



Faith *in your* Child's Future

PARENT HANDBOOK FOR VICTORIAN CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOLS

I am the Way, the Truth and the Life.

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Message from the Directors of Catholic Education

Dear Parent

Welcome to Catholic education and thank you for choosing a Catholic school for your child. All in Catholic education understand that this is one of the most important decisions you will make as a parent. By choosing a Catholic school, your child will be nurtured in an environment which engages with the Gospel teachings. Catholic schools recognise that every child is special and unique and make every effort to cater for your child's individual learning needs.

Catholic schools are founded on Jesus Christ and are an important part of the Catholic Church's mission. The values and teachings of Jesus Christ as presented in the Gospel and proclaimed by the Church are central to the Catholic school vision – a vision that offers fullness of life.

A distinctive mark of Catholic schools is the emphasis on community – principals, teachers, staff and parents working together and with the wider community to educate and develop the whole child: emotionally, academically, physically, socially, and spiritually.

Catholic schools are committed to excellence in educational standards. They are partners with you in your child's faith development and in providing a high-quality education.

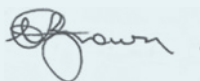
Catholic schools are supported by Catholic Education Offices in the Archdiocese of Melbourne and the dioceses of Ballarat, Sale and Sandhurst. These authorities provide service and leadership, so you can be confident that state and national standards in education are maintained in all Catholic schools. At the same time, each Catholic school has the flexibility to tailor its programs to meet the individual needs of students and its local parish and communities.

We wish you and your family well as you begin or continue this journey in Catholic education. We encourage you to be active partners with the school in your child's education and to involve yourself in the school community, where you are now a valued member.



Mr Stephen Elder

Executive Director of Catholic Education
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Welcome to the Catholic primary school

Victorian Catholic primary schools provide high-quality academic, social, physical and religious education for about 108,000 children all over Victoria.

Each Catholic primary school belongs to a parish and is a vital part of the parish community, as well as a significant presence in the local community. As a welcoming school community, each school provides an inclusive and safe environment focused on your child's wellbeing, achievement, challenge, creativity and enjoyment.

In Catholic schools, highly qualified and caring teachers are committed to an education that integrates and celebrates faith, learning and life. Our schools provide religious education and opportunities for faith

development in communities where prayer and sacramental celebrations are integral to life. Students are encouraged to engage in civic and public life, involving community service and working for social justice.

Our schools encourage your engagement in your child's learning and your involvement in the school. Together we can create an effective learning environment and a climate of mutual respect. We can ensure timely and effective communication and enable participation in consultation on matters of parental concern.



Coming to our schools

Children who attend a Catholic school usually attend the local Catholic parish primary school. Some special education facilities are also available (see page 13 of this Handbook).

Enrolments for children are welcomed for those who turn five years of age by 30 April of the year in which they start school. It is a good idea to start making contact with the principal and the parish priest of your Catholic primary school early in the year preceding the year when your child turns five years of age, as enrolment processes and criteria vary from school to school.

The principal or another senior staff member is more than happy to meet with parents, arrange tours or classroom visits and provide publications containing important information about the school and its policies. It is best to

phone the school to make an appointment for a mutually convenient time. This ensures that classes are not disrupted and that the principal or staff member sets aside adequate meeting time.

Each year, most Catholic primary schools begin taking enrolments for the following school year, usually in Term 1. Refer to the website of your Catholic parish primary school for specific enrolment details, or contact the school.

For more information about a Catholic primary school in your locality and orientation tours, see the Catholic Education Office website for your diocese or the website of the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Ltd (CECV) (below). These can connect you to the school's own website.



Catholic Education Offices

Ballarat – www.ceoballarat.catholic.edu.au

Melbourne – www.ceomelb.catholic.edu.au

Sale – www.ceosale.catholic.edu.au

Sandhurst – www.ceosand.catholic.edu.au

Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Ltd – www.cecv.catholic.edu.au

Enrolling in the school

School staff will provide you with the appropriate enrolment forms. The enrolment process will require particular information, both at the application stage and if the school offers you a place. An interpreter will be organised, if you require it.

When you enrol your child, to meet school and government requirements, you will need to provide the school with the information outlined below.

What information does the school need from you?

- A completed enrolment form (obtained from the school)
- Evidence of your child's date of birth, e.g. birth certificate, passport
- Religious denomination
- Certificate of Baptism (and Reconciliation, Eucharist, Confirmation, if these sacraments have been completed)
- Names and addresses of the child and parents and/or guardians
- Parents' occupations and levels of education attained
- Parents' telephone numbers (home, work, mobile)
- Specific residence arrangements
- Nationality and/or citizenship
- Information about the language(s) your child speaks and/or hears at home
- Immunisation certificate (showing whether your child has been immunised against diphtheria, tetanus, polio, measles, mumps, rubella, whooping cough and haemophilus influenza type B)
- Names of emergency contacts and their details
- Doctor's name and telephone number
- Medical information about your child (e.g. the child may suffer from asthma, diabetes, allergies, poor eyesight/hearing, etc.)
- Information on additional learning needs
- Parenting orders or arrangements.



Fees

The setting of fee levels and other compulsory charges in Catholic primary schools is the responsibility of the individual school, taking into account the allocation of government funds. Most Catholic primary schools offer a number of methods for paying fees to reduce any financial burden and to assist financial planning. If you have difficulty in meeting the required fee payment, you are encouraged to discuss this with the principal of the school.

See also page 23 of this Handbook.

Starting primary school

In Catholic primary schools, our teachers aim to create a safe and happy environment where your child is valued, affirmed and challenged. Most schools will liaise with your child's kindergarten to help ease the transition to school.

As a parent, you can do much to help your child's transition to school and help make the first few weeks exciting and enjoyable for both you and your child. Learning to be independent is a most important aspect of readiness for school. Children who have developed independence are much more able to deal with the new demands that school life places on them.

Many of our primary schools conduct orientation sessions for pre-school students. This is an opportunity for children to spend some time with their teacher for their first year. You should contact your child's school for more details of orientation procedures.



What you can do to help your child transition to Prep

- Attend the school information sessions and tours.
- Visit the school with your child to become familiar with the surroundings.
- Talk to parents of children in the school.
- Talk to the Prep teacher about your child's development, skills, strengths and interests.
- Find out about your school's buddy system.
- Encourage a daily routine with your child in readiness for school.
- Interest your child in school and its activities, e.g. learning as fun,

Your child's learning

Our Catholic schools provide a foundation of faith based on Catholic tradition and teachings. They also assist your child to develop knowledge and understanding, skills, capabilities and dispositions necessary for lifelong learning.

In Victoria, Catholic primary schools have a particularly strong emphasis on engaging students in a faith-based education where high standards are maximised in all areas of the curriculum, particularly in literacy and numeracy. Our schools provide an environment which encourages your child to be confident and excited about learning from the start of school life.

The child is at the centre of all learning arrangements in Catholic schools. Catholic schools recognise that students are individuals, each with diverse learning needs. Teachers design learning experiences that are responsive to the different ways which students learn and achieve their best.



Contemporary learning

In their approach to contemporary learning, teachers in Catholic schools:

- aim to ensure all students will make progress and succeed
- enable students to develop deep understandings about the world and how to operate effectively in that world
- build capacity for lifelong learning
- use questions and issues as drivers for learning
- create flexible learning opportunities in response to the different ways in which students learn and achieve their best
- encourage effective use of contemporary technologies to deepen and accelerate student learning, both inside and outside of school
- encourage learners to think and work creatively, explore and experiment, plan and reflect, communicate and collaborate
- create learning opportunities in different environments within and beyond the classroom.

Our schools provide facilities that enable your child to use and develop skills in various technologies, as well as to learn in engaging and effective ways.



Our primary school curriculum

The curriculum is planned carefully to ensure the development of the whole child, including intellectual, spiritual, physical, emotional and social dimensions.

The curriculum is based on the dignity of the human person, a culture of community and a commitment to social justice and service for the common good. It is designed to prepare students to be lifelong learners who can respond creatively to the challenges of the future, including rapid developments in science and technology, the environment, global activity and social change.

All our schools meet the curriculum, assessment and reporting requirements set by the Victorian and Australian governments. Like most Victorian schools, Catholic schools base their curriculum on the Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS) and selected subjects of the Australian Curriculum. This is now known as AusVELS, a single framework that identifies what is essential for all students to learn during the compulsory years of schooling (Preparatory to Year 10).

Most of our primary schools use an integrated curriculum to structure the teaching and learning program. This helps students make meaningful links between different domains of

study and supports the exploration of ideas and themes of study, particularly through an inquiry approach to learning.

For more information on AusVELS, see <http://ausvels.vcaa.vic.edu.au>

Australian Curriculum

The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) has responsibility for developing the curriculum in several phases. Mathematics, science and history have been the first curriculum areas to be implemented in Victorian schools in 2013 and 2014. All other remaining areas of the Australian Curriculum will be implemented from 2015.

Religious education

Our schools invite and support students to discover God's presence in their daily lives. Within a Gospel-centred environment, students are challenged and supported to understand themselves and the world in which they live through a world view founded in Scripture and in the traditions of the Catholic community – its stories, its worship, its experiences and its teachings.

Religious education is at the centre of the Catholic school curriculum and is reflected in a visible Catholic symbolic culture and active



sacramental and liturgical practice. Religious education explores students' life experiences in the context of Church teachings and tradition. Participation in religious education is compulsory for all students in all of our schools.

Christian education in sexuality

Our schools are encouraged to design their own program in positive human relationships and human sexuality in line with the universal teaching of the Church and based on the particular character of the local community and in partnership with parents.

English and Literacy

The study of English helps create confident communicators, imaginative thinkers and informed citizens.

It helps students to become ethical, thoughtful, informed and active members of society. English also helps students to engage imaginatively and critically with literature to expand the scope of their experience.

Literacy learning is fundamental to your child's learning progress. Our schools devote a high level of resources to literacy programs to improve literacy learning and student achievement across all years of schooling, but especially in the first few years.

Our schools monitor student literacy achievement and use results to plan for



students' distinct learning needs. Where necessary, teachers use specially designed intervention programs to consolidate basic understandings in literacy.

Mathematics

Mathematics provides students with essential mathematical skills and knowledge in number, fractions, decimals and statistics. It develops the numeracy capabilities that all students need in their personal, work and social lives.

Science

Science provides a way of answering interesting and important questions about the world. The knowledge it produces has proved to be a basis for action in our personal, social and economic lives. Science is a dynamic, collaborative and creative human endeavour arising from our desire to make sense of our world through exploring the unknown, investigating universal mysteries, making predictions and solving problems.

Languages

Languages is designed to enable all students to engage in learning a language in addition to English. Languages helps to ensure students communicate in the target language, and understand the relationship between language and culture. Languages study also helps students understand themselves as communicators and develop intercultural capability.



For details of VSL programs and availability, see www.vsl.vic.edu.au

Health and physical education

Health and Physical Education teaches students how to enhance their own and others' health, safety, wellbeing and physical activity. The Health and Physical Education learning area has strong foundations in scientific fields such as physiology, nutrition, biomechanics and psychology which inform what we understand about healthy, safe and active choices. Health and Physical Education offers students a curriculum that is challenging, enjoyable and physically active.

Our schools promote the development of a healthy lifestyle by providing a well-organised and active environment in which students can participate in a wide range of sports and physical activities. As well as improving fitness, participation in sport and physical education develops a sense of fair play, self-confidence and an ability to work with others as part of a team.

Physical education is timetabled for all students from Prep onwards. Opportunities are provided for students to participate in a large range of sports at school levels.



Humanities

The Humanities learning area comprises History, Geography, Economics and Business and Civics and Citizenship.

- **History** aims to ensure that students develop knowledge, understanding and appreciation of the past and the forces that shape societies, including Australian society, as well as understanding and use of historical concepts, such as evidence, continuity and change, perspectives, empathy and significance.
- **Geography** is a structured way of exploring, analysing and understanding the characteristics of the places that make up our world, using concepts like place, environment, sustainability and change. It addresses scales from the personal to the global and time periods from a few years to thousands of years.
- **Economics and Business** explores the ways individuals, families, the community, businesses and governments make decisions in relation to the allocation of resources. It aims to enable students to understand the process of economic and business decision-making and its effects on themselves and others, now and in the future.



- **Civics and Citizenship** is essential in enabling students to become active and informed citizens who participate in and sustain Australia's democracy. Students investigate political and legal systems, and explore the nature of citizenship, diversity and identity in today's society.

Arts

The Arts enables exploration of the dynamic relationships between the five Arts subjects: **Dance, Drama, Media Arts, Music** and **Visual Arts**. This involves students making and responding to artworks in many forms using materials, techniques and technologies. Within all Arts subjects, design facilitates the creative and practical realisation of ideas.

General capabilities and values

General capabilities and values are explicitly taught and developed in Catholic schools, supporting students to manage their own wellbeing, relate well to others and make informed decisions about their lives. Students develop as citizens who behave with ethical integrity, relate to and communicate across cultures, work for the common good and act with responsibility at local, regional and global levels. These general capabilities encompass the knowledge, skills, behaviours and

dispositions that will assist them to live and work successfully in the twenty-first century.

Technologies

Technologies ensures that all students benefit from learning about and working with the many forms of technologies that shape the world in which we live. This learning area encourages students to apply their knowledge and practical skills and processes when using technologies and other resources to create innovative solutions that meet current and future needs.

Leadership and peer support programs

Where opportunities are available, students are encouraged to be involved in student representative councils (SRCs) and in programs within their local community.

There are several leadership and peer support programs available in schools to encourage self-awareness and personal development. The 'buddy' system, where an older student is assigned to support a younger student, is now common in schools and has two main benefits – the older student learns to take on leadership and responsibility, while the younger student knows she/he has another student at school to whom she/he can turn for assistance.

Assessing and reporting your child's progress

Teachers will continually observe and assess your child's learning in class. At different times an assessment task or test may be set to gain a clearer idea of how well your child is understanding what has been taught. This important assessment assists the teacher to fine-tune teaching strategies for the individual student.

Various opportunities are provided during the year to let you know your child's progress. You will receive two comprehensive written reports each year, and arrangements will be made for at least one Parent / Teacher / Student interview where you can discuss your child's progress with the teacher. In addition, you can always contact the school to arrange a meeting with the teacher if you have concerns or wish to have an update on progress.

National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN)

Students in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 participate in the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN), which tests literacy (reading, writing and language connections) and numeracy skills. The results of these tests, in conjunction with a range of data from other assessment strategies and data collections, give you information on how your child is progressing and where s/he could benefit from greater challenges or extra help.

National assessment and reporting are the responsibility of the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA). In Victoria, the NAPLAN is administered by the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA).

For more information, see www.nap.edu.au, call 1300 895 563 (ACARA) or email info@acara.edu.au. Alternatively, see www.vcaa.vic.edu.au, call 1800 134 197 (VCAA) or email vcaa@edumail.vic.gov.au

Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA)

The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) is responsible to all Australian Education Ministers for developing Australian curriculum, developing student assessment, including NAPLAN, and for reporting overall student and school performance. ACARA also manages the *My School* website, which provides information on all Australian schools.

For more details on ACARA, see www.acara.edu.au. For more details on *My School*, see www.myschool.edu.au

Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA)

The Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA) sets the guidelines for what students learn from Prep to Year 12 in all Victorian schools. The VCAA is responsible for the administration in Victorian schools of the AusVELS, the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE), the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL), Vocational Education and Training (VET) certificates and the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN).

For more information see www.vcaa.vic.edu.au, call 1800 134 197 or email vcaa@edumail.vic.gov.au

Additional learning needs

Our schools assist all students, including students with additional learning needs.

If required, your child may access the services of:

- psychologists
- speech pathologists
- visiting teachers (hearing impairment, vision impairment, physical/chronic health impairment)
- English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D) / New arrivals school advisers.

If the school believes your child would benefit from these services, the school will contact you and ask for your approval for the direct involvement of student services staff with your child. You may contact your child's school for more information.

Information regarding the relevant referral process for these services is available from your child's school.

Literacy, Numeracy and Special Learning Needs (LNSLN) Program

Our schools adopt the Literacy, Numeracy and Special Learning Needs (LNSLN) program to improve participation and learning outcomes, particularly in literacy and numeracy, of educationally disadvantaged students and students with a disability. You may contact your child's school for more information.

Specialised therapy in schools

Our schools work in collaboration with specialised organisations in developing learning programs for students with special needs and these are tailored to meet the requirements of the individual student. All students who have a physical, chronic health impairment or multiple disabilities and require physiotherapy and/or occupational therapy as an integral component of their school program may be referred for



specialised therapy. Programs by Yooralla and Scope Victoria are provided. You may contact your child's school for more information.

Specialist settings

The Archdiocese of Melbourne operates specialist settings at:

- Larmenier School in Hampton
- MacKillop Specialist School in Whittington
- St Mary's College for Hearing Impaired Students, with campuses in Wantirna South and South Morang (primary), Dandenong, Ringwood and South Morang (secondary)
- St Joseph's Flexible Learning Centre in North Melbourne
- St Paul's College in Kew.

The Sandhurst Diocese operates:

- Doxa School in Bendigo
- Notre Dame College, McAuley Champagnat program in Shepparton
- Borinya Wangaratta Community Partnership in Wangaratta.

For more information contact:

- Catholic Education Melbourne:
03 9267 0228
OR
- Catholic Education Office
Sandhurst: 03 5443 2377

Gifted students

Catholic schools make provision for high-achieving and gifted students in a variety of ways. The Catholic Education Office in each diocese offers educational consultancy and access to resources to assist schools in identifying gifted students, assessing their specific needs, and making appropriate programming recommendations. You may contact your child's school for more information.



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students

Ongoing educational, pastoral and cultural support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students is provided through school-based curriculum initiatives. Schools develop, implement and evaluate individual learning plans for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students as required. Effective links are established with Aboriginal community organisations, with Koorie education personnel, student support schemes and funding where available. You may contact your child's school for more information.

An initiative of the Aboriginal Catholic Ministry, Melbourne is the 'Opening the Doors Foundation'. The Foundation provides assistance to parents of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who attend our schools in Victoria. It assists parents to choose and successfully maintain a positive educational environment for their children.

For more information, see
www.openingthedoors.org.au
or call 03 9443 9070

English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D) / New arrivals program

Consultancy services and funding are available to schools to meet the needs of newly arrived students requiring support with learning English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D). You may contact your child's school for more information.

Your child's health, wellbeing and safety

Students thrive at school when they feel happy, confident and secure. Your child's wellbeing is our first priority.

Our schools work with parents to provide every possible assistance and support for the wellbeing of all children in our care. The Australian Government's National Safe Schools Framework (NSSF) is an important guide for schools in this matter.

For more information on the NSSF, see www.education.gov.au/national-safe-schools-framework-0

Our schools have positive relationships policies, as well as student wellbeing and behaviour management plans and protocols. These documents outline expectations and responsibilities that promote mutual care, acceptance, courtesy and respect.

Our schools also have policies and strategies for preventing and/or responding to bullying behaviours and serious offences. These policies and strategies are based on government requirements and on the Pastoral Care policy of the Catholic Education Office of your diocese.

Many schools appoint dedicated Student Wellbeing Leaders to work with principals and other teaching staff to promote wellbeing and support services.

Our school communities have access to a wide range of student wellbeing support in areas which include:

- child protection
- student health services
- personal development
- safety



- resilience and mental health
- behaviour management
- anti-bullying education
- drug education
- sun protection.

School care program

If your child has high medical needs and is enrolled in a Catholic primary school in Victoria, s/he may be eligible for a service provided in partnership with the Royal Children's Hospital (RCH). The RCH Home and Community Care Service is available to schools upon request through Catholic Education Melbourne.

For more information, contact Catholic Education Melbourne on **03 9267 0228** or email execdiretor@ceomelb.catholic.edu.au

Anaphylaxis

Anaphylaxis is a severe allergic reaction which requires life-saving medication. A severe allergic reaction usually occurs within 20 minutes of exposure and can

rapidly become life-threatening. Anaphylaxis must be treated as a medical emergency, requiring immediate treatment and urgent medical attention.

Each of our schools has an Anaphylaxis Management Policy which includes the training of relevant staff. A medically approved individual Anaphylaxis Management Plan is developed for each student at risk and you are required to provide this plan and your child's EpiPen® to the school.

Healthy eating

Our schools address one of Australia's growing health problems, obesity, through various curriculum and practical initiatives. In schools where canteens operate, guidelines have been developed to provide students with healthy eating suggestions.

As a parent, you have an important role to play in helping to ensure your child receives a consistent message about healthy eating and being active.

For useful ideas and more information about healthy eating and physical activities, see www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au

Emergencies

In cases of emergency or ill health, the school will immediately contact you so you can collect your child or approve the appropriate medical attention. It is important to ensure that your contact details are up to date.

Sun Protection

Two in three Australians develop some form of skin cancer before the age of 70. Most skin cancer is preventable. The Cancer Council Victoria recommends a healthy UV exposure balance that ensures some sun



for vitamin D, while minimising the risk of skin cancer. Each of our schools has a sun protection policy to ensure a healthy UV exposure balance to help with vitamin D levels and minimise the risk of skin and eye damage and skin cancer.

Our schools are committed to implementing a combination of sun protection measures (clothing, sunscreen, hats, shade and sunglasses). Sun protection is required whenever UV levels reach three and above – the level that can damage skin and eyes. This is typically from the start of September to the end of April in Victoria (not just in Terms 1 and 4).

As a parent you have an important role in ensuring that your child develops and maintains healthy sun protection habits from the early years. Being a role model of sun-protective behaviours is one way to help your child to do this. Another is being aware of when ultra-violet (UV) rays will be dangerous and require sun protection.

For useful ideas and more information about sun protection and skin cancer prevention, including a SunSmart app and a UV alert, see Cancer Council Victoria's SunSmart website www.sunsmart.com.au

Parents and schools – Working together

Catholic schools welcome opportunities to work with you in educating your child. The partnership between you and the school, especially your child's teachers, is crucial to ensuring that your child has the best opportunities to enjoy the school experience and to learn effectively.

As a parent, you can contribute your own knowledge and skills at all levels, to assist your child's learning, to support the school's goals and to promote the principles of Catholic education.

There are many ways in which parents and schools can work together to improve the educational experience and outcomes for their children. You can help your child in many areas of school life, as suggested in the list opposite.

Parents have a particularly important role to play in the educating community, since it is to them that primary and natural responsibility for their children's education belongs.

(Congregation for Catholic Education 1997)



What you can do to help your child at school

Faith development

- Attend school and parish liturgies and Masses, sacramental education and faith development evenings.
- Participate in and discuss religious education learning activities and social justice initiatives.
- Build a partnership with the school and teachers to support your child's faith and learning.

Learning

- Encourage your child to take increasing responsibility for his/her learning and organisational skills.
- Discuss your child's learning and progress.
- Establish regular contact with your child's teacher.
- Encourage reading by setting an example – reading yourself.
- Read to your child and listen to your child's reading.
- Discuss your child's response to the texts and ask to see work s/he completes on these texts.

Wellbeing

- Encourage healthy eating, sufficient sleep and regular physical activity.
- Encourage positive attitudes, values and behaviours like courtesy, confidence, persistence, and doing your best.
- Celebrate your child's successes.
- Help your child balance the amount of time spent in school work and play.

School activities

- Attend school events, displays or productions in which your child is involved.
- Become actively involved in school community activities such as the School Board, parent groups, parent education programs, etc.

School attendance

Regular attendance at school is vital if your child is to obtain maximum benefit from the educational and social opportunities that the school can offer.

As a parent, it is important that you familiarise yourself with the school's attendance requirements and procedures, which in most instances are provided at the time of enrolment and published on the school's website. You are responsible for ensuring that your child attends school every day, on time, and for explaining absences in a timely manner.

Your child's teacher is directly responsible for monitoring daily attendance and patterns of absences and lateness, while the principal is responsible for determining if any irregular attendance or sustained absence is reasonable. If there are concerns about a student's record of attendance, the matter may be referred to a government Attendance Officer who has extensive powers of inquiry to investigate absences from school without a reasonable excuse.

There may be occasions when your child is reluctant or refuses to attend school. Such occasions may increase in frequency and reflect a pattern of worrying behaviour. You are strongly encouraged to work in partnership with your child's teacher to address factors which may be causing the problem and to implement agreed strategies to promote attendance.

For further information and 'helpful hints' in ensuring your child's regular attendance at school, see the Every Day Counts website www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/participation/Pages/everyday.aspx

Learning at home

Catholic schools usually advise parents of homework expectations at the beginning of the school year. You can assist your child with his/her learning at home in a number of ways.

What you can do to help your child

- Work in partnership with the school and teachers.
- Be aware of any learning that is to be completed outside of school.
- Have conversations with your child about his/her learning.
- Help your child to plan and organise a time and space for learning at home.
- Your conversations with your child about learning can happen in languages other than English.





Your child's progress

Our schools welcome opportunities to communicate with you about your child's progress. There are formal and informal occasions for this, both face-to-face and in writing (see page 11 of this Handbook). If you have concerns, it is essential to contact the school.

Contact information

It is important that you keep the school up to date with your contact telephone numbers and those of an emergency contact. In cases of emergency or ill health, the school will immediately contact you so you can collect your child or approve the appropriate medical attention.

Annual school reports

Every Victorian Catholic school provides an Annual School Report on its activities

to parents and the wider community. This report gives parents a clearer idea of the nature and outcomes of each school. The report includes important information such as enrolment and financial data, student attendance, the range of activities provided, overall performance of students on tests such as the NAPLAN, results of parent and student surveys and teacher qualifications.

The Annual School Report is normally found on the school's website, as well as on the State Register. Similar information about every school in Australia may also be found on the *My School* website.

For the State Register, see
www.vrqa.vic.gov.au

For *My School*, see
www.myschool.edu.au



Parish-school education boards

Parish-school education boards, or school advisory boards/councils, are established in most Catholic schools. These boards bring together the parish priest, principal and parents in a spirit of collaboration to realise the school's vision and achieve its educational aims. More details about the work of the board, its procedures and processes are available at your child's school.

'In schools... families have a most important place and role. Catholic schools appreciate their value, and promote their participation in the school, where they can assume various forms of co-responsibility'.

(Congregation for Catholic Education 2013)

Parents and friends associations

Most schools have a parents' association, often called the Parents and Friends Association or a Parents Auxiliary. These groups offer an opportunity for parents to gather and become involved in the life of the school. These groups take many forms and provide support for the school in areas such as:

- social functions
- maintenance of grounds, buildings and equipment
- fundraising for particular needs in the school
- voluntary support for educational programs.

Parent groups can also assist in fostering the intellectual, cultural, social and spiritual interests of their members, and provide opportunities for the development of community spirit among the staff, parents, parish and wider community.

Parent support

Catholic schools and Catholic Education Offices are committed to developing and maintaining opportunities for parent and community participation in the education of their children.

Victorian Catholic Schools Parent Body (VCSPB)

The Victorian Catholic Schools Parent Body (VCSPB) was established in October 2005. Its role is to:

- provide a forum to represent parents in Victorian Catholic schools
- promote parents as partners in education with the school, the Church and the community
- promote the principles of Catholic education in collaboration with the diocesan Bishops
- promote Catholic schools as schools of first choice for Catholic families.

The VCSPB provides an avenue for parents to participate at diocesan, state and national levels, advocates for Catholic school communities, and represents parents of students in Catholic schools through their school boards or parent associations. Each diocese has a representative on the VCSPB who ensures that school boards are informed about state issues.

For more information, see
www.vcspb.catholic.edu.au

Supporting parents – Access and affordability

Catholic education is strongly committed to the principles of social justice and the dignity of the human person. Catholic schools make it a priority, therefore, to create an environment in which all parents and families feel welcomed, valued and supported.

In particular, every effort is made to support and empower students with additional learning needs. For further information, see page 12 of this Handbook.

Support is available for students newly arrived in Australia and for families who are more comfortable communicating in a language other than English (see page 13 of this Handbook).

For families experiencing financial difficulties, the information in this section outlines a range of opportunities for assistance.

Government support¹

The Australian Government Schoolkids Bonus provides a guaranteed up-front payment to support families, eligible for Family Tax Benefit Part A, with the costs of their children's education. Currently this



¹At the time of publication, the details in this section were correct. You should check the relevant website for current allowances and eligibility requirements.

support equates to \$410 payment for every primary school child and \$820 for every secondary school-aged child. (Note: This is subject to government policy changes.)

For more information see www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/families-and-children/benefits-payments/schoolkids-bonus and www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/services/schoolkids-bonus

Transport

In country areas and some outer metropolitan areas, students who reside 4.8km or more from their nearest Catholic school may be eligible for transport support. In locations where there is not enough demand to run free school bus transport, the Victorian Government provides a conveyance allowance to help with travel costs.

For more information, first contact your child's school. If further information is required, see www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/safety/pages/conveyance.aspx or <http://ptv.vic.gov.au/getting-around/school-buses>

Public Transport Concessions

In Victoria, all students aged 17 and under can automatically travel on public transport at a concession rate. All students are eligible for a statewide Victorian Public Transport (VPT) Student Concession Card, which is required for purchasing a student transport pass.

For more information, see <http://ptv.vic.gov.au/tickets/concessions/students>



School-based support

Fees

If you have any concerns regarding payment of school fees or charges, you are encouraged to discuss these at any time with the principal of your child's school. Where appropriate, you will be able to make alternative arrangements to pay the fees. It is not helpful to ignore notices of request for payment.

Interpreting and translating services

All schools are able to provide access to interpreting and translating services free of charge. Parents of students from non-English-speaking backgrounds may request schools to provide interpreters for parent-teacher interviews and information sessions. Schools are also able to use the service to translate school notices.

Out of School Hours Care program (OSHC)

Some of our schools offer before- and after-school care and school holiday programs. You may contact your child's school for more information.



Parents using these services may also be able to access the Australian Government Child Care Benefit.

For information on the Child Care Benefit, see www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/services/centrelink/child-care-benefit

Scholarships

Some of our schools offer scholarships for prospective students and those already attending their schools. You may contact your child's school for more information.

Textbooks, equipment and ICT

Some textbooks, stationery and equipment will be provided by the school and a charge levied to the parent. Each student will be given a list of textbooks and equipment required. Many schools assist parents to buy and sell second-hand books. You may contact your child's school for more information.

Uniforms

Your child's school determines the uniform to be worn by all students. In addition, a sports uniform will usually be required. In some schools, parents can buy new or second-hand uniforms through a uniform shop. You may contact your child's school for more information.

Appendices



Useful contacts

Catholic Education Offices

Archdiocese of Melbourne

Central Office, James Goold House

East Melbourne

(03) 9267 0228

www.ceomelb.catholic.edu.au

Eastern Region – Croydon

(03) 9724 0200

Southern Region – Moorabbin East

(03) 9532 1922

Northern Region – West Melbourne

(03) 9329 8800

Western Region – Werribee

(03) 9731 3900

Diocese of Ballarat

Ballarat – (03) 5337 7135

www.ceoballarat.catholic.edu.au

Horsham Centre – (03) 5831 1260

Mildura Centre – (03) 5023 0722

Warrnambool Centre – (03) 5561 1177

Diocese of Sale

Warragul – (03) 5622 6600

www.ceosale.catholic.edu.au

Diocese of Sandhurst

Bendigo – (03) 5443 2377

www.ceosand.catholic.edu.au

Shepparton Office – (03) 5831 3811

Wangaratta Office – (03) 5723 0000

National Catholic Education Commission (NCEC)

(02) 6201 9830

www.ncec.catholic.edu.au

Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Limited (CECV)

(03) 9267 0228

www.cecv.catholic.edu.au

Victorian Catholic Schools Parent Body (VCSPB)

secretary@vcspb.catholic.edu.au

www.vcspb.catholic.edu.au

Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA)

(03) 9651 4300

www.vcaa.vic.edu.au

Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA)

(03) 9637 2806

www.vrqa.vic.gov.au

Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA)

1300 895 563

www.acara.edu.au

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Term Dates

For more information see www.cecv.catholic.edu.au

2016

TERM 1: Thursday 28 January – Thursday 24 March

TERM 2: Monday 11 April – Friday 24 June

TERM 3: Monday 11 July – Friday 16 September

TERM 4: Monday 3 October – Tuesday 20 December

2017

TERM 1: Tuesday 31 January – Friday 31 March

TERM 2: Tuesday 18 April – Friday 30 June

TERM 3: Monday 17 July – Friday 22 September

TERM 4: Monday 9 October – Friday 22 December

2018

TERM 1: Tuesday 30 January – Thursday 29 March

TERM 2: Monday 16 April – Friday 29 June

TERM 3: Monday 16 July – Friday 21 September

TERM 4: Monday 8 October – Friday 21 December

References

Congregation for Catholic Education 2013, *Educating in Inter-cultural Dialogue in the Catholic School*, Online, <www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_20131028_dialogo-interculturale_en.html>.

Congregation for Catholic Education 1997, *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium*, St Pauls Publications, Strathfield, NSW, Online, <www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/index.htm>.

New Revised Standard Version Bible: Catholic Edition 1993, Catholic Bible Press, Nashville, Tennessee.

