The RIVER SCHOOL

Neohumanist Education For Life

# Parent Handbook



## School Vision

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

Enquiries can be made at the office by contacting

(07) 5494 3559 or admin@riverschool.com.au

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# Welcome

We are delighted to welcome you to our River School Family — A place where children are Safe, Happy and Free to Learn.

Located on 15 acres of lush rainforest, The River School provides the complete package, a primary school from Prep through to Year 6 and an Early Education Centre for children aged 2 to 5 years, including a comprehensive Kindergarten program.

The River School values your child's foundation years with a gentle introduction to academic confidence and ability, and an emphasis on the development of social and emotional skills. It is a place that provides solid grounding for life. At the River School we encourage our young people to question and extend their minds, be peacemakers and understand their connection and responsibility as responsible global citizens.

Teaching programs are designed with our Neohumanist philosophy as the starting point — love, respect and kindness to all, to engaging processes, achieving Australian curriculum outcomes and importantly meeting the needs of individual learning styles. Learning experiences are continually built upon to encourage students to strive for their best, take risks and challenge themselves to expand their learning to higher levels of achievement.

# Our Philosophy - Neohumanism

The guiding philosophy of The River School and Early Childhood Centre is Neohumanism. Neohumanism takes the inner spirit of humanism (love of humanity) and expands it to also embrace plants, animals and the entire universe. Neohumanism recognises diversity but also emphasises the interconnectedness of all things. A Neohumanist education seeks to cultivate in children their already innate capacity for love and compassion. *"When the love of the human heart extends its embrace to the entire living and non-living worlds, this is Neohumanism."* (PR Sarkar)

Neohumanist education aims to develop the full physical, cognitive, and spiritual potential of each child. The methodology of NHE is flexible, creative, and culturally sensitive. It empowers children internally through personal and spiritual development, and externally through academic subjects, creativity and the arts, music, physical education, and real life skills.

Personal development includes spiritual concepts such as universal love, meditation and yoga, morality, integrity, intuition, and interpersonal skills such as courtesy, cooperation, communication, decision-making, conflict resolution, problem solving and self-awareness /regulation. As part of Neohumanism, an awareness of ecology is promoted in its broadest sense, the realisation of the inter-relatedness of all things, with active encouragement for the respect and care of all living beings and the environment. As an extension of this, everyone involved with our School is expected to follow the sentient vegetarian diet (no meat, eggs, onion, garlic or mushrooms) while at school and participating in school activities such as camps.



The goal of a Neohumanist education is to expand gradually a student's sense of community: from self, to family, locality, country, humanity, life on earth and ultimately the entire universe. A Neohumanist education is also an 'education for the whole child', that is, for the physical, mental and spiritual child. It is about doing (activity in the world), knowing (learning) and being (entering one's inner world). A successful education leads to a deep desire for further learning which then continues throughout life. However, there is abundant evidence that the kindergarten and primary school years are supremely important because they lay foundations for the rest of one's life.
(Neohumanist Education — A handbook for teachers. Michael Towsey. 2018)

# The River School ~ From Classroom to Creek



As a government approved, Independent School, we extend our mindset of excellence beyond the requirements of the Australian Curriculum to ensure our programs offer a balance of formal numeracy and literacy skills, a rich Arts focus, including visual arts, music, dance and drama, and an emphasis on inquiry, creative thinking and problem solving through the sciences, geography, history, technology, and language.

At The River School we recognise that our responsibility as educators goes beyond the teaching of academic subjects. Neohumanist education values and encourages the development of all facets of the children in our care, including spiritual, emotional, and social development.

Embedded within all our learning activities are opportunities for the development of skills such as communication, teamwork, honesty, and leadership. Our virtues program explicitly teaches the values of compassion and love, which are further modelled as the underlying basis of our philosophy through natural integration in all that we do.

We love and nurture our students and value each as an individual with absolute potential. Through our holistic approach we ensure that children feel loved and safe, and that they are given every opportunity to grow academically, spiritually, emotionally, and socially. We believe that the most important outcome of education is balanced, moral adults capable of creating a global society of justice, acceptance, and spiritual freedom, who actively work towards the universal good of all.



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

In later years, we use themes, projects, and areas of interests as a focus to make learning relevant and exciting. We especially encourage service-based projects that impact the community and globe, so that children learn ways to positively make a difference and see the results of their work.

A unique aspect of our approach stems from our understanding of child development. Unlike other educational systems, we not only recognise that every child has their own unique timeframe of development across all facets, but we also provide a learning environment that honours this. It is imperative to us that our students love learning and that we know, acknowledge, and cater for each child as an individual.

An important aspect of our learning program is that it is relevant to our students and upholds our Neohumanist values. To this end, much of our learning is placed in a real-world context.

By integrating the various learning areas and making our learning experiences current and relevant, we have the opportunity to provide our students with rich and deep learning experiences. Furthermore, our units of learning often have an environmental or service orientation that instil our appreciation and compassion for other people and our environment.

Neohumanist education aims to help children understand and feel that they are part of a universal family. We encourage learning about the diverse cultures of the world and developing understanding of our differences, similarities, and connections. The broadmindedness of our education helps children to expand their minds and become open-hearted and loving members of a universal community.

Developing a strong sense of rationality helps combat the limitations of dogma and narrow-mindedness that can divide human society. An exciting aspect of learning at the River School is that of rational thinking. Rational thinking equips our students with the ability to be deep thinkers and critical questioners. Our students are encouraged to respectfully question rather than simply accept what they see, read, or are told. This not only develops the skills necessary to step beyond being passive receptors of information but allows children to develop a strong sense of identity, confidence in their own decisions and judgments, and potentially allows our children to be agents of change now and in the future.

Yoga and meditation are significant inclusions in our school curriculum. The benefits of both yoga and meditation are well known and all children from our Pre-Kindy to Year 6 are involved in both practices. Spirituality is the progressive awareness of one's inner self to recognise a deeper connection within the universal whole.



Our virtues program is taught explicitly and embedded in our learning programs and all that we do. It has been specifically designed by our school, for our school. Our school songs reinforce our virtues, and our children engage in singing experiences as a whole school and with their class on a regular basis.

# The River School Curriculum

The River School follows the Australian National Curriculum, providing education in a supportive learning environment based on a healthy mutual respect between students and teachers.

The national curriculum is integrated into the Neohumanist Education framework of discovery and thematic learning and includes meditation and yoga, art, music, literature, Creekulum, drama and film, sports, indigenous studies and child-to-child learning.

Our academic curriculum is designed to achieve excellence through its integrated and inquiry-based programs. The Australian National Curriculum, along with the school's Neohumanist philosophy, forms the foundation from which all learning stems. Neohumanist philosophy provides a focus on research-based teaching and learning, allowing up-to-date, peer-reviewed understanding of child development and learning to inform our teaching practices.

Classes are purposely kept small to enable maximum student-teacher interaction and the building of genuine learning relationships. Teaching programs are tailored to meet individual learning styles and small group and whole class needs. Learning experiences are continually built upon to allow students to strive for their best, take risks and challenge themselves to expand their learning to higher levels of achievement.

Teachers at The River School have a deep and committed passion for the teaching profession and a true love of children. Their aim is to empower students with a desire to learn, and in turn develop deep understandings so that students are in a position to make choices based on critical thinking and self-knowledge. All our staff are addressed by their first names, building respectful relationships between adults and children.

Our teaching team is committed to ensuring your child is *safe, happy and free to learn*.

The Australian Curriculum is a very busy curriculum that can often leave little time for the acquisition of deep knowledge and understanding. At The River School we focus on the Achievement Standards of the National Curriculum, ensuring that we meet National Standards whilst allowing us to individualise our learning programs and integrate learning topics and areas that broaden and strengthen our students' knowledge about themselves and the world around them.

# The River School's Gather & Grow Village




The River School's Gather & Grow Village is one of the most powerful learning environments we have on campus. Each area of the village has a role; where students experience themselves as citizens of a living, interdependent community. This is also diametrically linked with our Jane Goodall's Roots and Shoots program which is run every Tuesday after school. Students learn the virtues of knowledge, simple living, contentment, responsibility, service, compassion, honesty, courage and respect and love.
The Gather & Grow Village is a micro-society where every student has a place, a purpose, and a way to serve others.

**Village Hall** *the classroom + library* where students have council meetings, conflict resolution circles, share 'Village News' updates and decision-making.

**Village Kitchen** where students learn to bake bread, damper, scones and more. They learn how to make soft cheeses and butter, communal cooking, harvesting from the market garden, preparing snacks for others and learning food citizenship: waste, compost, sharing.

**Village Theatre** where students re-enact village stories, explore roles (mayor, healer, builder, storyteller, gardener) and take part in drama projects.

**Village Fix-It Shop** *Tinkering Shed* with a Construction zone '*Village Builders Yard'* and practise upcycling, recycling and repairing.

**Arts and Crafts Centre** where students learn to knit, crochet and hand sew to make and repair clothing. Students make goods for the village signs, decorations, costumes and practise upcycling, recycling and repairing.

**Market Gardens** where students learn communal edible farming, basic Permaculture and medicinal plantings. Students have a 'Village Market Day' where they can trade or gift produce.

**Loose Parts (Mud Pit)** where students learn about civil engineering and construction.

**Fire Pit** where students experience ceremonies and celebrations, seasonal festivals and stories. Student are encouraged to contribute to communal meals.

# Facilities

Our Primary School has multiple classrooms that are particularly large and two contain kitchen areas and bathrooms. We have a beautiful Art Shed, a music room, library, teacher resource room, hall and meditation/yoga space (the Bliss Centre). We have a large oval area and equipment playgrounds, including a musical playground. Gather and Grow is a space that holds ** We also have some beautiful climbing trees and rainforest areas for the children to explore. Bridge Creek runs through the grounds and is a favourite spot for swimming in the summer, for class sessions and for adventure and investigative play all year round.

Our Early Childhood Centre has two rooms as well as a shared foyer space for Yoga and Meditation. Outside areas include a large deck, undercover play area, atelier (creative space), beautiful gardens and play spaces. Our ECC students regularly access the creek, music room, art shed and yoga hall in the Primary School.

# The River School Team

The River School is governed by Ananda Marga Education Ltd. This Governing Body is comprised of a Board of Directors who work with the Principal and Business Manager in areas of strategy and compliance.

Judy Raudon-Hill joins The River School in 2026 as Principal, bringing extensive experience as an educator and elder. She is dedicated to fostering a compassionate, inclusive learning environment guided by Neohumanist values of universal love and respect for all beings. Judy supports a holistic approach that nurtures each child's growth, wellbeing and sense of purpose.

The teachers at our school are dedicated and passionate about The River School's Neohumanist philosophy. Our teachers love our students and go above and beyond to ensure that students enjoy their time at school and receive high quality education.

# Parent Committee (P&F) and Parent involvement

The River School has an active Parents and Friends Committee that meet monthly and provide valued assistance and advice to our teachers and Principal and organise numerous events during the year. Each class has a Parent Representative who assists the teacher by liaising with other parents and representing that class at the Parent and Friends monthly meeting. All parents of the River School are automatically members of the P&F and can nominate at an AGM to be part of the executive committee.

We value and appreciate all parent and family involvement at The River School. Research is very clear that children's positive experiences and learning outcomes of their schooling years is significantly increased and improved through parent involvement. Furthermore, parent helpers and volunteers ensure we can continue to offer great learning experiences and a wonderful environment for our children.

Any time that parents volunteer in our school it can contribute to reducing their term's fees by up to $200 p/term at a rate of $20 per hour. (See Funding and Fees for more information on our Energy Contribution Scheme).



# Dress Code

There is no school uniform required at The River School, unless attending an excursion. However, we do ask for sun safe clothing to be worn and shoes are optional. We ask that children not wear the following:

- Clothing with logos or labels
- Clothing with pop culture pictures or icons
- 'Good' clothing that may potentially get damaged or dirty

# School Times

Early arrivals: There is There is supervision from 8:15am on the lower deck. Please do not arrive before this time – thank you. Our school day begins at 8.45am and ends at 2.45pm.
It is expected that children arrive by 8.40am for the beginning of class.
We have 2 official breaks during the day:

- 1st break 10.30 – 11.15
- 2nd break 12.45 – 1.15



## Animals

Our school has a few, staff owned, small dogs which have proved a great social and emotional support for students. Furthermore, we have a lot of wildlife that inhabit our school grounds including brush turkeys and wallabies. We respectfully ask that no other animals, particularly dogs, are brought onto the school grounds unless this has been pre-arranged with the classroom teacher.

## Enrolling at the River School

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

## Funding & Fees

The River School receives recurrent funding from both State And Federal Governments. In addition, we receive grants and donations and we also actively fundraise to achieve our goals.

As our school is run on a not-for-profit basis, we endeavour to keep our school fees as affordable as possible whilst ensuring that our operating costs are covered.

Our school fees are determined each year and necessarily increase by a nominal amount. Our fees are charged on a term-by-term basis. Occasional other costs are incurred through the year. These include school excursions and camps. A nominal building levy charge is invoiced to each family each term. This small levy ($30 p/family) ensures that all families coming through The River School can contribute to the future of the school. This compulsory levy is payable with the school fees and is earmarked for future building and maintenance projects.

### Energy Contribution

All families are asked to contribute 'energy' to the School. This 'energy' is calculated at $20 per hour for a total of 10 hours per term. Parents can contribute their energy to the School in the form of class help, assisting with fund-raising events, camps, School events such as The Spring Fair etc. Families can also choose to pay $200 a term instead of contributing the 10 hours 'energy'.

### Bus Levy

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

A bus levy is invoiced by the school to a student's account each term and is dependent on the distance travelled.



Our **Mission** is to:

Nurture each child's highest physical, mental, emotional, social and spiritual potential,
Encourage a deep Neohumanist understanding of the interconnectedness of all things, embracing humanity, animals, plants and the entire universe,
Model love and cooperation throughout the school so that children develop a compassionate heart with a clear moral compass and the skills and confidence to put their love into action,
Create a supportive learning community encouraging diversity, unity and service to all.

## The River School Early Childhood Centre (ECC)

A place where the magic of childhood is celebrated in every way.

Nestled on the banks of our beautiful forest and creek, our Wi'ra (Kindergarten) & Djaa'gan (Pre-Kindergarten) children have access to a wide range of natural learning opportunities.

Our children are supported in their learning through unstructured inside and outside play, child-led investigations and peer-to-peer learning, in conjunction with age-appropriate intentional teaching provided by qualified, loving educators.

We foster children's love of learning through scaffolding their areas of interest, nurturing independent and peer to peer learning while ensuring emotional and social growth.

Our curriculum is supplemented by weekly art, music and yoga sessions by qualified teachers from our Primary school. Our virtues of love, respect and compassion for all beings are interwoven in our everyday programs and interactions.

The River School ECC accepts children from 2 years of age and is a beautiful transition to our Primary environment.

If you would like to take a tour of our beautiful grounds and rooms, please contact the Centre directly:

07 5499 9359 or rsecc@riverschool.com.au