



SCHOOL HOURS POLICY

Policy & Guidance

- Schools must provide at least 25 hours student instruction per week (with the exception of Foundation (Prep) students in Term 1).
- In specific circumstances, school hours may be varied for student needs (including Prep students), teacher needs and emergency circumstances.
- School hours may not be varied for staff meetings or conferences (unless there are exceptional circumstances).
- Regional Director approval is required for changes to the start and finish times that affect the school bus schedule.
- Management of water or electricity disconnection will vary, depending on the severity and time of the disconnection.
- The school day is generally between 8:30am and 3:30pm, however, specific times are determined locally based on factors such as:
 - bus schedules
 - links with other schools
 - organisation of the school day
 - school speed zones
- Where possible school times should be organised to occur within the VicRoads school speed zone times (8:00 to 9:30am and 2:30 to 4:00pm), see [VicRoads school speed zones](#).

Purpose

- This policy outlines the requirements relating to school hours and any changes to school hours and to outline the process required for school closures.

Implementation

- The Principal of Footscray North Primary School is responsible for deciding whether or not to vary school hours, subject to Regional Director approval if required.
- Because of the impact any variation to the starting and finishing times of a school day may have on the school community, the Principal will consult with the School Council (as a means of considering the views of the school community) before varying the starting and finishing school hours, except in cases of emergency variations.
- Depending on the extent of the change, the school also may consider other forms of consultation with the school community, such as parent forums, written communications or surveys.

Attendance for Foundation (Prep) students

- To accommodate local circumstances, the Principal may dismiss Foundation students:
 - in January and February, no earlier than 2pm
 - during the remainder of Term 1, no earlier than 2:30pm

A variation to school hours during January and February may include limited days per week attendance or a later start to the day, provided that students are not excused for more than 25% of the normal school week.

To make these adjustments to attendance times, the Principal will:

- consult with and consider the views of School Council
- develop a comprehensive communication strategy with parents/carers
- ensure students are collected by the parent/carer or another person authorised by the parent/carer, or provision is made for the care of the student during normal school hours, when the parent/carer cannot collect the student or wants them to attend school

The Principal may also determine a timetable and procedure to spread Foundation admission over three days in Term 1 when there are large numbers of students.

Variation to hours for student or teacher needs

The following information outlines the various circumstances that school hours may or may not be varied, according to student or teacher needs:

End of term

Students can be dismissed:

- after 2:30pm at the end of Terms 1, 2 and 3
- earlier than 2:30pm on the last day of Term 4 provided the School Council has been consulted and their views taken into account (as a means of considering the views of the school community) and the instructional period excluding recess and lunchtime is at least 240 minutes

When determining end of term dismissal times, the school will:

- consider the VicRoads school speed zone times
- consider coordinating dismissal times with neighbouring schools
- advise relevant authorities to ensure school crossings are supervised and speed signs reflect the new finishing times

Early dismissal for staff meetings and conferences

The Principal is not permitted to dismiss students before the normal time to hold meetings, conferences or discussions with staff unless there are exceptional circumstances, then the Principal may dismiss students early provided that the parents/carers are notified in advance.

Strike action

When strike action is taken the Department expects:

- all schools will remain open and normal arrangements will apply, as far as practicable
- any student for whom a parent or carer is unable to provide adequate care will be supervised at school
- the Principal should be advised 48 hours before the proposed strike action of the teachers who will not be in attendance
- that in secondary schools, students in senior classes will be required to attend
- that in secondary schools, middle- and upper-year students will be considered for non-attendance

When strike action is taken the Department expects the Principal to:

- plan for the maximum number of students to attend school and make arrangements with those teachers who will be in attendance
- make special timetable arrangements as necessary for the day
- make arrangements for any students to attend school when their families cannot provide adequate supervision at home
- send a notice home to parents/carers advising them of the arrangements that will apply

The Principal will timetable classes for all teachers present in an equitable way.

Variation to school hours or school closure in emergency circumstances

Extreme weather conditions

(With the exception of schools on the Bushfire At-Risk Register during Code Red days), the school will not be closed on days of extreme heat or heavy rain.

If there are extreme weather conditions:

- midday recess may be reduced to no less than 30 minutes
- dismissal time may be adjusted accordingly

Students will only be sent home when there is someone to look after them. Teachers must remain on duty until the normal time to supervise those students who remain at school.

Emergencies

When students need to be evacuated in response to an emergency, students will be:

- supervised for the duration of an emergency and until the normal dismissal time, provided that it is safe for students to travel home or
- dismissed into the care of parents/carers during the evacuation and the details must be recorded

Regional director approval must be obtained to dismiss students. See [Emergency and Critical Incident Management Planning](#).

Water and electricity disconnection

When a disconnection will necessitate a school closure and prior notice is received, the Principal will:

- seek approval from the Regional Director before closing the school
- advise parents/carers of the likely time and date of reopening the school

When a disconnection occurs without prior notice to parents/carers, students will only be sent home when:

- there is a parent/carer at home to look after them
- there are no public toilets within reasonable walking distance to which the students may be taken, such as at another school, sports grounds, church yards, a railway station
- Please refer also to the school's *Emergency & Critical Incident Management Policy*.

Evaluation

- This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's three-year review cycle or if guidelines change (latest DET update late July 2020).

Not a mandatory policy

School Council Approval No Longer Required

Reference:

<https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/school/pal/school-hours>