

## 4.3 School hours and dates

### 4.3.1 School hours

Schools should provide at least 25 hours student instruction per week. For special arrangements for Prep students see [4.1.1.4](#) and [4.3.6.1](#).

#### 4.3.1.1 Starting and finishing times

Generally, instruction is undertaken in schools between 8.30 am and 3.30 pm. The specific times for each school will be determined at the local level, taking into account such things as bus schedules, links with other schools and the organisation of the school day. Where changes to the starting and finishing times will result in changes to bus schedules, the approval of the appropriate regional director should be obtained.

Under specific circumstances, early dismissal of students can occur (see [4.3.6](#)).

### 4.3.2 Student-free days

Each year four pupil-free days are allocated to schools for professional development, school planning and administration, curriculum development and planning and student assessment and reporting

From 2009 the pupil-free days for government schools are scheduled as follows:

- the first three days of Term 1 (with students beginning school on the fourth day of Term 1); and
- the remaining pupil-free day is the third-last Friday in Term 2 for student assessment and reporting purposes.

School councils continue to play a lead role in the development of the school's professional learning strategy taking into account the school's strategic goals and priorities.

Principals should inform parents and the broader school community of the scheduling arrangements for pupil-free days (using community language notices when necessary).

Guidelines to further assist schools in planning for the effective use of pupil-free days have been prepared - [Guidelines for principals – 2009 pupil-free days](#).

### 4.3.3 Public holidays

#### 4.3.3.1 Public holidays

The following days are public holidays:

- New Year's Day or substitute day

- 26 January (Australia Day) or substitute day
- the second Monday in March (Labour Day)
- Good Friday, Easter Sunday and Easter Monday
- 25 April (Anzac Day)
- the second Monday in June (the day on which the anniversary of the birthday of the Sovereign is observed)
- the first Tuesday in November (Melbourne Cup Day) or such other day as is appointed under section 8 of the *Public Holidays Act 1993* as a day in lieu of Melbourne Cup Day in a particular non metropolitan municipal district.
- Christmas Day or substitute day
- the day after Christmas Day (Boxing Day) or substitute day.

#### 4.3.3.2 Melbourne Cup Day arrangements

Melbourne Cup Day is a public holiday for all schools throughout Victoria.

A non-metropolitan Council may request that another day be appointed as a public holiday in lieu of Melbourne Cup Day and if approved, have it declared in the Victorian Government Gazette at:

<http://www.gazette.vic.gov.au>.

A full list of declared Victorian public holidays and non-Metropolitan public holidays can be accessed at

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/keydates/termdates.htm>.

#### 4.3.3.3 Metropolitan municipal districts

The following Metropolitan municipal districts are declared under the schedule of the *Public Holidays Act 1993*: Banyule, Bayside, Boroondara, Brimbank, Cardinia, Casey, Darebin, Frankston, Glen Eira, Greater Dandenong, Hobsons Bay, Hume, Kingston, Knox, Manningham, Maribyrnong, Maroondah, Melbourne, Melton, Monash, Moonee Valley, Moreland, Mornington Peninsula, Nillumbik, Port Phillip, Stonnington, Whitehorse, Whittlesea, Wyndham and Yarra.

### 4.3.4 Term dates

Under Regulation 10 of the Education and Training Reform Regulations 2007, the Minister for Education must determine the days on which government schools will be open for attendance by students.

To assist with planning in schools and the community, the term dates are determined for periods of five years. The table below includes the dates for the years 2008 to 2010. See the [School Term Dates](#) webpage for further information.

Year	Term 1	Easter	Term 2	Term 3	Term 4
<b>2008</b>	29 January to 20 March	21 to 24 March	7 April to 27 June	14 July to 19 September	6 October to 19 December
<b>2009</b>	28 January to 3 April	10 to 13 April	20 April to 26 June	13 July to 18 September	5 October to 18 December
<b>2010</b>	27 January to 26 March	2 to 5 April	12 April to 25 June	12 July to 17 September	4 October to 17 December

### 4.3.5 Orientation day

Orientation day programs promote enthusiasm and positive anticipation for secondary education in Year 6 students. Schools are encouraged to conduct extensive transition/orientation programs throughout the year. Orientation day should be seen as an integral part of a total program that aims to involve teachers, students and parents/guardians in the continuing education process.

All government secondary colleges should conduct an orientation day as part of a transition program.

Orientation day is to be held on the Tuesday in December following the last compulsory day for Year 10 students (see 4.3.7.2). Any proposal to vary the date of orientation day should be fully discussed with other schools and the appropriate regional director.

A full-day program should be offered at each secondary college.

The orientation day program is the responsibility of the secondary college. This program should be devised in consultation with the relevant primary schools.

Parents/guardians are responsible for transporting children to and from the allotted secondary colleges. This may include use of existing school bus services.

The secondary college is responsible for the students during the agreed program for the day.

Students not required to attend a government secondary school for orientation day—those intending to enrol at private schools that do not have an orientation day—will remain the responsibility of their primary school.

It is not intended that testing of any sort will form part of an orientation day program.

### 4.3.6 Variations to usual hours

#### 4.3.6.1 Early dismissal

Preparatory classes

Principals may dismiss Prep Year students early, provided that they are collected by the parent/guardian or another person authorised by the parent/guardian:

- in January and February, no earlier than 2.00 pm
- during the remainder of Term One, no earlier than 2.30 pm.

Principals, with the agreement of school councils, may vary these hours during January and February to suit local conditions, provided that students are not excused for a period exceeding 25 per cent of the normal school week. A variation to school hours may include four days per week attendance.

Principals must ensure that appropriate provision is made for a student where the parent/guardian or a person authorised by the parent/guardian cannot collect their child at the early dismissal time, or where the parent/guardian wishes them to attend during normal school hours.

For staggered admission of preparatory students see [4.1.1.4](#).

The policy enables principals, with the approval of their school councils, to vary the hours of Prep attendance to accommodate local views and circumstances, and may include four-day per week attendance or a later start to the day instead of early dismissal.

Where principals introduce new arrangements for Prep attendance, it is recommended that a comprehensive communication strategy with parents be developed.

### **Staff meetings and conferences**

In general, principals are not permitted to dismiss students before the normal time in order to hold meetings, conferences or discussions with staff. However, where there are exceptional circumstances, the principal, with the endorsement of the school council, may dismiss students early provided parents/guardians have been notified in advance.

### **Days of extreme weather conditions**

There is no provision for the closure of schools during days of heavy rain or extreme heat. However, the midday recess may be reduced to not less than thirty minutes and dismissal time adjusted accordingly.

Students should not be sent home unless there is someone at home to look after them.

Teachers must remain on duty until the normal time to supervise those students who remain at school.

### **Small schools**

In situations where no students arrive for the morning or afternoon session, teachers must remain on duty until normal dismissal time.

#### 4.3.6.2 Emergencies

Some emergencies may occur that requires evacuation of the school for a protracted period. In the case of a hazardous materials emergency, for example, students may have to be evacuated 500 metres or more from the school and be supervised for several hours.

Evacuation assembly points that provide shelter, water and toilet facilities should be identified in the school's emergency management plan to cater for long-duration evacuation and should include sites that are well beyond the school grounds (see [6.15.3](#)).

Students should be supervised for the duration of an emergency and until the normal dismissal time, provided that it is safe for students to travel home. Details should be recorded concerning any student who is released into the care of a parent/guardian during an emergency.

Approval to dismiss students must be obtained from the appropriate regional director. Parents/guardians must be advised of the likely date of resumption as soon as possible.

#### 4.3.6.3 Water and electricity disconnection

When prior notice is received of a disconnection that will necessitate the closure of the school, the principal must advise parents/guardians of the likely time and date of reopening the school.

The approval of the appropriate regional director should be obtained before closing a school.

Without prior notice to parents/guardians, students should not be sent home unless:

- there is a parent/guardian at home to look after them
- there are no public toilets (at sports grounds, church yards, railway stations and so on) within reasonable walking distance to which the students may be taken
- parents/guardians can be contacted to collect students from rural schools.

#### 4.3.6.4 Student attendance during strike action

Principals should be aware that it is the expectation of the Department that all schools will remain open and normal arrangements will apply, as far as practicable, when [strike action](#) is taken by teachers.

The principal would normally be advised forty-eight hours before the proposed strike action of the teachers who will not be in attendance. The principal must arrange for the maximum number of students to attend school and make appropriate arrangements with those teachers who will be in attendance. Principals may make any special timetable arrangements necessary for the day.

In secondary colleges it will usually be the case that students of compulsory school age and students in senior classes will be required to

attend; middle and upper year students will be considered for non-attendance.

In primary schools and secondary colleges, principals must timetable classes for all teachers present on an equitable basis.

Any student for whom a parent/guardian is unable to provide adequate care will be supervised at school. It is the responsibility of principals to make appropriate arrangements for any students who attend.

A notice should be sent home to parents/guardians advising them of the arrangements that will apply.

## **4.3.7 Term and end-of-year dismissal**

### **4.3.7.1 End of term**

Students should not be dismissed earlier than 2.30 pm at the end of terms 1, 2 and 3.

The last day of term 4 for students may end earlier than 2.30 pm if the school council (or councils if there are coordinated travel arrangements) agrees, provided that the instructional period is not less than 240 minutes exclusive of recess and lunch time.

### **4.3.7.2 End of school year**

Students up to and including Year 9 will attend until the end of the school year.

Other students may be excused toward the end of the year under the following arrangements:

- Year 10: from a Friday in December not more than two weeks before the last school day of the year upon request from a parent/guardian, provided that the principal has received satisfactory evidence that the student has suitable employment.
- Year 11: after the completion of their final tests or examinations, but not before the close of the school day on the last Friday of November.
- Year 12 students may be excused from school attendance following their final examination.

Principals may require attendance of these students at any time up to the last day of the school year.

### **Contact**

[Community & Stakeholder Relations Branch](#)