**Induction into the Victorian Teaching Profession**

A Guide for Beginning Teachers

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No doubt you are filled with equal parts excitement and apprehension about taking up your first teaching appointment. You have completed a thorough preparation and whilst you have now come to the end of your journey as a student, you are just beginning your journey as a teacher. Many of you may also have had responsible jobs, or even other careers, but you are now embarking on a new phase. As a teacher and life-long learner, you will continue to develop your knowledge and skills and build your confidence and motivation to teach.

Principals in schools know this and are keen to both support you and capitalise on your new learning, energy, and enthusiasm. Because they care deeply about the quality of the education their students receive, they want to help you to become the best teacher that you can be.

Induction is part of the ongoing process of professional learning undertaken by all teachers. It essentially covers the first year of teaching, before blending with the professional learning cycle of the school.

**What to expect from induction**

The purpose of induction for beginning teachers is:

* To provide a sound understanding of the expectations of the profession
* To provide a sound understanding of the expectations of the school
* To assist you to develop your teaching practice
* To formalise opportunities for reflection and feedback in a mutually supportive relationship
* To introduce you to the school’s learning community focused on improving practice to maximise student outcomes
* To provide support in the VIT registration process
* To provide empathetic moral support.

## Getting Started.

## Your welcome pack

With the notification of appointment, your new school may have invited you to an orientation or planning day before you commence teaching. They may have also included a welcome pack that contains:

* information about the school
* the key school procedures and policies
* a school calendar with key events
* information about the year level or classes you will be teaching.

Read all the materials included in your welcome pack. If you are unsure of something, or need more information, take note of any questions you may have.

No doubt you will have studied the school’s website when you were preparing for your interview, but now is a good time to take another look and find out more about your new school.

As a teacher, you will be partnering with parents and the broader school community to deliver the best student outcomes. It is therefore important that you familiarise yourself as quickly as possible with the unique situation of your school, which includes its profile, partnerships, specific programs and the broader community.

## Attending an orientation day

An orientation day is a great way to get to know your new school. The information you will be given during the day will probably answer a lot of the questions you might have.

On the orientation day, senior staff may present useful orientation information about the school, introduce you to key personnel, provide time for curriculum preparation with other members of the team, as well as completing some administrative requirements.

You may also be introduced to a buddy. This person will guide and support you as you start your teaching journey. Later, you will be given a mentor who will guide you through the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) ) [registration](http://www.vit.vic.edu.au/registering-as-a-teacher) process and work with you throughout the first two years of your career as you work towards achieving proficiency.

## If the school does not run an orientation day

If your new school does not run an orientation day prior to the beginning of the new school year, it is a good idea to contact the school principal soon after receiving your notification of appointment.

During your phone conversation, consider asking:

* if it is possible to visit the school before you commence teaching
* if you can attend any curriculum or professional learning activities planned for the end of the year
* who the best person is for you to contact if you have any further questions
* if it would be possible to sit-in on some classes before the end of the year.

You could also consider asking:

* for a copy of the school handbook, school policies and the school code of conduct
* if someone is available to show you around the school?
* what kind of programs operate in the school?
* what support is available for students in the classroom including programs to support students with specific needs?
* is there a program for the first day of school?
* if you can meet with a Curriculum leader – the Year Level Team Leader (Primary) or the Curriculum (Domain) Leader. If not, is there someone who can inform of the curriculum for the class/classes that you will be teaching?

This time is also a good opportunity to photocopy or print materials you will need for the first few weeks.

## The buddy system

The first few weeks in a new teaching position can be a stressful and an emotionally challenging time. So your new school may assign a buddy to you for the first few weeks. Your buddy can offer perspective and emotional support during this time, but they may be replaced with a more formal mentor, later on, to support you through your first two years of teaching and the [Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) registration](http://www.vit.vic.edu.au/) process.

Although the terms buddy and mentor are often used interchangeably, the roles of a buddy and mentor are different.

A buddy offers friendship, emotional and moral support in the first few weeks at your new school. The role of the mentor is more professional – it is a structured, practice-focused relationship that attends to the development needs of early career teachers.

In some cases, your principal may decide to use trained mentors as buddies, filling both roles. This means your buddy can switch to a mentoring role once you are comfortable in your new position.

## Learning about the school community

All teachers taking up a new appointment are to some extent joining a new community. It is an important part of your orientation into the new school that you also learn about the community to which the school belongs. Schools play an important role in their communities and there are certain expectations of the teachers who work in them.

Firstly, you need to know some basic socio-economic and cultural information related to the community.

This information will probably be part of the school profile you receive on orientation day and the information available on the school website. It will give you a more rounded picture of the children and young people in your classrooms. It is important to understand that the values and beliefs of people in the community may be very different from your own. It will also impact on the kinds of expectations that the community, and specifically the parents, have of you as a teacher. It is important to talk to staff at your new school about these expectations.

It is also good to know about:

* common types of employment in the community – professional, academic, trades, self-employed, skilled, unskilled, shift work
* education levels
* income levels and their impacts on school programs, such as excursions
* the predominant family profiles – extended, nuclear, single parent
* ethnic backgrounds and the languages spoken
* religious backgrounds
* protocols for engagement between Koorie communities and schools
* special needs that may be a result of trauma – such as floods, fires, drought, war or persecution.

## Moving to a rural community

Living and working in a rural community can be a really rewarding experience, but it is important to be aware of how it differs to the experience of teaching in a city – especially if you are moving out of the city for the first time.

As you are living in a small community as well as teaching in it, you will need to be aware that, your professional obligations may extend beyond the school.

Community perceptions of you as a teacher, based on your behaviour in social situations, may impact on your professional life. Some guidelines for professional conduct in a rural community include:

* maintaining confidentiality about school matters
* putting aside personal relationships or those developed in a social situation with students or parents when discharging professional responsibilities
* being impartial
* not using personal information in the classroom
* maintaining a standard of behaviour consistent with your professional role when you are in public settings
* seeking advice before accepting invitations from families.

## Conduct and ethical obligations

As a teacher you are governed by a number of conduct and ethical obligations including VIT’s [Victorian Teaching Profession Codes of Conduct and Ethics](http://www.vit.vic.edu.au/professional-responsibilities/conduct-and-ethics). For teachers working in a government school you are also bound by the Victorian Public Service Code of Conduct and the Department of Education and Training’s (DET) values. Your school will also have a prescribed code of conduct and formalised duty of care obligations.

The VIT Code of Conduct provides a set of principles or standards for the behaviour and conduct of all Victorian teachers. This includes a teacher’s professional and personal conduct with students, colleagues and parents, guardians and caregivers.

The Department provides information, guidance and support on the Code of Conduct for Victorian Public Servants, covering a range of topics including integrity, diversity and equity in the workplace.

You also have a duty of care to protect children under your care from harm and it is a mandatory requirement for you to report if you suspect or witness any instances of child abuse.

For more information, see:

* [VIT Codes of Conduct and Ethics](http://www.vit.vic.edu.au/professional-responsibilities/conduct-and-ethics)
* [Code of Conduct for Victorian Public Sector Employees](http://vpsc.vic.gov.au/html-resources/code-of-conduct-for-victorian-public-sector-employees/)
* [DET Values](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/hrweb/workm/Pages/Public-Sector-Values.aspx)
* [Protecting Children](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/health/protect/Pages/default.aspx)

# Getting Settled: Support and resources for your first term

## During your first few weeks

Over the first few weeks you will become fairly familiar with school policies and procedures. You will have met your students, your buddy and colleagues. You will also begin to feel more familiar with your surroundings.

The principal may organise a meeting with new teachers during the first week. This is an opportunity for you to ask any questions not answered by your buddy.

You are also likely to meet with:

* curriculum leaders and year level coordinators, to finalise planning for the year
* any relevant collaborative learning communities
* Welfare Coordinators with student support responsibilities
* key contacts including for when you will be absent

Staff meetings will clarify your school’s day-to-day procedures and priorities for the year.

## Administrative tasks to complete

Make sure these administrative tasks have been completed within your first few weeks:

* Ensure your tax file number and bank details have been given to the school’s Business Manager
* Your eduMail and other email accounts have been set up and your passwords are working
* You have access to edupay or your payroll system
* Your photocopy and/or printing card has been organised
* You have completed compulsory online learning modules including mandatory reporting to protect children and child safe standards, and Occupational Health and Safety.
* You are familiar with your school’s procedures and policies.

## Working with your buddy

During your first few weeks your new school, your buddy may:

* organise a regular meeting time with you
* check in with you regularly to see how you are going and check on your progress
* seek feedback about how your induction to the school is going, so your feedback can be passed on to the Professional Development Coordinator to keep improving the induction process for new teachers.

Always remember that the aim of a buddy is to offer support, not to evaluate or judge you.

## Working with your mentor

While your buddy can assist you with the practical tasks and issues you may encounter during your first few weeks of work, and offer emotional and moral support, working with a mentor is quite a different experience. Your mentor’s role is to support you with developing your professional practice and the VIT [registration](http://www.vit.vic.edu.au/registering-as-a-teacher) process.

The relationship with your mentor is more professional – a critical friend focussing on reflective practice. It is a developmental relationship of two people engaged in mutual learning and growth. Mentors and beginning teachers assist each other to become the best teachers they can be. It is a vitally important relationship.

All schools are learning communities and the students are not the only ones doing the learning. In a learning community, teachers adopt a spirit of inquiry, innovation, and experimenting towards improving practice. In these communities there are no mistakes or errors - only learning experiences.

While a mentor is someone with knowledge and experience and is seen as a role model by other teachers, they engage with beginning teachers by exchanging honest constructive feedback. It is a two-way relationship.

## VIT Registration

After graduation you will have registered with the VIT as a provisionally registered teacher. To achieve full registration you must provide evidence that you have meet the [Australian Professional Standards for Teaching](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/health/protect/Pages/default.aspx) at the Proficient level, undertake an evidence based approach using the inquiry approach and teach for at least 80 days.

An evidence-based inquiry approach involves working with your mentor or experienced colleagues, identifying a question for inquiry based on the learning needs of your students, undertaking professional learning related to your inquiry and then applying your learning to your teaching practice and evaluating the effectiveness of your practice and its impact on your students learning outcomes.

For more information on obtaining and retaining your registration with the Victorian Institute of Teachers, see VIT’s [guide](http://www.vit.vic.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0020/15419/PRTGuide_EvidenceBasedProcess_2016_v12final.pdf) for provisionally registered teachers and [videos](http://www.vit.vic.edu.au/registered-teacher/moving-to-full-registration/watch-how-to-become-fully-registered-with-the-vit) on the registration process.

## Observation in the classroom

Observation of classroom methods as well as video/audio feedback is a powerful way to develop knowledge about your teaching.

The primary purpose of classroom observations, whether formal or informal, is to provide evidence based feedback which helps you to improve your practice. Feedback is an integral part of the learning process and every teacher needs timely, high quality and constructive feedback on a regular basis.

## Why observation?

Observations are one of the requirements for the VIT’s full registration process, so make the most of them. Whatever area of teaching practice you have identified as a priority for development, observation can help you unpack and address it.

Whether it is classroom management, differentiated teaching or assessment, you can plan and use observation to help you answer all the questions going around in your head.

Observing teachers that are expert in areas that you want to know more about, is a great way to learn. If classroom management is causing you concerns, observe a teacher who teaches the same students as you and does not have the same classroom management issues. Watch what the teacher does and does not do, look for the teaching capabilities used.

Being observed and having your mentor provide objective feedback on your teaching, can help you identify the areas of practice and teaching capabilities you are strong in and areas that require further development.

## Planning for observations

There are three important steps to the observation process:

**Pre Observation Conversation:** Meet with your mentor to discuss the focus and plan for the observation

**Observation:** Your mentor observes and gathers evidence of your practice

**Post Observation Conversation:** The reflective conversation between yourself and your mentor following the observation.

## Using observation to understand your teaching challenges

In your day- to- day teaching, you will begin to identify your students’ strengths and areas of need. This may occur through formal assessment or through informal means such as student observations, interactions with students, conversations with colleagues, or your own personal reflections.

For example, a challenge you may have identified is that some students are reading the text correctly but they do not comprehend what they are reading. You have tried a few strategies but they do not seem to work and you are just not sure what is going on.

This becomes the focus of a collegiate classroom activity – an observation. You meet with your mentor and take them through your challenge. You highlight the learning objectives and the strategies you have already tried. You describe the areas of practice and teaching capabilities you would like your mentor to pay particular attention to during the observation.

In the post-observation conversation you would expect your mentor to share their observations – objective feedback using data on what they observed and to ask questions. This conversation will enable you to identify changes to your practice and further professional learning you might need to access. This may form the basis of your enquiry for the VIT registration process.

The more specific the focus, the greater the opportunity there is to examine your challenge. Through the observation you will also become aware of the professional standards you are demonstrating, your strengths as well as areas for further learning so that you can make that positive impact on student learning.

## Parent-Teacher Conferences

In most schools, parent-teacher conferences are scheduled towards the end of first term and again towards the end of third term. These may be accompanied by an interim report giving some broad indications about each student’s progress.

Parent-teacher conferences are an important way of providing feedback to parents on their child’s progress. It is also important for you to hear about concerns that parents may have. It is critical that each student knows that their teacher and their parents share goals about their learning.

The first time participating in Parent-Teacher Conferences may be daunting. Don’t worry parents can also be apprehensive about them. This is particularly the case if their child has not been succeeding at school or they have received negative feedback on these occasions in the past.

The school wants parents to attend and often puts considerable effort into encouraging them to do so. It is important that it is a productive experience for them, and for you.

## Tips for Parent-Teacher Conferences

Your school will have decided a particular format for these conferences and you need to follow those formats. However, there are a few things you can do.

* Arrange the furniture in the room so that you and the parents are sitting together at a table. Placing yourself behind a desk may not set the right tone.
* Prepare the room so that it is tidy and attractive. Display student work where possible.
* Present yourself professionally in dress and manner.
* If it has not been done for you, organise to have a more experienced teacher close by, so you have someone to whom you can refer difficulties.
* Be prepared. Have evidence of the student’s progress and learning behaviour. Samples of work, assessment records, diary notes or printouts make good examples.
* Conference times are usually about ten minutes, so be clear about what you want to communicate.
* Greet parents in a warm and welcoming manner. Introduce yourself if you have not met them before.
* Be confident but respectful. You are the professional educator but they know their child well. Do not forget that some of your parents may also be teachers.
* Practice active listening. Do not get so caught up in what you are saying that you do not listen properly to what the parents are telling you.
* Where appropriate, schools will have organised interpreters – if you need to, ask the parents if they would prefer to work with an interpreter. It is not appropriate to use students as interpreters.
* Begin and end with something positive. Show that you know the student and are committed to their progress.
* If you need to draw attention to some negative behaviours do it in terms of their impact on the student’s learning. Do not engage in personal comments or characterisations.
* Involve the parents by asking for their thoughts on what you are discussing.
* Have a place where you take notes about the interview, particularly if you have promised some follow up.
* End the conference by smiling and thanking them for coming.

## Student Assessment and Writing Reports

Assessment and report writing go hand-in-hand. They are two fundamental elements of the teaching and learning cycle. Throughout the year, formal and informal assessment inform your teaching practice and the data you gather provides the evidence you use in your feedback to parents and students.

## Student assessment

In collaboration with your learning teams and in compliance with your school’s curricula and assessment policy, you will be structuring student work towards the achievement of specific outcomes. You will be constantly engaged in the collection of different types of data – from observation to formal assessment tasks. The information you collect during these observations and tasks will inform the next stages of the learning process.

Remember, when you are doing assessment, the most valuable source of information and assistance is the expertise of your colleagues, the curriculum leaders in your school, your team members and your mentor.

For further information: [Assessment Advice](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/support/pages/advice.aspx)

## Writing reports

Comprehensive written reports are usually produced at the end of each term. The Victorian Curriculum provides the format for these reports and detailed guidance for writing them. Written reports provide a valuable opportunity for dialogue with the parents/carers of the students in your care.

Just as with parent-teacher conferences, reports are a very important task for a teacher. You are representing the profession to the public – to the parents/carers, but also to whomever else might read those reports in the future. Information from the reports you write will be collected and used at the school, region, state, and national level to describe educational achievement in a general sense and to set targets for improvement.

Your school will offer you guidance and information to prepare for writing reports. Your mentor might also offer guidance or advice.

Report writing and proof reading is often done in pairs, so guidance and feedback is available at all stages of the process.

For further information: [Advice for Writing Student Reports](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/support/Pages/tipsforwriting.aspx)

Getting Inspired: Support and resources to grow your teaching skills

## Setting goals for the new term

A brand new term is about to start. You are feeling more comfortable with your work environment and your students as you get to know them. The routines and procedures of the school are now familiar to you.

You have enjoyed a well-deserved break and it is time to get back to work and consolidate your new learning.

As part of the VIT [registration](http://www.vit.vic.edu.au/registering-as-a-teacher) process, you will be collecting evidence of your growing competence, often referring to the [Australian Professional Standards for Teachers.](http://www.vit.vic.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0012/12153/APST-2015-copy2.pdf)

If you have not already, the start of term two is a good time to sit down with your mentor and plan how you will work together. They can also help you decide on an area of practice you would most like to work on.

## Tips for goal setting

Rather than express your goal in general terms: “I want to be a better teacher”, it is more effective to identify a specific area of practice, for example, “I would like to improve my questioning” or “I would like my classroom to be more inquiry based” or “I need better classroom management strategies”.

The observations of your mentor’s classes and theirs of yours can focus on a specific improvement area making it easier to target your search for resources and professional development opportunities.

## Managing and running a productive classroom

If you are worried about student engagement in the classroom, you are not alone. This is the area most identified as a concern by beginning teachers.

Every classroom you enter will be different, and you will meet a wide range of personalities, skill-sets, and learn life stories in each. Achieving a calm working environment can be a challenge.

### **Tips for creating a productive classroom**

Your best aide in ensuring a productive classroom is the conscientious preparation of challenging, purposeful and relevant materials.

Ensure you are open with your students and have communicated the goals of the learning activity and the measures of success.

Look to your mentor and the school’s Student Code of Conduct. It is important to understand and follow the philosophy and procedures put in place by your school. If you feel that you have concerns in this area, speak with your mentor about making it a focus for observation and feedback. Actively note the techniques used by your mentor and ask them to observe you and do the same. Follow your observation with a discussion about what strategies may work for you.

Seek assistance from Curriculum Leaders and other support staff in catering for individual differences in your classes. Successful differentiation of learning activities can help to ensure that all students are able to actively participate.

If you have concerns about a student, or students in your class, talk to colleagues. Seek to learn whether their background stories account for the difficulties they are experiencing. Find out what strategies have worked for other teachers in the past.

Show a genuine interest in your students. Understand their preferences for learning, their interests outside school, and their motivations and aspirations.

* It is important to choose to be the person of authority in your classroom. This means behaving confidently even if at first you do not feel it!
* Be well prepared and believe in what you are asking students to do.
* Be clear about your purpose in structuring activities.
* Project confidence by facing the group and making eye contact with them.
* Except when you are working with a group, stay on your feet, interacting with students as they work – and, of course, monitoring their progress.
* Maintain a serious but friendly demeanour until you all get to know each other. Learning activities should be deeply satisfying and enjoyable but you should show at all times that your main focus is on their learning.
* Think about how you use your voice – maintain a low register and speak only slightly louder than a normal conversational level. Losing your temper and raising your voice into shouting or yelling certainly does not work. Speak more slowly than you would normally, leaving some brief pauses for information to be processed.
* Be careful of the language that you use. Avoid sarcasm which can be hurtful or making derogatory comments about the personal attributes of any student. You may feel frustrated and upset at times, but it is essential to maintain your sense of calm authority. Remember that students often model your behaviour.
* Be positive and praise good behaviour rather than criticising bad behaviour. Follow the ‘catch them doing something good’ rule, especially with students you are finding difficult. Rewarding good behaviour is much more powerful than punishing bad behaviour in achieving change. It is more powerful to begin a lesson with, “Thank you, Esme, Jade and Ahmet for sitting quietly with your books ready” than with a general criticism or identifying those not doing the right thing.
* Lastly and most importantly, allow your joy in the wonderful journey of discovery you are embarking on with your students to shine!

## Widening your networks

In large schools there may be a number of beginning teachers and therefore opportunities for collaborative support. Study groups or networks with the purpose of sharing ideas and resources and working through new ideas or challenges can be initiated either formally or informally. The Professional Development Coordinator at your school can assist with the planning process.

Another way that you can widen your support networks is by undertaking professional learning opportunities that support you to develop your teaching practice and interact with others both new to the profession and experienced teachers.

You will also have opportunities to continue to develop your teaching practice through participating in your school’s professional learning communities including [Communities of Practice](http://www.bastow.vic.edu.au/communities-of-practice) or [Professional Learning Communities](https://edugate.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edrms/project/PLC/Pages/Home.aspx).

## Professional Development

Once you are fully registered your ongoing professional development will be guided by the Performance and Development framework operating across Victorian government schools. The [Performance and Development](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/profdev/Pages/performancedevelopment.aspx) framework is a whole-of-practice approach with a focus on development and improving the quality of teaching in the classroom.

The performance and development approach aligns with the [Framework for Improving Student Outcomes](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/management/Pages/schoolperformance.aspx) (FISO). The framework is a comprehensive approach to continuous school improvement, using the latest research on student learning and global best-practice to assist schools to concentrate their effort on strategies that will have the greatest impact on improving student learning outcomes. Schools undertake an annual review and develop a four-year strategic plan and an annual implementation plan.

There is a strong link between FISO and the performance and development approach as the learning needs of students should drive the goal-setting of teachers. Principals' and teachers' performance and development plans draw on the goals and targets identified in the school’s strategic plan and the annual implementation plan. This ensures a cohesive approach to school improvement as there is a direct line-of-sight between the school's strategic direction, and the roles and responsibilities of the all staff in their performance and development plans.

There are a range of [institutes](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/profdev/Pages/institutes.aspx) offering professional development programs and courses.

## Resources to support you in the classroom

* [Learning and teaching resources](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/teachingresources/Pages/default.aspx): to help you teach specific subjects including information on delivering English, Maths, Health and Physical Education, ICT and English as an Additional Language.
* [Online learning and teaching resources:](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/support/Pages/digital.aspx) information, advice, resources and professional learning opportunities to assist you to plan and embed the use of digital technologies for learning across your school.
* [Learning diversity resources:](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/teachingresources/diversity/Pages/default.aspx) to help you make sure all students learn and thrive in your classroom including gifted, Koorie and English as an Additional Language students and students with a disability.
* [VicSTEM:](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/learningdev/vicstem/Pages/default.aspx) science, technology, engineering and mathematics resources, activities and programs.
* [Teacher support resources](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/support/Pages/default.aspx): to help you apply best practice to your teaching with information on reports, assessment, curriculum plans, digital spaces, literacy and numeracy.
* [Student Health and Wellbeing](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/health/Pages/default.aspx): information to support you to make sure students in your care are healthy and safe, including resources on student engagement and inclusion, students with disabilities, bullying, respectful relationships, cybersafety, healthy eating and drug education.