

KINDERGARTEN AND SCHOOL READINESS

SHOULD MY CHILD DEFER KINDERGARTEN?

For those parents unsure as to whether their child will be ready for 4 year old Kindergarten, we hope the following information enables you to make an informed decision.

The decision of whether to defer your child from Kindergarten is often very difficult. There are many pressures on parents to send their children to Kindergarten as soon as they are eligible. However, there are some good arguments for deferring kindergarten if you believe your child is not quite ready. As parents, you know the most about your child, and in the end, it will be your decision. It can help if you have as much information as possible on which to base this important decision.

For a child considering commencing the 4 year old kindergarten program, under the Department of Education and Training (DET) guidelines, once a child commences even one day of Term One they are considered as having started their one funded year of kindergarten. The Victorian Government provides funding for one year of kindergarten, in exceptional circumstances a child will be eligible for a second year of funded kindergarten provided they meet specific criteria. A child in receipt of a Kindergarten Inclusion Support (KIS) package may be eligible for a second year of funded kindergarten.

When considering whether to defer, parents can consult with professionals already working with your child, such as Three year old group kindergarten teacher, Childcare teacher, Maternal and Child Health Nurse, speech pathologist or paediatrician, who can assess your child's development and advise you on whether it might be beneficial to defer. The teachers at Tarralla Kindergarten would be happy to discuss with you any concerns you have, and assist you to assess your child's readiness to start Kindergarten. Please give us a call at the kindergarten and we can arrange a time to talk with you.

Parents need to consider whether, at the end of the four year old kinder year, your child will be ready for the big transition into primary school. The compulsory age for school entry is the year in which the child turns 6 years old. However, it is possible to get an exemption from attending school for that year. Parents should also think about the child's transition into secondary school, where being young or small, being emotionally immature, or going through puberty later than other students can have a number of disadvantages. There is no prize for getting there early!!

All the current research is clear, the most important factors for success at school are not whether they can write, read and count to 20 - it is the child's social and emotional maturity that has the most influence on their success at school. Children are best able to learn when they feel comfortable and are happy, with high self-esteem and a good self-concept. Fear and anxiety are great inhibitors to learning.

Some advantages of deferring your child's kindergarten year:

Your child will:

- Have the maturity to happily separate from their caregiver and less likely to experience separation difficulties.
- Be more able to ask for help when required and is less likely to feel at a loss when assistance is needed
- Have further maturation of fine and gross motor development
- Have a more established toileting routine and be less likely to have accidents
- Be clearer and more mature with speech and articulation
- Be more able to physically cope with their day and is less likely to need a daytime sleep
- Show increased social skills such as sharing and taking turns with other children
- Show increased readiness for cooperative play and be less likely to play alone
- Be more able to make choices rather than wandering and requiring assistance to settle
- Show increased concentration and pride in achievements
- More readily understand and accept the kindergarten routines and limits
- Show increased confidence and ability to manage emotions for coping with a range of situations and is less likely to withdraw or use physical means to deal with frustrations

At times family situations and other factors will need to influence your decision.

Generally, professionals agree that if you are in doubt – DEFER. Deferring is not holding your child back it offers opportunity for your child to mature and “manage well” rather than “just coping”.

