

Early Years Great Careers

Grow. Lead. Succeed.



What do primary school nurses do?

Primary school nurses play a vital role in the early childhood sector, which supports the development, health, education and wellbeing of young children and their families.

Primary school nurses work for the State Government and in a variety of government and non-government primary schools in metropolitan, regional or rural locations. They help to look after the health and wellbeing of students and their families and often deliver preventative health programs.

Primary school nurses provide primary health care, education and support for school communities. This includes:

- Health screening and surveillance in primary schools as part of a visiting service.
- Health promotion and primary health prevention programs.
- School community development activities.
- Small group work focusing on health-related discussion and information.
- Individual student health counselling.

Fast facts

- Employment prospects in the early childhood and nursing sectors are strong and growing.
- Nursing is a skills shortage area – the unemployment rate for school and maternal and child health nurses is below 1 per cent.
- Federal Government labour market forecasting shows that in the coming years more than 26 per cent of new jobs will be in the health care and social assistance sector, making it the largest employer.
- More than 93 per cent of Registered Nursing graduates get a job; much higher than the average for all Bachelor degree graduates.
- To work as a nurse, including a school nurse, you'll need to be a Registered Nurse Division 1 nurse with the Australian Health Practitioner Registration Authority (AHPRA)
- School nurse salaries begin at \$72,165 a year and will increase with experience depending on role and responsibilities. (Source: Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, School and Maternal and Child Health Line Salary Scale, Nurse Category 3b)

Future employment rating ★★★★★

*Future employment growth 11% PA or more. Source: DEEWR

What should I study at school?

Useful subjects include English, maths, biology, chemistry, health and human development and VET Certificate III in Health Services Assistance.

What should I study at university or TAFE?

Bachelor of Nursing (three years)
Postgraduate Studies in Nursing
 (depending on interest/area of specialisation)
Certificate II/III Health Streams
Certificate IV Enrolled Nurse
 (Division 2 Nurse)
Diploma of Nursing
 (Enrolled Nurse/Division 2 Nurse)

Once I am qualified, what are my other career and leadership options?

Options could include health promotion, mental health, community health, adolescent health, child health, registered nurse and practice nurse. Management and leadership options could include nurse manager and children, youth and families services manager.

Early Years Great Careers

Grow. Lead. Succeed.



Helen O'Shea
Primary school nurse

What are your major qualifications?

I have a Master of Public Health, a Bachelor of Nursing (Honours), a Critical Care Certificate and a Diploma of Health Sciences.

How long have you worked in early childhood?

I have worked with children for about 10 years and been a visiting primary school nurse for two years.

What is a typical day?

I use information from the school entry health questionnaire and consult with teachers to understand children's needs. The aim is to promote health and wellbeing and good learning outcomes.

I look at all aspects of children's health and wellbeing and I may assess vision and hearing, speech and motor skills, height and weight, developmental age and social circumstances.

After discussion with parents and teachers the children can be referred to community or school allied health professionals, paediatricians or social agencies.

What influenced your interest in an early childhood career?

My interest in early childhood grew over time. Moving into community health was a natural progression while studying my Master of Public Health.

My particular inspiration is in trying to make a positive change for young children,

no matter how subtle, to help them achieve at school, at home and with their friends.

What do you enjoy most about your career?

I enjoy making a difference for children and helping them overcome physical, psychological or social impediments to their development.

We have conversations about their favourite things, how they feel about themselves and share loads of funny stories and ideas.

Often the challenging times are the most inspiring, when a child is in desperate need for intervention to ensure their safety, wellbeing or health.

I also enjoy the autonomy of designing my own working day and being an independent practitioner. I am on the road, out in the community and working where it matters – in the schools.

What is the best experience you have had as an early childhood professional?

The interactions with the kids in learning moments, such as explaining how to cough without spreading germs. Watching them run back to class to tell all their classmates is a sense of achievement that is unsurpassed. I know I have made a difference today to the health and welfare of a whole class.

There are many "stand out" moments like this that inspire and reaffirm why I have found my way to primary school nursing.

What would you say to others who might be considering a career in early childhood?

A career in early childhood is one of the most rewarding experiences. When you are with a child in such an involved way you somehow enter their world. It is rewarding because you can understand their perspective. You can make a difference for them by advocating and explaining what it is the children need.

Where do you see yourself in 10 years' time?

My goals are varied and I see the future of visiting primary school nursing evolving. In the future it will be an exciting time to be a visiting primary school nurse.

Want to know more?

education.vic.gov.au/earlyyears-careers
deewr.gov.au
myfuture.edu.au
joboutlook.gov.au



All indicative salaries in the document are gross before tax a year for full time employees. Salaries will vary depending on employer, role and Award.

Information regarding course and professional pre-requisites is of a general nature. Please consult a career practitioner and/or check with individual institutions to confirm specific course requirements.