WINTERS FLAT PRIMARY SCHOOL
Student Wellbeing
Parent Handbook

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INTRODUCTION

Dear Parents,

This booklet has been prepared after much consultation with staff, students and parents. It is designed to outline the values, procedures and programs that are in place at Winters Flat Primary School to promote self esteem, tolerance and resilience among all our students. It should be recognised that this is a working document and will constantly be reviewed in the light of experience and feedback from Parents, Students and Staff.

It is hoped that parents will find it useful to gain a better understanding of the basis of some of the policies and procedures at the school, which are designed to protect and nurture the students. It sets out our school values, the principles we consider important to allow our children to grow and flourish in a safe environment. It sets out the programs that support those principles and the procedures put in place when problems arise. It also provides some tips on detecting problems as early as possible so that action can be taken to remedy them.

Importantly this booklet provides a basis for parents to give the school ideas for improving the way we work with students to protect their welfare and safety. So if you have ideas which you see as enhancing the subject matter of this booklet, please contact the principal or a School Councillor, who will take them to the School Council and staff for consideration.

SCHOOL VALUES

It is our school’s belief that each child must be treated as an individual and encouraged to develop a high level of achievement in all curriculum areas. We believe that it is the responsibility of all involved with the child to help develop their full potential as a thinking, responsible caring individual.

Our school is a “SPACE” school, meaning that we cater for each child’s Social, Physical, Academic, Creative and Emotional wellbeing.

We believe that all areas are equally important, and we strive to put in place structures and programs to address this. Our students will develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to understand and contribute to society.

We believe that children should be encouraged to respond to high expectations, and develop high expectations of themselves.
Programs which support our school values in relation to Student Wellbeing

One of the key elements of our Student Welfare Policy is to improve individual resilience through:
* Being sensitive to students’ feelings and needs.
* Accurate identification of concerns or issues.
* Empowering students to make well-judged responses to conflicts.
* Activating effective partnerships between school and home.
* Coordinating relevant services, utilising available programs.

**Program Achieve (You Can Do It)**
This program follows a structured format with four main sections. Each skill is built upon as the children progress through their schooling.
The program is broken down into 4 main sections:-
Getting Along
Persistence
Organisation
Confidence
There is also an underlying theme of Resilience.
Class teachers conduct a lesson each week. In this way teachers and students are able to reinforce the message throughout the week.

**Bounce Back**
This resiliency program complements You Can Do It by providing students with additional skills to deal with difficult situations. The program is gradually being introduced to all students via Simon Firth, District Wellbeing Officer.

**Social Skills**
This weekly program is linked to Program Achieve and Values Education. The names of students who have been observed carrying out the particular skill of the week are entered into a “raffle”. Three names are drawn out at Assembly. These students receive a reward and have their names published in Flat Chat.

**Rock and Water**
Rock and Water is a physical/social skills program developed to assist boys in their personal and social development. Firstly the program focuses on learning skills through a physical exercise. These skills are later connected to social and mental skills. The program is built on foundation stones of self-control, self reflection, evaluation and self-confidence. The program, while developed with boys specifically in mind, has been run for girls in other settings, and it is anticipated will be available for girls at Winters Flat in the future. In 2008, all grade 5 and 6 boys have received tuition in Rock and Water.

**Students of the Week**
Individual achievement within the classroom is recognised and celebrated. These awards are presented at Assembly and also published in Flat Chat.

**House Points**
The Houses were named after four surrounding mountains/hills.
House points are awarded to individual students throughout the week as positive reinforcement. Points can be awarded, but not removed. These points are displayed prominently in each class.
The points are collected at the end of each week, with the results being revealed at assembly.
Each student is allocated to a School House.
Tarrengower – Yellow
McKenzie – Blue
Alexander – Red
Franklin – Green
Students tend to form very strong attachment to their House and exhibit a great deal of pride and loyalty.
In general, sporting events are linked closely to participation for students’ Houses.
Cobbers Program
Senior class works with Junior class once a fortnight. The senior students are able to help younger students settle into the school environment. Their presence in the classroom helps to remove any apprehension younger students may have about older students in the playground. This program gives the junior student a “friendly face” to seek out in the playground for support if needed. It also provides older students with the chance to be positive role models of appropriate behaviours.

Recognition from the Broader Community
Whenever possible, students receive recognition from areas outside of school. This could include:-
- Newspaper
- Community groups
- Assembly
- Competitions
- Newsletter

Welfare Issues
Welfare issues are a shared responsibility. Primarily issues are managed by the Principals and the Primary Welfare Officer, in conjunction with teachers as appropriate. Concerns are reported and assessed, before appropriate action is implemented, recorded and communicated to appropriate personnel.

District Welfare Network
We are part of a group of teachers which meets once a term to discuss district needs and concerns. At these meetings successful strategies are shared, and appropriate Professional Development is organised.

Junior School Council
The Junior School Council is a leadership group within the school, to act as the student’s voice and to raise social awareness at student level. Councillors are voted into positions by their peers.

Healthy Eating
The school has a healthy eating policy which encourages students to bring fruit, vegetables and water bottles in their lunch boxes every day. Chips, confectionery, fried foods and high sugar drinks such as soft drinks, energy drinks and flavoured mineral waters are excluded from the Lunch Order system and are not to be brought to school by children for eating at play/lunch time.
We encourage rubbish-free lunches and snacks and the use of re-usable containers. No packaged food is allowed to be eaten outside the school building.

Lunch time programs.
The Wellbeing Committee has discussed several possibilities to add to the program. At present activities include Library, gardening, team games, and Junior School Council activities.
Parental involvement to help provide a range of activities is very welcome.
Signs would be placed around the school to let students know what is on offer.

Safety Survey
A Safety Survey is sent home to all students & families each year. The survey helps to identify areas around the school where certain groups of students may not feel comfortable. It also helps to identify potential and perceived bullies.
The results of this survey are acted upon with confidentiality.

Term Audit
All Incident Reports are collated and reviewed at the end of each term to identify repeat offenders and incidents. The information is also useful for identifying trends and is also reviewed at the end of year as part of our annual report.

Multi-Age Days
These days are conducted at different times for half a day each. Students are grouped across the school and work with teachers in 30 minute blocks. Each day has a different curriculum focus.
**Program Support Group meetings**
Students who need to be on an individual learning program are supported by the meeting of parents, classroom teacher, and Principal if appropriate, to discuss achievements and future goals for learning. These occur on a regular basis.

**Outdoor Education Programs**
Our camps and excursions programs, together with outdoor education programs, offer a learning environment for all students away from the routines of the classroom. These activities are often a good opportunity for social interaction, and the development of stronger relationships.

**Values Education**
Our whole school curriculum plan includes Values Education, based on the National Values sent to all schools in 2005.

**Education Psychologist**
Our school has the benefit of the services of Ms Andrea Campbell, who works with parents and students to assist students in their learning.

**District Wellbeing Officer**
Simon Firth is a district Student Support Services Officer. He works with grades throughout the school on various aspects of socialisation on a rotation basis. Programs such as ‘Getting Along’ and ‘The Yellow Brick Road’ have been written especially for younger children.

**Drug Education**
Bendigo Regional Office has project officers committed to Drug Education, and we are kept informed through professional development sessions, District Welfare meetings and Department memos.

We are also fortunate enough to be able to access programs which are resourced from outside agencies (when funding is available). These programs might be part of the School Focussed Youth Service based in Kyneton (such as the Learning for Life program), or be part of a Department of Education and Training initiative.

**CODE OF CONDUCT**

The **Student Code of Conduct** is designed so that students, parents and staff have a clear and consistent understanding of the rights and responsibilities of the school community. The code of conduct is consistent with Department of Education and Early Childhood Development’s Student Code of Conduct and reflects the following principles:

- Students will respect the rights and values of others
- All individuals are to be valued and treated with respect
- No one has the right to interfere with the learning of others
- Students have the right to work in a positive and supportive environment without intimidation where they are able to develop their talents, interests and ambitions
- Students will be educated in a safe environment in which care, courtesy and respect for the rights and property of others are encouraged
- Positive relationships between girls and boys to be encouraged.

**Behaviour.** Students have a responsibility to:
- Behave in a courteous way respecting others by acting in ways which are not physically or emotionally harmful to others or themselves
- Care for equipment, furniture, buildings, grounds and personal property
- Follow instructions given by staff.
Approach to Behaviour Management. The above principles will be achieved by:

- Use of Restorative Practices whenever possible
- All staff formulating classroom rules and consequences with their students
- Providing appropriate and consistent consequences for misbehaviour
- Providing students with the opportunity to be involved in the Junior School Council and other decision making bodies
- Positively encouraging students through Social Skills, Student of the Week programs
- Encouraging students to celebrate the achievements of others
- Assisting students to take responsibility for their own behaviour
- Implementing a Mentor Program, which establishes a support network for children at risk
- Fully implementing the ‘You Can Do It’ program, which incorporates ‘Program Achieve’
- Conduct Safety Survey twice a year
- Prepare term audits of behaviour problems
- Agenda Pupil Welfare report for Staff Meeting.

Class Rules, which focus on the positive, are negotiated in order to allow the students a sense of ‘ownership’ of the rule making process. Clear rewards and logical consequences are established and discussion to encourage behaviour modification occurs regularly.

Rewards may apply to either an individual or an entire class, and may include:--.

1. “Bonus” time to be used on personal projects.
2. Special activity – negotiated with teacher.
3. Computer time.
4. Work with Cobber.
5. Special recognition.
6. Specific rewards eg Art ‘lucky dip’.

Consequences could include:--

1. Verbal rule reminder.
2. Rule reminder (name on board).
3. Rule warning (cross beside name).
4. Rule action (withdrawal from class or yard for a short period of time. Student to catch up on any class work missed).

Where possible, consequences should be discussed as close as possible to the time of misdemeanour, and should be seen as a logical extension of steps taken to encourage students to make ‘smart choices’. If further action is needed, an incident report is completed by the student and teacher, with action of logical consequence (perhaps exclusion from a class activity like an excursion or camp, or being sent to another classroom for a period of time). It may also be followed up by action such as:

- Principal consulted
- Parents contacted.

Severe clause
If behaviour is considered severe, the Principal will make a decision about action to be followed.

An example of negotiated class rules (Senior Unit):-

1. We move safely and sensibly around the room.
2. We use equipment correctly and show respect for other people’s property.
3. We listen when others are speaking, value their ideas and wait our turn without interrupting.
4. We always try to include others, consider their feelings, and recognise their need for personal space.
5. We always try our hardest and take pride in everything we do.

Yard Rules apply to all students and are non-negotiable.

1. We keep our hands and feet to ourselves.
2. We use appropriate language.
3. We treat others with care and respect.
4. We keep out of the school buildings during recess times, and before and after school, unless with a teacher.
5. We use and care for equipment correctly.
6. We leave our food wrappers in our bags.
7. We are SunSmart.
8. We are not allowed to throw inappropriate objects.
9. We play in correct play areas.

Other values we encourage in the playground:
- We include others
- We help those who need it
- We keep our playground neat and tidy
- We respect other people’s personal space.

Behaviour Management Procedures
We, as a school, recognise that parents will have questions and concerns and we welcome your thoughts whenever they arise.

Incident Reports
Incident reports are written by student/s involved in any action where a school or class rule has been broken, and by appropriate witnesses. Teachers are able to assist students where necessary. Multiple students may use the one report, depending on severity of incident.
Teacher involved with incident to write what action was taken and whether follow up is required. All forms are handed to Welfare Co-ordinator to be filed. Reports are collated at end of each term to help identify particular types of incidents or repeat offenders. All incident reports are collated by the Welfare Co-ordinator and filed at the end of each year. Access to this folder is only by the Welfare Co-ordinator and Principal.

The Incident Report is broken into several sections:-
* Student’s account of what happened.
* What can be done to help rectify situation or be done to prevent further incidents.
* Teacher’s report of incident, action taken and if further follow required.
* Parental Section (as required) allows parents to see the incident and action taken at school. This section enables parents to indicate if further action is required, or if they are satisfied the issue has been dealt with.

Restorative Practice
After the whole staff undertook professional development in Restorative Practices, this way of managing student behaviour was integrated with existing behavioural management procedures at the school during 2008. This approach differs from punitive based approaches in the following ways-;
- It allows students to understand what they have done wrong
- It gives students ownership of the problems created
- It presents a desirable way to solve problems
- It gives students the chance to fix things with support
- It leaves students’ dignity intact and respects them as people

The above is achieved by asking the student a series of questions, moving from what happened, to what the student was thinking at the time and since the incident, to owning their part in the incident, identifying the range of people affected, before moving onto how the student can “fix things up”, and identifying any adult assistance required. Underpinning restorative practice is a no blame philosophy and the belief that students innately desire to be a part of solving problems they have had a role in creating. The practice also involves group or whole class “no blame conferences”. These are based on the same principles and can be utilised to manage more significant difficulties within a peer group, classroom or in the yard.
Restorative Practices is the preferred method for managing behavioural difficulties. On the few occasions it is unsuccessful, the method employed is time out.

**Time Out**

If recommended by the reporting teacher, the student may be withdrawn from playground for a period of time. At this time the Welfare Co-ordinator will counsel the student by working through the Incident Report. Information will be discussed and alternative behaviours suggested. Relevant staff will also be made aware of the outcomes. A copy of the report may be sent home to parents, who are then required to acknowledge that the issue has taken place and will be followed up at home. Confirmation of this will then be sent back to school.

**Management of behaviour**

Depending on severity of incident (discretion of Welfare Co-ordinator / Principal), the steps are as follows:-

**First Incident**

Incident report is filled out. The incident is discussed with the student/s so that they understand how their behaviour was unacceptable. By reflecting on the incident, the student/s may understand what can be done to rectify the situation and what might be appropriate/preferred behaviour. Potential consequences could include apology, withdrawal of privileges, Time Out, and perhaps parents informed of incident.

**Second Incident**

* Incident Reports are filled out.
* Copy of incident report may be sent home.
* Separate meetings, facilitated by the Welfare Co-ordinator are then organised with each group of parents. The purpose of these meetings is to ensure that face-to-face contact is made and reaffirm the rights and responsibilities of each person involved.
* Common understandings of the issue are shared between school and home. Appropriate behaviour is proposed and outcomes/consequences which may occur if these are not followed, are discussed.
* Written minutes will be taken during the meeting. These will be ratified at the conclusion of the meeting and each party given a copy. Where necessary, future meetings are planned.
* A Welfare Plan is negotiated with parents and students, which would be subject to negotiated review to assess effectiveness.
* Each party to be notified about what has taken place and a brief outline of future actions given. Level of detail shared with each party left to the discretion of the Principal, with regard to the maintenance of confidentiality.
* Counselling services, after consultation with District Services. Ongoing care and support is offered to all parties to prevent escalation of inappropriate behaviour and to minimise potential “victim” symptoms.

**Continual Incidents**

Perpetrator suspended (Department of Education and Early Childhood Development reference 4.7.3.2 Suspension) and returns to school after agreed period, dependent on perpetrator guaranteeing there will be no further incidents. Should further incidents occur after suspension, then expulsion will be seriously considered with regard to the best interests of all parties concerned (Department of Education and Early Childhood Development reference 4.7.3.4 Expulsion).
Anti-Bullying Policy

Definition of bullying
Bullying is when someone, or a group of people, who have more power at the time, deliberately upset or hurt another person, their property, reputation or social acceptance on more than one occasion.

Types of bullying
There are three broad categories of bullying.
- **Direct physical bullying** e.g. hitting, tripping, and pushing or damaging property.
- **Direct verbal bullying** e.g. name calling, insults, homophobic or racist remarks, verbal abuse.
- **Indirect bullying** - This form of bullying is harder to recognise and often carried out behind the bullied student’s back. It is designed to harm someone’s social reputation and/or cause humiliation. Indirect bullying includes:
  - lying and spreading rumours
  - playing nasty jokes to embarrass and humiliate
  - mimicking
  - encouraging others to socially exclude someone
  - damaging someone’s social reputation and social acceptance
  - cyber-bullying, which involves the use of email, text messages or chat rooms to humiliate and distress.

What Bullying is Not
Many distressing behaviours are not examples of bullying even though they are unpleasant and often require teacher intervention and management.

There are three socially unpleasant situations that are often confused with bullying:

**Mutual conflict**
In mutual conflict situations, there is an argument or disagreement between students but not an imbalance of power. Both parties are upset and usually both want a resolution to the problem. However, unresolved mutual conflict sometimes develops into a bullying situation with one person becoming targeted repeatedly for ‘retaliation’ in a one-sided way.

**Social rejection or dislike**
Unless the social rejection is directed towards someone specific and involves deliberate and repeated attempts to cause distress, exclude or create dislike by others, it is not bullying.

**Single-episode acts of nastiness or meanness, or random acts of aggression or intimidation**
Single episodes of nastiness or physical aggression are not the same as bullying. If a student is verbally abused or pushed on one occasion they are not being bullied. Nastiness or physical aggression that is directed towards many different students is not the same as bullying.

Students will:
* not bully other students. There is no reason to tease
* report any incidents at school, or on the way to & from school
* help prevent bullying situations by providing strong peer relations
* practise strategies being discussed in the classroom or individually
* take responsibility for behaviour
* respect others and don’t hurt their feelings
* treat others fairly
* take care of their own things and not steal or damage someone else’s property
* try to sort small problems out without needing a third party to intervene.

Being bullied can have different effects on different people.
Some feelings can include:-
* Feeling unhappy or left out
* Wanting to stay away or not join in
* Feeling frightened, embarrassed, angry or unsafe
* Finding it difficult to concentrate or sleep
* Being confused about how to deal with the situation.

If you feel you are being bullied, remember that not all strategies work all the time. If these do not work, seek help from an adult.
1. Do not show the bully you are upset, this may help avoid future provocation.
2. Do not ignore hurtful comments that upset you.
3. Use “I” statements, as they can be very powerful eg. “I don’t like it when you ……”
   “I don’t like it when you say…….”
Role of students who witness bullying:
‘There are no innocent bystanders’
* Don’t join in – being part of the group where someone is being bullied is still being a bully.
* Report bullying, so both the target and the bully are able to get help.
* When possible tell the bully to stop, sometimes peer group advice is stronger than messages coming from an adult.
* Reporting bullying is a mature and responsible act. It is not “dobbing”.

Staff responsibilities:
* Ensure the school community is aware of the Student Welfare Policy
* Liaise with parents via the Principal or Welfare Co-ordinator when required
* Monitor student behaviour during recess and lunch times to ensure that appropriate behaviour becomes an integral part of the learning process
* Deal with all reported and observed incidences of bullying
* Strive to ensure students feel safe at all times
* Help create a school culture which does not tolerate any form of bullying
* Help students identify the various forms bullying can take
* Model anti-bullying behaviour.

Strategies for Parents

How do I know if my child is being bullied?
Some of the signs that a child is being bullied may include:
- an unwillingness or refusal to go to school
- feeling ill in the mornings
- wagging school
- doing poorly in their school work
- becoming withdrawn, starting to stammer, lacking confidence
- crying themselves to sleep, having nightmares
- asking for money or starting to steal (to pay the bully)
- refusing to talk about what's wrong
- having unexplained bruises, cuts, scratches
- beginning to bully other children, siblings
- becoming aggressive and unreasonable.

What can I do if my child is being bullied?

Step 1: Listen carefully to your child and show concern and support.

Step 2: Give sensible advice – don’t encourage your child to fight back, this will most likely increase the bullying.

Step 3: Assist your child to develop positive strategies including:
- saying leave me alone and calmly walking away
- avoiding situations that might expose them to further bullying
- making new friends.

Step 4: Ask your child the following questions to understand if there is a repeated pattern:
- What, where and when did the incident happen?
- Who was involved on each occasion?
- Did anybody else see it, and, if so, who?
- What solutions have been tried so far?
- The names of any teachers who are aware of the problem.

Step 5: Work with your child’s school to solve the problem. Schools take their responsibilities in relation to bullying behaviour very seriously and they have more success when parents work with the school to solve the bullying problem.

Remember, if you were not aware that your child was being bullied, then perhaps your child’s teacher(s) did not know about it either.
Step 6: You can make a follow-up call to see what has been done or alternatively ask the school when you can expect them to get back to you.

Step 7: Work with the school to establish a plan for dealing with the current situation and future bullying incidents. Before you leave, ask for clarification about the next steps in the plan.

Step 8: If needed, ask for the school counsellor to become involved.

Step 9: Encourage your child to report any further bullying incidents to a teacher they trust at the school.

The school will need time to investigate and to talk to teachers and, perhaps, other students.

Parent responsibilities:
- Listen and have empathy with feelings, asking questions calmly to clarify the problem
- Watch for signs of bullying, both when your child is either a target or perpetrator
- If your child is the perpetrator, work with care and compassion but emphasise that any discussion is an explanation, not an excuse for the behaviour
- Make an appointment with your child’s teacher and make notes of the points you want to discuss before the meeting. Be assured that something will be done
- Try to stay calm at the meeting and present information in a way that makes it clear to the school that you and the school are working as partners in trying to fix this problem.
- Instruct your child to report to a teacher if they are being bullied
- Support your child if they have been bullied. Let them know that they are special individuals and help them to move on by encouraging them to use appropriate strategies for empowering themselves to deal with situations they may face
- Accept reasonable responsibility to work with the school to reinforce anti-bullying expectations, and follow up consequences if your child has been a perpetrator
- Model anti-bullying behaviour.

What I should NOT do if my child is being bullied?
- Do not directly approach any other student who you believe may have been involved in bullying your child.
- Do not try to sort the issues out with their parents. This usually doesn’t work and makes the situation much worse.

What if my child is bullying others?
- Respond calmly and non-defensively, and commit to working with the school to manage the problem in a helpful way.
- See the situation as an opportunity for your child to learn important developmental lessons.

What I should NOT do if my child is bullying others?
- Do not directly approach the bullied student or their family or try to get other parents to take your child’s side.

What I can do to reduce bullying at school?
- Report all incidents of bullying to the school, not just incidents that happen to your own child.
- Let your child know how much you disapprove of bullying and why.
- Any type of bullying at home should be avoided, and respect for others should be modelled and encouraged.
- Talk to your child about the qualities associated with caring friendships and discourage them from staying in ‘friendships’ where they are mistreated or not respected.
RESOURCES SECTION

Parent References
The school has a number of resources which may be borrowed by parents.

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development also provides information on its Website.
http://www.education.vic.gov.au

Other websites.
www.bullyingnoway.com.au
Dr Ken Rigby's website: www.education.unisa.edu.au/bullying/
KidsHelp: www.kidshelp.com.au
Bullying.Org: www.bullying.org

Notes:

1. Where student wellbeing is concerned, a good communication process, which results in regular, open and clear interactions between home and school, needs to be implemented.

2. Active parental support in behaviour management will always be encouraged.

3. A support group can be established for staff, parents and the student with a persistent behavioural issue. This can also include the situation for a student who may be a target of harassment.

4. If you feel your child is being bullied, some possible symptoms to watch for are: - not wanting to go to school, sadness or uncharacteristic quietness. These need to be reported to school.

5. Please let the school know if some personal situation has changed / occurred at home which may affect your child's behaviour / progress.