

All about Kidsfirst Kindergartens

STARTING OUT AT KIDSFIRST KINDERGARTENS

Do you start children at two years of age?

Yes, space permitting, we take children at our kindergartens from the age of two, and at Kidsfirst, even two year olds get 20 hours free each week. Our kindergartens are fully equipped and able to change nappies, assist with toilet training, and have quiet space for sleeping should your child need it.

Many of our kindergartens are able to take children immediately. There can be a wait for others, but we constantly have children leaving to go to school, so spaces are always coming up. To apply for a place, fill out our online application form.

Do you take children aged under two years? Kidsfirst Niu in Woodham Rd, and Kidsfirst Diamond Harbour enrol children from birth to age five. Our other 68 kindergartens start at two.

Can my child come if they are not toilet/potty trained?

Absolutely! We are fully equipped and able to change nappies, supplied by you. In addition to being able to change nappies, teachers will work with you to support your child with their toilet/potty training.

To find out more

- Call 0800 454 373
- Email betterbecause@kidsfirst.org.nz
- or talk with the kindergarten's head teacher.

WAITING TO START KINDY

How long will I have to wait to get a space at the kindergarten I applied to?

Many of our kindergartens are able to take children immediately. There can be a wait for others, but we constantly have older children leaving to go to school, so spaces are always coming up. To apply for a place, fill out our online application form.

Your head teacher will keep in touch with you while you are on the waitlist – and you're always welcome to call in to our kindys at any time. As soon as there is a space available we will let you know and talk to you about transitioning your child into their new kindy. It helps us if you can remain flexible with the hours/days – that way we can get your child started and build up to your desired hours and days.

FEES

How much does it cost to come to Kidsfirst kindergartens?

Children aged 3 - 5 years have 20 free ECE hours (government funded hours) to use each week in total (this includes any hours used at another ECE service, and you will need to declare these when you enrol).

Children aged 2 - 3 years enrolled at our services also receive 20 hours free of charge each week, subsidised by Kidsfirst. Parents of two year olds need to commit to using all of their government funded 20 ECE hours at a Kidsfirst service once their child turns three.

Children aged 2 - 5 years who attend more than 20 hours per week will be charged \$6 per hour for any additional hours over and above the 20.

Children aged under two years will be charged \$6 per hour for all hours enrolled.

You may be eligible for the WINZ childcare subsidy. You can self-check eligibility online at <https://www.workandincome.govt.nz/products/a-z-benefits/childcare-subsidy.html>. You can find a copy of our fees policy [here](#), or ask your head teacher for a copy.

From time-to-time, some of our kindergartens offer special promotional pricing: Visit [here](#) to find out more.

What if my child is not a New Zealand citizen?

You can enrol your child regardless of their immigration status, and the 20 hours free is for all children. Some conditions may apply.

Is there a discount for families?

Yes. Families with more than one child attending qualify for a 10% discount for siblings.

How often will I receive a bill?

If your child is aged 2 – 5 years and attends 20 hours or less, you will not normally receive an account.

If your child is aged under two years, or attends more than 20 hours each week, you will receive an account fortnightly, which will be due within 7 working days. If you have any questions about your account, email infocare@kidsfirst.org.nz, or call 0800 454 373 to speak to someone who can help.

DAY-TO-DAY

Can I spend time at my kindy?

You're always welcome here! We are here to help each family to find the right balance for you and your child, and we welcome visitors to the kindergarten to extend the children's interests and learning. Whānau often help on excursions, stay for a cuppa and biscuit, read stories, share their skills and passions and show they value their child's education just by being present. We understand the pressures on parents and family too – you can be involved whenever it suits you. We love to see waitlist parents and children, too. Talk with the head teacher to find out more.

HOURS

What hours are Kidsfirst Kindergartens open?

Our kindergartens operate for 6 hours each day, but each one has a start time that suits the majority of their community. Some start at 8.30am and finish at 2.30pm, and some start at 8.45am or 9am, finishing at 2.45pm or 3pm. You can click [here](#) to find a kindy near you and check their opening hours – or go to our website www.kidsfirst.co.nz

Can I choose my hours?

Our kindergartens offer either a full day, or in many cases a morning or afternoon session. Unfortunately we cannot offer different start and finish times throughout the day - it's either a session or a full day. Drop-offs and pick-ups must be strictly adhered to.

Can I choose my days?

Yes! We recommend starting with at least two days (if available at your kindergarten) and building up to five days as your child becomes ready. This gives our teachers time to really get to know you and your child, for your child to make friends, and gives consistency to support your child's learning each week.

Can we have days off?

Will we be charged for days we don't attend?

We don't charge fees if the kindergarten is closed over term break. We do charge if your child is absent for sickness or holidays. You can find a copy of our fees policy [here](#), or ask your head teacher for a copy.

Can I pick my child up early from their kindy?

Occasionally you just have to – we understand! Please let us know if this is the case. But normal start and finish times are determined by the operating hours of the kindergarten.

Are you open during school holidays?

A number of our kindergartens are open during the three term breaks throughout the year. If your kindy is not open, we may be able to offer you spaces in another local kindy for the term break. Ask us at betterbecause@kidsfirst.org.nz, or call **0800 454 373**.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

What is the teacher/child ratio at Kidsfirst services?

For children over 2 our ratio is one qualified teacher to every 10 children as required by the Ministry of Education.

For children under 2 years old our ratio is one qualified teacher for every 4 children, lower than that required by the Ministry of Education.

Do you have mat time?

We believe in the value of uninterrupted and sustained play so the children can explore and develop their curiosity - learning to communicate, share, test their working theories, and persist if things don't work out. All around, you will see children busy at play alongside each other, making choices for play that engage them with the people, the places and the things of our environment and community – supported in their learning by our fantastic teaching teams.

But we often come together for group sessions, storytelling, music, and special occasions with our whānau. You can find out more about Play-based Learning [here](#).

Do you have a 4 year old programme?

Unlike some other early learning philosophies, Kidsfirst does not push children through a pre-determined formal programme. Instead, individual learning plans are made for each child with goals specific to that child and their interests.

Following the interests of a child means getting to know them well, taking the time a child needs to fully explore the things that capture their attention. It's much more possible in our kindergartens, with their typically smaller class sizes, than in larger centres.

The concept of Play-based Learning has been around since the foundation of the kindergarten movement in the late 1800s. Kidsfirst has always allowed children to follow their own interests on the basis that we all learn best when it's something we are genuinely positive about. In recent years, Play-based Learning has gained a lot of traction beyond early childhood, and is now also a feature in many primary schools.

The approach sets children up to develop a real love of learning that they can take into the rest of their lives - something that becomes even more important as careers, and the workplace, continue to demand new skills. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/schoolboard/2017/10/09/the-future-of-your-career-depends-on-lifelong-learning/#31f95a331bd7>.

And we have great relationships with our local schools, supporting the transition to school for you and your child, as he/she moves on from Kindergarten.

Are children split into different age groups?

We believe in the value of whānau. Just as families don't separate children into age groups, we don't either. We believe children of all ages learn with and from each other (Ako), creating opportunities for role-modelling and teaching children empathy and communication. Lasting relationships start at Kidsfirst Kindergartens - with their Kidsfirst whānau.

How can I keep track of my child's progress?

Your child will have a profile book at the kindergarten from day one. Learning stories about your child and the learning that is happening at kindy will be put into the book regularly and you can see it at any time. You can also take it home from time-to-time to share with your whānau.

As well as a hard copy, all of our Kidsfirst Kindergartens use EDUCA – a secure online portal connecting you to your child's learning. Our teachers will upload your child's learning stories - straight to your phone or tablet. You and your family can provide comments and inspiration to build on the learning for your child. Your head teacher will tell you all about this when you enrol.

What will my child learn at kindergarten?

Our kindergartens follow the New Zealand early childhood education curriculum, "Te Whāriki", which strengthens early learning and lays a strong foundation for later success.

Our teachers plan programmes and focus areas around the children, and their whānau's aspirations for them. Children are encouraged to contribute to the planning, giving them a sense of ownership and a voice.

At Kidsfirst, your child will learn to:

- Take responsibility and make choices
- Practice sharing and co-operation with others
- Persist and not give up
- Communicate and develop relationships with adults and other children
- Be resilient when things don't work out
- Become independent but not afraid to ask for help
- Develop the ability to manage self
- Begin to learn to write through drawing and painting
- Develop curiosity and develop research skills through being curious
- Develop eco-awareness
- Develop their social consciousness through empathy and communication
- Be creative
- Explore – in the kindergarten and in their community
- Solve problems
- Become culturally aware and confident
- Ask questions about their world, helping them to make sense of it

Your child will enjoy a range of educational and fun experiences including:

- Dramatic play
- Manipulative play-puzzles, blocks, construction and carpentry
- Nature, science experiments and exploration
- Sand and water play
- Adventure play
- Physical outdoor play
- Books, stories and puppetry
- Music making, dance and songs
- Language and social development through conversation
- A range of creative and visual arts - collage, painting, art, dough and baking

You can find out more about your unique local Kidsfirst kindergarten by clicking [here](#), or visiting our website www.kidsfirst.co.nz

Getting kindy ready

You have completed the enrolment process and you have a start date for your child to begin their adventures at kindergarten.

Here's some information on how to prepare for your first day.

Can I visit before my child starts at kindergarten?

Yes! You're always welcome here! We recommend at least two visits with your child to support them in their transition to kindergarten. Talk to your head teacher about the best time for your visits, and take the time to help the teaching team to understand your child.

What sort of things do the teachers need to know about my child?

Things like:

- special words and ways of communicating
- favourite ways of being comforted
- sleep routines - when and how they like to go to sleep (if necessary)
- toileting routines
- favourite foods and special food needs
- life and family - important things that may be happening or anything that might be upsetting them.
- any special education needs, or early intervention services they are receiving.

Can I stay on my child's first day at kindy?

Absolutely. When you arrive, ask your head teacher about signing in, help your child to hang their bag and put their lunchbox away.

- encourage your child to get involved in an activity.
- be positive about the day ahead
- give yourself plenty of time to settle your child in
- use a short routine when leaving, such as reading a story together or waving to each other through the window
- It's really important that you tell your child when you're leaving, say goodbye, and then leave straight away. If you're worried, you can always phone, or your teaching team will ring you if they need to. It's normal for a little anxiety at first!

Will the teachers ring me if my child is unwell or hurt?

If your child becomes unwell, the teaching team will ring you and ask you to come and take your child home. It's a good idea to have a back-up plan in case you can't get there quickly.

Make sure your emergency contact person can help if needed. Keep your child at home until they are better to reduce the spread of illness.

If your child is hurt at kindergarten, the teaching team will apply first aid as needed. If the injury needs attention they will call you immediately and get the help needed. Any injury, hurt or scrape will be reported to you at the end of the session. Our teaching team are great at hugs, and in most cases your child will be back at play within minutes!

What should I pack for kindy?

- a drink bottle - named
- a sun hat - or a warm hat in winter. Please name all your child's clothes
- a change of clothes, and a bag for sending home dirty clothes
- warm jacket and gumboots in the winter – we play outside all year round!
- food – check with your teachers about the kind of foods we encourage children to eat at kindergarten
- spare nappies and wipes
- a bag to hold all these things in - named.

When will my child eat?

Most of our kindergartens have a "rolling kai". That is, the children are supervised to eat when they are hungry rather than at a set time – and they are supported to learn to manage their own snacks/lunches. If your child is really busy and not thinking about food, we'll encourage him/her to eat regularly.

There are times when we will have a group kai – with us all sitting down to share the group time and eat together. We often share fruit at morning and afternoon tea times.

What food does/can my child bring to kindy?

We encourage our families to put together healthy kai for their children - natural, whole foods, fruit and veges that will nourish them and give them the energy they need for a busy day's play. Talk to us more about ideas for lunches – and have a look at what others bring when you come to visit.

Lunch box suggestions - fuelled4life.org.nz and for more healthy heart family recipes hri.org.nz

Will you support my child with toileting?

Talk to us about how your child is managing toileting. We're more than happy to help and will plan with you to support your child's progress with potty and toilet training while he/she is at kindy.

Will my child be safe/happy/have fun/make friends at kindy?

Playfulness, adventure, creativity and exploration are valued ways of being at Kidsfirst – learning is fun! Our skilled and experienced teaching teams are proud to provide a programme for children where we foster a strong sense of belonging.

We do this by encouraging children to show Manaakitanga - caring for each other, and by supporting children to get along well with others, and to form and maintain relationships. Kindy kids are often lifelong friends!

WHAT MAKES KIDSFIRST KINDERGARTENS SPECIAL?

Your child is our number one priority. We deliberately keep the maximum numbers in our kindergartens down so we can really get to know each child. Our sessions are calm and children are settled because we pace our day around the children.

You are always welcome here! Relationships are key to us. Our teachers know each child and their family and create a learning programme based on the child and whānau's aspirations so we can really support each child to reach his/her potential.

Our teachers make the difference! We offer early childhood education programmes provided by 100% highly-qualified, registered teachers – with access to the resources of one of New Zealand's largest and most experienced early learning organisations – Kidsfirst! Our teachers are supported with a world-class professional learning programme to ensure they bring the very best to our children.

Our backyards are big and natural. The best of kiwi backyards where the children connect and interact with nature. Our play areas provide challenges and risk-taking opportunities, have quiet reflective spaces, and provide a variety of experiences.

Play spaces here are natural, they reflect our bicultural commitment, and they are planted with natives and fruit trees and vegetables aplenty. Kidsfirst is New Zealand-owned and not-for-profit, our funding goes back into our kindergartens – back to your neighbourhood.

We have a proud kindergarten history of supporting our local communities for more than 100 years!

TRANSITION TO SCHOOL

Do most children go on to local Primary Schools?

Kidsfirst Kindergartens have long established connections with schools in their communities, and in many cases are located on or near school

grounds. We have close relationships with most of the local schools to support a successful and happy transition for the whole family when the time comes for our children to go to school.

Many of our children do continue their learning journey locally, but if your child is not going to school locally, talk to us about how we can support you with your transition.

What if my child isn't ready for school at five?

Children can stay at kindergarten until their 6th birthday. Many children go off to school when they turn 5 years old but some do choose to stay in kindergarten. Talk to your head teacher about what is right for you and your child.

How do you support transition to school?

We have close relationships with most of the local schools to support a successful and happy transition for the whole family when the time comes for our children to go to school.

In some of our kindergartens, the new entrant teachers visit the kindergartens regularly to get to know the four year olds. In others, we visit the school with the children, taking time to familiarise the children with their new environment and new routines. Of course, your new entrant teacher will explain your school's process to you when you enrol, this is likely to involve several visits before your child turns five.

We often visit the schools for other reasons too - celebrations, sports day, concerts.

Our kindergarten tamariki love to see what the older children do at school.

We take time to celebrate this special time for families, as the tamariki move on to school.