

ENROLMENT

Under the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic):

- Schooling is compulsory for students aged between 6 and 17 years unless an exemption from attendance has been granted. This applies to all schools including mainstream, specialist, and government English language schools or centres.
- Every Victorian student has a legislated right to enrol at their designated neighbourhood school (section 2.2.13) and may be enrolled at another school subject to sufficient accommodation (section 2.2.14).

Victorian government schools must refer to the Enrolment in a Victorian Government School Guidelines for details on:

- age eligibility, including exceptions and exemptions from the maximum and minimum school age requirements and processes
- determining designated neighbourhood school areas and zones
- Department policy requirements relating to placement of students (Placement Policy) and enrolment management
- enrolment appeal processes and requirements
- determining permanent residence of students and families
- required documentation and information when enrolling students
- transfers between schools
- concurrent enrolment for students entering youth justice or secure welfare.

PLACEMENT POLICY

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.

All Victorian government schools must manage enrolments in accordance with this Placement Policy, except those schools where the Minister has approved specific entry criteria, being:

- select entry high schools
- special and 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.

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.

The Regional Director has the authority to effect placement of a student.

Right to attend the designated neighbourhood school

Eligible children and young persons have the right to be admitted to their designated neighbourhood government school, regardless of capacity.

A student's designated neighbourhood school is generally the school that is nearest the student's permanent address as determined by the school zone. The [Find My School website](#) provides guidance on which school zone a student's permanent residence is located within.

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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 students who seek enrolment in a school outside of their designated neighbourhood school should be enrolled in that school, if there is sufficient capacity at the school to accommodate all students who apply, or if this request for enrolment aligns with the school's enrolment management plan (if they have one).

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 five criteria.

In exceptional circumstances, a student may be enrolled in a school based on compassionate grounds. This is an overarching consideration and does not form part of the priority order of placement. Schools are permitted to assess and make a determination for exceptional circumstances applications on a case-by-case basis.

Schools must 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.

Priority Order of Placement

In circumstances when a school may not be able to accept all applications due to existing or future capacity concerns, schools must manage enrolment applications in accordance with the following priority order of placement:

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.

In exceptional circumstances, a student may be enrolled in a school based on compassionate grounds. This is an overarching consideration and does not form part of the priority order of placement. Schools are permitted to assess and make a determination for exceptional circumstances applications on a case-by-case basis.

1. Designated neighbourhood school

Eligible children and young persons have the right to be admitted to their designated neighbourhood government school, regardless of capacity.

A student's designated neighbourhood school is generally the school that is nearest the student's permanent address as determined by the school zone. The [Find My School website](#) provides guidance on which school zone a student's permanent residence is located within.

Schools must place a link to this policy and the Find My School website on their own websites. Sample wording for use on school website is:

Our school zone is available on findmyschool.vic.gov.au which hosts the most up-to-date information about Victorian school zones.

Students residing in our school zone are guaranteed a place at our school, which is determined on the basis of your permanent residential address.

The Department provides guidance through the [Enrolment: Placement Policy](#) to ensure that students have access to their designated neighbourhood school and the freedom to choose other schools, subject to facility limitations.

You can find more information and answers to frequently asked questions on the Department's website under [School zones](#).

2. Siblings

The sibling criteria applies to placement decisions at all year levels, from Prep to Year 12.

A sibling can be defined to broadly include step-siblings residing together at the same permanent address and students residing together at the same permanent address as part of statutory out-of-home-care arrangements, including foster care, kinship care and permanent care. Enrolment on sibling grounds may also be considered for students permanently residing together in the one residence as part of multiple family cohabitation. Students seeking enrolment on sibling grounds must be residing together at the same permanent address and must be attending the school at the same time.

For Year 7 applications, parents and carers can 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 enrolled at the school at the same time. There is an expectation that schools will enrol all older and younger siblings, unless otherwise agreed with the Regional Director. A school should only seek to restrict or limit enrolments of out of zone siblings if they consider there to be significant future or current capacity restraints (for example, there is a concern that students within zone could not be accommodated in present or future years) and where they have agreed with the Regional Director.

To seek agreement from the relevant Regional Director to restrict enrolments for out of zone siblings, schools must submit the Exemption Form to Criterion 2 of the Placement Policy application form. Schools can obtain a copy of the application form by contacting their Regional office.

Any agreement between schools and the relevant Regional Director on enrolment restrictions for out of zone siblings must be reviewed annually.

3. Restricting enrolments

Under section 2.2.16 of the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic), the Minister for Education may specify and approve entry criteria for a particular school. This power has also been delegated to the Department's four Regional Directors (Instrument of Delegation No. 2020/DO6).

The Regional Director may restrict enrolments at a school through:

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

In determining the need for such a restriction, the following factors are considered:

- demand for places from within and outside the school's zone
- the school's site capacity
- the school's built capacity
- the effect on, and capacity at, surrounding schools.

If a school is seeking to restrict enrolments, the region should be contacted. The Regional Director notifies schools in writing if a restriction is being applied or modified. All restrictions will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure they are still required.

4. 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 Year 7 placement offers, including those offers based on curriculum grounds, prior to the state-wide release of Year 7 placement offers in August each year.

Student tests or entry interviews must not occur prior to Year 7 placement offers, including offers based on curriculum grounds.

5. Order of closeness of their home to the school

This criteria only applies to students who are seeking enrolment in a school other than their designated neighbourhood school (where their permanent address is outside of the school's zone).

Exceptional circumstances — compassionate grounds

The Department recognises there may be some situations where, due to exceptional circumstances, a student may be unable to enrol in their designated neighbourhood school, or it may not be in the student's best interests to enrol in their designated neighbourhood school. In these exceptional circumstances, enrolment at another school may be sought on compassionate grounds.

In these instances, families must be able to clearly demonstrate the exceptional circumstances which they believe make an enrolment at their designated neighbourhood school unsuitable for their child or children, citing, for example, family violence or specific wellbeing, safety, physical health and/or mental health concerns. Importantly, this is not a comprehensive list of exceptional circumstances whereby a family may seek an enrolment on compassionate grounds; each application will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

The student will generally be offered a place at the school in next closest proximity to the student's permanent address or current address or location where relevant.

If seeking enrolment at a specific school that is not their designated neighbourhood school, families must be able to provide substantive evidence addressing why an enrolment at the specific school would best meet their child's circumstances.

When making an application to the Principal / Regional Director on compassionate grounds, schools and Regions can request that families provide further evidence to support their application, including, but not limited to:

- legal documentation
- reports from allied health and/or medical professionals, Department of Health and Human Services Practitioners, Victoria Police, family violence services, court orders and so on.

Not all of these documents may be requested from families; they will be requested on a case-by case-basis. These documents may assist schools and regions in their decision making processing in determining if there are exceptional circumstances and whether enrolment should be considered on compassionate grounds.

Instances of compassionate grounds are of a sensitive nature and if they relate to family violence, may pose risks to health and life. Family and student privacy will be maintained in these circumstances.

Enrolment Management

Enrolment management is an important tool used by schools and regions to ensure that all students can attend their local school. Strategies that support enrolment management include:

- maintaining accurate and complete enrolment records and data, to facilitate enrolment planning
- planning for an even distribution of students across all year levels while maintaining class size targets
- considering your enrolment projections and ensuring that the starting cohort of enrolment numbers does not increase to the extent that the overall capacity of the school is exceeded for the life of the cohort
- monitoring enrolment trends and subject/curriculum demands in the school
- advising current and prospective parents about any limits on enrolment early.

An enrolment management plan may be implemented by a school, with support from and in consultation with the regional office, when a school is required to manage enrolments in order to effectively manage or plan for current or future capacity. Regional Offices can also recommend and work in partnership with schools to develop enrolment management plans where necessary.

Enrolment management plans can be used as a tool for managing the number of out of zone enrolments when a school is at capacity or nearing capacity. This is done to ensure that all local students who seek entry can be accommodated within existing accommodation.