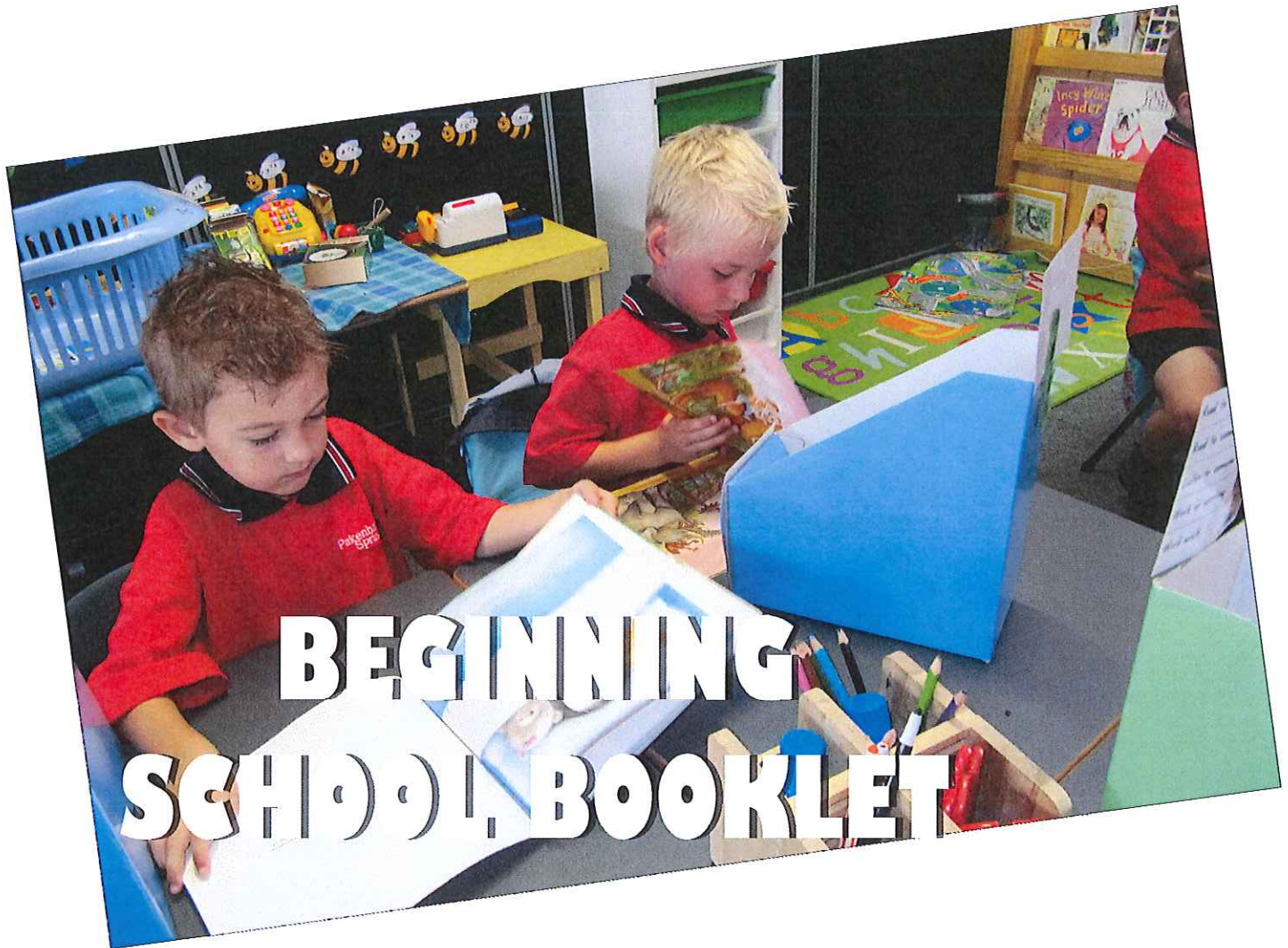


Pakenham Springs



BEGINNING SCHOOL BOOKLET

You have probably been preparing your child for school without even knowing it, all the child's life! You are your child's first teacher. What your child learns at school will build on the skills and knowledge you have already helped your child learn. Starting school should be seen as a natural progression—an exciting step your child is ready to take. This booklet is designed to make those first steps easier.



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1. INTRODUCTION

Progress from home or pre-school to school, is among the first and most dramatic of social transitions made by young children. Ability to cope with this stage can lay the foundations for success or failure during their early years at school, or even later.

Parents and others who are aware of the demands which are likely to be placed on these young children, can do much to support them and ease the transition.

This booklet has been written to help parents meet the needs of their children at this special time. It suggests ways of developing appropriate physical, social, emotional and intellectual abilities for a child about to commence schooling.

The school is a place where the parent expects a child will learn. Before children are able to benefit from the teaching that the school offers, however, they need to have reached certain stages of physical, social, emotional and intellectual development. This is stating the obvious. Few parents would consider that their three year old was ready for school, but they recognise a five year old's eagerness for experience outside the family.

No specific standards of readiness are mentioned in this booklet because children develop at different rates and so start school with different levels of skills. Schools take this into account when planning programs and activities for beginners.

If a child is competent in most areas, it may not matter much if there are some things that he/she cannot do (eg. tie shoelaces, say "yellow" or skip).

There are many ways that parents can ensure that their children are ready for their introduction to school and not be disappointed by their introduction and to help make the transition as successful as possible.

Here are a few well tested, tried and true ways of helping your child on this important journey.

The build-up

- Talk to your child about what they can expect, but don't go for over kill. Some children will wonder, "Is that all there is?" if their expectations have been built up too much. Conversely, do not use school as a threat; "Wait till you get to school, you won't be able to talk to your teacher like that!" An even handed approach is advised. At Pakenham Springs Primary School schooling will be fun, but children will be expected to become more independent and responsible for their behaviour and their learning.
- Pre-school is the ideal way to prepare your child for school, but, where pre-school has not been practical, creche, playgroups or playing at home with other children can provide opportunities





for children to learn the art of socialising and independent behaviour.

- At Pakenham Springs we have an extensive transition program for our new prep intake. If you missed it, bring your child up to our school before the first day and show them around the school. When you meet the teacher, don't be afraid to stress that your child has missed out on the transition program and may need some extra care and attention.

- If your child can't do up

shoelaces yet, buy shoes with velcro fastenings. Do all you can to make sure that your child can take care of themselves. Simple skills such as doing up buttons, picking up toys and wiping their nose will help them to assimilate in the classroom.

- Clearly label everything, and if they can't recognise their names draw a funny face or motif as well.
- Make sure your child knows exactly where you will be picking them up from each day.
- When you have given your child to the teacher and he/she is clearly in charge, say goodbye brightly and firmly and then go. If you feel like crying wait until you're in the car. If you linger over the goodbye and appear hesitant, your anxiety will spread to your child.
- If your child starts crying, take your cue from the teacher. Repeat your assurances, and then leave. You can rest assured that the teacher will comfort your child and have them settled within minutes.
- If you are working and another person will be taking your child to school, try at least to arrange to take your child yourself for the first few days. It is important not only for the child, but for you as a parent, to participate in the rite of passage.

A couple of don'ts

- Upon your child's return home don't say, "We had a great day while you were at school. I took baby to grandma's and we had jelly and ice cream." Your child is bound to be very cross.
- Don't expect your child to necessarily run beaming into your arms and tell you all about their first wonderful day. If you ask your child what they did they will probably say: "Nothing". Your child may be hot, tired and irritable. Allow them time to relax. It may take the first term and the Easter break for them to adjust to the pace of school life.



- If your child complains that they have no-one to play with or the teacher is “yucky” try not to panic. When a beginning school child claims they don’t have a friend it probably means that one day in the playground they looked around and for 60 seconds couldn’t find anyone to play with.

Home and school

- School should not be a separate part of a child’s life but should complement home life. Make yourself known to your child’s teacher. Discuss expectations and ensure that you both have the same ground rules for your child. Don’t sabotage attempts to educate your child and don’t expect to hand over all responsibilities for learning and discipline to the school.
- At Pakenham Springs Primary School we wish the channels of communication to remain open so problems can be circumvented, and if they occur, more easily solved.
- Books, books and more books. Research shows that children who grasp literacy skills the quickest are those who have been read to at home. One of the best ways to prepare your child for school is to simply read to them each day. Ten to fifteen minutes is all it takes.





2. ENSURING YOUR CHILD IS READY FOR SCHOOL

At Pakenham Springs Primary School teachers give particular care and support to children starting school. Our Junior School teachers in future years will visit preschools, organise school tours for parents and invite preschool children to the school. We set up buddy systems with older children to ensure that, from the very beginning, the incoming Prep children's experiences are stimulating and welcoming.

At Pakenham Springs Primary School we recognise that each child is an individual with unique strengths, needs and attitudes and that not all children are at the same stage of development at the same time. In partnership with parents, teachers identify each child's learning needs and plan programs to meet the wide range of abilities of the children in their classes.

Your child will enjoy starting at Pakenham Springs Primary School if he or she is already showing confidence in some basic aspects of their physical, emotional, social and intellectual development.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Children who are coping with their own personal needs such as eating, toileting, nose blowing, dressing and asking for assistance when necessary, will feel more confident at school.

Skills such as handling books, holding pens and pencils, pouring, cutting and playing ball games will be developed and improved at school. Nevertheless, experience with these types of activities during the preschool years can make things easier.

The physical skills that children need are of two kinds: those that are desirable for looking after themselves when an adult is not able to help them, and those that enable him/her to join in learning at school. These important skills include the following:-

Eating

At school, children need to:

- feed themselves
- unwrap a food package
- undo a lunch box
- unscrew a drink container
- remove and insert a straw in a drink packet
- drink with a straw
- get a drink from a tap
- peel a piece of fruit

Such skills are developed at home from an early age. Parents give young children finger food to hold and to chew, then, as they grow, they learn to drink from a cup, to use a spoon and to pour themselves a drink.



Toileting

Children will also need to:

- go to the toilet by themselves and undo and do up buttons and zips
- flush the toilet
- use a urinal
- wash their hands
- manage the taps

Toilet training is usually accomplished over a period of years and most children are competent by the time they start school. "Accidents" can happen at this age however. Teachers try to prevent these by regular visits to the toilet during the first weeks. A change of clothes for school is a good idea.

Dressing

Sometimes children feel too hot or too cold so they must be able to cope with cardigans, jumpers and windcheaters by themselves. Often shoes must be removed and put on again when indoor games are played.

The best way to help children learn these skills is to encourage them to dress themselves. Even so, many five year olds still find it impossible to tie shoelaces. Shoes with buckles, Velcro tabs or the new elastic laces may make it easier.

Nose Blowing

It is important for health that children are aware when their noses need wiping or blowing and that they are able to do it.

Hand-Eye Coordination

This is the ability to direct the hand with the eye. It is important for many things such as writing or catching a ball. It is developed through activities such as painting (even with a brush and water), drawing (with chalk, crayons, pencil, etc.) pouring, building with construction kits, catching big balls and hitting with bats.

Basic Movements/Gross Motor Skills

At school, children will use the skills of walking, running, jumping, hopping and skipping in new games. Most children develop and refine these skills simply by having the opportunity to play freely.

Clear Speech

Clear speech is best developed over many years in a relaxed atmosphere. Parents encourage and extend their children's speech and language by talking with them and gently providing an acceptable speech model.





For example, the child might say "We goed to the hothpital", and the parent replies, "Yes, we went to the hospital to see John/Jill. A parent who is worried about his/her child's speech or language, may seek advice from:

- hospitals with speech therapy clinics
- early childhood development centres
- the local School Support Officers (contact the school regarding this)

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

At school your child will meet new children and adults. Children often work in groups at school and this means they need to take turns, share things and cooperate. By mixing with children and adults outside the family, children learn to listen to others, respond to requests and make their own needs known.

We can prepare children for school life by encouraging them to share toys, take turns during games and help with household jobs.

The school is not simply a place. It is people who are mostly bigger than the beginner; unknown adults. When young children have had opportunities to mix with children and adults other than their parents, they learn skills which help them cope with the social aspects of school.

Learning how to relate to adults:

Children learn how to relate to adults when they are minded by someone other than their parent, play at home with friends, go out with other people, learn to ask for things at shops, go to playgroups, etc. When a child can listen to the teacher and others, do what is asked and make known his/her needs, it will be easier for him/her to learn and be happy at school.

Learning how to relate to other children:

Children learn to relate to other children when they have the opportunity to play together.

Sharing, taking turns and cooperating:

Children often work in groups in school and this means they will need to take turns, share materials and cooperate. They need the same skills in the playground when the adult supervision is more remote. Children learn to share when they are given food to pass around to share and they are asked to let another child play with special toys. They learn to cooperate when they help to prepare food, make beds or water the garden, for example. They find all these things rewarding when the parent notices them and praises their efforts. Playing games with adults helps to teach children how to take turns and how to cope with winning and losing.



EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Children play and work happily at school when they can cope with their feelings in a variety of situations.

Children will settle more easily into school if they feel a sense of security and can separate from their parents. They need to understand that adults must set limits, be able to interact with other children and adults and deal with conflict between individuals.

Separation:

It helps if a child can separate easily from the parent. When the parent tells the child that he/she (the parent) is going to leave but will be back, and then keeps the promise, the child learns to accept separation. This prevents the situation where a child, worried that a parent may not come and collect him/her after school, is unable to concentrate on what is happening in school.

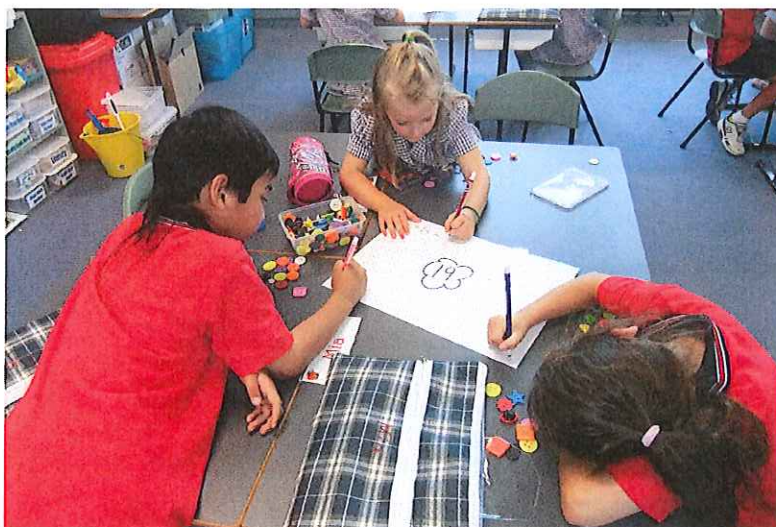
It helps the child if the parent points out the enjoyable things the child will learn at school. "You will have other children to play with. You will paint pictures, play ball, learn to read and hear stories." Be cheerful and encouraging. A child who enjoys school should not be made to feel guilty by a parent asking, "Did you miss me?"

Self Control:

No one expects small children to control their emotions as well as an adult, but temper tantrums like those of a two year old are not expected of a five year old. Other children often reject those who perform when they do not get their own way or when they have to wait for something they want.

Self control is developed at home in such ways as:

- when the parent does not give in to temper tantrums
- when the child is asked to wait while the parent finishes an activity before attending to the child
- when the parent does not give the child everything he/she asks for



Starting school can be a very demanding experience for small children particularly if they have to walk some distance or if they are unaccustomed to large groups of children. After the effort of coping at school, they may come home irritable and difficult to get on with.

Confidence:

A confident child sees himself/herself as generally being successful. He/she will be better prepared to meet the new challenge of school than the child who is lacking confidence.



Each time a parent commends a child for a new achievement, the child is given a sense of his/her own ability to do things. When the parent encourages the child to tackle tasks of increasing difficulty and praises him/her for success, the child's confidence increases.

Responsibility:

Children who take no responsibility for their belongings, or for the untidiness they have created, make problems for themselves and their teachers. In school, each activity has to be tidied away before another can be started and delays, because some children don't do their share, are a nuisance and unfair. A sense of responsibility is developed when parents encourage children to keep their own rooms tidy and put their toys away. At first the parent needs to help tidy up but generally more and more can be left for the child to do.

Independence:

School provides a marvellous range of activities for children. Those who do not need direction in occupying themselves can attempt more and will probably learn more. Each time the parent allows the child to tackle something alone, the growth of independence is encouraged.

Persistence:

Children who never finish things they start will have problems at school where new tasks are based on the completion of earlier ones. Small children give up easily when they find things difficult. If a parent helps with the difficulty, then allows the child to finish the task, he/she will come to see the value of persistence.

INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT

Children delight in developing knowledge and understanding by seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, smelling and doing. Many everyday activities offer important learning for children: playing games, going on outings, building with materials, going shopping, cooking, playing with sand and water, counting, following instructions, listening to and telling stories, reading books and drawing and writing together.

By offering your child a range of rich experiences such as these, talking about what he or she is doing, and answering and asking questions in your home language, you are helping your child to develop both language and an understanding of their environment.

Pre-Reading Skills

Being able to read well makes later school learning easier and also helps a person to find information, eg. reading





instructions on a medicine bottle, following road signs or applying for a job.

Some ideas to help your child prepare for reading:

- talk to your child
- draw your child's attention to signs, advertisements and writing on packets
- read to your child (when children are read to they become aware that meaning can be obtained from print; reading can be a useful and pleasurable activity);
- there are rules about print (i.e. you read the print not the pictures, we start at the top of the page, we read from the left to the right)
- make sure your child sees you reading a variety of materials

Pre-Mathematical Skills

Mathematics in primary school, includes:

- counting
- learning to add, subtract, multiply and divide
- measuring
- working with money
- telling the time

Before children can work with symbols such as 10, 84, -, +, x, =, they need to understand the concepts behind them. Children who come to school understanding such terms as: "more", "less", "the same as", "bigger", "smaller", and "how many", are prepared for early maths and should move easily to formal work.

Early preparation for mathematics occurs when parents or others:

- help the child to count a few objects such as plates on the table, buttons on a cardigan.
- talk to the child about time, eg. "five minutes till bedtime", "four sleeps till grandmother comes".
- let the child find out what he/she can buy with a few coins
- talk to the child as he/she uses construction toys, eg. "Can you make it bigger?" or "Find the blue blocks".
- let the child play with water or sand, etc. to learn how much will fit into different containers.

3. HEALTH

Parents would like their children to be healthy at all times. However, this does not always happen. If the child has an illness, allergy or condition (eg. asthma, epilepsy) the teacher should be informed. The teacher should also be told of the effects of any treatment that the child is having, so that allowances can be made in and out of the classroom. Sometimes health problems are not noticeable, however. If a parent has doubts about his/her child's health, it would be worthwhile obtaining a medical opinion before the child starts school.

Some areas to consider are:



Eyesight

There are many different kinds of eye problems although, fortunately, only a few children have them. Some of these may not be evident until a child is asked to do reading activities. If a child is finding these tasks stressful, or is underachieving, then eye problems may be a possibility. Parents should seek advice from:

- Infant Welfare Centres
- Optometrists
- Doctors

Hearing

Small children often seem to suffer from ear, nose and throat infections which may affect their hearing for a while. If a child does not seem to be hearing well, the parent should seek advice from:

- Infant Welfare Centres
- Doctors
- Early Childhood Development Centres
- National Acoustic Laboratories

General Health

Starting school is usually a tiring experience, even for a healthy child. If there is any likelihood that a child has a minor illness which is making him/her feel cross or miserable or which is preventing the child from sleeping or eating well, it would be wise to have the illness treated before the extra effort of starting school has to be made.

4. BEGINNING SCHOOL

As the time draws closer for your child to start school, there are a number of things that a parent can do to help the child settle in more easily. These can include:-

- walking with your child to school so that he/she knows the way even if you plan to walk or drive him/her.
- pointing out the different playground areas.





- making sure the child knows you will be collecting him/her in the playground.
- labelling the child's clothing, lunch box and possession and show him/her what you have done.
- talking about how long the school day will be in a way that the child will understand - eg "It's as long as pre-school, then you'll have lunch and perhaps some stories and then I'll come and get you."
- talking about the difference between playtime and lunchtime. Show him/her what food you have packed each morning.
- choosing a school bag or case that is an appropriate size for the child.

Many things have changed in schools since you have attended them as a pupil so don't be afraid to ask questions. Don't interrupt classes to talk to the teacher, however. It is better to make an appointment with the teacher to discuss things.

5. WHAT YOUR CHILD SHOULD BRING ON THE FIRST DAY

Your child should bring the following with them to school on the first day:

- School bag (named)
- Lunch in a lunch box (named) and a drink in a flask (named)
- Play Lunch—we suggest that you provide your child with a snack (sultanas, cheese or fruit etc.) to eat at morning recess. This should be wrapped separately from the child's lunch.
- Art smock—this can be made from an old shirt with the sleeves shortened and elastic at the wrists or bought at the Uniform Shop
- Spare clothing—this can be kept in your child's school bag in a plastic bag

Make sure that all clothing that can be removed is labelled. Small children often have difficulty recognising their own clothing, particularly if it is similar to that worn by other children.

6. FROM THE PARENT'S POINT OF VIEW

As a parent, you probably have mixed feelings about your child starting school. Until now you have probably spent a great deal of time with the child and now he/she doesn't need you so much. No longer will you be the main source of wisdom in your child's life. Most parents accept the teacher's growing influence as part of the long process of helping their child move from total dependence to independence.

If your child has been to pre-school, you probably knew all the things he/she did there. Now you may feel excluded. Don't be too hurt if, when you ask your child, "What did you do today?" he/she



answers, "Nothing" or "I don't want to talk about it." This is an extremely natural reaction by both you and your child.

It is good to talk to other parents about their feelings and experiences too and of course, take every opportunity to talk to the class teacher after school to find out just what your child did do at school.

Parents come to understand and accept that starting school is part of their child's long-term progression from dependence to independence. By talking to the teacher about how your child is settling in and the types of things they have been doing, you are forming a partnership with the school. This builds a strong foundation for your child's learning.

Most importantly of all, enjoy your child's first year at school just as he/she enjoys it. If you spent a considerable time with your child in the past you may even find time for some new activities yourself.

Research indicates that when teachers and parents work together as co-educators of children, home and school experiences are acknowledged and built upon for further success in learning.

At Pakenham Springs Primary School we are very keen to develop strong home-school partnerships with parents and teachers working together as a team in the best interests of the child. As part of the Early Years Strategy, Pakenham Springs Primary School will develop ways for you to participate in your child's education. We will let you know about these opportunities.

7. YOUR CHILD'S TEACHER

Your child's teacher is specially trained to teach primary aged students. He/she has many years experience and has kept abreast of current educational practices.

We encourage parents to get to know their child's teacher. All teachers are only too willing to spend time discussing your child's progress, classroom programs and routines. To ensure that the teacher can give you adequate time please make an appointment to see them so that they can arrange a mutually convenient time.

8. PICKING UP YOUR CHILD

All Junior School children should be collected from outside their rooms. Please do not enter the corridor or rooms. This will prevent a lot of congestion in the corridors and encourage independence in your child. Arrange a suitable spot to collect your child. Where the grade lines up is a good place. If your child has to wait for an older sibling, make sure that the older child also knows the correct meeting place.

9. USEFUL CONTACTS

- Early Years of Schooling website
www.sofweb.vic.edu.au/eyes
- The Education Line: (03) 9637 222
Or 1800 809 834 (freecall)
- Early and Middle Years of School Branch
Department of Education, Employment and Training
GPO Box 4367
Melbourne 3001
- Association of School Councils In Victoria
(ASCIV): (03) 9427 0155
- Parents Victoria: (03) 9417 4140
- Victorian Council of School Organisations
(VICCSO): (03) 9429 5900

This booklet has incorporated parts of the Early Years publication “The Step into Prep – A Guide for Parents” published by Department of Education, Employment and Training.



