

Access



Section One

Access

The Department's preschool provision	1
Enrolment in a NSW government preschool	2
Ratios, group size and attendance patterns	3
Hours of operation	4

Records Management

Records about children	5
Operational records	5
Policies and procedures	6
Retention of records	6
Access to records	7
Appendix 1.1	8
Appendix 1.2	10
Appendix 1.3	11
Appendix 1.4	12



This section relates to Quality Area 7 of the National Quality Standard: Leadership and service management.

Preschools in government schools operated by the Department of Education and Communities provide an inclusive environment where staff ensure that all children and families are included and welcomed equally. The preschools provide programs, information and resources that respectfully reflect the context, diversity and multicultural nature of communities.

Departmental preschools give priority of access to the most disadvantaged children within the local community, particularly those who would not otherwise be able to access a children's service.

The Department's preschool provision

The Department of Education and Communities operates 100 preschools with 133 classes across NSW.

Sixty-one preschools are located in the Sydney metropolitan area and thirty-nine are located in regional and rural areas.

The department's preschools were established in four phases:

- in the early 1940s eight preschools were established in inner-city areas to support women working in wartime factories
- in the mid-to-late 1970s sixty preschools were established with Commonwealth funding
- from 1993-2004 eleven preschools were established in Aboriginal communities, designated specifically for Aboriginal children
- in 2005 twenty-one new preschools were established in areas of need bringing the total to 100. Thirteen of these were established in schools that service an Aboriginal community or in schools where there is a significantly high number of Aboriginal children enrolled.

The total provision of preschools includes distance education preschool classes in Dubbo School of Distance Education and Broken Hill School of the Air.

A list of the department's preschools is in Appendix 1.1.

The eleven preschools designated for Aboriginal children were established under the Aboriginal Preschool Education Program as part of the Department's strategy for improving educational outcomes for Aboriginal children. This was done in accordance with the goals of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy and the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody.

The program was designed to increase the number of Aboriginal children accessing preschool and provide equality of educational opportunity and outcomes for Aboriginal children.

Local Aboriginal children have priority of access to the designated preschools (see the following section on enrolment for more detail).

The eleven designated Aboriginal preschools are: Alma Bugdlie Preschool (Alma Public School), Djanenjam Preschool (Casino Public School), Wingarra Preschool (Doonside Public School), Enngonia Public School Preschool, Coota Gulla Preschool (Liverpool West Public School), Mungindi Public School Preschool, Moama Public School Preschool, Wayeela Cooinda Preschool (Nowra East Public School), Kooloora Preschool (Toukley Public School), Birraleegal Goondi Preschool (Walgett Community College Primary School) and Barlu Kurli Preschool (Wilcannia Central School).



A list of the designated Aboriginal preschools and those established in 2005 to service Aboriginal communities is provided in Appendix 1.2.

The Department of Education and Communities also operates 47 early intervention classes across NSW. These classes are located in government schools and provide a preschool program for children with a confirmed disability from three years of age to school entry. Although they are part of the early childhood provision, these classes have their own Early Intervention Operational Guidelines.

A number of early intervention classes are located on the same site as a preschool which provides the opportunity for collaboration and support between the two services. Sections of the document may be useful for early intervention class teachers, particularly in relation to the educational program.

A list of early intervention classes is provided in Appendix 1.3.

Enrolment in a NSW government preschool

Children generally attend departmental preschool classes for one year only, in the year before starting school.

Children are eligible to enrol in preschool classes from the beginning of the school year if they turn 4 years of age on or before 31 July in that year.

The Public Health Act requires preschools to obtain documents from parents that show the child:

- is fully vaccinated for their age, or has a medical reason not to be vaccinated, or
- has a conscientious objection to vaccination due to religious beliefs, or
- is on a recognised catch-up schedule if their child has fallen behind with their vaccinations.

Applications for enrolment are made by completing the *Application to enrol in a NSW Government preschool* and

will be accepted by schools from the beginning of term two in the year before the child starts preschool.

The enrolment form is available at <http://www.schools.nsw.edu.au/media/downloads/gotoschool/enrolment/preschoolapptoenrol.pdf>

Offers of enrolment need to be made in keeping with the department's policy of targeting the most disadvantaged children in the local community.

Priority should be given to Aboriginal children and children whose families experience disadvantage, in particular families experiencing financial hardship and who are unable to access other children's services.

When the number of applications exceeds the number of places available in the preschool, children's names will be placed on a waiting list. The principal then establishes a placement panel to consider and prioritise these applications. The placement panel includes the principal, a staff member and a member of the school community. Where a significant number of Aboriginal children are seeking enrolment, the panel should include a nominee from the local Aboriginal Education Consultative Group.

In exceptional circumstances, children may attend preschool for an additional year. This can occur with the approval of the principal after discussions with the parent and consultation with the preschool teacher. If it is decided that a child would benefit from a second year in the preschool, the child would be considered as a new application and prioritised in the same way as all new applications.

Preschools designated for Aboriginal children

The eleven designated Aboriginal preschools cater specifically for Aboriginal children. If vacancies occur then every effort needs to be made to ensure the places are filled by Aboriginal children. If there are insufficient numbers of Aboriginal children, then places may be offered to non-Aboriginal children, although a buffer of two places is to be maintained for Aboriginal children.

Schools with designated preschools and those in communities with significant numbers of Aboriginal children are to liaise with the local Aboriginal Education Consultative Group when considering priorities for enrolment.



Distance education preschools

Eligibility criteria for enrolment in a distance education preschool differ from the rest of the departmental preschools. Preschool offered through distance education specifically caters for geographically isolated children in NSW.

Temporary visa holders

Children who are temporary visa holders may enrol in departmental preschools under the same conditions as Australian citizens.

However there are some short term visa holders who are ineligible to enrol.

Eligibility Information on the temporary visa subclasses is available on the *Schedule of Visa Subclasses and Enrolment Conditions* found at: <http://www.detinternational.nsw.edu.au/media-assets/trp/visa-subclasses.pdf>

Temporary visa holders enrolled in a departmental preschool do not have to pay the Temporary Residents Fee but are required to pay preschool fees.

Early Intervention Classes

Enrolment in early intervention classes is through an access request application process. All applications are submitted to a regional panel that determine eligibility and make offers of placement to these classes. Enrolment forms are completed after this process.

Further information is available from regional offices.

Enrolment in a departmental preschool or early intervention class does not guarantee enrolment into kindergarten in the school in which the class is located. *An Application to enrol in a NSW Government school* still needs to be completed and submitted to the school.

Ratios, group size and attendance patterns

The staff to child ratio for the preschool class is one to ten. This ratio should be maintained at all times (regulation 271).

Each preschool class offers a maximum of 20 full time equivalent (FTE) places. This may include multiple groups with a maximum of 20 children in each group.

Preschool classes are required to offer two attendance patterns across the week. Sessions offered can be of full or half day duration.

Decisions about enrolment patterns are best made in consultation with the school community, including other community-based early childhood providers.

Options for attendance patterns may include:

- a half-day sessional program for 5 days catering for two separate groups of children each day
- a part-time full-day program offering five days over a two week period catering for two separate groups of children per week, that is, two days or three days one week and three days or two days in the alternate week
- a part time full day program offering two days to one group and three days to another group of children each week
- a part-time program offering two and a half days to two separate groups of children each week
- in exceptional circumstances preschools may offer flexible enrolment patterns to cater for the needs of individual children for example, a child who is at risk. This could include five days per week. A five day per week program is also available where a preschool is located in a remote community; is located in an area with high socio-economic disadvantage, or in a community with a significantly high proportion of Aboriginal children.



Changes to attendance

Any change to the attendance pattern of the preschool requires the support of the school community and approval from the School Education Director.

Requests to change the attendance pattern should clearly identify:

- the rationale for the change
- the extent of community support
- the source of funding for any additional expenditure such as equipment for rest or sleeping
- the school's plan for providing relief during the preschool staff lunch period.

Hours of operation

It is recommended that the hours of operation of the preschool match those of the school.

On the last day of each term the principal may choose to close the preschool for a full day to allow for the cleaning of equipment and furniture, and the securing of buildings and resources for the vacation period. However, appropriate provision needs to be made for any child whose family is unable to make alternative arrangements for the closure.

Approval must be sought from the School Education Director if the preschool is to be closed at any other time.

Records management

This section relates to Quality Area 7 of the National Quality Standard: Leadership and service management.

In order to deliver quality programs to all children enrolled in departmental preschools, it is necessary to obtain a range of personal information.

It is the responsibility of the principal and preschool teacher to ensure that this information is accurate, confidential and used appropriately.

Parents from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds should be offered interpreter assistance in obtaining this information if required.

Records about children

The preschool must keep detailed and current records for each individual child attending the preschool. Much of this information is obtained from the *Application to enrol in a NSW Government preschool* and from additional information forms used by preschools. Records which contain personal information about a child are to be considered confidential. In addition, information such as the names and addresses of people authorised to collect children, needs to be kept in the preschool.

The preschool must keep records of:

- each child's individual program including assessments
- child attendance and enrolment
- information about any cultural or religious practices that need to be observed
- illnesses, accidents or incidents and any action taken
- medication forms and health care plans.
- the daily arrival and departure of children (see sample arrival and departure register in the Wellbeing section of the Handbook)
- excursion consents that state the number of adults and number of children attending the excursion Further information about record keeping requirements can be found on page 186 of the *Education and Care Services National Regulations* (2011).

Element 7.3.1

Records and information are stored appropriately to ensure confidentiality, are available from the service and are maintained in accordance with legislative requirements.

Operational records

Operational records to be kept include programs for children, visitor attendance and preschool policies.

The Program

- Records to be kept about the program include the philosophy, structure of the day and a weekly record (see The Program section of the Handbook)
- Quality Improvement Plan

Visitor attendance

- An up-to-date record of any visitors or volunteers to the preschool. The record must include name, signature and arrival and departure times

Staff timetable

- An up-to-date timetable which lets parents know of staff changes on any one day
- Record of responsible person in day to day charge of the preschool.

Records in relation to preschool staff, including the daily sign-on register, child protection and first aid training are kept by the school.

Policies and procedures

Regulation 168 of the *Education and Care Services National Regulation* states that children's services must develop policies to promote the health, safety and wellbeing of children (see Appendix 1.4).

Departmental policies for schools and preschools address most of the policy areas listed in Appendix 1.4. Where there is no specific departmental policy, such as for the arrival and departure of children, procedural information is provided in this handbook.

Preschool staff are required to be familiar with departmental policies and procedures. Policies must be kept at the preschool and be available either in paper or e-copy upon request.

Individual preschools may need to develop some procedures that are specific to their own context.

Such procedures should be stored with the Preschool Handbook.

Element 7.3.5

Service practices are based on effectively documented policies and procedures that are available at the service and reviewed regularly.

Retention of records

Records need to be stored securely on the premises for three years, then in secure storage until the child reaches 25 years of age. These include:

- records relating to personal information of each child
- any health related matters including medication forms and illness or accident records
- parent authorisations for the child to attend excursions.

Records about programs for children, daily attendance, developmental records and daily routine are to be kept for 3 years after the record is made.

Regulation 183 of the *Education and Care Services National Regulation* (2011) outlines further information about the storage of records.

All other records are kept in line with departmental policy.

Access to records

Any record which contains personal information about a child is to be considered confidential and to be kept in a locked filing cabinet. The preschool teacher has access to each child's individual record.

Parents may have access to their own child's records on request to the teacher.

What do the *Education and Care Services National Regulations* say?

Regulation 181 provides information on the confidentiality of records kept by the approved provider.

The approved provider of an education and care service must ensure that information kept in a record under these Regulations is not divulged or communicated, directly or indirectly, to another person other than:

- (a) to the extent necessary for the education and care or medical treatment of the child to whom the information relates; or
- (b) a parent of the child to whom the information relates, except in the case of information kept in a staff record; or
- (c) the Regulatory Authority or an authorised officer; or
- (d) as expressly authorised, permitted or required to be given by or under any Act or law; or
- (e) with the written consent of the person who provided the information.

Certain information be kept in a place that is easily accessed by all preschool staff, for example:

- consent for the child to be collected by someone other than the parent
- individual health care plans for children who require support at school with medication or health care procedures.

Element 7.3.1

Records and information are stored appropriately to ensure confidentiality, are available from the service and are maintained in accordance with legislative requirements.

Useful reference

Guide to the Education and Care Services National Law and Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011

Appendix 1.1

Department of Education and Communities Preschools

Schools have one preschool class except where indicated in brackets

(*indicates location of a designated Aboriginal preschool)

- Alma Public School *
- Annandale Public School (2)
- Arncliffe West Infants School
- Ashcroft Public School
- Australia Street Infants School
- Banksmeadow Public School (2)
- Bankstown South Infants School
- Bass Hill Public School
- Batemans Bay Public School
- Bidwill Public School (3)
- Birchgrove Public School (2)
- Boggabilla Central School
- Bonnyrigg Public School
- Briar Road Public School
- Broken Hill Public School
- Busby West Public School (2)
- Cambridge Park Public School (2)
- Camdenville Public School (2)
- Canley Heights Public School
- Canley Vale Public School (2)
- Cardiff South Public School
- Casino Public School *
- Casino West Public School
- Claymore Public School
- Coonamble Public School
- Darlington Public School
- Dawson Public School (2)
- Doonside Public School *
- Distance Education
 - Dubbo School of Distance Education (3)
 - Broken Hill School of the Air (1)
- Dubbo West Public School
- Eastern Creek Public School
- Edgeworth Public School
- Elmore Vale Public School
- Enngonia Public School (0.6)*
- Fairy Meadow Public School
- Five Dock Public School
- Granville Public School
- Harrington Street Public School (2)
- Hume Public School
- Irrawang Public School
- John Brothie Memorial Nursery School (2)
- John Warby Public School (2)
- Kegworth Public School
- Kemblawarra Public School (2)
- Kingswood Park Public School
- Kingswood South Public School
- Koonawarra Public School
- Lalor Park Public School
- Lansvale Public School (2)
- Lethbridge Park Public School
- Lismore South Public School
- Liverpool West Public School *
- Lurnea Public School
- Madang Avenue Public School (2)
- Manning Gardens Public School
- Marayong Public School (2)
- Mascot Public School (2)
- Matraville Soldiers Settlement Public School
- Mayfield West Public School
- Moama Public School (0.6) *
- Mount Druitt Public School (2)
- Mount Warrigal Public School (2)
- Mungindi Central School *
- Narrabri West Public School
- Nowra East Public School *
- Oak Flats Public School
- Old Guildford Public School
- Orange Grove Public School
- Oxley Park Public School
- Pendle Hill Public School
- Plunkett Street Public School
- Punchbowl Public School (2)
- Riverstone Public School (2)
- Riverwood Public School
- Rosehill Public School (2)
- Rozelle Public School
- Rydalmere East Public School
- Rydalmere Public School
- Sadleir Public School
- Sarah Redfern Public School (2)
- Sefton Infants School

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- Seven Hills West Public School
 - Smithfield Public School (2)
 - St Johns Park Public School
 - St Marys Public School
 - Stockton Public School
 - Telarah Public School (2)
 - The Entrance Public School
 - Tolland Public School
 - Toukley Public School *
 - Tweed Heads South Public School
 - Villawood East Public School
 - Walgett Community College -
Primary School*
 - Waratah Public School (2)
 - Wellington Public School
 - Whalan Public School (2)
 - Wilcannia Central School *
 - Windale Public School
 - Woy Woy Public School
 - Yates Avenue Public School

Appendix 1.2

Preschools in Aboriginal communities

11 designated preschools specifically for Aboriginal children

- Alma Bugdlie Preschool, Alma Public School, Western NSW
- Djanenjam Preschool, Casino Public School, North Coast
- Wingarra Preschool, Doonside Public School, Western Sydney
- Enngonia Public School Preschool, Western NSW
- Coota Gulla Preschool, Liverpool West Public School, South Western Sydney
- Mungindi Central School Preschool, New England
- Moama Public School Preschool, Riverina
- Wayeela Coinda Preschool, Nowra East Public School, Illawarra and South East
- Kooloorra Preschool, Toukley Public School, Hunter Central Coast
- Birraleegal Goondi Preschool, Walgett Community College Primary School, Western NSW
- Barlu Kurli Preschool, Wilcannia Central School, Western NSW

13 preschools established in 2005 located in schools that service an Aboriginal community or with significantly high numbers of Aboriginal children

- Bimbi Preschool, Tolland Public School, Riverina
- Batemans Bay Public School Preschool, Illawarra and South East
- Boggabilla Central School Preschool, New England
- Briar Road Public School Preschool, South Western Sydney
- Casino West Public School Preschool, North Coast
- Coonamble Public School Preschool, Western NSW
- Dubbo West Public School Preschool, Western NSW
- Garawa Preschool, The Entrance Public School, Hunter Central Coast
- Irrawang Public School Preschool, HunterCentral Coast
- Lethbridge Park Public School Preschool, Western Sydney
- Manning Gardens Public School Preschool, North Coast
- Wellington Public School Preschool, Western NSW
- Windale Public School Preschool, Hunter Central Coast

Appendix 1.3

Department of Education and Communities Early Intervention Classes

Schools have one early intervention class except where indicated in brackets

- Annandale Public School (2)
- Bankstown South Infants School
- Bomaderry Public School
- Broken Hill North Public School
- Claymore Public School (2)
- Dee Why Public School
- Drummond Memorial Public School
- Glenroi Heights Public School
- Griffith North Public School
- Hume Public School
- Inverell Public School (0.6)
- John Palmer Public School
- Kelso Public School
- Kingswood South Public School
- Kotara South Public School
- Lake Munmorah Public School
- Lismore Public School
- Loftus Public School
- Manning Gardens Public School
- Moree Public School
- Moss Vale Public School
- Mount Druitt Public School
- Mount Warrigal Public School
- Narara Public School
- Narranga Public School
- Normanhurst West Public School
- Orana Heights Public School
- Pendle Hill Public School
- Punchbowl Public School (2)
- Smithfield Public School (2)
- South Grafton Public School
- Tamworth South Public School
- Telarah Public School
- The Entrance Public School
- Tolland Public School
- Toronto Public School
- Towradgi Public School
- Waratah Public School
- Whalan Public School
- Windsor South Public School
- Wollondilly Public School
- Woy Woy Public School
- Yates Avenue Public School

Appendix 1.4

Policies to be made available

The *Education and Care Services National Regulations* (regulation 168) states that policies and procedures are required in relation to the following:

- (a) health and safety, including matters relating to -
 - (i) nutrition, food and beverages, dietary requirements; and
 - (ii) sun protection; and
 - (iii) water safety, including safety during any water-based activities; and
 - (iv) the administration of first aid;
- (b) incident, injury, trauma and illness procedures complying with regulation 85;
- (c) dealing with infectious diseases, including procedures complying with regulation 88;
- (d) dealing with medical conditions in children, including the matters set out in regulation 90;
- (e) emergency and evacuation, including the matters set out in regulation 97;
- (f) delivery of children to, and collection of children from, education and care service premises, including procedures complying with regulation 99;
- (g) excursions, including procedures complying with regulations 100 to 102;
- (h) providing a child safe environment;
 - (i) staffing, including -
 - (i) a code of conduct for staff members; and
 - (ii) determining the responsible person present at the service; and
 - (iii) the participation of volunteers and students on practicum placements;
- (j) interactions with children, including the matters set out in regulations 155 and 156;
- (k) enrolment and orientation;
- (l) governance and management of the service, including confidentiality of records;
- (m) the acceptance and refusal of authorisations;
- (n) payment of fees and provision of a statement of fees charged by the education and care service;
- (o) dealing with complaints.

For further information go to:

<https://detwww.det.nsw.edu.au/policiesintra/category.do?level=schools>