



FAQs about 'Flying Start' 3-year-old Preschool at SA Montessori:

Q: What is the Flying Start Preschool program?

A: The Flying Start preschool program is part of the state government's broader investment in quality early childhood education, and it includes funding that flows directly to the centre if allocated by families to enrich programs and practice. Flying Start assists eligible 3-year-old children with accessing up to 15 hours in a high-quality, teacher-led, play-based preschool program. This combines with the existing access to 4-year-old preschool to provide each South Australian child with access to high-quality preschool in the two years before school.

Q: Doesn't SA Montessori already provide a teacher-led, high-quality preschool program for all their children, including the 3-year-olds?

Yes, we absolutely do! We are very proud to be so far ahead of the pack in this area. In fact, the Office for Early Childhood Development (OECD) has actively celebrated that the programs that we already offer are what they are trying to achieve in other settings! Our centres have even been used by the OECD for filming explanatory modules highlighting best practice and for publicly announcing the launch of Flying Start. This funding is a wonderful way of trying to ensure that more children have access to the same standard of early learning experiences that our SA Montessori children have been benefiting from since 1989. For some other long day care centres, which have not previously provided a play-based learning program for pre-schoolers and do not have an Early Childhood Teacher, there will be big changes as the Flying Start funding brings them closer to the standard of quality preschool provision that is so familiar to us.

At a centre like ours, where we already provide an exceptional early learning program based on our rich Montessori curriculum delivered by highly qualified educators, the funding isn't about big changes but nuanced uplift. It provides additional specialised training for our educators to deepen their understanding of areas like cultural sensitivity and trauma-informed practice. It links us with the 'Preschool Boost Menu' to access allied health services to enhance our teaching strategies and provide personalised support. It also assists in maintaining the ongoing wage costs of our Early Childhood Teachers (ECTs) to ensure that these team members will be constant and consistent leaders in our program development.

Q: How will my child benefit if they join the Flying Start program with SA Montessori?

A: We strongly encourage all eligible families to embrace the opportunity to be part of the Flying Start program with SA Montessori. As well as the benefits to our community already mentioned above, there are advantages for your child as an individual. If your child is part of our Flying Start group they are included in access to the Preschool Boost Menu. The Menu offers a range of pre-approved, high-quality evidence-informed supports, tailored to the needs of 3- and 4-year-old children, their families and communities, in the areas of physical health and wellbeing, social competence, emotional maturity, language and cognitive skills and communication skills and general knowledge.

At this stage, you do not have the option of accessing a position for your 3-year-old at a Government preschool ('kindy') if you are enrolled in a long day care service that provides a Flying Start preschool program. This means that for the vast majority of our families, it should be a very easy decision. If you are enrolled and eligible, why *wouldn't* you sign up to Flying Start? Each registration to the program will financially support the educators, enrich our practices, and ensure your child continues receiving the best possible early learning experiences. If you are enrolled and eligible but do not register with Flying Start, it simply means the state government gets to hold onto those dollars instead of investing them in supporting early childhood educators. The state government has set aside funds to support the Flying Start program because they believe that every South Australian child deserves this opportunity, and we feel that every family should embrace that offer.

Q: What is the difference between the 'Flying Start' 3-Year-Old Preschool program and the regular 'Preschool' class at my SA Montessori centre?

A: The Flying Start funding is designed to enable long day care centres to implement an educational, tailored learning program for children in the two years before school. SA Montessori centres are leaders and innovators in this practice, as we have already been providing exactly that type of program within a long day care setting for many years. This means that the 'difference' will be much subtler in a centre like ours, where the Government funding is catching up with our existing standards, than it will be in a centre that is only beginning to offer this sort of learning program from this point onwards. We are proud that this means that there will only be nuanced distinctions between our established Montessori Preschool program and the 'Flying Start' program.

There may be subtle differences within your centre, such as more detailed Graduation Reports upon your child's transition to school. It is best to speak to your centre Director or Educational Leader about any small distinctions, but again we remind our families that the reason that there are few differences is because we have been operating above the average standard for such a long time. We are industry experts in an approach that is new to many other centres, and this is something we're very proud of. We appreciate that families who allocate their Flying Start funding to the centre are contributing to ensuring that this high standard can always be maintained, alongside the enrichment of additional staff training and Preschool Boost.

If you are comparing our program to another centre that advertises more distinct differences between their regular sessions and Flying Start, then it is worth remembering that this likely means that the concept of an educational preschool group is very new to them. It is also important to understand that the Flying Start program is only for 15 hours per week. Centres with significant differentiation between their regular groups and Flying Start sessions will not be providing consistent quality and practices beyond 15 hours. At SA Montessori your child is *always* accessing the same high standard of education and care. We believe your child benefits most from an environment like ours when the standard of practice is always so high that it's harder to notice the differences between the general group and the Flying Start program.

Q: If I register with Flying Start at my SA Montessori centre, will I get a fee reduction / discount?

A: No, the guidelines of the Funding Agreement prevent us from passing on the funding in the form of a discount to families. We must use the funding for the specified purposes outlined in the Agreement, including wage costs of our Early Childhood Teacher (ECT), professional development and covering additional non-contact time.

Q: What are the 'Priority of Access' requirements?

A: The 'Priority of Access' guidelines help to achieve the goal of supporting developmentally vulnerable children so they can be prioritised for access to the Flying Start program. The State Government has determined these categories and they apply only to the Flying Start Preschool program, not to our overall enrolments.

Q: Are 4-year-olds still able to receive 15 hours of a 'Preschool' program as well?

Yes, we will continue to provide our 15 hours of Preschool for eligible 4-year-olds. This has previously been known as 'Universal Access'. It will now be treated under the same umbrella as our Flying Start funding. This means that 3 *and* 4-year-olds in our centre will be able to access 15 hours of 'preschool' in their two years before school. There are some slight differences according to age, most notably that 4-year-old children have the option of allocating their 15 hours to a Government kindergarten while simultaneously attending a long day care setting like ours.