

Time to start school

A parent's guide to starting kindergarten





Welcome to your public school

Choosing to send your child to your local public school is a great start to education. From the first steps at kindergarten to the finishing day at secondary school, highly qualified teachers and support staff will nurture your child.

Starting school is such an important milestone in your child's life (and yours)! We all want the best for our children. We also want their early years at school to be a solid foundation for future learning and development.

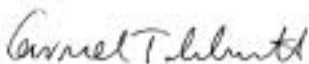
Our schools place a strong emphasis on children's overall wellbeing.

Your local school will provide a stimulating and challenging environment where your child can thrive. Your child will have great opportunities to do their best in academic, artistic, sporting and social endeavours – key activities to prepare for lifelong learning.

NSW Public Schools are leading the way and your child:

- will be part of a world class education system that achieves some of the world's highest levels of literacy and numeracy in international testing
- will benefit from smaller class sizes in kindergarten through to Year 2. This ensures children in the critical beginning years of school receive more individual attention
- will be taught by highly trained and academically qualified teachers. Our teachers are trained to address the individual needs of each child
- will be part of a school community that values integrity, excellence, respect, responsibility, cooperation, participation, care, fairness and democracy
- will celebrate the diversity of Australian culture. A public school education encourages all students to grow up to have a strong sense of their own and others' identities
- as a parent/caregiver you will receive new school reports on your child's progress that will be easy to understand. You will also receive information on your school's progress every year through the Annual School Report.

This guide will give you some ideas and suggestions for preparing you and your child for the big day. It is an exciting time and I wish you and your child all the very best.



Carmel Tebbutt MP
Minister for Education and Training



Handy school contacts and dates

My child's first school day is _____ starting time: _____ finishing time: _____

School phone number: _____

School address: _____

School website: _____

Principal's name: _____

Teacher's name: _____

Before and after school care: _____

Department of Education and Training

State Office

T 02 9561 8000

www.schools.nsw.edu.au

Parents & Citizens Federation of NSW (P&C)

T 1300 885 982

www.pandc.org.au

My local parent organisation contact

T _____

Aboriginal Education Consultative

Group (AECG)

T 02 9550 5666

www.nswaecg.com.au

My local Aboriginal organisation contact

T _____

Ethnic Communities' Council of NSW

T 02 9319 0288

www.eccnsw.org.au

Other contacts

Name _____

T _____

Name _____

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Name _____

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Useful websites

NSW Department of Education and Training

www.det.nsw.edu.au

www.schools.nsw.edu.au

NSW Health

www.health.nsw.gov.au

NSW Sport and Recreation

www.dsr.nsw.gov.au

NSW Department of Community Services

www.community.nsw.gov.au

www.parenting.nsw.gov.au

Key contacts

Name		
Address		
	State	Postcode
Telephone (H)	(W)	
Mobile	Fax/Email	

Name		
Address		
	State	Postcode
Telephone (H)	(W)	
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2006 Calendar

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■ School holidays
 ■ Start of school term dates
 ■ Start of term 1 for Western Division
 ■ Additional vacation days for Western Division

(See your local school for any variations to term start dates.)

2007 Calendar

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School terms 2006

Term dates

Term 1 – Eastern Division (54 days)

Monday 30 January 2006 to

Thursday 13 April 2006

Term 1 – Western Division (49 days)

Monday 6 February 2006 to

Thursday 13 April 2006

Term 2 – (45 days)

Monday 1 May 2006 to Friday 30 June 2006

Term 3 – (55 days)

Monday 17 July 2006 to

Friday 29 September 2006

Term 4 – (49 days)

Monday 16 October 2006 to

Thursday 21 December 2006

School holidays

Autumn holidays

Friday 14 April 2006 to Friday 28 April 2006

Winter holidays

Monday 3 July 2006 to Friday 14 July 2006

Spring holidays

Monday 2 October 2006 to

Friday 13 October 2006

Summer holidays – Eastern Division

Friday 22 December 2006 to

Friday 26 January 2007

Summer holidays – Western Division

Friday 22 December 2006 to

Friday 2 February 2007

School events & activities

JANUARY

FEBRUARY

MARCH

APRIL

MAY

JUNE

JULY

AUGUST

SEPTEMBER

OCTOBER

NOVEMBER

DECEMBER

Handy hint

Have your child practise trying on their uniform before the big day



Starting school

It's almost time. Your child is about to start the first day of a very exciting and rewarding learning experience. We recognise that it's a big step for everybody, so we've put together this guide to share some practical tips and ideas from parents, teachers and principals that may help smooth the way for a happy beginning.

These include getting ready for school, lunch ideas, what to pack, labelling, preparing your child for learning, how you can get involved with the school and understanding what happens in a school day.

Our best advice is

- to contact your school and participate in the kindergarten orientation program. If you've missed it, information will still be available at your school
- **tell the principal before school starts if your child has any allergies or medical conditions. This is essential. You should also let the school know as soon as you are aware of any new allergies or medical conditions**

If you've discovered a tip or two we'd love to hear from you so we can share it with other parents. Please send us an email parents@det.nsw.edu.au

Getting prepared

At a glance here's a checklist of things you'll need before school starts.

- School uniform (see more below)
- School socks (check colour as part of the school uniform)
- School bag (may be available from the school)
- Hat (check with your school)
- Lunch box
- Drink bottle
- Raincoat
- Art smock (an old shirt will do)
- Library bag

You don't need to go to the expense of buying pencils, textas etc because your school will provide these.

When you visit your school remember to pick up information about the school uniform. Your child's school will have its own uniform guide and if you have any particular needs please speak with your principal.

To keep costs down, many schools operate a school uniform clothing pool with new and second-hand items. Your child's school can also give you advice on which retailers stock the uniform.

Practise school days

Now that you have everything you need, you can practise what it's like to go to school. Practising school days can help you work out where your child might be struggling or becoming anxious. You may also find out things you'll need to change to fit in with a new school routine.

By helping your child learn new routines you will give them greater confidence and make their start so much more enjoyable.

School routines to practise together:

- Eating breakfast
- Dressing in school uniform
- Putting on school shoes, this may include tying shoelaces
- Packing and unpacking a school bag
- Doing hair and cleaning teeth
- Experimenting with lunch variations together
- Leaving the house to get to school on time
- Driving or walking past the school and talking about it
- Eating lunch (can your child open their lunch box, can they open the packaging, will some foods be too messy at school?)
- Walking across a pedestrian crossing safely
- Going to the toilet on their own e.g. has your son used a urinal?
- Saying good morning to the teacher
- Putting their hand up to ask or answer a question

New friends

Both you and your child will develop new friendships during their time at school.

Why not catch up with other parents and their children before school starts? Some familiar faces in the playground can help your child settle in quicker during their early days.

Your notes

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Getting a good start

Ensure your child gets a good night's sleep on school nights

Being tired and lacking energy will take the fun out of your child's learning and may make it difficult for them to concentrate. Children need a good sleep to be able to cope with the challenges of school, such as taking part in new activities, making friends, listening and following instructions and being confident learners. Having a bed-time routine on a school night can help your child be a more interested and successful learner.

When a child has enough sleep they have a much better chance of

- remembering what they learn
- paying attention and concentrating
- solving problems and thinking of new ideas
- playing sensibly

Get organised

Having practised a few times, you should have the morning routine worked out. Unfortunately, not everything goes to plan. Some mornings children (and parents!) move a little slower and can be less than cooperative. Be patient. Getting upset and frustrated only makes things worse. To ease the morning rush it's a good idea to prepare a few things the night before.

Here are a few tips that may help:

- Iron clothes and have them ready for the next day
- Have their clothes, shoes and socks laid out
- Prepare their lunch and pop it in the fridge
- Pack their school bag
- Keep brushes, combs and hair bands in a regular place

Clothes with easy to do buttons or velcro can speed things along in the morning and give your child more confidence by being able to dress themselves. Shoes with velcro instead of laces can also help if your child isn't ready to tie them on their own. This will give them some independence at school if their shoes become undone.

Make your child a healthy breakfast

A good breakfast gives children a great start by providing the nutrients or fuel they need to get them through the school day.

You may find it helpful to teach your child to get their own cereal if you know mornings are a rush. Also, some schools offer healthy foods for breakfast from the canteen or at a before school centre. Ask your school whether these options are available.

Packing the school bag

Pack food for littlelunch and lunch that is nutritious and easy to open. Children should eat a wide variety of healthy foods for balanced energy levels. We now support the sale of nutritious foods at school canteens. Foods such as cakes, soft drinks and chips are only sold occasionally. We developed the Fresh Tastes @ School program to support children's health and prevent obesity and its associated health risks. With this in mind, we encourage you to provide snacks and lunches from home that are healthy.

You must let your principal know if your child is allergic to certain foods.

Here are some suggestions that can be easily used for littlelunch, lunch additions or after-school snacks:

- Cut fruit up into pieces (squeeze a little lemon on the apple to prevent it browning) and store it in a small container or snap lock plastic bag
- Cut up vegetables into sticks such as carrot, celery and cucumber and store them in a small container or snaplock plastic bag and accompany with a yoghurt, hummus or tzatziki dip
- Make wholemeal muffins and freeze. Pack a muffin each day wrapped in foil for littlelunch. Similarly, make a healthy loaf of banana bread, slice it, wrap individual slices and freeze ready for school or afternoon snacks
- Peel oranges in one long strip and replace peel to protect the orange. Alternatively, cut the orange into slices and store in a container

Clever lunch tips

- If using tomato, slice thinly and place between other fillings to stop the sandwich from going soggy
- Cut up sandwiches using different shaped pastry cutters
- Keep items such as soft drinks, chips, cakes or chocolate to occasional treats rather than serving these foods daily
- Keep meat-based lunches cool with a frozen drink bottle or tetra pack
- Water is the best thirst quencher. Freeze a bottle of water with a slice of lemon or orange added to flavour it and pack it in your child's lunch box

Making lunch a success

Most children bring their snacks and lunches in a lunch box. It's recommended that you choose a lunch box that can insulate cold food, especially in the warmer months. If you decide on a plastic lunch box, always include a frozen drink bottle in it so that lunches will stay cool.

Nobody likes mushed or bruised fruit so make sure it won't roll around or get crushed in their lunch box.

Make sure your child can easily open packaged food if you're going to include it in their lunch box (some have lids that are difficult to peel off). Clingy plastic on sandwiches can also be difficult for young children to pull apart. Spend some time at home testing these with your child. You might also like to test out some favourite foods so your child doesn't come home with lunch still in their bag or thrown out without knowing.

What else can you pack?

Items for sport or art

When your child starts kindergarten the school will let you know when you may need to pack additional clothes for activities like art or sport.

A hat, sunscreen and a water bottle

School starts in summer so you need to make sure your child wears a hat and sunscreen to help protect their skin. Your child's school will have shaded areas while playing outside. Many schools have a 'no hat, play in the shade' policy during recess and lunch times; others will provide sunscreen that your child can apply before they go outside to play.

If your child has an allergy to sunscreen, it is essential that you inform the school.

Packing extra water bottles on hot days is a good idea. Teachers often let children take water into the classroom. If it's frozen, send it wrapped in a tea towel so water doesn't get on their work.

Sun tips

- Encourage your child to always wear a hat at school
- Apply a 15+ broad-spectrum sunscreen to the areas on your child that are exposed to the sun
- Encourage your child to apply sunscreen before playing outdoor sport by keeping a small bottle in their desk or locker if it is not provided by the school
- Encourage your child to wear collars and long sleeves
- Encourage your child to drink lots of water

A plastic bag with a spare pair of underpants and socks

Little toilet accidents do occasionally happen at school and the best way to manage them with the least amount of fuss and embarrassment is to have a spare pair of underpants and socks packed in a plastic bag in their school bag. If you have a little boy then packing a spare pair of shorts can be handy, too. Explain to your child not to worry if they have an accident. Remind them about the fresh clothing in the bag and show them how to put soiled clothes in the plastic bag for washing.

Note: Label everything!

Uniforms, jackets, jumpers, umbrellas, shoes, bags, pencil cases, lunch boxes – all of these items can get lost or look similar to your child's classmates' belongings. All schools have a lost property bin or area. But to save time, money and frustration, clearly label all of your child's items.

The easiest way to label your child's clothing is to write their name underneath the hemlines or on the tag using a permanent fabric marker, or sewing or ironing on personalised labels. Remember tags can be cut off!

Use a permanent marker or labels on your child's school bag, lunch box, drink bottle, pencil case, etc. After a couple of weeks, check the labels to see how they are going, as washing causes fading.



Helping your child prepare for learning

You are your child's first teacher and you'll continue to have an important role in their learning. It's important your child sees that you're excited about their new adventure. A child who enjoys school will learn more.

Sharing stories about the good things you enjoyed at school such as making friends, doing arts and crafts, sport or science will encourage them to adjust. Even if your school experiences seem a long time ago or weren't always enjoyable you can still help your child enjoy their school years. Being interested in what they have to tell you when they come home will also show them that what they're doing is important.

Tips on preparing your child for the classroom:

- Visit your school with your child
- Go past the school regularly and point it out to your child
- Share with your child good stories and memories of your own school days
- Be positive about school, teachers and learning
- Talk with your child about the kinds of activities they will take part in during the school day
- Talk about friendships and how to be a good friend
- Take your child with you to your local library and help them choose books
- Encourage your child's curiosity by asking questions and by encouraging questions in return
- Find out about other children who will be starting at the school and introduce yourself to some of the families. Maybe you could organise for some of them to play with your child

Your child's teacher will plan class lessons based on a variety of skills. Starting school may be a little easier if your child can try the things below, but don't worry if they can't do them all.

Language skills

- talking to other people about familiar objects and events
- answering and asking simple questions
- making needs known e.g. asking to go to the toilet
- following simple instructions
- using books for enjoyment or for looking at pictures
- identifying pictures in books, magazines, on television or video
- joining in singing familiar songs

Writing skills

- tries to write letters from the alphabet and numbers. (We teach NSW Foundation Style of writing in our schools, see below)
- tries to write their own name. Encourage your child to use a capital letter to start their name i.e. Chelsea
- tries to use a variety of tools to draw, scribble or write with (e.g. pens, pencils, textas, paintbrushes, sticks in the dirt)

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Handy tips on school life

Life in a school day

Your child's school day will generally start at 9:00am and finish at 3:00pm. These times may vary across the state, so check with your school. Your child's school may start with an assembly (where the principal or a teacher makes announcements to the school). Many schools invite parents to attend assemblies. It's a great way to find out what's happening at school and seeing children get awards.

This is an example school timetable. It may vary. For example some schools have sun-safe times.

Your child's school day timetable	
9:00am	School begins
11.15am	Littlelunch or recess
11:30am	Lessons
12:45pm	Lunch
1:30pm	Lessons
3:00pm	School finishes

Getting to and from school

Make sure your child is at school before the school bell. Children arriving late have to be signed into school and they miss out on the important start to the day!

When school is finished for the day, your child's class will gather at a regular spot waiting for parents to pick them up. Your class teacher will let you know the location. A teacher will be on duty to look after them. Please don't be late as it can make your child anxious. If there is an emergency, a call to the school will alert the teacher and keep your child calm.

Before and after school care

Before and after school care is available for children in many schools. If available, please ask your school to provide information about how you can access this program.

What did you do at school today?

You've probably heard about parents asking their children what they did at school only to receive a 'nothing' response. Try asking descriptive questions, you are more likely to get a more detailed answer. For example, ask 'What books did you read at school today?' or 'What words did you learn today?'

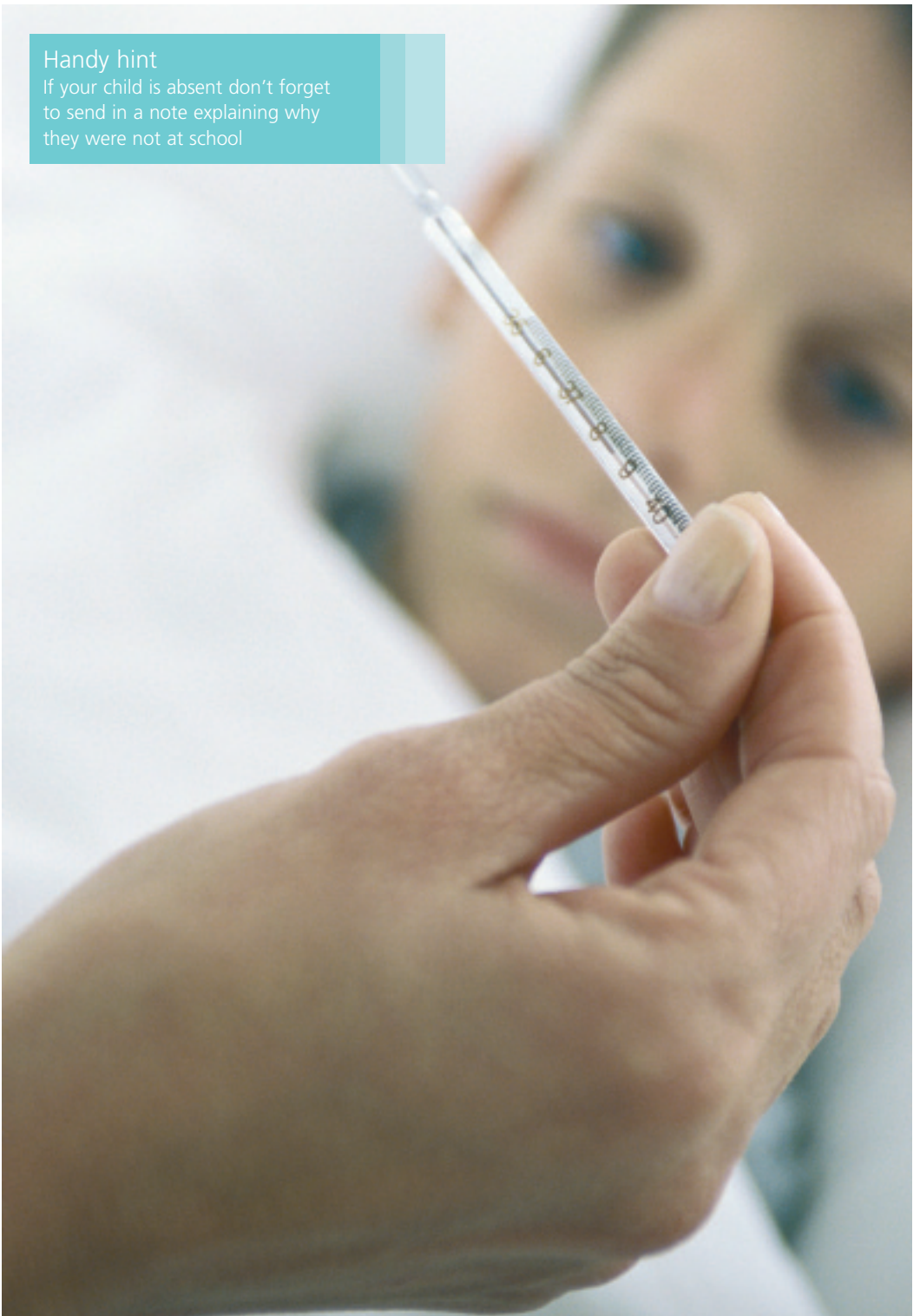
Value what your child learns

Your child is at the beginning stages of their learning and they need encouragement to become a confident learner. They'll probably show you a lot of their work – it might be a scribble, which is actually their attempt at writing their name or a blob of paint, which is a drawing of you. Valuing what they do – whether it's praising them over their artwork or congratulating them on learning to write their name – will lead to your child thriving at school and in life.



Handy hint

If your child is absent don't forget to send in a note explaining why they were not at school



Bullying

All parents want reassurance that their child is not going to be bullied, or bully others. It's an issue that your school takes seriously. All schools have anti-bullying strategies, copies of which are available at the school office.

If you are concerned about something in relation to your child and school, or you have an issue that you need to address, please speak to your child's teacher. An occasional quick word in the morning before school for a minor concern is a good idea. But for a longer interview, you will need to organise a suitable time.

If there is a bigger issue or, you believe that the original problem was not solved, please speak to the principal. Often issues can be resolved quickly and the teacher and/or principal will know how to deal with it. The sooner the issue is raised, the sooner it can be sorted out.

Absences

It's easy to miss your child's company, especially if they have been your constant companion over the past five years. Please don't keep your child away from school unnecessarily. It just makes it harder for them to keep up with lessons and breaks their routine of learning. This can lead to your child losing confidence.

If your child is absent, a written note needs to be provided. In special cases, telephone calls may be acceptable.

Infectious diseases

Some illnesses your child may come down with will be infectious. To prevent these infections spreading to other students, please see your doctor and keep your child at home for the advised time.

A handful of typical infections:

- Chicken pox – a slight fever, runny nose and a rash that begins as raised pink spots that blister and scab
- Measles – fever, tiredness, runny nose, cough and sore red eyes for a few days, followed by a red blotchy rash that starts on the face and spreads down the body and lasts 4 to 7 days
- Conjunctivitis – the eye feels scratchy, is red and may water. Eye lids may stick together during sleep
- Impetigo (school sores) – small red spots change into blisters that fill with pus and become crusted; usually on the face, hands or scalp
- Ringworm – small scaly patch on the skin surrounded by a pink ring

For further information about infectious diseases that may affect your child, contact NSW Health on 9391 9000 or go to: www.health.nsw.gov.au

Head lice

Please don't be alarmed if an outbreak of head lice occurs at your school. Head lice can be very annoying but thankfully they will not harm your child's health and they have no bearing on a child's personal hygiene.

The best thing you can do is help to manage head lice by

- regularly checking your child's hair
- keeping long hair tied back or braided
- keeping a fine-toothed comb in the bathroom and encouraging your family to use it when they wash their hair
- daily combing with a white hair conditioner using a fine tooth comb to get rid of head lice and their eggs (nits)



Be an active member of your school community

Getting involved in the school community will help your child to settle in to school life.

Children feel better about school when they see their parents getting to know their teacher and talking with them. Having regular contact with your child's school will help to build a relationship to support your child's learning. A positive home/school relationship also better allows your child's needs to be addressed.

Parents make many satisfying and long-lasting friendships through school life because there is a common bond of children starting school.

Being involved in the school community also makes it easier to find out information on where particular resources may be found, sharing handy hints and helping your child to look forward to starting school.

Your school can tell you more about local programs or organisations you can join.

Some of the ways to get involved in your school community include

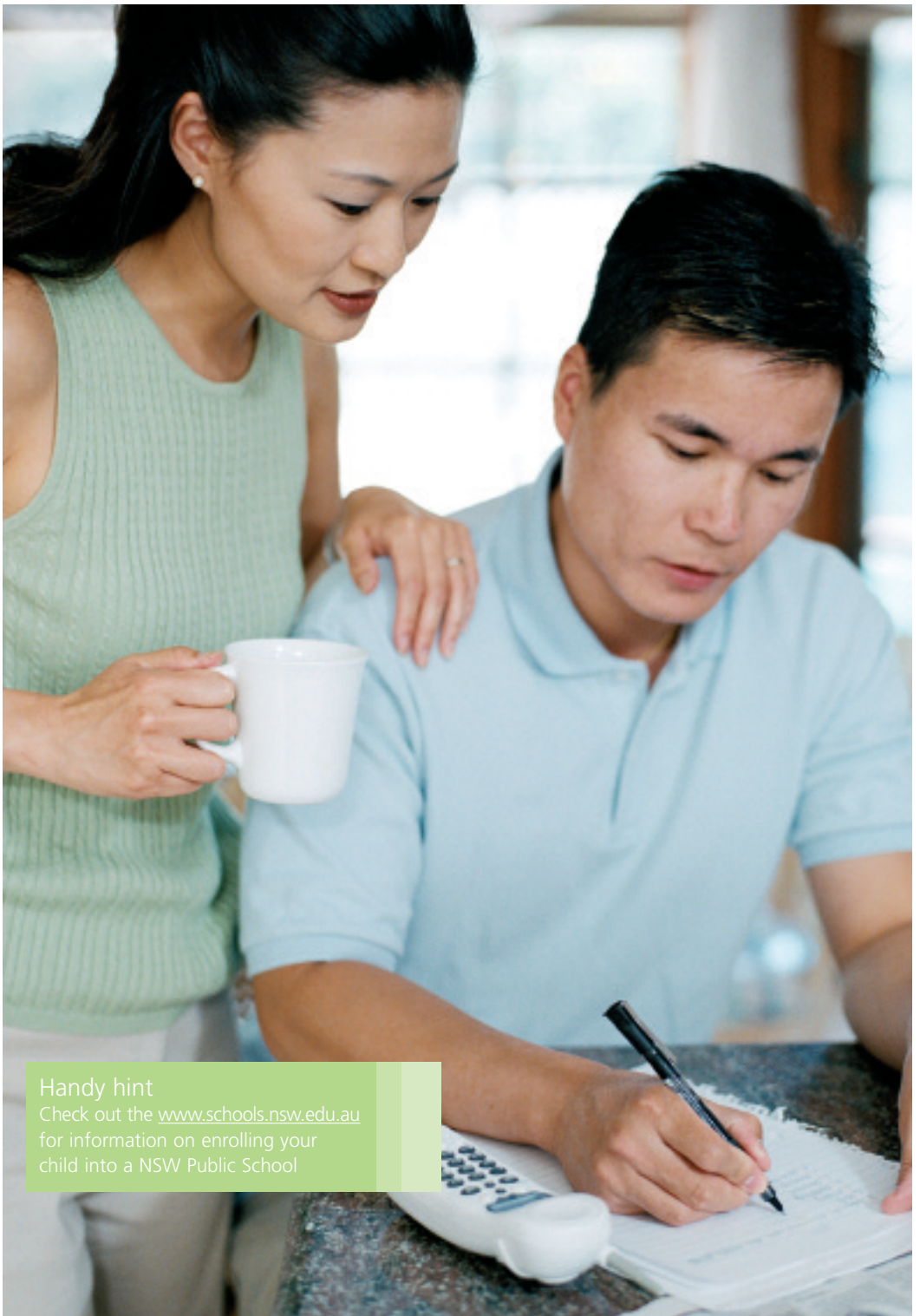
- joining classroom programs e.g. reading, maths groups
- helping out in the school canteen or on sports days
- joining school excursions
- getting involved in fundraising activities
- participating on a school committee

Organisations you may be interested in joining include

- your school's Parents and Citizens Association
- the School Council
- the Aboriginal Education Consultative Group

My notes

A series of horizontal dotted lines for writing notes.



Handy hint

Check out the www.schools.nsw.edu.au for information on enrolling your child into a NSW Public School

www.schools.nsw.gov.au

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