



PARENTS AND SCHOOLS – WORKING TOGETHER

Catholic schools work with you in educating your child. The partnership between you and the school, especially your child’s teachers, is crucial to ensuring that your child has the best opportunities to enjoy the school experience and learn effectively.

As a parent, you can contribute your own knowledge and skills at all levels to assist your child’s learning, support the school’s goals and promote the principles of Catholic education.

There are many ways in which parents and schools can work together to improve the educational experience and outcomes for their children. You can help your child in many areas of school life, as suggested in the list below.

Parents have a particularly important part to play in the educating community, since it is to them that primary and natural responsibility for their children’s education belongs (Congregation for Catholic Education 1997, n. 20).

What you can do to help your child at school

Faith development

Attend school and parish liturgies and Masses, sacramental education and faith development evenings.

Participate in and discuss religious education learning activities and social justice initiatives.

Encourage respectful conversations about faith, beliefs and values.

Build a partnership with the school and teachers to support your child’s faith and learning.

Learning

Encourage your child to take increasing responsibility for their learning and organisational skills.

Talk to your child about their learning and progress, using the language you know best. In conversations with your child, encourage respectful listening and sharing of opinions, beliefs and feelings.

Establish regular contact with your child’s teacher to discuss their learning and progress, and share knowledge of your child and how they learn.

Encourage reading by setting an example – reading yourself.

Read to your child and listen to your child’s reading.

Discuss the content of what has been read with your child and ask to see any work they complete in response to these books.

Wellbeing

Encourage a balanced diet, regular routines, sufficient sleep and regular physical activity.

Encourage positive attitudes, values and behaviours such as courtesy, confidence, persistence and 'doing your best'.

Celebrate your child's successes.

Encourage self-management, independence and resilience. Talk to your child's teacher about how you can support the school's focus on these important life skills.

Help your child balance the amount of time spent in school work and play.

School activities

Attend school events, displays or productions in which your child is involved.

Become involved in school community activities through the school board, parent groups, parent education programs, excursions and classroom assistance.

School attendance

Regular attendance at school is vital if your child is to obtain maximum benefit from the educational and social opportunities that the school can offer.

As a parent, it is important that you familiarise yourself with the school's attendance requirements and procedures, which in most instances are provided at the time of enrolment and published on the school's website.



You are responsible for ensuring that your child attends school every day, on time, and for explaining absences in a timely manner.

Schools must advise parents of unexplained absences on the same day.

Your child's teacher is responsible for monitoring daily attendance and patterns of absences and lateness, while the principal is responsible for determining if any irregular attendance or sustained absence is reasonable. If there are concerns about a student's record of attendance, the matter may be referred to a government Attendance Officer who has extensive powers of inquiry to investigate absences from school without a reasonable excuse.

In accordance with the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006* (Vic.), schooling is compulsory for children and young people aged 6–17 years unless an exemption has been granted.

There may be occasions when your child is reluctant or refuses to attend school. Such occasions may increase in frequency and reflect a pattern of worrying behaviour. You are strongly encouraged to work in partnership with your child's teacher to address factors which may be causing the problem and to implement agreed strategies to promote attendance.

For further information and tips to improve your child's attendance at school, see www.vic.gov.au/attendance-and-missing-school.

Learning at home

Catholic schools usually advise parents of homework expectations at the beginning of the school year. You can assist your child with their learning at home in a number of ways.

What you can do to help your child at home

Work in partnership with the school and teachers.

Be aware of any school work that is to be completed outside of school.

Have regular conversations with your child about their learning and link it to their previous experience.

Help your child to plan and organise a time and space for learning at home.

Speak to your child in the language you know best (where English is not the main language spoken at home).

Your child's progress

Communication between you and the school about your child's progress is important. There are formal and informal occasions for this, both face-to-face and in writing. Keep in contact with your child's teacher and contact the school if you have concerns.

Contact information

It is important that you keep the school up to date with your contact telephone numbers and those of an emergency contact. In cases of emergency or ill health, the school will immediately contact you so you can collect your child or approve the appropriate medical attention. It is also important that the school is kept up to date about any changes to your child's medical or healthcare needs.

Parish-school education boards

Parish-school education boards, or school advisory boards/councils, are established in most Catholic schools. These boards bring together the parish priest, principal and parents in a

spirit of collaboration to realise the school's vision and achieve its educational aims. More details about the work of the board, its procedures and processes are available at your child's school.

Parents and friends associations

Most schools have a parents' association, often called the Parents and Friends Association or Parents Auxiliary, which offers an opportunity for parents to gather and become involved in the life of the school. These groups take many forms and provide support for the school in areas such as:

- *social functions*
- *maintenance of grounds, buildings and equipment*
- *fundraising for particular needs in the school*
- *voluntary support for educational programs.*

Parent groups can also assist in fostering the intellectual, cultural, social and spiritual interests of their members, and provide opportunities for the development of community spirit among the staff, parents, parish and wider community.

In schools ... families have a most important place and role. Catholic schools appreciate their value, and promote their participation in the school, where they can assume various forms of co-responsibility (Congregation for Catholic Education 2013, n. 60).

Parent support

Catholic schools and Catholic education offices are committed to developing and maintaining opportunities for parent and community participation in the education of their children.

Catholic School Parents Victoria (CSPV)

Catholic School Parents Victoria (CSPV) was established in October 2005 and continues to provide opportunities for Catholic school parent perspective to be at the forefront of education across Victoria.

CSPV's role is to:

- *provide a forum to represent parent perspective in Victorian Catholic schools*
- *promote parents as partners in education with the school, the Church and the community*
- *promote the principles of Catholic education in collaboration with the diocesan bishops and directors*
- *promote Catholic schools as schools of first choice for Catholic families.*

CSPV provides an avenue for parents to participate at diocesan, state and national levels, advocates for Catholic school communities and education in the Catholic tradition, and represents parents of students in Catholic schools through their school boards or parent groups. CSPV aims to have up to two representatives from each diocese who endeavour to ensure that all Catholic school parents are informed about system and state issues.

For further information, see www.cspv.catholic.edu.au or email executive@cspv.catholic.edu.au.