

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING NEWSLETTER Term 1 Week 8 - 2026



TOUCHSTONES

This term, along with reinforcing the underpinning of all our behaviour with Respect, the two Touchstones we are focusing on are Belonging and Friendship.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Belonging is the feeling of being happy or comfortable as part of a particular group and having a good relationship with the other members of the group because they welcome and accept you. Belonging is the feeling of security and support when there is a sense of acceptance, inclusion, and identity for a member of a certain group.
		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Friendship is a state of mutual trust, respect and support between two people. Both elements have to be there and it has to be mutual. Friendship is the state of being friends. How friendship affects our brain - (Yr 6).

HARMONY WEEK

Harmony Week was recognised last week. Starting March 16th and leading into the International Day for the Elimination of Racism on March 21st, this is a wonderful time to celebrate the diversity that makes our community so vibrant. Each class was gifted a colours of the world colouring pack and to help our students embrace the power of inclusion, [we've included a Kindness Activity Card featuring 10 simple acts of empathy](#). We encourage you to print this out and pop it on your fridge as a daily reminder for the whole family to practice kindness and ensure everyone feels they belong.



MACS Commitment to Child Safety

Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools (MACS) has zero tolerance for any form of child abuse and is deeply committed to upholding and embedding the highest standards of child safety across our schools. We are guided by our Catholic faith and the unique and unrepeatable dignity of every person in our care. We are dedicated to creating an inclusive and protective environment where every child can feel and be safe.

We are responsible for inspiring and enabling every child to flourish and enrich the world.

Child safety is a shared responsibility between MACS, its employees including its Board, Executive Leadership Team, School Principals, teachers, staff and the wider community.

As Catholic educators, we have a moral, mission-driven and legal responsibility to uphold and actively promote the wellbeing and safety of every student entrusted in our care. Our commitment to the protection of students is enabled in nurturing, respectful and safe communities where the uniqueness and sacred dignity of every young person are celebrated, and they can flourish in their learning and development.

MACS has provided a newsletter series that gives an overview of what the Child Safe Standards are, how they are designed to help keep children and young people safe and what schools governed by Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools (MACS) are doing to prioritise and achieve this. Over the course of this year we will link a newsletter article to each of the 11 standards.

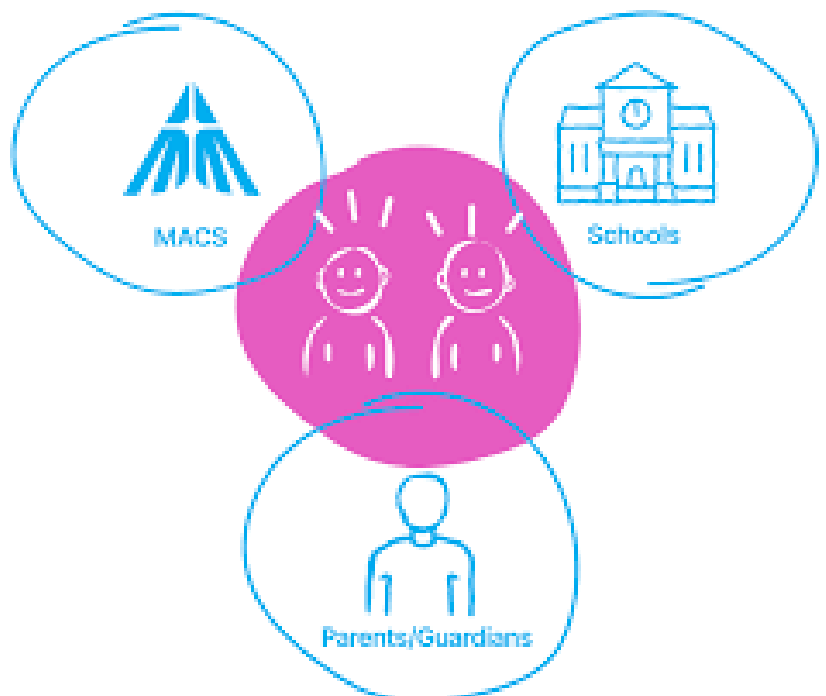
Overview of the Victorian Child Safe Standards

The Victorian Child Safe Standards are a set of 11 minimum requirements that all organisations working with children must meet. These standards are designed to:

- Prevent child abuse and harm
 - Make child safety a shared responsibility
 - Support the wellbeing of all children, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and children with disabilities
 - Promote the participation and empowerment of children and young people
- These standards apply to all school staff, volunteers, contractors, and anyone working with children in schools.

[Child safe standard 1](#) - Organisations establish a culturally safe environment in which the diverse and unique identities and experiences of Aboriginal children and young people are respected and valued

[Child safe standard 2](#) - Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture.



Expanding Our Toolkit: Strategies for Emotional Regulation

Over the last few years, our school-wide initiative focuses on expanding students' repertoires of strategies to manage overwhelming feelings. Working closely with our School Counselor, we focus on a Tool of the Week to provide students with a "shared language" and the opportunity to test which techniques work best for them. When a child feels "heightened" (anxious, angry, or overwhelmed), their nervous system is in overdrive.

Physical Grounding Tools: These tools help reset the body's physical response.

Mindful Movement & Action: Sometimes, "sitting still" is the hardest thing to do when overwhelmed. These strategies use active engagement to regulate emotions.

Cognitive & Reflective Tools: These tools help shift a child's mindset and build long-term resilience and self-esteem. To support this school-wide effort, we encourage you to:

1. Ask about the "Tool of the Week": Have your child show you how it works.
2. Model the behavior: Use the language yourself. "I'm feeling a bit stressed, I think I'll try a Body Scan."
3. Find the "Fit": Not every tool works for every child. Help them decide which ones belong in their personal "mental health toolkit."

Week	Tool	Focus Area	What it looks like
Week 1	Breathing	Physical	STOP and BREATHE. Slowing the heart rate to regain a sense of calm.
Week 2	Body Scan	Mindfulness	STOP and SCAN. Closing eyes to check in with physical sensations from head to toe.
Week 3	Mindful Walk	Grounding	FOCUS on the FEET. Concentrating on the sights, sounds, and physical sensations of moving.
Week 4	Gratitude	Connection	APPRECIATION. Expressing thanks to relish good experiences and build relationships.
Week 5	Song / Music	Regulation	SOUND & SPIRIT. Using melody or singing to block out unhelpful thoughts and focus on the "now."
Week 6	Affirmations	Mindset	POSITIVE MANTRAS. Using loaded phrases to challenge negative thoughts and boost self-esteem.
Week 7	Meditation	Relaxation	STILLNESS. Using visualization or focused thought to reduce overall stress levels.
Week 8	5 Senses	Grounding	SENSORY CHECK. Finding 5 things you see, 4 you touch, 3 you hear, 2 you smell, and 1 you taste.
Week 9	Mindful Drawing	Creativity	FLOW. Bringing awareness to the present moment through colour, design, and focused art.
Week 10	Alphabet Legs	Distraction	TACTILE A-Z. Tracing the alphabet on the leg to redirect the brain during high distress.

Insight Collective

Psychological Assessment Services for Children & Adolescents in Geelong and the Surf Coast

At Insight Collective we offer comprehensive and thoughtfully tailored psychological assessments designed to better understand the factors contributing to a young person's learning, emotional well-being, and day-to-day functioning.

About the Psychologist

Assessments are conducted by Charlotte McMaster, a registered Psychologist and Educational & Developmental Registrar. Charlotte brings a compassionate, evidence-based approach to understanding each young person's unique profile. She holds a Master's in Educational Psychology with First Class Honours from the University of Melbourne and has three years' experience in psychological assessment. Charlotte takes a holistic, empathetic approach to every assessment, ensuring each young person feels seen and understood.



We currently have **immediate availability** for cognitive, educational, ADHD, and Autism assessments.

If you have a student or client who may benefit from an assessment, we warmly welcome you to get in touch.

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Mental Health in Primary Schools (MHIPS)

Child development and mental health

Being in the BARWON region Clairvaux has been fortunate enough to have had the benefit of MHIPS training and support the last three years. By having MHIPS trained teachers in schools we hope to strengthen our mental health literacy and awareness. The foundations for mental health and wellbeing are built early in children's lives, and early experiences can strengthen or disrupt various aspects of development. Critical early life experiences that influence social, emotional and cognitive development include children's relationships with their parents and carers, teachers, and peers.

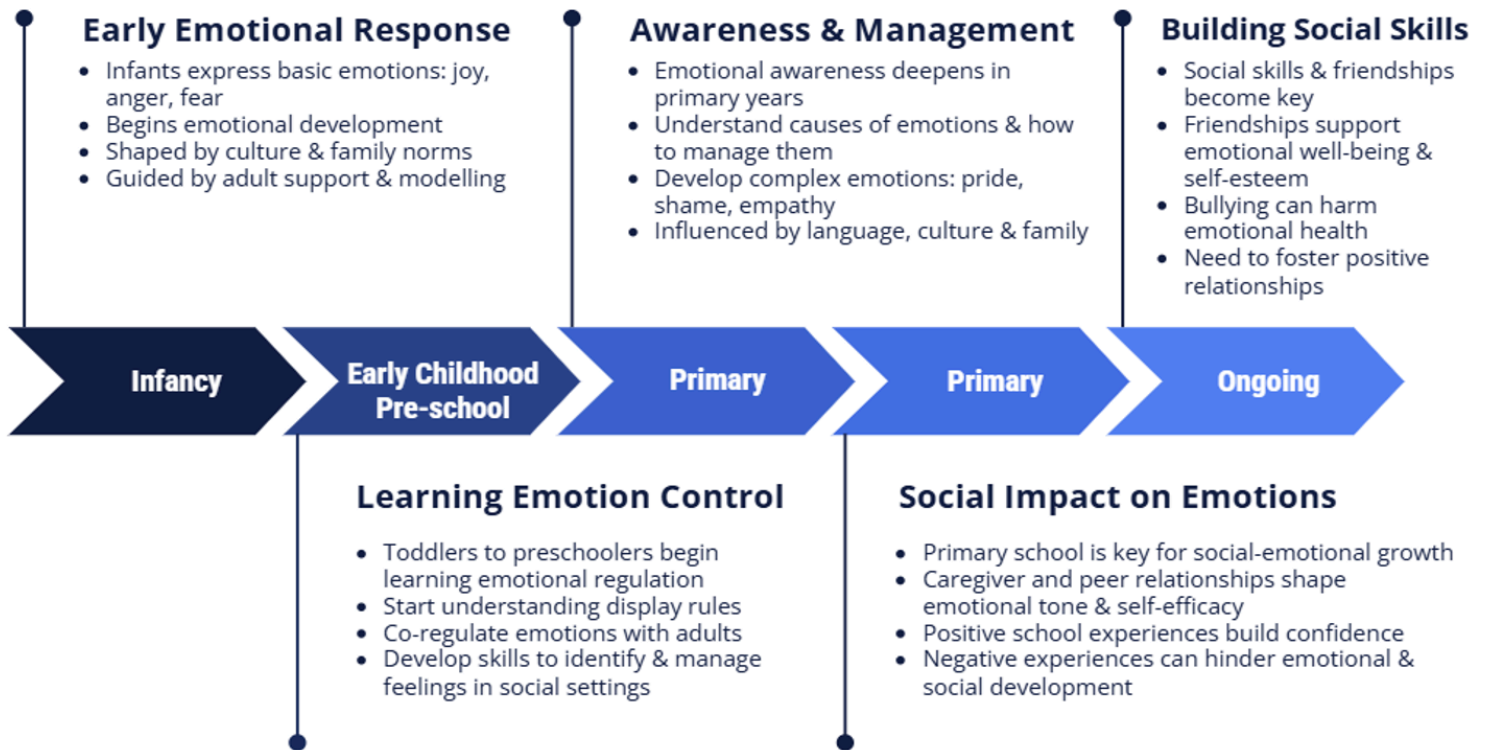
Watch the following video from The Centre for Community Child Health (Royal Children's Hospital), which explores how early experiences shape the architecture of the developing brain. <https://vimeo.com/112360818?fl=pl&fe=sh>



Children's Emotional Development in the primary years

Understanding and managing emotions is complex.

From early joy and fear to later pride and empathy, children develop emotional skills influenced by caregivers, culture, and school experiences.



Similarly, Johnson et al. (2023) found that the adults in children's lives, specifically teachers and parents/carers, act as significant actors in the mental health of children, and that adults' attitudes towards mental health are as important as their levels of knowledge about and capacity to recognise mental health concerns in children. As such, building mental health literacy amongst school staff, as well as their capacity to support their students, is a key component of MHIPS, and the training will build the capacity of Mental Health and Wellbeing Leaders to undertake this work.