

Fees and Refund Policy for Private Early Childhood Centres in Dubai

March 2026



Purpose

This policy outlines guidelines governing child registration, re-registration, withdrawal, transfer, and refunds for early childhood centres (ECCs) licensed by KHDA in Dubai. ECCs provide both care and education services to children from birth to age six (up to Year 1/KG2).

Scope

This policy applies to all KHDA-licensed early childhood centres in Dubai and governs interactions with parents and ECCs regarding programme fee payments, transfers, withdrawals, and refunds. It applies to all children enrolled at a licensed ECC regardless of age group or attendance model.

Birth–6 years:

Provision for children aged 0 to 6 includes care and early education. Flexible attendance models, including full-time, part-time, sessional/seasonal, hourly, drop-in, and package-based arrangements, are permitted and must be clearly set out in the parent contract. Fee structures shall follow the general provisions of this policy and may be organised on a termly, monthly, or other agreed basis at enrolment.

General Definitions

Term	Definition
KHDA	Knowledge and Human Development Authority
ECC	Early Childhood Centre — a KHDA-licensed facility providing care and/or education to children from birth up to the age of six (up to Year 1/KG2).
Application fees	A fee charged to process the application of new students (FS1/Pre-KG and FS2-K/KG1). This fee includes standard assessment fees and is not part of the programme fees.
Registration deposit	A deposit paid by parents to confirm a new child's enrolment.

Re-registration deposit	A deposit paid by parents to guarantee their child's place for the following programme year.
Programme fees	Knowledge and Human Development Authority
Mandatory services fees	Early Childhood Centre — a KHDA-licensed facility providing care and/or education to children from birth up to the age of six (up to Year 1/KG2).
Optional services fees	A fee charged to process the application of new students (FS1/Pre-KG and FS2-K/KG1). This fee includes standard assessment fees and is not part of the programme fees.
Service period	A deposit paid by parents to confirm a new child's enrolment.
Programme year	A deposit paid by parents to guarantee their child's place for the following programme year.
Attendance model	Knowledge and Human Development Authority
Withdrawal Certificate	Early Childhood Centre — a KHDA-licensed facility providing care and/or education to children from birth up to the age of six (up to Year 1/KG2).
Transfer Certificate	A fee charged to process the application of new students (FS1/Pre-KG and FS2-K/KG1). This fee includes standard assessment fees and is not part of the programme fees.
Distance Learning	A deposit paid by parents to confirm a new child's enrolment.
Government-enforced closure	A deposit paid by parents to guarantee their child's place for the following programme year.

Fee Structure for Early Childhood Centres

ECCs operate under a range of attendance and fee models. This policy does not prescribe a specific fee structure but establishes a regulated framework within which ECCs may define their own models. All fee structures must be clearly disclosed to parents in writing before enrolment and must be clearly outlined in the Parent-Early Childhood Centre Contract.

Attendance and fee models:

ECCs may adopt any of the following models or a combination thereof, subject to KHDA approval of the ECC's fees:

- Full-time: a fixed weekly or monthly/by term programme fee covering a standard full day of care and education.
- Part-time: a fee based on a set number of days or sessions per week.
- Sessional/seasonal: a fee based on morning or afternoon sessions or during term/semester breaks only.
- Hourly or drop-in: an hourly or casual attendance fee, applicable primarily for services for children aged 0–3, where flexibility is required.
- Package-based: a bundled fee for a defined block of hours, days, or weeks agreed in advance.

ECCs must clearly document the agreed attendance model and fee structure in the parent contract before the child begins attending. Any changes to the agreed model must be documented and acknowledged by both parties.

Fee collection cycles:

ECCs may collect tuition fees on any of the following cycles, as agreed in the parent contract:

- Termly (minimum three service periods per year, aligned with school breaks)
- Monthly (fees are divided equally across the programme year or charged monthly in arrears or advance as agreed)
- Weekly
- Custom schedule (any other billing arrangement agreed in writing between the ECC and the parent at enrolment)

Transparency requirements for optional services:

Where an ECC offers optional services in addition to the core programme, the following requirements apply:

- The nature, scope, and cost of each optional service must be clearly described in writing before the parent agrees to take it up.
- Optional services include, but are not limited to, meals and nutrition programmes, extended hours, transportation, enrichment programmes, and holiday or seasonal programmes.
- The refund terms and conditions for each optional service must be clearly outlined in the parent contract.
- If an ECC does not provide written refund terms for an optional service, the unused portion of the fee must be refunded to the parent upon withdrawal.

Registration and Re-registration Procedures and Conditions

In addition to the terms of the Parent-ECC Contract, all KHDA-licensed early childhood centres in Dubai must adhere to the following regulations governing child registration and re-registration.

Application fee for structured academic-year provision

- For children applying to a structured academic-year programme like FS1 (Pre-KG) and FS2 (KG1), an ECC may charge an application fee of up to AED 500 to process a new child's application, including standard assessments where applicable.
- The application fee is refundable if the child is not offered a place.
- The application fee is non-refundable if the ECC makes a formal offer of a place and the parent chooses not to accept it.
- The application fee is not deductible from programme fees.
- For children enrolled under other ECC attendance models, including provision for younger children and flexible enrolment arrangements, no separate application fee may be charged unless otherwise approved by KHDA.

Registration deposit:

- ECCs may ask parents to pay a deposit to confirm a new child's enrolment.
- This registration deposit must only be requested after a formal offer of enrolment has been made, and the parent has accepted it. ECCs may not request any deposit before a formal offer has been issued.
- The registration deposit cannot be more than 10% of the annual programme fees.
- The registration deposit is deductible from the programme fees for the service period of enrolment. It is not an additional cost — it is an advance payment that is offset against fees once the child starts.
- ECCs can register new children at any time during the programme year.
- New ECCs must have KHDA approval prior to registering children.
- For any child who was previously enrolled at a KHDA-licensed ECC or school offering provision for under six-year-olds, a valid Transfer Certificate or Withdrawal Certificate must be submitted as part of the registration process before enrolment is confirmed.
- If a new child enrolls during the programme year, the ECC may charge programme fees from the beginning of the month of enrolment.

If the parent accepts the offer and the child enrolls:

- The registration deposit is credited towards the programme fees for the service period of enrolment. No additional payment is required in relation to the deposit.

If the parent accepts the offer but subsequently decides not to proceed with enrolment:

- **For children following a structured academic year programme, i.e. FS1 (Pre-KG) and FS2 (KG1):** the registration deposit is refundable if the parent formally notifies the ECC of their intention to withdraw their child at least 60 calendar days before the child's start date. If notification is given within 60 calendar days of the start date, the deposit becomes non-refundable.
- **For children on flexible enrolment:** the refund terms for the deposit are determined by the terms outlined in the individual Parent-ECC Contract, which the ECC must clearly communicate to the parent before enrolment is confirmed.

If the parent does not accept the offer:

- No deposit is payable.

Re-registration deposit:

- ECCs may ask parents to pay a re-registration deposit to guarantee their child's place for the following programme year.
- This re-registration deposit cannot be more than 5% of the annual programme fees or AED 500, whichever is greater.
- The re-registration deposit is deductible from the programme fees for the service period of enrolment in the following programme year.
- The ECC may not ask for payment of any additional fees or deposits beyond the re-registration deposit to secure a child's place.
- The ECC may open re-registration at any time during the programme year.
- ECCs must obtain KHDA approval before refusing to re-register a child for the next programme year.

If the parent pays the re-registration deposit but subsequently decides not to proceed with re-enrolment:

- **For children following a structured academic year programme, i.e. FS1 (Pre-KG) and FS2 (KG1):** the re-registration deposit is refundable if the parent formally notifies the ECC of their intention to withdraw their child no later than 60 calendar days before the start of the following programme year. If notification is given within 60 calendar days of the start of the following programme year, the deposit becomes non-refundable.
- **For children on flexible enrolment:** the refund terms for the re-registration deposit are determined by the terms outlined in the individual Parent-ECC Contract, which the ECC must clearly communicate to the parent before collecting the deposit.

If the parent does not pay the re-registration deposit by the stated deadline:

- The ECC may not guarantee the child's place for the following programme year.
- If the re-registration deposit was not paid by the stated deadline and the child does not enrol in the following programme year, the ECC may not seek payment of that deposit at a later date.

Withdrawal Certificate

- Parents have the right to withdraw their child from an ECC at any time during the service period, but the withdrawal must follow the ECC's formal process.
- To initiate a withdrawal, the parent must submit a formal written request to the ECC, specifying the intended withdrawal date. This date cannot be backdated.
- The parent is responsible for all fees up to the withdrawal date. Upon full settlement of all outstanding fees, the ECC must issue a Withdrawal Certificate confirming the child's details, dates of enrolment and withdrawal, and that all financial obligations have been fulfilled.
- The ECC is entitled to withhold the Withdrawal Certificate until all outstanding fees have been paid in full. The ECC may not withhold the Withdrawal Certificate once all fees have been settled.
- The Withdrawal Certificate is required for a child to register at any other KHDA-licensed ECC or private school in Dubai. Without it, a child may not be accepted by any licensed provider.
- The Withdrawal Certificate may also be accepted by a new provider in place of a Transfer Certificate where applicable.
- Any fee disputes should be referred to KHDA through its official complaints channels.
- No additional fees may be charged for processing a Withdrawal Certificate beyond the approved fee, which for ECCs currently incurs no charge until KHDA notifies ECCs otherwise.

Important: A child's absence from the ECC does not constitute withdrawal and does not trigger a refund. Being listed on the ECC's enrolment register is considered active enrolment, regardless of attendance. Parents must complete and submit a withdrawal request at the earliest opportunity to avoid additional fee liability.

Outstanding Fees and Transfer Certificate

Before or at the time a child completes their enrolment period or transfers out of the ECC, the parent or legal guardian must settle all outstanding fees in full, including any programme fees, mandatory services fees, or other approved charges that remain unpaid.

- The ECC is entitled to withhold the Transfer Certificate until all outstanding fees have been settled in full.
- A Transfer Certificate is required for any child transferring between any permitted ECC in Dubai and must be submitted to the receiving ECC/school before enrolment is confirmed.
- Where a formal withdrawal process has been completed, the receiving ECC/school may accept a Withdrawal Certificate instead of a Transfer Certificate.
- No additional fees may be charged for processing a Transfer Certificate beyond the approved fee, which for ECCs currently incurs no charge until KHDA notifies ECCs otherwise.

Non-payment of Fees

Parents are responsible for paying programme fees, mandatory services fees, and any other KHDA-approved charges in line with the payment schedule set out in the Parent-ECC Contract.

Where fees remain unpaid after the due date, the ECC must manage the matter directly with the parent or legal guardian. The matter must be handled sensitively, professionally, and in a way that protects the child's dignity, wellbeing, safety and access to care and education.

If there is any inconsistency between this section and the Parent-ECC Contract, the provision of this section shall apply.

Required communication steps

Written reminders and final notices must be issued by email to the parent or legal guardian using the contact details held in the ECC's official records. Direct follow-up contact may be made by phone or through another agreed ECC communication channel.

No formal consequence may be applied for unpaid fees until at least 30 calendar days have passed from the original payment due date and the required communication steps below have been completed and documented. For the purposes of this section, a formal consequence includes withholding the Withdrawal Certificate or Transfer Certificate, not re-

registering the child for the following programme year, or restricting the child's attendance.

The ECC may apply a formal consequence only if it is clearly stated in the Parent-ECC Contract and aligns with KHDA requirements. Any decision not to re-register a child requires KHDA approval.

Before applying any formal consequence for unpaid fees, the ECC must complete and document the following steps:

1. Issue a first written reminder to the parent after the payment due date has passed
2. Issue a second written reminder if payment remains outstanding
3. Make direct follow-up contact with the parent
4. Offer the parent an opportunity to meet with the ECC to discuss the outstanding fees
5. In case the parent is unable to pay in full immediately, consider a reasonable payment plan in writing, clearly stating the amount outstanding, the payment dates, and the action that may be taken if the payment plan is not followed
6. Issue a final written notice before any formal consequence is applied.

The final written notice must clearly state the outstanding amount, the actions already taken by the ECC, the proposed next step, the date on which that step may take effect, and the parents' option to contact the ECC or refer the matter to KHDA.

Where a payment plan has been agreed, and the parent is making payments in accordance with that plan, the ECC may not apply any formal consequence in relation to the outstanding amount covered by the payment plan.

All communication must be addressed to the parent or legal guardian only. ECCs must not communicate fee-related concerns through the child, in front of the child/class, or in any manner that could embarrass, stigmatise, isolate, or distress the child.

Formal consequences for unpaid fees

Where fees remain unpaid after the required communication steps have been completed and documented, and at least 30 calendar days have passed from the original payment due date, the ECC may take proportionate action in line with the Parent-ECC Contract and KHDA requirements. This may include withholding the Withdrawal Certificate or Transfer Certificate until all outstanding approved fees are paid, not re-registering the child for the following programme year (subject to KHDA approval), or referring the matter to KHDA.

Where fees remain unpaid at the end of a service period or programme year, or where an agreed payment plan has not been followed, the ECC may withhold end-of-period or end-of-year reports, progress records, certificates, or other formal records until all outstanding approved fees are paid, ensuring this is clearly stated in the Parent-ECC Contract and in line with this Policy and KHDA requirements. This does not apply where a payment plan has been agreed and the parent is making payments in line with that plan.

During the communication and resolution process, the child must continue to access care and education as normal and must not be refused entry, isolated, embarrassed, distressed, or treated differently because of unpaid fees.

Where the parent does not respond to the ECC's reminders, does not acknowledge the outstanding fees, or does not engage with the ECC to resolve the matter, the ECC must retain evidence of all communication attempts before applying any formal consequence.

Any restriction to a child's attendance due to unpaid fees must be applied only as a last resort, after the required communication steps have been completed and documented, and in line with the Parent-ECC Contract and KHDA requirements. The parent must receive final written notice before this action is taken.

Where a matter remains unresolved after the ECC's internal process has been completed, either party may refer the case to KHDA through its official channels.

A child's absence from the ECC does not constitute withdrawal and does not trigger a refund. Refund calculations remain based on the withdrawal date recorded on the Withdrawal Certificate, in line with relevant sections of this Policy.

Tuition Fees Refund

Tuition fee refunds are calculated based on the withdrawal date, which is the date specified and documented by the parent in the official withdrawal request to the ECC. The withdrawal date recorded on the Withdrawal Certificate is the same as the date specified by the parent in their withdrawal request. The amount refunded reflects only the portion of the fees paid for the period after that date.

For children following a structured academic year programme (FS1 and FS2 or equivalent):

- Tuition fees paid before the start of the programme year are refundable, except for the registration or re-registration deposit, which is subject to the refund conditions outlined in the Registration and Re-registration section of this policy.
- The refund is calculated on a term-by-term basis from the withdrawal date recorded on the Withdrawal Certificate.
- If the student was enrolled in the term for two weeks or less, a month's fees will be deducted.
- If the student was enrolled in the term for a period between two weeks and one month, two months' fees will be deducted.
- If the student was enrolled in the term for more than one month, the full term's fees will be deducted.

For children on flexible enrolment:

- The unused portion of the paid period from the withdrawal date is refunded on a prorated basis, calculated from the withdrawal date recorded on the Withdrawal Certificate.
- For drop-in or hourly attendance, fees are only charged for sessions booked in advance. Sessions that were not attended and were not cancelled in accordance with the ECC's notice requirements are not eligible for a refund.
- The specific refund terms for flexible enrolment are determined by the terms set out in the individual Parent-ECC Contract, which the ECC must clearly communicate to the parent before enrolment is confirmed.

Service Continuity and Fee Obligations

Voluntary suspension of service:

Where an ECC temporarily suspends or reduces its services for reasons within its own control, the following apply:

- The ECC must notify parents in writing as soon as the decision is made and approved by KHDA, stating the reason and expected duration.
- Programme fees remain payable for any period during which the service was available and provided, including when the service is provided through distance learning or any other alternative method deemed appropriate and approved by KHDA.
- Where an ECC closes a room, class, or the entire centre for five consecutive days or fewer due to documented health, safety, or safeguarding reasons, including the management of an infectious disease outbreak, no compensation is required for that period. The ECC must notify parents in writing of the reason and expected duration as soon as practicable.
- Where such a closure extends beyond five consecutive days, or where services are otherwise not provided, the centre must compensate the parent. This can be through a fee credit, additional sessions upon resumption, or a prorated refund for the undelivered period. The chosen remedy must be agreed in writing between the ECC and the parent.

Circumstances beyond the control of either party (parents and ECCs):

This sub-section applies where the delivery of services is fully or partially interrupted due to government-enforced closure.

- Programme fees remain payable for any period during which the service was available and delivered, including when the service is provided through distance learning or any other alternative method deemed appropriate and approved by KHDA.
- The ECC retains all fees corresponding to the period during which the service was available and provided. These fees are considered earned and are not subject to refund.
- Fees corresponding to the period from the date when the service could no longer be provided are held on behalf of the parent and must be addressed through one of the following remedies, agreed in writing between the ECC and the parent:

- **Credit note:** The ECC issues a formal credit note for the held amount, to be applied against future programme fees, provided the child remains enrolled at the same ECC when services resume. The credit note is valid for six months from the date of issuance. If it is not used within that period, it shall expire.
- **Transfer of credit:** If the family has or plans to enrol another child at the same ECC, the held amount may be transferred and applied towards that child's programme fees. The transferred credit must be used within six months from the date of the written agreement, after which it shall expire.
- **Full refund:** The held amount is returned to the parent in full, covering the period during which the service could not be provided.

Optional Services Refund

- The refund policy for optional services shall remain between the ECC or third-party provider and the parent, subject to the terms and conditions agreed upon at the time of enrolment in those services.
- If an ECC fails to provide written refund terms for an optional service, the unused portion of those fees must be refunded upon withdrawal.
- Optional service fees paid before the start of the programme year are refundable, provided that no binding third-party contract is in place.

Disputes and Escalation to KHDA

- ECCs are expected to resolve any programme fee, refund, or withdrawal disputes with parents through their internal complaints process.
- It is a requirement that all internal resolution steps have been completed and documented before a matter is referred to KHDA.
- If a dispute remains unresolved after the ECC's internal process, either party may refer the matter to KHDA through its official channels.
- KHDA will address disputes on a case-by-case basis and may request documentary evidence from either or both parties as part of its review, including the signed parent-ECC contract.