

BACK TO SCHOOL



When to start at 'big school'

Parents are increasingly delaying starting their children at school by a year, even though education experts warn holding a child back generally results in no long-term learning advantage.

As school starts back this week, up to a fifth of kindergarten students will be entering school a year later than they were eligible to attend.

By law, all children must be enrolled in school by their sixth birthday, which means there can be an 18-month age gap between students in some classes.

While many parents believe their child will cope better with the demands of school if they are one of the older students in their class (particularly if they are boys), research shows any initial advantage dissipates as children progress through school.

"Most kids entering school on time at age have no disadvantage to them," University of Sydney education professor Andrew Martin said, but added that, in some instances, it might be necessary to hold some children back.

"For nine out of 10 kids on-time entry is appropriate," he says. "They might be a little bit young, there will be a bit of catch-up in the early days, but have a long view of your child's



education. Before you know it they will be catching up."

Professor Martin said older kindergarten children tended to be more physically and emotionally capable than their younger peers.

"Some children have a whole year of life on other kids in the class," he says.

"At that age that's a big developmental difference."

Charles Sturt University professor of transition to school, Bob Perry, says this is reflected in the results of the NSW Government's Best Start Kindergarten Assessment

program, which tests the literacy and numeracy skills and understanding of the incoming students.

But the age-related developmental differences fade as children grow up.

"By mid to upper primary, whatever edge you think they may be getting [evidence suggests] for most kids it is ironed out," Professor Martin says.

Professor Perry concurred.

"After three or four years it pretty much evens out," he says. "It's not always the older kids doing better. Some younger kids learn faster."

Research has shown that by high school, younger children are often more motivated and engaged in their studies than their older peers.

"The younger kids are not ahead of themselves in their mind, they don't have a licence and want to be off driving four months out from the HSC," Professor Martin said.

Education experts advised that, while parents may be concerned their child can't hold a pencil properly or doesn't know the alphabet when it comes time to start school, that is actually what school is for.

"It's not whether they can read or not, the teacher thinks that's their job to do," Professor Perry said, while noting that some schools appear to discourage the enrolment of younger children by organising their wait lists by birth date.

He said a child's school readiness was best gauged by their desire to go to school, their ability to interact with other children, and whether they can keep control of their belongings.

"Having a successful start to school is not about what you know, it's about how you know it, and if you've got friends going you'll have a happier time than if you don't," Professor Perry said.

TIPS FOR PARENTS

Learning Being able to read and write is not a pre-requisite for starting Kindergarten. In fact, that's exactly why your child should be starting to school - to start on the journey of discovery that is reading, writing and learning.

Words Read to your children, read with your children and talk to your children.

Control Ask yourself if your child can control his/her emotions and behaviour. If the answer is yes (most of the time), chances are he/she is ready for big school.

Directions It's important a child can follow simple directions before starting school. While this essential for classroom learning it will also help ensure they stay safe by following the rules while at school.

Seek advice If in doubt, talk to the experts. Your child's preschool teacher, and the Kindergarten teachers at your primary school, can advise if your child is ready for the next step.

How to find local businesses at your fingertips

This innovative new mobile friendly directory allows you to access local businesses anytime, anywhere.



iPHONES

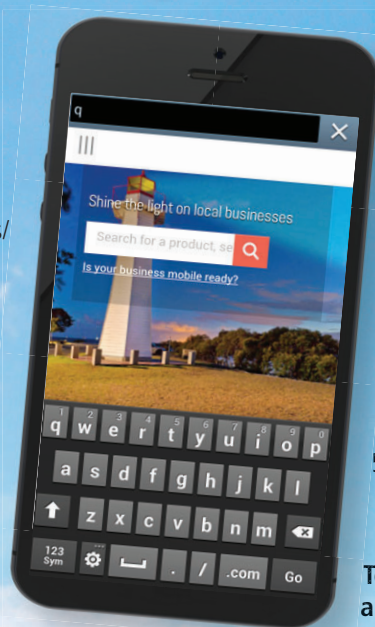


To download:

1. Visit www.centralwesterndaily.com.au/business/
2. Click the arrow within a box icon at the bottom of the page
3. Click Add To Home Screen
4. Business Solutions is now added to your screen. It will appear similar to an app.

To flick between the Central Western Daily and Business Solutions:

1. To go back to the Central Western Daily homepage from Business Solutions, use the III menu bar in the top left corner of the page.
2. Then click Central Western Daily.
3. To get back to the Business Solutions, go to the III menu bar, click the drop down arrow on Community and then click Find Local Products and Services.



ANDROID PHONES



To download:

1. Visit www.centralwesterndaily.com.au/business/
2. Save the page as a bookmark
3. Click and hold down the page in your bookmarks bar. It will come up with an option to Add Shortcut To Home Screen.
4. Click this option.
5. You will now find Business Solutions on your phone's front page. You can then move it wherever you like in your phone.

To flick between the Central Western Daily and Business Solutions:

1. To go back to the Central Western Daily homepage from Business Solutions, use the III menu bar in the top left corner of the page.
2. Then click Central Western Daily.
3. To get back to Business Solutions, go to the III menu bar, click the drop down arrow on Community and then click Find Local Products and Services.

