

DEPARTMENT PRESCHOOL ENROLMENT PROCEDURES

Implementation document for the Enrolment of Students in NSW Government
Schools policy

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Document history

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	28/01/1991	Memorandum to Principals of Schools with Preschool Classes 91.004, Entry Age to Government Preschools	
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	Jul 2016	Department Preschool Enrolment Procedures	Director Early Learning and Primary Education
1.0.0	20/02/2020	Department Preschool Enrolment Procedures – first publication as an Implementation document for Enrolment of Students in NSW Government Schools policy	Director Early Learning and Primary Education
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1 Preschool education in NSW

The department operates 100 preschools with 133 classes across NSW. The department has designated 11 of the preschools as specific for Aboriginal children. A further four are delivered via distance education.

These enrolment procedures provide information for principals and parents/carers when enrolling students in the department's preschools. They should be read in conjunction with the Enrolment of Students in NSW Government Schools policy.

The preschools are an integral part of the school in which they are located and operate within the same hours as the school. Attendance patterns vary and are determined to meet the needs of the local community.

Parents pay a fee for their children to attend preschool. There are a range of fees. Families experiencing financial hardship are able to obtain fee relief.

1.1 General principles of enrolment

Children can enrol in preschool from the beginning of the school year if they turn four years of age on or before 31 July that year.

Priority is given to:

- Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children
- children living in low socioeconomic circumstances
- children unable to access other early childhood services due to disadvantage or financial hardship.

The principal will offer enrolment in the following order (after the above priorities):

1. children living within the school's enrolment designated intake area
2. children living outside the school's designated intake area and who have siblings enrolled in the school
3. children living outside the school's enrolment designated intake area.

Enrolment in a preschool class within a school does not automatically translate to an entitlement to enrol in that school in Kindergarten. The Enrolment of Students in NSW Government Schools policy and General enrolment procedures apply from Kindergarten onwards.

1.2 Eligibility for enrolment in a designated Aboriginal preschool

Eleven designated preschools cater specifically for Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children.

When vacancies occur, every effort is made to ensure places are filled by Aboriginal children. This includes offering places to 3-year-old Aboriginal children. If there are insufficient Aboriginal enrolments, the department may offer places to non-Aboriginal children, although the preschool must maintain a buffer of two places for future Aboriginal enrolments.

1.3 Eligibility for enrolment in distance education preschool

Distance education preschools cater for geographically isolated children who cannot access other early childhood education services.

Preschool children need to meet the same distance criteria as that applied to primary school aged children.

For specific criteria, refer to [Distance Education Enrolment Procedures](#).

1.4 Eligibility for enrolment of temporary visa holders in preschool

Most preschool children who are temporary visa holders enrol in department preschools under the same conditions as Australian citizens. However, children on some temporary visas such as visitor/tourist visas are not eligible. For more information, refer to the [DE International website](#).

Temporary visa holders enrolled in preschool do not complete the Temporary Residents Program Application Form (Authority to Enrol) or pay the Temporary Residents Fee.

2 Applications for enrolment

Schools may accept enrolment applications for the following year from the beginning of Term two of the current school year.

Parents/carers must complete the Application to enrol in a NSW Government preschool form, which is found on the [Preschool enrolment](#) website. In some cases, schools may also ask the parent/carer to complete a [waiting list](#) application form.

Enrolment requires all the following documentation:

- birth certificate and/or [proof of identity and residency status](#)
- immunisation documentation as specified by the Australian Government
- proof of residential address
- passport or immigration card and evidence of visa status for children who are not Australian citizens
- low-income health care card if applicable
- copies of any family law or other relevant court orders if applicable.

When enrolling young children with disabilities or special learning needs, the principal will comply with the [Inclusive Education policy for students with disability](#) and seek support from the P-2 Initiatives Officer and Learning and Wellbeing coordinator in the local Student Support and Specialist Programs team. Refer to the [Leading and operating department preschool guidelines](#) for additional support with preschool enrolments.

2.1 Waiting list

If there is a possibility that enrolment applications will exceed available places, schools may choose to ask parents/carers to complete a waiting list application form.

The waiting list is valid for the year prior to enrolment in the preschool class and for the current preschool year.

If a vacancy occurs during the year, the school will offer the place to the child with the highest priority on the waiting list.

2.2 Enrolment panels

When the number of applications exceeds the number of available places, children's names will be placed on a waiting list and the principal will establish an enrolment panel. The principal will consult with the school community to develop enrolment procedures specific to the preschool and that reflect the community's profile and needs.

The enrolment panel will:

- review and prioritise applications, establish a prioritised waiting list and record all decisions
- include at least one staff member (other than the principal), a school community member and a community member nominated by the local Aboriginal Education Consultative Group where applicable; panel members must declare any conflict of interest with regard to any applications
- inform parents/carers in writing of application results and advise them if their child has been placed on a waiting list.

3 Universal access

Department preschools are required to comply with mandatory universal access principles when establishing enrolment and attendance patterns for their services.

The aim of the national partnership agreement on Universal access is to ensure that every child can participate in a quality preschool program for 600 hours in the year before school. A qualified early childhood teacher should deliver the program, in a form that meets the needs of children, parents and community. Cost should not present a barrier to participation.

3.1 Models of provision for enrolments

Schools need to ensure they offer at least 600 hours of preschool education over the year, which equates to approximately 15 hours per week. Options for attendance patterns may include:

- a 5-day fortnight program, with 3 days one week and 2 days in the alternate week for two separate groups of children (12 hours one week and 18 hours the next)
- a part-time program offering 2½ days to two separate groups of children each week
- a half-day sessional program for 5 mornings or 5 afternoons catering for two separate groups of children
- alternate semesters or terms of 2 days then 3 days per week.

Preschool classes are required to offer two attendance patterns across the week. If enrolment numbers are too low to offer two sessions, schools may offer a 5-day per week program.

In exceptional circumstances, preschools may offer flexible enrolment patterns to cater for the needs of individual children, for example children found to be at risk of harm.

4 Immunisation

Under the NSW Public Health Act 2010, immunisation procedures apply to children enrolling in department preschools. These procedures help to improve childhood immunisation rates and support the management of outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases. From 1 January 2018, children who are unvaccinated due to their parent's/carer's conscientious objection will no longer be able to attend preschool.

The school must not enrol the child if there is no approved immunisation documentation provided at enrolment.

4.1 Immunisation requirements

A school cannot enrol a child in preschool unless the parent/carer has provided an approved immunisation certificate that shows the child:

- is fully immunised for their age
- has a medical reason not to be vaccinated
- is on a recognised catch-up schedule if their child has fallen behind with their vaccinations.

Principals may only enrol children with the appropriate and genuine forms. Following amendments to the Public Health Act 2010, principals can only enrol children who have the appropriate forms. Fines of up to \$5,500 can apply to the provision of forged or falsified documents.

4.2 Temporary exemptions

In the following exceptional circumstances, a child can have a 12-week period from the date of enrolment for their parents/carers to provide the documentation:

- evacuated following a declared natural disaster
- in need of protection and/or placed in emergency care, for example, a child placed in emergency foster care
- Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children.

4.3 Record keeping

Schools must keep a register of the immunisation status of enrolled preschool children for three years from the date the child leaves the preschool. Officers from NSW Health are authorised to inspect the school's immunisation register.

A [sample register template](#) is available on the NSW Health website to help prompt schools to follow-up with families for evidence of a child's updated immunisation.

4.4 Australian Immunisation Register (AIR) forms

Schools can only accept approved Australian Immunisation Register (AIR) forms. Schools must not accept the Personal Health Record (Blue Book), a letter from a GP, or an overseas vaccination record as evidence of a child's immunisation status.

4.5 Recording in ERN

Schools can only accept approved Australian Immunisation Register (AIR) forms.

Do not record any preschool child in ERN as 'unknown/not provided'. Record children enrolled with a temporary exemption as 'not up to date'.

Parents/carers must provide a copy of one or more of the following (Table 1).

Table 1 Required Australian Immunisation Register (AIR) forms

AIR documentation	Purpose	Record in ERN	Notes
Immunisation History Statement	Showing the child is up to date with scheduled immunisations and is fully vaccinated for their age	Up to date	A child under 4 years of age who has received their 18- month vaccinations and has the words 'up to date' written in the immunisation status field of the Immunisation History Statement, is up to date.
Immunisation History Form	Certifying the child is on a recognised catch-up schedule as they have fallen behind with their vaccinations	Not up to date	
Immunisation Medical Exemption Form	Certifying the child has a medical reason not to be vaccinated	Not up to date	
Immunisation History Statement and an Immunisation Medical Exemption Form	Certifying the child cannot receive some or all of the vaccines	Not up to date	