

Partial Enrolment for Registered Home Schooling Students Guidelines

Background

The *Education and Training reform Act 2006* ('the Act') requires that all children of compulsory school age (6 to 17 years) are enrolled in a school, or registered for home schooling.

The Act provides that all young Victorians should have access to a high-quality education. Under the Act, the Victorian registration and qualifications Authority (VRQA) has responsibility for the registration of home schooling students. To gain registration with the VRQA, home schooling families must attest that they will provide regular and efficient instruction in the eight nationally agreed learning areas, in a manner that is consistent with the principles of Australian democracy.

As part of the introduction of legislative registration requirements for home schoolers, the Victorian Government committed to making various support mechanisms available to the home schooling community. In a document circulated in the Victorian Parliament in March 2006 it was stated:

*'The following support would be made available to home schoolers....
Students registered for home schooling, and their parents, will be eligible to partially enrol at their neighbourhood Government school for specific activities, as agreed by the school and parent.'*

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (the 'Department') has developed the following guidelines regarding this commitment.

Principles

The following principles are expected to apply:

- A partnership approach is fostered between the school and the home schooling family.
- Inclusion and full participation is required for all aspects of the program or activity in which the child is enrolled.

Enrolment process

A home schooling family is eligible to approach their neighbourhood government school to seek to partially enrol their child (of compulsory school age) in specific activities.

Families will be required to provide the school with a copy of the official letter issued by the VRQA confirming their child's registration for home schooling. This letter is provided to home schooling families by the VRQA upon successful registration, and is the only form of evidence the principal of a school can accept which proves that the child is registered for home schooling.

In circumstances where the principal agrees to enrol the student, normal enrolment policies and procedures apply, including completion of all relevant forms.

Any complaints regarding declined partial enrolments that are unable to be resolved at the school level should be referred to the relevant Regional Director.

Conditions of enrolment

Registered home schooling students may partially enrol at the neighbourhood government school to undertake activities, including sport, art, science, a language, etc.

Principals have the discretion to decline the enrolment where there are 'reasonable grounds' for doing so (such as a school decision to cap class sizes in particular year levels and/or subject areas, which have already been reached).

The period of enrolment is at the discretion of the principal, in consultation with the parent. It is possible that a school's capacity to enrol a student in specified activities may change from year to year. Consequently, it is feasible that the enrolment arrangements will be reviewed on an annual basis, or as otherwise determined at the point of initial enrolment.

Post-compulsory school age subjects and activities do not currently form part of the partial enrolment commitment.

It is at the discretion of the principal in consultation with the parent as to whether home schoolers seeking to partially enrol in a Government school other than the neighbourhood Government school are permitted to do so.

Principal discretion

The school principal can exercise discretion over the conditions of partial enrolment, and the level of adherence that is expected from the student towards school-level policies and procedures. This includes student dress code, and student wellbeing and management policies.

In some cases, the principal, in consultation with their school council may choose to exempt the home schooling student from certain aspects of a school-level policy.

Schools may choose to develop their own specific policy on partial enrolment for registered home schoolers.

Funding and budget implications

Subject to existing conditions, students enrolled as at February Census will attract funding through the Student Resource Package (SRP) on a pro-rata basis.

A registered home schooler with a disability wishing to partially enrol in a government school (other than a specialist school) may be eligible for funding through the Program for Students with Disabilities on a pro-rata basis, if they meet the relevant eligibility criteria.

The Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) is only available to eligible students enrolled full time in registered schools. Consequently, partially enrolled home schooled students will not be eligible to receive the EMA.

Adherence to school policies and procedures

School-level policies should be discussed by the school and the family at the point of initial enrolment. Adherence to school-level policies remains the principal's discretion.

Unless otherwise determined, all school level policies and procedures should apply, including those relating to student dress code (i.e. school uniforms) and student welfare and management.

Attendance

All usual attendance procedures and requirements remain relevant. Home schoolers are expected to attend at all times when the activity in which they have enrolled is delivered by the school.

Unless otherwise agreed, they are also expected to participate in all aspects of the program in which they are enrolled (including related camps and excursions).

Normal duty-of-care arrangements apply. This commitment provides important social opportunities for partially enrolled students. However, it is at the discretion of the school principal (in consultation with the parent) as to whether the student concerned is permitted to remain at the school during the lunch-time and recess breaks directly before or after the specific activity the child is enrolled to undertake.

It is also at the discretion of the principal, in consultation with the parent as to what, if any, extracurricular activities and/or other school programs partially enrolled home schooled students will be able to access (e.g. out of school hours care, camps, excursions, school concerts and performances).

Parent payments

The *Education and Training Reform Act 2006* affirms that students of compulsory school age enrolled in Victorian government schools are entitled to free instruction in the standard curriculum program.

In accordance with the Department's policy:

- Parents of partially enrolled students are expected to make relevant parent payments for essential education items. This should be on a pro-rata basis, where appropriate.
- Parents can also be invited to make voluntary financial contributions, subject to existing legislative principles.

Assessment and reporting

If the activity the student is enrolled to undertake is the subject of assessment, then it is expected that standard assessment and reporting policies and procedures apply. That is, parents of partially enrolled students will be eligible to receive a report on their child's progress in the specified activity.

Partially enrolled students will be eligible to sit the National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN). This can only be administered in a school-based setting.

Student transport

Access to student bus services and/or a conveyance allowance is subject to normal eligibility criteria. In accordance with existing procedures, this is dependent on the authorisation of the principal.

Further information

Additional information, including frequently asked questions, and a downloadable copy of the *Guidelines for Partial Enrolment for Registered Home Schooling Students*

is available on the Department's website at
www.education.vic.gov.au/aboutschool/enrolling/homeschool.htm

Further details regarding the registration requirements for home schooling families
can be accessed on the VRQA's website at
www.vrqa.vic.gov.au