



PRESCHOOL & LONG DAY CARE SERVICES

Preschools provide early education and care for children aged between 3 and 6, and usually operate during normal school terms and hours. Long day care centres offer early education and care for children from birth to 6, and are usually open for 48 weeks per year with extended hours. Independent schools can seek approval to operate a preschool or long day care centre or contract an approved external provider.

REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS

Early Childhood (EC) services, including preschools and long day care centres (LDCs), operate under the Australian Government's National Quality Framework (NQF) developed by the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) which includes:

- national law and regulations:
 - *Children (Education and Care Services) National Law*,
 - the corresponding *Regulations* (which include some special provisions for services in NSW)
- *National Quality Standard* (NQS)
- [national learning frameworks](#) including the *Early Years Learning Framework* for preschools and LDCs.

In NSW, all centre-based Early Childhood Services, including preschools and long day care services need to be approved by the NSW Regulator – the NSW Department of Education’s Early Childhood Education Directorate (ECED).

There are several layers of approval required to operate such a service, but the main two processes are as follows:

- **Provider Approval** – a individual or legal entity may apply for provider approval, which is ongoing and nationally recognised
- **Service Approval** – Once the Provider has approval, they must then seek service approval for each service they wish to operate (such as a preschool) at a particular location.

The Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) provides processes and an IT system (NQAITs) for approval and monitoring of EC services. The NSW Regulator is the Department of Education’s Early Childhood Education Directorate (ECED). Preschools and long day care centres require approval from ECED of both the provider and the EC service.

OPTIONS FOR INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS TO OFFER PRESCHOOL OR LDC SERVICES

Independent schools can either operate their own preschool or LDC service, or outsource the operation of the service at the school by contracting an already approved external Early Childhood service provider.

PROVIDER APPROVAL

Where an independent school chooses to operate their own preschool or long day care centre, usually either the board of the school or the school’s approved authority applies to ECED for provider approval.

ECED requires that all providers have the necessary knowledge to operate a preschool or long day care centre and may require that all “responsible persons” in management or control of the service undertake a day of training and formal assessment in Sydney. ECED will inform providers further about the application of this requirement.

SERVICE APPROVAL

An approved provider then seeks service approval to operate a preschool or long day care service at a specified location. ECED inspects the site to ensure the service is compliant with the relevant law and regulations. Key requirements include:

- indoor and outdoor space (sections 107, 108 of *Regulations*)
- educator to child ratios (note that NSW has specific requirements)
- educator qualifications
- NSW requirements for a qualified Early Childhood Teacher (sections 130, 272 of *Regulations*)
- a learning program based on the Early Years Learning Framework ([EYLF](#)).

APPROVAL PROCESS

Applications for both provider and service approval are made to the NSW regulator through the ACECQA National Quality Agenda IT System ([NQAITs](#)). Specific application forms are lodged electronically and then assessed and approved by ECED.

FUNDING FOR PRESCHOOLS

Preschools may be able to attract substantial funding under the State Government's *Start Strong for Preschools* program. Funding is payable for a child attending a preschool for 600 hours per year and who is either: at least 4 years old on or before 31 July in that year and not in compulsory schooling; or at least 3 years old on or before 31 July and from a low income family and/or Aboriginal family. Parents would not be eligible for the Commonwealth's *Child Care Subsidy*.

FUNDING FOR LONG DAY CARE CENTRES

Long day care centres may be eligible for limited funding from the State Government's *Start Strong for Long Day Care*. The centre must first be approved on the Commonwealth's Child Care Subsidy System, through which the service can offer fee relief to parents, and must deliver an early childhood education program to children four and five years old, in their year before school, for 600 hours, that:

- is taught by teachers holding an approved early childhood teaching qualification
- uses the Early Years Learning Framework.

IMMUNISATION REQUIREMENTS

All children in preschools and long day care centres need to be immunised in order to be able to enrol and to be eligible for Child Care Subsidy. This requirement applies unless there is a medical reason not to be vaccinated, or the child is on a recognised catch-up schedule if the child has fallen behind with their vaccinations. Children of parents with a conscientious objection to vaccination are no longer exempted from vaccination requirements and cannot be enrolled if unvaccinated. Further information on immunisation is available [here](#).

For more information contact the Regulations and Programs Team at the AISNSW on 9299 2845 or regulations@aisnsw.edu.au