

Griffin family copes well despite morning rush hour



SCHOOL'S IN: Mother, Bridget, is the teacher for all the Griffin family's home-schooled children. James (left), John, Rachel and Gabrielle get on with lessons with their mother's help.

By **RICHARD JAGO**

THE recent story of the Griffins - the Mansfield family with 11 children - has prompted some people in town to ask how on earth the parents manage to cope, so the Mansfield Courier decided to find out.

When visited last week, home school was in full swing, with the smaller children gathered around the teacher (mother, Bridget) and the older children working alone in their rooms.

Father, Brendan, who works as a linesman with SP Ausnet - was quietly and expertly carrying around new baby, Anne-Marie, who at this stage was a bit too young for school.

The morning rush hour seemed a good place to start the interview, so we asked how a family of 13 managed with only two bathrooms.

"People get up at different times, so the demand is staggered," Mr Griffin explained.

"Also the kids help themselves at breakfast - they learn from each other and they're taught to be helpful.

"We start training them early - they learn there's no free rides here."

Mrs Griffin said a big advantage was that with home schooling there was no need to meet buses, go to parent-teacher interviews, or collect kids from different places at different times.

She explained school started at 9am and the children were used to settling down and getting on with their work.

The Griffins are registered with the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority, the regulatory board for all home schoolers in the state.

There are textbooks available for home schoolers, and as with all education, what has to be learned builds on what has already been learned.

"And school is not necessary for

socialisation," Mrs Griffin said.

"Our experience is there are very few home-schooled kids who are socially awkward.

"And one other thing is there's not likely to be a scandal if the teacher is caught kissing the principal either," Mrs Griffin said.

So far so good, but what about practical matters like washing?

"That's no drama either," she explained, "I just do a couple of loads about every other day."

Mr Griffin pointed out it was very much easier to have a large family now than, say, 100 years ago.

"There's hot water on tap, we don't have to chop wood, milk the cow or catch the horse to go into town," he said.

Organisationally, the family is a model operation.

There is a work roster for the children and a taxi roster for Dad, who has to shuffle kids around to music, ballet, football and part-time jobs just like any other father.