



Melbourne Archdiocese
Catholic Schools



St Columba's
Primary School



PARENT handbook



ST COLUMBA'S PRIMARY

We respectfully acknowledge the Boon Wurrung people of the Kulin Nation, the traditional custodians of the Country on which we learn and play. We pay respect to ongoing living cultures of First Peoples, their ancestors and their Elders; past, present and emerging.

GENERAL INFORMATION

St Columba's Primary
24 Glen Huntly Road, Elwood
03 9531 6560
www.stcolumbaprimary.org
office@scelwood.catholic.edu.au

SCHOOL HOURS

8.30 - 8.45 gate opens for drop off
8.45 - 9.00 sweet spot & morning prayer
9.00 - 11.00 class time
11.00 - 11.30 recess
11.30 - 1.30 class time
1.30 - 2.25 lunch
2.25 - 3.25 class time
3.25 - 3.40 gate open for pick up

At the end of the day families are welcome to stay in the playground for a play. Once the gate closes, you can exit the school via the front door.

TERM DATES 2026

Wed 28 Jan* - Thurs 2 Apr
Mon 20 Apr - Fri 27 June
Mon 13 July - Fri 18 Sept
Mon 5 Oct - Tues 15 Dec**

SCHOOL CLOSURE DAYS 2026

Fri 6 March
Mon 25 May
Fri 28 Aug
Mon 2 Nov
Fri 27 Nov

*Preps start on Thurs 29th Jan 2026. **Yr 6 students finish on Mon 14th Dec 2026

EVENTS 2026

- Friday 6 Feb
Whole School Welcome Mass
- Tuesday 17 Feb
Shrove Tuesday Pancake Breakfast
- Wednesday 18 Feb
Ash Wednesday Mass
- Friday 13 March
Y3-Y6 Mass
- Sunday 29 March
Community Market
- Friday 8 May
Mother's Day Celebration
- Friday 5 June
St Columba's Feast Day + Mass
- Friday 26 June
Grandparent's Day
- July 13-17
Swimming/Water Safety P-Y3 & Y6
- Friday 4 September
Father's Day Celebration
- Thursday 10 September
Art Show
- Thursday 12 November
Y6 PYP Exhibition
- Friday 20 November
P-2 Mass
- Wednesday 2 Dec
Christmas Carols
- Monday 14 Dec
Whole School End of Year Mass
9am & Y6 Graduation

ABSENCE FROM SCHOOL

Parents must notify the office via the Compass app by 8:30 am on the day of absence if your child is unwell or will not be attending school.

Late Arrival if your child arrives after 8.45am, you **MUST** sign your child in at the office via the COMPASS terminal.

Early departure

If your child needs to leave school early for an appointment or other reasons, you must sign your child out of the office via the Compass Terminal.

It's a legal requirement that your child attends school every day of the term. If your child will be away for an extended time e.g. **family holiday**, parents must notify the principal at principal@scelwood.catholic.edu.au to approve the absence. If not, it is recorded as an *unauthorised absence* and you will be contacted.



Classroom teachers will provide work for the period of time the children is on holiday. Please refer to the attendance policy.

ALLERGIES/ANAPHYLAXIS

Sharing of food is not allowed to help protect children who suffer from allergies. We ask that **NO NUTS** or **nut products**, including Nutella, be brought to school. Please remember that we have students with severe anaphylaxis at St Columba's. We kindly ask all families to carefully check that any items brought to school do not contain nuts.

Children with asthma and anaphylaxis must have a current asthma management plan or anaphylaxis management plan signed by their **GP each year**. This must be provided to the school. At the start of Term 1, parents will be contacted to discuss the management plan with the classroom teacher. Asthma medication and Epipens are kept in the sick bay. You will be notified when medication is out of date.

ASSEMBLY

School Assembly is held on Friday mornings at 9.00am in the hall. Parents/carers are welcome to attend. On some occasions, the time for assemblies will change, you will be notified of these changes in the school newsletter. Each year level will present at one assembly per term.

ASSESSMENT & REPORTING SYSTEM

At our school, teachers assess and record children's progress in all areas of learning, including Religious Education, using a variety of tailored assessment methods.

Reporting Schedule

School reports: Provided at the end of each semester, concluding Term 2 and Term 4 via COMPASS.

Parent-Teacher Interviews: Held in Terms 1 and 3 to discuss your child's progress.

Types of Assessment at St Columba's

- Informal assessments - e.g. Anecdotal records from teacher observations.
Purpose: Provide insights into learning behaviours and inform planning.
- Formal assessments - e.g. Essential Assessment, PAT-R and PAT-M.
Purpose: Deliver detailed insights into a child's achievements and areas for growth.
- Formative assessment - Integrated into daily instruction.
Purpose: Offer regular feedback to guide teaching and help children improve understanding and engagement.
- Summative Assessments - Conducted at the conclusion of a teaching and learning cycle.
Purpose: Allow children to demonstrate their learning. Often informs future planning, taking on formative aspects.

• **Self-Assessment** -Children actively reflect on their learning and themselves as learners. This process is supported by:

- *Learning Goals*: Providing clear targets for children.
- *Success Criteria*: Helping guide reflection on key skills, including thinking, research, communication, social and self-management abilities.

This comprehensive approach ensures assessments are both a measure of achievement and a tool for growth.

ANDY'S BEFORE & AFTER SCHOOL CARE (BASC)

Operating Hours

Before School Care Session: 7.00am - 8.30am

After School Care Session: 3.00pm - 6.30pm

School Closure Days: 7.00am - 6.30pm

Last Day Of School Term: 1.30pm to 6.30pm

The BASC Program fees are charged on a per session basis.

Before School Care Session:

Permanent - \$22.00

Casual - \$25.00

After School Care Session:

Permanent - \$32.00

Casual - \$38.00

Early School Finish - \$38.00

Daycare - \$80.00

**Please note fees are subject to change*

BIRTHDAYS

Children may bring in something to share with their class to celebrate their birthday, eg: jelly lollies (snakes) or icy poles. Due to allergies, **cakes will not** be shared with children for birthdays. If your child is having a party and only a few are invited, please ask the teacher to assist handing out invitations or post them individually so as to not cause disappointment in other friends. At St Columba's, we encourage families to be mindful of the feelings of all children when planning celebrations outside school. While it's natural that not all classmates can be invited to every gathering, we ask that invitations and discussions about parties are handled discreetly. If you are hosting a party, please avoid excluding just one or two children, as this can cause unnecessary hurt. Supporting children to show kindness and consideration helps us nurture a culture of inclusion and respect across our community.

CALENDAR

Key dates and events can be found in the school newsletter and on the website - under News & Events.



Andy's Before and After School Care program offers a safe, happy and fun space for students right here on our school grounds.

The program is guided by children's interests, with activities such as cooking, arts and crafts, sport and gardening.

Students enjoy a healthy breakfast and afternoon tea each day, with a strict no-nuts policy and options for dietary needs when notified in advance.

Care is also available on school closure days, depending on numbers.

Contact: andysaftercare@gmail.com

CLASSROOM HELPERS

We warmly invite parents to participate as classroom helpers and volunteers. Parents are encouraged to assist with a range of classroom learning experiences or special activities throughout the year. We also welcome parents with particular skills in areas such as the Arts, ICT, Science, STEM or any other field to share their expertise and run workshops or experiences for our students.

All parents and helpers who assist in any capacity at the school **must hold a current Working with Children Card** (or be a registered teacher with the Victorian Institute of Teaching) and provide a copy to the school. In addition, all helpers are required to complete a short induction and sign the Child Safety Code of Conduct and Volunteers Policy each year before assisting. These forms and requirements are completed annually in accordance with the Child Safety Standards and can be accessed on our website and office.

CLASS LITURGIES & MASS

Throughout the year, each class will hold a class liturgy. Classes will send an invitation inviting family members to join them. The **Y3-6 Mass** will be held in **Term 1, on Friday 13 March**. The **P-2 Mass** will be held in **Term 4, on Friday 20 November**.

COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS



We make every effort to keep our families informed about the many events and activities happening across our school. Most updates are shared through the **Compass App** via messages, newsletters, lunch orders and interview booking. Login details will be shared to new parents at the start of Term 1, 2026.

We're also active on **Instagram** and **Facebook**, where we celebrate learning, share highlights and keep our community connected.

Additional information – including uniforms, news and events – can be found on our school website: www.stcolumbasprimary.org

COMMUNICATION WITH TEACHERS

We value strong communication between parents and teachers and encourage you to stay in touch via Compass Connect, email, or by speaking with your child's teacher before or after school. If you'd like a more detailed conversation, you're welcome to request a meeting at a mutually suitable time.

To help maintain a healthy work-life balance for our teachers and in line with the Right to Disconnect policy, we ask for your support in respecting their personal time. Teachers will respond within 24 hours, but there is no expectation for them to monitor or reply to messages outside their contracted hours unless an urgent matter arises.

For urgent issues outside school hours, please contact the school office.

DEMOCRATIC PRINCIPLES

The school supports and promotes the principles and practice of Australian democracy, including the commitment to:

- Elected government
- The rule of law
- Equal rights for all before the law
- Freedom of religion
- Freedom of speech and association

DISCIPLINE – STUDENT BEHAVIOUR POLICY

At St Columba's, we are committed to fostering a safe, respectful and inclusive school environment where all students can learn and thrive. Our [Student Behaviour Policy](#) outlines clear expectations and procedures to support positive behaviour and address any concerns that arise.

As a school, we follow a discipline approach that prioritises the [restoration of relationships](#). When behaviour concerns arise, we focus on guiding students to reflect, repair, and restore positive interactions with others.

Our Approach to Behaviour Management

We believe that students learn best in a supportive and structured environment. Our behaviour management approach focuses on:

- Setting clear expectations and reinforcing positive behaviour.
- Encouraging respectful relationships and responsible decision-making.
- Addressing inappropriate behaviour in a fair and consistent manner.

Classroom Behaviour

At the beginning of each year, students and teachers collaboratively develop classroom rules and expectations (Essential Agreement) to ensure a shared understanding of respectful and responsible behaviour.

Students learn behaviour expectations through [Social and Emotional Learning](#) (SEL) lessons, where they develop skills in self-regulation, conflict resolution and positive communication. These expectations are reinforced daily to help students make responsible choices.

To maintain a positive learning space, we:

- Use positive reinforcement and encouragement.
- Support students with strategies like movement breaks and redirection.
- Address minor disruptions in class and escalate ongoing concerns if needed.
- For repeated or serious behaviours, parents may be contacted and additional support plans may be put in place.

Playground Behaviour

All students are expected to follow safe and respectful play guidelines. Staff supervise and support students in resolving minor issues on the playground:

- For minor incidents, staff will speak with the students and guide them in making better choices.
- For more serious concerns, students may be required to leave the playground, complete a reflection sheet and have follow-up discussions with staff and parents.
- For high-priority issues, e.g. bullying or unsafe behaviour, leadership will be involved and parents will be contacted to ensure appropriate next steps are taken.

Bullying and Child Safety

St Columba's has a zero-tolerance approach to bullying. If a child is involved in repeated or serious incidents, a **Bullying Action Plan** is implemented and leadership works closely with families to support positive change.

Working Together

We value a strong partnership between school and home. If you have concerns about your child's behaviour or wellbeing, please reach out to their teacher or the Mental Health and Wellbeing Leader for guidance and support.

For full details, please refer to the [Student Behaviour Policy](#) on our school website.

FEES

Each year, the School Business Manager advises the Principal and the School Advisory Committee on the fees for the coming year. The School Advisory Committee reviews and ratifies the proposed fees before they are finalised.

For each child, there is an **annual curriculum levy** that covers all books, stationery, excursions, incursions and a range of additional learning experiences.

All fees and levies may be paid by completing the Direct Debit Authorisation Form you will receive with your fee statement in Term 1, this form outlines the available payment options and the payment schedule. Should you wish to discuss your fees for any reason, please arrange a time to meet with the principal.

principal@scelwood.catholic.edu.au

Please note: If you intend to withdraw your child's enrolment, a full term's notice is required. Where this notice is not provided, the school will charge all outstanding fees and levies for that term, as well as the fees for the following term.

FIRST AID & MEDICATION

Staff are trained in First Aid and will attend to ill and/or injured children. Should your child attend sickbay, you will be notified via COMPASS. If you require staff to give your child medication you will need to complete the Medication Authorisation Form.

[Medical Authority Form](#)

HOME LEARNING

It is an expectation that all children have home learning throughout the week, which is set by the classroom teacher.

Prep - Yr 2

Home reading and the weekly tasks can be found in your child's in satchel. Tasks will connect to the learning in the week and aim to be hands-on and collaborative. This may include oral language experiences, games and inquiries into the subject areas being learned at school. Each home learning task is an offering for families. We highly encourage these tasks to be completed; however, based on co-curricular activities and family priorities, we understand that there are weeks when children are unable to complete each task. Teachers may occasionally send home targeted tasks for children based on goals and will discuss this with parents.

Year 3/4 – 20 minutes of daily reading, including 5-10 minutes of reading aloud to encourage fluency and expression. Plus 45 minutes for other tasks, assigned over the week.

Year 5/6 – 20 minutes of daily, independent reading. Plus 60 minutes for other tasks, assigned over the week.

HOUSE TEAMS

Each child is a member of one of three houses:



Siblings are all placed in the same house team. Each child is allocated to a house team on commencement of starting school. An Inter-house athletic competition and tabloids sports days for the whole school are held annually. St Columba's Kids activities are organised by house group. Children are encouraged to wear a touch of their house colour on these occasions, e.g. coloured t-shirt, hair accessories, socks etc...

KISS N GO/ PARKING/ DROP OFF ZONES

St Columba's is a busy place, especially in the afternoon. To help the area directly in front of the gates flow smoothly a 'Kiss n Go' system is in place. Parking **IS NOT** permitted directly outside the school between 8.00am - 9.00am & 3.00pm - 4.00pm as this is the drop off/Kiss n Go zone.

If your child needs assistance getting into the playground/classroom and you need to assist them, please park your car. Good places to park include the side streets surrounding the school.

Please **DO NOT** leave your vehicle unattended or double park in the 'Kiss n Go' zone. To help make this area flow, move on quickly so others can also use it for its intended purpose.

When dropping off/ picking up children from BASC please park in the surrounding streets, not in the staff carpark.

LIBRARY

Children are encouraged to use the library regularly. Each week, during library, they will have the opportunity to borrow suitable 'good fit' books to take home as part of our literacy program. Each child needs a library bag to ensure that the books are transported to and from school safely.

LOST & FOUND

Lost and found is located downstairs outside BASC. Items collected from the yard or that are left lying around will be placed in the tubs.

Please ensure that your child's belongings are **clearly labelled** so they can be returned. At the end of each term, uncollected items will be resold at the 2nd hand uniform shop or donated to charity. Please relabel 2nd hand uniform.

LUNCH ORDERS

We offer lunch orders on **Fridays only**, provided by Fun Fresh Foods. Online orders can be made through our school website link and the Flexischools App. The menu contains snacks, fruit, wraps, salads, warm dishes and sushi.



On all other days, please provide your child with a lunch box containing, brain food for Prep - Yr 2 (a small portion of fruit or vegetables), a snack to be eaten before recess and lunch. Children are to bring their water bottle everyday.

MOBILE PHONES & APPLE WATCHES/SMART WATCHES

If your child has a mobile phone or a smart watch, these devices must be handed into the class teacher on arrival at school and can be collected at the end of the day. Should you need to contact your child during the day, please call the office **9531 6560** and a message will be passed on.

MUSIC TUITION - INSTRUMENTAL

Separate, individual music lessons are available through Creative Music. Lessons are conducted during school hours.

NAPLAN - NATIONAL ASSESSMENTS

Children in Years 3 and 5 undertake the National Literacy and Mathematics tests in March of each year online. A comprehensive report is sent home to each parent (in Term 3), which provides parents with further indication of how their children are progressing compared with children nationally.

NEW FAMILIES

To assist new families in settling into the school community, our Class Representatives are available as your main point of contact for day to day questions and guidance. They will help keep you informed about upcoming class and school events and ensure you are receiving all relevant communications. In addition, our Parents and Friends Association (PFA) supports community engagement across the school and hosts a variety of parent and family events throughout the year. New families are warmly encouraged to connect with both their Class Representatives and the PFA as they become familiar with school life.

NEWSLETTER

A newsletter is sent home via COMPASS monthly and is posted on the school website.

OFFICE CONTACT DETAILS

To contact Emma or Kylie in the office, please call 9531 6560 or email

office@scelwood.catholic.edu.au

The office is open from 8am – 4pm Mon to Fri.

OPEN LEARNING MORNING

Throughout the year, we will host **open learning mornings**. On these days, you are invited to visit classrooms, meet teachers and actively participate in the learning experiences with your child. Each of the open learning mornings will have a specific focus either literacy or numeracy and will provide you with tips for helping at home.

PARENT CURRENT RESIDENTIAL INFORMATION AND CONTACT DETAILS

In order to maintain up to date and current information, we require you to update your contact details with the office as soon as they change - office@scelwood.catholic.edu.au

PARENTS & FRIENDS ASSOCIATION (PFA)

St Columba's has a very friendly and hardworking Parents & Friends Association. Updates on what the PFA is doing in regards to fundraising/social activities and meetings are in the newsletter or on COMPASS.

PASTORAL SUPPORT

St Columba's has been a recipient of funding for a Chaplaincy Program since 2007. Bern Bradley is our Chaplain, which complements her role as Mental Health and Student Wellbeing Leader. Bern can be contacted during school hours on Tues & Wed on 9531 6560 or bernb@scelwood.catholic.edu.au.

SAFETY AND WELLBEING

St Columba's is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all to thrive. The school complies with all child safety regulations and works with children to ensure that they are empowered to understand their rights and to speak up when they feel uncomfortable or afraid. From Prep they are encouraged and explicitly taught to identify and to seek out an adult who they can go to (a trusted adult/ teacher or the appointed Child Safety Leader) if they feel insecure in any way. Natalie Cromie is the designated Child Safety Leader supported by members of leadership and staff.

The wellbeing of each child is important to us. In the event that parents become aware of an issue that is affecting the health and wellbeing of their child they should contact the **classroom teacher first**, often through working together these issues can be resolved. Bern Bradley is our Mental Health in Primary Schools Leader and can be contacted by email bernb@scelwood.catholic.edu.au for further support with an issue.

Where there has been no change, or the issue is of an ongoing or deeply confidential nature, parents should phone the school or email to make an appointment to speak with the Principal - principal@scelwood.catholic.edu.au.

Wellbeing is an integral part of who we are here at St Columba's. The physical and mental health of our children, our staff and our extended St Columba's family is at the heart of the school's programming and extends to the PFAs social agenda.

SATCHELS

Prep – Year 2 children are required to have a **school satchel**, purchased through Spartan. The satchels are for notices, homework, library and home reading.

SCHOOL UNIFORM

St Columba's school uniform is valued by the school community and it is therefore an expectation on enrolment at the school that all children will wear the uniform proudly.

WINTER BOYS

navy pants/navy shorts
light blue long-sleeve shirt
maroon jumper
navy socks
black leather shoes

WINTER GIRLS

check skirt
light blue long sleeve blouse with peter pan collar
maroon jumper
navy tights or knee high school socks
black leather shoes
optional: navy pants

SPORTS BOYS

navy shorts or track pants
light blue short sleeve polo
school rugby top
white socks
sneakers

SPORTS GIRLS

navy shorts/skort or legging/track pants
light blue short sleeve polo
school rugby top
white socks
sneakers

SCHOOL UNIFORM SHOP INFORMATION



All orders for school items are available via -

Spartan School World Retail Shop - 914 Nepean Highway Service Road, Hampton East

Online: <https://spartanss.com.au/collections/st-columbas-primary-school>

Weekly delivery to School Free of Charge from Spartan School World Free of Charge
Customer Service: 1800 815 557

Trading Hours: Monday, Wednesday and Friday: 9am – 5pm

1st Saturday of each month 9am – 12pm

We have a limited amount of 2nd hand uniform. To purchase second hand uniforms, please contact our office.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Our school is active on Instagram and Facebook. It gives families a good idea of what we do at school. No child is named. If you wish for your child not to be included in any photos or videos, please ensure you have completed the photography & recording permission form.

You will be asked at the beginning of the year to confirm again via COMPASS.



Instagram: www.instagram.com/stcolumbaselwood/



Facebook: www.facebook.com/stcolumbasprimaryschool

SPORTS & PHYSICAL EDUCATION

All children participate in Physical Education twice a week. The sports uniform is to be worn on these days with the school rugby top only. Classroom teachers will inform you of these days via the term class newsletter.

Annually St Columba's holds a **House Sports Day** event at **Sandringham Athletics Track** for all children in the school.

Interschool swimming is held in Term 1 for student Years 3-6.

Cross Country running competitions are held for Years 3 – 6 in Term 2.

Interschool Athletics are held in Term 3 for Years 3- 6 and children try out for the school team – Successful athletes at the Districts go on to represent the school at Zones.

Years 5 & 6 children participate in the **HOLT Interschool Sports Program** participating in Netball and Football during Term 2.

Children from Years 3-6 participate in Soccer, T20 Cricket and Basketball at various times throughout the year.

Our participation in sporting schools means our children are exposed to a wide variety of sporting activities. In addition to our PE and class sports program.

SWIMMING PROGRAM

Children from Prep – Year 3 participate in a short **swimming program** of 5 lessons at **GESAC** in Week 1 of Term 3.

Year 4+5 will participate in a **Life Saving Program** in readiness for Year 6. This program complements the **Water Safety Certificate** requirements.

By the end of the year, all children in Year 6 need to have completed their Water Safety Certificate, as such children in Year 6 will participate in swimming lessons during Week 1 of Term 3.

TIMETABLES

Each class teacher develops a weekly timetable. The teachers will post this on COMPASS to parents outlining the curriculum and special events happening that term.

VISITORS AND VOLUNTEERS

All visitors and volunteers (including parents carrying out tasks around the school) need to sign in and out via COMPASS and wear the visitor lanyard whilst on the premises at all times.

All visitors and volunteers are required to have a WWCC, complete the induction and to sign the MACS Code of Conduct.

VALUES, VISION & MISSION

At St Columba's, we are a values-led learning community where every child is known, every voice is heard and every learner is empowered to grow, lead and thrive. Guided by heart, purpose and innovation, we nurture curious minds, compassionate hearts and confident futures.

Through strong relationships, high expectations and meaningful learning experiences, we prepare students not only for the next step in their education—but for life.

Rooted in Catholic values, we are called to act with compassion, care for creation and stand with the most vulnerable. We nurture a culture of inclusion, belonging and shared responsibility.

At St Columba's, it's our village feel that captures hearts. Families are drawn to the warmth and authenticity they feel the moment they walk through our gates—a sense of community that carries through every classroom and out into the wider world.

WALKING & RIDING TO SCHOOL

As there is limited parking around the school and as the school is committed to limiting our footprint on the environment, we encourage you to walk or ride to school. Bike racks have been fitted inside the school grounds.

WEBSITE

Our school website is a great source of information about school programs and events. Please visit the site for information regarding special events, forms, cybersafety resources, ANDY'S BASC, blogs and newsletters.

www.stcolumbasprimary.org