

Flying Start Partners Webinar - 19 June 2026

Q & A Summary

Addressing Workforce Challenges

Q: In regional areas, where recruiting and retaining an Early Childhood Teacher (ECT) can be more challenging, how can a service continue to deliver the Flying Start preschool program if they are unable to secure an ECT?

A: The Office for Early Childhood Development (OECD) recognises that ECT workforce availability can be particularly challenging in some regional areas.

A range of workforce initiatives are in place to support services, including incentives to attract qualified teachers into early childhood settings, pathways to upskill existing educators, and programs that encourage school leavers and career changers to undertake early childhood teaching qualifications.

[Access](#) more information about workforce support opportunities.

Where a service does not have an ECT or a teacher holding a current ECT SAT in place, they are unable to deliver the Flying Start preschool program and need to notify OECD. Services experiencing workforce challenges are encouraged to contact their local team to discuss their circumstances and explore available support options.

Teacher Qualifications and Delivery

Q: Can a diploma-qualified educator deliver the Flying Start preschool program while they are studying towards an early childhood teaching degree?

A: Yes, a diploma-qualified educator may deliver the Flying Start preschool program while studying towards an early childhood teaching degree, if they hold a current



Special Authority to Teach as an Early Childhood Teacher (ECT SAT) approved by the Teachers Registration Board of South Australia. In these circumstances, services must confirm with the OECD Local Teams that there is another registered ECT available to coach and support programming and practice during this time.

Q: If a service has an ECT vacancy and follows its usual recruitment process to appoint a replacement, does the service need to notify the OECD if there will be no interruption to preschool program delivery between the current teacher leaving and the new teacher commencing?

A: No, the service is not required to notify the OECD if there will be no interruption to preschool program delivery.

Managing Teacher Absences and Maintaining Funding

Q: How does the 60-day rule apply if an ECT takes sick leave intermittently throughout the year? For example, if an ECT takes an extended period of sick leave, returns to work, and then takes further sick leave, do all periods of absence count towards the 60-day limit?

A: The 60-day limit is cumulative over a 12-month (calendar year) period. If an ECT's total absences without alternative backfill exceed 60 days, Flying Start funding may be paused.

The OECD will work closely with the service to minimise disruption and support the service to determine arrangements for a replacement ECT.

Services are encouraged to notify the OECD as early as possible if an ECT is expected to be absent for an extended period so that available support options can be discussed.

Q: If an ECT is replaced by another ECT, including a relief ECT, does this count towards the 60-day absence limit within a 12-month period?



A: No. The 60-day limit only applies when the preschool program is unable to be delivered by a qualified ECT.

If the program continues to be delivered by another ECT, including a relief ECT, or by a teacher holding a current ECT SAT, these days do not count towards the 60-day limit.

Transferring Between Flying Start Services

Q: If a family is participating in Flying Start 3-year-old preschool at a non-government early childhood education and care service commencing in Term 3 2026, can they later transfer to another non-government early childhood education and care service in 2027?

A: Yes. Families can choose which non-government Flying Start service their child attends and may change to another non-government Flying Start service if they wish. They are not required to stay with the same non-government service for the full duration of the program across either year group.

Communicating with Families About the Value of Play-Based Learning

Q: If a service has families who perceive that a more structured, school-like approach is the best preparation for school, how can educators explain the benefits of play-based learning?

A: Play-based learning is strongly supported by research as the most effective way to build the key skills children need to be ready to thrive at school and in life.

Services can help families understand that children develop important foundations for literacy, numeracy, communication, problem-solving, self-regulation and social skills through purposeful, teacher-led play-based learning.



A helpful approach is to share practical examples of how play supports learning and development within the service, while also drawing on the evidence that underpins high-quality early childhood education.

The Flying Start communications and family resources can also support these conversations by highlighting the value of teacher-led, play-based learning and its role in supporting children's development, wellbeing and school readiness.

Communicating the Value of Qualified Early Childhood Teachers and Educators

Q: If a service is finding it challenging to explain the difference between a diploma-led program and a teacher-led preschool program, how can this be communicated in a way that recognises and values the contribution of both?

A: Both teachers and educators play an important role in supporting children's learning, development and wellbeing, regardless of their qualification level.

The introduction of a teacher-led preschool program is not intended to diminish the valuable contribution of diploma-qualified educators, whose knowledge, experience and relationships with children and families remain essential to high-quality early childhood education.

A teacher-led preschool program brings the additional expertise of a qualified ECT, who is trained to lead curriculum planning, assessment and intentional teaching to support children's learning and development. This expertise complements, rather than replaces, the important work of diploma-qualified educators.

Services are encouraged to take a team-based approach, recognising the strengths and contributions of all staff.

For educators who wish to further their qualifications, a range of pathways and incentives may be available to support upskilling.



Equally, educators who choose to remain diploma-qualified continue to make a meaningful and valued contribution to children's outcomes.

