Toolern Vale & District Primary School

PARENTS’ HANDBOOK
For more information visit our website
www.toolernvaledps.vic.edu.au
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WELCOME

Dear Parents

Welcome to Toolern Vale & District Primary School. We invite you to join with the parents, teachers and children who are already members of our school community. We encourage you to help develop positive attitudes towards school and hope that this will be a happy, rewarding year for all. We strongly believe that successes in education are directly related to the strength of relationships developed between children, teachers and parents.

We aim to develop in each child:

- Self esteem
- Confidence
- Motivation
- A sense of purpose
- A willingness to accept challenges and responsibility
- The ability to work and play co-operatively
- A positive attitude to school

This booklet has been compiled to provide information to make your family's introduction to the school a pleasant and enjoyable experience. We welcome your interest and involvement and look forward to working with you in the coming years.
1 Purpose Statement
The Purpose of Toolern Vale and District Primary School is to provide an innovative, challenging education in a unique environment which motivates children to embrace learning for life. Children will develop the essential thinking skills within a supportive learning culture.

The school team will cultivate creativity and foster the social, emotional and physical well being of the individual and the whole school community.

School Values
➢ Acceptance
➢ Co-Operation
➢ High Expectations
➢ Engagement
➢ Resilience

Rights & Responsibilities
Students and teachers have rights and responsibilities within the learning community.

➢ Students and teachers have the right to do as much work as possible
➢ Everyone has the right to learn
➢ Students and teachers have the right to feel comfortable in the classroom
2 History of the school

On the 5th of November 1867, an application by interested parents to form a school was forwarded to the Board of Education for their approval.

In 1869, two acres of Crown Land from the Green Hills reserve was gazetted for the site of the school. The proposed 27 feet by 18 feet school was to be built of stone with shingle roof at an estimated cost of two hundred & two pounds, made up of schoolroom one hundred pounds, residence seventy four pounds, outhouse eight pounds and furniture and requisites twenty pounds. On the 20th of July 1869, Mr. John Dunstan was appointed as teacher to the school, with Mrs. Jane Dunstan as work mistress. In 1879 a further three acres was gazetted.

Thursday 11th March 1965, fire struck the whole district, all that was left of the school were the toilets. Students travelled to Bacchus Marsh State School and continued their studies until the present building was completed.

In 1994 Sydenham West Primary School merged with Toolern Vale on the Toolern Vale site and the school was re-named Toolern Vale and District Primary School.

Throughout the early history of the school the local people supported their school very strongly. Through the community they continually promoted, maintained and developed their school.

This commitment continues today and parents are actively involved in all aspects of school life. Toolern Vale is a family orientated school set in a beautiful natural environment.
3 Starting School

3.1 Preparing for school

There are two orientation days in December. These days have proven to be very successful in making your child feel confident about attending school the next year.

If your child is unable to attend these days please arrange for them to spend some time at school.

Show by your words and actions that school is a happy place. Talk about “when you go to school” in a positive way. Children are very quick to pick up feelings of anxiety so tell them what a wonderful time they’re going to have. It is advantageous for children to have some level of self-reliance. Children will cope more easily with the new environment if they are able to take off and put on their shoes and put on their own coats, jumpers and cardigans.

3.2 What your child should bring to school

- Lunch box (lunch and play lunch)
- Drink bottle (plastic only)
- School bag for transporting books, handkerchief and other belongings
- Art smock. This is essential for protection of clothes
- Library bag. Essential for borrowing books from the library

Every article should be clearly labelled with your child’s name especially jumpers and coats.

3.3 The first day at school

- On the first morning bring your child to the prep room. The class teacher will be there to greet you and your child.
- Assist your child to find their name tag in their hook and locker. Lunch boxes can go in their locker tub. Once the bell goes, please say goodbye and leave your child.
- If your child is unsettled then you may escort them into the classroom until they are feeling more confident. If your child cries when you are leaving, it will be only for a short time as he/she will quickly become interested in classroom activities. If you are worried about your child, don't hesitate to talk to the teacher.
- Please Note: All parents are invited for a cup of tea and a chat provided by the Parents’ Club in the Parents’ Room after settling their child at school on the first morning.

3.4 Dismissal times

School will start on Thursday, 2nd February, 2012. Preps will not attend school on Wednesdays during February (i.e. 8th, 15th, 22nd February.)

All prep and grade 1 children must be picked up from their classroom.

It is very important that you are prompt picking up your child at dismissal time. Little ones become very worried if their parents/carers are not there when expected.
4  Parent Involvement

THE FIRST YEAR OF SCHOOL

4.1  Parents and teachers as partners

When a child first goes to school, there is a great change for his/her family. We believe that you, the child's parents, are a most important link in the educational chain. There are many ways in which a parent may support and assist in their child's education.

4.2  Parental help

The assistance offered by parents in all aspects of school life is invaluable. Some of the ways in which help is given are:-

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Council committees</th>
<th>Fund raising events</th>
<th>Classroom programs</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cookery</td>
<td>Hearing reading</td>
<td>Working bees</td>
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<td>Typing stories</td>
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<td>Sports days</td>
<td>Parents &amp; Friends</td>
<td>Speed reading</td>
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4.3  Parents & Friends

Aims and Objectives

- to provide a venue for parents to get to know one another and to discuss activities and policies related to the school
- to have special days for the children where different lunches or morning teas can be offered e.g. pancake Tuesday, BBQ's etc
- to assist teaching staff where possible and work in co-operation with the School Council and Principal
- to provide a feeling of belonging and contribute to the well being of the school
- to initiate and organise fundraising activities for the benefit of the school.

Membership

Membership of the Parents and Friends is unrestricted and involvement is encouraged, anyone who has an involvement with the students of the school is automatically a member.

4.4  School Council

The School Council at Toolern Vale is the organisation responsible for the development and management of the school. This includes the setting of the school policy and the allocation of resources to ensure the programs can be effectively carried through. Toolern Vale School Council consists of 12 members - 8 parents and 4 DEET employees (staff) plus two co-opted members as required, who serve for a 2 year term. Meetings are usually held at 7.00 or 7.30 p.m. on a set day of the month. Interested observers are always welcome.

Sub Committees include Charter, Buildings and Grounds, Whole School Welfare, Fundraising and Finance and all school community members are encouraged to participate on these committees.

4.5  Maintenance

A handyman is employed by the School Council to carry out minor maintenance. Grass is mowed and the grounds are kept in great condition by a family from the local community and parent volunteers. Occasionally working bees are called and your support is highly valued. Remember "Many hands make light work".
5 Welfare, Health and Safety Concerns

5.1 Welfare and discipline

The school has established standards of student behaviour suited to the age and development of the children. They are expected to foster attitudes which enable them to work in harmony at school and prepare them to live comfortably in society. Emphasis is on the development of self respect and self discipline. The school encourages children to respect the rights and privileges of others and to exercise common sense in the use of school facilities.

We recognise the importance of school and parents working closely together to instill positive behavioural traits in the child and put a great deal of value on this partnership.

The Welfare & Discipline Policy and Program has been developed by the children, parents and staff of the school in partnership and relies on the co-operation and support of these parties to operate successfully.

The Tribes program runs throughout the school to help develop a sense of responsibility and self esteem in the children as we believe this is the vital ingredient in a comprehensive discipline and welfare program.

5.2 Information teachers should have drawn to their attention

Parents should tell teachers of:

1. Any problems with eyesight, hearing or speech.
2. If your child is asthmatic - details of medication.
3. Change of address, contact numbers, arrangements for collecting child from school. Please notify the office.
4. Any worries your child may have about school.

5.3 Accidents

In case of accidents, or a child being taken ill at school, -

(a) Minor problems will be dealt with at school and children will be returned to their classroom. If a child has been to sick bay, parents will be notified.

(b) Parents will be notified by phone and if unable to make contact will notify the emergency number. It is most important that we have these telephone numbers. If you change your place of employment during the year, please notify us. Please show the parents Christian name and place of employment and identify the emergency person, e.g. aunt, neighbour.

Most of our staff have first aid qualifications and we maintain an efficient Sick Bay.

5.4 Medication

Should it be necessary on rare occasions for the school to administer medication to your child, it is essential that you forward a request in writing, indicating direct dosage and name of doctor who made out the prescription. The relevant form is available at the office. All medicines must be handed into the office. No medications should be kept in children’s bags.
5.5 **Absences**
A sick child is unable to cope with the emotional and academic demands placed on them at school and it may put the health of the other children at risk. Any child who is unwell should be cared for at home.

Whenever a child is absent from school, the parent is required by law to supply the school with a written or personal explanation the next day the child attends. A telephone call to the office on the day your child is absent is the best way to inform us.

5.6 **Infectious Diseases**
If your child is suffering from an infectious disease the Principal should be contacted - parents will be notified of the period of exclusion.

5.7 **Asthma**
Children who are affected by asthma should have an asthma management plan filed with the school and emergency procedures detailed. If asthma medication is required at school, it should be handed in to the office in a ziplock bag with the appropriate form.

5.8 **Picking children up early**
If you find it necessary to collect your child from school at any time other than normal dismissal, the Principal or the office staff must be notified and the child signed out.

5.9 **Fire Drill**
During the year, the school practices our emergency fire drill/evacuation procedure. This is a precautionary step, but necessary. On a given signal all children under control of a teacher, leave the classroom and assemble on the oval or safe room until the all-clear is sounded. Under certain circumstances the Evacuation Plan may be activated which involves children being bused to the Melton Civic Centre.

5.10 **Health and Sunsmart**
The school has an official Sunsmart Policy which requires children to wear appropriate hats (part of the official uniform) and use 15+ or 30+ sunscreen when outside. The policy is for terms one and four but children should wear school hats on all sunny days.
6 Curriculum

6.1 Learning areas

The focus at Toolern Vale & District Primary School is on teaching literacy and numeracy. Victorian government schools teach the Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS) which include a range of subjects covering:

- physical, personal and social learning
- discipline-based learning
- interdisciplinary learning

The VELS form the basis for curriculum planning and assessment from Prep to Year 10 in all Victorian schools.

The VELS website (http://vels.vcaa.vic.edu.au/) provides an overview of the Victorian curriculum from Prep to Year 10.

The Department provides VELS based Learning and Teaching Resources – Prep to Year 10, in the following areas:

- English
- Languages other than English (LOTE)
- Mathematics
- Science
- Communication
- Design, Creativity and Technology
- Information and Communications Technology (ICT)
- Thinking Processes
- Interpersonal Development
- Personal Learning
- The Arts

The Early Years Program is organised to ensure smaller teaching groups in Literacy and Numeracy which provides effectively for all children. Extra staff are also employed to help children develop to their full potential.

If you would like to know more about a particular curriculum area do not hesitate to speak to the class teacher or the principal.

6.2 Reports

A written report will be sent home mid year and at the end of the year. The report will summarise the work that has been done throughout that period, a list of outcomes assessed and the Victorian Essential Learning Standards. The mid year report will assess numeracy and literacy while the end of the year report will assess all curriculum areas.
6.3 **Parent Teacher Interviews**

An interview will be held early in the school year for staff and parents to gain a better understanding of the child and to develop the most suitable educational programs.

Parents or staff may request interviews, at any time the need arises, during the year to discuss any aspect of a child’s progress or other relevant issues.

A second interview is held in July to discuss the half year report.

The curriculum programs and the children’s reports are based on the Department of Education’s Victorian Essential Learning Standards which provide a sequential set of learning outcomes in each of eight key learning areas.

6.4 **Buddies**

Older children are ‘buddied up’ with a younger student in the school to assist with the younger student's entry to school. They do various activities together and it gives the younger student someone to 'look out for' in the playground. This is beneficial to all participants and enhances the social interaction across the school.

6.5 **Homework**

Children at primary school level should not spend hours on homework each night - they have spent most of the day involved in academic activities. However children should be encouraged to read at home and they will have work to complete at times. All children will have set homework such as tables, spelling and projects. Children should be encouraged to play educational games and to use calculators and computers. Children’s involvement in activities such as shopping provide valuable learning experiences. We encourage parents to assist with their child's homework and enquire when there are any concerns. It may be advantageous to develop a homework routine to assist children organise themselves, especially in the older grades. An established homework routine is extremely important.

Recommended maximum homework per night is – Grades Prep to one, 30 minutes – Grades 2/3/4, 45 minutes – Grade 5/6, 1 hour.

6.6 **Swimming**

All grades participate in swimming instruction each year. The classes will be held at the Gisborne Aquatic Centre.
6.7 **Camps**
Children's camps and stay-up programs are designed to help your child to progressively become more independent and to build self confidence and enhance the educational programs. Camps are organised as follows:

*Grade Prep/One* - Stay up Evening – a ‘late’ night of fun and food at school

*Grade Two & Three* - Overnight Camp

*Grade Three to Six* - Overnight camps of three nights.

Children have the opportunity to attend school camps at various venues. We try to keep the cost within reach of all families and rotate the areas to which we travel.

6.8 **Computers**
Children are introduced to computers in Prep year and are encouraged to develop their computer skills as they progress through the school. The computer is utilised as a tool for learning and developing concepts as well as a strategy for problem solving, research and as another means of developing communication skills. Children have regular access to the latest computers to enhance the normal curriculum programs. A small bank of computers is set up in every room and we have a whole grade computer centre in the Library. We have a ratio of one computer to every five children. Children in grades P-6 have access to the internet on a school contract basis.

6.9 **Student School Supply Levy**
Parents are asked to contribute towards the cost of books, pencils, photocopying and other expenses. The School Council has set the Levy for 2012 at $100.00 per child (or $90.00 if paid by the end of March 2012).
7  **Timetable**

7.1  **School Hours**  
Please help your child arrive punctually at school  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8.55 am</td>
<td>to 11.15 am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.15 am</td>
<td>to 11.45 am</td>
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<tr>
<td>11.45 am</td>
<td>to 1.20 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.20 pm</td>
<td>to 1.50 pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.50 pm</td>
<td>to 3.25 pm</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

All prep and grade one children are to be picked up from their classrooms.

7.2  **Term dates – 2012**  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TERM</th>
<th>Dates</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TERM 1</td>
<td>Thursday 2nd February - Friday, 30th March</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TERM 2</td>
<td>Monday, 16th April - Friday, 29th June</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TERM 3</td>
<td>Monday, 16th July - Friday, 21st September</td>
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<tr>
<td>TERM 4</td>
<td>Monday, 8th October - Friday, 21st December</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

7.3  **Weekly occurrences**  

(a)  **Assembly**  
Each Monday the whole school assembles at the commencement of the school day. There are presentations by grades, news of the week and weekly awards are presented.

(b)  **Newsletters**  
Newsletters are sent home with the eldest child each Friday - please check your child's bag!

(c)  **Collection of money**  
All money for subject contributions, excursions, etc. is to be sent into the school in a clearly marked envelope showing: child’s name, activity and the amount of money enclosed. There is a deposit box at the office window.

(d)  **Children's banking**  
Children can open an account with the Commonwealth Bank and deposit money each Thursday. Application forms for new accounts will be circulated early in the school year.

7.4  **Term Activities**  

(a)  **Excursions**  
Children attend excursions during the year to support the curriculum programs. We cannot allow children to participate unless the permission form is signed and returned to school by the return date. Money sent to school for any purpose MUST be in a sealed envelope which bears your child's name, grade and the purpose for which the money is intended. On excursions children are required to bring their lunches in disposable bags and their drinks in disposable containers. Excursions are a vital component of a child's educational experience.

(b)  **Book Club**  
Book Club order forms are issued during the term. Children may purchase books at special prices at their appropriate level.

(c)  **Curriculum days**  
At various times during the year the staff will be involved in activities to enhance their professional development, plan programs and develop policies. These may be pupil free days sanctioned by School Council and parents will be notified well in advance.

7.5  **Annual activities**  

*Photographs.* Class, individual and family group photographs are taken each year.
8 Special Events
Involving the whole school community

8.1 Fund Raising
The Parents & Friends and School Council work together to raise funds to enable the school to resource educational programs throughout the year. At these times we rely heavily on our parent body and local community to involve themselves actively which will ensure enhanced learning opportunities for our children.

Generally we run one major fund raising activity each term.

8.2 Christmas break-up
Each year towards the end of Term 4 a concert is held in the evening. Families, friends and relations are invited to this annual event which also involves our Grade six graduation program.

8.3 Musical Performance and Choir
In August 2011 we will be holding a musical involving the whole school. The event highlights the Arts program which runs at the school. Similar events are held regularly (at least one every two years). The school alternates the musical performance (odd years) and the choir CD recording (every years).

8.4 Special Occasions
On special occasions throughout the year, the Parents & Friends organise sausage sizzles, stalls etc. for the whole school to enjoy. These events also assist with fund raising for the school.

Parents and friends are encouraged to participate.
9 Helpful Things to Know

9.1 Nutrition
The school has a policy of encouraging good nutrition - children should have a healthy breakfast each morning, and bring plenty of fruit to school for the recess and lunch breaks. Lollies, chewing gum, chocolate bars and fizzy drinks are not to be brought to school.

Children are encouraged to have a bottle of water with them at their table, and fruit and vegetables to nibble during class, which we call our Grazing Policy. Junior classes have a fruit time between 9.00 am and recess.

9.2 Lunches
Lunch is eaten in the classroom under the teacher's supervision. Lunch may be ordered from the local shop. A price list will be circulated to all parents. Parents must place the order at the shop before 10.00 a.m. There is a restricted menu for school lunches.

The school has as special Friday lunch which is run by volunteers and assists to raise money for the keeping of the grounds.

9.3 Uniforms
The school colours are bottle green and gold. Uniforms may be purchased through the school. All children are expected to wear school uniform. Each family will be issued with an order form. All socks, leggings, beanies, gloves and jackets must comply with school colours.

Thongs and shirts/T-shirts with no sleeves are not to be worn to school. Socks are to be worn at all times. This is a safety issue.

All students must wear a sun smart hat (i.e. legionnaires or slouch hat) and sunscreen to school during Term 1 and Term 4.

9.4 Valuable items
Children should not bring valuable items to school, or school related activities such as excursions and camps. Responsibility for such articles will not be accepted by the school.

9.5 After School Activities Program
The School hosts an after school clubs program during the year which operates daily from 3.30 pm to 6.00 pm.

The program provides organised activities each week night. The activities are advertised in the newsletter, and each child is able to access the program. There are set conditions regarding booking, payment and eligibility.