

Placement Policy

This section of the department's enrolment guidelines outlines the obligations on Victorian government schools in relation to placement of students and is referred to as the 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 or delegate has approved specific entry criteria, being:

- select entry high schools
- specialist schools
- English Language Schools and Centres
- camp and outdoor schools
- hospital schools and teaching units
- distance schools
- flexible learning government schools and flexible learning campuses
- any other school with entry criteria as approved by the Minister or delegate.

The Placement Policy applies to the placement of students at all year levels, from Foundation (Prep) to Year 12.

Specialist schools are subject to different placement requirements than those described in the Placement Policy. For more information, refer to: [Enrolment in specialist schools](#).

If families are seeking to better understand the Placement Policy, please refer them to: [Starting school](#).

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. Accordingly, all students that reside within the area of a designated neighbourhood school (referred to as a 'school zone') must be offered a place when seeking enrolment. For information on eligibility, refer to: [Eligibility to enrol in a Victorian government school](#).

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.

For information on verifying a student's permanent address, refer to: [Determining permanent residence](#).

The department recognises that some schools may require additional capacity to accommodate students from within their school zone. In these circumstances, schools may be supported by the temporary allocation of relocatable buildings. For more information about how relocatable buildings are allocated, refer to: [Relocatable Building Management](#).

International students

International students (such as those holding a dependant or temporary visa) have the legal entitlement to enrol at their designated neighbourhood school.

However, under the Education Services for Overseas Student Act 2000 (Cth), students who hold a subclass 500 student visa (a student visa in their own name) may only attend government schools accredited to accept international students. The department refers to students who hold a student visa in their own name as Standard and Study Abroad students.

Given Standard and Study Abroad students are required to attend an accredited school, they may not be able to attend their closest school.

Schools may contact the International Education Division for support with queries regarding international student enrolments: international@education.vic.gov.au

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 accommodation at the school
- this request for enrolment aligns with the school's enrolment management plan (if they have one).

Where there is insufficient accommodation at a school for all students who seek entry, students must be enrolled according to the Placement Policy's priority order of placement (see below).

The department takes into account a school's enrolment practices when determining the allocation of relocatable buildings. Buildings are prioritised to schools which are addressing local demand, and which have a high percentage of enrolments from within their school zone.

Sufficient accommodation

Whether a school has sufficient accommodation to enrol additional students depends on a number of factors. These include if the school will continue to have appropriate physical and operational capacity and resources to provide high quality education

and services to the school's overall student population. Sufficient accommodation takes into consideration:

- built capacity and/or target-built capacity
- current enrolments and forecast enrolments
- current demand and forecast demand within the school zone
- staffing levels
- industrial agreements
- subject/curriculum demands on the school
- where practical, planning for an even distribution of students across all year levels while maintaining class size targets.

Schools must have sufficient accommodation to meet current and future in-zone demand before enrolling students from outside the school zone.

In some instances, schools may not have sufficient accommodation to offer placement to all students. This includes instances where schools are forecast to come under significant enrolment pressure from within the school zone. Where this is the case, the department will work with schools to develop an enrolment management plan to support long term enrolment planning.

Sufficient accommodation is determined by the principal in consultation with their regional office, and it should reflect current and future in-zone demand. In instances where further support may be needed, final determination on sufficient accommodation may be made by the regional director.

Priority order of placement

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

In circumstances where schools do not have sufficient accommodation to accept all students who apply from outside their school zone, schools must manage enrolment applications in accordance with the following priority order of placement:

1. students with a sibling at the same permanent address who are attending the school at the same time
2. 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. Further information is available below under 'Exceptional circumstances – compassionate grounds'.

Priority 1. Siblings

The sibling priority applies to placement decisions at all year levels, from Foundation (Prep) to Year 12. There is an expectation that schools will enrol all older and younger siblings, unless otherwise approved by the regional director.

A sibling is defined broadly and can include step-siblings and students residing together as part of a multiple family cohabitation or out-of-home-care arrangements, including foster care, kinship care and permanent care. Students seeking enrolment on sibling grounds should be residing together at the same permanent address and must be attending the school at the same time.

Where siblings do not reside together on a full-time basis, families may still seek enrolment on sibling grounds. These applications will be considered on a case-by-case basis. If there are complex sibling arrangements such as this, schools should contact their regional office to seek advice. Regional office contact details and locations are on the department's website, visit: [Office locations](#).

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 approval from the regional director.

To seek approval to restrict enrolments for out-of-zone siblings, schools must submit the Exemption to Priority 1 of the Placement Policy application form. Schools can obtain a copy of the application form by contacting their regional office. All applications are assessed by both regional and central offices.

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

Priority 2. Order of closeness of their home to the school

In metropolitan areas, and in Ballarat, Bendigo and Geelong, closeness to school is the distance measured in a straight line from the child's permanent residential address to the school. In any other area of Victoria, closeness to school is the distance measured by the shortest practical route by road.

Distances from an address to the 5 nearest schools (as measured in a straight line) are available on the [Find my School website](#). This website can be used when considering order of closeness to school, particularly for metropolitan areas, and in Ballarat, Bendigo and Geelong. In other areas, schools should consider travel distance between the applicant's address and the school when considering order of closeness.

Closeness to school is either assessed upon receipt of an enrolment application or as part of the annual Foundation (Prep) enrolment or Year 7 placement processes for government schools.

Timelines will be strictly observed for Foundation (Prep) enrolment and Year 7 placement applications. If an application for Foundation (Prep) enrolment or Year 7 placement misses the deadline, it should be considered after applications received on time (if the student does not live in the school zone or does not have a sibling attending the school at the same time).

Exceptional circumstances – compassionate grounds

In exceptional circumstances, a student may be enrolled at a school on compassionate grounds. This is an overarching consideration and does not form part of the priority order of placement.

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.

Exceptional circumstances may include family violence, wellbeing and safety concerns, physical 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.

Under the Disability Standards for Education 2005, education providers are legally required to make reasonable adjustments for students with disability. On that basis, grounds for exceptional circumstances do not include concerns related to a student's disability where those concerns can be addressed by making reasonable adjustments. For examples of reasonable adjustments and further guidance, refer to: [Making reasonable adjustments](#).

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.

When considering an application or appeal on compassionate grounds, schools and regional staff can request that families provide further evidence. This may include:

- legal documentation
- reports from allied health and/or medical professionals, the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing practitioners, Victoria Police, and/or family violence services
- court orders.

Matters of compassionate grounds are of a sensitive nature and may pose risks to health and life (for example, matters related to family violence). Family and student privacy must be maintained when considering applications on compassionate grounds.

For more information, refer to: [Privacy and Information Sharing](#).

Schools can contact their regional office to seek advice and support when considering applications on compassionate grounds. Regional office contact details and locations are on the department's website, visit: [Office locations](#).

Student tests and interviews

A placement offer must not be dependent on a satisfactory report, test or interview.

Student tests or interviews may only occur after a placement offer has been accepted. This covers all forms of testing, including examinations for school specific

scholarships, academic programs, leadership programs, sporting trials, music or performing arts auditions, and other try-outs or performance assessments. Schools must also not hold formal or informal interviews for prospective students and their families.

Schools must not reserve places or prioritise placement for students on the basis of anticipated test results.

For secondary schools, this means that tests or interviews cannot occur prior to the state-wide release of Year 7 placement offers and families confirming their acceptance in August each year. Schools must not promote tests or interviews before placement offers have been accepted (refer to the state-wide timeline in the Placement Information Pack).

This does not apply to selective entry and other specialism schools that are not required to manage enrolments in accordance with the Placement Policy. For further information, visit: [Selective Entry and Other Specialism Schools and Programs](#).

Enrolment management

Schools, in consultation with their regional office, manage enrolments to ensure that all students can attend their local school now and into the future. 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.

Schools under enrolment pressure may be supported with an enrolment management plan. Enrolment management plans provide current and projected data and, where required, support schools to implement enrolment restrictions approved by regional directors.

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 4 regional directors (Instrument of Delegation No. 2020/DO6).

This allows the Minister for Education, and regional directors as delegates, to restrict new enrolments at a school by setting unique entry criteria. This could include, for example, limiting entry year enrolments to students who reside in-zone and to out-of-zone 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 and built capacity
- sufficient accommodation
- the effect on, and capacity at, surrounding schools.

The regional director will notify the school in writing if a restriction is being applied or modified. All restrictions are reviewed on an annual basis to ensure they are still required.