



magic garden
early education

FEES, ABSENCES & HOLIDAYS POLICY

Policy category: Governance, Management and Administration

The purpose of this operational policy is to ensure written information outlining any fees charged by our centre is provided to parents in alignment with Ministry of Education's Licencing Criteria GMA3 and to ensure parents are informed. Magic Garden's highest cost is its staff. Staff costs are fixed, regardless of whether children are in attendance or absent. Our fee structure reflects the high level of quality care and education, and is designed to be simple, without complicated holiday or sickness arrangements.

Position Statement

Magic Garden will provide this document and a current schedule of fees and information to all parents upon enrolment. Fee information is displayed on the information board in the foyer of the centre and is available on our website under the Enquiries menu. If we need to make changes to the fees, parents will be informed of any changes in writing. Parents and caregivers are solely responsible for the payment of fees and the consequences of not paying fees on time. We are strictly limited to a maximum number of places so if fees remain unpaid the enrolment may be deemed withdrawn so another child can enrol and use the place.

Issue Outline

Information about fees charged by the centre is clearly communicated with parents at the time of enrolment to avoid confusion, late payments or non-payment. Parents should be fully aware of all costs and the penalties for not paying fees on time. Making things clear from the start will support positive relationships with parents.

Detail

What our Fees Cover

- Our fees are based on a daily enrolment of either 8 or 10 hours over 52 weeks of the year.
- The government subsidises early childhood education services up to six hours per day and up to 30 hours per week. Different rates are payable for children under two years old, compared to children two years and over.
- Government subsidies pay for up to 30 hours care at statutory minimum ratios, being a 1:5 ratio of teachers to children under two and 1:10 ratio for children over two. Parent's fees pay for our higher teacher to child ratios, sunscreen, wipes, a dedicated pedagogical leader, 100% qualified teachers, three meals a day, Storypark and physical portfolios. Nappies, formula and any nappy creams are to be provided by the parent.
- The fee includes provision for all services provided and includes provision for the centre to meet its employment obligations for staff for any statutory holidays that occur during the working week and when the centre may otherwise be closed
- **20 Hours ECE Subsidy**
 - We confirm that *20 Hours ECE* is offered at our centre. Only children aged three and over are eligible.

- Per child, only up to six hours in any one day can qualify for *20 Hours ECE* to a maximum of 20 hours per week in total.
- Parents must choose where their child claims *20 Hours ECE*. You cannot claim *20 hours ECE* at multiple ECE services. A declaration is required from parents.
- Our Over Three's fees include the benefit of the *20 Hours ECE* payments from the Ministry of Education.
- **Work and Income Childcare Subsidy**
 - Some children are eligible for the Childcare Subsidy from Work and Income. If this applies to a child, the parent must advise us immediately.
 - Full fees will be charged and remain the liability of the parent(s) until such time as the Childcare Subsidy has been approved and paid by WINZ.
 - If applicable, the Childcare Subsidy will be paid directly to the centre.
 - A parent cannot claim both *20 Hours ECE* AND the Childcare Subsidy for the same hours of attendance, but you they claim both subsidies for different hours of attendance.
- **Family Boost payment**
 - The Government intends to pay a tax rebate of up to \$75 per week, per family, with eligibility related to the level of household income
 - Full details will be released in the May 2024 Budget, with interim details available on the IRD website: <https://www.taxpolicy.ird.govt.nz/news/2024/2024-govt-familyboost>
 - Family Boost will make the net cost of childcare cheaper for some families. Tax credits will be made directly to eligible families rather than through Magic Garden or its fees.

Schedule of Fees

- The centre will produce a schedule of current fees charged
- Our schedule of fees is included in the enrolment pack with our payment policies, is displayed in the foyer of our Centre and is available online under the Enquiries section of our website at all times.
- This policy is available on the Magic Garden website under About Us/Key Policies

Enrolment Fee/Deposit

- One week's fees are payable upon our acceptance of your enrolment as a deposit and one week's fees are payable in advance prior to beginning with us. The deposit payment is non-refundable if your child does not start with the centre and less than two weeks' notice is provided.

Changes in Fees

- Management reserve the right to change the fee rates and policies. Any fee changes will be applicable to existing as well as new enrolments. Parents will be given one month's notice in writing of proposed changes to the Fees Schedule.
- The centre will keep accurate records relating to enrolments and attendance.

Payment Methods

- Our centre accepts payments by Bank Automatic Payment and Bank Internet Transfer.
- Any flexible payment plans or extensions or alternative payment methods are to be discussed with and approved by the Centre Manager, on a case-by-case basis.

Invoicing Practices

- Parents will be invoiced for services on a weekly basis. Fees are to be paid in advance.

Holidays, Sickness and Absences

- To keep things simple, our fees are calculated and spread out over 52 weeks a year. This means that fees are payable for all holidays, sicknesses, absences and statutory holidays.
- If a parent wishes to withdraw their child temporarily from our centre for a holiday, our fee will continue to be charged so as to ensure the enrolment remains secure. If a parent wishes to take a holiday greater than 3 weeks and to keep their child's enrolment this should be discussed with the Centre Manager at least one month in advance. We reserve the right to enrol another child to take up the available place, so please ensure holidays greater than 3 weeks are pre-agreed with the Centre Manager to avoid losing your child's enrolment at Magic Garden.
- If a child is sick they should not attend the centre, as per our Illness Policy. This ensures the risk that other children and adults may become ill is minimised. Our normal fee applies for occasional sick days.
- If a child is to be away from our centre for an extended period of time due to sickness or injury, you should advise centre management immediately so that alternative enrolment and fee arrangements may be made

Frequent Absence Rule

- For any holidays greater than 3 weeks our Centre loses its Government funding (which is likely to be equal to or greater than the fees paid by the parent) because this is deemed a Frequent Absence. Your child's enrolment with us may be cancelled if you haven't pre-arranged this absence with our Centre Manager.
- If your child has a pattern of absence, regulations require you to sign a reconfirmation of enrolment form to maintain your booked hours. If the frequent absence pattern continues across three months continuously, funding will cease in the fourth month and your enrolment may be cancelled.

Late collection and early drop-off fees

- Our rosters are arranged on the times that you have enrolled your children. We have extra costs and potential regulatory issues with our teacher to child ratios if you drop off your child earlier or later than they are enrolled for.
- If parents or approved alternate adults are unable to collect a child on time please call the centre so we can inform your child and maintain correct ratios.
- If a child is dropped off early or picked up late (compared to your enrolment time slots) parents will be charged \$2 per minute you are overdue to contribute to additional staff costs.

Failure to Pay Fees on Time

- Fees are invoiced for one week's enrolment in advance. If you are aware that you cannot pay our fees when you receive our invoice, you must advise us immediately so we may discuss alternative payment options with you. Failure to pay our fees may result in suspension of the child's enrolment at our centre; referral to a debt collector and additional debt collection charges being applied. Magic Garden reserves the right to charge a 10% penalty on any weekly fees that are unpaid.

Forced Closure

- Due to events outside the control of the centre, the centre may be forced to close at the instruction of the Ministry of Health, Civil Defence, or the New Zealand Police, or an act of Nature. If we are instructed to close at any time, we will inform you immediately. As with other childcare facilities and private schools' full fees apply for forced closures.

Withdrawal and Permanent Changes to Enrolled Days

- We understand that parents, from time-to-time, may choose to withdraw their child from our centre. We require a month's notice in such instances.
- If a parent wishes to reduce a normal enrolled day(s), we require 2 weeks prior notice so we can fill this space. Please notify Work and Income if applicable.
- We will make casual days and permanent additions to enrolled days subject to availability. We strongly encourage parents to let us know as early as possible if additional days are required so we can prioritise and waitlist days for existing families.

Alignment with Other Policies

- Communication and Relationships Policy

Relevant Background (including Legislation/Regulation/Licensing references)

Licensing Criteria 2008, Governance, Management and Administration:

- **GMA3:** Written information is provided to parents about any fees charged by the service.
- Ministry of Education Funding Handbook
- Chapter 4 of the Ministry of Education's funding guide with regards to 20 hours early childhood education
<http://www.lead.ece.govt.nz/~media/Educate/Files/Reference%20Downloads/Lead/Files/Funding/FundingHandbook/Chapter420HoursECE.pdf>

Supportive information and resources:

- Work and Income Brochure <http://www.workandincome.govt.nz/documents/brochures/help-with-childcare-costs.pdf>
- [Early Childhood Council](#)
GMA3 Fees Policy template

Impacts of Policy on Staff, Parents, Children

Making the fees schedule and policy visible aims to avoid any confusion or animosity about costs involved or consequences of not paying fees on time. Clarity around enrolment terms, particularly for absences, holidays, sickness and permanent changes to enrolments will reduce complexity for parents.

Alignment with the Centre Philosophy

This policy is in alignment with our Centre Philosophy.

Implications and/or Risks

Following this policy significantly reduces the risk of this Centre not being able to meet financial and legal obligations.

Implementation

Clear procedures have been developed and will be followed by the Centre.

Review

This policy is reviewed annually or when there is a significant change in the area of the policy topic.

Authorised:	Paul Blair
Date:	May 2024
Next Review Date:	May 2025
Consultation Undertaken:	Owners and Management, Parents
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