



# Parent Handbook



## School Vision

*The River School is a world leader in Neohumanist Education contributing to a future of compassion, joy, justice and universalism.*

**<https://riverschool.com.au>**

# Welcome

We are delighted to welcome you to our River School Family — A place where children are *Safe, Happy and Free to Learn*

Located on 15 acres of lush rainforest, *The River School* provides the complete package, with a *Primary School* from Prep through to Year 6 and an *Early Education Centre* for children aged 2 to 5 years including a comprehensive Kindergarten program.

The River School values your child's foundation years with a gentle introduction to academic confidence and ability, and an emphasis on the development of social and emotional skills. It is a place that provides solid grounding for life. At the River School we encourage our young people to question and extend their minds, be peacemakers and understand their connection and responsibility as responsible global citizens.

Teaching programs are designed with our Neohumanist philosophy as the starting point — love, respect and kindness to all, to engaging processes achieving Australian curriculum outcomes and importantly meeting the needs of individual learning styles. Learning experiences are continually built upon to encourage students to strive for their best, take risks and challenge themselves to expand their learning to higher levels of achievement. Students are supported through the development of a strong sense of self as a learner and our Virtues program to feel a sense of pride and ownership of their learning and choices.





# History of *The River School*

In 1984, 52 acres of farm and rainforest land was purchased by a group of like-minded individuals keen to establish a community housing cooperative with a service component. Initially the land was known as the *Maleny Land Community* with many of the founding members identifying as Ananda Marga, hence the Sanskrit name for the land – Ananda (bliss, happiness) Kamala (lotus). A number of the original shareholders still reside on the community land above the School, known as the *Prout Community Settlement Cooperative*.

In the late 1980s it was decided the main service project would be a primary school based on **Neohumanist** principles of love and respect for all. In 1995, the 15 acres of land set aside for the school received the stamp of approval by the QLD Department of Education. The school began with 23 students of mixed ages learning as one family in the original farm house.

Dada Ratnaprakash (whom many knew as Dada Ratnadevananda), was appointed Principal in October 1995, and remained in that position until December 2010. Prabha Demasson was appointed Administrator and spent eighteen dedicated years, including three of those years in the Principal position, developing, nurturing and building the heart and love that is The River School. In 2014, Jenny Oakley took over the helm as Principal, and in 2017, Ann Donoghoe, a staff member of the River School since 1997, was appointed current Principal.



The dedication and passion of the School Board — *Ananda Marga Education Ltd.*, the Prout Community and staff have all contributed to The River School becoming a world leader of Neohumanist educational practices.

# Our Philosophy - Neohumanism

The guiding philosophy of The River School and Early Childhood Centre is Neohumanism. Neohumanism takes the inner spirit of humanism (love of humanity) and expands it to also embrace plants, animals and the entire universe. Neohumanism recognises diversity but also emphasises the interconnectedness of all things. A Neohumanist education seeks to cultivate in children their already innate capacity for love and compassion.<sup>1</sup> *“When the love of the human heart extends its embrace to the entire living and non-living worlds, this is Neohumanism.” (PR Sarkar)*

Neohumanist education aims to develop the full physical, cognitive and spiritual potential of each child. The methodology of NHE is flexible, creative and culturally sensitive. It empowers children internally through personal and spiritual development, and externally through academic subjects, creativity and the arts, music, physical education and other life skills.

Personal development includes spiritual concepts such as universal love, meditation and yoga, morality, integrity, intuition and interpersonal skills such as courtesy, cooperation, communication, decision-making, conflict resolution, problem solving and self awareness /regulation. As part of Neohumanism, an awareness of ecology is promoted in its broadest sense; the realisation of the inter-relatedness of all things, with active encouragement for the respect and care of all living beings and the environment. As an extension of this, everyone involved with our School are expected to consume only vegetarian food while at school.



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**The goal of a Neohumanist education** is to expand gradually a student’s sense of community: from self, to family, locality, country, humanity, life on earth and ultimately the entire universe. A Neohumanist education is also an ‘education for the whole child’, that is, for the physical, mental and spiritual child. It is about doing (activity in the world), knowing (learning) and being (entering one’s inner world). A successful education leads to a deep desire for further learning which then continues throughout life. However, there is abundant evidence that the kindergarten and primary school years are supremely important because they lay foundations for the rest of one’s life.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> /2 Neohumanist Education — A handbook for teachers. Michael Towsey. 2018



# The River School Education

As a Government approved, independent School, we extend our mindset of excellence beyond the requirements of the Australian Curriculum to ensure our programs offer a balance of formal numeracy and literacy skills, a rich Arts focus, including visual arts, music, dance and drama, and an emphasis on inquiry, creative thinking and problem solving through the sciences, geography, history, technology and language.

At The River School we recognise that our responsibility as educators goes beyond the teaching of academic subjects. Neohumanist education values and encourages the development of all facets of the children in our care, including spiritual, emotional and social development.

Embedded within all our learning activities are opportunities for the development of skills such as communication, team work, honesty and leadership. Our virtues program explicitly teaches the values of compassion and love, which are further modelled as the underlying basis of our philosophy through natural integration in all that we do.

We love and nurture our students and value each as an individual with absolute potential. Through our holistic approach we ensure that children feel loved and safe, and that they are given every opportunity to grow academically, spiritually, emotionally and socially. We believe that the most important outcome of education is balanced, moral adults capable of creating a global society of justice, acceptance and spiritual freedom, who actively work towards the universal good of all.



# A Balanced Approach to Learning

In the early years, we immerse children in learning through a play based curriculum with an emphasis on fun and imagination. Teachers enrich play by supplementing and stimulating the children's own ideas. They create a rich environment for indoor and outdoor play within a structured day that includes large group, small group and individual activities. Using play, imagination and creativity as a basis for early learning helps children develop a love of learning and helps sustain their natural creativity and passion.

Our child-centred approach caters to each child's interests, learning time-frames, learning-styles and their academic, social and emotional uniqueness. By providing a rich environment and a variety of educational choices, we help children direct, develop and expand their own interests and unique talents. Because we are a small school, with a low student/teacher ratio, and plenty of volunteer and parent support, teachers can accommodate the varying needs of each child. We support children in making their own choices, both individually and as a group.

In later years, we use themes, projects and areas of interests as a focus to make learning relevant and exciting. We especially encourage service-based projects that impact the community and globe, so that children learn ways to positively make a difference and see the results of their work.

A unique aspect of our approach stems from our understanding of child development. Unlike other educational systems, we not only recognise that every child has their own unique time-frame of development across all facets, we provide a learning environment that honours this. All manner of learning opportunities are available in all classrooms but there is no expectation that all children are ready for every experience. Furthermore, there is no pressure or stress put upon our students to achieve certain benchmarks by certain ages. It is imperative to us that our students love learning and that we know, acknowledge and cater for each child as an individual.







## Real World Learning

An important aspect of our learning program is that it is relevant to our students and upholds our Neohumanist values. To this end, much of our learning is placed in a real-world context. We avoid, where possible, teaching academic skills in isolation, and prefer using authentic units of inquiry or themes in which to embed much of our academics. This allows students to engage more fully in the learning process and ensures a greater understanding and knowledge of content and academic skills.

By integrating the various learning areas and making our learning experiences current and relevant, we have the opportunity to provide our students with rich and deep learning experiences. Furthermore, our units of learning often have an environmental or service orientation that instill our appreciation and compassion for other people and our environment.

## Universalism

Neohumanist education aims to help children understand and feel that they are part of a universal family. We encourage learning about the diverse cultures of the world and developing understanding of our differences, similarities and connections. The broadmindedness of our education alongside our involvement with other Neohumanist schools, helps children to expand their minds beyond narrow thinking and prejudice and become open-hearted and loving members of a universal community.

# Rational Thinking

Developing a strong sense of rationality helps combat the limitations of dogma and narrow-mindedness that can divide human society. An exciting aspect of learning at the River School is that of rational thinking. Rational thinking equips our students with the ability to be deep thinkers and critical questioners. Our students are encouraged to question rather than simply accept what they see, read or are told. This not only develops the skills necessary to step beyond being passive receptors of information, but allows children to develop a strong sense of identity, confidence in their own decisions and judgments, and potentially allows our children to be agents of change now and in the future.



# Spiritual Learning

Yoga and meditation are significant inclusions in our school curriculum. The benefits of both yoga and meditation are well known and all children from our Pre-Kindy to Year 6 are involved in both practices. Spirituality is the progressive awareness of one's inner self to recognise a deeper connection within the universal whole.

Our virtues program that is taught explicitly as well as being embedded in our learning programs and all that we do, has been specifically designed by our school, for our school. Our school songs further reinforce our virtues and our children engage in singing experiences as a whole school and with their class on a regular basis.



# Early Childhood Centre (ECC)

Our Early Childcare Centre, rated *Excellent* by the *Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority*, prides itself on its quality Kindergarten programs and long-day care facility. The Centre is a Government Approved and Funded Kindergarten provider, preparing our children for an exciting and gentle transition into the Preparatory year. We have two family groups: Pre-Kindergarten (2yrs – 3 yrs) and Kindergarten (3 yrs – 5 yrs). In 2016, we started our “Creek Kindy” program which the children adore. Our Creek Kindy honours our children as natural explorers, creative individuals and deep thinkers. We also have specialised Music and Arts & Cultural studies programs that run at the Early Childhood Centre.



## Primary School

Although our Primary classrooms are predominantly single stream, we encourage activities that are collective (mixed ages). This includes our ECC children working and playing with children from the primary school in pre-arranged, supervised activities. As well as encouraging unity and thoughtfulness, our collective activities encourage leadership and patience in our older students, while our younger students benefit from the guidance and help of the older children.

## Facilities

Our Early Childhood Centre has two ‘classrooms’ as well as a shared foyer space for Yoga and Meditation. Outside areas include a large deck, undercover play area, atelier (creative space), beautiful gardens and play spaces, and special areas for our rehabilitated chickens. Further, our ECC students regularly use the creek, music room, art shed and yoga hall in the Primary School.

Our Primary School has a separate classroom for each year level. Some of these rooms are particularly large and two contain kitchen areas and bathrooms. We have a beautiful Art Shed, a music room, library, tuckshop, teacher resource room, hall and meditation/yoga space (the Jagrti). We have a large oval area and equipment playgrounds, including a musical playground. Our edible gardens are cared for by our children and the produce disappears as fast as it grows! We also have some beautiful climbing trees and rainforest areas for the children to explore. Bridge Creek runs through the grounds and is a favourite spot for swimming in the summer, for class sessions and for adventure and investigative play all year round.

# The River School Curriculum

The River School follows the Australian National Curriculum, providing education in a supportive learning environment based on a healthy mutual respect between students and teachers.

The national curriculum is integrated into the Neohumanist Education framework of play-based and thematic learning and includes meditation and yoga, art, music, literature, drama and film, sports, environmental studies (eco-studies), indigenous studies and child-to-child learning (kids teaching kids). We also have an Empowerment teacher who provides children with support in academic learning as well as specialised programmes for social and emotional learning. We have had excellent results integrating all students into our classrooms.

Our academic curriculum is designed to achieve excellence through its integrated and inquiry-based programs. The Australian National Curriculum, along with the school's Neohumanist philosophy, forms the foundation from which all learning stems. Further, Neohumanist philosophy provides a focus on research-based teaching and learning, allowing up-to-date, peer-reviewed understanding of child development and learning to inform our teaching practices.

Classes are purposely kept small to enable maximum student-teacher interaction and the building of genuine learning relationships. Teaching programs are tailored to meet individual learning styles and small group and whole class needs. Learning experiences are continually built upon to allow students to strive for their best, take risks and challenge themselves to expand their learning to higher levels of achievement.

Teachers at The River School have a demonstrated passion for the teaching profession and a true love of children. Their aim is to empower students with a desire to learn, and in turn develop deep understandings so that students are in a position to make choices based on critical thinking and self-knowledge. All our staff are addressed by their first names, building respectful relationships between adults and children.

Our teaching team is committed to ensuring your child is *safe, happy and free to learn*.





# How does the National Curriculum work in our classrooms?

The Australian Curriculum is a very busy curriculum that can often leave little time for the acquisition of deep knowledge and understanding. At The River School we focus on the Achievement Standards of the National Curriculum, ensuring that we meet National Standards whilst allowing us to individualise our learning programs and integrate learning topics and areas that broaden and strengthen our students' knowledge about themselves and the world around them.

Examples of our learning units include:

## From Little Things Big Things Grow

This delightful unit engaged our younger students in a number of practical activities designed to bring awareness to the growing and changing world around them including the knowledge that they share their world with small and large animals and plants. Students learnt that their own actions and effort could produce results and that they are responsible for and can directly effect the welfare of others (including creatures and plants). The creation of a class garden assisted students in deepening their understanding of their responsibility to care for others and the planet.



## My Amazing Brain

Year 4 students were taken on an incredible journey of the human brain. This neuroscience discovery-based learning unit was designed to show students how the brain works and the role it plays in everyday life. By journeying through the brain, children appreciated the importance of this organ and how certain aspects of the brain affect the way we think, behave, learn and remember.

Our units of work allow us to delve deeply into questions and ideas. These questions and ideas are developed, often from students' interests, and will change year to year depending on the learning, emotional and social needs of each class.

At The River School we understand that one size *doesn't* fit all. The flexibility in what we teach and how we teach it ensures our students are engaged, challenged and have access to learning beyond the standard curriculum requirements.

## 2019 Progressive Learning Neohumanist Curriculum Alignment with Australian Curriculum

| <b>FAMILY GROUP</b>   | <b>TERM 1</b>  | <b>TERM 2</b>   | <b>TERM 3</b>  | <b>TERM 4</b>   |
|---|--|---|--|---|
| <b>PUGGLES (Prep)</b><br><b>Me &amp; My World</b><br>Starting with ME – Knowing who I am and expanding to where I live, in the world. | <b>Wonderful Sustainable Me</b><br>(Knowing who I am)              | <b>Australia – My Beautiful Home</b><br>(About My Connection to Place)  | <b>My World is Amazing</b><br>(Expanding My Place)<br>Developing a deeper connection and understanding, care and compassion of the world I am part of. | <b>Growing Around Me</b><br>(Connection to the Growing World Around Me)                                     |
| <b>PADEMELONS (Yr. 1)</b><br><b>Belonging</b><br>(Connection — Me, My group, My place)  | <b>Belonging to a Group</b>  | <b>Belonging to the Earth We are gardeners</b><br>(How we can effect change through our actions)              | <b>Belonging to my Community Out &amp; About</b>   | <b>My Imagination Belongs to Me Nature sprite</b><br>(We belong to a tradition of imaginative storytelling) |
| <b>KINGFISHERS (Yr. 2/3)</b><br><b>Growing Global</b><br>(Making the Connection between ourselves, others & the environment)          | <b>Council of All Creatures</b><br>(Everything Can Co-exist)       | <b>Making a Difference</b><br>(Research to discover people who have made positive contributions to the world) | <b>Exploring Our World</b><br>(Learning about our world through Geographical, Scientific & philosophical Investigations)                               | <b>Importance of Community</b><br>(Past to present – our impact on others & the environment)                |
| <b>PICCABEENS (Yr. 4)</b><br><b>Growth Mindset</b><br>(Deeper understanding of self, and relationship to others and the environment)  | <b>Growing A Growth Mindset</b>                                    | <b>Just Like Me</b>   | <b>Why Waste?</b><br>How does the environment support the lives of people and other living things?   | <b>Human Impact</b><br>(Land focus – deforestation etc.)  |
| <b>REGENTS (Yr. 5)</b><br><b>The Guardians</b><br>(My role in caring for all life)  | <b>Active Guardians of our Earth</b>                               | <b>Active Guardians of our Oceans &amp; Waterways</b>   | <b>Spectacular Spinning Earth</b><br>(Space focus)<br><br>A Universal understanding  | <b>Exploring and guarding our Unique Planet</b>   |
| <b>RED CEDARS (Yr. 6)</b><br><b>The Power of One</b><br>(Completing the Circle – ending with ME – Knowing what I am capable of)       | <b>What is the Power of One?</b><br>(Social emotional development) | <b>The Power of One to vote</b><br>(Government Focus / Human Rights)  | <b>The Power of One in nature – Volcanoes building of the planet, creators of life</b><br>(Big events that create Change – Warrior Camp)               | <b>The Power of One in Me</b>   |



# Empowerment Centre

The Empowerment Centre is a place of learning where students at The River School are provided with intensive literacy and numeracy sessions to ensure that they reach their full potential in the classroom. Programs run at the Empowerment Centre are individually tailored to meet the needs of each student and are designed to compliment their learning preferences.

The Empowerment Centre maintains a close relationship with all classroom teachers. This in turn guarantees that learning activities completed at the Centre support the students' classroom learning.

While learning at the Empowerment Centre is coveted by the children at our school with many children asking to be part of its program, the children who attend the Empowerment Centre are carefully selected on a needs basis. While so many children would love the opportunity to work at the Empowerment Centre and so many children would benefit from the experience, there is of course, not enough hours in the day to have a program for each child. The selection of children is carefully made through consultation with the Principal, Empowerment Centre teacher and the classroom teacher.

The primary purpose of the Empowerment Centre is to provide opportunities where all students can reach their potential. The programs described above have been running successfully for a number of years.

The Empowerment Centre is inspired by Neohumanist values. It is the intention of the Centre to instill in students a lifelong love of learning, a sense of connectedness with the world, a sense of freedom to express themselves, and the confidence to contribute meaningfully to their community and to the world.

## Reading Support

In addition to the services offered by our Empowerment Centre, we are fortunate to have 'Story Dogs' visit our school once a week to offer a gentle reading program for children who are challenged by the written word. In this delightful, voluntary service our young children have the opportunity to share the reading of the written word to trained dogs.



# Meditation and Yoga

We have teachers of yoga and meditation who are experts in these fields to teach and develop yoga and meditation skills to our students. Meditation at The River School is a daily event. Our week begins with a whole school Morning Circle. Morning Circle begins with a whole school meditation followed by songs and a class virtue presentation. This is a beautiful way to start the week. Each class also participates in a weekly lesson on meditation, guided and facilitated by our meditation teacher. On the other days, each class enjoys Quiet Time which includes yoga, meditation and quiet reflection guided by the classroom teacher.

We teach meditation at The River School to:

- Help children utilise their full potential
- Give our minds a “rest”
- Help children find happiness and contentment within, so they don't feel only material objects can fulfill them
- Create peace and relaxation to enhance the ability to learn
- Create an environment so that children may have a genuine taste of spiritual bliss and peace.

At our Bliss Centre, where Morning Circle is held, each class, including those from our Early Childhood Centre, participate in our weekly yoga class. At The River School we value being able to involve our children in these classes to reap the benefits of obtaining the skills of relaxing the mind and body.

## Virtues Program

Every week all classes focus on a specific virtue from our Virtues program. Children engage in artwork, role-plays, journaling and participate in brainstorming and discussions to fully integrate the qualities of each virtue. One class each week presents their understanding of the given virtue at Morning Circle, and writes an affirmation about that virtue for the school.

The 10 \* virtues of the River School are:

- Love
- Respect
- Contentment
- Responsibility
- Courage
- Simple Living
- Service
- Honesty
- Compassion
- Knowledge



\*These virtues were chosen for The River School in consultation with the local Ananda Marga community. The 10 River School virtues reflect the 10 precepts of Yama-Niyama which provide us with social codes on how to live a life of love, compassion and integrity. Creating an awareness of these qualities enhances and encourages virtuous choices.



# Art and Cultural Studies

A Specialist teacher is employed in the role of Art and Cultural Studies teacher at our school. This innovative learning program is diverse and flexible, and is designed to engage and deepen our students' understanding of various cultures and creative expression. Children engage in multi-media projects to demonstrate their understandings of the topics being studied. Stand-out presentations include a video created by our Regents (Year 5) titled "River School Paper Project", the Kingfisher (Year 3) presentation about our Pacific Island neighbours and Regents yearly 'Kids in Action' projects. A significant aspect of our Arts and Cultural Studies program is learning about and embedding a deep understanding of Indigenous culture.

Art is not just a specialist area of study at the River School; it's a context through which other learning outcomes can be realised, and core skills such as critical thinking and problem solving are developed. The Art program is designed in consultation with classroom teachers and is integrated into many different learning areas and units of work. Our students learn a variety of art skills and produce beautiful and unique pieces that can be seen around the school. Examples of art undertaken by our students include lantern making, sewing, book making and printing. The Art Shed is open twice a week during lunchtimes for students to undertake personal creative projects. On occasion, local artists including Indigenous artists, come in to teach specific techniques and children have the opportunity to do more in-depth projects. Every year we display some of the children's artwork at the Maleny Show.

"As a teacher, I create the 'space' for my students to experiment with materials and engage with a range of quality activities that allow for self-expression and innovation. I love observing the transformative power of art in action. Observing these 'magic moments' during the artistic process, is what inspires me in my role as teacher." (Alieta Belle - Arts & Culture teacher)



# Music

Our music program began in 2004 with each primary class having one music session a week. We have developed a progressive program with fun and feeling, giving children a broad range of instrumental and vocal experiences. This leads to opportunities for individual tuition, group ensembles and



performances throughout the school year. Included in the music program are songs that reflect our themes of universalism, ecology and other positive concepts. These songs are an important part of everyday learning, especially in the lower primary. We also offer small group tuition in guitar, marimba, percussion, performance and choir. For children desiring individual tuition, we have a private music teacher onsite who takes children for guitar, singing and keyboard lessons.

# Dance

In 2015 we introduced Dance into The River School as an extracurricular activity that is available to all students. Students can participate in dance & movement during lunch time dance sessions, twice a week. Dance has also been incorporated into our school performances and community events.



# Information Technology

In this modern age, learning to use information technology in a useful but critical way is essential for all students. At *The River School* technology is for educational purposes only and the playing of non-educational games is not permitted.

Technology use is closely monitored by classroom teachers and is used in the classroom for direct teaching purposes, individual skill practise and research. Our classrooms connect to the internet with broadband cables instead of wifi. Use of technology is kept to a minimum as we educate students to access a range of learning tools including outdoor resources. Classes can access the new computer hub for a variety of technology and design projects.

All personal devices bought into the school by students are secured in the office during school time and returned at the end of the day [policy — Acceptable Use of Personal of Electronic Devices Policy 2019]





# Environmental Studies

So much of our learning encompasses the study of ecology and the inter-relatedness of all things. Our children engage in caring for our natural environment on a regular basis, either informally or formally. We work with a number of environmental groups and individuals to broaden our understandings and our ability to care for our environment.

Some of our classes tend and cultivate class gardens over the school year and relish in the bounty of produce that is provided. They learn not only the value of nurturing our environment but also the symbiotic relationship that it provides.

## Skills-based Learning

Due to the flexibility of our delivery of curriculum, all year levels undertake skills-based learning as part of their units of work. Particular favourites at *The River School* are gardening (including the eating of our yummy produce) and cooking. Our tuckshop kitchen is available for small groups or classes to learn preparation and cooking skills, and our ECC, Puggles (Prep) and Pademelons (Year 1) are lucky enough to have their own kitchens. Other skills-based learning undertaken at *The River School* have included but are not limited to: sewing, tree planting, recycling projects, photography and service activities.

## Physical Education

Neohumanist philosophy recognises the importance of healthy bodies, as well as the facets of emotional, spiritual, social and academic growth. Our classroom teachers are responsible for ensuring that physical activity is a high priority within the curriculum. Numerous studies indicate that a healthy body is essential for optimum learning and most classes will undertake some sort of physical activity on a daily basis. This may include yoga, games, skill sessions, swimming, team sports or even trekking up the creek.

At The River School we emphasise teamwork and sportsmanship in all that we do. During games and physical education, our focus is not on winning but working together and having fun. We have a Sports Coordinator who organises for professionals in their field to teach our children a variety of sports including: netball, basketball, soccer, and orienteering,

In the summer terms, our children participate in swimming activities at the Maleny Pool and at our creek! In Term 3 we have our full-day River School athletics carnival, the “Friendly Olympics”. Our children in Years 1-6 train all term in various field events such as javelin, discus, long jump, high jump and sprints to compete at the Friendly Olympics with the aim to improve their own scores (distances etc) gained during the term. This is an extraordinarily fun family day which begins with an Olympic March around the oval and ends with fun races. Our Puggles (Prep) and ECC children join us and participate in some activities organised especially for them.

# Lunch Time Clubs

There are a number of lunch time clubs available to students in Years 1 - 6. They are generally mixed ages and may vary from term to term depending on interest and resources. Clubs during 2019 included: The Cuppa Club (conversation and drama are enjoyed over a cup of herbal tea and biscuit, finishing with an active and fun game), Sport, Acro and Performance Dance, Music, Art and Skipping.



## Service

Service and the deeper understanding of service from the heart is an important part of The River School. We encourage our children to be involved in service projects throughout the year. This may be part of their unit of learning in class or a specific project they have chosen to be part of.

In 2013, for example, our Gumnuts (Year 2) undertook a unit on Random Acts of Kindness. A beautiful book was published, “The Kindness of Gumnuts”, which told their journey of giving to our local and broader community. Part of this journey included knitting a beautiful blanket for an Indigenous community and making planter boxes of lovely flowers to give away randomly in our Maleny community. This was a very moving experience for the children and parents and for the recipients of this Random Act of Kindness.

Our students also partake in fundraising activities for causes that are close to their hearts, such as environmental and animal care groups, and other less fortunate schools overseas. We regularly support local groups such as our Neighbourhood Centre by cooking and serving food at their ‘soup kitchen’.

Acts of Service can take many forms from helping a friend, being thoughtful to others, rescuing a caterpillar from the driveway and cleaning up rubbish from our school. The children at The River School are very giving students and learn the personal and global benefits of giving from our virtues program, service projects and the modeling of service by all our staff.



# School Camps

Once a year students in Years 2 to 6 participate in external, school camps. Camps have always been a major part of *The River School* curriculum with students returning happy and eager to share their amazing experiences. We are proud of the way *The River School Camp Program* has developed to become a progressive and purposeful journey for our young people.

The **lower primary** students (Years 2 and 3) look forward to their family focused camp at *Bribie Island, House of Happiness*. Bike rides, volcanoes on the beach, swimming, outings to the Seaside and Abbey Museums, beach walks, games and performances ensure an action packed program for our young students and their families.

The **Piccabeens'** (Year 4) camp at *Noosa North Shore Retreat* is run by *Total Adventures Group*, who provide not only the accommodation and meals, but also trained instructors for the activities. With a strong focus on team building and personal challenge, the students are provided with opportunities to learn new skills, work collaboratively to solve problems and set personal goals in a supportive and encouraging environment.

Connection with land and sea is the theme for **Regents** (Yr. 5). This camp takes place on Moreton Island with activities designed to deepen student awareness of the life systems created by nature on the land and in the oceans.

**Red Cedars** (Yr. 6) look forward to the much anticipated Young Warrior Leadership Camp. Over four days our Yr. 6 students take part in a range of activities designed to push themselves to new known limits. The aim of this camp is to '*assist young people develop personal resilience and equip them with skills to grow into balanced, loving humans.*' Discovering the warrior within develops respectful young people who want to positively contribute to humanity, and become balanced adults. This camp importantly holds space for parents to continue to grow as individuals and provide better examples and environments for their family. This epic journey for our young school leaders is run by the *Resilient Leaders Foundation* – *Kirsty & James Greenshields*.

**Note:** As part of our Energy Contribution scheme (see Funding and Fees), parents may nominate to assist with the supervision of the children during the day activities and nights of each camp. Most camps take place in the third term, however this is dependent on the specific needs of each class group.

## Excursions

Excursions are also an active and integral part of our learning. We have explored many parts of our local environment, from hikes up the creek, to examination of Maleny's history, recycling projects, Qld Parliament House to visits to the beach, local waterfalls, museums, zoos and more.

# The River School Team

The River School is governed by Ananda Marga Education Ltd. This Governing Body is comprised of a Board of Directors who work with the Principal in areas of strategy and compliance.

The current Principal is Anne Donoghoe. Anne has worked at The River School as a Classroom Teacher since 1997. In 2015, Anne became the school's Deputy Principal before taking on the position of School Principal in 2018. Anne brings her passion and many years of River School experience to the position.

An Ananda Marga *Acharya* is assigned to The River School as the school spiritual leader. The Acharya works closely with the School Board, Principal and staff to facilitate a weekly class 'Quiet Time' session which includes yoga, meditation and the 'getting of wisdom'. In addition to leading mediation and yoga lessons the Acharya is a sounding board, confidante and friend to the staff, students and families of our school.

The teachers at our school are dedicated and passionate about The River School's Neohumanist philosophy. Our teachers love our students and go above and beyond to ensure that students enjoy their time at school and receive high quality education. We have a low student-teacher ratio with enormous support from our teacher aides.

## Parent Committee (P&F)

The River School has an active Parents and Friends Committee that meet monthly and provide valued assistance and advice to our teachers and Principal and organise numerous events during the year. Each class has a Parent Representative who assists the teacher by liaising with other parents and representing that class at the Parent and Friends monthly meeting. All parents of the River School are invited and welcome to become part of this committee.

## Café Nights

Café Nights are generally once a term and are a fun way for our families to get together in a social setting. The Parents Committee is involved in the running of these evenings and helping to prepare and serve delicious River School food. The evening normally includes a shared meal followed by entertainment provided by students, staff or family members. Café nights allow our children to showcase their talents, passions and confidence.





# Parent Involvement

We value and appreciate all parent and family involvement at The River School. Research is very clear that children's positive experiences and learning outcomes of their schooling years is significantly increased and improved through parent involvement. Furthermore, parent helpers and volunteers ensure we can continue to offer great learning experiences and a wonderful environment for our children.

There are many opportunities for parents to be involved in our school. These include, but are not limited to:

- \* Tuckshop
- \* Gardening
- \* Classroom help
- \* Camps & excursions
- \* Cafe Nights
- \* Fundraising events
- \* Spring Festival



Any time that parents volunteer in our school it can contribute to reducing their term's fees by up to \$200 p/term at a rate of \$20 per hour. (See Funding and Fees for more information on our Energy Contribution Scheme).



## Health

The health of our students and environment is very important. At The River School we use natural products where possible in the maintenance or cleaning of our grounds or buildings. We understand the potential hazards of many cleaning and maintenance products and do not expose our children to any of these. No chemicals are used on our gardens and all our produce is organic. While our office area uses Wifi, our classroom internet is hard-wired with Wifi available and turned on only when necessary in our senior classes.

# Special Programs

**Warrior camp** for our Year 6 boys and girls. Our students head out on Warrior Camp with adult role models, to connect with each other and more importantly with themselves. During this transition from child to adolescent, the Warrior camp instills in our students a strong sense of purpose and identity, and is an important rite of passage at our School.

**Yr. 6 Surfing program** - In Term 4 students participate in a surf skill and safety program. They are taught how to 'read' the ocean and how to ride a surf board. Our School organises this program in conjunction with North Caloundra Surf School.

Our ***Celebration Day for Girls*** program is offered to Year 5 mothers and daughters. This program is delivered via a one-day workshop with the girls for the full day and their mothers joining their daughters for the afternoon.

At the *Celebration Day*, the girls enjoy lively discussion, fun activities, craft, women's stories and gentle celebration of the magical threshold of puberty and menarche.

During the day they are warmly invited into the time-honoured, nurturing connection and support women have long shared with each other. Many participants report that their mother-daughter relationship is enriched and enlivened as the doors of communication in this key area of female experience and development are opened wide.





# Transition Program

The River School has developed strong and effective transition programs for students as they move from Kindy to Prep in the Big School, and from the final year of Primary School into Secondary School.

Our Prep transition program begins in Term 4 of the Kindy year with four visits to our Prep learning space. The transition visits occur without our current Prep students, so that the Kindy children can spend time familiarising themselves with Prep without the older children. Our Kindy teachers accompany the children on these visits and parents are welcome to attend. New children to the River School enrolling for Prep in the following year, are also invited to these transition days.

Students in Years 1 - 5 have two transition days during Term 4 to familiarise themselves with the teacher and space for the following year.

Our Year 6 students are well prepared for their move to Secondary School, particularly in regards to their confidence, strong sense of identity and resilience. Year after year, teachers and administrators from our local high school compliment our students' confidence, academic and creative abilities, caring and compassionate natures and their strong sense of self.

## Behaviour Support

The River School recognises that learning occurs across all domains, including behaviour. Our goal is for students to become self-regulators and monitors of their own behavioural choices. As such, we, as adults are here to guide children through this process. We understand that a punitive approach to inappropriate behavioural choices may cause a shift in behaviour through fear of punitive consequences but does not encourage a true shift in the feelings or emotions that influence inappropriate behaviour. Thus, our supportive program helps children to understand the effects of behaviour on themselves and others and to make true shifts in their thinking and choices. We do not wish children to behave in a certain way simply because they are being monitored by an adult, we wish for them the ability to make positive and appropriate choices for themselves.

We use a restorative framework when guiding students through understanding the consequences of particular behavioural choices. Restoring relationships with others and self is paramount to this framework, recognising that behaviour has consequences for all involved. Restoring relationships that have been effected can take many forms; these are decided upon by the student in conjunction with teachers, the Principal and/or the parents. Such consequences of behaviour seek to help students be agents of their own choices in the future by being logical, focused on the behaviour and not the student, and often involving a service element to build the student's esteem and confidence through helping others.

There are numerous benefits to our behaviour support system that we see daily at The River School and beyond. Our children do not fear telling the truth. They understand that we are here to help them and there is no reason to be fearful of being honest, regardless of the circumstance. Furthermore, inappropriate behaviour rarely goes "underground" in an attempt to hide it from others. Children learn to understand triggers and factors that influence behaviour choices and similarly learn to self-monitor and regulate their behaviour, extending into the self-confidence and self-understanding to make appropriate choices beyond their time at the River School.



## Class Sizes

Our class sizes are capped at 24 students. While we prefer to have no more than 22 students per class, we will, in exceptional circumstances, extend this. We often have waiting lists for particular year levels so parents are encouraged to secure their enrolment earlier rather than later.

## Staff-student ratio

Keeping the staff-student ratio as low as possible is an important consideration at the River School. In our youngest classrooms we have a full-time teacher aide to support the teacher and students. All other classes receive teacher aide time, the allocation of which is determined by the age of the students, the number of students in the class, and the needs of the students in each class.

## Wellbeing



At the River School we honour a parent's right to make personal and individual choices regarding their child's health.

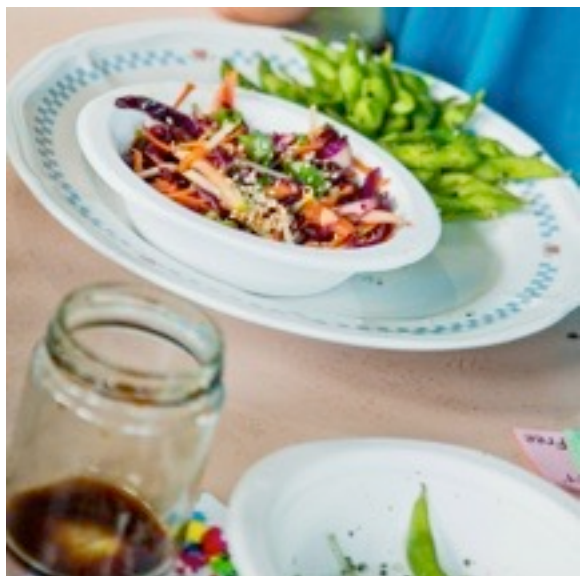
If children are unwell, particularly with a contagious condition (including head lice and impetigo) we ask that they remain at home until the condition passes. If a child becomes unwell at school, we will look after them in our wellness room and will contact parents to pick them up as necessary.

All our staff are trained in first aid and the remedies we use at school are Homeopathic treatments. We will administer other medications provided by parents under certain conditions. Please see the office if this is a necessity for your child.



# Food

It is well known that food plays an important role in health, including physical, emotional and mental health. A condition of enrolment at The River School is that our food policies are adhered to within the school grounds and on any school excursion or camp. We ask that parents respect the following food policies for their child's school lunches, snacks and school events.



**Sentient Vegetarian:** No meat, poultry, seafood or eggs. Additionally, we ask that you avoid onions, garlic and mushrooms as these foods do not align with our understanding of the positive workings of the human nervous system.

**Unhealthy foods:** We ask parents to avoid 'foods' that are high in sugar or contain preservatives, additives and food colourings. Junk food specifically has no place at the River School, and lollies and sweets will be removed from lunchboxes. Foods that have high sugar content or are full of preservatives can adversely affect a child's ability to concentrate and learn, and to be in control of their actions and behaviour.

**Minimal food packaging:** We encourage parents to use minimal packaging in their child's lunchbox and we also encourage children to take all packaging home.

**Nuts:** The inclusion of nuts in your child's lunch, while a healthy option, may be potentially dangerous for a child with a nut allergy. Families will be notified at the beginning of each school year if nut products, and which type of nuts, are allowed on the school grounds. At present, we ask that **no peanuts** be brought on to the school grounds.

## Special Occasions

We are happy to celebrate your child's birthday at school and a number of parents bring in cake for these occasions. If you wish to do this, we ask that our food guidelines are followed – ask at the office if you need a recipe.

In the lower grades particularly, birthday parties outside of school are inclusive of the whole class. We encourage this practice and ask that if you are having a birthday party not including all students, that arrangements for this occur outside of school rather than party invitations being given out at school.

Furthermore, commemorations of ANZAC Day and Remembrance Day are held outside of school at local community events. Each year on ANZAC Day our school is represented in the commemorative march in Maleny and the service at the RSL. Involvement in community events are voluntary.



# School Buses

We have a number of buses that offer free transport to and from school in selected areas. Demand for a place on our buses is high, and parents must book a place on a permanent basis, or on a daily basis as the need arises or a place becomes available.

We have a strict code of conduct for behaviour on our school buses, and a child who exhibits unsafe behaviour,

including behaviour that is distracting to the bus driver, can potentially lose their place and right to travel on the bus.

We generally use our school buses for school excursions, which provides a significant financial saving for parents.



# School Times

Early arrivers - will be supervised from 8:20am on the lower deck. Please do not arrive before this time - thank you.

Our school day begins at 8.45am and ends at 2.45pm.

It is expected that children arrive by 8.40am for the beginning of class.

We have 2 official breaks during the day:

1<sup>st</sup> break 10.30 – 11.15

2<sup>nd</sup> break 12.45 – 1.15



# Own Work

There is mixed research about the benefits of homework, and we understand that families have differences in opinions about the usefulness of doing school work at home. However, in terms of reading, the research is clear that engaging in literacy activities including reading, at home, can significantly increase students' ability to read and also their enjoyment of reading. Thus, reading at home is encouraged as a daily activity. Other activities are supplied for 'own work' across year levels and while parents are encouraged to support their child's motivation to complete these, it is a family's choice whether these types of activities are undertaken at home. The completion of 'own work' is the choice of each individual family. We endeavour to foster a love of learning in all children, and we do not want 'own work' to undermine this love.

## Communication

We contact our families by email, dedicated, private facebook pages, parent portal (school website) and in our newsletter to keep everyone updated about school events. Our newsletters are available through the parent portal. We encourage parents to access the newsletter and read it carefully as this is a great way of finding out what is happening across the whole school.



## Animals

Our school has a few, staff owned, small dogs which have proved a great social and emotional support for students. Furthermore, we have a lot of wildlife that inhabit our school grounds including bush turkeys and wallabies. We respectfully ask that no animals, particularly dogs, are brought onto the school grounds unless this has been pre-arranged with the classroom teacher. A form must be obtained from the office and completed before bringing domesticated animals onto school grounds.

## Parking

Parking is available at the bottom of the school near the Early Childhood Centre. For the safety of our children we ask that no cars be driven through the school grounds between 8.15am and 3.00pm.

## Tuckshop

Our school tuckshop sells sentient vegetarian food 2 days a week. Lunch orders are organised in the classroom at the beginning of the school day, while some snacks may also be purchased during the lunch break. The tuckshop menu is decided upon at the beginning of each term. Volunteers are always needed at the tuckshop as this is a great service for our families. Unlike many schools, our tuckshop is run on a not-for-profit basis to keep prices fair and affordable.

# Evaluation of Student Progress

Report cards on your child's progress are prepared at the end of Term 2 and the end of Term 4. Teacher / parent-teacher interviews are offered in Terms 1 and 3. Parents are encouraged to make a time with their child's teacher to discuss their child's progress.

## NAPLAN

Each year, students across Australia in years 3, 5, 7 and 9 sit the NAPLAN tests in Numeracy and Literacy. It is a Federal requirement that all schools partake in this testing program. However, at the River School, we consider these tests to be a snapshot in time and recognise that a child's ability or potential cannot be defined by their results of NAPLAN. Thus, we do minimal preparation for these tests and treat them simply as another activity on another day.



## School Policies

The School has a number of policies that have been written to ensure the smooth running of our school. These policies are available for perusal in the office and on our School website. Of particular note are the following:

**Child Protection Policy:** This policy forms part of the The River School's written processes about how the school will respond to harm, or allegations or harm, to students under 18 years old, and the appropriate conduct of the school's staff and students, to comply with accreditation requirements.

**Electronic Device Policy:** Students are discouraged from bringing electronic devices to school. A parent may give signed permission for a child to bring a device to school but it must be checked in at the office at the beginning of the school day and collected at the end of the school day. Under no circumstances is the device to be used at school or on the school buses.

**Financial Hardship Policy:** Enrolled families may apply for financial hardship for a reduction or full waive of one term's fees. Applications are available from the office and are determined on a case-by-case basis.

**Complaints Handling Policy:** Our Complaints policy sets out the steps parent can take if they have any concerns about the school. We encourage parents to speak to their child's teacher or the Principal so that concerns can be heard and resolved in a timely manner.





## Dress Code

There is no school uniform at The River School and shoes are optional. However, we do ask that children do not wear the following:

- Clothing with logos or labels
- Clothing with pop culture pictures or icons
- 'Good' clothing that may potentially get damaged or dirty

Each student is supplied with a River School hat upon enrolment, and this is the only hat that students are permitted to wear at school. While the first hat is supplied free of charge, subsequent hats can be purchased from the office.

Students are required to wear closed-in shoes and a River School shirt on school excursions. These shirts can be purchased from the office.

We encourage all children to keep a change of clothes in their school bag in case of emergency, such as playing in the rain or swimming in the creek.

# Funding & Fees

The River School receives recurrent funding from both State And Federal Governments. In addition, we receive grants and donations and we also actively fundraise to achieve our goals.

## School Fees

As our school is run on a not-for-profit basis, we endeavour to keep our school fees as affordable as possible whilst ensuring that our operating costs are covered.

Our school fees are determined each year and necessarily increase by a nominal amount. Our fees are charged on a term-by-term basis and include all academic costs such as books, stationery and art materials. One term's written notice must be supplied when a family cancels their child's enrolment. There are a number of payment plans to assist families meet their financial obligations. Failure to pay the fees by the agreed date accrues a 5% interest payment.

## Other Expenses

Occasional other costs are incurred through the year. These include expenses for Arts Council performances, school excursions and camps.

## Building Levy

A nominal building levy charge is invoiced to each family each term. This small levy (\$30 p/family) ensures that all families coming through The River School can contribute to the future of the school. This compulsory levy is payable with the school fees and is earmarked for future building and maintenance projects.

## Energy Contribution

All families are asked to contribute 'energy' to the School. This 'energy' is calculated at \$20 per hour for a total of 10 hours per term. Parents can contribute their energy to the School in the form of class help, assisting with fund-raising events, camps, School events such as The Spring Fair etc. Families can also choose to pay \$200 a term instead of contributing the 10 hours 'energy'.

## Enrolling at the River School

Parents wishing to enroll their child at The River School must, in the first instance, make an appointment for their family (parent/s and enrolling child) with the Principal. Parents will be shown around the school and introduced to the child's prospective teacher. The School also holds a *Tour Morning* once a term. Please contact the School to find out the dates for the tours.

An enrolment fee of \$300 per family is payable to secure a child's enrolment at The River School.

Enquiries can be made at the office by contacting (07) 5494 3559 or [admin@riverschool.com.au](mailto:admin@riverschool.com.au)



# Welcome from our Principal



On behalf of The River School, I am delighted to welcome you to our River School family. Our School is a vibrant and diverse community where childhood is nurtured through mutual love and respect for all. It is a place where children feel safe, happy and free to learn ensuring a great foundation that will last them a lifetime.

At the River School we support our students to be confident learners, and promote the development of social and emotional skills for life. We are passionate about guiding our young people to acquire skills that encourage them to question and extend their growth mindsets. To be peacemakers who understand the connection and responsibility to themselves, others, animals and the environment. Our Neohumanist philosophy builds upon the Australian Curriculum enabling our students to take their place as confident, global citizens. The River School provides real life learning experiences where students develop deep knowledge, understandings and skills to assist them as they transition to young adults, making positive contributions to the world.

Having been part of this beautiful School for twenty-two years, in a variety of teacher capacities, and Principal since 2017, it is an honour to share our unique School. I warmly invite you to visit us, meet our inspiring staff, our happy students, our spectacular environment and experience the difference for yourself.

*Anne Donoghoe, Principal*

# School Mission Statement

Nurture each child's highest physical, mental, emotional,  
social and spiritual potential.

Encourage a deep Neohumanist understanding of the interconnectedness of all  
things, embracing humanity, animals, plants and the entire universe.

Model love and cooperation throughout the school so that children develop a  
compassionate heart with a clear moral compass and the skills and  
confidence to put their love into action.

Create a supportive learning community encouraging diversity,  
unity and service to all.



## Contact Information

*The River School*

251 Bridge Creek Road (PO Box 411)  
Maleny QLD 4552

Primary School: (07) 5494 3559  
Early Childhood Centre: (07) 5499 9359

Email: [admin@riverschool.com.au](mailto:admin@riverschool.com.au)

Website: <https://riverschool.com.au/>