



Junior Learning Community



Information Booklet 2026

STAFF



Jessica Kattwinkel
Principal



Kate Leigh
Business Manager



Genevieve Erskine
Prep/1 Teacher



Jaymie Lowe
Grade 1/2 Teacher



Claudia McLaren
Grade 2/3 Teacher



Gemma Welsh
Grade 3/4 Teacher



Alistair Burrell
*Grade 3/4 Teacher
/ Learning Specialist*



Madi Dillon
Grade 4/5 Teacher



Dom Connor
Grade 6 Teacher



Brendan King
*Health & Wellbeing
Leader / PE*



Donna Williams
Art / STEAM Teacher



Abbey Ritchie
LOTE Teacher



Kelly Rogers
STEAM Teacher



Beth Marwood
Education Support



Bree Egan
Education Support



Hannah Zappelli
Education Support



Liv Roberts
Education Support



Suzanne Bath
Chaplain

OUR PHILOSOPHY

Our School Motto: *'Living and Learning Together'*

Our Vision: *An inclusive community that supports and encourages a love of learning and the skills and mindset to thrive.*

Our Mission: In order to fulfil this vision, we nurture our students to:

- be independent lifelong learners who are well equipped to meet the challenges of an ever changing world
- think and learn through problem solving
- achieve personal success and excellence
- demonstrate ethical, social and environmental responsibility
- be active, happy, engaged and productive citizens.

At Birregurra Primary School we value:

- Community - growing positive partnerships between school, home and the broader community
- Aspire - setting goals and purposefully working towards their achievement
- Respect - for self, others, learning and our environment
- Excellence - striving for the highest personal achievement in all aspects of schooling.

We apply these values in our everyday dealings with each other and in the development of our programs and policies.

In our school community these values are demonstrated when:

- learners are at the centre of our teaching and learning
- teaching and learning programs encourage deep understanding and a sense of the importance of learning
- students have the opportunity to learn in a positive, caring environment and are encouraged to become self-motivated, life-long learners
- all students are encouraged to achieve their personal best in all that they do
- members of the school community show great confidence in one another and themselves
- students, teachers and parents feel that they are treated fairly at all times
- students are encouraged to work cooperatively and collaboratively with their peers and other members of the school community, and to be active and responsible citizens.

WHAT IS A JUNIOR LEARNING COMMUNITY?

The Junior Learning Community at Birregurra P.S. consists of children ranging in age from approximately 5 years to 9 years of age. Classes are carefully selected and include a range of personalities, abilities and interests. We proudly place children in multi-age settings because we believe this is more akin to a family setting where children learn from each other in a caring and supportive way. Because children learn at different rates, not every child in Grade One, for example, will have the same teaching focus or be completing the same tasks at the same time. At other times, students may be working on the same learning when it matches their needs.

Teachers at Birregurra P.S. address the learning needs of children as unique individuals rather than deliver a predetermined curriculum to any given grade. Your child is always at the centre of the curriculum. Teachers provide learning that is authentic, relevant and engaging. Each student's interests, stage of development and individual learning goals are catered for during inquiry time, literacy, numeracy and specialist programs.

Teachers ensure that each child is working towards a Victorian Curriculum Standard that is developmentally appropriate. The Junior Learning Community includes students in grades Prep, Grade 1 and Grade 2.

At Birregurra P.S we devote the first few weeks of school to building our classroom community. Together, we explore the 'nuts and bolts' that will make our classroom a ten out of ten-learning environment. Teaching and learning activities focus on 'getting to know' each other (interests, hobbies, strengths, family, favourite books, friends etc). Each grade works from our Junior Behaviour Matrix, which clearly outlines expected behaviours and supports consistency across the school.

We are interested in hearing from you, about your child's interests, your hopes and aspirations for your child this year, and any other information you consider important for the classroom teacher to know.



This can be shared in our Parent/Teacher conversations held after school via telephone on Tuesday 10th and Wednesday 11th February (Week 3), and Tuesday 17th and Wednesday 18th of February (Week 4).

All children are assessed by teachers at the beginning of the year to identify their initial learning needs in literacy and numeracy. This information is used by classroom teachers to set learning goals and to plan programs that are developmentally appropriate for each child.



LITERACY

HOW IMPORTANT IS ORAL LANGUAGE FOR MY CHILD'S FUTURE LEARNING?

Oral language (speaking and listening) is crucial to a child's literacy development (reading and writing, including spelling). At Birregurra P.S, we actively encourage interaction among our students and peer learning is seen as an important part of language development. We provide learning experiences that encourage interaction and use a range of materials to promote talk. Examples include dramatic play, Lego building, shared reading and craft activities. Teachers model the language students need, ask questions that invite extended responses, and encourage students to discuss and explain their learning. This occurs through one to one conversations, small group sharing and daily whole class discussions.

Research indicates that a child's speech and language skills are one of the strongest predictors of literacy ability. Parents can contribute to their child's oral language development by simply talking to and reading with their children.

WHAT LITERACY TAKES PLACE AT BIRREGURRA P.S.?



At Birregurra P.S., we believe children learn to read through regular and meaningful reading. Students are immersed in a range of reading experiences designed to build both skill and enjoyment. Each day, students listen to quality literature, explore different types of print, and engage in reading using carefully selected books.

Teachers provide explicit instruction through guided reading and shared text learning. Students also complete activities connected to a common text study, allowing them to practise comprehension, vocabulary and discussion skills. Carefully selected mentor texts support students to see clear links between Reading and Writing, helping them apply ideas, language features and text structures in their own writing. In 2026 teachers will continue to use evidence-informed teaching resources for the whole literacy block. This will help students build confidence and better understand how phonics, reading, writing and speaking and listening connect to support their overall literacy development.

A typical literacy block in the Prep - 2 learning community includes Sounds Write, Daily Retrieval, Fluency, Handwriting, Text-Based Units and Reading and Writing activities.



SOUNDS-WRITE

At Birregurra Primary school, we have a whole school approach to phonics, using the Sounds-Write program. Sounds-Write provides students with a highly structured instructional approach to teaching children to read and spell. It teaches the essential skills of blending, segmenting and phoneme manipulation. Daily structured 'mini lessons' support students to read and spell words with a focus on letter formation and handwriting. Throughout Grade One and Two, students will begin to learn the basics of morphology, this includes learning where the words have originated from, their meanings and understanding prefixes and suffixes.

DAILY RETRIEVAL

The Daily Retrieval helps students consolidate their understanding and build fluency in essential literacy concepts. It also ensures they have the prerequisite skills needed for the day's lessons, boosting their confidence through consistent and sequenced practice.

FLUENCY

Fluency is an essential component of early reading instruction due to its strong relationship with reading comprehension. While effective phonics instruction fosters efficient word reading, it does not always lead to automatic text reading fluency. Fluency sessions include modelled, shared, choral, and echo reading, as well as partner reading activities, all of which help develop accuracy and prosody (reading with expression).

HANDWRITING

Handwriting is a vital skill that benefits from regular practice. Each day, time is allocated to developing and refining students' handwriting abilities, focusing on correct letter size, formation, and placement on lines. Clear and legible handwriting allows students to share their work confidently with others, fostering a sense of pride in their achievements.

TEXT BASED UNITS

Text-based units are a great way to help students develop skills and knowledge that link to the language and literature components of literacy simultaneously. There is a strong and consistent body of evidence demonstrating the impact of high-quality texts on students' literacy outcomes. At BPS we have committed to developing a text rich curriculum that is intentional and sequential, with the view to build knowledge, vocabulary, and exposure to/ability to access a range of complex texts. Our text based units, adapted from evidence based examples, aim to support students to develop their comprehension.

The units provide opportunity for the following:

- Comprehension monitoring (students are taught how to become aware of when they do not understand and what to do about it).
- Graphic organisers and story mapping (students are taught/provided visual scaffolds for text structure and sequencing).
- Question answering (students respond to carefully developed questions from the teacher).
- Question generation (students are taught how to develop their own questions about the text during reading).
- Summarising (students are taught how to remove redundant or less important information/they are taught how to focus on what is most relevant).
- Using multiple strategies at once (reciprocal teaching – predicting, clarifying, questioning, summarising).
- Cooperative learning (using strategies in small groups rather than with the teacher).
- The units incorporate key elements including text level reading, text level writing, vocabulary and sentence level writing and reading fluency, linking reading and writing.

READING

Students will engage in a range of reading activities throughout the week, including 'partner reading,' 'listening to reading,' 'word work,' and small-group teacher focus sessions.

Mentor texts model reading strategies and print conventions, while teacher-led small group sessions provide targeted instruction using carefully selected texts to extend learning.

Reading at home is encouraged daily and can include a variety of texts, such as storybooks, factual texts, comics, games, newspapers, and magazines, to nurture a love of literature. In Prep, Grade 1, and Grade 2, take-home readers will include a *Dandelion Launchers* or *Dandelion Readers* book to reinforce the sounds learned at school. Grade 1 and Grade 2 students will also take home a self-selected text from our Book Boxes. These books will be familiar and/or very easy to read, designed to be enjoyed for fun while increasing exposure to more complex vocabulary. Their primary purpose is to build reading confidence and fluency through easy, interest-based reading. All children are encouraged to engage in reading at home every day as part of their daily routine.

WRITING

Children are encouraged to write for real purposes every day. They need explicit instruction in writing, beginning in the early years. Sentences are the building blocks of all writing, with structured lessons on sentence structure and building stamina through 'Quick Writes'. Students will also engage in meaningful writing activities throughout the text-based units.

MATHEMATICS

HOW DO YOU TEACH MATHS AT BIRREGURRA P.S.?

Our Mathematics program helps children develop a strong understanding of number and connects maths to real-life situations. At the beginning of each lesson, all classes incorporate maths fluency activities to build speed, accuracy, and confidence with key skills. We also emphasise investigation, the use of concrete materials, and a variety of games to reinforce concepts taught. Children are encouraged to articulate their thinking when explaining their findings. To cater for a wide range of ability levels, teachers use open-ended tasks or provide different entry points for students working on the same task. Maths lessons are carefully timetabled and may include children working in small groups, with partners, individually, or as a whole class.



The following are examples of additional opportunities for exploring mathematics within and beyond the classroom setting:

- coin recognition, exchange of money, cash register with numbers etc. in shops
- naming shapes (cylinder, cone, rectangular prism etc.) as children build/construct
- reading analogue and digital time for appointments, performance times etc.
- measuring height of towers, distance travelled by paper planes, width of stage etc.
- mapping pathways, drawing bird's eye view etc.
- cooking, measuring quantities.

SCIENCE AND INQUIRY

Our Science program is supported by Primary Connections 5Es teaching and learning model and resources. The program and term long units are based on an inquiry-oriented teaching and learning model. Students use their prior knowledge and literacies to develop explanations for their hands-on experiences of scientific phenomena. Students have opportunities to represent and re-represent their developing understanding. They are engaged actively in the learning process. Students develop investigation skills and an understanding of the nature of Science. Teaching and learning progresses through five phases: Engage, Explore, Explain, Elaborate & Evaluate.

SPECIALIST PROGRAMS

Students attend specialist classes each week. In 2026 these include Indonesian, Art, Physical Education and STEAM. Together, these learning areas support students' academic, social and personal development and contribute to a well rounded education.

Indonesian builds cultural awareness and broadens global perspectives. Art encourages creativity, imagination and self expression. Physical Education, including the Term 1 athletics program with Mr King, promotes fitness, teamwork and sportsmanship. This preparation supports students as they approach School House Sports on Friday 27 March and the interschool Polwarth Sports on Friday 27 February.

STEAM learning develops skills across Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics. Students apply inquiry, problem solving and critical thinking to real world situations and learn how innovation shapes everyday life, from digital technologies to engineering design.

Across all specialist subjects, students practise collaboration, perseverance and confidence. These capabilities transfer beyond the classroom and into all aspects of students' lives.



RESPECTFUL RELATIONSHIPS

The Respectful Relationships curriculum helps schools promote and model respect, positive attitudes, and healthy behaviours. This social and emotional learning (SEL) program equips young people with the essential social, emotional, and relationship skills needed for everyday life.

The Respectful Relationships curriculum:

- Supports mental health and wellbeing
- Contributes to improved academic outcomes and social-emotional development
- Fosters respectful and supportive peer relationships
- Reduces rates of bullying, as well as sexual and homophobic harassment.

Students develop key skills and mindsets, including:

- Emotional literacy – understanding and expressing emotions effectively
- Resilience strategies – coping with challenges and bouncing back from setbacks
- Courage and confidence – navigating both everyday life and difficult situations
- Optimistic thinking – developing a positive outlook and problem-solving approach
- Emotional regulation – amplifying positive emotions and managing negative ones
- Anti-bullying skills – responding to and countering bullying behaviour
- Success strategies – building attitudes and skills for lifelong achievement.

Respectful Relationships integrates these essential personal and social skills across all key learning areas. It uses children's literature to explore wellbeing and resilience concepts while incorporating cooperative learning strategies, circle time, educational games, music, drama, art, and contemporary culture and technology. Many activities also encourage critical and creative higher-order thinking, ensuring a dynamic and engaging learning experience.

CHAPLAINCY PROGRAM



The Chaplain's role includes care for members of the school and wider community. Responding to issues and critical incidents as they arise, as well as facilitating proactive relationship building, small group delivery and programs to ensure improved wellbeing outcomes for young people and their communities.

The chaplaincy's role within the school community is to provide the link needed between the physical and psychological wellbeing of the students, parents/caregivers and teaching staff, ensuring that a holistic approach is undertaken as we seek to produce resilient, resourceful, competent and successful individuals. As chaplain, duties may include (not limited to):

- building relationships and being present in the school community
- implementation of preventative and proactive programs
- supporting classroom activities or individual students in class
- as needed accompany child or parent to mediation and or court appearances
- liaising with various service providers and local councils
- offering support at times of significant events
- intervention and trauma support in crises and emergencies.

Chaplains can deal with a wide range of issues, including:

- behaviour management
- social relationship issues such as anger, peer relationships, loneliness and bullying
- family relationship issues;
- the development of the self - sense of purpose, self-esteem, and mental health
- the involvement of students in the community
- addressing issues of social inclusion and racism.

RESTORATIVE PRACTICE

HOW DOES RESTORATIVE PRACTICE WORK?

When something happens, our old habits taught us to ask: Who is to blame? What rule did they break? What is the punishment?



Our NEW HABITS are grounded in the principle that when something happens, it harms and damages relationships. We ask a different set of questions: Can you tell me what happened? What were you thinking/feeling at the time? How have you been thinking/feeling since it happened? Who do you think has been affected by your actions? How were they affected? What could you do now to help make things right? How can we prevent this from happening again in the future? What can I do to help you?

Our new habits are restorative. Our new habits are: inclusive, create community, develop problem solving around day to day difficulties, build confidence and embrace the concepts of being SAFE, FAIR and FRIENDLY.

DOES STUDENT WELLBEING FIGURE PROMINENTLY AT BIRREGURRA P.S?

The wellbeing and personal development of every student is a priority for all staff at Birregurra Primary School. We are fortunate to have the support of the Mental Health in Primary Schools initiative. This initiative supports schools to employ a Mental Health and Wellbeing Leader, a qualified teacher, to implement a whole-school approach to mental health and wellbeing. The program aims to build the capability of the whole school in developing knowledge, awareness and skills about mental health and wellbeing, improving student mental health outcomes, and social and emotional development skills. These skills and attitudes support academic engagement.

The program supports student mental health and wellbeing by:

- implementing effective mental health strategies aligned to social and emotional learning in the curriculum, and whole-school approaches to health, wellbeing, teaching and learning initiatives
- embedding evidence-based training and resources across the school to build the capability of staff to better identify and support students
- developing clear referral pathways within school and externally (to community services) for students identified as requiring further assessment and intervention
- improving school connections with local health services to better navigate the service sector.

At Birregurra Primary, we are committed to:

- **Fostering connectedness** - ensuring every student feels part of a team and a supportive community.
- **Explicitly teaching social and emotional skills** through the *Zones of Regulation* and *Respectful Relationships* programs.

Each class teacher oversees student wellbeing and provides support to students, families, and staff. They work one-on-one with students, in small groups, and with the whole class.

Teachers help children develop problem-solving skills, resolve friendship challenges, take responsibility for their actions, and build resilience. They also collaborate with parents to support the emotional intelligence and wellbeing of every child.

Our Mental Health and Wellbeing leader, Mr Brendan King can support referrals to **Student Support Services** as needed (parent consent required). Parents are encouraged to contact their child's teacher or Mr King if they have any concerns about their child's wellbeing.

HOMework

In our Junior Learning Community, homework is primarily based around supporting children's early literacy development. Research shows that reading books aloud with young children contributes to the development of their emergent literacy abilities, which are defined as the foundational skills or knowledge that children develop before learning the more conventional skills of reading and writing. Shared reading experiences are highly beneficial for young people. Benefits of shared reading include facilitating enriched language exposure, fostering the development of listening skills, spelling, reading comprehension and vocabulary. They are also valued as a shared social opportunity between parents and their children to foster positive attitudes toward reading. Our home reading program reflects and reinforces classroom learning programs in a way that incorporates individual interests. We also encourage children to engage with their families in talking about their friends, experiences and interests at school.

In addition to reading, we encourage incidental real life maths activities. The table provides a guide for each year level in the Junior Learning Community.

| Year Level | Time per night | Regular expectations | Additional expectations |
|------------|----------------|---|---|
| Prep | 10 mins | Read decodable reader books with an adult each night. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Share a variety of texts together. E.g. Picture storybooks, posters, programs, leaflets.- Practice counting to and back from 10 and learning the numbers before and after a particular number. |

| | | | |
|---|---------|--|--|
| 1 | 10 mins | Read take home books (Dandelion Reader's/ levelled readers) each night | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inquiry research as required. - Real life maths. E.g count the number of white cars on a car trip. |
| | 10 mins | Spelling practice - High Frequency Words | |
| 2 | 15 mins | Read take home books (Dandelion Reader's/ levelled readers) each night | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reading, writing or inquiry activity when required. - Real life maths. E.g measuring when cooking, telling the time |
| | 10 mins | Spelling practice - High Frequency Words | |

EXTRA CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES & OPPORTUNITIES

During the year, we hold excursions and incursions to enrich your child's education through real life experiences. These activities are designed to stimulate and motivate learning, to provide experiences not readily available, and to help children develop social skills in real life settings.

SWIMMING

In 2026, students in the Junior Learning Community will participate in swimming lessons at Bluewater in Colac. Lessons will take place each Friday afternoon in Term Two for an eight week period. Lessons involve a half hour practical lesson in the pool as well as a water safety lesson, supporting students to develop their knowledge of how to be safe in and around the water.



HOW DO I CHECK MY CHILD'S PROGRESS?

Mornings are busy times for parents, children and teachers as we all prepare for the day ahead, and as such, are suitable for quick necessary exchanges of information. Should you wish to discuss aspects of your child's progress with the class teacher we would appreciate that you arrange an appointment. In-depth issues require and deserve sufficient time for a considered discussion, so that we can best support your child.

"Can you give me some more information please?"

"Can I make time with you to discuss ...?"

"Would you be able to clarify ... for me please?"

Please let the teacher know (verbally, via email or XUNO) that you require a time to discuss your child and we will make ourselves available. No matter is too big or too small for our shared attention!

Contact details for all junior school teachers are as follows:

School phone number: 5236 2222

School email address: birregurra.ps@education.vic.gov.au

Prep/1 - Genevieve.Erskine@education.vic.gov.au

Grade 1/2 - Jaymie.Lowe@education.vic.gov.au

Grade 2/3 - Claudia.McLaren@education.vic.gov.au

Health & Wellbeing Leader - Brendan.King@education.vic.gov.au

The Reading Diary is an important communication tool between home and school, and another way to stay abreast of your child's learning. Please check your child's diary each night and ensure that it is returned to school daily.

Weekly updates from classroom teachers are distributed via XUNO and provide an outline of our learning focus.

The Junior Learning Community information evening, held early in Term One, provides families with an overview of our early years' programs and extracurricular events.

Parent - Teacher Phone Conversations are scheduled each term to develop strong home/school relationships. These support the development of learning goals and aspirations.

Reports are sent home at the end of each term, outlining your child's progress.

OTHER USEFUL INFORMATION

ASSEMBLY

Whole school assemblies are held every second Friday at 2:45pm, dates are included on the calendar in the weekly newsletter.

LUNCH ORDERS

We are incredibly fortunate to have dedicated parent volunteers who generously give their time to prepare, organise, and distribute lunch orders from our school kitchen. Their efforts ensure that students enjoy delicious meals while fostering a strong sense of community within our school. We deeply appreciate their hard work and commitment, which make this valuable service possible.

Paper Order Form Information

- Order forms will be sent home each **Friday afternoon**.
- Completed forms and payments are **due back by Wednesday**.
- Lunch orders will be provided on **Friday**.

HEALTHY EATING

We encourage students to develop healthy eating habits and make sustainable choices by:

- **Tapping into water** – Bringing a named water bottle to class.
- **Including fruit and vegetables in their lunchbox** – A mid-morning break is provided for students to enjoy these.
- **Limiting occasional foods** – Avoiding snacks high in sugar and/or fat where possible.
- **Composting** – Fruit and vegetable waste is added to our compost, which is then used in the school garden.

Eating time is supervised by the classroom teacher, and children are encouraged to wash their hands before eating. We also promote **nude food** by encouraging students to bring their snacks and lunches in small reusable containers rather than wrappers. This supports our environment and helps keep our school grounds clean.

SCHOOL UNIFORM

Children are expected to wear school uniforms at all times. **Please make sure all items of clothing and belongings are named.**

Broad brimmed or bucket hats are required to be worn outside as dictated by the UV index (usually mid August to end of April) as part of the school's Sun-Smart Policy. It is also recommended that students apply sunscreen before school, and top up sunscreen is available in each classroom throughout the day.

Precious and/or expensive items should not be brought to school. The school and department are not responsible for any personal items that are lost or damaged while at school. Teachers will remind students to leave their treasures at home.

Students are not permitted to wear decorative jewellery to school. Stud earrings and sleepers worn in the ears, and watches, are the only acceptable jewellery. Please note, nail polish is not permitted.

BIKE TRAVEL

Students are encouraged to walk or ride to school each day. If school students choose to ride a scooter or bike to school, they **must** wear a helmet. When in the school grounds, students must walk their scooter/bike to the bike shed where it will be secured until home time.

STUDENT ABSENCES

Preferred means of communication for student absences is via direct communication with the school office: verbal (in person or via phone) or written (via email or XUNO app).

Contact details -

School office: 5236 2222

School email: birregurra.ps@education.vic.gov.au

FEEDBACK

We appreciate the trust you place in us to work with you in raising your child. Education is our focus and we strive to provide a rich learning environment. We are constantly looking for ways to improve and your feedback is encouraged. If you have any thoughts or ideas as to how we can improve, please let us know.

Thanks for reading all this information. If you have further questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to one of us!

Genevieve Erskine, Jaymie Lowe, Claudia McLaren

Junior Teaching Team