



# Advertising

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Help for non-English speakers

If you need help to understand the information in this policy, please contact [Xiaomei Lin on 9801 7450

## Policy

This policy sets out requirements for Victorian government schools regarding advertising, including advertising undertaken by the school, as well as advertising by third parties on school sites and in school publications.

## Summary

- Schools and school councils may enter advertising arrangements in which a third party promotes the school, or a school service, activity, or initiative.
- Schools are required to pay for advertising from their own budget and follow the [Procurement – Schools Policy](#).
- Schools and school councils may also agree to a third-party advertising on school sites such as billboards or commercial signage, or in school publications such as newsletters.
- Any advertising that is displayed on school grounds or in school publications must be appropriate – refer to the section on appropriate advertising.
- Advertising on school grounds must also be for the purposes of promoting educational, recreational, sporting, or cultural activities for students, the local community, or young persons.
- The promotion of government programs or initiatives is not considered advertising.

## Details

Schools and school councils may enter advertising arrangements in which a third party promotes the school, or a school service, activity, or initiative.

Schools and school councils may also agree to a third-party advertising on school sites such as billboards or commercial signage, or in school publications such as newsletters.

Schools and school councils must follow this policy when engaging in any advertising arrangement.

Difference between advertising and sponsorship

Advertising and sponsorship are different.

Advertising

Advertising is typically an arrangement where an organisation or individual (the advertiser) purchases public space from another organisation (the publisher) for an agreed price to advertise their product or service and there are no additional benefits to the publisher. For example, a company pays a school to buy space in a newsletter or magazine or a billboard to advertise their services to the school community, or the school pays a company to advertise the school to prospective students and families. The only benefit to the publisher is usually the payment received from the advertiser for advertising the product or service (noting that payment can be waived or in kind).

Advertising may be in the form of print, radio, television, outdoor, online, and other digital platforms.

The promotion of government programs or initiatives is not considered advertising.

### **Sponsorship**

Sponsorship is typically where an organisation (the sponsor) supports another organisation's activities (such as an event or upgraded facilities) through the provision of money, goods, or services in exchange for the promotion of the sponsor's goods, services or activities (such as through logo placement, naming rights or public acknowledgement of the support received from the sponsor). For example, a local bakery supports a school's fete by providing free or reduced-price baked goods for the school to sell at a food stall, in exchange for their logo being placed on the school's advertising for the fete, alongside a sentence thanking the bakery for their contribution.

For sponsorship arrangements, schools must follow the department's policy on school sponsorship: [Sponsorship Policy](#).

### **Advertising undertaken by the school**

Schools are best placed to make decisions about their advertising requirements. When thinking about promoting the school, or school-related activities and initiatives, schools must:

- consider the best way to promote the school, via advertising or sponsorship.
- consider whether the advertising opportunity is an appropriate use of public funds and will achieve value for money.
- produce a communications plan that details the audience, budget, advertising types, timing and how the school will evaluate if the advertising was successful – if needed, senior education improvement leaders (SEILs) can provide advice to principals to support planning.
- identify the target audience/families and their needs, including how they prefer to communicate and/or receive information – this will help to decide which media to use such as, social, and digital media, local newspapers, radio, TV, billboards, signs, newsletters, or Facebook and Google
- think about combining social and digital advertising with traditional advertising, such as local papers, to increase exposure in the community.
- when contacting the local newspaper (or any advertising partner), ask for a readership profile and rate card, which shows the prices of advertisements – the rate card is a starting point for price negotiations.

Note: Schools must follow the [Procurement – Schools Policy](#) to purchase advertising.

## Effective advertising

Effective advertising needs to be short and succinct: in general, shorter is better. Think about whether the audience will grasp the message in the first 3 seconds. This may seem short, but it is how much time people take to make decisions about whether something they are seeing or hearing is relevant.

It is important to understand the audience, such as where they live and what media they use, before deciding where to advertise. What is the audience most likely to see or encounter in their day-to-day lives?

Content should be summarised in no more than three short points. Keep it simple: concentrate on communicating what is the problem or issue you are addressing and why will people benefit if they do what you suggest.

Principals must assess the success of the advertisement based on the original objective and think about the return on investment. This could include the number of enquiries and enrolments that resulted from the advertising.

The department's Communications Division can support SEILs with advice on effective advertising.

## Community involvement

Schools may have parents or carers who know about advertising, or even have access to appropriate advertising mediums. Try to involve the school community and leverage their skills to minimise advertising costs.

Avoid situations where the involvement of individuals within the school community would create an actual, potential or perceived conflict of interest – refer to [Conflict of Interest](#).

### Informing staff of advertising

Principals are encouraged to inform staff of advertising before it is published to prepare them for questions from parents and the local community. It may also help to provide staff with a list of frequently asked questions.

### Third party advertising on school sites or in school publications

Under the [Education and Training Reform Act 2006 \(Vic\)](#) (the Act), school councils have the power to:

- enter into licence arrangements with third parties to install advertising billboards or signage on school land subject to [Ministerial Order 1280 \(DOCX\)](#)
- enter into agreements for paid and unpaid advertising in their publications – for example, websites, newsletters, social media, and student planners/diaries.

## Appropriate content

Before entering into an advertising agreement with a third party, school councils should consider the values and views of the school community, and the type of organisation and services promoted through the advertisement, in accordance with [Ministerial Order 1280 \(DOCX\)](#).

The content of all third-party advertisements on school sites or in school publications:

- must be appropriate for children (aged 0 to 18 years)
- must not depict nudity, sex, violence, horror or use crude language.
- must not have as their objective the promotion of any political party or member of parliament (refer to political advertising below)
- must not involve tobacco companies, gaming venues or companies selling or promoting alcohol.
- must not include a direct endorsement by the school, school council or the department of the product, service, or organisation – for example, Railway Primary School supports Joe's Butchers for quality meat.

## Political advertising

Schools and school councils must not enter into an advertising agreement if the content could be perceived to promote any political party, candidate, or issue (including sitting members of parliament).

This includes any advertising by a member of parliament (either government or non-government), that displays the name, logo, slogan, image or branding of a political party or that names, portrays or promotes a member of parliament in a manner regarded as excessive or gratuitous.

This always applies, not only during the caretaker period. For information about the promotion of party political materials when a school premises is used as polling places for elections, refer to [Elections – Schools as Voting Centres and Polling Places](#) and [Political Activities](#)).

If a member of a political party or member of parliament asks to advertise content in a school publication, contact the department's Integrity Assurance and Executive Services Division for advice at email: [det.portfolio.services@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:det.portfolio.services@education.vic.gov.au)

As mentioned above, the promotion of government programs or initiatives is not considered advertising but when in doubt, contact the department's Integrity Assurance and Executive Services Division for advice.

### Advertising in school publications

Before agreeing to paid or unpaid advertising in a school publication, schools and school councils must ensure:

- the advertisement contains only appropriate content (refer to the section above on appropriate content)
- any actual, potential or perceived conflict of interest identified is avoided, or appropriately declared and managed (refer to [Conflict of Interest](#) (for department employees) and [School Council – Conduct and Conflict of Interest](#)).

### Advertising on school sites

Under the [Education and Training Reform Act 2006 \(Vic\)](#) (the Act), school councils have the power to enter into licence arrangements with third parties to install advertising billboards or signage on school land.

To comply with the Act, the advertising on school land must be for the purposes of educational, recreational, sporting, or cultural activities for students, the local community, or young persons.

School councils must assess the purpose of advertising signage on school land on a case-by-case basis to ensure it is acceptable and permitted under the Act. Principals are encouraged to seek advice from the department's Legal Division if needed.

Advertising signs are exempt from building permits if they are:

- set back less than 3 metres from the street and their height is not more than one metre above ground level, or
- set back three metres or more from the street, and their height is not more than eight metres above ground level and are not larger than 6 square metres in total display area.

School councils must consult with local councils before installing signs or billboards outside of these specifications, as they will have to comply with local council laws and planning requirements.

### Structural requirements for advertising on school sites

The safety of staff and students is paramount when installing billboards on school sites. Schools must ensure that installed billboards and signs, and the buildings or fences they are fixed to, are structurally adequate.

## **Schools must follow appropriate best practice measures including:**

- ensuring billboards and signs are covered by the licensee's public liability and other relevant insurance.
- making sure the size of billboards or signs is not disproportionate to the size of the school site.
- considering the proximity of billboards and signs to neighbouring dwellings (consulting with neighbours where appropriate).

Before starting work, schools must carefully examine records for onsite services (including permits) to ensure requirements are met.

Approval is required from the manager of the Victorian School Building Authority's Property Management Unit at [vsba.property@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:vsba.property@education.vic.gov.au) before purchasing or installing electronic billboards (being a billboard that requires electricity).

## **Contacts**

For advice on planning to advertise your school or a school service, activity or initiative contact your senior education improvement leader.

For general advertising advice, contact the Communications Division via email: [portfolio.comms@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:portfolio.comms@education.vic.gov.au)

For questions about advertising requests from a political party or election candidate contact Integrity Assurance and Executive Services Division email: [det.portfolio.services@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:det.portfolio.services@education.vic.gov.au)

## **Related policies**

- [Code of Conduct](#)
- [Community Use of Schools](#)
- [Conflict of Interest](#)
- [Procurement – Schools](#)
- [School Communications Toolkit](#)
- [School Council – Conduct and Conflict of Interest](#)
- [Sponsorship](#)

## **Relevant legislation**

- [Education and Training Reform Act 2006 \(Vic\)](#)
- [Ministerial Order 1280 \(DOCX\)](#)

## **Evaluation**

This policy will be reviewed in accordance with the school's three-year review cycle.

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Last ratified by School Council in February 2026