



EARLY YEARS HANDBOOK

BALLARAT
SPECIALIST
SCHOOL



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Values

Our school's mission is "Achieving Personal Success Together." We strive to enable our students and staff to reach their full potential in a safe, stimulating and flexible learning environment.

Our educational programs provide a balanced and personalised curriculum where student achievement is acknowledged and celebrated.

Ballarat Specialist School utilises School Wide Positive Behaviour Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS) to establish a climate where appropriate behaviour is the norm. Teaching behavioural expectations and rewarding students for following them is a much more positive approach than waiting for misbehaviour to occur before responding.

Our staff and students do this by focusing on **Respect**, **Responsibility**, and **Safety** each day. These three areas are Ballarat Specialist Schools' "Core Values" and are taught and reinforced daily.



Learning

At Ballarat Specialist School, the Early Years is made up of Prep, Grade one and Grade two students who are grouped in composite classes. The Early Years and the Junior school (Grade 3 – 6) are collectively known as the Primary School.

Educators in Early Years use the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF) and play-based learning to facilitate students learning of core skills such as personal hygiene, mealtimes, toileting, social and emotional, in addition to academic learning.

The Early Years classes have an emphasis on educators, parents and the school community collectively designing a program that meets the individual needs of our students. They use indoor and outdoor learning areas to create physical and social environments that expose children to a range of play-based and sensory-based learning experiences and activities.



The VEYLDF curriculum adopts a holistic approach to learning and development for our students at the Ballarat Specialist School. The VEYLDF has five learning outcomes that enable Early Years educators to design learning opportunities at each student's point of need. The outcomes are:

Identity – Children have a strong sense of identity

Community – Children are connected with and contribute to their world

Wellbeing – Children have a strong sense of wellbeing

Learning – Children are confident and involved learners

Communication – Children are effective communicators



The Early Years lesson structure incorporates the VEYLDF integrated teaching and learning approaches of:

Adult- lead learning – Explicit teaching of the curriculum content

Guided learning – Students and educators learn together

Child-directed learning – Children lead their own learning through play-based learning activities.

Starting school

TRANSITION DAYS:

Students vary in how they adapt to new settings, and in preparation for this, Ballarat Specialist School offers three half days of transition for prep students and a whole day transition for grade one and two students. It is important during this period that your child's start to school is positive. We also understand that this period of time may be difficult for families to adapt to, and we encourage you to communicate openly with your child's teacher or leadership staff if this is the case.

Transition dates will be communicated with families at the Information sessions held for new parents in term four each year.

DROP-OFF & PICK-UP:

Parents are able to drop off students each morning in their classroom in the Early Years building from 8:45 am to 9am. If arriving after 9 am, families will be required to attend the school office in the first instance.

At afternoon pick-up times, parents are asked to wait outside the Early Years building for teachers to open the doors at 2:45pm for students to be collected. Please ensure that students are picked up by 3pm each afternoon.

Students travelling by bus to and from school will be collected and taken to the bus port by staff each morning and afternoon.



Daily Schedule

In the Early Years, there is a strong emphasis on beginning to build relationships with educators and peers, establishing new school routines and determining classroom expectations. Early Years classes follow a predictable daily schedule that helps students build a sense of independence and understand what's happening throughout the day. A visual schedule is used to assist with transitioning around the school, which is modelled for students every day.



The variety of lessons that students are exposed to includes Morning circle (speaking and listening) lessons, Literacy lessons, Numeracy lessons, Structured play lessons and streaming lessons. Students have the opportunity to mix across the Early Years cohort during literacy and numeracy streaming classes to build relationships with educators and peers while focusing on explicit teaching to suit the needs of individual students.

Typical Specialist classes such as Art, Performing Arts and Science are integrated into Structured Play lessons, with students undertaking structured play lessons three times a week.

Students also have scheduled weekly Physical Education lessons where they participate in a PMP (Perceptual Motor Program) with the school's Physical Education teacher.

Incursions, Excursions & Special Events

Students in the Early Years have a variety of opportunities to participate in excursions, incursions and school-based special events. These excursions, incursions, and events are an important part of the curriculum as they develop an integral component of students' personal growth. Excursions are sequenced with the curriculum to provide opportunities for diverse experiences. Some of these experiences include excursions to local playgrounds, SEDA sports days, the Swimming program at the Ballarat Aquatic Centre and visits to the Botanical Gardens.

As a community, we aim to have all students learning in a safe and supportive environment.



Programs

Respectful Relationships:

Students engage in the Respectful Relationships program to promote respect, positive attitudes and behaviours. Our students are taught strategies to build healthy relationships, resilience and confidence that can be transferred between the classroom and the community.

School-Wide Positive Behaviour Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS):

At BSS, we strive to build an inclusive learning environment that supports all students to be their best. We use the SWPBIS framework to teach appropriate behaviours across environments and encourage all community members to embody our values of safety, respect and responsibility.

School Wide Positive Behaviour Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS) is an evidence-based framework that aims to improve whole school safety and promote positive behaviour. This is achieved through recognising positive student behaviour and introducing group and individual interventions for students on a referral basis. With clear links to the VEYLDF, we aim to teach students behavioural and social expectations in the same way we teach academics. This is supported and scaffolded around our school's Safety, Respect and Responsibility values.

Zones of Regulation Program:





The Zones of Regulation is a curriculum designed to foster self-regulation and emotional intelligence. Self-regulation is the ability to adjust your levels of alertness/emotions AND direct how your emotions are revealed behaviourally in a socially adaptive way in order to achieve goals.

The Zones of Regulation program groups all emotions and levels of alertness into four colours:

- BLUE: low state of alertness, such as when one feels sad, tired, sick or bored.
- GREEN: optimal state of alertness, such as when one feels happy, calm and focused
- YELLOW: heightened state of alertness, such as when a person feels frustrated, anxious, excited or silly.
- RED: extremely heightened state of alertness, such as when someone is feeling anger, terror, panic or elation

Incorporating the Zones of Regulation program within the classroom helps students to learn new emotions and understand facial expressions, identify and express their own emotions, identify their triggers, and identify tools for managing each zone.

The **ZONES** of Regulation®

			
<p>BLUE ZONE</p> <p>Sad Sick Tired Bored Moving Slowly</p>	<p>GREEN ZONE</p> <p>Happy Calm Feeling Okay Focused Ready to Learn</p>	<p>YELLOW ZONE</p> <p>Frustrated Worried Silly/Wiggly Excited Loss of Some Control</p>	<p>RED ZONE</p> <p>Mad/Angry Terrified Yelling/Hitting Elated Out of Control</p>

Communication

Seesaw: We use Seesaw to communicate what events have happened in the classroom and share your child's learning with you. Families can share information and contact their classroom teacher via the private message function in the app. Families will be invited to join this by their classroom teacher on the first day of school via a QR code or email.

Compass: The school uses Compass for families to access student reports, book Student Support Group (SSG) meetings and other relevant requirements. Families will be invited to join this by the administration team.

Phone calls to the front office: Please contact the office for urgent messages to be relayed to the classroom.

Social Media: The school regularly communicates via the BSS Facebook and BSS Instagram pages.

Parent/Carer Newsletter (electronic): Emailed directly to parents each fortnight on a Friday afternoon.

If your child is absent from school, please

- Call the school to inform of the student's absence before 10 a.m. Please call daily for repeated absences or lodge the absence via the Compass app.
- Families can communicate with the classroom teacher privately on Seesaw.
- If there are any changes with pick up or drop off, be sure to get in touch with the office/teacher directly as soon as possible via a phone call to the office staff.

Healthcare

If a student becomes ill or sustains an injury during the day, our school nurse will attend to their needs. We also have several first-aid trained staff who can assist with minor injuries. Qualified first aid staff will treat minor headaches, cuts and abrasions within each mini-school and communicate with families.

For students with additional health care needs, the school will require documentation and health care plans to assist in training and managing these needs. Before a student commences school, we require specific forms to be completed and returned to the school with any medication to be administered at school. The school can assist with completing and managing these forms by contacting the IST administration officer or a leadership team member.

Travel

The school's bus system features ten buses from three local bus companies that collect and drop off students at school.

The bus systems cover all of Ballarat and the wider community, including areas as far as Ballan, Skipton, Lexton and Daylesford.

Approximately 70% of Ballarat Specialist School students from Prep to Year 12 travel by bus daily. At both campuses, bus coordinators are responsible for the organisation, communication and general logistics between our school and the bus companies.

Families must apply for a place to travel via bus to and from school; this can be done by requesting information from your child's teacher.

Integrated Services Team

Our Allied Health Team comprises a range of Allied Health Professionals, such as a Speech Pathologist, Occupational Therapist, Exercise Physiologist, Nurse and Allied Health Assistants. The Allied Health Team collaborates with the well-being & engagement team and is part of the Integrated Services Team. The Allied Health Team is a resource that provides teachers, assistants and parents with strategies and knowledge about specific student needs, such as:

- Speech, language and communication disorders
- Mealtime and swallowing difficulties
- Sensory processing, engagement and self-regulation difficulties
- Fine motor, visual perception and handwriting difficulties
- Gross motor, mobility, transfer and positioning needs
- Toileting, self-care and independence skills
- Medical support needs
- Specialist equipment and assistive technology needs

Allied health support is provided through teacher consultation, capacity-building strategies, and integrating intervention strategies or adaptive equipment into daily class routines.

A three-tiered response-to-intervention model is used to support students across the school:

- **Tier 3** or the individualised, intensive supports (e.g., physiotherapy hydro sessions, specialised assessments, medical advice plans and equipment prescription)
- **Tier 2** or targeted, supplemented supports through group programming or adapted timetabling (e.g., sensory gym sessions, gross motor/fitness groups, social skills groups)
- **Tier 1** or whole school programming supports, integrated into the curriculum and classroom (e.g., use of AAC strategies, Zones of Regulation, use of visuals, staff training sessions)

Before and After school care

Ballarat Specialist School has partnered with an independent provider called TheirCare to provide exceptional Outside School Hours Care services for our school community.

The program is available for all children at Ballarat Specialist School from 6:30 a.m. until 8:45 a.m. in the morning and from 3:00 p.m. until 6:00 p.m. each school day. During School Holidays & Pupil Free Days, the service will operate from 6:30 a.m. until 6:00 p.m.

Families wishing to use this service can visit the TheirCare website:

www.theircare.com.au

Families are eligible for a Government Rebate called the Child Care Subsidy, which can reduce the cost per session by up to 85%. More information can be obtained by contacting the school or ringing TheirCare Support Team on 1300 072 410.

TheirCare provides a stimulating and safe environment for all children. During sessions, children develop life skills, friendships, confidence and creativity through play-based programs.

