

# PLACEMENT POLICY GUIDELINES

2019



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# GENERAL

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The Department's Placement Policy embeds the legal entitlement for students to enrol at their designated neighbourhood school, and to enrol at another school if there is sufficient accommodation.

## SCOPE OF THE PLACEMENT POLICY

All Victorian government schools are required to comply with the Placement Policy except those schools where the Minister has approved specific entry criteria (outlined below). The Placement Policy applies to the placement of students at all year levels, from Prep to Year 12. Single-sex government schools are required to follow the Placement Policy, noting that only students of the requisite gender are eligible to apply.

### Categories of schools with specific entry criteria

- Select entry high schools
- Special development schools
- English Language Schools and Centres
- Camp and outdoor schools
- Hospital schools and teaching units
- Distance schools
- Community/alternative schools
- Individual schools with entry criteria as approved by the Minister.

## DEFINITION OF DESIGNATED NEIGHBOURHOOD SCHOOL

In Victoria, children of compulsory school age are entitled to be enrolled at their designated neighbourhood school. The designated neighbourhood school is generally the government school within closest proximity to the student's permanent residential address, unless the Minister or their delegate (such as the Regional Director) has restricted the zone of a school. In such cases, a child's designated neighbourhood school may not be their nearest school.

## ATTENDING A SCHOOL THAT IS NOT THE STUDENT'S DESIGNATED NEIGHBOURHOOD SCHOOL

Students are able to apply for a place at a school that is not their designated neighbourhood school. All requests from students living outside the school's zone will be considered by the principal at the preferred school.

## PLACEMENT WHEN THERE ARE SUFFICIENT PLACES FOR ALL STUDENTS WHO SEEK ENTRY

If there are sufficient places, under the Placement Policy it is expected that government schools will accept all students of school age seeking enrolment at the school. Newly established schools are exempted from this expectation, as they must manage enrolments to ensure they do not exceed capacity once fully operational across all years of schooling.

The Department's Transfers Policy deals with the process for students transferring between schools outside of the Year 6 to 7 placement process. See: [Transfers Policy](#)

For more information on school capacity, see: [Managing Enrolments](#)

## **PLACEMENT WHEN THERE ARE INSUFFICIENT PLACES FOR ALL STUDENTS WHO SEEK ENTRY**

Where there are insufficient places at a school for all students who seek entry, students are enrolled according to the Placement Policy's priority order of placement, which has six criteria. Schools ensure that all applicants eligible under a criterion have been offered a place before moving to consideration of the next. All students for whom the school is the designated neighbourhood school are guaranteed a place. The priority order of placement is as follows:

1. Students for whom the school is the designated neighbourhood school
2. Students with a sibling at the same permanent address who are attending the school at the same time
3. Where the Regional Director has restricted the enrolment, students who reside nearest the school
4. Students seeking enrolment on specific curriculum grounds
5. All other students in order of closeness of their home to the school.
6. In exceptional circumstances, compassionate grounds.

## **SIBLINGS**

For the purposes of the Placement Policy a sibling can include step-siblings who live at the same permanent address.

The sibling criteria applies to placement decisions at all year levels, from Prep to Year 12. Parents are able to indicate on the *Application for Year 7 Placement* form if the student has an older sibling who resides at the same permanent residential address and who will also be attending the school.

## **RESTRICTED ENROLMENT**

As indicated in the Placement Policy, the Regional Director may restrict enrolments at a school through:

- the application of a restricted zone and/or,
- restricting new enrolments at the school.

In determining the need for such a restriction, factors considered include the demand for places from within and outside the school's zone, the school's site capacity, built capacity, and the effect on, and capacity at, surrounding schools.

Schools are notified in writing by the Regional Director if a restriction is being applied or modified.

For more information on school zones and capacity, see: [Managing Enrolments](#)

## **CURRICULUM GROUNDS**

In years Prep to 10 all Victorian government schools offer the Victorian Curriculum as set by the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority – therefore regardless of which government school they choose, parents can be confident that their child will learn the common set of knowledge and skills required by students for life-long learning, social development and active and informed citizenship.

Within this broader curriculum, schools have the flexibility to focus on particular learning areas depending on the needs and interests of their community. For example, within the languages

learning area government schools have the flexibility to select which language(s) they offer in consultation with their local communities.

Students seeking enrolment on curriculum grounds are considered only after the school has first ensured that all students eligible under the first three criteria of the placement policy have been accommodated. Importantly, secondary schools are not able to make offers of a place, including those offers based on curriculum grounds, prior to the scheduled system-wide release of offers in August each year.

## EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES

The Placement Policy recognises there are exceptional circumstances where a student may be unable to attend their designated neighbourhood school, or where on compassionate grounds the student should be offered a place at another government school.

In instances where there are exceptional circumstances and the student is unable to attend their designated neighbourhood school, the student will generally be offered a place at the school in next closest proximity to the student's permanent address, unless there is substantive evidence that placement at another government school is required.

In instances where on compassionate grounds, the student is seeking a place at a specific government school, there must be substantive evidence to demonstrate that enrolment at the preferred school is required.

Each application will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis. Schools may request written documentation to support a request for consideration on compassionate grounds, such as reports from social workers or mental health professionals. Instances of compassionate grounds are of a sensitive nature, and the Department and schools comply with strict privacy arrangements.

For more information, see: [Privacy Policy](#)

## FAIRNESS AND EQUITY

School enrolment practices must be fair, equitable and comply with state and federal laws. Factors such as ability, history of behaviour or level of engagement with education are irrelevant factors for placement decisions. The DET Placement Policy and priority order of placement ensures schools enrol students in a way that is fair, equitable and lawful.

Further information about fair, equitable and lawful enrolment practices is available at:

- [Disability standards for education](#)
- [Help for students who can't attend school due to disability and complex health care needs](#)

## APPEALING A PLACEMENT DECISION

Parents/carers are able to appeal against a school's decision not to provide a placement. This can occur in relation to placements at Year 7, or placements at other year levels

Appeals are to be made in writing and lodged with the school at which the student has been unsuccessful in seeking a placement. In the case of appeals regarding Year 7 placements, there is a set date by which time any appeals must be lodged, which will be outlined on the *Application for Year 7 Placement* form. Appeals are considered by the school's placement committee and/or Principal, and the school's decision will be communicated to the parent/carer in writing. In assessing the appeal, the school will check to ensure compliance with the priority order of placement, and the processes for verifying permanent address, as appropriate. In the case of appeals regarding Year 7 placements, there is a set date by which time the school must respond to parents/carers lodging an appeal, usually two to three weeks after the appeals period closes.

If the appeal at the school level is unsuccessful and parents/carers are not satisfied that their appeal has been adequately considered, they are able to escalate the appeal to the relevant Regional Director, by lodging an appeal in writing. In the case of appeals regarding Year 7 placements, appeals to the Regional Director must be lodged by the set closing date (usually in September, as advised in school's placement committee's letter). Appeals are considered by a panel of senior regional staff which then provides advice and a recommendation to the Regional Director who makes the final decision. This concludes the appeal process.

Regional office contact details and locations are on the Department's website, see: [Our Office Locations](#)

# YEAR 7 PLACEMENTS

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The Department of Education and Training's website contains comprehensive information on the transition from Year 6 to Year 7.

For information for parents, see: [Tips for starting primary and secondary school](#)

## APPLICATION PROCESS FOR YEAR 7

In April of each year government primary schools distribute the *Application for Year 7 Placement* form to families of all students in Year 6. All students are requested to complete and return the form, even if they have been accepted into a non-government school (there is provision to indicate this on the form).

Families are asked to complete the form and return it to their primary school no later than a set state-wide date in May. If, at any stage, any details on the *Application for Year 7 Placement* form change, families are requested to notify their primary school immediately.

Fee-paying international students are not required to complete this form, they should instead make a new application for enrolment into a government school at [International Student Program](#) or apply directly to their school of choice if this is a non-government school.

Although Year 7 placements will be determined by secondary schools, all communication regarding the Year 6 to Year 7 transition process must be in writing and lodged through the family's primary school until the Year 7 placement is confirmed. Primary schools notify parents/carers of placement offers, in writing, in August. This notification should include a rationale for any non-placement at the preferred school, if applicable.

Schools are not able to make offers of a place, including those offers based on curriculum grounds, prior to the scheduled system-wide date of the release of offers.

## APPLICATION PROCESS FOR YEAR 7 WHEN THE STUDENT IS CONTINUING AT THE SAME SCHOOL (SUCH AS A PREP TO YEAR 12, PREP TO YEAR 10, OR PREP TO YEAR 9)

If a student is already enrolled in a junior campus of a school, then the student is assured of a place at the senior campus of a school.

If the child is **continuing** at the same school (such as a Prep to Year 12, Prep to Year 10, or Prep to Year 9 school), a Year 7 Placement form does **not** need to be completed.

If the child is **not intending to continue** at the same school, a Year 7 Placement form does need to be completed.

## APPLICATION PROCESS FOR YEAR 7 WHEN A GOVERNMENT SECONDARY SCHOOL HAS MULTIPLE CAMPUSES

There are several government secondary schools in Victoria that offer Year 7 enrolments at more than one campus. Each campus of a school has its own zone and follows the Department's Placement Policy. If you wish your child to attend a particular campus, you will need to indicate your preference in Section 4 of the *Application for Year 7 Placement* form.

## PROCESS FOR STUDENTS ATTENDING A NON-GOVERNMENT SCHOOL FOR YEAR 7

Confirmed Placement: If you are sure that you already have a place for your child in a non-government secondary school for Year 7, to commence in 2020, you are not required to complete Section 4 of the *Application for Year 7 Placement* form.

Unconfirmed placement: If you have applied for a place for your child in a non-government secondary school to commence Year 7 in 2020, but have not had this placement confirmed, you may also apply for a place in a government school.

Late confirmation of placement: If your child is granted a place in a non-government secondary school after you have been allocated a place in a government school, you are asked to notify your primary school immediately so that your child's place can be reallocated.

## APPLICATION PROCESS FOR YEAR 7 WHEN A CHILD IS ATTENDING A NON-GOVERNMENT PRIMARY SCHOOL

Parents/carers should lodge the completed form with the secondary school that is their first preference.

## APPLICATION PROCESS FOR YEAR 7 WHEN A CHILD IS HOME SCHOOLED

Regional offices are able to provide parents/carers of home school children a copy of the application for placement form and provide further information regarding the Year 7 placement process.

## APPLICATION PROCESS FOR YEAR 7 FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Fee-paying international students should make a new application at [International Student Program](#) or for enrolment into a government school, or apply directly to their school of choice if this is a non-government school.

For more information, see: [Victorian Government Schools International Student Program](#)

## SIGN-OFF OF THE APPLICATION FOR YEAR 7 PLACEMENT FORM

Where practicable all parents of a child should sign and submit a single application for placement form.

For the purposes of this form, a parent includes a guardian, any person who has parental responsibility for the child including parental responsibility under the *Family Law Act 1975* and an informal carer of the child under an Informal Carer Statutory Declaration.

For further information, see the Department of Education and Training policy on Decision Making Responsibilities for Students.

**Note:** Where it is not practicable or possible for parents to sign a single form, they should communicate this to the primary school who will allow more than one application form to be completed and submitted by each parent. These applications will be treated as separate applications. If the student is offered two placements at different schools as a result, the parents are expected to reach an agreement about which placement to accept in the best interests of the student. If parents or carers have difficulty reaching agreement, it is recommended the dispute be resolved through discussion, attendance at the Family Relationship Centre or at Court.



# DETERMINING PERMANENT RESIDENCE

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The advice in this section is reproduced from the Department's Permanent Residence Guidelines, published on the Schools Policy and Advisory Guide (SPAG).

## DEFINITION OF 'PERMANENT RESIDENCE'

For the purpose of student enrolment in Victorian government schools, the permanent place of residence is considered to be the address at which a child permanently resides at the time of enrolment.

## APPROACH WHEN THE STUDENT HAS TWO ADDRESSES

In the case of shared parenting arrangement, where a child resides at multiple addresses, the child's 'permanent residence' is the address at which the child spends the majority of their weekdays as described in a parenting plan or court order, or confirmed in writing by both parents via a statutory declaration.

If the child spends an equal amount of time at two addresses, both addresses will be considered the child's permanent address and the child will be entitled to enrol in the designated neighbourhood school for either address (or any other Victorian government school subject to entry criteria and capacity).

The final choice of which school the child ultimately attends rests with the parents/carers or student if they are an adult or mature minor for the purpose of making enrolment decisions.

## EVIDENCE FOR DEMONSTRATING PERMANENT RESIDENCE

To assist schools in verifying a student's permanent residence when assessing enrolment applications, schools may request parents/carers to provide supporting documentation such as original or certified copies of rental agreements or unconditional contracts of sale, electoral roll confirmation, council rates notices or other official documentation that demonstrates permanent residence at that address such as a driver's license or health care card. Documents should show the same address and parent's/carer's name as recorded on the school enrolment application form.

This request may occur after the parent has submitted an Application for Placement Request, if deemed necessary by the school. Information to parents/carers should clearly explain that the documentation is required to confirm that the student is eligible to enrol at the school on the basis that their permanent residence is within the school's zone. The school should also clearly communicate to parents/carers applying to enrol, that the enrolment application may not be accepted if the requested information/documentation is not provided.

Alternatively, the school may ask parents to complete a statutory declaration confirming they are living at the address and that the arrangement is genuine and intended to be permanent. Schools may also remind parents/carers that a person who makes a false declaration is liable to the penalties of perjury.

If a school has concerns about the duration of a rental agreement being provided as proof of permanent address, the school should consult with the family to ensure that the school has provided reasonable consideration to the family's living circumstances. For example, it is not acceptable to disregard a rental agreement that is shorter than 12 months from the time of enrolment if this accurately reflects a family's residential circumstances.

## ENQUIRIES FOR VERIFICATION OF PERMANENT RESIDENCE

Schools can make reasonable enquiries to verify permanent address information provided by parents/carers, such as:

- Checking the electoral roll at an Australian Electoral Commission office or the Victorian Electoral Commission head office
- Checking with a real estate agent
- Checking whether the contact landline phone number provided is registered to the residence provided on the enrolment form
- For a rental property which is a studio apartment or a one bedroom unit, checking whether there are any regulations/codes limiting the occupancy of these apartments to one person per apartment.

To satisfy privacy law requirements, schools should ensure parents/carers applying for enrolment are aware of the enquiries the school may make to verify the information provided about a student's permanent residence.

**Note:** The Department does not consider home inspections or surveillance to be reasonable forms of enquiry and does not support these practices.

## NON-ACCEPTANCE OF ADDRESS PROVIDED ON ENROLMENT APPLICATION FORM

If, after making reasonable enquiries, the Principal does not accept that the address provided on the enrolment application form (and any subsequent supporting documentation) is the genuine permanent residence of the student, the school may refuse the enrolment if the school is in a position where it is applying the priority order of placement due to demand for places exceeding supply.

The school should ensure reasons are provided to the parent/carer for not accepting the address and ensure the parent/carer is aware that they may appeal this decision.

## CHANGE TO THE STUDENT'S ADDRESS AFTER AN ENROLMENT OFFER HAS BEEN MADE

If, after a placement offer is made to the student, the student's permanent residence changes or it comes to light that the address provided on the application form was not the genuine permanent residence for the student, a school may only withdraw a placement offer in the following circumstances:

- The placement offer made to the student expressly states that the offer may be withdrawn prior to the first day of attendance if the student's permanent place of residence changes or the school becomes aware that the address provided on the application form was not the genuine permanent residence for the student; and the new address is not within the zone for the school.

Prior to withdrawing an offer of enrolment in the above circumstances, school staff should consider any safety or wellbeing issues relating to the student and should consult with the regional office or the Department's Legal Division.

## INABILITY TO PROVIDE EVIDENCE OF PERMANENT RESIDENCE

Schools should ensure enrolment practices do not unfairly disadvantage students who are unable to provide proof of permanent address because of their individual circumstances. This is particularly relevant to students experiencing homelessness, family violence or recently arrived

immigrants or refugees. In these cases, school staff should seek advice from their regional office before refusing an enrolment application on the basis that the student is unable to provide proof of permanent residence.

## MORE INFORMATION

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Families are encouraged to contact their primary school if they require further information about the application process and Year 6 to Year 7 transition arrangements, or if they require assistance completing the *Application for Year 7 Placement* form.

Schools should contact their respective Youth Pathways and Transition Manager for assistance.

Regional office contact details and locations are on the Department's website, see: [Our Office Locations](#)