

Transition to School Parent Information Pack

Southern Melbourne Area
Early Childhood Improvement Branch



A MESSAGE TO PARENTS AND CARERS FROM THE EARLY CHILDHOOD IMPROVEMENT BRANCH, DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION & TRAINING (SOUTHERN MELBOURNE AREA)

Dear Parent/Carer,

As your child is about to start school, it is time to decide where they will attend primary school. This Information Pack provides details around the enrolment processes for government primary schools answers to frequently asked questions. If you are considering a government specialist school, or other setting, you are advised to make direct contact with that school.

Enrolling your child, or children, in Foundation (Prep) is an important decision and your child has a right to enrol in their designated neighbourhood school; this right is set out in the [Education and Training Reform Act 2006](#). Your designated neighbourhood school is determined by your permanent residential address and the Department's [Find My School](#) website allows you to locate your designated neighbourhood school by inputting your residential address. The website is the official and most up to date source of information on school zone maps.

Every designated neighbourhood school is a great school that provides a supportive environment that fosters the emotional and intellectual growth of their students. Applications to schools other than your designated neighbourhood school are considered subject to the school having available spaces, as outlined in the Department's Placement Policy.

The transition timeline and *Frequently Asked Questions* (FAQs) contained in this document will help you navigate the transition to primary school process.

What you need to do

1. Read the Department's [Placement Policy](#) including the permanent address guidelines and the priority order of placement
2. Locate your designated neighbourhood school using www.findmyschool.vic.gov.au
3. Contact your designated neighbourhood school or preferred primary school to submit an enrolment application by **August**.

Your primary school will notify you of the outcome of your child's Foundation (Prep) enrolment application **as soon as possible**.

Please note, due to COVID-19, the above timelines have been extended. However, all parents/carers are encouraged to submit an enrolment form as soon as practical, so that the school can respond and confirm the enrolment outcome.

Fee-paying International students

Fee-paying international students are not required to complete this form. For enrolment in a government school, make an application online at www.study.vic.gov.au.

More information

Contact your primary school if you require more information about the enrolment process and transition arrangements.

We wish your child well in their transition to primary school and trust that primary schooling will be a richly rewarding experience.

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TRANSITION TO SCHOOL TIMELINE 2020-2021

The table below provides parents/cares with a recommended activity timeline to support children attending kindergarten, transition to Foundation (Prep) in a government primary school or specialist school.

It is noted and acknowledged that some children may require a more comprehensive transition plan to meet their individual needs.

Activities	Recommended Time/Date
Obtain a copy of Transition to School Parent Information Pack from your child's kindergarten or from your designated neighbourhood school. <i>Find your designated neighbourhood school at www.findmyschool.vic.gov.au</i>	Week 3, Term 2 2020
Contact primary schools and specialist school for details about participating in their information sessions for prospective families; view primary school websites for information about how to support your child's transition to school.	From 1 May 2020
Submit an enrolment application for a Foundation (Prep) placement for the 2021 school year.	By August 2020
<p>Primary schools manage enrolment applications using the <u>Priority Order of Placement</u></p> <p>Primary schools will notify parents/carers of their child's Foundation (Prep) placement by 21 August 2020.</p> <p>If your child is enrolling in a specialist school, you will be notified of the outcome of your enrolment application from 21 August 2020.</p>	<p>ASAP once enrolment is received</p> <p>ASAP</p>
<p>Transition planning commences for vulnerable children with diverse learning needs, including children in out of home care, families who identify from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds, and children with a disability or additional learning needs.</p> <p>This includes convening a Program Support Group and developing a transition plan which may include additional meetings and visits in the preschool and primary school environments to create the gradual development of relationships with new staff and understanding of the child in a familiar natural environment.</p>	From 24 August 2020
Enrolment information sessions commence for families of all enrolled children.	From 1 September 2020
State-wide Transition day (students placed in 2021 classes based on your child's Transition Learning and Development Statement (TLDS), observations from transition activities, and other information)	Tuesday 8 December 2020

Activities	Recommended Time/Date
<p>Foundation (Prep) assessments are conducted to allow primary schools to develop a deeper understanding of the strengths and areas for further development of your child and to develop programs to meet their needs.</p>	<p>Start of 2021 school year</p>
<p>Schools commence Student Support Group meetings for children experiencing vulnerability with diverse learning needs – parents and carers are invited to attend.</p> <p>These meetings provide you with the opportunity to work with your child's school to make decisions about their education and check their progress.</p>	<p>Start of 2021 school year</p>

TRANSITION TO SCHOOL – FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQS)

At what age should my child be enrolled at primary school?

To start primary school your child will need to turn five years old by 30 April in the year they start school. Your child must be at school in the year they turn six years of age. This is the compulsory school starting age.

Relevant information and advice to help you make an informed decision about the best age for your child to start school is provided by your child's early childhood educator, schools, and other professions such as a preschool field officer, paediatrician or child psychologist.

My kindergarten teacher mentioned that my child may benefit from a second year of funded kindergarten, when do we need to decide?

The decision to declare a second year of kindergarten is made in Term 3. Children must have a delay in at least two outcome areas of Victorian Early Years Learning Development Framework (VEYLDF) and consideration is made to determine if the child will achieve better outcomes through a second year of kindergarten than they would at school.

Discussions with family, observations of the child's developmental and learning areas linked to outcomes in (VEYLDF), and strategic planning for the child's transition to school will have taken place throughout the year to assist families make this decision.

Assessing a second year of funded kindergarten due to coronavirus (COVID-19): In most cases, children make a successful transition to school after their four-year-old kindergarten year. We acknowledge that 2020 has presented many and various challenges for children and families.

Throughout the various stages of lockdowns many kindergarten programs have also been able to offer learning from home support,

depending on their available capacity. However, even if your child has been absent from the kindergarten program for a period of time, it does not mean that your child won't thrive at primary school. If you have specific concerns about aspects of your child's development, please talk to your child's early childhood teacher about these and how you can work together to support your child's learning.

You may also wish to refer to the [second year funded kindergarten factsheet](#).

My child will be turning six this year but won't be attending school - what do I need to do?

You will need to submit a school exemption application to the Department of Education and Training (DET). The exemption application form can be found on the [DET website](#).

What is the legislation that gives my child the right to enrol in their designated neighbourhood school?

Children of compulsory school age are guaranteed the right to enrol in their local school as set out in the [Education and Training Reform Act 2006](#), specifically section 2.2.13 (1), which states, "A child of compulsory school age is entitled to be enrolled at [their] designated neighbourhood Government school."

Your designated neighbourhood school can be found by visiting the [Find My School](#) website.

When do I enrol my child in primary school for Foundation (Prep)

You are required to enrol your child at a Victorian government primary school by **7 August 2020**. If you are moving to a new area or from interstate or overseas, your child can

enrol at any time during the year once your child is permanently residing at your new address.

Where can I find the Victorian school term dates?

School term dates for 2020 to 2025 are available on the [DET website](#).

How can I learn more about the Victorian Education System?

If you are moving from overseas or interstate, information about education in Victoria, in regional areas or in Melbourne can be found on the [DET website](#).

How do I choose a school?

Your child will usually go to the designated neighbourhood school. You can also choose to send your child to:

- a different government school if they have places available
- or a Catholic or independent school

Learn more about the different types of schools by visiting the [DET website](#).

How can I find my designated neighbourhood school (local) school?

Visit the [Find My School](#) website and type in your permanent residential address. The website will then locate your designated neighbourhood Government school. To find your local Catholic or independent school, visit the [Catholic Education Melbourne](#) or [Independent Schools Victoria](#) websites.

Can my child attend a government school that is not our designated neighbourhood school?

You can request a Foundation (Prep) placement at a school that is not your designated neighbourhood school; however, that school can only accept your enrolment if a space is available at the school. For more information [visit the DET website](#).

How can I decide on a primary school that is the best fit for my children?

When deciding which primary school to choose, it is recommended that you contact the individual school that you are considering for more specific details. Information is often available in local early childhood education services or on primary school websites.

For more information refer to the [DET website](#).

How do I enrol my child at school for Foundation (Prep)?

To enrol your child in a Victorian government school you will need to fill out the school's enrolment application form I and provide the school with important information about your child, including:

- evidence of your child's date of birth (if they were not born in Australia, a passport or travel document such as a visa)
- your contact, phone and address details, and that of any other parent, guardian and/or carer
- names and contact details of emergency contacts
- doctor's and dentist's names and phone numbers
- Immunisation Status Certificate
- health and welfare information
- information about the language/s your child speaks and hears at home
- custody orders (if applicable)
- documents that show proof of permanent residential address

Enrolment forms are available at each school. If you need an interpreter to help fill out the enrolment form, the school staff can help organise this for you.

Who may sign the enrolment form?

Where practicable all parents/carers with parental responsibility for your child should sign the enrolment form.

A parent includes any person who has parental responsibility for the child including by way of Court order or parenting plan, a guardian for adult students, and an informal carer of the child under an Informal Carer Statutory Declaration.

Where it is not practicable or possible for parents/carers to sign a single form, they should communicate this to the primary school who will allow more than one enrolment form to be completed and submitted by each parent.

For further information, refer to the [Enrolment Policy](#).

Can I get help with the cost of school uniforms and books?

You may be eligible for assistance to help with some school costs such as camps and excursions and school uniforms or books if you hold an eligible concession card or you meet other special eligibility criteria. Please talk to your school Principal, Assistant Principal or Student Welfare Coordinator about your situation and they will assess your eligibility for assistance.

How can I support my child to transition to primary school?

Local early childhood services and schools organise their own transition to school programs and activities each year. To find out more, talk to your child's early childhood educator or contact the school where your child is enrolled.

Participating in transition to school programs and activities will help you and your child:

- get a better understanding of what school will be like
- establish friendships with other children and families who will be attending the school.

Primary schools will offer a range of transition sessions commencing in Term 4, prior to the year of enrolment. It is recommended that you

attend these transition sessions with your child to familiarise yourself with the school and its environment.

Your school may also provide more visits or transition activities for students with additional needs. Contact your school for more information.

You can also explore the Department's [tips for starting primary school](#).

Who else can support my child's transition to primary school?

Please speak to your Early Years educator or school regarding continuing support for your child during transition. If applicable, other supports you may wish to speak to can include –

Pre School Field Officer (PSFO)

If your child has been involved in this program whilst at kindergarten the PSFO is able to interact with the school regarding the support, they have provided.

NDIS

According to the details of the NDIS care plan for your child, support for transition to school is possible within certain areas. [For more information refer to the DET website](#).

Early Learning Mental Health Service (ELMHS)

If you have been involved in this program whilst at kindergarten support can continue into the school system. Visit the [ELMHS website](#) or phone 9554 1000 for more information.

Interpreter Service

Free interpreting and translating services are available via early years educators and primary school teachers. They can access interpreter services to assist you and your child transitioning to school if required. These services need to be planned so that bookings can be made to suit all. For information about how to book this service, visit the [DET website](#).

Supporting Refugees

Students from refugee backgrounds require additional support from teachers and school staff to develop the English language and learning skills they need to succeed in Victorian schools. Intensive support can be received through the [Refugee Education Support Program \(RESP\)](#).

What is a Transition Learning and Development Statement (TLDS) and will this be shared with the primary school?

To make it easier to share information with your chosen school, your child's early education service will write an individual Transition Learning and Development Statement (Statement). The statement summarises your child's interests, skills and abilities, identifying individual approaches and teaching strategies to support your child on their learning journey.

The information in the Statement helps Foundation (Prep) teachers get to know the children entering their classes, and to plan appropriate learning and teaching programs. The Statement is not a report card. It is important for you to contribute to the Statement, as it will give your child's new teacher a better understanding of your child and help the school to plan for your child's continued learning and wellbeing as they settle into school.

To receive a copy of the statement, speak to your early childhood education service or visit the [DET website](#) for more information.

In addition to the information schools receive as part of the Statement, schools are obliged to conduct a range of assessments with each child when they enter Foundation (Prep). These assessments are typically carried out early in the year to allow primary schools to develop a deeper understanding of the strengths and areas for further development of children and to develop programs to meet their needs. Primary schools have different approaches to the scheduling of these

individual assessments. Contact your primary school for details on how they will conduct assessments for your child.

What assistance is available to support my child's travel to and from school?

A range of transportation options are available to eligible young people, including the School Bus Program, travel to specialist schools, the Students with Disabilities Transport Program and conveyance allowance.

My child has a disability, how can I ensure their needs are met?

Prior to your child's transition, the opportunity to share openly your child's needs with the school will occur during a Parent Support Group meeting. The first of these meetings usually occur towards the end of Term 3 whilst still attending kindergarten. This includes information about your child's learning and development in early childhood settings, assessments and reports from professionals.

Sharing information will enable the school to work with you to develop strategies to support your child through transition to school meeting the individual needs. Once starting school another Parent Support Group meeting will take place with new teachers.

What supports are available for my child who has additional needs?

The Department provides a range of policies, programs and resources for schools to support the delivery of high-quality schooling for all students, including students with disabilities.

These resources may be provided in the Student Resource Package, through student support services, which includes a workforce of psychologists, social workers, youth workers, speech pathologists and visiting teachers, or through specific early identification and intervention programs.

The Program for Students with Disabilities is a targeted supplementary funding program that provides individualised funding for eligible

children with high support needs. Resources from the Program for Students with Disabilities can be used in several ways to support students, including –

Teaching staff, specialist staff – special needs coordinator, occupational therapists, speech pathologists), teacher professional development, specialist equipment/materials, including assistive technology, education support staff.

Training and funding – for staff that assist children who require regular, complex medical support at school.

Accessible Buildings Program – funding to provide improved access to mainstream school facilities for children and parents with injuries or disabilities. Facility modifications may include ramps and handrails (including temporary ramps), toilet and shower modifications, modifications for vision or hearing impairments (e.g. sound field systems), change tables and hoists, and limited external works to improve access for the applicant.

Student Support Groups – to provide you with the opportunity to participate in joint planning for your child and to monitor their progress at school. Student Support Groups ensure those with the most knowledge of, and responsibility for your child, work together with you to set shared goals for your child's education, plan reasonable adjustments for your child to access the curriculum, provide educational planning that is ongoing throughout your child's school life, and monitor your child's progress.

For more information visit the [DET website](#).

Can my child enrol in a specialist school?

There are specific criteria for enrolling your child in a specialist school. These criteria are used to establish eligibility against the Program for Students with Disabilities guidelines. You will need to contact the relevant specialist school to assess enrolment

eligibility for your child. In addition to the enrolment requirements, eligibility is further determined by your residential address.

What are the key dates that I need to be aware of to ensure a smooth transition for my child into Foundation (Prep) at a government school?

You are advised to contact prospective primary schools. You can make an appointment with the Principal or Assistant Principal to discuss additional support for your child if required.

Primary schools advise families to collect information, reports and assessments for targeted funding (if applicable) by **18 September** to ensure funding commences at the start of Term 1 in the year of enrolment. Transition sessions often commence in Term 4 prior to the year of enrolment. You are encouraged to work with your school to develop a model that works best for you and your child.

What is the Primary School Nursing Program, and can all children access it?

The Primary School Nursing Program is a free service offered to all children attending primary schools and English Language Centre schools in Victoria.

Primary school nurses visit schools throughout the year to provide children with:

- the opportunity to have a health screening assessment
- information and advice about healthy behaviours
- and linking children and families to community-based health and wellbeing services

What support is available at primary school for my child who is still learning English as an additional language?

Your school will provide additional language support as appropriate.

I am caring for a child in out of home care and would like more information on how I can help them to thrive at primary school.

You are encouraged to speak to your child's school about the resources and supports they will provide, as well as what you can do to encourage and support your child's learning. LOOKOUT Education Support Centres can also provide advice and support to carers regarding all aspects of a student's education. They aim to boost the capacity of schools, carers, child protection practitioners and out of home care services to improve educational outcomes for all children and young people living in out of home care.

For more information or advice, contact South Eastern Victoria Region LOOKOUT Centre by emailing lookout.sev@education.vic.gov.au

Who can I contact for advice on Koorie education in schools?

Primary schools, parents and community can obtain assistance with Koorie cultural inclusion, Koorie education guidance and support through their region by contacting the Koorie Education Coordinators (KEC). The KEC can arrange for a Regional Koorie Engagement Support Officer (KESO) to be assigned to any school where contact with Koorie families may be requested.

For more information or advice, email sevr@education.vic.gov.au or phone 1300 338 738

How do I find the contact details of my regional office?

You can find the regional office contact details and locations on the [DET website](#), or contact the South Eastern Victoria Region directly by emailing sevr@education.vic.gov.au or calling 1300 338 738



SECOND YEAR FUNDED KINDERGARTEN FACTSHEET

DOES MY CHILD NEED A SECOND YEAR OF KINDERGARTEN?

In most cases, children make a successful transition to school after their four-year-old kindergarten year. All children are different, even those of similar ages, and no matter what experiences children have before they arrive at school, they will have developed a range of skills and abilities that form the basis for further learning and teaching. Based on current health advice, kindergarten programs can be open for families who wish to attend.

Many kindergarten programs have also been able to offer learning from home support, depending on their available capacity. However, even if your child has been absent from the kindergarten program for a period of time, it does not mean that your child won't thrive at primary school. If you have specific concerns about aspects of your child's development, please talk to your child's early childhood teacher about these and how you can work together to support your child's learning.

During four-year-old kindergarten, your early childhood teacher will assess your child, plan for their move to school and identify any developmental areas that may need particular attention.

There may also be a small number of children for whom a second year of kindergarten is appropriate. Your child may be eligible if:

- your child's teacher has found they have developmental delays in at least two key areas of learning and development, and
- your child will have better outcomes at kindergarten rather than going to school.

YOUR CHILD'S ASSESSMENT

There are guidelines that early childhood teachers will follow to assess your child's eligibility for a second year of kindergarten. These guidelines help the teacher identify your child's needs and goals.

The learning and development areas assessed by early childhood teachers include:

- identity – the child's sense of identity
- community – the child's connection with and contribution to their world
- wellbeing – the child's sense of wellbeing
- learning – the child's confidence and involvement in learning
- communication – the child's communication
- other factors may also be considered.

YOUR INVOLVEMENT

It's important that you and the teacher work together to achieve the best outcome for your child. With your consent, the teacher will:

- complete the assessment of your child
- meet with you to discuss this assessment

- if delays in your child's development are identified, develop a Term 3 Learning and Development Plan for your child
- get the support of other early childhood development professionals as needed.

If the teacher believes your child has a developmental delay in two or more key areas and would benefit from a second year of kindergarten, they will complete a Second Year Statement which will require your input in Term 4. They will also send a declaration to us (the Department) and talk to you about your options.

Talk to your kindergarten service for more information or advice.

GET AN EXEMPTION FROM SCHOOL

If your child turns six in their first or second year of four-year-old kindergarten, you must get an exemption from school. For more information, visit the [Department's website](#).