



Western Australian children to step up in Pre-primary and Year 7

The
right
time



The
right
place

The
right
thing
to do



From the Premier

Today we announce the next logical steps in our plans for giving Western Australian children the educational advantages they need.

Over the last three years, the Western Australian Government has worked to strengthen education in this State.

The clear need to empower school communities has been given substance through our Independent Public Schools initiative which has reinvigorated the public school system.

The State Government believes strongly that, at every stage of their schooling, children need to be completely ready to benefit from what lies ahead.

This is why, from 2013, compulsory schooling will begin in Pre-primary in all schools across the State, public and private.

In that year of schooling, children acquire the foundations of numeracy and literacy for later learning. We also recognise Pre-primary as one of the most important years in children's social, emotional and physical development.

In 2015, Year 7 public school students will move to secondary schools. This will give them the learning environments and facilities most appropriate for the education of young adolescents.

Year 7 students are now, on average, six months older than before the last changes to school entry age. Secondary schools offer both the specialised learning and the focused pastoral care that these young people need.

We are aware of the issues raised by some country parents whose children attend small schools. These families will have longer to make the transition to secondary school in Year 7.

These important educational decisions are two major steps forward in honouring our commitment to continually improve public education and in ensuring all Western Australian students take full advantage of the national curriculum being introduced across the country in the next few years.

These decisions form an important part of our vision for education in this State, which will soon include substantial new initiatives in early childhood development and learning.



Hon Colin Barnett MLA
Premier of Western Australia



From the Minister

These initiatives for Pre-primary and Year 7 focus on children at the vital transition points within their education as they start primary school and then move to secondary school.

In every decision about education that the Government makes, our prime consideration is the quality of education we offer our children.

This applies equally to the two major decisions being announced.

The decision for Year 7 public school students to move to secondary schools has been the result of wide and long discussion. In coming to this decision, we acknowledge that secondary school settings are more appropriate for young adolescents, both in terms of their learning and their social and emotional development.

We know these students have educational requirements best suited to the specialist teachers and facilities that secondary schools can offer. This move will ensure they also have appropriately mature and specialised learning experiences.

It is important to realise that more than 90 percent of all Year 7 students will be in secondary schools across Australia from 2015. Our students need the same advantages of learning in secondary settings as students based in other states and territories.

Now, all children in Western Australia will benefit from the same opportunities.

The State Government is sensitive to the individual needs and circumstances of families in rural areas in introducing these initiatives.

By making the Pre-primary year compulsory in 2013, primary principals and teachers of young children will be encouraged to continue to strengthen their efforts in offering the best start to learning in schools.

This is why the change to make Pre-primary the first year of compulsory schooling, rather than Year 1, is so important.

To complement this decision, we will guarantee every child a place at their local public school for this vital year of learning.

We have looked at the issues long and hard, and have made these decisions to improve the education and development of Western Australian children.



Dr Elizabeth Constable MLA
Minister for Education



The right time to move

We know that Pre-primary aged students are ready and eager to learn. We also know that Year 7 students thrive in secondary school settings.

Pre-primary will become the first year of compulsory schooling for young children from the start of the 2013 school year; and Year 7 will become the first year of secondary school in 2015.

Pre-primary as first year of compulsory schooling

The early years of children's lives, even before they start compulsory schooling, influence later learning and life outcomes. It is unequivocal: children begin learning from birth and parents are their first teachers.

Western Australia is already leading the nation with high quality Kindergarten and Pre-primary education programs.

It is clear, from the almost universal uptake of Kindergarten and Pre-primary, that parents and families already value the benefits of school-based learning in the early years.

By making Pre-primary compulsory, the State Government is underlining the importance of ensuring all children of this age in all schools have access to high quality, full-time programs.

The benefits derived from a better balance between play-based and structured learning in Pre-primary will be invaluable. With all children attending regularly, teachers will also be better able to monitor each individual child's progress.

The new on-entry assessment of Pre-primary students in public schools, which started this year, is ensuring that teachers know more about their students' early literacy and numeracy capabilities. This information is helping teachers provide more individual support for students who need it, and allows them to challenge students who are more advanced.

Children will be well prepared to meet the requirements of Year 1 having acquired the essential concepts and social skills necessary for them to transition successfully into the wider primary school environment.

Early learning gives children a head start

Regular attendance at Pre-primary means that children access learning opportunities each day. This is particularly important as lessons and activities build on those of previous days. Children who do not go to school regularly are constantly playing catch-up and risk falling behind in their learning.

When the new national curriculum is implemented, it will assume that all Pre-primary aged children are attending school regularly. Compulsory Pre-primary assures our children have the best possible start.

The change also means that all children who have reached the compulsory age for school will be guaranteed Pre-primary places in their local public schools.

Year 7s move to secondary school

Year 7 students are, on average, six months older than in the years before the school starting age was raised; and currently approximately half are celebrating their 13th birthdays while still in primary school.

This means they are ready for the challenges that secondary schools can offer them and have the maturity to thrive in the new setting.

Nationally, having Year 7 students in secondary schools is the norm, and most private schools in Western Australia are now organised this way.

Already eight Western Australian public secondary schools enrol Year 7 students together with 55 district high schools around the State.

With the introduction of the national curriculum, all Year 7 students need access to specialist teachers who are currently only available in secondary schools.

Secondary schools also have a wide range of specialist facilities to motivate and engage students in subjects such as science, design and technology, the arts, languages and physical education. Access to highly regarded Gifted and Talented programs in public schools will be available to Year 7 students.

Western Australian public school students deserve access to the same educational opportunities as their peers in other schools in Western Australia and other parts of the country.



The scene is set

The Western Australian Government's education reforms have set the scene for these major moves.

In the last three years, our public school system has undergone a transformation.

The bold step to rejuvenate public schools by placing significant authority and accountability at the local level has been extremely successful according to the principals already taking part. One in four public schools is now an Independent Public School.

Freed from centralised bureaucracy and restrictions, these schools are shaping their programs according to the needs and aspirations of their students. It is clear that educators, parents and communities are enthusiastically supporting this initiative to establish autonomous schools within the public school system.

Vital services are being placed as close to schools as possible to support all schools as they respond to the unique circumstances of their students.

Schools decide when and how to use these services – including curriculum specialists and an increased number of school psychologists – for the benefit of both students and staff.

In addition, funding is increasingly being allocated directly to schools so they can put in place the programs they need to ensure students achieve their very best.

More and more, schools are working together through networks and collaborations to give students greater choices in the subjects they can study and more access to specialist teachers. There is also a growing willingness to support new and innovative approaches to behaviour management and discipline across networks of schools.

Against this background we are now taking another two major steps forward.



Putting the changes in place

In 2013 Pre-primary will become compulsory and in 2015 Year 7 students will begin their secondary schooling.

This means that students who are in Year 3 in 2011 will be undertaking their Year 7 public school studies in secondary settings.

Principals and teachers always have the best interests of their students at heart. Over the next three years they will develop plans and processes to make the transition for Year 7s as smooth as possible.

In secondary schools, young adolescents will benefit from the support of specialist teachers, pastoral care coordinators, psychologists, chaplains and other health and social services specialists.

Similarly, primary schools will emphasise the benefits of uninterrupted early childhood learning and engagement with parents.

Bringing in the Year 7 move from 2015 will give families time to adjust plans for their children's futures. It will also ensure the necessary planning and structures are in place for a smooth transition to the new arrangements.

The three year lead time also means that teachers will have time to undertake professional development for the national curriculum in Year 7.

Special consideration for families with children in small country schools

The State Government is aware that some families living in country areas could experience greater challenges in preparing themselves by 2015 for the transition to secondary schooling in Year 7.

On a case by case basis, principals at some small schools will offer these families special consideration to help them to be able to plan the most suitable timing and arrangements for the education of their children.

We have decided to support these families by providing this option until the beginning of 2018.



Preparations are underway

Schools already work closely with families in the lead-up to their children starting school for the first time.

More than 95 per cent of children first go to school in Kindergarten and then go on to Pre-primary the following year.

School staff are experienced in making this transition to school a positive and exciting experience for children. They will continue to build on this invaluable work when Pre-primary becomes compulsory.

In the last few years, many schools have benefited from new buildings specifically designed for the learning needs of young children.

Many private schools in Western Australia and schools in other states and territories successfully educate Year 7 students in secondary settings and we have learned from their experiences.

New buildings and alterations to some existing public school infrastructure will be necessary to support the decision to move Year 7 students to secondary settings.

Secondary school principals and staff are experienced in helping students settle into their new environments. They will build on transition programs already in place, refining and adding to these to better suit Year 7 students.

In 2014 primary and secondary schools will ensure that both Year 6 and Year 7 students are fully supported as they prepare for the transition to secondary school the following year.

Primary school principals and staff will ensure that both groups have the opportunities and experiences that children and families have come to expect in the final year of primary school.



What the changes mean for families

Here is a simple table for families to find out what the changes mean for their children.

Birth year	Pre-primary	Year 7
1 July 1999 to 30 June 2000	2005	2012 Primary school
1 July 2000 to 30 June 2001	2006	2013 Primary school
1 July 2001 to 30 June 2002	2007	2014 Primary school
1 July 2002 to 30 June 2003	2008	2015 Secondary school *
1 July 2003 to 30 June 2004	2009	2016 Secondary school *
1 July 2004 to 30 June 2005	2010	2017 Secondary school *
1 July 2005 to 30 June 2006	2011	2018 Secondary school
1 July 2006 to 30 June 2007	2012	2019 Secondary school
1 July 2007 to 30 June 2008	2013 Compulsory	2020 Secondary school
1 July 2008 to 30 June 2009	2014 Compulsory	2021 Secondary school
1 July 2009 to 30 June 2010	2015 Compulsory	2022 Secondary school
1 July 2010 to 30 June 2011	2016 Compulsory	2023 Secondary school
1 July 2011 to 30 June 2012	2017 Compulsory	2024 Secondary school

* See page 6: Special consideration for families with children in small country schools.

Finding out more

Information will be updated regularly over the next three years on the parent website:

det.wa.edu.au/schoolsandyou

A parent information telephone line will operate from 8.00am to 8.00pm Monday to Friday until the end of 2011 school year and then during normal business hours from 2012:

1800 791 197

Contact can also be made by email:

therighttime@det.wa.edu.au

