

Prep Handbook 2017



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FORWARD

May I take this opportunity to extend a warm welcome to the parents of children who will be commencing their primary school life at Don Valley in 2017. I would like to especially welcome those parents whose eldest child is starting at the school or who are new to the school in 2017.

The purpose of this booklet is to provide you with information that will enable you to assist your child (and us) to make the transition to primary school an easy one. We hope that the suggestions that are contained in the book prove helpful and useful.

On behalf of the staff and School Council, I would like to stress our belief that the best possible education for your child will be provided as the result of a co-operative partnership between parents and teachers.

As with any co-operative effort, it is crucial that the lines of communication between parents and teachers remain as open and effective as is possible, and that the communication be a two-way affair. Please don't hesitate to contact your child's teacher if you have any questions, concerns or suggestions to make.

Lesley Gunther
Principal



Don Valley Primary School: providing a caring and supportive environment where diversity and respect for self and others are valued.

1. TERM DATES 2017

The state school system and the majority of private schools will work to a four-term year. There are three term holidays during the year.

The term dates for 2017 are as follows:

Term 1: 31 January to 31 March *

Term 2: 18 April to 30 June

Term 3: 17 July to 22 September

Term 4: 9 October to 22 December

* Each year government schools are provided with four student-free days for professional development, school planning and administration, curriculum development, and student assessment and reporting purposes. We will notify you when these dates have been set.

2. THE BEGINNING

Parents and teachers are very aware that children beginning school are passing one of the most significant milestones they meet. This is the first major step towards adulthood and independence. There will be many opportunities for new experiences, for learning and for discovery. Of even more importance, the children will be learning to cope with living in a small society. (i.e. school).

Your child will be in a stimulating environment that allows them to investigate and discuss. Perhaps you, as a parent, will feel that you have lost your child, but this is the time when they will most need your sympathetic understanding and your confidence. You can share in your children's growth through your interest in their school life, their reading, the work they bring home and through your visits to the school.

We welcome your child to Don Valley Primary School.

3. THE FIRST DAY

The first day at school is a very important step in the life of your child. It is important, therefore, that it be a happy experience.

On the first morning, it is advisable that parents leave the room as quickly as possible after introducing their child to the teacher and seeing him or her settled into an activity.

An array of interesting activities such as construction blocks, picture books, art & technology activities, (with which most of them will be familiar from previous visits through our transition program in 2016) will be made available for the children. The aim will be for them to quickly become involved and absorbed in familiar and challenging pursuits. Should your child become tearful, which sometimes happens on the first day, we would appreciate your co-operation in accepting the teacher's advice on the best way of helping your child to settle.

This is not a suitable time for lengthy discussion of matters relating to your child with the teacher. The teacher will be pleased to discuss your child with you but please try to make arrangements for this to happen at another time (perhaps at the end of the day, after the children have been dismissed).



4. TIME TO GO HOME

During the first few weeks of their school life, a full day from 9.00 am to 3.30 pm can be very long and often over-tiring for a young child.

Some children are still in need of rest in the afternoon, especially as February can be very hot and adjusting to the new social demands of the classroom and playground can be exhausting. For the first week Preps will go home at 12:30pm. (Jan 31, Feb 1-3). If parents are unable to pick their children up at this earlier time during the first week, they will be able to book their children into the After School Care program. **However, we will need prior notice to organise this.**

Preps will then have Wednesdays off up to, and including March 8th. At all times, the children will only be dismissed into the care of a parent or a responsible adult nominated by the parent. Whilst early dismissal times are in operation the child should be signed out on the list remaining with the class teacher. In emergencies, children will, where possible, remain at school under supervision until the normal dismissal time at 3.30 pm. Parents who wish their children to be collected by another adult are requested to notify the teacher of such arrangements in writing and inform the adult of sign out procedures.

5. HOW TO HELP YOUR CHILD TO SETTLE IN

- (a) Show genuine interest on your child's account of the day. Really listen to what she/he says and look at the things that she/he brings home to show you.
Please encourage him/her to talk about his/her work, find something to praise and display it in a special place.
- (b) If your child is experiencing some problem, please come to the school and discuss it with us. By working together, we can usually eliminate the small fears that worry every child. Once alerted to the problem, teachers can watch for clues to the causes of his/her anxiety and take steps to build up his/her confidence. We all want to ensure that your child has a period of happy growth towards his/her full potential.
- (c) May we suggest that you make up a couple of "school lunches" for your child during the last few weeks of the holidays before school commences. In this way, you can teach your child the appropriate order in which the items of food may be eaten. We encourage our students to eat healthily and try to discourage students from bringing along junk food and other pre-packaged foods with little nutritional value.
- (d) It would be helpful if you could train your child to visit the toilet at "school times" (8.45 am, 11.00 am, 12:30 pm) so that she/he will become accustomed to a routine. Please note that one of the first items on the agenda on day one is to explain the use of the toilet during "lesson times". This familiarisation will have been started through the Transition Program from the previous year.

Please help us by ensuring that your child understands that it is quite acceptable to tell the teacher that he/she needs the toilet at any time. It would also be appreciated if boys could be given some guidance and experience in the use of a urinal before their commencement day.

- (e) We hope that all parents will understand that through “play”, a child builds up confidence, establishes sound relationships with other children, improves his/her powers of conversation and promotes stamina and dexterity. Try to provide materials such as sand, water, manipulative materials such as blocks etc. which will stimulate his/her imagination and initiative. Above all, please encourage him/her to play with other children and where possible be supportive of after school visits to the homes of newly acquired friends.
- (f) If your child is required to bring money to school, we have special envelopes with a place for his/her name and the reason for the payment clearly marked on the outside. Money should be left at the office. Forwarding the money by the required date would also be appreciated.
- (g) Please help your child to become independent in routines such as putting on shoes and tying laces, taking off coats and jumpers and placing them on a peg, and putting belongings away after using them.
- (h) Take the opportunity to encourage your child to use his/her powers of observation and concentration. Whilst in the car or out shopping ask him/her questions that are designed to make him/her take notice of the various colours of flowers and trees, the way in which animals move and the different shapes she/he can find around him/her.
- (i) Arrange for your child to stay with relatives or friends for progressively longer periods without you being present. Such experiences help to teach children that it is not always possible to be with parents and allow them to make a gradual adjustment to this situation.

6. APPROACH TO CURRICULUM

In our Prep to Two classrooms we have a strong commitment to the Early Years of Schooling program that involves a strategic and comprehensive approach to developing literacy and numeracy skills. The Early Years program is planned around a daily two hour literacy block and a one hour maths block. A core belief of the Early Years program is that given sufficient time and support, all students will succeed. The home-school partnership is an extremely significant component of the Early Years program. Some students will need individualised learning plans at different times to help them reach their potential (this can also mean extension for some students). These will be developed in consultation with parents.

In planning all curriculum activities we also look at the learning styles and learning preferences of the individual students within each group. Activities are planned to

accommodate these differences and to meet the needs of the individual learner so that we can maximise engagement and success for all of our students.

Throughout the school we believe that individual interests and intelligences should be nurtured. We believe that all children should have exposure to a rich variety of learning experiences and that they should also be given the opportunity to develop a wide range of skills and interests. Students have specialist instruction in Art, Music, PE, and Languages/Global Studies. Multi-Age sessions during the week encourage students to develop relationships with children of different ages while offering a stimulating curriculum. This also includes developmental learning sessions to encourage learning through play based activities, inquiry learning and student choice. Through-out the year students will also have many opportunities to participate in a wide variety of special events.

Planning for each term's activities is focused around an integrated unit of work. Each unit of work will also be a focus for some of the activities in Literacy and Numeracy. The activities enable students to develop understandings and explore concepts in other disciplines such as Science and Humanities. In the early years we also believe that is important to provide experiences that will enable students to develop their thinking skills, inter-personal skills, communication skills and technological skills.

Most importantly we aim to make learning a positive fun experience!

7. STUDENT GROUPINGS

As with most small schools, we place students in composite or multi-age classrooms. Our experience has shown that this type of student grouping has many positive effects. Student learning activities are developed according to individual need and stage of development or tasks are structured so that they are open ended, enabling different students to work on the same task but with different expectations and outcomes. Without the restrictions that can be imposed by narrow age based groupings, students can be more easily extended. Our students are very comfortable interacting with students of different ages across the school. This encourages leadership and responsibility together with mentoring and positive role models. Through the school there is a caring, family type atmosphere with frequent opportunities for interaction between the classroom groups.

8. PREP ENTRY ASSESSMENT

During the first few weeks all Prep students will be assessed on some aspects of their current literacy development. This information together with the information observed from the Early Numeracy Interview and any other observations, will be shared with parents in a parent-teacher interview during term one.

9. READING

Learning to read is a very complex process. During their first years, the children are prepared for learning formal skills. Just as babies learn to walk and talk at different ages, so it is that children differ in the time at which they are ready to read.

Sharing this time of learning and discovering is most exciting. Please do not miss the opportunity to assist your child with this vitally important process. The first books he/she brings home will be “non-readers”.

These are chosen for their interest to the child, to widen his/her knowledge of things and to make him/her aware that the printed word has meaning.

Your child needs you to read with him/her, to talk about the pictures and to point to the words as you read.

Please remember that actually reading a book will come much later when your child can recognise and remember words easily in many different contexts.

10. ABSENCE AND LEAVING THE SCHOOL GROUNDS

For safety reasons no child is allowed to leave the school grounds during the day unless in the company of a teacher or unless written approval is provided by a parent. Should you need to collect your child early, you will need to sign your child out at the office.

Special arrangements also exist for the collection of children during days of total fire ban. Further details are printed in the School Handbook.

11. HEALTH

Regular attendance is important in promoting school work, social adjustment, and attitudes and responsibility. Absences are a handicap to your child's development at school.

On the other hand, the presence of an unwell child in the classroom is disruptive for the class and unfair to the individual child. Please remember that if your child is ill, he/she should not be sent to school, BUT other than ill health, "Every Day Counts".

Details of exclusion periods for infectious disease are published in the school handbook. It is a Departmental requirement that a written parental explanation for the absence be supplied on return.

Prior to 1997 the Shire nurse made occasional visits on request to check children's hair for Head Lice. As this no longer happens free of charge, parents are now totally responsible for the detection, eradication and treatment of Head lice although the Shire will provide advice in this area. Please note that Head Lice do not discriminate according to how clean hair is and as a result can spread quite quickly throughout any group in close contact; hence their prevalence in schools. Parents of students with long hair however, are asked to keep hair tied back as this restricts any movement of the parasites. We recommend checking your child's hair on a weekly basis. Parents will also be asked to sign a permission form, which allows staff at school to conduct routine Head Lice inspections, as an effective management strategy.

During the first morning session students will have the opportunity to get out a 'brain food' snack. This needs to be a hard fruit (apples, pears), vegetable

(carrots, celery etc) or nuts. The provision of a healthy and nourishing big snack for 11.00 am, rather than lollies, chocolate bars, chips etc. is also highly recommended. It is more desirable that children are provided with too much rather than too little to choose from at both recess and lunchtimes.

12. SCHOOL DRESS

The wearing of school uniform, is strongly recommended and requested but not compulsory. The school colours are navy and light blue. The details of the uniform are as follows :

EITHER - Pale blue/navy blue school t-shirt or skivvy and navy blue tracksuit pants, school windcheater or cardigan.

GIRLS - Standard blue and white check dresses available from most retailers.

BOYS - School pale blue/navy t-shirt and grey/navy shorts, or trousers.

Orders for school windcheaters, t-shirts and tracksuit pants are taken at the end of each year. The Parents & Friends' Club usually carries a limited stock of spare windcheaters and t-shirts.

Parents who missed out on placing an order but would like to purchase a garment should apply at the school to see if one is available in the required size.

Clear labelling of all clothes (particularly uniform items) and lunch bottles and boxes will alleviate any trauma for children who misplace items of clothing during the school day, (and the stress on parents and staff trying to locate lost items).

There are often items of second hand uniform for sale. Please enquire at the office if you are interested.

13. ODDS AND ENDS –

- (a) **SUN SAFETY** - Please ensure your child is provided with a suitable wide brimmed hat for protection from the sun's harmful U.V. rays whilst playing outside. Hats are compulsory every school day from 1st September to 1st May. Don Valley hats are available via Parents and Friends' uniform order forms.
The school is a Sun Smart School which includes this requirement along with some policy and physical requirements.
- (b) The **School Bank** is currently operated through the school for the Bendigo Bank at Woori Yallock. Information on how to open an account will be forwarded to all families in term 1.
- (c) **Parents and Friends Club** operate a canteen on Fridays for lunch/recess orders. The menu and prices will be announced early in Term 1.

- (d) A **Booklist** will be distributed, along with an explanatory letter on Orientation Day
- (e) **Required Documents-** evidence of date of birth and an immunisation status certificate is required for all new enrolments at State Schools. All children must be 5 years or older by 30th April of the year they commence school.
- (f) **Conveyance Allowance –** The Department of Education pays a Conveyance Allowance (currently \$100 per term) to parents who must transport their children more than 4.8 km in order to attend school. Please note that the allowance is only payable where the nearest school is further than the prescribed distance. For more details contact the Business Manager.
- (g) **Education Maintenance Allowance –**
Please check current government policy on this.
- (h) **Student Medical Forms -** These forms provide us with required information about your child but more importantly, are our primary means of dealing with a situation involving your child. Please help us by ensuring that your child's form is completed correctly and is then kept up to date throughout the year by providing extra information or amendments as they arise. Should your child suffer from Asthma or Anaphylaxis it is imperative that the school have a copy of the relevant management plan for these or any other conditions or allergies your child may suffer from.
- (i) For any further information please refer to the Don Valley Primary School Handbook which is regularly updated and available on request. (Most new parents would have a copy of the most recent edition).

We look forward to contributing to your child's learning and development as a valued citizen of the community.

**If you would like a guided tour, with the Principal, Lesley Gunther,
please contact the school on 59 67 3321.**