Celebrating the start  
of kindergarten in 2023

Content for services to inform   
families about Free Kinder and  
Three-Year-Old Kindergarten

Contents

INTRODUCTION 3

SAMPLE TEXT 4

Newsletter/website/app content 4

Social media content 5

TALKING POINTS 4

Free Kinder 6

Kinder Kits 6

Flexible hours for Three-Year-Old Kindergarten 7

Four-Year-Old Kindergarten starts transition to Pre-Prep in 2025 7

Benefits of two years of kindergarten 7

ACTION CHECKLIST 8

VICTORIA'S KINDERGARTEN WORKFORCE 9

# INTRODUCTION

Free Kinder has launched at participating services, Kinder Kits are back, and flexible hours have commenced for Three-Year-Old Kindergarten – 2023 is a big year for early childhood education in Victoria.

Use this resource to promote the new kindergarten year, Free Kinder and the continued roll-out of Three-Year-Old Kindergarten.

This content can be used by service directors and managers, teachers, and educators in standalone kindergartens and long day care centres. The materials may help you respond to questions from families too.

Because Free Kinder is available at participating services, you may find more families getting in touch during the year to ask about accessing a place. This may include families who are engaging in early childhood learning for the first time.

If you have any questions or need support responding to questions from families, contact your [**Local Early Childhood Improvement Branch**](https://www.vic.gov.au/contact-early-childhood-improvement-branch).

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| **Three-Year-Old Kindergarten continues to roll-out** | **The Best Start, Best Life reform builds on the success of Three-Year-Old Kindergarten** |
| * This year, 2023, marks the start of flexible hours being introduced for Three-Year-Old Kindergarten across the state – services can offer between five and 15 hours of a Three-Year-Old program. * By 2029, all families in Victoria will have access to 15 hours of Three-Year-Old Kindergarten. | The Best Start Best Life initiatives include:   * Free Kinder for all three- and four-year-old children at participating services from 2023, in both standalone (sessional) services and long day care (childcare) settings * Over the next decade, Four-Year-Old Kindergarten will transition to ‘Pre-Prep’, becoming a universal 30-hour a week program of play-based learning available to every four-year-old child in Victoria by 2032. The staged roll-out will begin in 2025. * 50 Victorian government-owned and affordable childcare centres will be established. These centres will be built in locations across Victoria that have the greatest need and will make it easier for families to access education and care. The first four of the centres will be available in 2025. |

For more information see [**vic.gov.au/give-your-child-the-best-start-in-life**](file:///C:\Users\10256824\Desktop\Give%20your%20child%20the%20best%20start%20|%20Victorian%20Government%20(www.vic.gov.au)).

#### Having enough teachers and educators to continue to deliver high-quality kindergarten programs is critical to the success of the Best Start, Best Life reform. We have included information about recruitment and retention initiatives on page 9.

# SAMPLE TEXT

As you know the families in your community best, we encourage you to use the sample text below and personalise to reflect your service.

We want to make it easy for you to share the good news – that Free Kinder is here, and the Three-Year-Old Kindergarten roll-out continues!

## Newsletter/website/app content

The following content can be included in your newsletter, website or shared on your family communication platform (e.g. Storypark/One Child) or via email.

#### **Getting the best start in 2023**

*Our Kindergarten programs for 2023 have started.*

*Studies show that**two years of kindergarten are better than one when it comes to early learning. That’s why we’re offering Free Kinder, including*

* *x hours each week of Three-Year-Old Kindergarten (xxx hours each year)*
* *15 hours each week of Four-Year-Old Kindergarten (600 hours each year).*

*For each child enrolled in our kindergarten program, we receive funding from the Victorian Government. This means that your family is not out of pocket for the kindergarten program and does not have to claim the savings back.*

*Two years of play-based learning is a powerful way to support a child’s development and these benefits – including pre-reading, early number concepts, independence, concentration and social skills – last into school years and beyond.*

*Children starting at Three-Year-Old Kindergarten this year will also receive a special Kinder Kit. These free Kits are full of educational and fun toys, books, and resources that families and children can enjoy in celebration of starting their kinder years.*

*For more information, ask our staff or visit* [*vic.gov.au/kinder*](http://www.vic.gov.au/kinder)*.*

**For services with vacancies**

***Kindergarten starts at three — you can still enrol for 2023***

*Still thinking about kindergarten for 2023? It’s not too late to enrol your child.*

*Two years of kindergarten has lasting and positive effects for children, and their early learning experiences will follow them into their school years and throughout their lives. In Victoria, kindergarten starts at three.*

*Our teachers and educators will help your child become curious and confident and develop a love of learning. In a kindergarten program, children use play to build their language skills and learn about numbers and patterns. They also learn how to get along with others, share, listen, and develop their social skills.*

*For more information about our Three- and Four-Year-Old Kindergarten programs, contact us today or visit* [*vic.gov.au/kinder*](http://www.vic.gov.au/kinder)*. It’s not too late to enrol for 2023.*

Consider sharing this video in your online communications: [Make everyday a new adventure – YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X-VUErkm2wM&t=3s)

## Social media content

You can share the following posts on your social media channels (e.g. Facebook, Instagram or Twitter). This content can be adapted to suit your audience as long as the key information does not change.

If you would like to provide more information, consider including [vic.gov.au/kinder](http://www.vic.gov.au/kinder).

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| ***Sample posts*** |
| *Kinder has started for 2023!*  *Children in our Three-Year-Old Kindergarten program were excited to start kinder as we celebrated the start of two years of fun, learning and making friends. Welcome!* |
| *Four-Year-Old Kinder has started for 2023!*  *Children in our Four-Year-Old Kindergarten program were excited to start their year of fun, learning and making friends.* |
| *To celebrate a new year of Three-Year-Old Kindergarten and the launch of Free Kinder, our three-year-old children received a free Kinder Kit full of educational and fun books and toys.* *The Kits can be taken home and enjoyed by families as they help their children learn through play. For more information about how to enjoy the Kits, go to* [*vic.gov.au/kinderkits*](file:///C:\Users\10256824\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\INetCache\Content.Outlook\51HN7S75\vic.gov.au\KinderKits)*,* |
| *We’re proud to offer Free Kinder!*  *This will support children’s learning and development and ensure they get the best start in life.* |
| *Did you know that kindergarten starts at three? If you know a family who has a three-year-old child, let them know that they are eligible for x hours a week of free Three-Year-Old Kindergarten at our service this year.* |
| *Kinder now starts at three and is free! We still have vacancies in our Three- and Four-Year-Old Kinder programs for 2023. Contact us**today to enrol your child.* |

#### **TALKING POINTS**

To assist your conversations with families, your workforce and your broader community.

## Free Kinder

* Free Kinder is available for Three and Four‑Year-Old Kindergarten programs (if your service opted in).
* There is an ‘Advice for families’ fact sheet about Free Kinder on the [Communicating about Three-Year-Old Kindergarten webpage](https://www.vic.gov.au/communicating-about-three-year-old-kindergarten-your-community).

#### **Sessional kindergartens**

* From 2023, children enrolled in a sessional kindergarten program will pay nothing at participating services – a saving of up to $2,500 per child each year.
* For three-year-olds, Free Kinder means a free kindergarten program of between 5 and 15 hours per week.
* For four-year-olds, Free Kinder means a kindergarten program of 15 hours per week (600 hours a year).

#### **Long day care**

* Participating long day care services, which also attract [Commonwealth Childcare Subsidy (CCS)](https://www.education.gov.au/child-care-package/child-care-subsidy) payments, will receive a Free Kinder amount of up to $2,000 per child.
* Long day care providers will be required to pass on the full amount to parents as a direct reduction in their out-of-pocket fees.

## Kinder Kits

* Children starting Three-Year-Old Kindergarten in 2023 will receive a free Kinder Kit. This includes children enrolled through [Early Start Kindergarten](https://www.vic.gov.au/early-start-kindergarten) or [Access to Early Learning](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/professionals/health/Pages/access-to-early-learning.aspx#link00).
* Kinder Kits are colourful activity boxes filled with books by Australian authors and toys and activities by Victorian designers and businesses. They also include tips and ideas to help families engage with the Kit and their child’s learning.
* Everything inside a Kinder Kit has been recommended by education experts to help families make ‘learning through play’ part of everyday life.
* Children in Four-Year-Old Kindergarten programs are not eligible to receive a Kit (for mixed-aged group rooms, consider distributing at the end of day or during orientation).
* Three-year-olds in long day care programs must be enrolled in a funded Three-Year-Old Kindergarten program to receive one.
* Kinder Kits will be delivered to services in Term 1.

## Flexible hours for Three-Year-Old Kindergarten

* Three-Year-Old Kindergarten program hours will vary from service to service, providing families with between 5 and 15 hours each week.
* Hours of delivery will increase statewide as infrastructure and workforce supply increases, with services delivering a 15-hour program by 2029.
* Having different numbers of hours at different services will help ensure the reform grows in a sustainable way.
* Where places are limited, the participation of children is prioritised over the number of weekly program hours delivered.
* This is to enable as many Victorian children as possible to have access to free Three-Year-Old Kindergarten programs, and the benefits that come with them.
* The primary aim of the Three-Year-Old Kindergarten reform is for all children to have access to two years of kindergarten before they start school, no matter where they live.

## Four-Year-Old Kindergarten starts transition to Pre-Prep in 2025

* Over the next decade, Four-Year-Old Kindergarten will transition to ‘Pre-Prep’, becoming a universal 30-hour a week program of play-based learning available to every four-year-old child in Victoria by 2032.
* Four-Year-Old Kindergarten will transition to Pre-Prep in stages, starting in some rural areas in 2025.
* From 2025, delivery of between 16-30 hours per week of Pre-Prep will commence in Ararat Rural City, Gannawarra Shire, Hindmarsh Shire, Murrindindi Shire, Northern Grampians Shire, and Yarriambiack Shire.
* Vulnerable children and Aboriginal children outside these roll-out areas will be eligible for Pre-Prep from 2026, with disadvantaged children also eligible from 2028.
* Children in metropolitan Melbourne will be able to access Pre-Prep from 2030, starting at 16-20 hours, and from 2032, children across Victoria will be eligible for 30 hours of Pre‑Prep each week.
* This staged roll-out is similar to the successful approach taken for Three-Year-Old Kindergarten and allows sufficient time to grow the workforce and infrastructure required to support this major uplift in service delivery.

## Benefits of two years of kindergarten

* Australian and international evidence shows that quality play-based learning helps lay the foundation for success throughout a child’s education and life.
* Two years of quality early childhood education is shown to have more impact than one year and can lift children’s outcomes across all learning domains.[[1]](#footnote-2)
* A UK study[[2]](#footnote-3) showed children who attended at least two years of kindergarten had:
  + better development in language, pre-reading, early number concepts, independence and concentration when starting school
  + higher exam scores, and better grades in English and maths
  + better social behaviours and self-regulation.
* Two years of early childhood education has a stronger positive effect on children experiencing vulnerable circumstances or who need extra support, giving them more time to maximise their full potential.[[3]](#footnote-4)

# ACTION CHECKLIST

The start of a new kindergarten year is a special occasion for your service and for families – especially this year! Here are some ideas to consider during Term 1.

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| **ACTION** | | **COMPLETE** |
| **1** | Update your website, social media channels and newsletter with information on any vacancies your service may have. You could include a link to the [kindergarten starting-age calculator](https://www.vic.gov.au/give-your-child-the-best-start-in-life#when-to-start-three-year-old-kindergarten) to help families. |  |
| **2** | Check your [Kinder Tick](https://www.vic.gov.au/kinder-tick) logo is still displayed on your building, and on your other information materials. [Order more signage](http://shout.finsbury.com.au/kinder/), if you need it or [download the logo and information resources](https://www.vic.gov.au/kindertick). If you are no longer a funded kindergarten provider, please remove any material relating to the Kinder Tick. |  |
| **3** | Add the Free Kinder or Three-Year-Old Kindergarten image to the signature on your emails. |  |
| **4** | Brief staff on Kinder Kit eligibility and how they intend to distribute Kits to eligible children as well as store extra Kits for late enrolments. |  |
| **5** | Put up printed posters and any materials that you order from the [Victorian Kinder Portal](https://shout.finsbury.com.au/uStore/login.aspx?SecurityToken=undefined&storeid=112&returnNGURL=/en-AU/home/&ShowRibbon=true&forceLogin=true). |  |
| **6** | Display your kindergarten certificate. |  |
| **7** | Write greetings in languages of your multilingual families and stick on the wall. Consider whether you need any [translated kinder resources](https://www.vic.gov.au/kinder/translations). |  |
| **8** | Include information and some fun photos about how your start to the year is going on your social media channels, in your newsletter or on your family communication platform (e.g. One Child/Storypark). We encourage you to share on social media using the hashtag #FreeKinder #3YOKinder |  |
| **9** | If you still have spots available in your Three-Year-Old program, print out the ‘Talk to us about enrolling’ postcard (which is editable so you can include your contact details) and drop off at your local maternal and child health service. |  |
| **10** | At an appropriate moment, hand out **Kinder Kits** to eligible children.   * Help families understand how they can use the contents of the Kits to extend children’s learning and play at home. * Point out the QR code on the side of the Kit, which will take families to the [Kinder Kit webpage](https://www.vic.gov.au/kinderkits). * Distribute translated resources to identified families. * Consider how you could use the Kinder Kit template for allied health support for families. * Point out the ‘Guide for Families’ and ‘how to’ video. * Highlight the online book readings with Auslan and captioning. * Continue to encourage families and children to use the content of their Kits at home throughout the Term and for the year ahead! |  |

# Victoria’s Kindergarten Workforce

To support the Best Start, Best Life reform, more than 5,000 early childhood teachers and educators will be needed over the next decade in Victoria. This is on top of the 6,000 new jobs that will be created – 4,000 kindergarten teachers and 2,000 educators – as part of Three-Year Old Kindergarten.

The Department of Education is working with the early childhood, higher education and training sectors and providers to develop strategies to grow the workforce as well as invest in retaining and supporting the current workforce.

The current Kindergarten Workforce Strategy includes measures to provide supportfor services to recruit and retain teachers and educators, including the below:

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| **Attraction initiatives** |
| **Encouraging people to choose careers in early childhood education**   * [Best Start, Best Life communications campaign](https://www.vic.gov.au/kinder) |
| **Improving the accessibility and quality of pre-service training**   * [Early childhood scholarships](https://www.vic.gov.au/training-and-support-early-childhood-professionals?Redirect=1), including Aboriginal Pathways scholarships * [Innovative Initial Teacher Education](https://www.vic.gov.au/training-and-support-early-childhood-professionals?Redirect=1) * [Free TAFE](https://www.vic.gov.au/free-tafe) |
| **Better quality placement experiences and vocational education and training**   * [Early Childhood VET placement pilot](https://www.swinburne.edu.au/news/2021/06/new-industry-based-learning-model-for-diploma-of-early-childhood-education-and-care/) * [Support for early childhood educator traineeships](https://www.chisholm.edu.au/free-tafe-for-priority-courses/jobs-victoria-early-childhood-educators-traineeship-program?gclid=EAIaIQobChMIyI38yLy5_AIVWiQrCh0qBAOcEAAYASAAEgJu6PD_BwE&gclsrc=aw.ds) |
| **Getting people in jobs – when and where we need them**   * [Financial incentives for early childhood teachers and educators](https://www.vic.gov.au/training-and-support-early-childhood-professionals?Redirect=1) * [Early Childhood Jobs website](https://jobs.earlychildhood.education.vic.gov.au/) * [Recruitment supports](https://www.vic.gov.au/three-year-old-kindergarten-information-professionals?Redirect=1), including connecting with recruitment agencies |
| **Retention initiatives** |
| **Supports for early career teachers**   * [Grants to support provisionally registered teachers](https://www.vic.gov.au/training-and-support-early-childhood-professionals?Redirect=1) * [Mentor support](https://www.vic.gov.au/training-and-support-early-childhood-professionals?Redirect=1) * [Career supports for teachers in their first five years of teaching](https://www.vic.gov.au/supports-early-career-early-childhood-teachers) |
| **Staff wellbeing support**   * [Wellbeing webinars and research to better understand wellbeing](https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/mental-health-and-wellbeing) * Wellbeing Support Program * Targeted professional development for service leaders |
| **Leadership and career development**   * Early Years Learning Networks * Early Learning Leadership Forums * Victorian Early Years Awards * [Educational Leader professional learning](https://learninghub.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/elearning/eca-leadership-program/) * Career longevity support * [Supporting workforce planning and management](https://elaa.org.au/resources/free-resources/employee-management-development-resource/) |

[Click here](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/educationstate/2022_ESF_Handouts_Early_Childhood_Education.pdf) for full details about these programs and supports.

1. [Starting Strong 2017: Key OECD Indicators on Early Childhood Education and Care.](https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/starting-strong-2017_9789264276116-en) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. [Effective Pre-School, Primary and Secondary Education Project (EPPSE) Research Report: Influences on students’ GCSE attainment and progress at age 16](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/266373009_Effective_Pre-school_Primary_and_Secondary_Education_EPPSE_3_-_16_Project_Influences_on_students%27_dispositions_and_well-being_in_Key_Stage_4_at_age_16) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. [Pre-school - Two years are better than one](https://www.vu.edu.au/sites/default/files/two-years-are-better-than-one-mitchell-institute.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-4)