



Department of Education and
Early Childhood Development

Welcome to Primary School

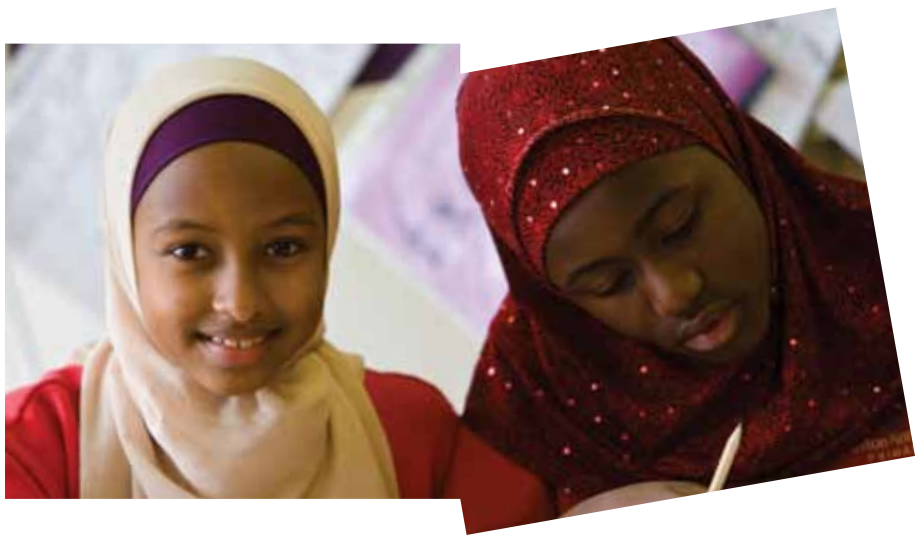
A Parent's Guide to Victorian
Government Primary Schools



Every
child,
every
opportunity



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School term dates

2011

Term 1:

4 February (students start) to 8 April -
teachers begin Term 1 on 1 February

Term 2*:

27 April to 1 July **

Term 3:

18 July to 23 September

Term 4:

10 October to 22 December

* (25 April is Easter Monday - a public holiday -
as well as ANZAC Day. 26 April is a public holiday
in lieu of ANZAC Day)

**Please note that schools are able to set a
student free day in either Term 2 or Term 3.

2012

Term 1:

6 February (students start) to 30 March -
teachers begin Term 1 on 1 February

Term 2:

16 April to 29 June*

Term 3:

16 July to 21 September

Term 4:

8 October to 21 December

*Please note that schools are able to set a student
free day in either Term 2 or Term 3.

2013

Term 1:

1 February (students start) to 28 March -
teachers begin Term 1 on 29 January

Term 2:

15 April to 28 June*

Term 3:

15 July to 20 September

Term 4:

7 October to 20 December

*Please note that schools are able to set a student
free day in either Term 2 or Term 3.

No stamp required
if posted in Australia



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Welcome to Primary School Parent Feedback

By taking part in this brief survey, you can help us improve the information included in future guides. After completing the survey, please tear off this page and post it back.

Alternatively, you can email your feedback to:
parenthandbook@edumail.vic.gov.au

Thank you for your help.

Did this guide provide you with all the information you require?

Yes No

Was the information easy to find?

Yes No

What other information would you like to see included?

How did you receive this guide?

Do you use the internet to find out about education and early childhood services in Victoria?

Yes No

Would you be interested in receiving information about early childhood services or Victorian government secondary schools?

Yes No

If yes, please provide your postal address.

The size of this guide is right for this sort of information (please circle): **Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly disagree**

The guide has the right balance of pictures and text (please circle): **Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly disagree**

Any other comments?

Parent Update

The Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development produces a free email newsletter – *Parent Update* – to keep you in touch with the latest news, events, initiatives and changes to education and early childhood development in Victoria.

Subscribe to *Parent Update* online now by visiting www.education.vic.gov.au/parentupdate/



tear along here

Message from the Ministers

Victorian government schools are giving every child, every opportunity to shine. Today's schools and early years services are centres of excellence in learning, connecting students, teachers and the community to the world's knowledge.

With new facilities, and excellent principals and teachers adopting 21st-century learning techniques, we're in the business of transforming education. National data shows that Victorian students, across all year levels, are among the best performers in Australia in reading, writing and numeracy, as well as grammar and punctuation.

We are also making the move from kindergarten to school as smooth and positive as possible for Victorian children. Our transition-to-school initiatives, including a Transition Learning and Development Statement created for each child starting school, are equipping parents and teachers with the information they need to ensure that children get the tailored support they need.

We recognise that children are more likely to do well at school when parents are involved, and that parents play a vital role in their child's learning. That's why we encourage parents to become partners with schools and early years services, and why the Victorian government school system is open and accountable to parents.

Parents are kept up-to-date about their child's individual strengths and interests, and annual school reporting shows how students and the school measure up against others in the state.

The Victorian Government is dedicated to ensuring Victorian children get the most out of school and early years services so that every child gets the best possible start to life. All children will be given the support they need to reach their full potential.

There is no better time to enrol at a Victorian government school. We wish you and your family well as you begin this exciting new journey together.



Bronwyn Pike

Hon Bronwyn Pike MP
Minister for Education



Maxine Morand

Hon Maxine Morand MP
Minister for Children and
Early Childhood Development

Introduction

Every child, every opportunity

Congratulations on choosing a Victorian government school for your child. Our world class schools offer opportunity, choice, cultural diversity, life skills and, most importantly, a great education for every child.

Starting school is a major milestone for you and your child and the start of a new phase of life for you both.

This guide will help make your child's move from kindergarten and other early childhood services to primary school as smooth and enjoyable as possible.

Your child's first years of school will be exciting and engaging and this guide will help you and your child make the most of the experience. There are handy hints and tips about your child's school journey that are based on suggestions from other families who, like you, want the best for their children.



Victorian government schools recognise and value the contribution you and your family make to your child's education and this guide explains how you can stay informed and become involved in your child's education. Victorian government schools are part of a strong and vibrant education system that ensures every child has the opportunity to thrive, learn, grow and shine.

This guide has advice about the extra support available to you and your family, if required, so that your child can get the best out of school. Families with additional needs can access a range of support. The differing types of financial assistance available for parents and children are also explained, including the School Start Bonus and the Education Maintenance Allowance.

Victorian government schools are centres for their local communities. Principals, teachers, staff and school councillors make every effort to connect with their community members.

Your child and family are very important new members of the school community – welcome to school!





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Getting ready for school

Research shows children learn and develop more in their first eight years of life than at any other time.

Positive relationships and experiences in these years are the building blocks that support health, learning, development and wellbeing at school and beyond.

Early Childhood Services

Most children in Victoria will have attended a kindergarten program in the year before they start primary school. This might have been in a sessional kindergarten or in an integrated service or child care centre; or your child could have attended a family day care program or a play group.

Participating in an early childhood service supports and encourages your child's learning and development by:

- providing an environment to explore, discover and learn about their world
- encouraging their natural curiosity and supporting their learning
- understanding their own emotions and those of others
- helping them to get along with other people
- helping them to establish friendships with children of their own age and relationships with other adults
- learning to share and care for materials and equipment that belong to a group
- encouraging them to take responsibility for their own wellbeing – such as using the toilet on their own and dressing themselves.

Choosing a primary school

School is compulsory for all Victorian children aged between six and 17 (up to 17th birthday). The school year runs from late January/early February to December.

Primary school is from grade Prep (preparatory year) to grade six. To start Prep, your child should be five years old by 30 April. More than 66,000 Victorian children started Prep in 2010!

Victoria has 1159 government primary schools, 381 Catholic schools and 43 independent schools (non-denominational or other religions).

All schools within the government, or state school system, must adhere to statewide standards in key areas such as literacy, numeracy, the arts, health and physical education.

Some government schools offer bilingual immersion programs in languages such as Chinese, Japanese, French and Auslan (language for the hearing impaired). Some schools offer alternative curriculum options as well as the mainstream curriculum. For example, some schools have a strong environmental focus, while others focus on providing intensive English language teaching to new arrivals. There are currently 97 specialist schools for students with special needs and disabilities.

There are also over 114 specially accredited Victorian government schools able to accept international students. For more information about applications and fees, visit www.study.vic.gov.au

So it makes sense to do some research in the year before your child starts school. Ask people you know about where they send their children, and even visit some schools yourself.

Where to go?

Most children attend primary school close to home.

Government schools have an obligation to accept any student who lives in their neighbourhood.

If you wish to send your child to a school in a different area, you need to contact that school directly.

To find a school, visit the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development's *Find a School* website:

www.education.vic.gov.au/findaservice

The *My School* website also enables you to search the profiles of almost 10,000 Australian schools. Information on the site has been provided by individual schools and education authorities.

For more information, visit **www.myschool.edu.au**

Transition-to-school programs

It's a great idea to attend transition-to-school programs at your child's new school in the year before they start Prep.

These programs help you and your child get a better understanding of what school will be like. Most importantly, they allow families to start getting to know school staff, other families and children.

For further information about transition-to-school programs, contact the school your child is enrolled in or your child's early childhood service.

Early childhood opportunities for Koorie children

Koorie Early Childhood Field Officers and Koorie Preschool Assistants provide extra support to Koorie children to participate in kindergarten, and to ensure a culturally rich experience for them. They can help with advice about the move to school. You can find out more about support for Koorie children on page 20 of this guide.

There are many things you can do to help your child look forward to starting school:

- ask your child what they think about school
- encourage questions about going to school
- encourage your child to do things on their own, such as dressing, washing their hands, going to the toilet, unwrapping their food, and opening their drink bottle
- talk to friends and other families about what school is like
- talk to the school about how you can be involved
- talk to your child's early childhood educator about things you can do at home to help your child's learning and development
- help your child stay healthy – have regular health and dental checks and keep immunisations up-to-date.



Transition Learning and Development Statement

A child's transition to school is usually more successful when there are strong community relationships and shared information between early childhood services, such as kindergartens and local schools.

Before your child starts school, you and your school will receive a Transition Learning and Development Statement.

It provides information on your child's learning and development, and strengths and interests, in early childhood.

The information in the Statement helps Prep teachers to get to know the children entering their classes before they start; and to plan for each child's learning and development when they start school.

You will be asked to tell the school more about your child and give your perspective by completing Part 1 of the Statement – the family.

If your child has a disability or developmental delay and receives assistance from the Kindergarten Inclusion Support Service, your child will have a Transition Learning and Development Statement that includes an additional Part 1A.

Further information is available in *Sharing our Journey: The Transition from Kindergarten to School Kit*. It provides information sheets for families and a plan outlining actions to support your child's move from kindergarten to school.

For more information, visit www.education.vic.gov.au/earlychildhood/transition

Victorian Student Number

The Victorian Student Number (VSN) is a student identification number that is assigned by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development to all students in government and non-government schools at the time of their initial enrolment in a Victorian school. The number, which is unique to each student, is used as a key identifier on a student's school records, and will remain with the student throughout his or her education, until reaching the age of 25.

The VSN is included on each student's report card or is available by request from the student's school. Students transferring to a Victorian school from interstate or overseas will be assigned a VSN as part of their enrolment.

Financial assistance

The School Start Bonus helps every family of a child starting Prep or Year 7 at a government or a non-government school. Parents receive a one-off payment of \$300 to help meet the costs of buying school and sporting uniforms, school bags and related equipment. You will be issued with a voucher by the school in which your child is enrolled to attend. This can be redeemed for cash at Australia Post outlets from 10 January 2011 so you have the chance to buy required school items before school starts.

The School Start Bonus is in addition to the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA). This helps eligible families with the costs of sending their children to school. If you have a child under 16, receive an eligible Centrelink benefit and hold a Health Care Card or pension card, you may be eligible to receive the EMA. This allowance is split between the parent and the school, and is paid in two installments – from March and from August/September.

The parent portion can be paid directly into your bank account or by cheque and is often used to help with the costs of uniforms and excursions. The school uses its portion for expenses such as textbooks, stationery and special programs for your child.

The Education Tax Refund is a Commonwealth Government tax refund to help with the cost of educating primary and secondary school children. Eligible parents, carers, legal guardians and independent students can be reimbursed for half the cost of items such as computers, educational software, textbooks and stationery.

To apply for EMA, contact your child's school.

For more information about the School Start Bonus and the EMA, visit www.education.vic.gov.au/financialassistance/

For more information about the Education Tax Refund, visit www.educationtaxrefund.gov.au

Parent payments in Victorian government schools

Victorian government schools provide free instruction in the standard curriculum program.

Schools may, however, charge for the materials and services used by students.

School councils are responsible for developing and approving a policy about parent payments at their school, which must comply with the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development's policy and be distributed to parents.

School councils can ask for payment for:

- essential education items that parents are required to provide or to pay the school to provide for their child, for example stationery, textbooks and school uniforms



- optional extras offered on a user-pays basis, for example, school magazines or extracurricular programs or activities
- voluntary financial contributions, for example building and library funds.

For the Department's policy and further information, visit www.education.vic.gov.au/parentpayments/

Children with additional needs

Each child is an individual with unique strengths, abilities, learning styles and needs. Sometimes children with additional needs require extra supports and special learning programs, to help them participate fully in school activities.

If your child has additional needs, you may already be receiving support from an early childhood intervention service or a Preschool Field Officer. They will help you prepare information about your child's developmental needs to give to the school.

This enables the school to start planning programs or arrange support.

You can find out more about support for children with additional needs on pages 22 and 23 of this guide.



Beginning school

Starting school is an important milestone for parents and children and the beginning of a new journey together.

The beginning of the school year

There's a lot you can do to prepare your child – and yourself – for school. The first day of school can be an emotional time for parents and children.

The more you can help your child to become familiar with the layout of the school and what they need to do before day one, the less overwhelmed they are likely to feel.

Before school starts

The summer holidays before the start of the school year are a great time to:

- show your child where the school is and talk about how you will get there
- arrange playtimes with other families whose children will be going to the same school as your child – it helps if your child knows another child at their school
- practise the things your child will need to do to get ready for school (putting things in their bag and remembering to take a hat)
- confirm your before-school, after-school and vacation care arrangements. Show your child where the outside school hours care facilities are, and talk about how they will get there
- be positive about starting school and enjoy your child's excitement
- ask the school what time your school starts on the first day and where to take your child.

The night before school starts

- lay out your child's clothes, shoes and socks
- check your child's timetable to make sure they have the necessary equipment for the day's activities
- establish a sleep routine. You may find your child needs more sleep when they start school. Try to establish a nightly routine with a set bedtime to ensure your child is well rested.

The first day of school

- help your child to pack their school bag with a snack, drink and lunch and a hat. Place a change of clothes with a spare pair of underpants in a plastic bag. Let your child know these clothes are in the bag in case of any accidents
- put sunscreen on your child in the morning if it is needed
- show your child where you will meet them at the end of the school day
- at the end of the day talk to your child about what happened at school.

Dressing for school

- check the weather forecast and be prepared for unexpected changes
- look for easy fasteners when choosing belts, shoes, bags and clothing
- encourage your child to dress themselves so they will be able to manage things like their jumpers and shoes at school.

Looking after belongings

- label all your child's belongings and show your child where these labels have been placed
- check when any special items, such as a library bag or art smock, are needed at school
- note where lost property is held at the school.

Food for energy

- ensure your child has a balanced breakfast before starting the school day
- pack a healthy lunch and snacks and explain when they should be eaten. It's a good idea to have different containers for each of the snacks. Try not to include nuts in school lunches and snacks as many schools have rules about bringing nuts to school
- make sure your child can manage to unwrap any food wrappings.

Avoiding the last-minute rush

- try to leave home with plenty of time to get settled before the school day starts
- make sure you allow time to say goodbye and for your child to join others at play.

Saying goodbye

- at first you might stay a while to ensure that your child feels secure at school
- once your child has settled into school, a short and reassuring goodbye encourages independence
- always tell your child that you are leaving and what the arrangements are for picking them up at the end of the day
- be guided by your child's teacher as to the time to say goodbye.

Going home

- check what time school finishes – during Term 1 some schools have earlier finishing times for Prep children
- arrive in plenty of time to collect your child
- it's a good idea to arrange a meeting place for you and your child, as it can be confusing with so many parents collecting their children.



Notes between home and school

- check your child's school bag with your child each night for newsletters and notes from school
- make sure your child knows when you place a note in their bag and what needs to be done with it
- parents of separated families are encouraged to agree on methods of communication between home and school so the child is not adversely affected.

Home reading and homework program

- establish a quiet time for reading together. For instance, this could be part of the bedtime routine. Early in the year your child's teacher will discuss with you the home reading and homework program
- read with your child in English and/or your home language
- let reading together be a pleasurable activity. Your child's teacher can help you find books that are interesting to your child and match their stage of development.

Travelling to and from school

In some locations, students who live more than 4.8 kilometres from their nearest government school may be eligible for transport support. Some students may also be eligible for the Victorian government conveyance allowance to help with travel costs.

You can find out more by getting in contact with your child's school. Any child enrolled in a special school or special developmental school may be eligible for transport assistance to school. To be eligible, a student must live within the designated transport area for that school.

Walking or riding to school is a great way to get a healthy start to the day. It can also be a good opportunity to teach your child about traffic safety. The Walking School Bus and Ride2School

programs involve groups of children walking or cycling to and from school under the supervision of adult volunteers.

Contact your child's school to find out whether it has a Walking School Bus or Ride2School program. For more information about the Ride2School initiative, visit www.bv.com.au.

For more information about travel support, contact your local school or visit www.education.vic.gov.au/traveltoschool

During the Prep year

- keep in regular contact with your child's teacher. In this way you can discuss activities your child is learning at home, find out how your child is adjusting to school and assist the teacher to find out more about what are your child's interests
- if your child is having difficulty at school, talk to your child's teacher. Also talk to your child about what they think might help them
- keep talking to your child about school – ask them about their new experiences, what they like, and what they find hard
- if your child attends an outside school hours care service, find a way of sharing your child's school progress with the staff
- share feedback about your child's experiences in starting school with the school and early childhood service
- organise time for your child and their new friends to play together outside of school.

You know your child best. If you see signs of anxiety in your child about starting school it's important to talk with them about how they are feeling, to listen and to acknowledge their concerns. This will help to build their self-confidence and lessen any stress they may be experiencing.

Attendance

In Victoria, education is compulsory for children aged between six and 17 years (up to 17th birthday). Once enrolled in primary school, your child is expected to attend school every day of each term. It's important that children develop regular attendance habits at an early age. Children who are regularly absent risk missing out on learning the basic building blocks in subjects, and this can lead to long-term learning difficulties.

For further information, contact your child's school, your Department of Education and Early Childhood Development regional office or visit www.education.vic.gov.au/healthwellbeing/wellbeing/attendance/

What can you do?

- encourage school attendance
- notify your school if your child is absent
- your child should avoid physical activity if absent from school because they are sick. Ask them to stay in bed or on the couch and keep activities low key
- make medical/dental appointments outside of school hours where possible.

Pupil-free days

Schools have four pupil-free days per year for staff professional development, school planning and administration, curriculum development and planning, and student assessment and reporting. In 2011, the first three days in Term 1 will be pupil-free days: Tuesday 1 February to Thursday 3 February 2011.

Students attend school for the first time on Friday 4 February 2011. The fourth pupil-free day will be held by schools in Term 2 or 3, 2011. Your school will let you know the date of their fourth pupil-free day early in the year so that you can make arrangements as necessary.



Outside school hours care program

Many primary schools offer programs for school children outside school hours. These can include before-school care, after-school care and vacation care. Any of these types of care can cater for pupil-free days as well.

The Victorian Government regulates outside school hours services and minimum standards apply. For more information about the requirements for provision of outside school hours care, visit www.education.vic.gov.au/licensedchildservices

You may also be able to obtain the Child Care Benefit (a Commonwealth Government benefit) to assist with payment of fees for outside school hours care.

For more information on the Child Care Benefit, visit www.familyassist.gov.au or call 136 150.



Uniforms and dress codes

Each school council decides whether its school will have a uniform, what the uniform will be and whether wearing it will be compulsory. Students are usually required to wear their school uniform during school hours, while travelling to and from school, and when they are engaged in school activities out of school hours.

Some schools have arrangements with uniform suppliers, or a school shop, where you can buy uniforms. Schools may also sell second-hand uniforms.

The State Schools Relief Committee is a charity organisation that provides assistance to families that need help to purchase school uniforms or appropriate footwear.

You should ask your child's school about how to access this assistance or for more information, visit www.ssr.net.au

Even if the school does not have a uniform it will probably have a written dress code that outlines the expectations of the school around student appearance and may cover things such as grooming, piercings, jewellery, footwear and school bags.

Are your contact details up-to-date?

The safety of all students and staff is paramount. Every Victorian government school has an emergency management plan and, in case of any emergency, it is important that your school has your current contact details. If they need to be updated please contact your school's front office.



IN FOCUS: SCHOOL DESIGN

The 21st-Century classroom

To help ensure all teaching and learning meets the needs of the 21st-century, every Victorian government school is being rebuilt, extended or renovated – the largest school building program in Victoria's history.

Driven by new practices in teaching and learning that build on the recognition of the powerful impact that school design has on how well students perform at school, we are creating flexible learning spaces designed to suit the individual needs of students.

Moe (South Street) Primary School took a collaborative and team approach to building part of its school.

Principal Lawrie Fildes used a range of ideas from staff, parents and students to help create the design for the school.

'My main focus was on creating spaces to encourage and support new teaching practices, but it was important that the people who used the school contributed ideas,' Mr Fildes said.

'The students said they just wanted to be near each other. There's something in that, even if it's related simply to the idea that they need to feel safe and comfortable for a learning environment to work well,' he said.

The new design focuses on connections and openness with the entire redevelopment in one building. It features eight new classrooms surrounding a central hub, library, staff area and entry foyer.

'Most importantly, our teachers and students continue to explore and experiment with the spaces and they're generating new ideas and avenues for our teaching curriculum,' Mr Fildes said.

In the classroom

The Prep classroom

The Prep classroom is an exciting and stimulating place where your child will be challenged and supported. Teachers aim to create a safe and happy environment in which children are valued, praised and encouraged to 'have a go'.

Classrooms are designed to welcome your child, spark their imagination and arouse their thinking. They feature colourful displays of children's learning materials and artwork, books, computers, construction materials and art supplies. Children's work is also displayed.

The curriculum

The Prep curriculum emphasises literacy and numeracy skills, and includes a two-hour daily literacy block and a one-hour daily numeracy block.

Literacy is not just the ability to read and write. It's also the ability to understand and interpret information presented in different ways and in different formats.

Numeracy is not just the ability to do maths in the classroom. It's also about being able to reason with numbers and measures in everyday life.

Students also develop physical, creative, information and communications technology skills as they are encouraged to explore their world and build confidence and resilience.

Your child will sometimes work with the whole class, and at other times be grouped for sessions with children who have similar learning styles and knowledge. As your child develops, they will learn to work independently and collaboratively in small groups.

Australian curriculum

Work is also taking place Australia-wide on the development of a national curriculum. All federal, state and territory governments have committed to the development of a kindergarten to Year 12 national curriculum, initially in the areas of English, mathematics, science and history. The final curriculum in these areas for Prep to Year 10 will be available from 2011 and will be introduced into Victorian schools in 2012.

For more information, visit the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority at www.australiancurriculum.edu.au

Helping your child in the classroom

The Prep year is a significant shift in environment for your child and all school staff are committed to working with you to ensure that your child is supported throughout the year.

To help your child in the classroom:

- share with your child good stories and memories of your own school days
- be positive about school, teachers and learning
- talk about the types of activities they will take part in during the school day
- talk about friendships and how to be a good friend
- take your child to your local library and choose books together
- talk about the letters, words and numbers your child sees when shopping, on television, in books and on computer screens
- encourage your child's curiosity by asking questions and encouraging questions in return
- introduce yourself to the families of other children.

Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework

The Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework describes the key knowledge and skills for children from birth to eight years. It describes how professionals can work with families and other professionals to support children’s learning and development. It links to the standards that apply for all students from Prep to Year 10 in Victorian schools, called the Victorian Essential Learning Standards.

For further information, visit www.education.vic.gov.au/earlylearning/eyldf/

Victorian Essential Learning Standards

The Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS) outline what is essential for all Victorian students to learn during their time at school from Prep to Year 10. They provide a set of common state-wide standards that schools use to plan student learning programs, assess student progress and report to parents.

The Standards cover the discipline-based domains of English (including English as a second language), mathematics, science, humanities, languages other than English (LOTE) and the arts. Within these domains, students learn physical, personal, social and interdisciplinary skills that they can use in school, in their personal lives, in the community and later in the workplace.

The Standards outline the essential knowledge, skills and behaviours students are expected to demonstrate within each domain. From Prep to Year 10 there are six levels of Standards with level 1 associated with the Prep year of schooling.

At levels 1 and 2, children develop foundation knowledge, skills and behaviours in:

- English (reading, writing, speaking and listening)
- mathematics (number, measurement, chance and data, space and working mathematically)
- the arts (creating and making)
- interpersonal development (with an emphasis on social skills)
- health and physical education (movement and physical activity).

Your child’s report card will show a clear picture of your child’s progress during the semester. You will receive a written report twice a year (see page 31). To find out more, visit www.vels.vcaa.vic.edu.au/



Information and communication technology

Children are engaged by new technology and many are confident users of it. Knowing how to use technology helps children with the fundamental skills of reading, writing and mathematics, and also forms part of the skill set children need for life in the 21st-century.

The internet has opened up new spheres of learning and connects students to people, information and places around the world.

Victorian schools are leading the way in digital learning. This takes place in a technology-rich environment using computers and other devices such as digital cameras and a range of online resources and software for learning and teaching. Starting from Prep, schools are integrating Information and communication technology (ICT) into their curriculum in ways that not only increase children's digital literacy, but enhance their ability to create, investigate, collaborate and share knowledge. In some cases, ICT is overcoming barriers of isolation created by living in a remote location or having a disability.

The Victorian Government has invested significantly in providing schools with digital facilities and equipment, including funding for schools to buy new computers. Every government school in Victoria has been upgraded to high-speed, fibre-optic broadband through the Victorian Government's VicSmart initiative. This means that your child will have easy access to the best internet learning materials available worldwide.

You may like to visit www.education.vic.gov.au/child and explore a range of websites with your child.

Ultraset

The Ultraset enables parents to become partners in their child's education, giving you online access to your child's homework, attendance, assessment, curriculum and teacher feedback at any time.

It provides an online space where students, teachers and parents can transfer and exchange information:

- ensuring every child has a complete online record of achievement for all years of schooling
- giving students their own online workspaces, personally tailored education programs, direct feedback from teachers and better access to curriculum materials
- enabling students in remote schools to access specialised curriculum and podcast classes from schools that excel in various subject areas
- giving them the ICT skills they will need in the 21st-century workforce
- reducing schools' administrative burden by allowing teachers to enter attendance data, school reports, timetables and school events
- allowing schools to pool resources and access a vast central database of classroom resources.

If you would like more information about the Ultraset, visit www.education.vic.gov.au/ultraset

If you would like to develop your computer skills, contact your local community centre. For more information about adult community education, visit www.acfe.vic.gov.au or www.shortcourses.vic.gov.au

IN FOCUS: TECHNOLOGY AND LEARNING

Harnessing technology to help students learn

Laburnum Primary School in Blackburn is using their students' love of social media websites such as Club Penguin, MySpace and Facebook to develop and expand their learning.

'We wanted to find a web 2.0 technology that required students to take responsibility and encourage discussion and to get children to reflect, to give and receive feedback', said Joanne Blannin, IT Coordinator.

The school has developed a 'Ning' or online, virtual classroom for Year 5 students to interact and learn online which will meet these objectives.

Outside experts including local authorities, volunteers as well as local secondary school students and teachers were invited to join the classroom to provide a different perspective on the children's work.

For example, one group of students interviewed a local radio host and posted the interview online and asked people to comment on it. The group received a lot of constructive feedback about its work and innovative ways to improve and develop it.

'We set up a social space online because we wanted to see the hidden learning that goes on – the thoughts and reflections as well as the peer feedback which we all know is so powerful,' said Ms Blannin.

The students were responsible for writing their own code of conduct about how to use the space and the rules that govern its use.

The school has also supported students in practising cyber safety by encouraging them to limit the amount of personal information available on the site. For example, the school does not allow students to have portrait photos on the site but uses photos of each student's shoes instead.



Languages other than English

Knowing another language is valuable. As well as opening a door to the culture of other people and places, it can help with English literacy and career opportunities.

Victorian government schools provide high quality language education programs.

The most commonly taught languages are; Chinese (Mandarin), French, German, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese and Auslan (language for the hearing impaired). Other languages include Arabic, Croatian, Greek, Indigenous languages, Khmer, Korean, Macedonian, Maori, Somali, Spanish, Turkish and Vietnamese.

Language programs offered in most government primary schools are decided by the school council. Children in Years 1 to 12 who do not have access to the study of a specific language in their school can attend language programs outside school hours at the Victorian School of Languages (VSL). For more information about the VSL, visit www.vsl.vic.edu.au

In some government schools, Community Languages Schools (CLS) offer languages classes to school-aged children. Parents may enquire at the school to ascertain whether there is a CLS operating.

For more information about Languages other than English visit www.education.vic.gov.au/studentlearning/teachingresources/lote/clsforschools.htm

English as a second language

Many students start school speaking a language other than English at home. A range of services are provided in schools to support students whose first language is not English.

Newly-arrived students requiring support with learning English as a Second Language (ESL) have an entitlement to intensive English language classes and can enrol in English language schools, centres, campuses and outposts in their first 12 months in Australia. Refugee and humanitarian entrants are entitled to a longer period of intensive English language support, if required.

Mainstream schools with significant numbers of ESL students receive funding to provide ESL programs for students who have been attending an Australian school for less than five years. If your child needs ESL support, consider this when choosing a school.

For more information about ESL support, visit www.education.vic.gov.au/studentlearning/programs/esl/eslschools.htm

Special religious instruction

Your child's school may offer special religious instruction in one or more recognised faith-based religions. You can choose whether or not your child takes part in these classes. Attendance is not compulsory.

Classes are taught by accredited instructors who are approved by the Minister for Education.

Prep assessment

During the normal school day activities, teachers may ask your child to perform certain tasks so they can assess their development, particularly in literacy and numeracy. Children are regularly assessed in a range of tasks that are more like fun and games than 'tests' in the early years of school.

Prep entry assessment

When a child starts school they are assessed so that the teacher can design a learning and teaching program that best suits their individual needs. Early in the school year, your child's teacher will request an interview with you to discuss how your child is progressing. You can use this discussion to raise any questions that you may have and it is an opportunity for you to share your thoughts with the teacher on the following:

- your child's kindergarten or child care experiences and what your child has already learnt
- how independent your child is
- how easily your child mixes with children of various ages
- the languages your child speaks and understands
- your child's particular health and medical requirements
- family events that may be affecting your child (for example, births, deaths, separation, divorce or other changes in family circumstances).

English Online Interview

All Victorian government schools assess students in Prep and Years 1 and 2 against the expected VELS English Standards (reading, writing and speaking and listening).

This takes the form of an interview between the teacher and the student, with responses being recorded by the teacher electronically. It's a fun and engaging activity for children and may be undertaken over several sessions. Students are assessed at the beginning and end of Prep, and at the end of Years 1 and 2. The results provide comprehensive information about what students have achieved.

For further information on the English Online Interview, visit www.education.vic.gov.au/studentlearning/teachingresources/english/englishonline.htm

The National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy

The National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) takes place in all government and non-government schools each year.

All students in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 are tested on reading, writing, spelling, grammar, punctuation and numeracy. The results will provide you with information about how your child is progressing through their schooling.

For more information, contact your school or go to www.naplan.edu.au

Support for Koorie students

Schools and teachers are committed to working with you to ensure that your child is supported throughout their schooling journey. Support for Koorie students is available through a number of programs that target the specific needs of children and families.

The Victorian Government is committed to closing the gap between Koorie and non-Koorie students. The Wannik Education Strategy for Koorie students has put in place a higher level of support for individual Koorie students and their families. A key part of the strategy is increased resourcing. A Koorie Education Coordinator and Koorie Engagement Support Officers are available in each region to assist Koorie students, families and schools to work together. In addition, every Koorie student will have an Individual Education Plan.

For more information, contact your school, Department regional office, go to www.education.vic.gov/wannik or contact the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development on 1800 809 834 (freecall).

IN FOCUS: DEVELOPING LITERACY SKILLS

Fostering a love of reading

An innovative partnership between a local bookshop and primary school has helped families and students to develop and celebrate their love of reading.

To encourage their students' interest in books, Wembley Primary School established a book club for Years 5 and 6 students to attend during their lunch break.

To expand the opportunities available to students, the principal made contact with a local bookshop to set up a program where the children and a teacher could visit the bookshop.

'Once a term students and teachers go to the local bookshop so that they can select books, often recommended by the bookshop manager, or the school's literacy consultant, for purchase for the school and classroom libraries', said Stephen Warner, Principal.

The program requires students to read the books at school and home, and write a short, catchy book review onto a card. The students' review are prominently displayed on the shelves of the bookshop for customers to read.

'Parents are encouraged to take their children to the local bookshop to see the children's reviews. It makes a huge difference for parents to see practical examples of their child's learning and it's even more exciting that it's seen by others in the community as well,' said Mr Warner.

The program has engaged many more families in the selection of books and has encouraged the establishment of home libraries and the purchase of suitable and popular books for home and school.

The program has been so successful that it has been extended to Years 3 and 4 students.



Support for students

Government schools are for all children. Diversity among students and their families is recognised and welcomed. Different types of support and individual learning programs are offered to make sure all children can participate in education and achieve their best.

Students with disabilities

The Victorian Government is committed to the delivery of an inclusive education system that ensures all children have access to a high quality education that meets their individual needs.

To improve educational outcomes for students with disabilities, the following strategies are in place:

- providing parents with the choice of learning environments that best develop their child's potential
- supporting children and their families in making the transition from preschool to school, from primary to secondary school, and from school to higher education, training and employment
- involving children and parents in planning decisions through a Student Support Group
- supporting children to access programs that allow them to pursue individual pathways
- ensuring that the expertise of professionals working in mainstream and special schools is maintained and developed through professional learning.



The Program for Students with Disabilities is an additional program for a defined student population with moderate to severe disabilities. The Program for Students with Disabilities supports the education of students with disabilities in Victorian government schools by providing schools with additional resources.

For more information or to access the *Program for Students with Disabilities Handbook*, visit www.education.vic.gov.au/healthwellbeing/wellbeing/disability/handbook/

Student support services

All school staff and teachers are committed to working with you to provide every possible assistance and support for the wellbeing of your child. Student wellbeing staff are available to support students who have additional learning and other needs. These staff may include school nurses, school chaplains, student welfare coordinators and primary welfare officers.

The Student Support Services Program assists children and young people through the provision of specialised support. Student support services staff comprise psychologists, Koorie Engagement Support Officers, guidance officers, speech pathologists, social workers, visiting teachers and other related professionals. These staff are involved in a range of activities, including student and family support, assessment, crisis response, consultation with student wellbeing and other school staff, group work and the facilitation of early intervention programs in schools.

For more information about student support services, contact your school, your Department of Education and Early Childhood Development regional office or visit www.education.vic.gov.au/healthwellbeing/support/ssso.htm

Primary School Nursing Program

The Primary School Nursing Program is a service offered by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development to all children attending primary schools. The aim of the program is to provide all Victorian children the opportunity to have a health assessment in their first year of primary school. Your child's school will give you the School Entrant Health Questionnaire to complete during the first year. You are asked to provide information about your child's health history and any concerns you have about your child's health.



With your consent this information will assist the nurse to undertake a health assessment of your Prep child and to provide you with follow-up information and advice if needed.

For more information about the Primary School Nursing Program, contact your school, your Department of Education and Early Childhood Development regional office or visit www.education.vic.gov.au/healthwellbeing/health/schoolnursing/primschool/



Wellbeing, health and medical information

Children thrive in school when they are healthy and feel happy, confident and secure.

Victorian government schools build positive learning communities where children feel valued and supported.

This section outlines the type of support and programs offered to your child at school.

Student behaviour

Victorian government schools have a duty of care to provide a safe, secure and supportive environment for all children.

All schools will have a Student Engagement Policy in place that covers the rights and responsibilities of all members of the school community, including the principal, staff, students, parents and other members of the school community. The Student Engagement Policy will outline what is expected, including how conflicts and disputes, including bullying, in the school setting will be resolved.

Schools must develop strategies to promote care, respect and tolerance. The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development also has policies and guidelines in place to help schools to implement effective whole-school approaches to the prevention and management of bullying.

Schools have personal development programs to equip children with positive attitudes and values, such as self-confidence, persistence, organisation, 'getting along with others' and resilience.

These attitudes and values are the foundation for academic achievement, sound interpersonal relationships and overall healthy psychological living, as well as the successful transition from school to adult life.

For more information about what schools need to include in their Student Engagement Policy, visit www.education.vic.gov.au/healthwellbeing/wellbeing/engagement/

For more information on the Department's student wellbeing policies, visit www.education.vic.gov.au/healthwellbeing/wellbeing/

Bullying

Discovering that your child is being bullied or that your child is bullying others is very stressful and upsetting. Most parents initially experience anger, confusion and guilt.

The Department's advice for parents is:

- listen carefully to your child and show concern and support
- give considered advice – don't encourage your child to fight back as this will most likely increase the bullying
- assist your child to develop positive strategies, such as saying 'Leave me alone', calmly walking away or avoiding situations that might expose them to further bullying
- ask your child questions to understand if there is a repeated pattern of bullying
- establish what, when, where the incident(s) happened and who was involved
- work with your child's school to solve the problem by establishing a plan for dealing with the current situation and future bullying incidents.

If needed, ask for the wellbeing staff member to become involved. Remember, if you were not aware that your child was being bullied, perhaps your child's teacher(s) did not know about it either.

Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying is direct or indirect bullying using digital technologies such as harassment by mobile phone, sending inappropriate emails or deliberately excluding someone from social networking spaces.

Students are encouraged to report cyberbullying to their teacher and parents.

Help your child to be cyber-aware by ensuring they protect their internet password. It is also a good idea to know what websites your child is accessing and bookmark them.

It's best to have a shared computer in a living area, rather than in your child's bedroom.

For more useful strategies, visit
www.education.vic.gov.au/healthwellbeing/safety/bullying/cyber/



Buddy system

Many schools set up 'buddy' systems for Prep children with older students to ensure a stimulating and welcoming experience from the very beginning of school. The benefits are twofold, as the older children learn to take on responsibility, while the younger children know that they have a fellow student they can confidently turn to for support.

Health

Physical education and school sport

Government schools promote healthy lifestyles through physical education and sport, which are timetabled for all students from Prep to Year 10.

Research confirms that physical activity and fitness enhance students' mental and social development.

Physical education and school sport also develop students' sense of fair play, self-confidence and the capacity for teamwork.

School sport provides important connections into community sporting organisations that foster lifelong participation in healthy community physical activities.

Swimming and athletics, Australian Rules football, soccer, netball, softball, golf and cricket are just some of the sports offered at school in a range of representative levels, including regional, state and national.

The achievements of our young sports stars are honoured with the prestigious annual Victorian School Sports Awards.

Healthy eating

Healthy eating has a long-lasting and positive impact on a child's growth, development and health.

The food your child eats at school is a major influence on their eating habits, growth, energy, concentration levels and ability to learn.

The 'Go for your life' Healthy Canteen Kit helps schools to offer healthy foods, and encourages students to value healthy eating.

You have an important role to play in helping to ensure your child eats well and stays active.

Healthy school lunch ideas include:

- sandwiches or pita bread with cheese, lean meat, or salad
- cheese slices, dry biscuits with spread, and fresh fruit
- washed and cut-up raw vegetables or fresh fruits
- a frozen water bottle, particularly in hot weather, or Tetra Pak of reduced fat milk.

Highly processed, sugary, fatty and salty foods should make up only a very small part of your child's diet. Foods to limit in school lunches include:

- processed meats such as salami, pressed chicken and strasbourg
- chips, sweet biscuits, muesli and breakfast bars
- fruit bars and straps.

Cordials, juices containing sugar, and soft drinks encourage tooth decay and are not recommended.

The 'Go for your life' Free Fruit Friday program provides participating primary schools with grants to buy fruit and vegetables from local businesses once a week for Prep to Year 2 students, at no cost to parents.

The 'Go for your life' Kitchen Garden Project with Stephanie Alexander establishes a kitchen garden in project schools. Students learn to grow, harvest, cook and share healthy food.

Healthy Start in Schools grants are provided to Victorian government primary schools to expand or create physical resources that enable schools to take up 'Go for your life' initiatives.

You must let your principal know if your child is allergic to certain foods. For further information about allergies, see page 28.

For further information, visit www.education.vic.gov.au/goforyourlife/



Medical information

Immunisation

When enrolling a child in primary school, or transferring between schools, parents need to bring their child's immunisation status certificate to the school.

Children who are not immunised can still attend school, but must also present an immunisation status certificate. However, if an outbreak of an infectious disease occurs at the school they will be sent home until the danger has passed.

Local councils can provide immunisation certificates.

You can also get your child's status online at www.medicareaustralia.gov.au/public/online-services/



For more information, contact your local council, your doctor or the Immunisation Program (Department of Human Services) on 1300 882 008.

Medical conditions

If your child has a medical condition, you need to inform the principal and your child's teacher. In particular, the school needs to know if your child has epilepsy, haemophilia, asthma, diabetes or severe allergic reactions to bee stings or certain foods, etc. (For more information on allergies, see below). You will be asked to provide this information when you enrol your child and it is important to keep it up-to-date.

For further information, visit www.education.vic.gov.au/management/governance/referenceguide/enviro/4_5.htm

Health support plan

All children with a significant medical condition or illness should have a health support plan developed by the school, you and your child based on the medical advice from your child's doctor.

This plan must be attached to the child's records. If your child needs to take medication during school hours, you should talk with their teacher or principal about necessary arrangements and provide written instructions for storing and administering the medication.

Allergies

If your child has an allergy you must advise the school. You may also want to provide an allergy action plan which has been developed by your doctor.

For further information about allergy action plans, visit www.allergy.org.au/content/view/10/3/

Anaphylaxis

The Anaphylaxis Guidelines for Victorian Government Schools have been developed for schools to support children at risk of anaphylaxis. Schools with children diagnosed at risk of anaphylaxis have prevention and management strategies put in place, including regular training and updates for school staff in recognising and responding appropriately to an anaphylactic reaction.

If your child has anaphylaxis, you must provide the school with the action plan developed by your child's doctor, along with your child's medication including an EpiPen® or EpiPen Junior® or Anapen® or Anapen Junior®. The school will work with you to develop a detailed anaphylaxis management plan for your child. This will include strategies to minimise your child being exposed to what causes their allergic reaction and information about the storage and use of medication.



Anaphylaxis management requirements also apply to outside school hours services which are regulated by the *Children's Services Act 1996* and the *Children's Services Regulations 2009*.

For more information about the obligations for outside school hours care services, or for general information, visit www.education.vic.gov.au/anaphylaxis

Head lice

Your child's school will have a policy about managing head lice. They are not a threat to health and they do not spread other infections. Head lice can be managed with cooperation between you and the school. Detecting them early is the best way to avoid an outbreak because there is no guaranteed method of prevention. It is recommended that you regularly check your child's hair.

For more information, contact your school or visit www.education.vic.gov.au/headlice





Staying informed

The more you and the school work in partnership, the more you will be able to know about your child's school, and the more you and the school will be able to support your child's learning.

The following communication channels and the Ultranet (see page 17) are available so you can be kept informed of your child's experience at school and you can inform the school of your child's learning at home. You can also arrange meetings with class teachers or the principal throughout the year.

Student report cards

The student report card provides you with a clear picture of your child's progress. It is used in all Victorian government schools to report student achievement in Prep to Year 10. Report cards are provided for parents in June and December every year.

Information provided on the report card includes a chart with an A–E rating, showing your child's current progress against the expected statewide standards (VELS), as well as outlining the progress they have made since the previous year.

Clearly written comments will tell you what your child knows and can do. It will also identify areas in which your child needs further help or can improve. The report card will clearly describe what the school will do to support your child and might suggest things you can do at home to help.

For more information about student report cards, visit www.education.vic.gov.au/aboutschool/studentreports/

Parent–teacher interviews

Parent–teacher interviews are an opportunity for you to meet your child's teacher(s). By asking questions and gathering more detail about the information provided in the transition-to-school information, you can become more involved in your child's learning and give them support where needed.

Schools offer parent–teacher interviews at least once a year. You can also request interviews at other times. If you are concerned about your child's progress, discuss these concerns with their teacher. You can also contact the school for an appointment.

For more information, visit www.education.vic.gov.au/aboutschool/studentreports/

School newsletters

School newsletters contain important dates, promote student achievements and help you understand elements of teaching and learning. Most primary schools publish a regular newsletter, and some publish it on their website.

Parent Update

The Department produces *Parent Update*, a free email newsletter, which will keep you up-to-date with the latest information and changes to education and early childhood services in Victoria.

To subscribe to *Parent Update*, visit www.education.vic.gov.au/parentupdate/

School annual reports

Each school provides a concise annual summary of its achievements and progress towards improving student learning, engagement and wellbeing, as well as information on their students' pathways and transitions on to further education or work.

Government schools are required to share their annual reports with their local communities. Reports are provided to parents and placed online on the school's website and on the Victorian State Register managed by the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority. Contact your school for more information about its annual school report or visit the State Register online at www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/sreg/



Parent complaints

If you have any concerns about your child's education, you should raise them in the first instance with your child's teacher or principal. Make an appointment through the school office.

For more information about complaints, visit www.education.vic.gov.au/parentcomplaint/

Interpreting and translating services

All Victorian government schools can provide access to certain interpreting and translating services, free of charge, for parents from language backgrounds other than English.

Schools can provide interpreters for:

- parent-teacher interviews
- information sessions on school programs
- issues concerning discipline or welfare
- educational assessment of students
- enrolling students.

Schools can also arrange translations of key newsletter items, school notices and program information.

For further information, contact your school or visit www.education.vic.gov.au/interpreting

IN FOCUS: FAMILIES AND SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS

Using technology to involve families in learning

At the click of a mouse families are now able to keep in touch with their child's learning by using online applications. Schools recognise that families are busy and by being able to access information online they can be active in their child's learning.

Bellaire Primary School is a growing school with a strong focus on personalised learning and it is constantly looking for ways to increase the sense of community among students, staff and parents.

'Although we are considered a large primary school, we still like to have a 'small school' feel. The school's website and unit blogs are strong vehicles for involving parents in their child's learning and developing a community environment at the school,' said Jane Warren, Principal.

To keep parents informed of their child's progress, the school has developed blog sites for every unit as a way to keep parents updated about classroom activities.

Starting at Prep, the teacher scans writing samples, inserts digital images of hands-on activities and makes an audio recording of a book for reading.

Junior students demonstrate their learning through the use of stop animation, photo stories and student made movies.

Students in Years 3 and 4 work within a unit blog and an online learning space called Edmodo.

By Years 5 and 6 students work as open learning communities and use Edmodo and video conferencing as well as wikis, blogs and documentaries.

'Parents are invited and encouraged to look at their unit or child's blog at least once a week. They can see the types of activities the students are doing at school and then leave messages on the blog. It's a great way for parents and teachers to keep in touch,' said Ms Warren.



Being involved

Victorian government schools recognise that you have the first and most significant influence on your child's learning and that your continued participation in their education is important if they are to achieve the best possible learning outcomes. It is well known that students with interested and involved parents do better at school. While you may be involved in your child's learning at home, you can also contribute by participating in the school council, joining the parent club, or getting involved in less formal school activities.



School councils

All Victorian government schools have a school council. The school council enables parents and others to be involved in governing the school. Councils have between six and 15 members. They include parents, the principal, staff, and sometimes community members. Parents do not need any particular qualifications or experience to take part and you can ask your school about training opportunities available for new school council members.

Elections are held early in the school year and must be completed by the end of March. All parents of students enrolled at the school are eligible to vote.

For information about school councils, visit www.education.vic.gov/aboutschool/participation/

For advice on legislation and policy matters relating to school councils, contact the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development's Community and Stakeholder Relations Branch via email at community.stakeholders@edumail.vic.gov.au or contact the Department's regional office in your school's area.

Two independent school council organisations provide information about, and support for, school councils:

- Association of School Councils in Victoria (visit www.asciv.org.au or call 03 9808 2499)
- Victorian Council of School Organisations (visit www.viccsso.org.au or call 03 9429 5900)

Parent clubs

Many Victorian government schools have a club or association for parents of children at the school. Parent clubs enable parents to participate and contribute to the wellbeing of their school community and the education of their child.

Parent clubs, in partnership with the school council, also organise social, educational and fundraising activities.

Parents Victoria is a not-for-profit organisation that offers advice, support and information for parent clubs in government schools.

For more information, visit www.parentsvictoria.asn.au or call 03 9380 2158 or 1800 032 023 (freecall for country callers).

Volunteers in schools

Victorian government schools have volunteer programs allowing parents to participate directly in school activities. Schools determine how and when they will use volunteers.

Your child's school might offer opportunities to be involved in canteen duty, excursions and events, reading and mathematics support, environment committees and cultural groups.

You may be asked to apply for a Working with Children (WWC) Check. The WWC Check helps to keep children safe by preventing those who pose a risk to the safety of children from working with them, in either paid or volunteer work. For information, visit www.justice.vic.gov.au/workingwithchildren

Tips for getting involved:

- use the Ultranet to keep up-to-date with your child's learning and to communicate with teachers
- read the school newsletter and other school notices
- attend school open days, family events and other special activities at school
- help out with fundraising activities, sports days, excursions and other events
- be involved with the school council or parents' club.

Homework

Homework helps students by complementing and reinforcing classroom learning, fostering good lifelong learning and study habits, and providing an opportunity for students to be responsible for their own learning. Prep to Year 4 homework should not be seen as a chore.

Homework will:

- enable the extension of class work by practising skills or gathering extra information or materials
- mainly consist of daily reading to, with, and by parents/ care givers or older siblings.

Homework is another opportunity for parents to participate in their child's education.

Parents, in partnership with the school, should encourage their children to establish good homework patterns from early primary school.

Schools usually advise parents of homework expectations at the beginning of the year and provide a copy of the school's homework policy.

For more information, visit www.education.vic.gov.au/aboutschool/lifeatschool/homework.htm

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Further information

Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

Website: www.education.vic.gov.au

Department of Education and Early Childhood Development Information and Referral Service

Phone: 1800 809 834 (freecall)

Email: edline@edumail.vic.gov.au

Regional offices:

For more information about Victorian government schooling contact your regional office:

Barwon South Western Region	5225 1000	(Geelong)
Grampians Region	5337 8444	(Ballarat)
Eastern Metropolitan Region	9265 2400	(Glen Waverley)
Gippsland Region	5127 0400	(Moe)
Hume Region	5761 2100	(Benalla)
Loddon Mallee Region	5440 3111	(Bendigo)
Northern Metropolitan Region	9488 9488	(Coburg)
Southern Metropolitan Region	9794 3555	(Dandenong)
Western Metropolitan Region	9291 6500	(Footscray)

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In case of emergency

For immediate help, phone: 000 or 112 from some mobile phones

Help lines

Parentline: counselling, information and referral service for Victorian parents and carers with children from birth to 18 years, phone: 13 22 89

Lifeline: 24-hour counselling, phone: 13 11 14

Men's Line Australia: 24-hour help line for men, phone: 1300 78 99 78

Kids Help Line: free and confidential telephone counselling for five-to-25 year-olds, phone: 1800 55 1800