

DAYLESFORD DHARMA SCHOOL COMMUNITY HANDBOOK





"The emphasis of this school is to teach the noble qualities of loving-kindness and universal responsibility. We are not trying to change these children, but to awaken and nurture their own deepest qualities – their innate sense of loving-kindness and compassion and their own natural tendency towards positive behaviour."

Geshe Konchok Tsering School Founder

Welcome to the Daylesford Dharma School Community!

We aim to provide an education based on kindness and compassion, and to form positive and supportive partnerships with all families. This handbook provides some important information on how we work together and what our expectations are of staff, students and parents.

Our school is based on Buddhist philosophy and therefore underpins all that we do.

Overarching principles of universal responsibility, interdependence and the development of wisdom and compassion serve to hold our community. These principles relate to our thoughts and actions of body, speech, and mind. We invite our school community to support these principles as a foundational and common point of focus in all of our actions and interactions.

Our expectations of actions can be best summed up by our Five Precepts.

The Five Precepts

The Five Precepts are an expression of the Buddha's teachings and provide us with a guide on how to think, speak and act in a kind and compassionate manner towards ourselves and to those around us.

The Five Precepts are:



Reverence for Life

We are committed to protecting people, animals, plants and minerals from harm. We care for them in a way that we would like to be cared for ourselves. We respect all life.

Understanding the delicate balance of our eco-system and avoiding upsetting this, as much as possible, is an important practice.

Our focus on vegetarian/vegan foods aims to teach children that we are able to make choices to reduce our impact on other beings, while still maintaining a healthy and nourishing diet.

In our younger children, reverence for life is often demonstrated in practical ways, such as being mindful of little creatures and demonstrating a desire to care for and protect them. As children develop in their understanding, then we start to see more intentional and informed choices, such as making an independent choice to follow a vegetarian diet, to actively engage in the protection of animals, or to fight for to protect and preserve the natural environment. In these early years we place great importance on learning to love the fascinating living world we are part of. As children move into the older grades, we begin to include a focus on what we can do to protect life for all.

Deep Listening and Loving Speech

We listen deeply and use mindful speech. We speak truthfully, using words that inspire confidence, joy and hope. We speak and listen in a way that can help ourselves and others.

For our younger children, they are often developing their vocabulary around loving speech, and also at times wanting to experiment with cause and effect through their language. It is not uncommon for our younger children to play with words such as bum and poo, and to test for how these words are received by their peers and also by adults. We focus our teachings upon redirecting and helping children develop a vocabulary of kind and loving words, and provide opportunities to practice this language through activities such as setting intentions and participating in sharing circles.



In our older children, use of language starts to become more nuanced, and we work to teach them compassionate communication, and to develop strategies to resolve differences in peaceful and harmonious ways.

Children are supported to understand that to speak the truth is to follow the path of righteous behaviour, and to have the courage to speak openly and honestly, without fear of punishment.

Body Responsibility

We are respectful of our bodies and the bodies of others. We are committed to learning appropriate ways to take care of our energy and cultivate loving kindness, compassion, joy and inclusiveness.

We teach children strategies for caring for their bodies and minds in harmony with each, such as recognising where in their bodies they feel emotions, practising breath work, learning how to transform emotions.

We teach children to shape their own personal body bubble, and to enter into other's bubbles only with permission and in a respectful manner.

We guide children to understand the range of emotions we experience, and to consider how to express and manage emotions without impacting other's sense of security and safety within their own bubble.

In younger children understanding of body responsibility is very much based in developing an awareness of space and movement. As children become older we move towards a deeper understanding of caring for our body as a system, and making educated and informed decisions in how we care for our bodies, with reverence.

Mindful Consumption

We choose food, drink and activities that are healthy for ourselves and others. We contemplate interdependence and consume in a way that preserves peace, joy and well-being for all living things.



We prioritise nude food to encourage nutrition and reduce packaging, local produce and products to reduce food and product miles, and reuse of materials where possible. Our ‘thrifty’ mindset allows us to consider our carbon footprint.

We have an ethical purchasing policy that guides our school’s consumer decision making in order to minimise the impact we have on people, communities and the environment.

In our younger children, much learning comes through observation of others and practices that are implemented by the family, while in older children, they are starting to make their own decisions around what they consume, perhaps by making their own lunches, or starting to prepare meals at home. As children become older they begin to develop their own original ideas and initiatives to practice mindful consumption.

Generosity

We do our best to share and be generous when we think, speak and act. We give compassion to those in need. We always ask when borrowing.

Through being generous and honest, we are able to truly connect with the best in ourselves.

In younger children, generosity is often demonstrated in the sharing of personal possessions. In older children, the notion of sharing time and energy to help guide and support others becomes more pronounced, particularly as they start to develop their own ideas around being a good friend. The notion of service to one’s community also becomes more pronounced.

Student Engagement and Discipline

Compassionate Communication



“World peace does not mean the absence of conflict. It is in the nature of this reality of living that conflict happens, and conflict must be expected. World peace is therefore not about the attainment of absence of conflict but is a state that arises from the manner in which we resolve our conflicts. It is through mutual respect, appreciation for differences and by compromise that we resolve our conflicts. “
Geshe Konchok Tsering, Daylesford Dharma School Founder.

The school has adopted a Compassionate Communication approach largely based on Non-Violent Communication (NVC); an approach developed by Marshall Rosenberg. This is the process that children will encounter on a daily basis as they resolve their social challenges. Skill building is formally revisited each year during Term 2 when Social Harmony is the overarching theme that guides the learning. We also implement restorative justice processes as a supplementary approach from time to time.

The Dharma School views conflict resolution as an ongoing process and a necessary skill to acquire if we are to hold any hope of world peace.

We utilise a ‘Peace Table’ process to help children learn how to navigate and larger conflicts that may arise in the school. It is not a place where you go if you have been naughty or bad but rather a place to work through conflict in a peaceful and meaningful way.

We encourage parents and family members to participate in our skills development programs that are regularly extended to our school community. We value your connection to our school community as you follow your child’s learning journey. We also have a number of resources available for borrowing, please see the Principal if you are interested in utilising these resources.

The Peace Table

The “Peace Table” is a focus meeting. It is a conceptual framework and process for establishing harmony in our school. It is set in a quiet place in the classroom or in the office, it is a place for deep listening and communication. All incidents that are brought to the peace table are explored in a fair and consistent way. This consistency of process and language is what supports a culture of peace. All members of the school community are expected and encouraged to use the peace table as a place where issues can be discussed, ideas canvassed, and problems explored and resolved.

Sharing Circles



Sharing circles are a strategy used at our school to create a sense of belonging and trust within the classroom and the school. Students each have an opportunity to share their thoughts and feelings openly and freely. Sharing circles are not just a tool for when things are not going right. They provide a forum to share joyous moments and the things that are working well. Students are given the opportunity to feel worthwhile and their presence within the group is valued and seen as purposeful.

Parent commitment and partnership

In enrolling at the Dharma School, parents are committing to support their child's engagement with the school's engagement and discipline practices. The school will work in partnership with families to ensure developmentally appropriate support and guidance of all children to ensure a safe and harmonious educational environment. If, despite the best efforts of the school, it becomes apparent that a child is unable to manage their behaviour and that there is a real threat to the safety and wellbeing of any members of the school community, including the child, then the school may need to either pause or discontinue a child's enrolment.

The School Day

The school day begins at 9am and concludes at 3:20pm Monday to Friday during school terms. Children can drive to school from 8.45 am and must be collected at 3.20pm. Parents are welcome to stay with the children on school grounds after the end of the school day to gather together and play, however; it is the direct responsibility of each parent to ensure your child is properly supervised.

During Term 1, Prep children attend for four days per week, not attending on Wednesdays. Each child will attend on Wednesday morning for baseline testing to help the teacher understand each child's strengths and needs as they commence schooling.

Late Arrivals

Arrival at school on time is an important part of ensuring that children are able to fully engage in important daily routines, in particular our morning Awareness session. This starts at 9.00am daily and involves a shared meditation and engagement with our weekly themes.



We understand that on occasion, families may arrive late. In this instance, we ask that you please be mindful of the learning that may be already underway in your child's classroom.

After signing your child in via your Compass App or at the office, please accompany your child to their classroom to hand over to their teacher directly once the class is no longer in meditation.

Early Finishers

If for any reason you need to pick up your child prior to 3:20pm please inform the school of your intention by communicating with the office. You will also need to sign your child out in the office, stating the time you picked them up.

Embracing multi-faith

We are a non-denominational school and students and families of any religious belief or secular background are welcome to join the Daylesford Dharma School community.

We hold the view that a multiplicity of spiritual traditions is necessary in the world, and that this plurality of religious and spiritual traditions provides for the wide variety of people's dispositions and aspirations. In support of this, we cultivate understanding and mutual respect through the study of other cultures, religions and traditions.

Funding and Fees



As an independent school we are partially funded by the Federal and State Governments, but we rely on tuition fees and donations in order to run the school. Government funding essentially covers our staff and teacher salaries; therefore school fees are very important as they cover the costs of resourcing and administering the school.

Since its inception, the school has endeavoured to make the tuition fees as affordable and accessible as possible.

Fees are invoiced four times a year in line with the school terms. Invoices are emailed indicating the payment terms and how to pay. We are able to accept cash, EFTPOS and credit card payments in the office or you can pay directly into the school's account.

A **Material Levy** covers some costs such as paper and consumables in the school/classroom throughout the term.

A **Building Levy** helps ensure the maintenance and ongoing development of our school.

A **Booklist Fee** covers all stationery, textbooks, workbooks for personal use in the classroom. These items become the student's property and therefore they become responsible for the care and replacement for these items. You may be charged for additional workbooks throughout the year as your child progresses to additional levels.

A **Camp/Excursion Fee** contributes to the cost of most camps, excursions and incursions throughout the year. There may be some small additional payments depending on the costs of scheduled activities.

Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund

The Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund (CSEF) is a Victorian Government initiative that provides payments for eligible students to assist with costs for camps, sports and excursions. Families holding a valid means-tested concession card or temporary foster parents can apply. \$125 per year is paid for eligible primary school students, with \$225 per year paid for eligible secondary school students. Payments are made directly to the school and offset school fees. Application forms can be obtained at the office.

Conveyance Allowance



The conveyance allowance is a form of financial assistance to help families in rural and regional Victoria with the cost of transporting their children to their nearest appropriate school/campus. The conveyance allowance is available to eligible students travelling by public transport, private car and private bus. The conveyance allowance is also available to eligible students whose nearest school is not serviced by a free school bus. There is an extensive free school bus service that operates in and around Daylesford. This is coordinated by Daylesford Secondary College. If, however, you live over 4.8km from the free bus route you may be eligible for the conveyance allowance. Please contact the office for information. The Dharma School offers a bus service to collect children from the Secondary College and from other locations around town.

Concessions, discounts and fee assistance

Concession fees are available to all families who are able to present a current Health Care Card.

A 10% sibling discount is offered for the second child attending, and subsequent children will also be eligible for further discounting.

It is our goal to be accessible to all families for whom the Dharma School is the right school for their children, irrespective of financial means. If your circumstances may be limited enrolling your child, please contact the Principal to discuss further fee assistance.

Communication

In line with our precept of Mindful Consumption the school chooses to communicate electronically wherever possible.

Compass: In an effort to reduce our consumption and the impact this has on the environment; we utilise a school communication system called Compass. The Compass Parent Portal is an integrated, online portal that allows you to access up-to-date and meaningful information about our school and your child's progress, see information on excursions, inform the school of an absence, view attendance information, access academic reports including past reports, book parent teacher conferences, contact staff, and receive communications and reminders from the school. We ask each parent to download the Compass Schools App (available for Apple and Android users).



eNews: Our weekly eNews is the best source of information in relation to what is happening in and around the school and information on upcoming events. The eNews comes out weekly on a Friday evening.

Other notices, reminders and communications may at times also be sent through email and text messages. If you do not have the ability to receive emails or text messages, please communicate this to the office so alternative arrangements can be made. Paper notices may also be issued via students should permission or a handwritten signature be required.

You can expect to receive these emails and texts from a range of staff, including teachers, our Office Manager- Rosie, our Learning Manager- Tanya, and our Principal- Jen.

Please endeavour to update your contact details with staff in the office to ensure we can communicate with you.

Free School Bus

Our students are able to access the Free School Bus service that operates in and around Daylesford and surrounding areas. There is an extensive service operated by local bus companies. The Daylesford Secondary College is the bus coordinating school, if you wish to utilise or enquire about the Free School Bus please contact the Bus Coordinator on 5348 2367. Bus travellers are collected in the morning at Daylesford Secondary College Terminus by our bus driver and shuttled to the Dharma School, and students leave class shortly after 3.00pm each day, and are shuttled by our minibus back to the Daylesford Secondary College. We are also able to pick children up and drop them off from a range of locations in Daylesford- please discuss this with the school.

After School Care



Daylesford Child Care Centre operates the Daylesford Outside School Hours Care program offering care for children in the Daylesford area after normal school hours. Children are collected directly from the school. For more information on the services they offer and how to access them please contact 5348 3702.

Attendance

Attendance at school is very important to the learning journey of each child. We require that parents please ensure that their child/ren attend school each day. If your child is unable to attend for any reason please inform the school as early as possible by emailing administration, directly through your parent Compass Portal or by phoning the main telephone number 5348 3112. It is okay to leave a message stating your name and the name of the child that will not be attending. For planned or prolonged absences, we ask that you inform the administration in writing at least 4 weeks prior. As part of our funding agreement with the Federal and State Governments we are required to record absences and report on these twice a year.

Medical

Parents must ensure that the school has accurate and up to date medical information relating to your child to enable the school to provide proper care and support. And changes in your child's needs must be communicated to the school at the earliest opportunity. In the event of an accident or illness when it is impractical, or not possible, to communicate with a parent / guardian, the school may authorise for the child to receive medical, surgical or other treatment recommended by a qualified medical practitioner in order to ensure the child's sustained health and capacity.

What to Bring



Food

We support children to be mindful when consuming food. To eat with awareness of the resources, energy and generosity of others that is embodied in the food is seen as an act of loving kindness. When we eat with mindfulness and connect into our food, we are cultivating our knowledge of interdependence – the first stepping stone to world peace.

We encourage the inclusion of whole and unpackaged foods as a general approach to the school lunch box. We encourage home-cooked snacks as lunch box inclusions.

The Dharma School discourages the inclusion of sugar based and low-nutrition snack foods as a regular part of food consumption.

We encourage our whole school community to approach healthy eating as the norm and snack foods and sweets as being for occasional use.

We embrace the principles of the ‘slow food’ movement and the rich local food heritage of our community as a reflection of our commitment to teaching interdependence.

We support our school community by committing to a kitchen garden program that teaches children food propagation, harvesting and cooking of local organic produce. This encourages the celebration of cooking and eating together in community.

Our educational philosophy recognises the interdependent nature of all life. This inspires the principle of non-harm that joins us with a common bond in community. We strive to see all other beings as being worthy of our compassion and equanimity. It is this view that guides our school to adopt the approach of eating a vegetarian diet while at school. However, children (and their parents) are in no way required to commit to a vegetarian lifestyle at home.

By supporting the practice of non-harm in food choices at school, we encourage discussion and reflection and the opportunity to consider cultivating compassion at a more expansive level. The Dharma School extends this policy to its fundraising and kitchen garden programs.

We also ask that all communal food at school have no animal products (vegan). This provides another level of respect for animals and allows greater inclusion for our school community.



It is an ongoing process to assist the children to understand what rubbish is and what is to be recycled and above all to work towards reducing their consumption. We have a “nude food” policy where we encourage unpacked foods that also assists to reduce rubbish at school.

It would greatly support the school if sound recycling and reduction habits are also reflected in practice at home and taught to children.

Clothing

Please ensure you provide adequate clothing for your child depending on the season.

During Term 1 and Term 4, as part of our SunSmart policy, students are required to wear a sunhat during play times and during outside activities. Acceptable hats are either broad rim or legionaries’ styles that are free from excessive branding and logos. (Baseball caps are not acceptable). Students must have a hat designated for school that is named and kept in your child’s school bag so it is not forgotten. SunSmart clothing that covers children's shoulders will also be required during Term 4. During our SunSmart terms students will be restricted to shady areas such as the veranda if they do not have an appropriate hat. Sharing of hats is not permitted.

We also ask that students be provided with a water bottle designated for school that is kept in your child’s school bag to ensure adequate hydration during PE programs.

During the winter months Daylesford can be quite cold and wet but getting outdoors into the fresh air remains important, and so it is advisable to provide gumboots, jackets and beanies to maintain the comfort of your child during play times and protect them from the elements. We suggest having a spare pair of clothes, particularly socks, in your child’s school bag for those times when children find themselves wet and cold after play.

As we have a practice of not wearing shoes in the classroom, we suggest that children wear shoes that they are able to put on and take off without assistance. Velcro is a great choice while your child is still learning to tie shoelaces.

We do not have a school uniform and allow students to dress freely as an expression of their personality. We do, however, require that children wear clothing to provide adequate protection from sun and cold. We also ask that children not wear clothing that exposes midriffs.



Curriculum

The Daylesford Dharma School offers a unique and engaging approach to schooling, by marrying contemporary Western education with the wisdom and teachings of Buddhism. We follow the Australian Curriculum, and our whole school approach to delivering our curriculum is supported by our Awareness Program. This program provides the background against which all learning takes place.

The integrated framework of our Awareness Program promotes self-awareness learning that is linked to social responsibility, respect for cultural diversity and human rights, sustainability, and upholding peace as an attainable goal. It is this program that informs the curriculum and supports our unique school culture.

The Awareness Program subjects include: Interdependence, Gratitude, Respect, Non-Harm, Honesty & Intent (Motivation), Mindfulness, Aspiration, Courage, Generosity, Positive/Thoughtful Speech, Universal Responsibility, Difference, Humility, Patience, Contentment, Delight, Forgiveness, Loyalty, Kindness, Deep Listening and Loving Speech, Reverence for Life, Loving Thoughts towards Self and Others.

Awareness Program Activities include: Meditation, discussion, reading and writing stories, drawing, art and craft, model-making, music, song and dance, construction, and role play.

Every week on Monday and Wednesday mornings we hold a Whole-School awareness between 9 and 9:30am in the Gompa.

Parents are most welcome to join us for these sessions.

Integrated Approach to Learning

Our programs support the pursuit of excellence in literacy, numeracy, social studies, science and technology and follow the Australian Curriculum.



We strive to create a nurturing and inspiring learning environment where critical thinking, meditation and creativity are integrated throughout the whole curriculum. Our curriculum provides for a high quality, relevant and flexible continuum of learning.

In practice, our curriculum embraces the 8 key learning areas (English, Mathematics, Science, Health & Physical Education, Humanities and Social Sciences [HASS], The Arts, Technologies and Languages.) which are interpreted by learning themes that guide the focus for the learning of each term. These learning themes are:

- Term 1: Wellbeing
- Term 2: Social harmony
- Term 3: Cultural diversity
- Term 4: Environmental balance

This thematic structure allows detailed examination of the social, conceptual, creative and physical aspects of the world and intrinsically provides opportunities for interdisciplinary learning and linking of the 8 key areas.

Specific lessons are timetabled to build numeracy, literacy and creative arts skills that support the foundation of the curriculum. These foundation lessons are informed by the learning theme that provides the focus for learning of that term and connects the 8 key areas into an integrated and whole school approach to curriculum framework.

This integrated curriculum approach allows flexibility to introduce current contemporary issues into the learning themes. It provides opportunities for reflection, creativity and the support of multiple intelligences. It promotes an inquiry approach to learning that fosters problem solving skills and academic stimulation of the whole child. It embraces human rights, sustainability, social responsibility and peacemaking in both general and specific ways.



Growth Mindset

The school has adopted a “Growth Mindset” approach. This involves continuing to practice and learn and embracing challenge and celebrating failure/mistakes as demonstrations of courage and learning.

For more information about Growth Mindset: TED Talk by Carol Dweck titled “The Power of Knowing you can improve”.

Assessment & Reporting

Assessment forms a large part of the learning journey. We assess students regularly through formal and informal means and this assists in informing us of not only the learning that has been occurring but identifies areas that we may need to focus on.

The school issues reports to parents twice a year, at the end of Term 2 and the end of Term 4. These reports provide information on the progress of your child’s learning throughout the year. You are welcome to make an appointment to discuss your child’s progress with the classroom teacher at any time throughout the year.

The school is required to offer the NAPLAN assessments each year for Grade 3 and 5 students. We see these standardised assessments as a useful opportunity to experience test conditions that are likely to be experienced later in life. We provide an opportunity to practice mindfulness and meditation prior to conducting these tests in order to assist children cope with any anxiety or concern they may have. We see NAPLAN as an opportunity for students to gain an understanding of what they know and have learnt.

Student, Parent, Teacher 3-Way Conversations

At the end of Term 2 and Term 4 we hold Student Led Learning Conversations. The value we place on including students within the learning process and supporting them to develop lifelong learning habits, is reflected in this new approach. Students are at the centre of discussing and creating their own learning goals and tracking their progress throughout the year and these Learning Conversations provide an opportunity for them to discuss these in detail with parents and carers.



Student Led Learning Conversations are a conversation between the student, their parents and their teacher. The student has an opportunity to share with their parents/carers, with the support of their teacher, their growth as a learner. All three parties - student, parents/carers and the teacher - sit together and talk about the student's learning by looking at and discussing a range of the student's work samples. Each conference will last for fifteen minutes, and will include:

- A 10 minute Student Led 3 Way Learning Conversation
- Followed by a 10 minute parent/teacher conversation about each child's progress and future learning needs.

These meetings will be held on a student free day at the end of each semester and will require students and parents to attend for their meeting time only.

At the end of Term 3 we also hold our Learning Celebration, where students get an opportunity to share and demonstrate the learning they have been doing particularly in specialist programs. It is also a great opportunity for our school community to get together as a whole.

Students with additional needs

As a small and low-fee independent school, we try our best to meet the needs of all students, however; there will be times when students may require additional support beyond what the school can offer. In the event of a student requiring any specialist assessments beyond those that are standard in-school social, emotional and academic learning, this does need to be coordinated and financed by families. The school has one part time learning support assistant who works 1.5 days across our three classes. Families with children who require additional support beyond this may need to explore other schooling options.

Prior to a child enrolling at the Dharma School both parents and the school must feel confident that the child's educational, developmental, physical and social needs will be able to be nurtured and nourished by the school. It is important in applying for enrolment that the school is aware of anything your child may face that relate to the following:

- the intellectual, physical or social development of the student.



- the school's ability to educate the student including, without limitation, any disability, physical or intellectual impairment, mental illness, psychological issue, relevant family circumstances or other issue.

If there is any change to your child in these areas, it is important that school is informed of this in a timely manner, to enable a realistic assessment of the school's capacity to continue to support the child to be conducted.

It is important to note that the school may need to decline or discontinue the enrolment of a student if, in order to participate and derive true benefit from the school's educational program, the student may require special services or facilities that the school is unable to reasonably provide, or that, even after the provision of these the student could not participate or derive substantial benefit from the school's educational program.

In the event that clear and accurate information regarding a child's intellectual, physical or social development is not provided to the school, the child's enrolment may need to be discontinued.

Community

We invite parents to get involved in our school community and there are numerous ways in which you can do this.

We regularly hold fundraising and community events to not only raise money for our school but also to help build awareness of our school. Keep an eye on the eNews to see what events are coming up and how you can get involved.

We welcome parents in the classroom to assist with the learning also. Each class has a parent representative called a Class Carer who is the main point of contact for parents wanting to be involved in the classroom. The Class Carer liaises with the teaching staff to determine what the needs might be and how parents may be able to assist. They also are able to provide feedback to the teaching staff on any thoughts or ideas that parents have that may contribute to the learning. So, if you have any special skills or talents that you may be able to share or whether you are able to assist in reading with students or making resources for the classroom please speak to your Class Carer and get involved.



We hold excursions regularly throughout the year and welcome parents' assistance on these. Please speak to the Class Carer if you are interested in helping out on any upcoming excursions.

Working Bees, odd jobs, cleaning, organising and fundraising are just a few other areas that you can get involved. We rely on our community to support us so that we can provide the best possible learning opportunity for your child. If you have any ideas or suggestions, please let us know.

We require all parents who are interacting with children to have a Working With Children (WWCC) check completed. This includes assisting in classroom activities, reading, library support and excursions. If you do not have a current WWCC you can apply for one as a volunteer and it is no cost. The application can be found online at <http://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au/> once you have completed the form print out and go to an Australia Post outlet to lodge. You will need to provide a copy of your successful WWC to the Office in order to undertake voluntary duties with the students. If you require any assistance with completing an application, please see the Office staff for assistance.

All parents and carers are invited to participate in the parent/carer meetings. These meetings are an opportunity to share experiences and ideas and to link with the teachers, administration and board. Meeting dates & times are notified in the eNews.

All parents and carers are invited to join the closed Daylesford Dharma School Families Facebook group, <https://www.facebook.com/groups/472381739540749/> which provides support and communication to parents and carers of the school.

Upholding of precepts by parents and carers

Upholding the school's precepts and commitment to compassionate communication is an expectation and responsibility of all members of the school community. If a mutually beneficial relationship of trust and cooperation between parents/carers and the school or its staff breaks down to the point of being unable to be resolved through thoughtful mediation and creates the potential to cause any harm to the school community, it may be necessary to discontinue a child's enrolment.

Who's Who

It can be difficult to know who's who so here's a list of some of the contacts you may need to know.

Daylesford Dharma School Community Handbook



Performing Arts: Joanne Tsakoumagos (Tue)

Joanne@dharmaschool.com.au

Visual Arts: Patsy Taylor (Thur)

patsy.taylor@dharmaschool.com.au

Learning Support

Learning Support: Selena McVeigh

selena.mcveigh@dharmaschool.com.au

Administration

Office: Rosie Berenyi-Mansell

rosie@dharmaschool.com.au

Finance: Avic Mclay

accounts@dharmaschool.com.au

Wellbeing Team

Chaplain: Jaala Freeman

jaala.freeman@dharmaschool.com.au

Leadership

Principal: Jen Willis

jennifer.willis@dharmaschool.com.au

Learning Manager: Tanya Wiggins (Wed, Fri)

tanya.wiggins@dharmaschool.com.au



Daylesford Dharma School:

Address: 90 Daylesford-Trentham Road, Daylesford, VIC 3460

Phone: 03 5348 3112

Website: www.dharmaschool.com.au

Concerns and Feedback

The Daylesford Dharma School strongly encourages parents to express any concerns that they may have for their child's learning or wellbeing directly with the class teacher. It is best to make an appointment with the teacher so that they can give full attention to your concern.

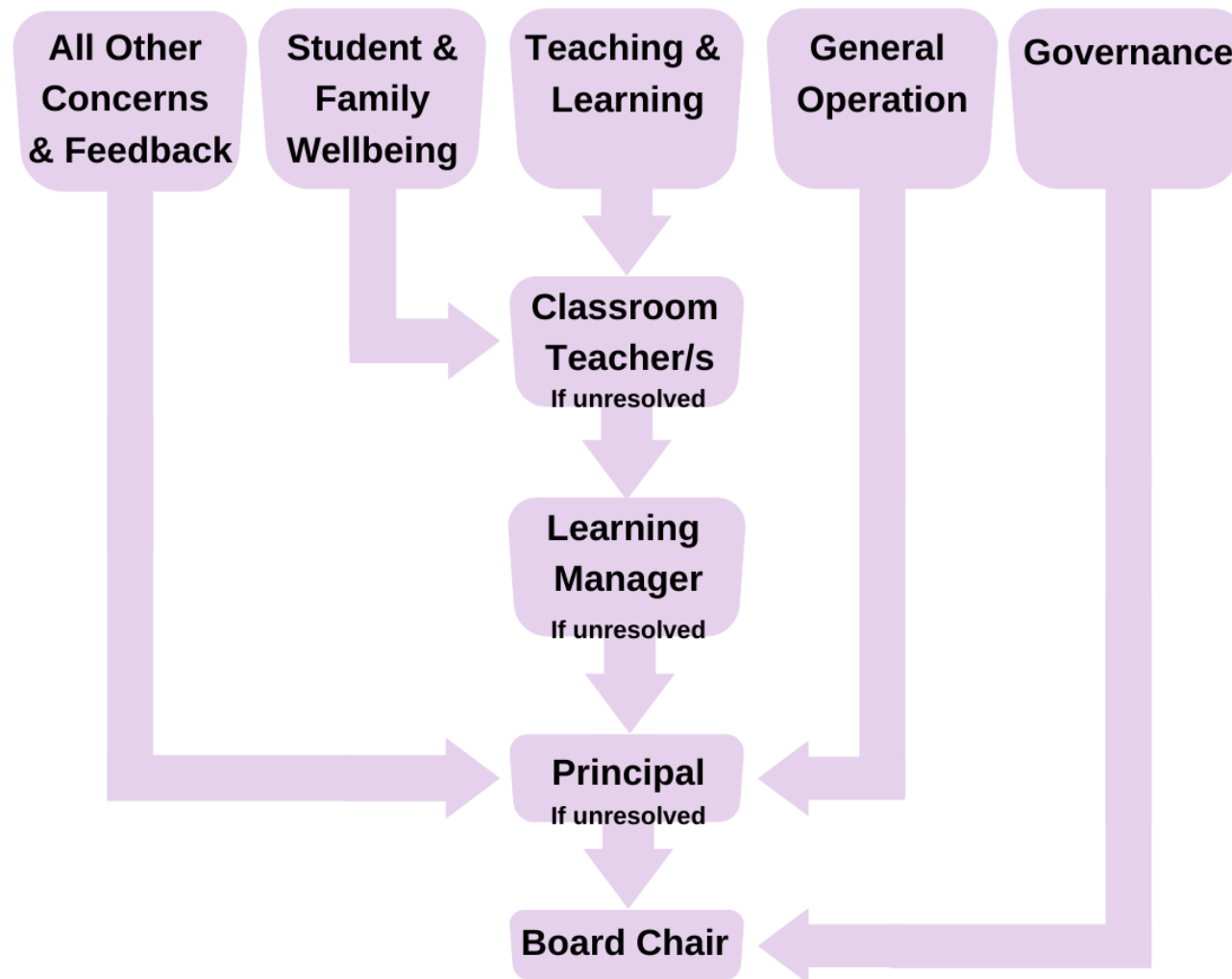
We also believe it is important to not let small concerns slide but to address them early on so that they do not go on to become problems. We value your input and interest in your child's progress and are always happy to make time to discuss issues and collaborate on solutions.

Similarly, we encourage you to communicate any changes to home or family life with your child's teacher. This is an important part of our holistic approach to student wellbeing and assists us in supporting developmental and life transitions.

Likewise, any concerns regarding the school leadership, communications or administration are encouraged to be communicated directly with the appropriate staff member.

We understand that it is not always easy to communicate concerns directly to another. The below sequence should guide any decisions on who to communicate with.

Concerns and Feedback Flowchart



Governance



The Board of Governance oversees the strategic direction and philosophy of the school according to Buddhist principles. The Board also employs the Principal and manages any potential risk to the operations and future of the school.

The Board meets once a month to discuss and make decisions in relation to the strategic direction of the school - the Principal also attends and reports to these meetings. Positions on the Board are held by talented, passionate community members who strongly believe in the vision and values of the school. Board Directors contribute their time voluntarily.

Opportunities to meet and communicate with members of the Board occur throughout the school year.

School Policies and Procedures

The school maintains a full register of Policies and Procedures informed by the requirements of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) and guided by Independent Schools Victoria (ISV). Some policies can be found on the school website, under the heading Policies and Procedures, and you are welcome to ask the school directly for any that you may be interested in that you may not find on the website.

Bushfire Safety

Bushfire At-Risk Register

Daylesford is assessed as having an extreme bushfire risk, and as such, our school sits on the Department of Education and Training Bushfire At-Risk Register. For information on our Policies and Procedures in relation to bushfires, please refer to the following documents included within the enrolment package, and also available on our website:



DDS -DOC-003 Bushfire Threat Emergency Evacuation Plan

DDS -DOC-003 Bushfire Threat Emergency Evacuation Route

DDS-POL-032 Bushfire Preparedness Policy

DDS-PRO-032 Bush Fire Preparedness Procedure

CODE RED Days

As the school is listed on the Bushfire At-Risk register, the school will be closed on a Code Red day. Where possible, up to 3 days notice of a planned closure will be provided; notice of planned closure will be sent by email and SMS- parents and carers should, however, expect that in some instances fewer than 3 days notice may be provided. Once the final decision to close is confirmed at 12 noon the day prior, this decision will not change – regardless of any changes in the weather forecast. This will help limit confusion and help families plan for how children will be cared for when the school is closed. When the school is closed for bushfire, no staff will remain on site and no programs of any nature will operate.

Evacuation Drills

The school will conduct an off-site evacuation drill at least once per term in Terms 1 and 4 and may also conduct additional drills throughout the year. Parents/carers will be notified by email or SMS prior to scheduled drills.

Final Note



Thank you again for being part of our community, we really value your support and involvement in this unique school. The future is a little brighter with the knowledge that mindful leaders are being developed through an education based on kindness and compassion. By choosing to send your child to our school you are contributing to a brighter future and a more peaceful world.

Acknowledgement of understanding and agreement

Once you have taken the time to read and consider all the information included within this handbook, please detach and return the below agreement to the school office. Thank you.

Parent/Carer Enrolment Agreement

As a member of the Dharma School Community, I confirm and agree to the following:

Daylesford Dharma School Community Handbook



I have read the Community Handbook in its entirety and agree to support my child to, and will also personally abide by all expectations within this handbook.

I will thoughtfully uphold the 5 precepts and support my child/ren, staff and all community members to do the same.

I will pay all fees as incurred during my child's enrolment at the school and should my circumstances change, I will inform the school to seek alternate arrangements as soon as possible.

I will read all school communications and actively respond in a timely manner.

I will work in partnership with the school to support my child to actively participate in all Engagement and Disciplines processes, including but not limited to the Compassionate Communication process, The Peace Table process and Sharing Circles.

I will proactively engage directly with the school staff or Board should I have any concerns in regards to my child's schooling.

By signing the below, you agree that you have read, understand and agree to the above statements and contents of this handbook.

Parent/Carer Full Name(s) _____

Signature(s) _____

Date ____/____/____