

# STUDENT WELLBEING AND ENGAGEMENT POLICY



## PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all students and members of our school community understand:

- (a) our commitment to providing a safe and supportive learning environment for students
- (b) expectations for positive student behaviour
- (c) support available to students and families
- (d) our school's policies and procedures for responding to inappropriate student behaviour.

Tallarook Primary School is committed to providing a safe, secure and stimulating learning environment for all students. We understand that students reach their full potential only when they are happy, healthy and safe, and that a positive school culture helps to engage students and support them in their learning. Our school acknowledges that student wellbeing and student learning outcomes are closely linked.

The objective of this policy is to support our school to create and maintain a safe, supportive and inclusive school environment consistent with our school's values.

## SCOPE

This policy applies to all school activities, including camps and excursions.

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## POLICY

### 1. School profile

Tallarook Primary School was established in 1875 and is located approximately 85 kilometres north of Melbourne. There are currently 18 students enrolled from Grade Prep to 6 and five school staff members on site, three of whom work contracted in a part-time capacity including a Pastoral Care Officer (0.3 EFT).

The small rural township of Tallarook is located just off the Hume Highway, nestled at the foot of the Tallarook Ranges. Tallarook is within easy access to Seymour, which is 8 kilometres north and Broadford, which is 13 kilometres south. At the 2016 census, Tallarook had a population of 736.

Tallarook Primary School is a largely mono-cultural school with most families being of Anglo-Saxon cultural background. Many of the schools' families have lived in the area for more than one generation whilst other families have chosen Tallarook as their community following a move from larger cities.

Tallarook Primary School is in the Mitchell Shire Local Government Area; part of The Southern Goulburn Network in the Hume Region and an active member of the Mitchell Cluster of Schools which include Beveridge Primary School, Wallan Primary School, Wallan Secondary School, Upper Plenty Primary School, Wandong Primary School, Willowmavin Primary School, Kilmore Primary School, Pyalong Primary School, Tooborac Primary School, Puckapuynal Primary School, Broadford Primary School and Broadford Secondary School.

The school comprises a restored brick building that was the original school house. This building has seen an array of action throughout its history and currently accommodates the school administrative area. There are also two separate open plan modular 5 buildings that house two classrooms each and an older relocatable building that houses the student toilets. The latest addition to the school buildings is the Alec McKay Memorial Building which is a Multi Purpose room comprising a large learning space, library, kitchen/science room and two separate withdrawal spaces.

The yard is set back from the road with several different tiers, comprising play equipment, classrooms, asphalted basketball and netball court area. On the next level, another play equipment area and student toilets. On the final tier, the oval and outdoor recreational area.

The school also has two storage sheds: one for sport equipment and the other for storing administrative equipment and resources. Vegetable gardens, a small orchard and a chook house also provide for a well-rounded approach to sustainability. The school has installed a Waste Water Treatment Plant that provides underground irrigation to the school oval allowing for a grassed playing surface all year round.

## 2. School values, philosophy and vision

Tallarook Primary School aims to develop well adjusted individuals who continually strive to achieve their full potential in a dynamic, caring and supportive environment.

The school's motto "A Caring Community School" reflects the school's philosophy that children learn best when part of a co-operative, collaborative environment that is stimulating, personalised and challenging while supported by teachers and learners who are all striving to achieve common as well as individual goals. This is best achieved through consultation with the children, families and members of the wider community.

*Tallarook Primary School's Statement of Values and School Philosophy is integral to the work that we do and is the foundation of our school community. Students, staff and members of our school community are encouraged to live and demonstrate our core values of 'respect, responsibility, personal achievement, caring and fair go' at every opportunity.*

*Our school's vision is to empower students to reach their personal best, and fully equip them to contribute positively to society as happy, healthy young adults.*

*Our Statement of Values is available online at: <http://www.tallarookps.vic.edu.au/page/54/School-Wide-Positive-Behaviour-Framework>*

## 3. Engagement strategies

Tallarook Primary School has developed a range of strategies to promote engagement, positive behaviour and respectful relationships for all students in our school. We acknowledge that some students may need extra social, emotional or educational support at school, and that the needs of students will change over time as they grow and learn.

To support students in wellbeing outcomes, Tallarook Primary School aims to provide a holistic and supportive environment where the wellbeing programs embedded support not only personal student goals but also develop deeper understanding of peer and staff relationships, informing the whole school community to provide transparency, clarity, structure and strategies which can be transferred to the home environment developing a common language across the whole school community.

The list below outlines the current programs running within our school and how these programs can inform a whole school community approach. More detail about the programs are listed in the appendix of the document.

As students progress through their learning, programs are explicitly taught and embedded throughout the whole school curriculum with expressive language and strategies continually being developed and reassessed to meet the needs of the individual within the school environment.

A summary of the universal (whole of school), targeted (year group specific) and individual engagement strategies used by our school is included below:

**Universal Frameworks Utilised Include:**

- Respectful Relationships
- National Safe Schools Framework, Incorporating 'Bullying No Way'
- Kids Matter Mental Wellbeing Framework
- School Wide Positive Behaviour Support (SWPBS)
- Zones of Regulation
- Wheel of Choice
- Class Dojo

**Whole school strategies to promote positive behaviour and inclusion are listed as follows:**

- high and consistent expectations of all staff, students and parents and carers
- prioritise positive relationships between staff and students, recognising the fundamental role this plays in building and sustaining student wellbeing
- creating a culture that is inclusive, engaging and supportive
- welcoming all parents/carers and being responsive to them as partners in learning
- analysing and being responsive to a range of school data such as attendance, Attitudes to School Survey, parent survey data, student management data and school level assessment data
- deliver a broad curriculum including LOTE (Afrikaans) and visiting specialist teachers delivering Visual Art and Library programs that are tailored to their interests, strengths and aspirations
- teachers at Tallarook Primary School use an instructional framework to ensure an explicit, common and shared model of instruction to ensure that evidenced-based, high yield teaching practices are incorporated into all lessons
- teachers at Tallarook Primary School adopt a broad range of teaching and assessment approaches to effectively respond to the diverse learning styles, strengths and needs of our students and follow the standards set by the Victorian Institute of Teaching
- our school's Statement of Values are incorporated into our curriculum and promoted to students, staff and parents so that they are shared and celebrated as the foundation of our school community
- carefully planned transition programs to support students moving into different stages of their schooling
- positive behaviour and student achievement is acknowledged in the classroom, and formally in school assemblies and communication to parents through the School Wide Positive Behaviour Support program (SWPBS) and Class Dojo (rewards application)
- monitor student attendance and implement attendance improvement strategies at a whole-school, cohort and individual level
- students have the opportunity to contribute to and provide feedback on decisions about school operations through the Student Representative Council and other forums including year group meetings and Peer Support Groups. Students are also encouraged to speak with their teachers, Principal, Education Support and Wellbeing staff whenever they have any questions or concerns.
- create opportunities for cross—age connections amongst students through athletics, performing arts and peer support programs
- All students are welcome to self-refer to the Pastoral Care Officer and Principal if they would like to discuss a particular issue or feel as though they may need support of any kind. We are proud to have an 'open door' policy where students and staff are partners in learning

- we engage in school wide positive behaviour support with our staff and students, which includes programs such as:
  - Respectful Relationships
  - Bully Stoppers
  - Safe Schools
- programs, incursions and excursions developed to address issue specific behaviour including the Music Therapy and Wellbeing Program run by the Pastoral Care Officer and teachers
- opportunities for student inclusion (i.e. sports activities, recess and lunchtime activities)
- buddy programs, peer support programs

#### Targeted Programs Include:

-Music and mindfulness wellbeing program for class specific groups addressing pressing classroom behavioural issues and strategies to manage life ups and downs.

- each year group's teacher is responsible for their year, and monitoring the health and wellbeing of students in their year, acting as a point of contact for students who may need additional support
- connect all Koorie students with a Koorie Engagement Support Officer
- all students in Out of Home Care will be appointed a Learning Mentor, have an Individual Learning Plan and will be referred to Student Support Services for an Educational Needs Assessment
- wellbeing and health staff will undertake health promotion and social skills development in response to needs identified by student wellbeing data, classroom teachers or other school staff each year
- staff will apply a trauma-informed approach to working with students who have experienced trauma

#### Individual

- Student Support Groups, see:  
<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/participation/pages/supportgroups.aspx>
- Individual Learning Plan and Behaviour Support Plan
- Program for Students with Disabilities
- referral to Student Welfare Coordinator and Student Support Services
- referral to ChildFirst, Headspace
- Navigator
- Lookout

Tallarook Primary School implements a range of strategies that support and promote individual engagement. These can include:

- building constructive relationships with students at risk or students who are vulnerable due to complex individual circumstances
- meeting with student and their parent/carer to talk about how best to help the student engage with school
- developing an Individual Learning Plan and/or a Behaviour Support Plan
- considering if any environmental changes need to be made, for example changing the classroom set up
- referring the student to:
  - school-based wellbeing supports
  - Student Support Services
  - Appropriate external supports such as council based youth and family services, other allied health professionals, headspace, child and adolescent mental health services or ChildFirst
  - Re-engagement programs such as Navigator

Where necessary the school will support the student's family to engage by:

- being responsive and sensitive to changes in the student's circumstances and health and well being
- collaborating, where appropriate and with the support of the student and their family, with any external allied health professionals, services or agencies that are supporting the student
- monitoring individual student attendance and developing an Attendance Improvement Plans in collaboration with the student and their family
- running regular Student Support Group meetings for all students:
  - with a disability
  - in Out of Home Care
  - and with other complex needs that require ongoing support and monitoring.

#### **4. Identifying students in need of support**

Tallarook Primary School is committed to providing the necessary support to ensure our students are supported intellectually, emotionally and socially. The Student Wellbeing team plays a significant role in developing and implementing strategies help identify students in need of support and enhance student wellbeing. Tallarook Primary School will utilise the following information and tools to identify students in need of extra emotional, social or educational support:

- personal, health and learning information gathered upon enrolment and while the student is enrolled
- attendance records
- academic performance
- observations by school staff such as changes in engagement, behaviour, self-care, social connectedness and motivation
- attendance, detention and suspension data
- engagement with families
- engagement with Student Support Service Officers to identify and assess educational support needs and/or behavioural support plans.

#### **5. Student rights and responsibilities**

All members of our school community have a right to experience a safe and supportive school environment. We expect that all students, staff, parents and carers treat each other with respect and dignity. Our school's Statement of Values highlights the rights and responsibilities and expected behaviours of members of our community.

Students have the right to:

- participate fully in their education
- feel safe, secure and happy at school
- learn in an environment free from bullying, harassment, violence, discrimination or intimidation
- express their ideas, feelings and concerns.

Students have the responsibility to:

- participate fully in their educational program
- display positive behaviours that demonstrate respect for themselves, their peers, their teachers and members of the school community
- respect the right of others to learn.

Students who may have a complaint or concern about something that has happened at school are encouraged to speak to their parents or carers and approach a trusted teacher or a member of the school leadership team.

## 6. Student behavioural expectations

Behavioural expectations of students, staff and families are grounded in our school's Statement of Values and School Philosophy Policy. Student bullying behaviour will be responded to consistently with Tallarook Primary School's Bullying Policy.

When a student acts in breach of the behaviour standards of our school community, Tallarook Primary School will institute a staged response, consistent with the Department's Student Engagement and Inclusion Guidelines. Where appropriate, parents will be informed about the inappropriate behaviour and the disciplinary action taken by teachers and other school staff.

Disciplinary measures may be used as part of a staged response to inappropriate behaviour in combination with other engagement and support strategies to ensure that factors that may have contributed to the student's behaviour are identified and addressed. Disciplinary measures at our school will be applied fairly and consistently. Students will always be provided with an opportunity to be heard.

Disciplinary measures that may be applied include:

- warning a student that their behaviour is inappropriate
- teacher controlled consequences such as moving a student in a classroom or other reasonable and proportionate responses to misbehaviour
- withdrawal of privileges
- restorative practices
- detentions
- behaviour reviews
- suspension
- expulsion

Suspension and expulsion are measures of last resort and may only be used in particular situations consistent with Department policy, available at:

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/participation/pages/engagement.aspx>

Corporal punishment is prohibited in our school and will not be used in any circumstance.

## 7. Engaging with families

Tallarook Primary School values the input of parents and carers, and we will strive to support families to engage in their child's learning and build their capacity as active learners. We aim to be partners in learning with parents and carers in our school community.

We work hard to create successful partnerships with parents and carers by:

- ensuring that all parents have access to our school policies and procedures, available on our school website
- maintaining an open, respectful line of communication between parents and staff, supported by our Communicating with School Staff policy.
- providing parent volunteer opportunities so that families can contribute to school activities
- involving families with homework and other curriculum-related activities
- involving families in school decision making
- coordinating resources and services from the community for families
- including families in Student Support Groups, and developing individual plans for students.

## 8. Evaluation

Tallarook Primary School will collect data each year to understand the frequency and types of wellbeing issues that are experienced by our students so that we can measure the success or otherwise of our school based strategies and identify emerging trends or needs.

Sources of data that will be assessed on an annual basis include:

- student survey data
- incidents data
- school reports
- parent survey
- case management
- CASES21
- SOCS

## FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

*Refer to:*

Statement of Values and School Philosophy Policy  
Bullying Prevention Policy  
Child Safe Standards

## REVIEW CYCLE

This policy was last updated on 25 January 2021 and is scheduled for review in February 2022.

## Appendix A:

### Zones of Regulation

Self-regulation is something everyone continually works on whether or not we are aware of it. We all encounter trying circumstances that test our limits from time to time. If we are able to recognize when we are becoming less regulated, we are able to do something about it to manage our feelings and get ourselves to a healthy place. This comes naturally for some, but for others it is a skill that needs to be taught and practiced. This is the goal of The Zones of Regulation (or Zones for short).

#### WHAT ARE THE ZONES?

The Zones is a systematic, cognitive behavioural approach used to teach self-regulation by categorizing all the different ways we feel and states of alertness we experience into four concrete coloured zones. The Zones framework provides strategies to teach students to become more aware of and independent in controlling their emotions and impulses, manage their sensory needs, and improve their ability to solve conflicts.

By addressing underlying deficits in emotional and sensory regulation, executive functioning, and social cognition, the framework is designed to help move students toward independent regulation. The Zones of Regulation incorporates Social Thinking® ([www.socialthinking.com](http://www.socialthinking.com)) concepts and numerous visuals to teach students to identify their feelings/level of alertness, understand how their behaviour impacts those around them, and learn what tools they can use to manage their feelings and states.

#### THE FOUR ZONES: OUR FEELINGS & STATES DETERMINE OUR ZONE

The **Red Zone** is used to describe extremely heightened states of alertness and intense emotions. A person may be elated or experiencing anger, rage, explosive behaviour, devastation, or terror when in the Red Zone.

The **Yellow Zone** is also used to describe a heightened state of alertness and elevated emotions, however one has more control when they are in the Yellow Zone. A person may be experiencing stress, frustration, anxiety, excitement, silliness, the wiggles, or nervousness when in the Yellow Zone.

The **Green Zone** is used to describe a calm state of alertness. A person may be described as happy, focused, content, or ready to learn when in the Green Zone. This is the zone where optimal learning occurs.

The **Blue Zone** is used to describe low states of alertness and down feelings such as when one feels sad, tired, sick, or bored.

The Zones can be compared to traffic signs. When given a green light or in the Green Zone, one is “good to go”. A yellow sign means be aware or take caution, which applies to the Yellow Zone. A red light or stop sign means stop, and when one is in the Red Zone this often is the case. The Blue Zone can be compared to the rest area signs where one goes to rest or re-energize. All of the zones are natural to experience, but the framework focuses on teaching students how to recognize and manage their Zone based on the environment and its demands and the people around them. For example, when playing on the playground or in an active/competitive game, students are often experiencing a heightened internal state such as silliness or excitement and are in the Yellow Zone, but it may not need to be managed. However, if the environment is changed to the library where there are different expectations than the playground, students may still be in the Yellow Zone but have to manage it differently so their behaviour meets the expectations of the library setting.

More information can be found at: <http://www.zonesofregulation.com/index.html>



## **The Wheel of Choice**

The Wheel of Choice is a strategy developed by Lynn Lott and Jane Nelsen which offers solution focused strategies explicitly taught and devised by students to develop ways in which students can manage their own responses to challenging situations.

When students are involved in activities that help them practice the skills involved in the Wheel of Choice solutions they gain a deeper understanding of the choices available to them.

More information can be found at: <https://www.positivediscipline.com>


## **Individual Learning Plans and Behaviour Support Plans (where necessary individualised supports are implemented according to a department educational needs assessment)**

### **Individual education plan**

The purpose of an individual education plan is to develop and monitor an appropriate holistic program of assistance and support for the student, and should include actions such as:

- determining agreed expectations
- establishing personal contact
- increasing supervision of the student
- providing personal support and counselling for the student
- referring the student to support agencies
- making return-to-school arrangements and offering support.

Individual education plans may be a suitable intervention to improve attendance if issues are identified with a student's education level, such as their literacy or numeracy levels, or if poor engagement in learning is identified as contributing to the student's attendance pattern.

The Department requires that all government schools develop an individual education plan for each Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student, in a partnership between teachers, student, parent or caregiver and the Koorie Engagement Support Officer. See:  [Koorie education learning plan \(pdf - 1.56mb\)](#)

The out-of-home-care partnering agreement also commits to an educational needs assessment for all students in out-of-home care. For more information about supporting students in out-of-home care, see: [Out-of-home care and homelessness](#)

For more information on supports for these groups of students, see: [Support and resources for specific groups of students](#)

Individual education plans may be implemented following an attendance improvement plan, or a return to school plan if a student's educational attainment is an issue. For more information, see: [Individual education plans](#)

### **Behaviour support plan**

As part of a student support group or discipline procedures, it may be useful to develop and use a behaviour support plan (BSP). A BSP is a school-based document designed to assist individual students who have experienced harm, are at risk of harm, or have caused harm to others.

## **Respectful Relationships**

Respectful Relationships supports schools and early childhood settings to promote and model respect, positive attitudes and behaviours. It teaches our children how to build healthy relationships, resilience and confidence.

The Respectful Relationships whole-school approach recognises that schools are a workplace, a community hub and a place of learning. Everyone involved in our school community deserves to be respected, valued and treated equally.

We know that changes in attitudes and behaviours can be achieved when positive attitudes, behaviours and equality are lived across the school community, and when classroom learning is reinforced by what is modelled in our school community.

The Royal Commission into Family Violence identified the critical role that schools and early childhood education have in creating a culture of respect to change the story of family violence for future generations.

In 2016, respectful relationships education became a core component of the Victorian Curriculum from Foundation to year 12, and is being taught in all government and Catholic schools and many independent schools.

Everyone in our community deserves to be respected, valued and treated equally. We know that changes in attitudes and behaviours can be achieved when positive attitudes, behaviours and equality are embedded in our education settings.

Respectful Relationships is about embedding a culture of respect and equality across our entire community, from our classrooms to staffrooms, sporting fields, fetes and social events. This approach leads to positive impacts on student's academic outcomes, their mental health, classroom behaviour, and relationships between teachers and students.

Together, we can lead the way in saying yes to respect and equality, and creating genuine and lasting change so that every child has the opportunity to achieve their full potential.

### **A whole-school approach**

A whole-school approach encourages schools to review their existing procedures and culture to ensure that they model respectful relationships and gender equality practices across the entire school community.

Cultural and procedural change, means schools and their communities look at staff practices, classroom management, school events, sport programs, formals and other occasions, to ensure all aspects of a school's operation and culture are underpinned by respect and equality.

A whole-school approach to Respectful Relationships recognises that schools are:

- a workplace where all staff should feel equally respected, safe and valued and have equal opportunities
- a safe space where young people can learn about gender equality and respectful relationships, in and out of the classroom
- part of the wider community that can model gender equality and respectful relationships.

A resource kit for schools has been developed to provide schools with strategies and tools to support the implementation of the whole-school approach. For more information, see: [Teaching Respectful Relationships](#)

## The evidence for Respectful Relationships

"Family violence is complex and multifaceted but research shows that gender inequality is a key driver" (VicHealth, 2007)

More than one in three Australian women aged over 18 has experienced violence since the age of 15 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2012). A 2013 VicHealth study found that of Australian young people aged 16-24:

- Almost a quarter believe that partner violence can be excused if the person is so angry they lose control
- Only half knew where to get help if they were faced with a problem about violence against women (VicHealth, 2013)

The evidence supporting Respectful Relationships is overwhelming and comes from respected institutions such as the World Health Organisation and The Royal Commission into Family Violence. Helping children develop an understanding of healthy relationships and respect is key to preventing family violence in the future.

In 2014-15, Respectful Relationships education in schools was trialled across 19 schools, reaching 1700 teachers and 4000 students and was found to have had a positive effect on students' attitudes, knowledge and skills, and school policies, culture and ethos.

### The primary prevention of family violence

Respectful Relationships is informed by a public health model. The public health model takes a population approach to management of disease and injury and health promotion.

Respectful Relationships is defined as 'primary prevention' according to the public health model. Primary prevention focuses on preventing issues from occurring in the first place by targeting risk factors and social determinants of health through education and legislation.

In the example of family violence, this involves looking at the things that contribute to family violence occurring, and preventing them from happening.

Key underlying determinants and contributing factors in the perpetration of violence against women include:

- a lack of gender equality - e.g., rigid gender roles and identities, weak support for gender equality, masculine organisational cultures and masculine sense of entitlement
- cultural norms around violence - e.g. social norms and practices that are violence-supportive, weak sanctions against violence/violence against women, and previous exposure to violence
- a lack of access to resources and support systems - e.g. support for the privacy and autonomy of the family, unequal distribution of material resources, limited access to systems of support (VicHealth, 2007).

Primary prevention of violence against women therefore includes programs, campaigns, policies or other measures that set out to address these underlying factors and reduce the likelihood that violence against women will take place. Such actions may include strategies that:

- promote equal and respectful relations between men, women, boys and girls
- promote non-violent social norms and reduce the effects of prior exposure to violence
- promote access to resources and systems of support (VicHealth, 2007).

For more information please visit the websites below

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/teachingresources/discipline/capabilities/personal/Pages/respectfulrelapproach.aspx>

<http://fuse.education.vic.gov.au/Resource/ByPin?Pin=LFZGD2&SearchScope=All>

## **National Safe Schools Framework (Incorporating 'Bullying No Way!')**

The [National Safe Schools Framework \(PDF, 2.7MB\)](#) provides a vision and a set of guiding principles for safe, supportive and respectful school communities that promote student wellbeing. It is supported by all Australian education jurisdictions.

**These guiding principles emphasise the importance of student safety and wellbeing as a prerequisite for effective learning in all school settings.**

The National Safe Schools Framework adopts a whole-school approach to safety and wellbeing. It identifies nine elements of effective practice to help schools to counter harassment, violence and bullying:

1. Leadership commitment to a safe school
2. A supportive and connected school culture
3. Policies and procedures
4. Professional learning
5. Positive behaviour management
6. Engagement, skill development and safe school curriculum
7. A focus on student wellbeing and student ownership
8. Early intervention and targeted support
9. Partnerships with families and community

Each element contains a comprehensive range of strategies for school communities to use, based on good practice, research-based literature, and feedback from all educational systems, sectors and educators.

For more information please visit the following website:

<https://studentwellbeinghub.edu.au/docs/default-source/nationalsafeschoolsframework-pdf.pdf?sfvrsn=0>

## **Bullying No Way!**

Teachers can use the many opportunities that arise throughout the school day to discuss how people behave in various social situations, dealing with conflict, and how people get on with each other. Learning about bullying — what it is, why it happens and what to do about it — within everyday classroom activities reinforces school values related to respect and inclusion. It also communicates to everyone that bullying is never okay.

A starting point for thinking and learning is quality and appropriate teaching resources. A series of lesson plans on a wide range of topics has been developed by Bullying. No Way for each National Day of Action against Bullying and Violence, and is available all year round.

The Bullying. No Way! Teaching resources catalogue includes resources which have been reviewed by educators as suitable for use in the classroom. Teaching about bullying in a meaningful way involves adopting a reflective and critical thinking approach and ensuring all students are included. A well-planned curriculum incorporates social-emotional learning, safe and supportive school environments and respectful relationships as part of students' formal learning.

Talking and teaching about bullying in the classroom may raise personal issues for some students.

Bullying can be a sensitive topic to discuss in groups and classes, particularly if there are current unidentified bullying issues and as such personal disclosure guidelines exist for teacher reference.

For more information please visit the following website: <https://bullyingnoway.gov.au/>

## **Kids Matter**

KidsMatter Primary is a mental health and wellbeing framework for primary schools and is proven to make a positive difference to the lives of Australian children.

KidsMatter Primary provides the methods, tools and support to help schools work with parents and carers, health services and the wider community, to nurture happy, balanced kids. It is a flexible, whole-school approach to improving children's mental health and wellbeing for primary schools. It can be tailored to schools' local needs.

Through KidsMatter Primary, schools undertake a two-to three-year cyclical process in which they plan and take action to be a positive community; one that is founded on respectful relationships and a sense of belonging and inclusion, and that promotes:

- social and emotional learning (including evidence-based social and emotional learning programs)
- working authentically with parents, carers and families
- support for students who may be experiencing mental health difficulties.

When schools take on KidsMatter, they build on the work that they are already doing in these areas. Mental health and wellbeing is vital for learning and life. Children who are mentally healthy learn better, benefit from life experiences and have stronger relationships with family members, school staff and peers. Good mental health in childhood also provides a solid foundation for:

- managing the transition to adolescence and adulthood
- engaging successfully in education
- making a meaningful contribution to society.

School is the most significant developmental context, after family, for primary school-aged children. Schools play a crucial role in building children's self esteem and sense of competence. They can also act as a safety net and assist in protecting children from circumstances that affect their learning, development and wellbeing.

Schools, working closely with families and the community, are key environments for comprehensively supporting children's mental health and wellbeing.

As a national initiative, KidsMatter Primary, through its national and state and territory teams, provides a range of resources and support to all interested primary schools. These are provided free of charge. KidsMatter is funded by the Commonwealth Department of Health.

KidsMatter was extensively evaluated in 2009 by Flinders University. The evaluation found clear benefits for students, school staff and for schools.

Benefits for students included:

- Increased positive mental health (eg optimism and coping)
- Reduced mental health difficulties (eg emotional symptoms, hyperactivity, conduct problems and peer difficulties)
- Improvements in behaviour and motivation for students already experiencing mental health challenges

Benefits for staff included:

- Increased staff satisfaction
- Professional learning opportunities
- Improved student learning and behaviour

Benefits for schools included:

- Stronger parent engagement and parenting capacity
- More effective partnerships with community
- Improved student educational outcomes

For more information please visit the following website: <https://www.kidsmatter.edu.au/>

## **School Wide Positive Behaviour Support**

School-Wide Positive Behaviour Support (SWPBS) is an approach to assist school professionals improve social behaviour and academic outcomes. It provides guidance for adopting behaviour interventions into a single whole-school framework. The interventions are evidence based, with a focus on data-based decision making and preventing serious behavioural issues.

SWPBS is a broad range of systemic and individualised strategies for achieving important social and learning outcomes in schools while preventing problem behaviour. The key attributes of SWPBS include preventive activities, data-based decision making, and a problem solving orientation.

For more information please visit the following website:

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/management/improvement/Pages/swpbs.aspx>

## **Class Dojo**

Class Dojo is an application based communication system. Teachers utilise Class Dojo to inform and communicate with parents/carers and students about upcoming events on the school calendar, reinforce and engage students in previously taught positive strategies for learning and engaging with members of their school community.

For more information please visit the following website:

<https://www.classdojo.com/en-gb/?redirect=true>

## **Music & Mindfulness**

Students at Tallarook Primary School have the opportunity to work within their classroom groups with the Pastoral Care Officer (Peter) and the classroom teachers.

The Music & Mindfulness Program aims to promote pro-social behaviours in students in early and middle years. In partnership with classroom teachers weekly sessions are run which focus on specific areas of wellbeing and resilience through discussion based interaction and music therapy based activities.

The sessions engage students in activities promoting a deeper understanding of different feelings and emotions felt within the body as well as gain some strategies to better self-regulate and manage tricky feelings and emotions if challenged by other students or adults within school, home and community environments.

Whilst the older students in the school are focussed on leadership skills and working as a team reflecting and embedding the school values across their curriculum, students in the younger years develop language around their emotions and feelings through an experiential approach utilising music therapy and discussion as well as other scenario based examples to identify and express their emotions.

Additionally, strategies are provided for students to become more confident in expressing their concerns to trusted adults as well as utilising self regulation strategies to manage emotions arising in everyday situations. A variety of discussion based activities which educate students around emotional literacy will be utilised. In addition to this, music therapy methods focusing on percussion based improvisation, to develop mutual understanding of the individual differences between group members and a cohesive feeling of attunement, as well as pro-social activities such as dancing and singing. These activities endeavour to provide a platform for growth of self-esteem, respect for others, a shared experience of joy through positive moments of group socialisation.

### **Grade 6 Leadership Meetings**

As designated school leaders the Grade Six students at Tallarook Primary School have the opportunity to engage in regular meetings with members of the wellbeing team and/or the school Principal. During these meetings the students are asked to guide an agenda and draw on leadership skills they are developing to implement the Grade Six legacy, fundraising and social projects. In addition, students are encouraged to discuss effective leadership strategies and develop deeper understanding of how to support each other to maintain a school-wide community focus within their leadership styles.

### **Student Leadership (Junior School Council)**

Students from across the school (Foundation to Grade 6) are provided with leadership opportunities. They are democratically voted into positions by their peers. Regular meetings are held where the Junior School Council President is supported by staff to guide an agenda and draws on leadership skills to provide student voice within the community on items such as: learning opportunities, fundraising and social projects.