Villagespeak
A brief history……

Village School began in 1982 in a small wooden house, on land owned by Penguin Books in Ringwood. The founding principal, Carol Glover wanted to provide a progressive, independent primary school with class sizes small enough to allow meaningful interactions between children and teachers. The aim was to provide a relaxed yet stimulating learning environment that would allow children to develop as confident and competent individuals.

In 1985 the school moved to its present site in Holloway Road, Croydon North and continued to follow these main aims. The larger space allowed for the development of the Village Farm and for the Brushy Creek Wetlands.

The school continues to evolve, while remaining true to its original aims. Over the years we have developed our own traditions and terminology that seem perfectly logical to the old timers, but a trifle confusing to the newer parents. We hope this booklet will provide some answers to your questions and give a little insight into the nature of our community.

**Amphitheatre**

Many years ago, one of our parents, Carol Watters, saw some left over mounds of dirt and visualised an amphitheatre! The result is the amphitheatre, which in good weather can provide a performance area. It is also a good play area lending itself to impromptu performances and other games. It has recently acquired a flagpole, courtesy of the government and is therefore also a proper site for any formal ceremonies we may wish to conduct.
Animals
Yes there are a few…. We believe the presence of animals is essential to a primary child’s existence. Children are naturally inquisitive and relate well to all of the animals on site, whether they are nursing a guinea pig or a chook, or patting the horses and feeding the goats. Caring for living creatures is a way of becoming responsible for others, a way of developing a less self-centred approach to living. We wish to foster this caring which will hopefully extend towards all living creatures and the natural living environments on our planet. We want to empower our students to make a difference and to understand that they can.

Animal Duty
The older two groups in the school are mainly responsible for the welfare of the animals. They are expected to be at school by 8:45am to tend to the goats, sheep, chickens, ducks and horses. Each day the horses, goats and sheep are put out on tether for feeding. The children are responsible for keeping them watered and then at 3:00pm, returning them to their enclosures and ensuring they have enough food and water. Usually this duty takes approximately 15 minutes at each end of the day. Animal clean-up is scheduled for one half hour per week.

Board
The school is governed by the Village School Board, which is made up of teachers, Business Manager, Principal and parents. All decisions, except those relating to curriculum, are made here. Board elections are held at the Annual General Meeting and members serve a term of at least two years. Parents are welcome to attend any of the Board meetings and the meeting dates are published in the newsletter. If you inform the school office in good time of your intention to discuss a special issue, we will adjust the agenda so that you don’t have a long wait.

Break
Our term for recess. We have a half hour break in the morning and then an hour or lunch break. Currently in 2014, breaks are at 10:30am to 11:00am every morning and 12:30pm to 1:30pm for lunch except on Thursday where break is at 10:15 am – 10:45am and lunch is from 1:00pm -2:00pm.
Brushy Creek Wetlands

This was the name given by an enthusiastic group of parents sometime in the nineties, to the wetland area to the left of the drive. This group was responsible for getting grants to develop other billabongs on the land between our property and the creek and the area is still a good resource for environmental science activities.

Camps

There are usually two camps each year and one sleepover. The school sleepover takes place at the end of Term 2. At the beginning of term 3 our first camp is the Performance Camp held up at Mt Evelyn and its primary purpose is to rehearse and refine our performance. All children are expected to attend. Those who still feel too unsure to sleep over are delivered for the day sessions and picked up after tea in the evening. It takes place over two nights and three days. The end of year camp is in the middle of term 4, and usually involves the Whole School. All our camps and sleepovers are open to as many of our younger students who wish to attend. Parents must understand that they might get a call to fetch their child should s/he change their mind about staying. We always negotiate for a few parents to attend camp as extra help for the staff. These parents will usually not mix with their child’s group so that their child’s independence is not compromised.

Carrying

It is important that a child who is ready for school be treated as such. Please refrain from carrying your child’s bag and/or your child to and from the classroom. Our school ethos is about developing independent learners and we would like to encourage parents to reinforce these aims. Obviously when your child is sick this may not apply.
**Chief Ranger**

During animal duties one child is appointed as the Chief Ranger and given the responsibility of directing others to complete the various tasks. This responsibility includes checking the welfare and safety of the animals; liaising with the appropriate adult when food, hay or straw is needed and locking up and returning the keys to one of the teachers.

**Complaints**

In the situation where a child has a complaint against another child s/he is encouraged to speak directly to that person and attempt to deal with it. In the case of a young child or in a situation where emotions are high the child is expected to get the help of a teacher to assist them in resolving the issue and coming to a resolution that is acceptable to all.

Children receive modelling from teachers as to the best way to pose questions in a way that is not confronting and will receive the best response from the other person. They are shown how to uncover and understand the reasons behind their own actions and that of the other person/s. In the case of disputed facts/impressions other students will be called on to give their first hand observations. At times, 'witness statements' may need to be taken in order to facilitate a mutually acceptable outcome.

Where a child has a complaint against a teacher they are again encouraged to take that complaint to the teacher in question but it is understood that they may need support from a friend or another teacher in order to do this. Again they are encouraged to explain their feelings and understandings and to ask questions to clarify the situation. A mutually satisfactory resolution must be reached to allow relationships to be restored. Again other students might be needed to give their insights and another teacher, or student, independent of the situation might be needed to be an impartial Chair.

**Complaints**

If a parent has a complaint against a teacher s/he is expected to take the complaint directly to the teacher concerned and discuss calmly. If this discussion is not fruitful the complaint must be taken to the Principal where a meeting will be held and minutes taken. If this meeting does not reach an acceptable resolution the Chair of Village School Board will be called on to read the minutes and chair a further meeting. If this meeting does not conclude to the satisfaction of all
parties then help will be sought from ISV as independent mediators. At no time will either party in any of the above situations be victimised or discriminated against and all parties to the dispute will be heard fairly and awarded equal time. In the situation where facts are disputed every effort will be made to substantiate claims of facts and actions by interviewing witnesses or other persons who are aware of the situation first hand. All persons will be given reasonable time to prepare for the meetings and extra time will be awarded if requested.

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<th>Consequences</th>
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<td>Natural consequences for actions are given whenever possible. We try not to have arbitrary detentions as a form of punishment. If a child is behaving inappropriately when mixing socially during breaks and lunches, then the natural consequence is to remove the child from that situation for a period of time. Initially that may mean waiting in the library, sitting on the veranda or walking around with the duty teacher. However sometimes children are given separate lunch and break times. In terms of careless or wilful behaviour that might result in something breaking, then the children are expected to pay for the damages (within reason).</td>
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<tr>
<th>Cubbies</th>
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<td>These are built at various times by the students and are a tremendous medium for learning about social interaction, bartering, wheeling and dealing, leadership, self assertion and friendship.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Emu Bob</th>
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<td>This is our term for picking up rubbish. Every so often we call an emu bob, particularly when we have visitors arriving! See ‘waste management’.</td>
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<th>Excursions</th>
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<td>Parents are given an indemnity form to sign at the beginning of the school year. If this is not signed we are not able to take your child on any excursion. We try to include as many excursions as possible as part of our aim to provide a stimulating learning environment. We endeavour to forewarn parents about most of these, however, there are times when a small ‘mini-excursion’ may take place e.g. big friends walking with little friends to a local playground or one teacher or parent taking a small group of children to the local shops to shop for a cooking activity. These excursions may happen spontaneously in response to</td>
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some activity that may be happening in the classroom and prior notice is not possible. We regard this freedom and flexibility as an added bonus to the rich and varied educational experiences we offer.

**Fire and Other Emergencies**

Village School is registered as a school which is designated to close on days of ‘Code Red’ bush fire warnings. For lesser emergencies we have an Emergency Management Plan which allows us to evacuate our site in an orderly manner. We have regular ‘drills’ to make sure that we can carry out an evacuation quickly and safely.

**Gazebo**

This gazebo was built as our twenty first birthday present and many past and present parents donated money to help this construction take place. Have a look around the inside beams to see the commemoration plaques. It now provides a shaded area for lunches, for games and a much needed shelter for children while they are waiting for after school pick ups. At the end of the day children are required to play close to the gazebo so that they are easily accessible to parents and the duty teacher, should a message come through for them.

**Gumboots**

These are really an *essential* item for Village kids. For more than half the year our playground has many wet, muddy areas and if you’re in Prep it is your duty to find every single one of them! The older children need them to enter the pony paddocks during winter, where any other shoes are ruined! Please supply a named pair of gumboots at the beginning of each year and also a rain jacket that can stay at school.

**Spare Clothes**

Following on from gumboots, it is essential for all students to have a complete set of spare clothes at school ready to be changed into after playing in or falling into muddy puddles.
Head Lice

Nits, bugs... a rose by any other name etc. They seem to be a fact of life around primary school children. Firstly don’t panic. We try to take a very casual approach with the children so that they don’t feel labelled or excluded. We ring the parents if they are discovered at school and if possible the parents are asked to come and collect students and treat them straight away. We put notes in the newsletter or use the Homegroup Reps to disseminate the information and there are now a variety of remedies available. One of the main things to remember is to treat them again a week later, even if you think you removed everything the first time. Talk to your teachers or other parents if you need advice about treatment.

Helmets

We supply helmets for horse riding; but if children bring bikes, skateboards, roller blades, scooters or any other ride-on vehicles with wheels we expect them to bring their own helmet from home. Otherwise they will not be permitted to use them in the school grounds. (Knee, wrist and elbow pads are also required for skateboards and roller blades).

Homegroups

This is our term for classes. There are four homegroups formed roughly in an ascending order of age from Preps through to Year Six. As there are usually at least two grade levels within any one homegroup we do not refer to grades at all, calling the group by the teacher’s name, or any other name the group might like to call itself. We group children according to their social needs rather than their academic needs as we address the latter individually, and there are always a variety of skill levels within one group.

Horse Riding

This is a privilege that few primary school children get to experience within their school community. Formal horse riding lessons are provided for each group for one term as part of our Outdoor Education Program. The safety of the children is paramount and there is a lot of attention given to handling and leading the horses as well as care of the horses and the riding equipment. Most lessons involve one child leading while another is on horseback. Extra lessons are available at a very reasonable cost either during lunchtime or after school.
Joint Meeting
This refers to a combined meeting between the two older groups and the two younger groups in the school, which takes place once a week to talk specifically about any issues with the animal program and any that are of school significance. The older children run a small business (see VIPP) by selling eggs and horse poo and they need to make decisions about how this money is spent. It is also a chance to discuss any other social issues between the older children.

Medication
Generally speaking if a child needs to be on medication for a temporary illness, it is best to keep them at home until they are well again. In situations where ongoing medication is required it should be delivered to the office and dispensed from there. The enrolment document contains a form to fill in regarding any allergies and other special conditions and also to give permission to staff to administer any creams or paracetamol if they are required.

Meeting
Each group starts the day with a meeting chaired by one of the children. At the outset this sets the tone of empowering the children; allowing them to share their news and take part in decision-making and problem solving. The older children also use agendas and take minutes.

Membership
All parents and employees are automatically members of the Village School Incorporated Association and a nominal fee is added to your first term's fees each year to cover this.

Mistakes
We love them! Well, we're happy to see the children making them, because that's how they learn. We try to encourage children to have a go and then when something doesn't work, to try another way. We hope to provide a learning environment where children feel safe to make mistakes and learn from them.

Naming Clothing
We wish! For some reason we have a lot of children who quickly forget to recognise their own clothing once it has been left somewhere for more than half a day. It's probably a recognised childhood syndrome but the result is an awful lot of very good clothing going to the Op Shop at the end of each term. Please ensure you name all their clothing to help us reunite your children with their own clothing and check the lost property tub, kept in the gazebo, regularly.
**Newsletter**
A newsletter is produced weekly and sent out via email. It contains a list of important dates for upcoming events. The teachers are encouraged to write about their homegroup’s activities and the children are encouraged to submit some of their writing and drawings. This is also a chance for parents to talk about their special meetings and parent run events and it also allows parents to advertise their own businesses. Any outside advertising is charged or just put on the office noticeboard.

**Parent Directory**
Each year we send out a directory of the details of all the families in the school. The enrolment document includes a space for you to sign to give permission for your family’s details to be included. This directory also contains class lists, children’s birthdays and the calendar for the year.

**Parent Involvement**
We love it! One of the nice things about our small community is the way parents share their various skills with the children. The other nice thing is the wonderful things the working bees produce over various weekends.

**Parent/Teacher Interviews**
See reports

**Parking**
You may have noticed that all cars reverse into our school parking bays as a safety feature. It is particularly helpful at the end of the day when most of our parents arrive and leave within a fifteen-minute period. Students are expected to stay within sight of the duty teacher and around the gazebo at this time.
Parties

Although there is certainly no school policy about these, we ask that parents be aware of the effect of giving out birthday invitations at school when only some of the children may be invited. Children suffer dreadfully when they feel exclusion of any form and it is particularly hurtful if you are the only girl, or boy not invited. If you plan to give your child a small party, please check that by inviting only a specific number you are not excluding just one other boy or girl.

Performing

This is something the children do extremely well because it is part of our school culture to do so. The meetings start the process by helping the children to feel confident to speak out in front of others. Our performing arts program is designed to be as much fun as possible so that there is an ongoing enthusiasm for singing, dancing and play acting. Each year there is a Whole School Performance which involves making and building props, sets, costumes, tickets and programs, and then hiring a theatre for the performance. Every child and most parents become involved in this event. There is also an End of Year Performance where each group performs items and graduates are given their certificates.

Poo Pick Up

One of the more onerous duties the older children need to perform. Supplied with rubber gloves they pick up horse manure and bag it. It is then sold to help raise money for the ongoing animal programs needs. This happens during the weekly animal clean up.

Real Life Learning

If there’s a choice between ‘reading about it’ and ‘doing it’ we choose the latter. It may be collecting 100 bottle tops to see how big a hundred is; building a model to demonstrate how flight works; cutting up a bull’s eye to discover how we see or visiting a plant nursery to research for setting up a garden. We encourage family members and the wider community to visit us to share experiences or teach us skills, and we regularly work with brooms, spades and rakes both with the animal program and in the gardens.
Reports

Twice a year we have formal meetings with parents, and sometimes students, to discuss progress - academic and social - and set goals for the future. Twice yearly we use tests which give results against National Benchmarks and also diagnostic tests to aid in planning. Teachers write comprehensive reports twice yearly about student experiences and their achievements at school. Teachers are also available for informal meetings and chats with parents as and when necessary or desirable.

Responsibility

We're very fond of this word. We try to foster children taking responsibility for their belongings, their behaviour and their learning. It is an open-ended experience with many possible outcomes and lots of false starts. Our aim is to engender a sense of self-reliance and the confidence to make decisions and then take the responsibility for doing so.

The Shack

This is a weatherboard bungalow which is used as a tack room for the horse riding gear and is intended to be further utilised as a Pioneer Cottage. It is also used at times for student activities when no other space is available.

The Spider

This is our wonderful climbing apparatus which can become the rigging of a pirate ship, a space vehicle or anything our students want it to be. Some make it to the top where the view is wonderful and others play at the lower levels.

Signing in

All visitors have to sign in on arrival at the office so that we are aware of who is on our site and any one time. Parents also need to sign in if they are staying are on school grounds for any other reason other than dropping off or picking up their children. If an evacuation becomes necessary for whatever reason, we must be able to account for all our parents on site.

Sleepover

At the end of the second term we have a Whole School Sleepover. We do this to help young children who may not have experienced many nights away from home to prepare for camps, either in the same year or the following year. It is also a great social event for the children, with barbecue tea, disco and/or talent quest and videos before bed. The children make cubbies with sheets etc in the classrooms and wake up to a very lazy start to the last day of term.
**Special Lunches**

Thanks to the parents, the children are provided with a cooked lunch once a week. This can be paid upfront for the term or weekly at $4.00. Paying upfront per term entitled you to a small discount. Term amounts are printed in the newsletter at the beginning of each term.

It is supplied as a service, not as a fundraiser and is currently on Thursday but may change from year to year.

**Sunhats**

A suitable sunhat (not a cap) must be supplied for your child for terms one and four, when the wearing of hats is mandatory while outside. Children who do not have a sunhat will be asked to stay indoors. Village School hats are purchased in bulk once a year and can be ordered at that time, and ones left over may be purchased from the office during the year.

**Sunscreen**

There is a clause in the indemnity form that allows parents to decide whether or not the teachers can supply or apply sunscreen to your child. We encourage parents to send sunscreen with their children but there is always some available in the first aid room.

**V.I.P.P.**

Very Important Poo and Products is the business run by the children. The horse poo and the chickens’ eggs are the main source of income but from time to time they may grow and sell vegetables, or a parent may donate a product for the children to sell. The proceeds go to replenishing the poo bags, buying tools and other equipment for the animal program. Occasionally when the bank balance gets high enough they may spend it on some type of equipment for school, usually sports equipment.

**Village Hall**

Our Multipurpose Hall which was obtained with the help of the BER is used for Whole School Meetings, music lessons, Freeform, performance, sport and anything else that requires a big space.
Waste Management
As well as doing our animal welfare jobs at the end of the day, students attend to our waste management by emptying the bins into which our waste has been deposited. We sort our waste into paper, rubbish, recyclables and food scraps. The animals get the food scraps and the other bins are taken to the relevant place to be emptied.

Weekend Animal Duty
The animals rely on the kindness of parents to offer their services on the weekends and over the holidays. If most parents can do this then it may only be once or twice a year. It can be quite a pleasant weekend outing to share with your children and new parents are always given a ‘training session’ by a more experienced parent. Any chicken eggs found are yours to keep.

Whole School Meeting
This is held every Wednesday morning at 9:00am and is a chance for all students to speak about and/or show what they have been doing, to raise issues affecting the whole school, to name new animals and for teachers to raise issues in a whole school forum. These meetings are run by the older students.

Whole School Meeting
Not to be confused with’ Whole School Meeting’, despite there being no obvious difference, except that it is advertised in the newsletter and is held out of school hours for parents and teachers. Sometimes this is followed by separate homegroup meetings although these meetings can also be held straight after school at 3:30pm. Sometimes there are guest speakers; often we talk about camps or other aspects of Village life, and we tend to have one at the end of the year where we invite past students to talk about life after Village School.

Whole school Event
We usually have one of these each term and involve the whole family. Often the theme of them has to do with an area of study for the term, like the Bush Dance. Others like Science Night or family Maths Nights are just for fun.
Working with Children Checks

We love having parents come into the room to work with our students, join us on excursions and come with us on Camps. For the ongoing safety of us all we insist that, in order to be involved in all these things, parents obtain a WWCC (Working with Children Check). Application forms are available online at www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au