

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!

In this handbook, you'll find some important information about our school community and some helpful tips for families starting at our school.

Our school is based on Buddhist philosophy and therefore this underpins all that we do. Our education program is based on kindness and compassion, whilst continuing to deliver the Australian curriculum. Our goal is to provide a balanced, heart-led and nurturing environment for our students.

We are guided by overarching principles of universal responsibility, interdependence, and the development of wisdom and compassion. These principles relate to our thoughts and actions of body, speech, and mind and serve to hold our community.

We're focused on forming positive and supportive partnerships with our families, using these principles as a common focus in all of our interactions.

Underlying all that we do are our five precepts. We like to think of them as a compass that guides our actions- and we invite you to share this view.

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:



1. 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.

A key focus of our school is connection to the environment. We've developed a practical mindfulness program that inspires connection and action. Our younger children are given the tools to explore, discover and revere the local environment. They learn about the delicate balance of our eco-system and how they can be of benefit to the world they live in.

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

As our students develop their understanding, we encourage intentional, informed and independent choices, such as following a vegetarian diet at school, actively engaging in the protection of animals, or to protect and preserve the natural environment.

2. 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.

Our staff, students and wider school community are encouraged to develop intentional language, focused on loving-kindness and compassion.

We're aware that the earlier learning years are a critical time for developing vocabulary, and setting the tone for engaging with the world with language. We also expect younger children to experiment with words and sounds that test adults such as bum, poo or profanities. We see this as an opportunity to witness the cause and effect of our actions, and to redirect by helping children develop a vocabulary of kind and loving words. Our classes provide opportunities to practice positive and mindful language through activities such as setting intentions and participating in sharing circles.



In our older children, when language starts to become more nuanced, we encourage compassionate communication, and provide strategies to resolve differences in peaceful and harmonious ways.

Children are given the courage to speak openly and honestly, without fear of punishment, and taught that mindful language is a positive practice with exponential benefits.

3. 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.

The early years are a time of discovery, big new emotions and learning how to navigate the world. Our goal is to provide our students with strategies for personal care and awareness. This includes recognising how emotions activate physiological changes in the body, how to recognise those changes, and how to transform emotions. We provide tools such breath work, meditation and yoga to develop an awareness of space and movement.

We guide children to understand the range of emotions we experience, and how to express emotions without impacting others sense of security and safety. 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

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.

4. 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 have an ethical purchasing policy that guides our consumption in order to minimise the impact we have on people, communities and the environment. Our ‘thrifty’ mindset allows us to consider our carbon footprint.

This extends to how we prioritise nude and local food to encourage nutrition, reduce packaging, food and product miles and deeper connection with our local community.

In our younger children, learning comes through observation of practices that are implemented by the family, while in older children, we provide tools to develop original ideas and initiatives to practice mindful consumption. This might be preparing meals or writing recipes at home, or starting to make their own lunches.

5. 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 our best selves.

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 is a focus, and we proudly see this in our buddy system.

Embracing both multi-faith and a secular approach

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. Many of our school families would not consider themselves ‘Buddhist’ but hold an affinity with the school’s principles and values as a psychology for living.

Student Engagement and Discipline

Guided by our precepts, and working towards a more compassionate and kind society, we’ve implemented four communication practices to encourage social harmony and authentic dialogue.

1. Compassionate Communication

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

“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.

Our school is guided by Marshall Rosenberg's Compassionate Communication approach largely based on Nonviolent Communication (NVC);

Students of our school will encounter this approach and learn the skills on a daily basis, as we use this approach to resolve social challenges. During Term 2 each year, Social Harmony is the overarching theme that guides learning and skill building is integrated into our daily activities. We also implement restorative justice processes as a supplementary approach from time to time.

We utilise a ‘Peace Table’ process to help children learn how to navigate any 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 challenge and 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 or [email](#) the Principal if you are interested in utilising these resources.



2. The Peace Table

The “Peace Table” is a focused 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, and requires 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.

3. Sharing Circles

Sharing circles are a communication tool used at our school to create a sense of belonging and trust in our community. Students have an opportunity to share their thoughts and feelings openly and freely and develop the skills and confidence to raise a concern or complaint. Sharing circles are not just a tool for when things are not going right. They provide a forum to share joyous moments and celebrate 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.

4. Parent commitment and partnership

The relationship we build with parents is paramount. By enrolling at Daylesford Dharma School, parents are committing to support their child’s engagement with the school’s learning framework and discipline practices.

We will work in partnership with families to ensure a safe and harmonious education environment, and deliver developmentally appropriate support and guidance of all children. 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.

Curriculum



The Daylesford Dharma School offers a unique and engaging approach to schooling, by underpinning a 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 classroom 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 challenges 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 our eNews to see what events are coming up and how you can get involved.

Classroom Carers

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.

Excursions

We hold excursions regularly throughout each term to support engaged learning, and we welcome parents' assistance on these. Please speak to the Class Carer if you are interested in helping out on any upcoming excursions.



Working bees and our Low Fee School Model

Working Bees, odd jobs, gardening, cleaning, library book covering, organising and fundraising are just a few other areas that you can get involved in. We operate from a low-fee paying school model to ensure that our compassion wisdom education is accessible to all families regardless of their means. To enable our Low Fee School Model, we require that families give their in-kind support to the school each term for 8 hours. These hours are logged on-line or via the Volunteer Folder in the office. Our Office Manager will contact you to enable your chosen volunteer activity to be recorded. This information adds value to our school financial viability by reducing maintenance costs. We are always open to ways that we can provide fee relief in exchange for volunteer hours to support the development of the school and support a student's continued enrolment. We also understand that some families are too busy to be able to support the school by volunteering and would rather increase their financial contribution, and so there is a higher tiered school fee level that enables families to opt out of volunteering. 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. When you sign your enrolment agreement form, you are agreeing to our school code of conduct and the school's right to terminate an enrolment if this agreement is not upheld.

The School Day- What to expect

Attendance

Attendance at school is very important to the learning journey of each child. Please ensure that your child/ren attend school each day. If your child/ren 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 and leave a message. For planned or prolonged absences, please inform principal@dharmaschool.com.au 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.

What to Bring

Clothing

Please ensure you provide adequate clothing for your child depending on the season. We are located on 22 acres of open pasture land and are still foresting our grounds so the site can be windy and sometimes we have snow! For our Bush School program, you will receive information on how to dress your child for outdoor education activities so that they are comfortable and warm in all weather conditions.



Summer

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. 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.

Winter & Cooler days

Daylesford can be quite cold and wet in Winter. We even occasionally get snow! However, getting outdoors into the fresh air remains important, 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.

Uniform

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 that provides adequate protection from sun and cold. We also ask that children not wear clothing that exposes midriffs.

We do have T-Shirts with the school logo that are available for purchase from the Office. We encourage students to wear the school t-shirt while on excursions as it makes visibility easier while in a group in a different environment.



Mornings & Getting To School

The school day begins promptly at 9am and concludes at 3:20pm Monday to Friday during school terms. It is important to time your child's arrival so that they can prepare themselves for learning and feel secure and organised. This promotes healthy transitions that have a positive accumulative effect on a child's engagement with school. Families are encouraged to arrive at school from 8.45 am and collect students at 3.20pm. Supervision for students is only extended until 3.45pm. After this time the Student Supervision policy procedure will be enacted that includes calling the parent/carer, and then escalating through the different stages to ensure that a child is not left at the school unsupervised.

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.

Free Public School Bus

Our students are able to access the Free Public 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 at 3.05pm 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.

Dharma School Bus

To support our students who are unable to obtain a place on the public school bus or who prefer a smaller school based service, we operate our own Bus transport to school service from delegated bus stops from Castlemaine, Yandoit, to Hepburn Springs and Daylesford via the Daylesford Secondary College Bus Terminus and on to the school. There is a term fee charged and advanced booking required to obtain a seat on the bus. For details and bookings contact buscoordinator@dharmaschool.com.au



Preps

During Term 1, Prep children attend for four days per week, excluding Wednesdays. Throughout the first term, preps will be invited to attend baseline testing on a Wednesday morning. The results will help us understand your child's strengths and needs as they commence schooling.

Late Arrivals

Punctuality is an important practice for our children. Arrival on time ensures that all of our students are able to fully engage in important daily routines, such as 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 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.

Lunch and break time

Each day our children have morning tea at 11 that begins with their recess snack on the verandah with their teacher before playing until 11.30. Lunch time begins at 1.10 with a food blessing and mindful eating in their class group before venturing out to play.

Nude food, Nutrition, and Non-Harm

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.



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 that requires a lunch box of unpacked foods, which also assists us to reduce rubbish at school.

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 strongly encourage a no sugar policy to prevent sugar spike behaviours that can interrupt concentration and disturb learning.

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

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.



After School Care

Daylesford Community 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.

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 BushFire 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.

Daylesford Dharma School- Administration

In this section you will find information on our funding and fees, school governance including policies, staff contact information and

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 or if books are lost.



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 who use the terminus bus services.

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 a limitation to enrolling your child, please contact the Principal to discuss our volunteering and fees assistance program. We are committed to being inclusive and valuing what each family can offer our school. This is particularly so during times of financial hardship.



Parent 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 fortnightly 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.

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

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.

Our Staff

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

Your child’s classroom teacher is your first port of call should you have any concerns regarding your child’s learning or wellbeing at school. We view and value our relationships as a three-way partnership between student, parent and teacher. We also view parents as the experts when it comes to your children so anything that you can share with us that will help us support your child please do not hesitate to let your teacher know.

Position	Name	Email	Phone
Interim Principal	Andrea Furness	principal@dharmaschool.com.au	0434 482 480
Learning Manager	Tanya Wiggins (Wed, Fri)	tanya.wiggins@dharmaschool.com.au	5348 3112
Prep/1 teacher	Angelique Downing	angelique.downing@dharmaschool.com.au	5348 3112
Grade 2/3 teachers	Rachael Cooper (Mon, Tue, Wed) & Tina Halvy (Thu, Fri)	rachael@dharmaschool.com.au tina.halvy@dharmaschool.com.au	5348 3112
Grade 4/5/6 teacher	Mandy De Lacy	mandy@dharmaschool.com.au	5348 3112
Chinese and HPE teacher	Patsy Taylor (Wed, Thur)	patsy.taylor@dharmaschool.com.au	5348 3112
Performing Arts teacher	Joanne Tsakoumagos (Mon)	joanne@dharmaschool.com.au	5348 3112



Visual Arts teacher	Patsy Taylor (Thur)	patsy.taylor@dharmaschool.com.au	5348 3112
Learning Assistant	Selena McVeigh (Mon, Tues, Wed mornings)	selena.mcveigh@dharmaschool.com.au	5348 3112
Chaplain (wellbeing support)	Venerable Lekdron (Mon, Tues)	lektron@dharmaschool.com.au	5348 3112
Office Manager	Rosie Berenyi-Mansell	rosie@dharmaschool.com.au	5348 3112
Book-keeper	Avic McClay	accounts@dharmaschool.com.au	
Bus Coordinator	Yasmin Mata		0431 069 972

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.

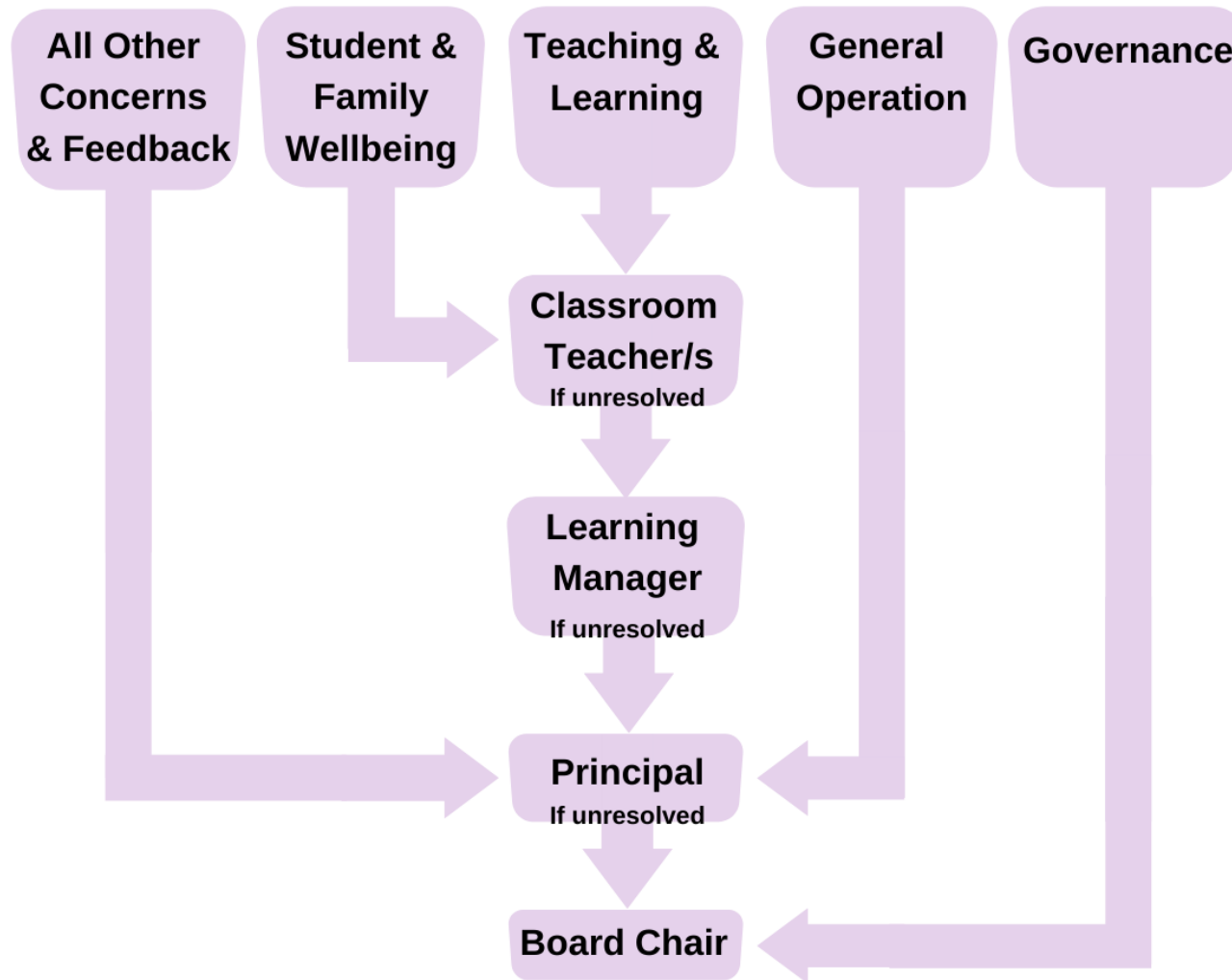
We also believe it is important to not let small concerns slide but to address them early on so that they do not go on to become problems. We value your input and interest in your child’s progress and are always happy to make time to discuss issues and collaborate on solutions.

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. Please also refer to our Complaints policy on our website or call the Principal if you need advice.

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 twice yearly through our community Board Forums. We have 5 Board subcommittees and 3 Working parties that we encourage parents to participate in if they would like to establish a direct involvement with the development and operations of the school. See the Governance section on our website or call the Principal for more information.

The Parent/Carer Group is encouraged to have a member attend the monthly Board meetings to report feedback and strengthen communication pathways in the school.

School Policies and Procedures

The school maintains a full register of Policies and Procedures informed by the requirements of the Department of Education and Training (DET) and the Victorian Registration & Qualification Authority and guided by Independent Schools Victoria (ISV). Many policies can be found on the school website, under the Our Community tab/Our Policies. You are always welcome to ask the school directly for any policies that you are interested in that you may not find on the website.

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:

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 ____/____/____

