



## ENROLMENT OF CHILDREN UNDER MINIMUM AGE

### INTRODUCTION

The compulsory age by which a child must be enrolled in a Victorian school is the year in which the child turns 6 years of age. The minimum starting age is 4 years and 8 months. That is a child must turn 5 by 30<sup>th</sup> April in the year of school commencement.

Principals are, on occasions, approached by parents seeking enrolment for children under that minimum age. These parents have a variety of reasons for seeking early enrolment and it is often difficult for the Principal to ascertain the validity of those reasons.

There are legal issues, too, in that parents whose child is enrolled early, but who are later disappointed with the child's social or academic progress, may take legal action against school or system for accepting the under-age enrolment.

### PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to provide clarity of principles and procedures for parents seeking to enrol their child, who is under the minimum age, in a Catholic school in the Diocese of Sale. When considering the enrolment of children under the minimum age into their schools, authorities need to apply the principles and procedures contained in this document.

### PRINCIPLES

Assuming that the school has the capacity to accept the enrolment, the education needs of the child remain paramount.

Experience shows that, even when a child appears school-ready from an academic perspective, the social development of the child may not be well served by early enrolment. On occasions, this does not manifest itself until later, often in the secondary school environment.

Schools are funded on the understanding that they cater for children of appropriate age. Extending that age range is contrary to the intention of the funding.

## POLICY

The enrolment of students under the minimum starting age is discouraged. It may happen only if:

- No child of legal school age misses enrolment because a child under the minimum age has been enrolled
- The Principal and the Parish Priest have considered the evidence and determined that the child would be disadvantaged educationally if under-age enrolment were denied.

Acceptance of an application for early enrolment requires the approval of the Director of Catholic Education.

## PROCEDURES

Principals who are approached by parents seeking enrolment of a child under the minimum starting age must:

1. Receive the *Application for Enrolment* from the child's parents / caregivers and inform them that
  - a. the child can be enrolled only if that enrolment would not cause another child of school age to miss out.
  - b. the approval of the Parish Priest and Director of Catholic Education is required before the child can be enrolled.
  - c. approval will be contingent upon the recommendations contained in reports from a registered Child Psychologist and the child's pre-school/kindergarten teacher (see points below)
  - d. if the child is accepted, the child's progress will be assessed at the end of the preparatory year and it will be at the school's discretion as to whether or not the child repeats preparatory year.
2. Request the parents to obtain an assessment from a registered Child Psychologist. This statement should address the question as to whether the child's learning would be disadvantaged by his or her NOT beginning school early.
3. Request the parents to obtain an assessment from the child's pre-school / kindergarten teacher.
4. Request the parents to provide certified evidence of the child's date of birth.
5. Once these reports are to hand, the Principal, in consultation with the Parish Priest should determine whether or not early enrolment is appropriate. If it is determined that it is in the child's interest to accept the enrolment early, that there is capacity in the class to accept the enrolment and that parental agreement to any conditions has been obtained in writing, the Principal should submit to the Director a request for the child to be enrolled. All documentation, including reports and copies of correspondence with the parents outlining the above conditions, should accompany that request.

6. Wait until the Director's approval is received in writing before confirming the enrolment. Please note that such approval would only be given in exceptional circumstances.

## **EXPECTED OUTCOMES**

Adherence to the policy and procedures will mean that:

- No child under the minimum enrolment age is inappropriately enrolled in a Catholic school in the Diocese
- Principals and Parish Priests are clear on processes for making a determination when early enrolment is sought.

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