PREP PARENT HANDBOOK

Information for Parents of Prep Students
Dear Parents,

Starting school is a wonderful and exciting time for all concerned and we hope this information booklet will assist you in helping to give your child a positive transition into school life.

We welcome the opportunity to share with you, the joint responsibility of developing your child to their full potential. A close liaison between school and home greatly increases the chances that your child’s education will be a happy and rewarding experience.

School life is an extension of the home environment in which the values of co-operation and sharing, tolerance and a respect for the rights of others are encouraged.

Just as children begin to walk and talk at different ages, so do children learn at different rates. Whilst one child may be ready for a particular task, another may require different activities which are suited to the level of that child’s development. Some children are ready to read when they begin school, others require tasks which encourage and allow reading readiness to develop. The most important aspect of readiness to read is the emphasis placed upon reading in the home. Daily reading with your child is a most important part of this process.

The school will organise opportunities such as Parent Information Evenings and Parent/Teacher Interviews, to meet with you to share information on your child’s learning and what we are trying to achieve. In addition, you are invited to contact us if you have anything you would like to discuss. Usually a few informal words with the teacher as you deliver or collect your child will be sufficient, but there may be occasions when you need to arrange an appointment for formal discussions.

The start of a school year can be tiring for children and this is especially so with Foundation Year children. The classroom program will make allowances for this. Children are expected to attend school for the full day on each school day of the week, unless they are overtired or unwell. Parents need to telephone the school to advise that a child will be absent.

Your child will receive two written reports a year showing their progress.

I would like to extend a very warm welcome to you and your child and we hope that you will enjoy your association with us and will accept our invitation to become an active member of our school community.

Stephen Mathers
PRINCIPAL
Starting school is a big change for children. Often the hardest part is being away from the family and familiar surroundings. Some children find it difficult to join a group of other children and this can impact on their initial enjoyment of being at school. Some ways you can make the transition from home to school easier for your child are:

**Before school starts:** Be positive about school. Talk to your child about the school where he or she will meet other children and make new friends and take part in interesting and enjoyable things. Visit the school so that your child becomes familiar with the school environment.

Our transition program at Newmerella Primary School begins with “Let’s Play” sessions. The idea of these sessions is to open the classroom to potential Foundation Year students and their parents to come along and “play” with us at school. These sessions are held once a week over several weeks in term three.

In Term Four, prospectively enrolled preps are invited to come for half days and full days during the term. Dates to be advised.

These transition visits to the school prepare children for the year ahead and usually dispel any worries about coming to school.

Provide opportunities for your child to spend some time away from the family: This will help your child to become more independent and to build self confidence. An overnight stay with Grandma or a sleepover at a friend’s house will help your child to be more at ease in different environments.

Share reading experiences: The bedtime story is really important for 5 and 6 year olds. Share new stories and rediscover old favourites. Allow some quiet moments for reading in bed and encourage children to borrow books from the town library.
Encourage questions: Questions are vital for investigating and learning. Listening to and answering these questions will help your child remain an active and curious learner. You, as a parent, should also be asking questions of your child, particularly questions which require more response than a ‘yes/no’ answer. Don’t be put off when your child’s answer to “What did you do at school today?” is “Nothing”. Be more specific - ask about friends, activities, reading time, singing, games, craft and play times. Encourage children to reply using sentences rather than single or few words. This will help develop your child’s language development.

Encourage children to discover for themselves: We all have to learn to take responsibility for our own learning. Young children are natural investigators. Don’t always tell them the answers, but do provide the means for them to find their own answers. Much problem solving is learned through play. Encourage imaginative play, dressing up and role playing.

Encourage drawing and writing at home: When is a child ready to draw and write? As soon as he or she is able to hold a pencil! Keep plenty of pencils, crayons, paint, paper, cardboard and scissors on hand and encourage their use.

Sometimes write for your child: Write down a story or statement as your child tells it, then read it back several times. Draw some pictures together to go with the story and display the ‘story’ for the whole family to share.

Put TV viewing and computer games in proper perspective: Most children enjoy watching TV, but they also need time for playing, reading, being outdoors and using their own imaginations. Choose carefully what and how much TV your child watches. Sometimes ask questions about their favourite programs.

Ensure your child knows his family name and address: Could your child find his or her way home? Do they know their surname? Do they know their address and telephone number? Learning these things can be made into a game - there is no need for pressure or drills.

Get to know your child’s teacher as a friend: The benefits of a good relationship between teacher and parent are obvious. Don’t hesitate to communicate with the teacher as you see the need - before confusion develops or problems arise. (But please be mindful of the teacher’s daily program and make a time that suits you both.)
PREPARATION FOR SCHOOL

Your child will be able to adjust to school life better if they are able to do ALL these things independently:

- To use a handkerchief or tissue independently.
- To put away playthings and materials after use.
- To wash hands and face without assistance.
- To remember to use and flush the toilet and wash hands afterwards.
- To know how to take off and put on clothing.
- To repeat own name and address, also telephone number if possible.
- To leave you for a few hours without being upset.
- To tie their own shoelaces or use buckles or velcro on shoes and cope with buttons and zips on clothing.
- To know that they must never accept anything from strangers or leave the school in the company of strangers.

YOUR INVOLVEMENT

If you wish to become involved in your child’s school programs these are some of the ways:

- Encourage and support your child.
- Serve on the school council or become involved in working bees or other whole school community activities.
- Donate some of your time to help in the classroom. Listening to readers or assisting with craft activities or excursions involve you and give you a better insight into the dynamics of the classroom, how it is run and how your child fits in socially. (A current Working with Children's check is necessary)
- Keep communication pathways between home and school open and up to date.
**SCHOOL CONTACTS:**

PHONE: 51541620 or 51541115  
MOBILE: 0428 449 775  
FAX: 51541345  
EMAIL: newmerella.ps@edumail.vic.gov.au  
mathers.stephen.m@edumail.vic.gov.au  
WEBSITE: newmerellaps.vic.edu.au

**SCHOOL COUNCIL:**

This is the important decision making body at the school. The school council is responsible for assisting the Principal and staff in matters affecting school policy, student and teacher welfare, buildings and grounds improvements and equipment purchases. School council meetings are public meetings and all are invited to attend but only elected members may vote. Meetings are held every second Tuesday of each month at 7.30pm. See the newsletter for details.

The current composition of the Newmerella Primary School Council is:  
9 Non-Department employees  
2 Department employees and the Principal  
Up to 2 community members

School council elections are held early in the year. Councillors serve a two year term in office with half retiring annually. Community members serve a one year term. A list of councillors will be published in the Newsletter after the election.

**SCHOOL FUNDS & EXPENSE STRUCTURE**

Each year School Council sets fees for the adequate running of the school. Money is used to pay for:

- All start up costs of books and materials  
- Transport  
- Arts Council performances  
- Art/Craft materials  
- Maintenance of computer equipment  
- Photocopying  
- Physical education equipment and some sports excursions  
- Swimming, small excursions and entry costs  
- Newsletters  
- Incidental expenses

Please note that the money raised is less than 2% of the total school budget and all parents are expected to pay these fees  
Parents may be able to claim the Camps, Sports and Excursion Fund (CSEF) if they have a means tested concession card or are a temporary foster parent. The allowance will be paid to the school to use towards expenses relating to camps, excursions, or sporting activities for the benefit of your child. Currently the allowance is $125.00 per student.
**SCHOOL SUPPLIES:**

To make it easier for parents, the school has provided for each student an Essential Education Pack as an alternative to student booklists where parents usually purchase all the required resources themselves. **These packs are to be purchased from the office before the start of the school year and are then released to your child’s classroom.** Teachers will name all the items.

We have payments plans to assist parents which include Centrelink deductions, BPay or arranged regular deposits. **The school does not request any Voluntary Contributions.**

**PUPIL SUPERVISION BEFORE & AFTER SCHOOL:**

On normal days, teachers will be on duty between 8:10am and 3:50pm. **CHILDREN SHOULD NOT BE AT SCHOOL OUTSIDE THESE TIMES.**

**ENROLMENT:**

The school may enrol a child if they turn five before the end of April.

An admission form must be filled in to have a child enrolled. **A copy of the child’s Birth Certificate and an immunisation form must be presented to the school upon enrolment.** Important details are on this admission form such as emergency contacts in case of illness/injury. Children from another school cannot be enrolled without a "transfer note" from their previous school.

**STUDENT ABSENCES:**

‘Every Day Counts’

Regular and punctual attendance is a vital factor in the progress of children at school. This is an important matter because if the absence rate is high, a child’s development and involvement in group programs is seriously affected. When children are away from school a note or personal (phone) message must be given by parents. This way the school can make sure that the child was absent with parental consent. Records are kept and all reasons for absences are recorded and sent to the Department of Education.

**APPOINTMENTS TO SEE TEACHERS:**

The school welcomes parent visits and their active involvement and interest in their child’s learning and development. However parents need to be mindful that each classroom teacher and the Principal have a heavy classroom commitment and it is important not to disrupt classroom learning. Parents are asked to limit visits to outside class times. If parents wish to discuss pupil progress or any problems related to their child it is probably best that they ring or seek a mutually suitable time prior to the discussion.
REPORTING:

Oral Report days and two Written Reports are provided to give comprehensive feedback to all parents.

BUS TRAVEL:

Children must have permission to travel by bus. Bus forms for permanent and casual travel are available at the school office.
For any changes to bus travel arrangements, parents are asked to contact the school and **GIVE 24 HOURS NOTICE PRIOR TO TRAVEL. This is a Department of education requirement and students will not be granted permission without 24 hours notice unless exceptional circumstances arise. This includes students getting off at different stops other than their own.**

Children will **always** be placed on the bus unless a written note or telephone call is made to the contrary.

NEWSLETTERS:

These are distributed on Mondays to keep parents in contact with happenings at the school.
They are the main source of communication between the school and home.
Newsletters are also available from the school website.

UNIFORMS:

Wearing of school uniform is compulsory. The uniforms can be purchased at Donchi’s DJ Clothing & Footwear in Orbost. Notes are to be provided when students are out of uniform. School hats must be worn in Term 1 and Term 4 as part of our Sunsmart policy.

LIBRARY:

Our library is well stocked with an array of books to suit all reading interests and abilities. Children are encouraged to borrow books on a regular basis. Library sessions are held with teachers during class times once a week. The borrowing system is computerised; each book has an electronic bar code and is recorded on computer. Reminder notices will be sent home with children who have overdue books.

A Mobile Library visits the school fortnightly. Parents and children are encouraged to use its resources.
FIRST AID:

Generally, minor injuries at school are attended to by a teacher "on duty" at that time. In the event of a serious injury every effort will be made to contact parents immediately. If they cannot be contacted, then the emergency contact numbers supplied on the enrolment form will be used.

If injuries need attention immediately, children will be transported to hospital for further attention either by ambulance or car. In the event of back or neck injury the child will not be moved and an ambulance will be called.  

It is recommended that all parents join an ambulance scheme.

HEALTH & INFECTIOUS DISEASES:

- Remember, infections spread quickly at school.
- If in doubt, parents should contact the school.
- Please send a note when your child returns to school.

Diphtheria
To be excluded until medical certificate verifies freedom from infection.

German Measles:
To be excluded until medical certificate clearance, or recovery OR seven days after the appearance of the rash.

Impetigo (School sores):
To be excluded until sores are treated and covered.

Infectious Hepatitis:
To be excluded until medical certificate clearance or recovery.

Mumps:
To be excluded until medical certificate clearance or recovery.

Head Lice:
To be excluded until EFFECTIVELY treated.

Ringworm:
To be excluded until medical certificate is issued stating that treatment has been received.

Scabies:
As above.

HEAD LICE PROGRAM:

The school operates a 'Parent-managed head lice program. This program offers regular head lice screening to assist with the control of head lice, and follows school council approved guidelines.
PHYSICAL EDUCATION:
No child will be excluded except on medical grounds. A note must be sent to school with
the child. Children are encouraged to use the physical education equipment during lunch
and recess times.

SWIMMING PROGRAM:
This is undertaken at given times in the school year. The school encourages all
children to learn to swim. Parents who wish to help with instruction or who have undertaken a swimming course
are very welcome, but must have a current Working with Children's check.

GROUND ROSTER:
A grounds roster has been drawn up involving most families. With the implementation of
this roster the school grounds can be maintained to a high level with just an hour or two
per family per year. Details of the roster are sent out at the start of the year and
reminders in the weekly newsletter.

MONEY:
Sometimes it is necessary to send money to school with your child. Please ensure that
it is in an envelope marked with all details of what the money is for and your child’s name
and grade.

EXCURSIONS:
From time to time the chance for your child to participate in an excursion to a local
destination is offered. This is a good opportunity for children to interact together outside
the school environment, enjoy a bus trip and discover things in their own locality.
Minor excursions are usually covered by the school fees.

RECYCLING PROJECT:
The school has developed a recycling program which includes chickens, vegetable
garden, orchard and composting. All children are encouraged to minimise and dispose
of waste to the correct recycling areas. The school also has pet rabbits for the students
to interact with.
FOOD & SNACKS:
Children need to have a snack at morning recess time (play lunch) and be provided with a good healthy lunch. As to the question of how much food to give your child, be guided by your experience and what your child tells you. Our policy is that uneaten food is taken home. This will help determine how much food to provide each day. Soft drinks and lollies are not acceptable food for school lunch boxes.

LUNCH ORDERS
Purchased lunch orders are available on Fridays only. Wally’s Bakery in Orbost collect the orders from school and deliver the lunches prior to lunchtime. An lunch menu and pricelist will be supplied at the start of the year. Orders are to be written on a paper bag with your child’s name and grade, and money placed inside the bag.

FREE FRUIT FRIDAY
A free fruit program is currently run for the children providing morning snacks each Friday. We also gladly appreciate any donations of fruit to assist with this program.

JUNK FOOD:
The school has a policy of promoting healthy eating habits. We ask for parental assistance by not supplying children with lollies, chewing gum, etc. whilst at school.

BICYCLES & HELMETS:
All children under the age of 10 must be accompanied by an adult if riding to and from school. By law children must wear bicycle helmets. Children riding in a dangerous manner to or from school may be warned by teachers and where necessary they will inform parents. Continued unsafe behaviour on bicycles will be reported to police for the children’s own safety. All bicycles coming to school should be roadworthy. Parents should regularly check that their children’s bikes are safe.

Bicycles should be parked in the bicycle shelter whilst at school.
PREPARATION FOR THE FIRST DAY

All students at Newmerella Primary School wear school uniform.

This ensures that all students are dressed appropriately and that new students immediately fit in as being a member of our school.

Clearly name all articles of clothing.
Children often cannot identify their own belongings even when they are named. If your child does lose an article of clothing please check the lost property area.

Prep students attend school for the normal hours of 9:00am to 3:15pm. Afternoon sessions are usually less taxing as we realise that new prep students will be feeling tired. If your child is not coping with the hours of school, it is possible to take a day off or finish early until they can cope with full days. This can be arranged with the teacher.

Make sure that your child is at school by the starting time of 9:00am. Assemblies are held each Monday and Friday from 9am and announcements are made about what is happening for the week. Awards are usually presented at Friday’s assembly.

On the first day, parents are invited to meet in the staff room for morning tea and a get together.

School adjustment is easier for the child and the teacher after the parents leave, so show by your words and actions that you are sure that the school is a happy and safe place, wave cheerfully and go.

Parents collecting children from school are asked to wait outside the classroom as this prevents any unnecessary interruptions to the end of day routine.

Encourage your child to be organised and take responsibility for their own bag and possessions.
General Comments

- If your child brings toys or equipment home from school other than their own, please return them to school. Part of the learning process is to recognise that school things belong to school only, and that other children’s things must not be taken.

- Never take your child away from the school grounds, other than at home time, without notifying their teacher and signing them out at the office.

- If unexpected circumstances mean that you will be late picking up your child from school, please notify the office.

- Children MUST wear hats in Terms 1 and 4. This is in line with our Health & Safety policy. School uniform wide brimmed hats are available from the school and are the only headwear to be worn.

- Children should wear suitable footwear to school. Thongs and open toe shoes are not suitable for school.

- If children become muddy or wet while at school, we have second hand items of school uniform that they can change into. It is essential that these spare clothes be washed and returned to the school. It’s a great idea to include a change of underwear, track pants or shorts in the child’s bag just in case they are needed.

- If money is sent to school with your child please ensure that it is in an envelope with their name and what the money is for clearly marked.

- Many youngsters take some time to find a friend among their new classmates. This generally worries the parents more than it does the child. Try not to give him or her any extra worries by asking who he or she played with. If they didn’t play with anyone in particular, he or she will feel that they have let you down. Ask about their school work or the story and if they can remember what the story was about. Wait for information about other children. When they are ready to make friends you will be the first one to be told. If you have any concerns about this, talk to your child’s teacher.

- Remember that we do not allow children to go home with anyone other than their parent unless we have written or verbal authorisation.