

Funded Kinder Programs at Wingate Avenue

What is a 'Funded' Kindergarten program?

The Victorian Government has increased support for children to access high quality educational programs by introducing 3-year-old Funded Kindergarten Programs as well as 4-year-old Funded Kindergarten Programs. This means approved Kindergartens are sent funding by the Government for them to run a Kindergarten Program, hire qualified Early Childhood Teachers and offer additional programs for the enrolled children such as sport, music, art, yoga or languages throughout the year.

This funding is separate from the 'Free Kinder 2021' that the Government offered to help families affected by the pandemic in 2020, which is no longer being given to families.

In 2022, the minimum weekly attendance in a Funded Kindergarten Program is 5 hours for a three-year-old and 15 hours for a four-year-old, however families are free to enrol their children for as many days as suit their needs and are available at Wingate Avenue.

If your child attends Wingate Avenue and also attends another Centre that offers a Funded Kindergarten Program, you must only select one program to receive the funding for the year. If your child attends Wingate Avenue and also attends Sessional/Community Kinder, the Sessional Kinder will automatically receive your funding. Each year we will send out information about how to choose a Kinder Program, and all families are welcome to ask staff for advice about the process.

Children that select Wingate Avenue's Funded Kindergarten are given priority of access to the Centre. This means that Wingate Avenue is responsible for ensuring those children have access to the hours of Kindergarten per week. Families who are unable to access a Funded Kindergarten Program elsewhere are also given priority of access to Wingate Ave's Funded Kindergarten Program.

What happens to the funding?

The funding given by the Government each year is used by the centre to help us create the best support network for each child enrolled in the Kindergarten rooms, whether they are funded or not. This includes helping us offer competitive pay and conditions for quality Kinder Teachers, ensure that fees are kept low, and organise extra-curricular programs each Term to come to Wingate. This year we will be focusing on Sport and Physical Education, so we are looking at having a company come in and run a sports program weekly. The funding allows us to pay professionals to add wonderful things to our program and offer the children a wide range of opportunities for learning.

How is Wingate Avenue's Kindergarten different from a Sessional Kinder?

Sessional/Stand-alone Kindergartens and Kindergartens that operate within an Early Years Centre are different in a few ways. Firstly, most Sessional Kinders will only offer programs for children aged 3 and above who are eligible to attend the Funded Program, whereas Centres like Wingate offer care for children from birth, allowing siblings to attend the same Centre all the way through to Primary School. Wingate Avenue's Stalks (3-year-old Kinder) and Blossoms (4-year-old Kinder) Rooms are not reserved only for children accessing the Funded Program if there is space, which also means more children are able to benefit from the Teachers and the Kinder Program for longer periods of time.

Sessional Kinders also almost always close during school holidays and only run programs from certain times on certain days, such as 8 am to 4 pm Mon and Wed or 9 am to 3 pm Tues and Fri. They do sometimes offer before and after-school care for an extra fee, however. Centres like Wingate only close for public holidays and over the Christmas period and are open for longer during the day, which is often helpful for working families.

However, many Sessional Kinders are either government or community run, and therefore often very low cost or sometimes free to attend, especially if you qualify for additional funding, such as families on certain Visas or who are in contact with support agencies. This also depends on the Kinder itself, so

Funded Kinder Programs at Wingate Avenue

it is always a good idea to call around your local Kindergartens to get the price ranges. Centres like Wingate often have a higher daily fee as they offer additional services and do not receive as much funding from the Government as Sessional Kinders often do.

Both styles of Kinder offer similar educational school readiness programs, staffing and follow the same framework and regulations. You can find Kindergartens near you on this website: <https://findakinder.educationapps.vic.gov.au/>

What does School Readiness look like in Stalks and Blossoms?

Every Kinder is different and will focus on developing the school readiness skills they think will be the best for the children enrolled with them. At Wingate, we believe that the most important skills children need to succeed at school are;

- Resilience and a strong, positive sense of self
- Emotional and social intelligence
- The ability to resolve conflict
- Effective communication skills

This means we create programs that support children to develop their confidence in themselves, learn how to create positive relationships with their peers and solve problems between friends, identify and process their emotions in a positive way, develop their self-help skills and body safety, and learn how to feel successful or try again.

These skills are developed in a variety of ways and often our Kinder Teachers will program and plan for them to be included in the curriculum by observing the children, having conversations with families and documenting evidence of areas that need support (for example, seeing a trend of friendship groups struggling to play positively, with lots of language such as 'you're not my friend' or 'that's not fair' would inspire our Kinder Teachers to focus on social skills, how to set boundaries, playing fairly and taking turns).

Our Kinder Teachers will then set up intentional teaching experiences or strategies for those skills alongside the regular curriculum that teaches literacy, numeracy, gross/fine motor development, science, art and imagination through play.

As the current guidance from Primary Schools is for Kindergartens to not focus too strongly on letters, numbers, writing or pencil-holding as individual skills, so we assist children to build the foundation of those skills through play-based experiences such as – painting to strengthen grip and introduce the tripod (pencil) hold, reading and having access to books to recognise letters, counting and time to begin number recognition etc.

Many Primary Schools will have specific ways they teach children those skills and the advice Kindergartens are given is that it can confuse children to be asked to change the way they have learned or developed a skill, so Primary Teachers prefer to introduce those concepts to children when they start Prep.

What are the roles and responsibilities of all parties in relation to Funded Kindergarten?

Centre Management:

- Hire appropriate staffing for the Kindergarten programs
- Educate and inform families about the Kindergarten programs and eligibilities
- Maintain all information about the enrolled children in the Kinder Information Management System
- Allocate the funding appropriately

Funded Kinder Programs at Wingate Avenue

Kinder Teachers:

- Implement an appropriate Kinder Program
- Collaborate with families to set goals and assist their children to become school ready
- Write Transition Statements for each child who will be going to school

Families:

- Collaborate with Management and Kinder Teachers about their child/ren's needs, goals, interests, additional support or areas of concern
- Communicate with the Centre about plans for their child/ren's Kindergarten and School enrolment in a timely manner
- Fill out and return any forms regarding the Kindergarten program enrolment, School Transition Statements and feedback.

What are Transition Statements?

Transition Learning and Development Statements summarise the child's abilities as they start school and identifies their approaches to learning. It is passed on to the child's future school at the end of their final year of Kindergarten if the family consents to it. The Transition Learning and Development Statement (often referred to as the TLDS):

- summarises a child's learning and development
- identifies their approaches to learning and their interests
- indicates how the child can be supported to continue learning.

The Transition Learning and Development Statement is not a report card - the information in the statement helps Foundation teachers get to know the children starting in their class and to plan appropriate learning and teaching programs.

The Kindergarten Teacher will complete the report, then families are then asked to read over the information and add to it before returning it for forwarding to the Primary School. This usually occurs during November so that any families who are leaving care before the Christmas holidays are able to complete the statement in time.

When should I start thinking about Kindergarten and School enrolment?

Depending on your Kindergarten requirements, families are encouraged to begin thinking about what kind of service will suit your needs around the time your child is 2 years old. Things you may consider when choosing a Kindergarten can include cost, travel time to and from the location, staffing, days they have available/if they have a waitlist, programs they offer, whether other children your child is friends with are also attending. If your child attends two different services, you will need to decide which one will access your Kinder Funding from the government.

Where you live will affect the Primary Schools that are available to you within your 'zone' as schools will only be able to accept enrolments from families that are near them. We recommend looking into the schools near you and their enrolment requirements to get a good idea of how early you will need to make those decisions. Schools will usually ask that children who will start school the next year are enrolled by June the year before, but some very popular schools might want families to go on a waitlist in order to get into them.

Wingate Avenue will aim to host a Kinder Information Night yearly in order to expand on this information for families and allow them to meet the Kinder Teachers to discuss the program in detail.

If you have any questions about this information pack, please come and speak to Alison or Belle.