



BLACKHALL KALIMNA WELLBEING POLICY

Philosophy

**‘At our core remains an unshakeable commitment to encouraging all children to progress at their own pace towards their own goals and to be respected as individuals in their own right. A commitment to our children to be nurtured and challenged in an atmosphere that inspires creativity and independent thinking in all areas of life and does not, overtly or subtly, use competition or punishment to motivate through fear of failure. Preshil will remain a school that puts kindness, compassion and social relationships at the centre of its operations.’
(Towards 2023)**

Preshil’s approach to education is expanded on further in ‘Courage’, a document produced in 2008. This philosophy and culture allows teachers and students to form positive, bounded relationships that are not hindered by a significant power imbalance and encourages students to seek support from their teachers and to talk to them about any personal issues they are experiencing. This approach, along with encouraging and accepting the individual, fosters a sense of belonging within the school environment, which Preshil recognises as a ‘protective’ factor in mental health.

Additionally, the Preshil philosophy embraces alternative models of school ‘discipline’. Students are encouraged to take ownership of their school experience and come to shared agreements about appropriate interactions and behaviours. Where interpersonal issues do arise, they are dealt with using a restorative approach rather than a punitive one. (see Mutual Respect Policy)

Rationale:

Preshil believes that wellbeing is a pre-condition and integral, rather than incidental, to learning and, as such, aims to promote the link between wellbeing and learning in every aspect of the curriculum, school culture and student support systems. *MindMatters* is a federally funded initiative which has been in operating since 2000. It is a framework that aims to promote mental health, prevent problems and enable early intervention via a ‘Whole School Approach’. This concept aligns closely with the values and ethos of Preshil and works to incorporate it into the school’s strategic planning. This Policy also recognizes the commitment Preshil staff have towards the Safeguarding Children Program.

This policy outlines Preshil’s approach to promoting the positive health and wellbeing of the entire senior school. This includes all staff, students and parents/carers and involves actively promoting good health and wellbeing rather than merely attempting to prevent or respond to illness. Therefore, this policy focuses on **promotion, prevention and early intervention** in order to provide for all members of the school community at a whole school level whilst also responding to the specific needs of individuals.

The attached model is adapted from the *MindMatters* model (2010). It outlines the different interventions and structures at Preshil which promote a ‘Whole School Approach’ to health and wellbeing and provides the framework for the organisation of this document. This policy is designed to be utilised alongside other important documents and policies listed at the end of this document.

Aims:

- To actively promote an environment which supports the positive mental health and wellbeing of the entire school community
- To provide an environment in which students feel safe, supported and able to speak out about any issues or concerns
- To develop a strategic and co-ordinated approach to mental health and wellbeing that is relevant and appropriate to the unique Preshil community
- To respond in an appropriate and timely manner to students with individual support needs in regard to their mental health and wellbeing
- To build strong networks with the local community and local health care providers in order to provide appropriate referral pathways for students in need
- To provide support, resources and professional development to all staff in order that they can adequately and effectively fulfill their responsibilities
- To encourage student voice and empowerment and foster a sense of belonging for all members of the school community
- To offer the opportunity for individual learning that allows students to develop their own unique strengths, builds confidence, self-reliance and encourages engagement and retention in school
- To actively engage with parents and carers and recognise the importance of families in promoting of the positive mental health and wellbeing of our students
- To constantly review this and other relevant policies in a strategic manner to continue to improve on the mental health and wellbeing of the entire school community

Promotion and Prevention

Rationale:

The Preshil philosophy towards education (as stated above) is integral to achieving a whole school approach to wellbeing and provides the foundation upon which other school structure and systems can build.

Structures and Programs:

In line with a whole school approach to wellbeing, and Preshil's philosophy regarding the importance of relationships, all staff have a role and responsibility to ensure the positive wellbeing of all students.

Classroom teachers:

Classroom teachers are the foundation of the school and student learning, including their wellbeing. They practise inclusive teaching and learning techniques, build respect and promote safety within the school. They deliver a comprehensive, inclusive curriculum that engages all students and allows for individual needs. Classroom teachers build strong and supportive relationships with the students. As such, they are well placed to identify any potential risks or mental health concerns through their interactions with students and observations of students and their behaviour. Classroom teachers will maintain regular contact with students' families and raise any concerns they may have. They are also responsible for raising any ongoing or immediate concerns with the Year Level Co-ordinators.

Home Group teachers:

Students are grouped in to 'Home groups' and will spend the first ten minutes of each day in this peer group with their Home group teacher. The purpose of this time is to provide a welcoming environment for students as their first contact with school for the day. This is provided through a welcoming physical environment and space to 'belong' as well as through the relationships with the

Home group teacher and with peers. Different activities take place during these Home groups which assist students to feel a connection to each other, their teacher and the school.

Trackers:

During 2014 students will also be supported by a newly defined 'Tracker' program which will be continually developed and refined over the coming years. Each student is assigned a member of the teaching staff as their Tracker for the entire time that they are at Preshil. The role of the Tracker is to offer support and mentoring for each student in their group by providing students with an identified adult support to talk to and raise concerns with. Where necessary, Trackers will also act as 'brokers' who assist students in finding and talking with the appropriate people within the school to support their specific wellbeing needs. This support takes place outside of timetabled classes, in an informal manner and may take many different forms depending on the individual Tracker and the needs of the student/s concerned.

Tracker groups are also intended to encourage peer support across the school as each Tracker will have a group of 10-12 students from across all year levels. Specific times will be scheduled each year to allow Tracker groups to meet together to assist in this process and allow friendly and cohesive groups to form.

Year Level Co-ordinators:

The Co-ordinators oversee students at each year level and assist in co-ordinating individual supports when appropriate. They also build strong relationships with students and are able to assist with individual support needs when these cannot be addressed by classroom teachers alone. They work closely with the Wellbeing Co-ordinator, making individual student referrals when appropriate and meeting regularly to discuss those students most at risk.

Student Voice and Student Initiated Action:

Students are actively encouraged to be involved in all aspects of their education and school experience throughout their time at Preshil. They are supported to raise issues, concerns and give feedback to each other and their teachers on a one-on-one basis and through scheduled Forum times.

Student forums are held consistently throughout the school year and take place in year level groups (7&8, 9&10 and VCE). They are student led discussions where any issues or concerns can be tabled and discussed, giving students the opportunity to feel empowered within their own school environment. This aims to give students ownership of, and responsibility for, their own education.

Curriculum that supports Wellbeing:

International Baccalaureate (IB) Middle Years Programme (MYP):

As part of our strategic plan, Preshil will be implementing the International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme at years 7-10 from 2014 onwards. The IB mission statement is as follows:

The International Baccalaureate aims to develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect.

To this end the organization works with schools, governments and international organizations to develop challenging programmes of international education and rigorous assessment. These programmes encourage students across the world to become active, compassionate and lifelong learners who understand that other people, with their differences, can also be right (MYP From principles to practice, pre-publication 2014.)

The IB Middle Years Programme is a holistic programme that provides students with academic challenge *and* life skills. It encompasses student-led, inquiry-based learning which encourages

students to develop a strong sense of personal identity by exploring their own learning styles, taking appropriate risks and developing their skills, attitudes, knowledge and understanding of concepts. These higher order thinking skills equip young people to explore the world, and their awareness of themselves, in ways that develop sound judgment.

An important aspect of this holistic approach to education is the IB 'Learner Profile' which represents valued personal attributes, encouraged in all students, that go beyond an interest in intellectual development and academic content. The Learner Profile states that, as learners, we strive to be: inquirers, knowledgeable, thinkers, communicators, principled, open-minded, caring, risk-takers, balanced and reflective (MYP From principles to practice, pre-publication 2014.)

This new programme will enhance current school practices and assist greatly in achieving a whole-school approach to wellbeing by integrating the development of student's social and emotional needs into the curriculum across all subjects.

Years 7 – 10 Health Curriculum:

All students from year 7 to 10 participate in the Health curriculum. This includes the following:

This curriculum is flexible and responsive and, therefore, provides a forum to respond to specific issues or concerns as they present and takes into account the fact that, regardless of age, different individuals will have different skill levels. The curriculum will be constantly reviewed and modified as necessary by the Health Faculty in order to be truly responsive to the differing needs of students. Through this curriculum, Preshil aims to equip students with the information and skills to increase their 'protective' factors and identify and respond to any 'risk' factors in regard to their mental health and wellbeing.

Learning Support:

Preshil is committed to providing a strong foundation for students learning through a whole-school inclusive approach. This approach is fundamental to the IB Middle Years Programme which states:

Inclusion is more about responding positively to each individual's unique needs.

Inclusion is less about marginalizing students because of their differences.

(Learning diversity in the International Baccalaureate programmes: Special educational needs within the International Baccalaureate programmes, 2010)

Inclusion is an on-going process that aims to increase access and engagement in learning for all students by identifying and removing barriers. This will be achieved in the culture of collaboration and mutual respect, support and problem solving. Learning support at Preshil is about responding to each individual's unique needs and working towards achieving within the school curriculum according to the students' level of capability. The school will sustain this through the provision of the Learning Support Team and staff collaboration.

Extra-curricula education and health promotion:

In addition to timetabled classes and the programmes and structures stated above, Preshil also provides ongoing Health Promotion and Education through targeted programmes and workshops for students. These include a wide range of topics relevant to young people and their families and can involve both school staff and/ or external professionals as facilitators. Preshil also recognises the importance of involving parents and families in promoting the positive wellbeing of our students and, as such, aims to ensure that appropriate information and education sessions are provided to parents on contemporary issues regarding youth wellbeing.

Early Intervention

Support for Students Experiencing Mental Health Difficulties:

New enrolments:

Whenever new students apply to enrol at Preshil, great care is taken to liaise with the student and their family about the specifics of the student's needs. Prior to acceptance of an application, time and thought is given to ensuring that the school offers the 'best fit' for the student and is able to provide the supports needed for the student's specific needs. Following acceptance, where a specific mental health issue is identified, students are referred to the Wellbeing Co-ordinator by the Registrar and a detailed process of information gathering and communication with the student's family and external professionals begins. Where appropriate, students may be case managed by the Wellbeing Co-ordinator to ensure a positive transition into the school.

Wellbeing Co-ordinator:

The Wellbeing Co-ordinator is available to provide time limited, individual student support services where appropriate. In order to access this service, students can be referred via the Year Level Co-ordinators, the Registrar (in the case of new enrolments), parents or through self-referral.

Assessment and supported external referral:

For those students in need of specific mental health intervention, a supported referral will be made to appropriate external professionals and/ or agencies by the Wellbeing Co-ordinator. An example of the available services includes:

- Psychiatrist or Psychologist via private practice or utilising Medicare rebates
- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)
- Headspace Centres
- Local, youth friendly GPs
- Generalised or specific counselling services such as those provided by local Community Health Centres or the Centre Against Sexual Assault (CASA)
- Speech therapists, social workers, youth workers

This is not an exhaustive list and every attempt will be made to find an appropriate support service or group of services that appropriately responds to the student in need, taking into account any existing support structures including family and social networks.

Case Management:

For those students who already have an identified mental health issue with external supports AND are experiencing a significant transition period, a case management approach will be offered to assist them through this transition. Examples of such a transition may be: students that are new to the school or, that have been unwell and missed a significant amount of school.

Where case management is provided, a school specific support plan will be completed with the student, family and relevant external professionals. The Wellbeing Co-ordinator will then inform teaching staff of any relevant supports necessary (taking into account confidentiality constraints) and continue to review this plan during the case management period.

The Wellbeing Co-ordinator will meet with the student at an appropriate frequency and for an appropriate and necessary time period. The aim during this time will be to assist students and staff to manage any wellbeing needs utilising the usual school supports without the need for any ongoing involvement from the Wellbeing Co-ordinator.

Safety Planning:

Where the school is made aware of any acute risk issues in regard to suicide or self harm, appropriate school safety planning will be completed by the Wellbeing Co-ordinator in conjunction with the student, family and external professionals. The Preshil Critical Incident Management Plan will be implemented.

Supplementary Policies and Related Documents:

- Safeguarding Children Statement
- Confidentiality and Documentation Policy
- Mutual Respect Policy
- Mandatory Reporting Policy
- Code of Conduct
- Procedures Manual
- Arlington Wellbeing Policy
- Blackhall Kalimna Wellbeing Policy
- Child Protection Mandatory Reporting
- Duty of Care - Crimes Act 1958 (Vic) Policy
- Working With Children Policy
- Elective Provider Teacher's Code of Conduct Policy
- Instrumental Teacher's Code of Conduct Policy
- Learning Support Policy