

INFORMATION ABOUT ATTENDING DAY CARE OR KINDERGARTEN IN TERM 4 AND STARTING PREP IN 2021

Dear parents and carers,

Thank you for supporting your community to help slow the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19).

This letter includes information about:

- when your child can return to childcare and kindergarten, depending on if they're enrolled in a service in metropolitan Melbourne or rural and regional Victoria
- schools being ready to welcome children to Prep in 2021
- health and safety advice.

Returning to childcare and kindergarten

First Step: Monday 14 September to Sunday 27 September

- Your child can only attend childcare (long day care or full day care) or sessional kindergarten on-site in metropolitan Melbourne if you are a permitted worker (under the Permitted Worker Permit Scheme) or your child is vulnerable.
- Your child can attend childcare (long day care or full day care) or sessional kindergarten on-site in rural and regional Victoria.

Second Step: From Monday 28 September

- Your child can attend childcare (long day care or family day care) on-site in metropolitan Melbourne or rural and regional Victoria.
- Permitted Worker or Access to On-Site Childcare/Kindergarten Permits will no longer be required in metropolitan Melbourne.

Third Step: From Monday 5 October

- Your child can attend sessional kindergarten on-site in metropolitan Melbourne or rural and regional Victoria.

These changes depend on average daily case rates going down and the advice of the Victorian Chief Health Officer.

We understand you may be worried about your child's safety, but the advice from the Victorian Chief Health Officer and the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC) is that childcare and kindergarten remain low-risk, safe places – unless the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) asks them to close.

Restrictions on childcare and kindergarten were made to reduce the number of people moving around the community, not because services are unsafe places for children or staff. Your service will have a COVIDSafe plan and health and safety measures in place, such as cleaning.

It is very important that your child goes back to their childcare or kindergarten service when they can. Attending their childcare or kindergarten service is the best way for your child to continue their learning and development. It will also help prepare any children starting Prep in 2021.

Schools will be ready for children starting Prep in 2021

We know that education in 2020 has been different, but your child will have developed a range of skills and abilities in kindergarten to help them continue their learning in Prep. Kindergartens and schools are working together to support families and welcome children at different stages in their growth to Prep in 2021. Term 1 at school will support children who may not have been able to attend four-year-old kindergarten on-site as planned this year.

Schools are doing lots of things to support children to start Prep, including:

- online school and classroom tours
- 'meet the principal' video
- 'meet the Prep team' video conferences
- kindergarten and Prep teacher meetings
- training Year 5 students to be Prep buddies.

If you have not yet enrolled your child in Prep for 2021, we encourage you to look into the options available and enrol them as soon as possible. The Department of Education and Training provides a lot of useful information about starting school on its [website](#).

Once you have enrolled your child, you should talk to the staff at your child's school about how Prep will look in 2020/2021. You should also talk to your child's kindergarten teacher to plan for a positive kindergarten to Prep transition experience for your child.

All Victorian Government schools and funded kindergartens can access free telephone interpreters through VITS Language Loop. Ask your kindergarten to call 9280 1955 or visit the [website](#) to organise an interpreter to support you with any communication. This will help the kindergarten to get to know your family and child's needs.

Health and safety advice

To help keep your children and your family safe, your childcare or kindergarten service will continue these important health and safety activities:

- Temperature screening for all children attending the service
- Regular cleaning of the whole service
- Wearing face masks, where possible
- Encouraging children, parents and carers who feel unwell to stay at home and get tested.

We also ask that you talk to your children and family about practicing good hygiene at home, including:

- Wash your hands or use hand sanitiser before entering a childcare or kindergarten service
- Wear a face mask any time you leave home, including when you visit your childcare or kindergarten service
- Stay 1.5 metres away from anyone you don't live with, including staff and families at your childcare or kindergarten service
- Cough and sneeze into a tissue or your elbow. Then wash your hands.
- Stay at home if you feel unwell and get tested. Stay at home until you have the test results and have no symptoms.