

# Parent Handbook



## School Vision

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

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# 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). Several 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 farmhouse.

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. 1 “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, sentient food while at school.

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.

(Neohumanist Education — A handbook for teachers. Michael Towsey. 2018)

## The River School ~ Heart Based 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, teamwork, 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

Our balanced approach caters to each child's interests, learning timeframes, learning-styles and their academic, social and emotional uniqueness. We offer a robust curriculum that includes inquiry-based approaches such as *Walker Learning* – play and project based holistic pedagogy in the younger years, and integrated units in Yrs. 2 – 6. Our English program is underpinned by scientific evidence-based practice comprising of *InitiaLit*, *MiniLit Sage* (support program), *Spell Ex* and *Spell-It*. Numeracy learning is strengthened using a variety of progressive, investigation-based programs. Our children's wellbeing is supported through *Inner Me* practices that consist of daily yoga, meditation, mindfulness, and weekly virtue practice.

In the early years, we immerse children in learning through a balanced curriculum with an emphasis on curiosity. Teachers create a rich environment for indoor and outdoor learning within a structured day that includes large group, small group, and individual activities. Incorporating play, imagination, and creativity within early learning helps children develop a love of learning and helps sustain their natural creativity and passion.

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 timeframe of development across all facets, but we also provide a learning environment that honours this. 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.



# 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. 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 Bliss Centre). 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 discovery 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 support for social and emotional learning.

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 several 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 affect 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.

## 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 Circle. School 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 Inner Me 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, 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 School 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 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 once a week during lunchtimes for students to participate in Art Club. 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 where possible. 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. For children desiring individual tuition, we have a private music teacher onsite who takes children for guitar.

# 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. 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 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 and School Electronic Devices Policy 2024].



# 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 Lillypillies (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. We access Sporting School's grants to pay for the specialist coaches.

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.



# Empowerment Centre



The Empowerment Centre is a place of learning where students at The River School are provided with intensive literacy sessions to ensure that they reach their full potential in the classroom.

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 need's basis. 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 Empowerment Centre is inspired by Neohumanist values. It is the intention of the Centre to instil 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.

## 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.

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 modelling of service by all our staff.

# 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 have included: Arts, LOTE, Sports, Library, and Music.



## School Camps

Once a year student 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 **Kingfishers** (Years 2) look forward to their family focused camp at *Bribie Island, House of Happiness*. Bike rides, swimming, beach walks, games, crafts and performances ensure an action packed program for our young students and their families.

The **Wattles and Piccabeens** (Year 4 and 3) 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.

The **Regents** (Yr. 5) enjoy an adventurous camp, at QCCC Mapleton. This camp is set in the rainforest with outdoor education as the focus. They challenge themselves on ropes courses, abseiling, and other activities. They also get to spend time swimming and playing in their pool.

**Red Cedars** (Yr. 6) attended Emu Gully Camp in 2025. This camp is team building focused and encourages the students to push themselves in activities resulting in reports of "I am so proud of myself", "I was scared, but did more than I thought". A wonderful opportunity for the senior students to challenge themselves and support their peers.

**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 certain camps. 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 and zoos. Excursions are aligned with units of study.

# 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 and Business Manager 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 spiritual guide is connected with The River School. They work closely with the School Board, Principal and staff to facilitate a weekly class 'Inner Mw' session which includes yoga, meditation and the 'getting of wisdom'.

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 class learning assistants.

# 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 automatically members of the P&F and can nominate at an AGM to be part of the executive 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
- \* Library book covering
- \* Library shelving and sorting

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.

## 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 session 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 regard to their confidence, strong sense of identity and resilience. Year after year, teachers and administrators from our local high school complement our students' confidence, academic and creative abilities, caring and compassionate natures and their strong sense of self.

## 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 Learning Assistant to support the teacher and students. All other classes receive Learning Assistant 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.



# 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.

# 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.

A number of 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.

# 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 schoolwork 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.

# SCHOOL FOOD GUIDELINES



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.

## Nuts:

The inclusion of nuts in your child's lunch may be potentially dangerous for a child with a peanut allergy.

**NO PEANUTS** are to be brought on to the school grounds. Please check the ingredients in processed foods, this can be inclusive of nut mixes, baked goods or some crackers.

**All other nuts are fine to eat at school.** Cashews, almonds, macadamias etc.

## Some Lunch Suggestions:

Crackers & cheese, fresh cut fruit, dried fruit, cut fresh vegetables, dips & crackers, nuts (not peanuts), salads, pasta, yoghurt, sandwiches, wraps, seaweed, corn or soya chips.

## Processed foods:

We ask parents to minimise foods that are high in sugar or contain preservatives, additives and food colourings.

These foods can adversely affect a child's ability to concentrate and learn.

## Minimal food packaging:

We encourage parents to use minimal packaging in their child's lunchbox, where possible and we also encourage children to take all packaging home, to minimise waste onsite.



Updated: May 2023



# Tuckshop

Our school tuckshop sells sentient vegetarian food 2 days a week. Lunch orders are made entirely via the app FlexiSchool, by 8:30 the morning of. 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.

# 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.



# School Times

Early arrivals: There is supervision from 8:15am 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

# Communication

There are a number of methods we use to keep in touch with families to let you know what's happening in our community. Each year group has a dedicated, private Facebook page to let you know what's happening in class, as well as providing opportunities for parents and students to connect outside of school.

We also keep parents up to date via email and text, as well as sending the Weekly Wrap and a term newsletter.

Finally, in an effort to make communicating with us a breeze, we have our online Parent Lounge where you can contact us to register student absences, as well as keep your personal details up to date.

# 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.

# Parking

The safety of our staff and students moving around our school grounds is of the utmost importance to us. To ensure that everyone gets to and from their classrooms safely, please be aware of the following:

**KISS AND GO PARKS** – the 4 parking spaces on the left-hand curb just below the oval/lower deck has been designated for 'kiss and go' traffic only. New signs are currently being installed to clearly identify these parking spaces.

Please be aware that this area has a **2-minute** parking limit, and the driver cannot leave their car. This helps keep the cars moving in and out of these parking spaces, for those doing drop off and pick-ups only.

The other parking spaces remain available for drop off, if you intend to stay longer.

**NO ENTRY TO RING ROAD** – a reminder that the ring road that runs up and through the school grounds is only accessible to **school buses** and **school staff**. 2 new signs, one at each end of the school ring road, have been installed to remind families not to enter this area during the designated times:

**FAMILIES:** No entry between 8:00am – 3:30pm

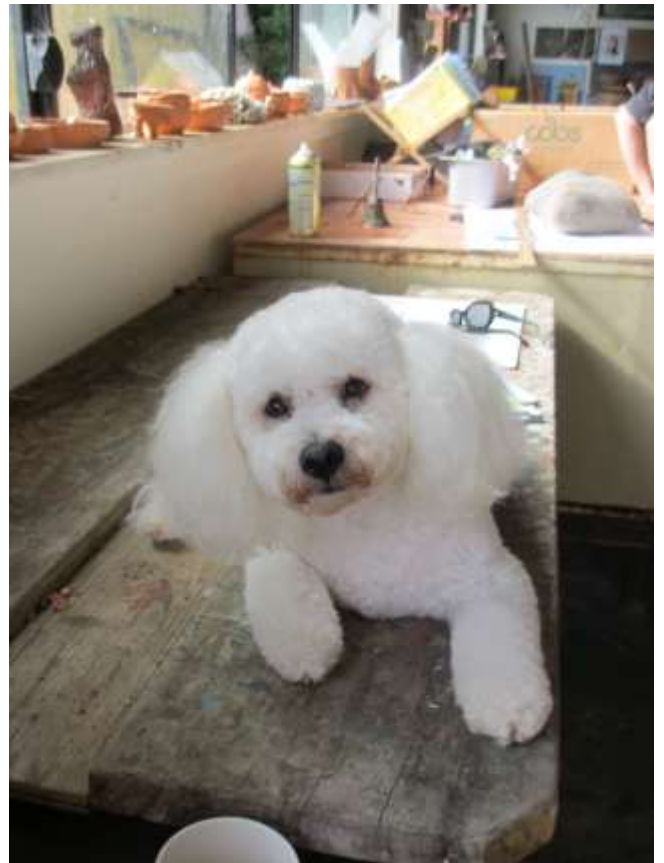
**STAFF:** No entry between 8:10am – 3:10pm



**DISABLED PARK** – there is a dedicated park for disability permit holders, in front of the ECC building which provides direct access to our lower deck. We have members of our community who rely on this parking so it's imperative that this space is kept clear and available to permit holders only.

# School Buses

We have dedicated school buses run by Glasshouse Country Coaches. To organise a bus run you can contact them directly on 07 5496 9249 or be email: [admin@glasshousecoaches.com.au](mailto:admin@glasshousecoaches.com.au)



# 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 Government 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

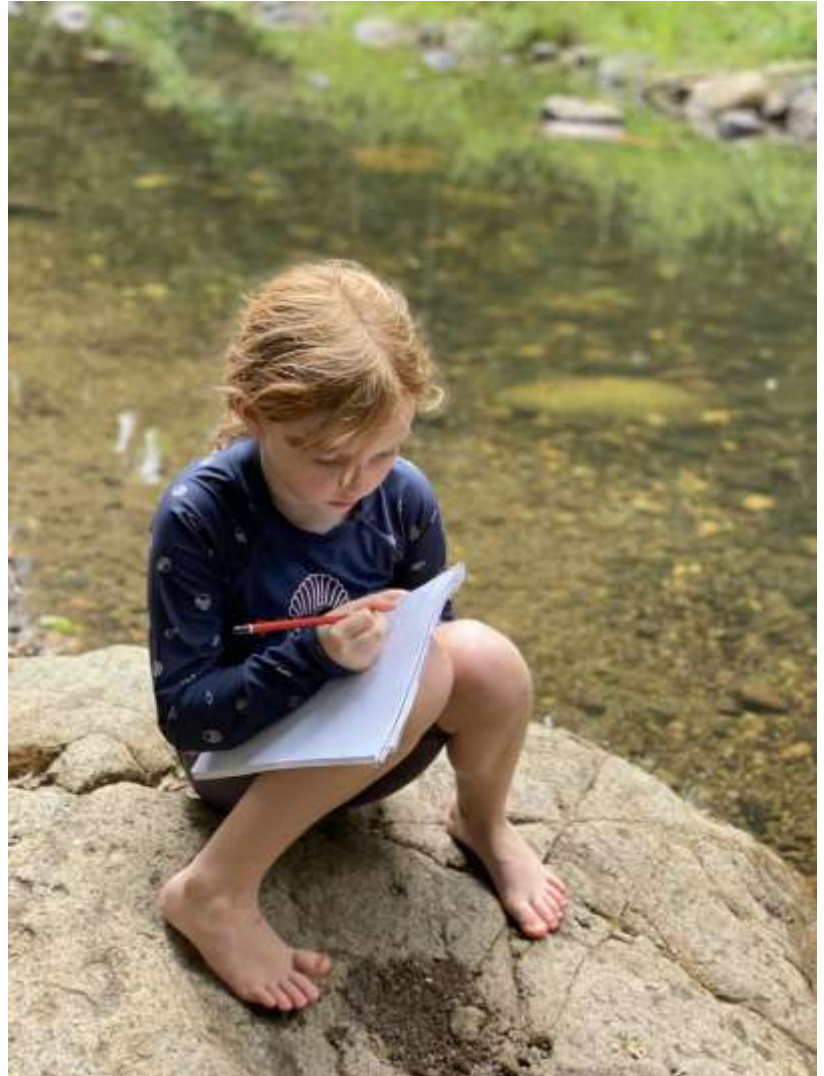
The School has a number of policies that have been written to ensure the smooth running of our school. These policies are available for perusal in the office and on our School website. Of particular note are the following:

**Child Protection Policy:** This policy forms part of The 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.



# 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 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'.

## Bus Levy

A bus levy is invoiced by the school to a student's account each term and is dependent on the distance travelled. Refer to the School Fee Schedule for rates.

# Enrolling at the River School

Parents wishing to enrol their child at The River School must, in the first instance, send through an 'Expression of Interest' which can be found on the 'enrol' page of our website. Once received, the admin team will book an interview for your family to meet 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)

## Our **Mission** is to:

- 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.



## Early Childhood Centre (ECC)

Our Early Childcare Centre 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: Djaa'gan (Pre-Kindergarten, 2yrs – 3 years) and Wi'ra (Kindergarten 3 years – 5 years). 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.

Enquiries can be made to the ECC by contacting

(07) 5499 9359 or [rsecc@riverschool.com.au](mailto:rsecc@riverschool.com.au)

