child is enrolled for will be required to provide at least four (4) weeks' prior notice in writing.
- The notice period starts from the date Orchard Early Learning Centre notified.

Holiday Fee Discount

- Families who attend for 3 days or more can receive 50% reduction of the full daily rate charged for holidays.
- Specific conditions and eligibility criteria for this discount are:
 - If you take up the holiday discount no other discounts will apply
 - You must provide us with a minimum of 2 weeks' advance written notice, which needs to confirm the exact period during which your child will not be attending.
 - Your child/ren cannot attend the service if you are applying the holiday discount.
- Discount is given for only a full week of booked days i.e. Not part of the week.
- There is no limit on the number of weeks families choose to take per year.

Orchard Early Learning Centre Family Discounts

- The following discount will be applied based on each family's total number of enrolled days per week (regardless of how many children are attending Orchard ELC) based on the





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following scale:

5 – 7 days	5%
8 – 10 days	10%
11 or more days	15%

Discount for notified Absences

- Families can receive a \$15 credit against their gap fee when they notify the centre through the parent app and or provide an email to the administration Service Support team of the intended absence in advance.
- Absences need to be received and confirmed 24 hours prior to your booked day to qualify for the discount.
- The Discount will be applied after the absence has occurred.

Overdue Fees

- Parents/guardians with overdue fees must discuss this situation and or any difficulties they may have in meeting payments immediately with Orchard Early Learning Centre enrolments consultant. Parent will be required to make suitable arrangements to pay, including the option of a payment plan. If this is not done, or the agreed arrangements are not kept, the matter may be referred to a debt collector and/or your child's position at Orchard Early Learning Centre withdrawn.
- Regardless of any requirement to withdraw your child/ren due to payment default, payment of fees for the period already invoiced is expected.

Change of Fees

- Fees are subject to change at any time provided a minimum of four 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 our CCS Software.
- Change of fee automatic debit date is subject to change at any time provided a minimum of 14 days written notice is given to all families.

Financial Difficulties

- If a family is experiencing financial difficulties, a suitable payment plan may be arranged with authorisation of the General Manager.
- Families can apply for Additional Child Care Subsidy (ACCS) through Centrelink for additional fee assistance.
- There are four different payments under Additional Child Care Subsidy:
 - Additional Child Care Subsidy (child wellbeing)—to help children who are at risk of serious abuse or neglect. The approved provider is involved in determining children who may require additional support who are at risk of harm
 - Additional Child Care Subsidy (grandparent)—to help grandparents on income support who are the principal caregiver of their grandchildren. Families are required to contact Centrelink directly regarding this payment





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- Additional Child Care Subsidy (temporary financial hardship)—to help families experiencing financial hardship. Families are required to contact Centrelink directly regarding this payment
- Additional Child Care Subsidy (transition to work)—to help low-income families transitioning from income support to work. Families are required to contact Centrelink directly regarding this payment

Debt Recovery Procedure

- If a family fails to pay the required fees on time, a reminder letter will be issued after one week and then again, after two weeks if the fees are still outstanding.
- At any time of the debt recovery process the family will be encouraged to enter a debt agreement with the service to repay outstanding fees. A written contract will be provided for the family to sign outlining repayment plan details. The repayment plan will provide information as to the duration and amount of the repayments as well as steps that will be taken if the repayment plan is not adhered to.
- A child's position will be terminated if payment has not been made after two weeks, for which the family will receive a final letter terminating the child's position. At this time the Service will initiate its debt collection process, following privacy and conditional requirements.
- Once a Debt Collection Agency has been contracted Parents / Carers will pay Orchard Early Learning Centre for all costs incurred including costs for which the Orchard Early Learning Centre may be contingently liable in any attempt to collect any monies owed by you to Orchard Early Learning Centre under this Agreement. This will include debt collection agent costs, repossession costs, location search costs, process server costs and solicitor costs on a solicitor/client basis.

Late Collection Charge

- Parents must be aware that Orchard Early Learning Centre is not licensed or insured to have children on the premises before or after hours. This is a breach in the Education and Care Regulations.
- Our service reserves the right to implement a late collection charge when parents/guardians have not collected their child/ren from the service before closing time. This charge will be set at a level determined by Orchard Early Learning Centre Management and is based on the need to recoup expenses incurred in employee overtime wages.
- A late collection fee is according to the following sliding scale: - \$50 for the first 10 minutes or part thereof, and \$15 for each 5 minutes thereafter or part thereof.
- Families will be clearly notified if there is a change in the fee.
- Families who are late to collect their children more than 3 times will put their child's position in jeopardy.

Parent Termination of Enrolment

- Parents must provide the following written notice to terminate their child/rens position:

1 February to 31 October	4 weeks notice required
1 November to 31 January	8 weeks notice required





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- If a family has accepted the offer of a placement, then decides to withdraw from the Service before the agreed commencement date, the written notice period applies.
- If less than the written notice period is given prior to the agreed commencement date, one weeks full payment of fees and the one weeks bond is payable to the Service and is non-refundable.
- In some circumstances CCS may not be paid for sessions if the child has not physically started care.
- Additionally, CCS may not be paid for absences submitted after a child's last physical day of care, unless conditions have been met as specified by Family Assistance Law.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Approved Provider is responsible for:

- Ensure the service operates in line with the Education and Care Services National Law and National 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.
- Ensure that copies of the policy and procedures are readily accessible to nominated supervisors, coordinators, educators, staff, volunteers and families, and available for inspection. *Policies are available on the online via the parent portal and at the Services reception area.
- Notifying families at least 14 days before changing the policy or procedures if the changes will:
 - affect the fees charged or the way they are collected or
 - significantly impact the service's education and care of children or
 - significantly impact the family's ability to utilise the service.
- Ensuring a notice outlining the fees charged is provided to families on enrolment and annually in line with any fee increases.
- 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 CWA as required.

The Nominated Supervisor is responsible for:

- Ensure that regulatory obligations are met in relation to payment of fees.
- Implement procedures for the payment of service fees.
- Communicate with families at enrolment and orientations about fees, including:
 - the amounts charged payment periods and methods how the Child Care Subsidy





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- or other government subsidy (e.g. from your jurisdiction) will be applied
- notice periods
- bond/security deposit
- varying fees for different age groups
- public holidays
- family holidays
- cancellation of casual bookings
- additional days
- illness
- bedding
- nappies
- bottles/formula
- food
- late payment of fees
- incursions/excursions
- how they can access copies of statements/receipts
- financial hardship considerations and payment plans
- Orchards ELC discounts
- Ensure families receive receipts for fees paid
- Ongoing communication with families about their account in collaboration with the enrolment's consultant.
- Assisting the enrolments consultant to monitor the application of the Child Care Subsidy or other government subsidy
- 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.

Early Childhood Educators are responsible for:

- Referring parents'/guardians' questions in relation to this policy to the General Manager or Nominated Supervisors / Director.

Families are responsible for:

- Ensure this policy has been read and understood, referring any questions, queries or concerns to the enrolments consultant prior to enrolling.
- Provide the Service with the correct enrolment details to facilitate the CCS claim:
 - Centrelink Reference Numbers for child and CCS claimant
 - Date of Birth for child and CCS claimant
- Ensure payment of fees as per policy.
- Notify Centrelink of any changes that may affect their CCS entitlement.
- Confirm their child's enrolment through the parents myGov account.
- Record daily the arrival and departure times of their child or children attending care on the day of attending.
- Notify the centre as soon as possible of all absences. (Includes sick leave or holidays)
- Provide documentation for additional absence days as required.
- Notifying the Orchard Early Learning Centre Management if experiencing difficulties with





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the payment of fees.

LINKS TO EDUCATION and Care Services National Regulations, National Quality Standard

Regs	111	Administrative space
	168	Education and care service 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 or procedures

QA	7.1	Governance supports the operation of a quality service
	7.1.2	Systems are in place to manage risk and enable the effective management and operation of a quality service
	7.1.3	Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined, and understood and support effective decision making and operation of the service

RELATED LEGISLATION

Child Care Subsidy Secretary's Rules 2017 A New Tax System (Family Assistance) Act 1999
Family Law Act 1975
Family Assistance Law – Incorporating all related legislation for Child Care Provider Handbook in Appendix G https://www.education.gov.au/early-childhood/resources/child-care-provider-handbook

SOURCES/RESOURCES / USEFUL LINKS

- Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA). Policy and procedure guidelines. Payment of Service Fees and Provision of a Statement of Fees Charged by the Service.
- <https://www.education.gov.au/early-childhood/resources/child-care-provider-handbook>
- Australian Government Department of Education Child Care Provider Handbook.
- Australian Government Department of Education Early Childhood and Care
- Australian Government Department of Education Information for childcare providers when a period of local emergency occurs.
- <https://www.education.gov.au/early-childhood>
- Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010.
- Education and Care Services National Regulations.
- Guide to the Education and Care Services National Law and the Education and Care Services National Regulations.
- Guide to the National Quality Framework.
- CCS Information – www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/services/Centrelink/child-care-





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subsidy

POLICY REVIEW

This policy will be monitored to ensure compliance with legislative requirements and unless deemed necessary through the identification of practice gaps, the service will review this Policy every 12 months.

In accordance with R. 172 of the Education and Care Services National Regulations, the service will ensure that families of children enrolled at the service are notified at least 14 days before making any change to a policy or procedure.

The Service encourages staff and parents to be actively involved in the annual review of each of its policies and procedures. In addition, the Service will accommodate any new legislative changes as they occur, and any issues identified as part the Service's commitment to quality improvement. The Service consults with relevant recognised authorities as part of the annual review to ensure the policy contents are consistent with current research and contemporary views on best practice.

Date(s) reviewed: April 2019 / April 2020 / January 2021 / February 2022 / January 2023 / January 2024

Next Review: January 2025

