The Victorian Student Number

Information for Parents

What is the Victorian Student Number (VSN)?

The VSN is a student identification number that is assigned by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development to all students in government and non-government schools, and students in Vocational Education and Training institutions. The number, which is unique to each student, is a key identifier on a student's school records, and will remain with the student throughout his or her education, until reaching the age of 25. The VSN is nine digits long, randomly assigned, and tied to identifying information about the student (name, gender and date of birth).

Why was the VSN introduced?

The introduction of the VSN provides the capability to accurately detect patterns of student movement through, and departure from, the Victorian education and training system. It greatly improves the collection and analysis of timely and accurate data about education in Victoria.

Why do students need to have a VSN?

In a large and diverse education system such as Victoria's, a standard, centrally assigned student number is the best way to identify individual students. Using a reference number to collect and store data helps avoid errors and confusion when names are misspelled, changed, or mistaken for other similar names.

Most Australian states and the federal government either have already or are intending to introduce a unique student identifier. Many other countries, including New Zealand and Canada, have also introduced such identifiers.

Where does the VSN appear?

The VSN appears on:

- common student communications, such as enrolment confirmations and report cards, and
- applications made by the student for enrolment in new schools or institutions.

Why does the government need information on students?

The government collects information to track improvements made to the education system, to identify areas that require further improvement, and to analyse trends and identify future needs. The VSN simply improves the accuracy, reliability and completeness of this information, providing a better basis for assessing needs and developing policies to meet them. The improved quality of information will also result in more accurate reporting to the community on the state's education system.

Will the privacy of personal information be protected?

Yes, security is built in to the VSN system and the number itself. The student records maintained in the VSN system contain minimal information about each student – name, date of birth, and gender together with the date of admission and date of exit from each education provider attended.

The VSN system is not a collection point for other student data such as academic achievements and outcomes, health or welfare information. Because the number is randomly assigned, personal information about the student cannot be inferred from it.

Access to the data in the VSN system is strictly limited, and the database itself is maintained in a fully secure environment. The information will be used only for educational purposes and the ways in which the VSN can be used are prescribed by legislation. The legislation also outlines that is a criminal offence to use the data for other than the prescribed purposes. Commonwealth and State Privacy Principles have also been used to guide the design of the VSN system.

Is a student (and the student's parents) entitled to see the information stored on the VSN system about the student?

Yes. A student (and the student's parents, if the student is under the age of 18) may request a copy of the information held in the Victorian Student Register relating to that student.

What do schools think of the new system?

Schools, other education organisations and education experts were regularly consulted during the development and design of the VSN. Care has been taken to minimise the administrative demands that the VSN places on schools. There has been broad support for the VSN from the education sector in general.

How can I find out more?

Further information can be found on the VCAA website at: www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/schooladmin/vsn/index.html

VICTORIAN CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT AUTHORITY

State Government Victoria