

Starting kindergarten – when is the right time?



The Department of Human Services provides funding to support children to attend kindergarten in the year before they start school.

It is important that children start school when they are ready to learn in a more formal environment. Therefore it is important for parents to consider when is the best time for their child to start school—as this will determine the best time to attend kindergarten.

- Any child who has started a kindergarten program may withdraw if the parents decide that the child will not begin school in the following year. This decision is usually reached through considerable discussion between the parents and kindergarten teacher about the child's best interests. Withdrawing from the kindergarten program before the end of Term 2 means the child will still be able to return the following year for a full year of kindergarten before starting school.
- There is also provision for a second year of kindergarten for children who are assessed "as having developmental delays. (see brochure 'Does my child need a second year of kindergarten?')

There may be confusion about these options when parents are faced with the information that their child may benefit from waiting another year before attending a kindergarten program. Please speak to the staff at your service.

Waiting another year for kindergarten

Each child develops at his/her own rate, and although your child's age may make him/her eligible to start kindergarten, other factors may impact on his/her readiness for such an experience.

Once you make a decision and your child starts kindergarten, you and the teacher may begin to see signs that your child is not ready for such an experience. From the beginning there needs to be open, honest communication between you and the teacher, keeping the child's needs and best interests and the family's needs at the forefront.

A view that may develop over time is that your child will benefit more from the kindergarten experience if he or she waits a year. Often the issue is one of the child's maturity, an issue that will diminish or disappear with time. In such a situation, if you withdraw your child by the end of Term 2, then he or she can have a full year of a kindergarten in the following year.

Anyone can withdraw their child by the end of Term 2 and defer the year of kindergarten, with the child returning in the following year.

Remember

- Think carefully about when your child is likely to be ready to start school, and therefore when is the best time for the child to have a kindergarten experience. If you're unsure, talk to others who know your child and whose judgement you trust.
- Attend a kindergarten, or an information session and ask about the kindergarten program.
- Before and after your child begins in a kindergarten program, share your concerns, thoughts and ideas about your child openly with the teacher.
- If you need clarification or further information about when is the best time for your child to attend kindergarten, speak to your child's teacher, child care coordinator or maternal and child health nurse.

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