



Grandparents As Parents

An information resource for grandparent carers

EDUCATION

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The information about financial assistance is intended only as a guide to payments available. Individual circumstances vary and you should obtain your own advice about whether or not you qualify under the relevant laws and criteria.

Community Solutions Inc. has made reasonable efforts to ensure the information is accurate and current as at July 2006 but does not accept responsibility for any errors or omissions.

Introduction

Schools form an important part of the network of community support for families, and particularly for children who are going through a difficult time. The need for children to feel a sense of belonging and support at school is a critically important part of their developmental years, and communication between schools and grandparent carers can help to develop and support these connections.

For many grandparent carers, it has been a considerable time since they were involved with the Queensland school system. Some may need to enrol their grandchildren in a new school and others may need to work closely with Guidance Officers, Learning Support Teachers and other specialist staff.

Education, the second booklet in the **Grandparents As Parents Information Kit**, provides useful details about schooling in Queensland. In addition, it outlines financial assistance that may be available to help with the costs of education. The booklet also offers suggestions on how to manage other issues (such as homework and challenging behaviours), so that grandparent carers can support and enhance their grandchildren's learning.

Education in Queensland

Parents or carers may enrol a child in their local primary school by contacting the school directly.

QUEENSLAND STATE SCHOOLS

All state schools are coeducational. The school year usually runs from late January to mid December. It is divided into two semesters, with two terms in each and vacation breaks for Easter, winter, spring and summer.

School hours are generally from 9.00 am to 3.00 pm Monday to Friday, except for public and school holidays and student-free days, with variations in some secondary schools or at the Principal's discretion to suit local conditions.

ENROLLING YOUR CHILD

Prep

From 2007, all children of eligible age may attend a full-time Preparatory Year (Prep) before starting Year 1. Prep is not compulsory but helps children develop the skills and knowledge to help them make a smooth transition to Year 1.

Children will need to be five by 30 June in the year they enrol in Prep. Children born on or after 1 January 2002 will be eligible for the new Preparatory Year of schooling before enrolling in Year 1. From 2008, the starting age of compulsory schooling will increase by six months so that children must turn six by 30 June in the year they enrol in Year 1.

Parents or caregivers can enrol their child in Prep by contacting the school directly. Visit www.education.qld.gov.au/etrf/prep.html or call the Prep Hotline on **1300 650 200** for more information.

Primary

To be enrolled in Year 1 in January, children will need to be five years old by the last day of December of the previous year. From 2008, children will need to be six by 30 June in the year they enrol in Year 1.

Under special circumstances, children may be enrolled at a younger age. Parents may enrol a child in their local primary school by contacting the school directly. A birth certificate must be provided when enrolling a child at a new school.

CHOOSING A STATE SCHOOL

Parents or caregivers are free to send their children to the school of their choice, depending on available places. Some schools may have reached full capacity and have an enrolment management plan in place that means students may not be able to attend unless they live within the designated catchment zone.

Parents or caregivers should contact the relevant Education Queensland district office for more information about available schools in a specific area, or they can search for schools in their local area on the departmental website at www.education.qld.gov.au/schools/directory

TRANSFERRING TO ANOTHER SCHOOL

A Certificate of Transfer should be obtained if a student transfers from one Queensland state school to another. When a student is transferring from interstate or overseas, the new school should be contacted directly. It is helpful if parents or caregivers are able to provide any additional information, such as school reports or samples of written work, to help staff assign the student to the most appropriate class. A birth certificate must be provided when enrolling the child.

When transferring between schools:

- Consider timing - will the move coincide with the change of term?
- Involve your children in discussions and decisions about moving - this may help allay any fears or concerns they have.
- Prepare a list of your children's particular needs - e.g. preferred subjects, sporting and other interests, transport needs, extracurricular activities.

BEFORE AND AFTER SCHOOL HOURS CARE AND VACATION CARE

Before and after hours or vacation care services for students are located on many state school sites in Queensland. Parents and Citizens' Associations offer some of these services while others are provided by approved not-for-profit or commercial organisations. Contact your school principal or Parents and Citizens' Association for out-of-hours care in your local school.

VACATION AND TERM DATES

Education Queensland sets the dates for state school vacations. Non-state schools base their holidays on the state school dates but these can vary from school to school.

Check with your local school for annual vacation dates and student-free days when teachers undertake professional development.

A full list of holidays and term dates is available on the departmental website at www.education.qld.gov.au/public_media/calendar/holidays.html

KEEPING INFORMED

In order to ensure that the school keeps you informed of your grandchild's progress, and that you are contacted in emergencies, you will need to provide written evidence that you are the child's primary carer.

- If you have been awarded legal responsibility for the child, provide the school with this documentation.
- If you have acquired responsibility for the child through an informal arrangement, the child's parent/s need to give written authorisation and notification to the school, confirming that they agree to you being the primary carer and point of contact for educational matters.
- If you are unable to provide a letter of authority from the child's parent/s, you should discuss the circumstances with the School Principal.



To ensure that the school keeps you informed of your grandchild's progress, you will need to provide written evidence that you are the child's primary carer.

In some cases, family circumstances change frequently, and parental responsibility for a child may alternate between grandparents and parents. You may need to take over the care of your grandchild for weeks or months at a time. During those times when your grandchildren are in your care, the school may provide you with information about the children if you have complied with the points listed above. It will also help to establish and maintain a relationship with the school, through regular, open and respectful communication. In particular, let the school know about changes in the child's circumstances, such as residence and other arrangements. There are many formal and informal opportunities for parents or caregivers to find out about the school and their child's progress.

Some of these include:

- **School website**
- **Newsletters**
- **Reports on student performance** - Schools provide reports to parents or caregivers at the end of each semester to inform them of their child's progress.
- **Letters** - Schools often communicate information about specific issues relating to a student by way of a personal letter, usually sent home with the student.
- **Personal appointments** - Parents or caregivers are encouraged to meet with any staff member at a mutually convenient time at their child's school to discuss relevant issues and concerns. From 2006, every school must offer parent-teacher interviews each semester.
- **Parent-teacher nights** - Schools often hold these nights at the start of the year to discuss class or year programs with parents or caregivers. There are also opportunities to talk about issues or concerns and to ask how children are performing and progressing at school.

HOMEWORK

Homework provides opportunities for students to consolidate what they learn in the classroom, to develop a pattern for lifelong learning and to involve family members.

The Queensland Government has developed a policy for state schools that sets out guidelines for homework, including the amount of time students should spend on homework each week. Each school will use the guidelines to develop its own homework policy in consultation with the school community.

The policy recommends the following maximum homework hours over a week:

- In the Prep Year, generally students will not be set homework.
- Years 1-3: Could be up to but generally not more than 1 hour per week.
- Years 4-5: Could be up to but generally not more than 2-3 hours per week.
- Years 6-7: Could be up to but generally not more than 3-4 hours per week.
- Years 8-9: Could be up to but generally not more than 5 hours per week.



For students in Years 10-12, the amount of time devoted to homework and independent study will vary according to the student's learning needs and individual program of learning, determined through their Senior Education and Training (SET) Plan.

Tips to help your grandchild with their homework:

- Read to them, talk with them and involve them in tasks at home including shopping, playing games and physical activity
- Help them to complete tasks by discussing key questions or directing them to resources
- Encourage them to organise their time and take responsibility for their learning
- Encourage them to read and to take an interest in current events
- Help them to balance the amount of time spent completing homework, watching television, playing computer games, playing sport and engaging in other recreational activities
- Contact the teacher and discuss any concerns.

STATE EDUCATION AND FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

State schools provide free instruction, administration and facilities.

Parents or caregivers are responsible for providing textbooks and other resources, including uniforms, for their children while attending school. Many schools offer a textbook and resource scheme to provide these learning resources at a lower cost to the parent.

Many schools, in conjunction with their parents and citizens' associations, also ask parents or caregivers for a voluntary financial contribution to provide extra resources such as art materials or sporting equipment. These amounts vary from school to school.

Parents or caregivers also bear the costs of school excursions, camps and extracurricular activities.

Textbook and resource allowance

The Department of Education and the Arts provides assistance to parents or caregivers of secondary school age students attending state and approved non-state schools to contribute towards the cost of textbooks and learning resources.

For more information contact your school principal or the Department's School Financial Services Unit on **1800 248 997**.

Transport assistance

The transport of students to and from school is a parental responsibility. The Queensland Government funds the School Transport Assistance Scheme to help students travel to and from school if their access to education facilities is impeded by distance, disability, financial disadvantage or from areas designated as drought-declared.

Be supportive of your grandchild and if there is a cause for concern, work with the teacher to find a solution to the problem.

Eligible families receive assistance with rail, bus or ferry transport, or conveyance allowance for driving their children to school. Students with disabilities can also be assessed to determine their eligibility for taxi or contract minibus.

For more information on school transport assistance for students with disabilities, contact your local Education Queensland district office or visit www.education.qld.gov.au/students/transport

For further information on school transport contact your local Queensland Transport office or visit www.transport.qld.gov.au/public

Living away from home allowances scheme (LAFHAS)

The Queensland Government offers financial assistance to students who are compelled by geographic isolation to board away from home in order to attend approved schools with the required year levels.

For more information contact the Department's School Financial Services Unit on 1800 248 997.

Other Assistance

Many schools have school uniform shops and second-hand clothing pools. Contact your school parents and citizens' association for further information. Families in genuine financial difficulties are asked to contact the school principal for assistance and advice with uniform provision.

Further Information

For more details on these financial assistance schemes, visit www.education.qld.gov.au/finance/grants/fund/garp/html/par-stu.html

BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT

Behaviour at school is managed supportively to achieve a positive learning environment for the benefit of students, staff and parents or caregivers. Corporal punishment is not allowed in Queensland state schools.

Schools are expected to develop a range of supportive strategies to effectively manage behaviours. These will include positive preventive action for all students, through to more intensive intervention and support.

Any problems related to behaviour should be brought to the attention of school staff to enable schools to respond effectively and implement practices to maintain a safe learning environment.

STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

Guidance and Counselling Services

These are provided directly to students and their families and are available at all Queensland state schools or education programs. This includes early intervention programs with some specific services available to parents or caregivers of children with disabilities from infancy.

Behaviour at school is managed supportively to achieve a positive learning environment for the benefit of students, staff and parents or caregivers.

Guidance and counselling services focus on fostering positive human change to enable effective learning and teaching. Guidance officers may work directly with the student or with the student’s teachers, support personnel, family, or other specialists depending on the issues to be resolved and the age of the student.

Issues that may be dealt with include personal and social development, diverse learning styles and needs, educational and career plans and choices.

Guidance officers work as members of a support team, which may include a range of other professionals working in schools and in the community. They are committed to providing the best education and training possible for every young Queenslander regardless of their circumstances, and while respecting client privacy and confidentiality.

There are also Community Education Counsellors who provide educational counselling and support services within specific secondary schools to ensure that the best possible assistance services are available to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander secondary students and communities.

Youth Support Coordinator Initiative

This aims to establish collaborative relationships between schools, TAFE and community services to enable better responses to the needs of young people experiencing personal or family difficulties. The primary role of youth support coordinators is to assist young people at risk of disengaging prematurely from learning or training. More than 100 youth support coordinators are employed by community-based agencies funded by the Queensland Government. Student involvement is voluntary.

EDUCATION QUEENSLAND DISTRICT OFFICES

Education Queensland has five district offices in the Sunshine Coast and Wide Bay regions.

Sunshine Coast		
Sunshine Coast North (Nambour)	Ph 5470 8900	Fax 5470 8909
Sunshine Coast South (Murrumba Downs)	Ph 3881 9600	Fax 3881 9630
Wide Bay Burnett		
Wide Bay North (Bundaberg)	Ph 4154 0300	Fax 4153 1212
Wide Bay South (Maryborough)	Ph 4121 1633	Fax 4121 1645
Wide Bay West (Kingaroy)	Ph 4162 9500	Fax 4162 9524

Guidance officers may work directly with the student or with teachers, family, or others depending on the issues to be resolved and the age of the student.



Other district offices are located around the state.

Atherton	Ph 4091 0800	Mackay	Ph 4951 6900
Brisbane (Central and West)	Ph 3350 7866	Moreton East (Ipswich)	Ph 3280 1773
Brisbane (North)	Ph 3350 7866	Moreton West (Ipswich)	Ph 3280 1666
Brisbane (South East)	Ph 3422 8644	Mt Isa	Ph 4744 8222
Brisbane (South)	Ph 3422 8655	Rockhampton	Ph 4938 4661
Cairns	Ph 4046 5222	Roma	Ph 4622 9711
Gladstone	Ph 4971 3600	Toowoomba	Ph 4616 9111
Gold Coast	Ph 5562 4888	Torres Strait and Cape	Ph 4069 1282
Logan Beaudesert	Ph 3804 9666	Townsville	Ph 4726 3111
Longreach	Ph 4658 4599	Warwick	Ph 4661 0500

USEFUL EDUCATION CONTACTS

Department of Education and the Arts website www.education.qld.gov.au

Department of Education and the Arts – General Enquiries **13 13 04**

Queensland Council of Parents and Citizens' Associations Inc (QCPCA) **3352 3900**

School Financial Services Unit (Department of Education and the Arts) **1800 248 997**

This information was provided by Department of Education and the Arts.

Internet Safety

Children need parents and carers to teach them how to make smart choices about who and what they find online. Here are some tips to help you guide your grandchild's experience online:

- Spend time online with your grandchild. Check out good sites together. The internet can be a fun family activity!
- Help your grandchild use the internet as an effective research tool - learn about handy homework tips for kids and also good searching ideas.
- Learn about the world out there. Kids are communicating in a diverse range of ways, from chat to Instant Messaging, and from message boards to blogs. Learn how these work and what tools they offer to protect your child's privacy.
- Be aware of online stranger danger, particularly in chat rooms. Set house rules about what information your children can give out and where they can go online.
- Put the internet computer in a public area of the home, such as the living room, rather than a child's bedroom.
- Talk to your grandchildren about their internet experiences, the good and the bad. Let them know it's OK to tell you if they come across something that worries them. (It doesn't mean that they're going to get into trouble.)

Stay involved with your child's use of new technologies.

- Teach your grandchildren that there are ways they can deal with disturbing material - they should not respond if someone says something inappropriate, and they should immediately exit any site if they feel uncomfortable or worried by it.
- Teach children that information on the internet is not always reliable.
- Encourage children to treat others in the same way they should in real life by giving them an understanding of Netiquette.
- Know the best ways of avoiding spam.
- Consider using filters, labels and safe zones.
- REMEMBER: Children need parents and family members to help them become cybersmart.

They keep me young – I am putting them on the right road.

Grandparent carer

Mobile Phones

Many parents and carers find that allowing their children to use mobile phones has benefits, such as keeping in touch while away, and making calls in emergencies. However, mobile phones are no longer just a way to make voice calls. Many mobiles include cameras, sound recording capability, and can even track where you – or your children - are. Increasing numbers of mobile phones are also Internet enabled, which means that you can connect to the Internet, access email, and participate in IM (Instant Messaging) as well as chat.

The 'always on' nature of mobile services means that children are more vulnerable to the risks, which include bullying, people making inappropriate contact, as well as the possibility that they'll access unsuitable 'adult' content.

Tips:

- Stay involved with your child's use of new technologies. Ask your child to show you how his or her phone works, or borrow it and play with it until you are familiar with it.
- Find out how access to 'adult' content and other services offered by your child's mobile phone can be managed. Such information is usually available on the carrier's website.
- Remind your children to keep their personal details private and to think about who they give their phone number to. People can't send them nasty or unwanted messages if they don't have your child's phone number.

Go to www.cybersmartkids.com.au for more information and tips. Cybersmart Kids Online is a community awareness project developed by the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) with the objective of providing parents and children with information and tools to help them have a rewarding, productive and safe experience of the internet.

Adapted with permission from the Australian Communications and Media Authority's web site www.cybersmartkids.com.au.



Challenging Behaviours

Health professionals can help parents identify problems and ways to help their child cope with difficulties in positive ways.

Almost all children will be difficult or demanding at times. Challenging or disruptive behaviours are those which persist or become so severe that they cause major problems for families or communities.

Excessive disruptive or aggressive behaviour at any age should be taken seriously. It should not be dismissed as a “phase” or something they will “grow out of”. Such behaviour in children and adolescents may begin with frequent loss of temper, irritability, impulsive behaviour, or becoming easily frustrated.

When a parent or other adult in frequent contact with the child is concerned, they should contact the general practitioner, community health centre, school counsellor, or guidance officer. Health professionals can help parents identify problems and ways to help their child cope with difficulties in positive ways. If more specialised assessment or intervention is required, general practitioners, schools or other health professionals can make a referral to a Child and Youth Mental Health Service (CYMHS).

Aggressive behaviour may include:

- Explosive temper tantrums;
- Physical aggression;
- Fighting, threats or attempts to hurt others;
- Use of weapons;
- Cruelty towards family pets or other animals;
- Intentional destruction of property or vandalism.

Discipline should be about learning and should not be harsh or unfair. Physical punishment will often make children’s behaviour even more difficult. Seeing or hearing domestic violence can affect children and adolescents as much as being assaulted. Violent television or video games may also affect vulnerable young children. *Violence often leads to violence.*

Tantrums

Tantrums happen when children feel frustrated or stressed. Occasional tantrums are a normal stage of development in young children. Parents should be concerned if tantrums become extreme or constant.

Some things parents can do to help children get over tantrums are:

- Spend regular and relaxed time with them;
- Let them know you notice the good things they do, and
- See if there are other stresses affecting the child such as starting childcare, new baby, adults arguing.

Behavioural problems may affect a child or adolescent’s ability to solve problems, cope with life stresses, and enjoy normal activities with their family and friends. Their schooling may also be disrupted. Disruptive behaviour can make it difficult



for children to form friendships and can interfere with family relationships. Without treatment, children and young people may go on to have problems at school, with the law, in employment and in bringing up families of their own.

Parenting Programs

Parenting Programs can reduce disruptive behaviours in preschool and primary school age children. Programs such as the Triple P (the Positive Parenting Program) provide information and counselling to increase parenting skills and satisfaction and promote family harmony.

These programs show carers how to manage their children's behaviour in constructive ways. Carers are encouraged to take care of their own needs and develop ways to make time for themselves and their partners.

For more information on Triple P call your local Child Health Clinic or talk with your school. Triple P locations are available at www.health.qld.gov.au/cchs.

Schools

Schools can be an important source of support for children or young people with difficulties. The structure of school life and the ongoing professional support of a teacher or school counsellor may help children or young people cope.

A number of programs are available across Queensland. Schools know the dangers of bullying and harassment. They have many resources to help them develop prevention programs.

Where to get help

- Your child's general practitioner, teacher, guidance officer, school counsellor.
- Community Health Centre.
- If more specialised assessment or intervention is required, general practitioners, schools or other health professionals can make a referral to a Child and Youth Mental Health Service (CYMHS) – for local clinics, look under Health in the White Pages telephone directory.
- Your general practitioner may refer you to other specialists who work with children and adolescents such as a private psychiatrist, psychologist or paediatrician.
- Triple P Positive Parenting Program – Parenting and Family Support Centre, Phone: **(07) 3365 7290**

The information above was provided by Queensland Health.

Occasional tantrums are a normal stage of development in young children. Parents should be concerned if tantrums become extreme or constant.

Managing Head Lice

If you find head lice early, they are easier to treat. Check everyone in the family once a week.

Itching is often the first thing that raises concern about head lice, however it is not a reliable sign of head lice. You can have head lice and not know. Lice move fast in dry hair and are easy to miss. Most children who itch do not have head lice. If you find head lice early, they are easier to treat.

Check everyone in the family (adults and children) once a week. If a close contact has head lice, keep checking every 2 days until no lice are found for 10 consecutive days. Checking for head lice is easier to remember if you do it on the same day each week.

Eggs will be glued to the hair. Those found within 1.5cm from the scalp mean an active condition. They will hatch and will need to be treated. If you find only eggs more than 1.5cm from the scalp and no adult or young lice, the condition is inactive and does not require treatment.

About head lice combs ...

Head lice combs are very fine toothed, made from plastic or metal and are designed to remove head lice. Some combs also remove some eggs. There are different types available: plastic, metal and electronic. Metal head lice combs with cylindrical teeth remove head lice and eggs better than combs with flat teeth.

Conditioner and Combing : a technique for the detection and/or treatment of head lice

Conditioner and combing is the most effective way of finding head lice. Conditioner and combing is also an effective way of treating head lice, particularly mild conditions. The conditioner stuns the lice for some minutes so they can be easily removed.

Conditioner and combing is cheap. It also avoids the use of head lice chemicals (insecticides). Using conditioner and combing every two days between chemical treatments removes young lice as they hatch from the eggs. No insecticide will kill the eggs.

For conditioner and combing you will need:

- white hair conditioner
- an ordinary comb
- a fine tooth comb
- hair clips
- white tissues or material
- good light
- a magnifying glass
- a mirror if combing yourself
- a plastic container
- an old toothbrush, safety pin or dental floss

Conditioner and Combing Detection

1. Untangle dry hair with an ordinary comb.
2. Apply hair conditioner to dry hair. Use enough conditioner to thoroughly cover the whole scalp and all hair from the roots to tips.
3. Use the ordinary comb to evenly distribute conditioner and divide the hair into four or more sections using the hair clips. A mirror helps if combing yourself.
4. Change to a head lice comb.
5. Start with a section at the back of the head. Place the teeth of the head lice comb flat against the scalp. Comb the hair from the roots through to the tips.
6. Wipe the comb on the tissue or material after each stroke. In good light, check for head lice. Adult lice are easier to see – young lice are difficult to see. A magnifying glass will help. You may see some eggs.
7. Comb each section twice until you have combed the whole head. If the comb becomes clogged, use the old toothbrush, dental floss or safety pin to remove the head lice or eggs.

If you find head lice, decide on a treatment option. It is recommended that you use:

- The conditioner and combing technique as a treatment alone, or
- The conditioner and combing technique in between the use of a chemical treatment.

It is essential to check for effectiveness after each application of a chemical product. Some head lice are resistant to some chemical treatments. This means that this treatment will not be effective in killing head lice.

If you choose the conditioner and combing as a treatment, see below. If you choose a chemical treatment, wash the conditioner off and allow the hair to dry before applying a chemical treatment.

Conditioner and Combing Treatment

1. Follow all steps for 'Conditioner and Combing Detection' above.
2. Keep combing the whole head until all the hair conditioner is gone.
3. Repeat the conditioner and combing every 2 days until you find no more head lice for 10 consecutive days. You will be removing all the adult lice and any young lice that hatch from the eggs.

Cleaning up after conditioner and combing detection and/or treatment

1. Place all tissues or material in a plastic bag, tie the top and put it in the bin.
2. Wash hair normally.
3. Soak combs in soapy hot water (just after boiling) for at least 30 seconds to ensure head lice are killed (this should be done by an adult). When the water has cooled, use an old toothbrush to remove the debris.



Choosing a Chemical Treatment Product

The two most important things to think about when choosing and using chemical treatments are *safety* and *effectiveness*.

Choose only chemical treatments designed specifically to treat head lice.

Choose only chemical treatments which have an 'Aust. L' or 'Aust R' number on the label. These products are licensed or registered with the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) in Australia. This means they are approved for safety. Be wary of chemical treatments which are not officially approved.

Using chemical treatments

Chemical treatments are insecticides (poisons) and need to be used with caution. Check for safety warnings and check with your Pharmacist if you have any questions about safety and possible side effects. Use a chemical treatment only when you actually find head lice. This avoids unnecessary exposure to chemicals.

Chemical treatments do not repel head lice. They should not be used to prevent head lice. Chemical treatments are only safe when they are used as directed on the label. Overuse can damage the scalp.

A chemical treatment is effective when it actually kills the head lice. To work properly, the chemical treatment must be in contact with the head lice at the right concentration and for the right amount of time. Make sure you follow the instructions carefully.

No one chemical treatment will work for everyone. It is essential to check for effectiveness every time you use a chemical treatment.

No chemical treatment will kill eggs. The eggs will continue to hatch after the treatment. Therefore it is essential to apply the second treatment one week later to kill any young lice that have hatched. The conditioner and combing technique can be used in between to help remove lice that are hatching.

The information above was provided by Queensland Health.



This booklet, **Grandparents As Parents: Education**, was developed by Community Solutions Inc. with funding provided by the Australian Government and the Telstra Foundation. Australian Government funding was provided through the Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, under the *Stronger Families and Communities Strategy*.