



Faith *in your* Child's Future

PARENT HANDBOOK FOR VICTORIAN CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOLS

I am the Way, the Truth and the Life.

(Jn 14: 6, NRSV)

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Message from the Directors of Catholic Education

Dear Parent¹

Welcome to Catholic education and thank you for considering a Catholic schooling 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 you will ensure that your child is educated in an environment where students are nurtured with strong Christian values based on the Gospels. 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 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 for your child.

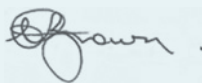
Catholic schools are supported by Catholic Education Offices in the Archdiocese of Melbourne and the Dioceses of Ballarat, Sale and Sandhurst. These authorities provide service and leadership, so you can be confident that state and national standards in education are maintained in all Catholic schools.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

We wish you and your family well as you begin 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

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¹The term parent is used to include natural, adoptive or foster parents, guardians and caregivers of students.

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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 104,000 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.

With highly qualified and caring teachers committed to the practice and celebration of Christian values, Catholic 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, 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 the Special education facilities section on page 13 of this Handbook.

Enrolments for children who turn five years of age by 30 April of the year in which they start school are welcomed. 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.

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.

By May each year most Catholic primary schools have begun taking enrolments for the following school year. Refer to the website of your Catholic parish primary school for specific enrolment details or contact the school by phone.

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.

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

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' occupation and level 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 (for example, does the child 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 welcome to discuss this with the principal of the school.

See also the *Supporting parents – Access and affordability* section on page 22 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 an orientation day/morning for pre-school students. This is an opportunity for children to spend a morning 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 get 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, meeting new friends.

Your child's learning

The purpose of each Catholic primary school is to give your child a foundation of faith, values, knowledge, skills, and attitudes 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 and 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 his/her own distinctive learning styles. Some students learn mainly through physical experience or hands-on tasks; other students prefer to learn using visual or verbal experiences. Teachers cater for the diverse needs of different students. Learning experiences are designed to help your child develop knowledge, skills and understanding in all areas of learning.



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 an inquiry learning approach to develop independent learning and the ability to make connections between ideas, areas of knowledge and experiences
- create flexible learning opportunities in response to different learning styles
- encourage effective use of contemporary technology to develop learning and understanding
- 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 his or her 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 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 (in 2013: English, mathematics, science and history). This is now known as AusVELS, and identifies what is essential for all students to learn during the compulsory years of schooling (Prep to Year 10).

Most of our primary schools use an integrated curriculum to structure the teaching and learning program. This promotes the ability to make meaningful links between different domains of study and supports the exploration of ideas and themes of study, particularly through the inquiry approach to learning.

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

Australian Curriculum

The Australian Curriculum is in development. The Australian Government, in collaboration with the state and territory governments, is committed to developing an Australian Curriculum from Foundation (in Victoria this year is known as Prep) to Year 12. The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) (see page 11) has responsibility for developing the curriculum in several phases. The Foundation – Year 10 curriculum in English, mathematics, science and history will be implemented in Victorian schools from 2013.

For more details see www.acara.edu.au or www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/Home



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 tradition 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, based on the particular character of the local community and in partnership with parents.

Literacy

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. Our schools emphasise the importance of literacy development across all years of schooling, but especially in the first few years.

Teachers plan programs based on assessment of student literacy needs. Individual schools tailor programs to meet the literacy needs of students as they progress through their schooling. Most of our primary schools offer Reading Recovery, the early intervention program for Year One students working below the expected level in literacy.

Mathematics

In mathematics learning your child is engaged in activities to learn ideas and develop skills in number, space, measurement and logic. Teachers aim to develop fully the talents and capabilities of all students by providing a challenging curriculum that is comprehensive, balanced and student-centred.

Mathematics programs aim to increase performance in mathematics learning for all students. Our schools monitor student mathematical achievement and use results to plan for your child's learning



needs. Where necessary, teachers use specially designed intervention programs to consolidate basic understanding in mathematics.

Science

Science education aims to foster your child's curiosity and wonder about the world, both visible and invisible, and to develop your child's knowledge and understanding of this world. It provides the opportunity to explore the relationship between science, society and technology and the implications for your child's life, the environment and the community in which s/he lives. Science learning provides your child with the skills and understanding appropriate to good citizenship and service of the common good.

Languages

The study of languages is an integral component of a broad and balanced education for all students. At a time of rapid globalisation, learning a language is more important than ever. In learning a language, students develop communication skills and knowledge and awareness of other cultures. They come to understand social, historical and family relationships, and the culture of the people who speak the language studied.



Each of our primary schools usually offers students the opportunity to learn a language. This may be Italian, Japanese, Indonesian, French, Arabic, Chinese (Mandarin) or Vietnamese. If your preferred language is not offered by your child's school, you may be able to access the services of the Victorian School of Languages (VSL), which offers after-school and Saturday classes and distance education. The school may require that this study is in addition to the normal learning program.

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

Physical education and sport

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 activity. 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, district, zone, state and national levels.



Humanities

The study of history, geography and economics gives students the opportunity to learn about people and their cultures and environments, in the past and the present. The humanities assist students to gain the knowledge, skills and attitudes to understand themselves and their world.

Your child will learn to plan, investigate and ask key questions, analyse data, form conclusions and present information in a variety of ways through integrated topics and projects.

Arts

The Arts are a vital part of primary school experiences, allowing your child to express his/her emotions, individuality, imagination and creativity. There are many opportunities for your child to participate in music, dance, drama and visual arts activities. Many of our schools stage regular concerts involving performances in dance, drama and music. There are opportunities to learn a musical instrument. Through visual arts your child will be able to create artworks in different media, including painting, drawing, clay modelling, graphics programs, etc.

General skills and values

The curriculum is designed to develop your child's skills in thinking and solving problems, decision-making, using technology, planning and organisation, as well as creativity and design. Our schools encourage students to be active citizens by understanding their place in society and their rights and responsibilities as citizens. Your child will develop important interpersonal and leadership skills, including communication, building social relationships and working with others.

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 s/he has another student at school to whom s/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 a task or test may be set to gain a clearer idea of how well your child is understanding what has been taught. This important feedback 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 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 is 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. It 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 Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS) and the phasing in of the Australian Curriculum (AusVELS), the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE), the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) 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 students with additional learning needs by developing and implementing individual learning programs within the school.

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.

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

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.

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. For example, full-time students who have a physical or multiple disability 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.

Special education facilities

In the Archdiocese of Melbourne, special education facilities are available at:

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

In the Sandhurst Diocese, the Doxa School in Bendigo, Borinya in Wangaratta and Notre Dame College, Shepparton, provide special education facilities.

For more information contact:

- Catholic Education Office
Melbourne: 03 9267 0228 or www.ceomelb.catholic.edu.au
OR
- Catholic Education Office,
Sandhurst: 03 5443 2377 or www.ceosand.catholic.edu.au

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, which assist schools in identifying gifted students, assessing specific needs, and making appropriate programming recommendations to school staff. 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 Indigenous 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.

As part of the Aboriginal Catholic Ministry, Melbourne, the 'Opening the Doors Foundation' provides assistance to parents of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who attend our schools in Victoria, so that they are able 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), and their teachers. You may contact your child's school for more information.

Your child's health, wellbeing and safety

Children thrive in 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 within the Australian Government's National Safe Schools Framework (NSSF).

For more information on the NSSF see www.deewr.gov.au

Student wellbeing and behaviour management plans and protocols in our schools outline expectations and responsibilities that promote mutual care, acceptance, courtesy and respect.

Our schools have anti-bullying policies and strategies for dealing with serious incidents, based on government requirements and the Pastoral Care policy of the Catholic Education Office of your diocese. Many schools appoint dedicated Student Wellbeing Coordinators 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.



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 the Catholic Education Office Melbourne.

For more information contact the Catholic Education Office Melbourne on (03) 9267 0228 or execdirector@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 plans and procedures for anaphylaxis management and the training of relevant staff. An individual Anaphylaxis Management Plan is developed for each student at risk and you are required to provide 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.

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.

Learning

- Encourage your child to take increasing responsibility for his/her learning and organisational skills.
- Discuss your child's school work and progress with him/her.
- Contact the relevant teacher to discuss any problems your child is having with his/her classwork or homework.
- 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 completing homework, watching television, playing computer games and engaging in other leisure or recreational activities.

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.



Homework

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

What you can do to help your child with homework

- Ask whether homework (for upper primary students) has been set and ensure your child keeps a homework diary.
- Acknowledge your child's success and ask how his/her homework and class work are progressing.
- Help your child to plan and organise a time and space for completing work at home.
- Assist your child to complete work at home by discussing key questions and directing him/her to resources.
- Discuss homework in your child's first language (where English is not the main language spoken at home) and link it to his/her previous experience.

Your child's progress

Our schools welcome opportunities to communicate with you about your child's progress, to enable you to:

- assist with your child's progress
- see examples of work
- develop a relationship with your child's teachers.

There are formal occasions for this, both face-to-face and in writing (see the Assessing and reporting your child's



progress section on page 11 of this Handbook). However, you are welcome to make appointments at other mutually convenient times to discuss any concerns.

Contact information

It is important that you keep the school up to date with your contact telephone numbers and those of an emergency contact. There may be times when the school will need to contact you. 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.gov.au/sreg

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



Parish education boards

Parish education boards, or school boards, are established in most Catholic schools. These boards bring together priests, members of religious orders, principals and parents in a spirit of collaboration to realise the school's vision and achieve its educational aims. School boards may provide advice in areas such as school improvement and the development of policy. Procedures and processes for parent representation on school boards are available at your child's school.

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 for the school community
- 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.

It 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.

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

Parent Seminar Series – Archdiocese of Melbourne

The Parent Seminar Series, operating in the Archdiocese of Melbourne for over 17 years, provides parents with a forum for discussing a range of topical issues relating to their children's education and personal development.

For more information see
 the Parents section at
www.ceomelb.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 the Additional learning needs section on page 12 of this Handbook.) Support is available for students newly arrived in Australia or for families who are more comfortable communicating in a language other than English (see Interpreting and translating services on page 24). For families experiencing financial difficulties this section provides a number of opportunities for assistance.

Government support²

Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA)

If you have a child under 16 years of age and receive an eligible Centrelink benefit along with a health care or pension card, you may be eligible for an Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) from the Victorian Government. This allowance is provided to assist low-income families to offset the cost of the essential educational items that all parents are required to pay for.



²At the time of publication, the details in this section were correct. You should check the relevant website for current allowances and eligibility requirements.

Application for the EMA is made through your child's school. The school will provide you with further information, including the application form and details about deadlines, which it is your responsibility to meet.

For more information see www.education.vic.gov.au/aboutschool/financial/ema.htm, or call 1800 060 970

Schoolkids Bonus

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.

For more information see www.deewr.gov.au/Schooling/Pages/SchoolkidsBonus.aspx or www.humanservices.gov.au, or call Centrelink on 132 468

Transport

In country areas and some outer metropolitan areas, students who live more than 4.8 km 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/aboutschool/lifeatschool/traveltoschool.htm or <http://corp.ptv.vic.gov.au/projects/school-buses/>, or call the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development on (03) 9637 2000



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://corp.ptv.vic.gov.au>

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.facs.gov.au under Family Assistance Office/Publications/Fact Sheets

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 and equipment

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.

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

(03) 5337 7135
www.ceoballarat.catholic.edu.au

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

2013

TERM 1: Wednesday 30 January – Thursday 28 March

TERM 2: Monday 15 April – Friday 28 June

TERM 3: Monday 15 July – Friday 20 September

TERM 4: Monday 7 October – Friday 20 December

2014

TERM 1: Wednesday 29 January – Thursday 4 April

TERM 2: Tuesday 22 April – Friday 27 June

TERM 3: Monday 14 July – Friday 19 September

TERM 4: Monday 6 October – Friday 19 December

2015

TERM 1: Friday 30 January – Friday 27 March

TERM 2: Monday 13 April – Friday 26 June

TERM 3: Monday 13 July – Friday 18 September

TERM 4: Monday 5 October – Friday 18 December

References

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

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

