



ENROLMENT OF CHILDREN UNDER MINIMUM AGE

1.0 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. A child must turn 5 years by 30 April in the year of commencing at school.

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 the school or system for accepting the under-age enrolment.

2.0 PURPOSE

This policy provides 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.

3.0 PRINCIPLES

- 3.1 Enrolment of a child under the minimum school age is critical and a Principal must be confident that the decision is in the interests of the child.
- 3.2 Acceptance of an application for early enrolment requires the approval of the Director of Catholic Education and will only be granted under exceptional circumstances.
- 3.3 In the first instance the Principal's decision to progress the enrolment is also contingent on the capacity of the school to accept the enrolment with the educational needs of the child being paramount.
- 3.4 Assuming that the school has the capacity to accept the enrolment, the education needs of the child remain paramount.
- 3.5 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.

- 3.6 Schools are funded on the understanding that they cater for children of appropriate legal age. Extending that age range is contrary to the intention of the funding.
- 3.7 The enrolment of a student under the minimum starting age is discouraged. It may happen only if:
 - 3.7.1 No child of legal school age misses enrolment because a child under the minimum age has been enrolled.
 - 3.7.2 The Principal and the Parish Priest have considered the evidence and determined that the child would be disadvantaged educationally if under-age enrolment was denied.

4.0 PROCEDURES

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

- 4.1 Receive the Application for Enrolment from the child's parents / caregivers and inform them that:
 - 4.1.1 The child can be enrolled only if that enrolment would not cause another child of school age to miss out.
 - 4.1.2 The approval of the Parish Priest and Director of Catholic Education is required before the child can be enrolled.
 - 4.1.3 Approval will be contingent upon the recommendations contained in reports from a registered child psychologist and the child's pre-school/kindergarten teacher (see 4.3)
 - 4.1.4 Enrolment is conditional on establishment of a Parent Support Group (PSG) where it is a requirement that the child's parents meet with designated staff at a minimum of four times a year. The purpose of these meetings will be to monitor the child's first twelve months in school. Adjustments to the child's learning requirements will be made accordingly.
- 4.2 Request the parents to obtain an assessment from the child's pre-school/kindergarten teacher.
- 4.3 Request the parents to organise an educational assessment for their child using a registered, practising psychologist. All assessment information provided by the psychologist will need to be forwarded to the school.
- 4.4 Request the parents to provide certified evidence of the child's date of birth.

- 4.5 Once these reports are in 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 outlining the above conditions, should accompany that request.
- 4.6 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.

5.0 EXPECTED OUTCOMES

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

6.0 REFERENCES

Department of Education and Training. *School Policy and Advisory Guide*.

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/participation/pages/admission.aspx#1>

Catholic Education Melbourne. Publications and Policies: *Enrolment for Schools in the Archdiocese of Melbourne*.

<http://www.ceomelb.catholic.edu.au/publications-and-policies/policy/policy-2.4-Enrolment-for-Schools/>

7.0 REVIEW

Draft Review: September 2012

Implementation Date: March 2015

Review Date: September 2017