

# The Compact:

Roles and responsibilities  
in Victorian government  
school education



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The Victorian Government and its schools share a commitment to, and responsibility for, the learning and development of children and young people.

Minister Dixon has outlined the Government's reform agenda for education, which is underpinned by **autonomy**, **professional trust**, and **accountability and support**. This reform agenda empowers school leaders and teachers, working with their communities, to be the drivers of change and to determine the local approaches that will achieve improvement. International evidence supports the move to greater autonomy, with schools from high-performing systems achieving improved student outcomes when given autonomy over the things that matter most. Professional trust and autonomy must, however, be balanced with the right types of accountability and support for improvement to be widespread and sustainable.

## The Compact

In support of the Government's reform agenda, the Compact articulates the respective roles and responsibilities associated with the changing context of the Victorian education system, particularly in relation to professional trust, autonomy and accountability and support. It is an agreement between Victorian government schools and the Department and it seeks to improve the learning and development of children and young people by:

- clarifying existing responsibilities of schools and the Department
- describing existing flexibility available to schools in the management of resources and operations
- outlining the role of the Department in providing support, resources and guidance

- clarifying the accountabilities of schools to their community and the system, and minimising compliance requirements.

School responsibilities outlined in the Compact refer primarily to responsibilities held and/or shared by principals and school councils, but also include those relevant to teachers and students. The specific roles and responsibilities of principals are clearly outlined in Principals' Contracts, and the roles and responsibilities of school councils are outlined in the Council Constituting Order and in the induction component of the Improving School Governance handbook. These documents should be referred to for further clarification about respective responsibilities and will be regularly updated to ensure consistency with this Compact. The use of 'Department' throughout this document refers to central and regional offices.

This Compact uses an aspirational set of principles to support the Government's vision for education in Victorian government schools that was outlined in *Towards Victoria as a Learning Community (TVLC)*. It provides an overview of the responsibilities of schools and the Department in achieving this vision, but it is not an accountability document and does not replace existing accountability documentation. Rather, accountability documentation (such as Principals' Contracts and the School Accountability and Improvement Framework) will be updated over time in line with the roles and responsibilities outlined in this Compact. The **Accountability Requirements** section provides further information about accountability.

### Principles guiding the Compact

1. All students can exercise education choices that meet their learning needs, aspirations and interests, and will be supported to reach their full potential
2. Schools and the Department share a professional commitment to continual, evidence-based improvement in teaching and learning and to improving student outcomes
3. Schools provide inclusive, safe and orderly environments for all members of the school community
4. Resources are managed effectively, efficiently and fairly to deliver the best possible education experiences for all students
5. Schools and the Department are open and responsive to our communities, and are held accountable for outcomes

The responsibilities of schools and the Department relating to each principle are outlined in the following pages. The broader application of these principles should be informed by each school's vision, values and strategic planning. The Compact will be updated regularly and through consultation to reflect future changes to autonomy.

## Changing Relationships

Increased professional trust and autonomy for schools will result in fewer mandates and more targeted and responsive support from the Department. These changes will mean that principals are expected to exercise their responsibility for driving improvement at the local level.

In this context, schools will be expected to:

- work collaboratively and in partnership with other schools, business, industry and community sector organisations

- act in the best interests of their students, families, local communities and peers being accountable to them for outcomes, performance and improvement
- actively and positively contribute to the education system, for the broader benefit of all Victorian students
- engage with local government, relevant community organisations and other providers, including the Early Childhood, Higher Education and Skills sectors.

The Department will retain its obligation to intervene to enhance student outcomes where performance measures clearly indicate that a school is not performing effectively, and support from the Department has been unable to address this.

## Accountability Requirements

The Compact aims to empower schools to deliver their core responsibilities in a locally relevant way. It does not replace or remove any existing accountability arrangements outlined below.

### Schools are required to refer to and meet the obligations:

- Current legislative and regulatory requirements and guidelines (including, but not limited to, those created under or in accordance with: *Education and Training Reform Act 2006*; *Equal Opportunity Act 2010*; *Fair Work Act 2009*; *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic)*; *Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)*; *Financial Management Act 1994*; *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004*; *Accident Compensation Act 1985*; *Public Administration Act 2004* and the *Constitution Act 1975*)
- VRQA minimum standards
- ACARA and VCAA curriculum guidelines and mandated policies
- Enterprise Bargaining Agreements
- Principal contract accountabilities (Schedule B), including performance management and development processes
- School council responsibilities outlined in the Council Constituting Order of individual schools and the induction section of the Improving School Governance handbook
- Principals Guide to School Council Elections
- Commonwealth and Victorian policy requirements including National Education Agreement and National Partnership Agreements in which Victoria is a participant
- School Accountability and Improvement Framework (currently under revision, to be replaced by School Performance Framework)
- Student Engagement Policy Guidelines
- DEECD Human Resources website
- Schools Policy and Advisory Guide
- Student Resource Package Guide
- Out of Home Care Education Commitment 2011
- Victorian Institute of Teaching requirements

# Principles and responsibilities

## Principle 1:

*All students can exercise education choices that meet their learning needs, aspirations and interests, and will be supported to reach their full potential*

### Aim

- Provide teaching and learning programs, and implement practices and resources, which allow young Victorians to fully participate in education.
- Develop the skills and abilities that will prepare all students, including vulnerable students and students with disabilities, for lifelong learning and success in their chosen post-school pathway.

### Responsibilities

#### Schools will:

- Provide equitable enrolment opportunities to all local students (subject to admission criteria policies defined by the Department).
- Plan, document, implement and publish an explicit, school-wide curriculum that provides core requirements (e.g. AusVELS, VCE, VCAL, VETiS); supports student choice, empowerment and engagement (e.g. through locally determined specialisations); reflects community priorities; and prepares students for life in the 21st century.
- Develop or adopt an evidence-based instructional model and ensure its use across the school.
- Ensure a range of assessment practices are used to monitor and evaluate each student's progress, guide instructional practice, identify learning and student pathways, and report to students and families on progress.
- Establish networks and partnerships with other schools, early childhood and further education settings, and community organisations, business and industry to support student outcomes, strengthen student transitions and increase choice and customisation of offerings in local areas.

- Provide all students and families with the skills, information and support they need to make informed decisions about options and pathways through school and post school.

#### The Department will:

- Provide schools with admission criteria policies to support school enrolments and develop these collaboratively with schools where differentiated policies are required (e.g. specialisation).
- Provide evidence-based, validated curriculum, assessment, and instructional model resources.
- Facilitate and broker networks and partnerships where schools require additional support to form these.
- Provide guidance and processes to support positive transition from kindergarten to school.
- Provide guidance and processes for effective student pathways and exit processes into further education, training and employment for all students.
- Ensure access to targeted and comprehensive support for schools facing exceptional challenges with operational or curriculum planning.

## Principle 2:

*Schools and the Department share a professional commitment to continual, evidence-based improvement in teaching and learning and to improving student outcomes*

### Aim

- Schools and the Department will plan, review and reflect on the effectiveness of their respective activities.
- Use feedback and evidence to make decisions, strengthen practices, and identify areas for improvement that will positively impact on learning experiences and outcomes for all students, including vulnerable students, students with disabilities and gifted and talented students.

### Responsibilities

#### Schools will:

- Demonstrate sustained learning growth across school years and age cohorts.
- Support the professional development of the school workforce, including local planning and delivery of professional learning programs, mentoring and peer observation.
- Set the direction for school improvement by developing local, evidence-based initiatives and innovations that support continued improvement of teaching and learning.
- Play a key leadership role in the improvement of the Victorian education system and a collective responsibility for students in Victoria, by working collaboratively across schools to share effective practices; mentor and appraise peers and colleagues (principals and teachers); and undertake joint resource management (e.g. SSSOs).
- Support the induction and development of the teaching profession by facilitating pre-service teacher placements.
- Participate in system-wide and sample programs of assessment, and system surveys.
- Implement Victorian government policy.

#### The Department will:

- Provide policy direction for the government school education system.
- Monitor system-level, national and international trends, and make recommendations for evidence-based changes to policy and practice.
- Undertake monitoring and analysis of school performance and benchmarking data, including factors influencing improvement trajectories, and ensure accessibility for schools.
- Provide access to quality professional development (if required) to support increased and improved peer observation and feedback, and in response to evidence of student progress, school performance, and emerging research and best practice.
- Promote and support (as appropriate) school and system innovation, including providing information about evidence-based improvement initiatives and best practice and sharing case studies.

## Principle 3:

### *Schools provide inclusive, safe and orderly environments for all members of the school community*

#### Aim

- Support the engagement and wellbeing of all staff and students, including vulnerable students and students with disabilities, by providing a climate of fairness, trust and mutual respect.

#### Responsibilities

##### Schools will:

- Demonstrate sustained improvement in student engagement and wellbeing.
- Create an inclusive and respectful environment, taking account of the physical, intellectual, cultural, ethical and social needs of students, families and carers.
- Identify, document and communicate the unique features of the school's context.
- Build partnerships in local areas and with families to maximise student inclusion, engagement and re-engagement in high quality learning experiences.
- Document, communicate and implement school policies and strategies relating to student safety, wellbeing and engagement. This includes taking reasonable measures to eliminate discrimination and victimisation as far as possible, addressing the impact of disadvantage, and supporting students facing complex challenges.
- Ensure student consultation and voice in the development of policies that contribute to providing an inclusive, supportive and orderly school environment.
- Establish clear policies and strategies to support students with challenging behaviours. This includes the provision of appropriate professional learning for teachers, the development of curriculum experiences to meet the needs of all students, and the development and communication of student referral processes for rare instances when the needs of the student cannot be met within the school.
- Apply appropriate discipline and behaviour procedures, including suspension and expulsion, in

line with system level policies, recognising the need to ensure that all young people have an appropriate pathway in education.

- Provide school health programs that build life skills and resilience and promote general health and wellbeing.
- Ensure that a duty of care is provided to all students enrolled at the school for all school programs.
- Report data on suspensions, expulsions and the number of students that move to different settings.

##### The Department will:

- Provide practical guidance and resources for managing challenging behaviour of students, parents and staff, and for managing bullying, discipline, cyber-safety and wellbeing.
- Ensure access to professional learning relating to student welfare and discipline, and access to specialist expertise in exceptional, complex cases.
- Broker partnerships with youth, community and health services where a school is facing particular challenges and needs support.
- Ensure access to strategies, resources and approaches relating to student safety, wellbeing and engagement. This includes taking reasonable measures to eliminate discrimination and victimisation as far as possible, addressing the impact of disadvantage, and supporting students facing complex challenges.
- Conduct research and identify best practice in relation to optimal school environments.
- Provide quality assured surveys for staff, students and parents so that schools can assess engagement, wellbeing and safety of staff and students, and the general climate of the school.

## Principle 4:

*Resources are managed effectively, efficiently and fairly to deliver the best possible education experiences and outcomes for all students*

### Aim

- Plan, allocate and share resources in ways that use them to the greatest effect, and that demonstrate value, equity and responsiveness to local needs.

### Responsibilities

#### Workforce

##### Schools will:

- Attract and retain a high quality school workforce, ensuring clear role expectations and flexible management of workload and deployment, to achieve school strategic aims and goals.
- Conduct principal selection processes that support selection of the right candidate to drive school performance and represent the needs and expectations of the school community.
- Organise high-performing teachers to support other staff (e.g. through peer observation and coaching), develop best practice models, and lead professional development.
- Demonstrate proactive and robust management of staff performance, including capacity-building and evidence-based progression against agreed targets.
- Include student feedback in workforce arrangements (e.g. student survey data on teacher performance).
- Regularly review, adapt and improve school workforce management practices, including practices related to the maintenance and enhancement of staff wellbeing.
- Focus on performance and capacity-building of all staff (e.g. teachers, support staff, specialists), recognising good performance and taking appropriate action when staff are underperforming.
- Ensure an appropriate level of staff input into school

policy, through the use of open and consultative decision making processes.

- Comply with National Employment Standards, legislative requirements, and the principles of employment and conduct that apply in the public sector (e.g. merit-based selection, equal opportunity, dispute resolution).

##### The Department will:

- Provide guidance and resources that support the full HR management lifecycle (recruitment, selection, performance management and recognition, exit procedures).
- Provide workforce planning data and analysis to support schools in the management and development of their own workforce.
- Develop and implement programs and initiatives to increase supply of high quality entrants into teaching, particularly where shortages exist.
- Implement a defined principal performance management cycle and accompanying processes.
- Provide access to specialist expertise and support for schools facing exceptionally challenging workforce issues.
- Provide advice in relation to school management of payroll and leave functions.
- Ensure support for new, acting and transitioning principals.



## Funding

### Schools will:

- Demonstrate equity and transparency in the use of funding and resources, including appropriate communication and decision making processes related to the partnership role of the principal and school council and appropriate governance and controls over financial assets.
- Ensure that the interests and needs of students are paramount when making decisions regarding the purchase of programs from external providers.
- Ensure that any arrangements a school enters into with education and training providers to provide all or part of a school program are consistent with departmental policies and guidelines and represent value for money in the use of government funds.
- Allocate resources and monitor efficiency in order to achieve strategic plan targets and ensure the sustained operation and financial independence of the school.
- Ensure the budget is aligned and integrated with learning priorities.
- Choose suppliers, and opt in and out of Department's service provision as best meets local needs.

## Infrastructure

### Schools will:

- Maintain safe and secure environments, including meeting regulatory requirements.
- Align infrastructure planning and management with school strategic planning, ensuring appropriate input from the school council.
- Opt in to the model for capital works management that meets the capacity of the school and corresponding support needed from the Department.
- Maintain ICT systems, data storage (including CASES 21) and transfer processes that support school, region and system-wide monitoring, reporting and student transitions.
- Seek opportunities to share sites, facilities and ICT systems with early childhood providers, community learning organisations, local government and other schools.

### The Department will:

- Undertake fair, appropriate and transparent allocation of all Commonwealth and Victorian government funding.
- Provide an inclusive Student Resource Package (SRP) that maximises discretionary funding.
- Provide clear processes for accessing centrally-managed sources of funding outside the SRP (e.g. workforce bridging, capital funding).
- Provide technical and policy advice, professional development, guidance and benchmarking on financial management and procurement.
- Monitor high-risk school-level expenditure (defined by volume and value).
- Facilitate larger-scale partnerships and shared service arrangements that reduce administrative costs or overheads (e.g. Local Administration Bureaus).
- Provide appropriate advice and support on the role of the school council.

### The Department will:

- Strategically manage its portfolio of infrastructure, including demographic, provision and capacity planning.
- Provide capital works project management and support, at the level requested by individual schools.
- Undertake targeted investment for maintenance projects, in line with audit priorities.
- Monitor maintenance requirements through condition assessments.
- Provide access to a central internet service provider.
- Broker partnership arrangements that support local planning, development, sharing and maintenance of infrastructure and ICT.
- Provide appropriate advice and support on the role of the school council.
- Undertake a sustainable, transparent and needs based approach to asset management and investment.

## Principle 5:

### *Schools and the Department are open and responsive to school communities and are held accountable for outcomes*

#### Aim

- Work together to promote and build public confidence in government schools by consulting and reporting on activities and achievements.
- Engage the active participation and support of families, community sector organisations, businesses, and local communities; and foster innovation and best practice across the system.
- Be accountable for working within the legislative and regulatory framework for Victorian government schools, while exercising flexibilities to meet the needs of students and the expectations of local communities.

#### Responsibilities

##### Schools will:

- Implement planning, monitoring, and reviewing processes (including developing a Strategic Plan and engaging in periodic reviews) that support school improvement.
- Report these dimensions of performance regularly and in plain English to the school council, school community and the Department.
- Report regularly to families and students on student achievement, progress and plans for improved learning.
- Administer system-wide surveys and data collection (e.g. staff, student and parent surveys), and participate in core national and international assessment programs (e.g. NAPLAN, PISA, TIMSS, PIRLS).
- Provide the Department with quality student and school level data (including student attendance, assessment and destination survey data) in a timely and accurate manner.
- Operate locally-appropriate governance models and processes that engage the school council, families/carers and the community as active participants in education and development.

##### The Department will:

- Provide governance and policy frameworks that are consistent with legislated responsibilities of schools/school councils and which support local flexibility and decision-making.
- Implement guidance and capacity building for school councillors, and support and intervene where significant failures of governance arrangements occur.
- Provide timely, accurate and functional performance data that enables school-level benchmarking, and which provides feedback from system surveys and sample assessments.
- Provide access to core performance indicators, transparent performance standards for schools, and clear expectations/triggers of graduated support and intervention.
- Monitor school performance against a range of core indicators, and provide targeted responses to demonstrated issues related to school performance and student outcomes.
- Maintain a pool of trained and accredited school reviewers (including practising principals), and provide guidance and resources for school review activities.



