

Warringa Park School

Warringa Park School is a specialist school which uses the ‘Positive Behaviours in Schools’ program.

Tell us about Warringa Park School

Warringa Park School is a specialist school located in Hoppers Crossing. The school population is drawn from the City of Wyndham and the school caters for students aged 5 to 18 years who have a diagnosed intellectual disability ranging from mild to profound. Almost 35 percent of students enrolled in the school have Autism Spectrum Disorder.

As the only specialist school in the immediate area and situated in a high growth corridor the school has experienced significant enrolment growth in the last four years. The school has 330 students who come from a wide geographical area and a diverse socio-economic background. 40 percent of families are in receipt of the Educational Maintenance Allowance and 14% are from non-English speaking backgrounds.

Enrolment is dependent upon eligibility criteria as determined by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.



What is the approach to behaviour at Warringa Park School?

Our approach is built around a strong focus on encouraging safety and positive behaviours, rather than the negative aspects of bullying. What we do is very much linked to our four school rules and expectations.

These are clearly stated and visible expectations that are colour coded and have accompanying symbols. These expectations are specifically taught, modelled and actively rewarded across the whole school—and also at a classroom level, where they are broken down to suit the varying understandings of the students.

The Warringa Park four school rules and expectations are:

- We look after ourselves
- We look after each other
- We look after our school
- We speak nicely to each other



How was this approach developed?

In 2007, we looked into the school culture. At the time—there were many and varied expectations and staff were implementing a variety of different programs. We decided to draft school rules and expectations in consultation with all staff. We visited the past, celebrated what was good and looked at what we needed to do into the future.

The process was as follows:

- A curriculum day for all staff to honour the history, evaluate where we were at and set goals and priorities for future growth
- A committee was formed to prepare a draft of the expectations
- These expectations were referred to leadership, consultation and whole of staff for feedback
- A final draft was presented to the whole school.

In 2008 we heard that the 'Positive Behaviors in Schools' (PBIS) project was being implemented in the Western Metropolitan Region, and we campaigned for Warringa Park to be one of the pilot schools. We were chosen as the only specialist school to be part of the first implementation of PBIS.

Joining the PBIS project was a natural continuation of the work we had already done. We saw the opportunity to make use of the resources and supports being offered by the region to cement and build upon our own program.



How is the PBIS implemented?

The PBIS is built into our strategic plan and annual implementation plans at a 'whole school' level. We take a team approach, with representation from all areas of the school, and sharing information with all staff. We use all data sources available to set our goals and priorities.

As part of PBIS we have a Safety Focus centered on the Orange and the Blue Rules. The key questions are:

- What can we do to keep ourselves safe?
- What can we do to help others be, and feel, safe?
- What do we do when we feel upset or unsafe?

To answer these questions the Student Representative Council has researched and implemented the 'Stop, Talk and Walk' approach:

STOP

TALK: *I don't like that.*

WALK: *Make the choice to walk away.*

Then if the behaviour continues tell a staff member.

Has the program been a success?

The PBIS formula assisted us to establish a culture of what we do at Warringa. We aim to tailor our environment, programs and strategies to suit the individual student to set them up for success.

There is a growing expectation of all staff to model, acknowledge, and actively reward pro-social behaviours at a whole school and classroom level. Simple things such as framing things in the

positive—telling young people what you want them to do (not what not to do) is now common practice.

Our school-specific data collection portal informs us of the location and type of incidents that occur. Our whole school SET data (which is part of the standard evaluation for PBIS) informs us of our progress at a whole school level. We started with 87.1 percent positive responses in November 2009. By November 2011 this had improved to 92.6 percent.

Interpretation of our combined data tells us:

- we have fewer incidents in the yard than in the classroom
- behaviour incidents in the yard have decreased markedly since we introduced our 'play zone' system
- problems are generally limited to a small number of students

What is the future of the program?

Our EBS surveys inform us of what staff believe is and is not happening and where we need to prioritise. For example—at the moment staff want a consistent approach to individual students with very challenging behaviours.

As mentioned above, our data tells us that the PBIS project has been successful. But to sustain the changes, the staff need to remain focused on implementing strategies with a common purpose.

It is the staff who make the difference. There needs to be uniformity and consistency, and expectations need to be encouraged and acknowledged by everyone consistently and regularly.

What could be done to improve the program?

Our data is now telling us that the behaviour of a small number of students has an out-of-proportion effect on perceptions of safety at Warringa.

We are therefore at the stage where we need to clearly define individual management for these few students—both proactive and reactive strategies, with staged responses clearly spelt out and defined for certain behaviours. These strategies then need to be implemented uniformly and consistently at a systemic level.

However, we also need to maintain the emphasis on further embedding the teaching of pro-social behaviours into every day curriculum practice and delivery.

How is the program funded?

The program is funded out of the school's PBIS and wellbeing budget.

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