ISSUE 1 | 28TH of JANUARY 2026

Newsletter

College Principal
Wayne Johannesen
Assistant Principals—Drysdale
Damian Marra
Kane Dougherty

Assistant Principals—Ocean Grove
Sarah Foley
David Mitri

Principal Report.

Welcome to the 2026 school year.

I hope all families enjoyed a safe and restful break and that students are feeling positive and ready to begin the year ahead. I particularly extend a warm welcome to new students and families joining our College community in 2026, including the families of students joining us in Year 7 and new enrolments across Years 8-12. We welcome you to our College community and look forward to working in partnership with you as your child begins this next stage of their learning journey.

The start of the school year is an important time to establish routines, build connections and set clear expectations that support students to experience success across the year. By working together to support learning, wellbeing and engagement from the outset, we can ensure all students feel a strong sense of belonging and are well positioned to thrive at Bellarine Secondary College.

Ready to Learn Conferences

Thank you for your support of the Ready to Learn Conferences. I appreciate the process for booking a time with teachers has been a little clunky with conflicting Home Groups visible on Compass and apologise for that oversight. We highly value these conferences and are keen to further refine and improve the process given the important opportunity they provide to set students up for a successful year of learning. Your feedback on how we can make them most effective is very welcome and we will be sharing a link by which you can provide feedback in the coming days.

Staggered Return to Timetabled Classes

To support a smooth and well-organised start to the school year, the College will implement a staggered return to timetabled classes.

Year 7, Year 9 and Year 12 students will return to timetabled classes on Thursday 29 January, allowing focused support for students at key transition points.

Year 8, Year 10 and Year 11 students will return on Friday 30 January. This approach enables staff to prioritise student wellbeing, establish routines and expectations, and ensure students are well prepared for the year ahead.

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24 Hour Absence Line

5251 9010

All student absences must be reported to the College the day of absence.

Drysdale Campus
Peninsula Drive
Drysdale, 3222

Ocean Grove Campus
70 Shell Road
Ocean Grove

P 5251 9000
E bellarine.sc@education.vic.gov.au
W www.bellarinesc.edu.vic.au

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Starting the Year Strong – Attendance Matters

Regular school attendance plays a critical role in both academic progress and social development. Being at school every day supports students to maintain consistent learning routines, build positive relationships with peers and teachers, and remain connected to classroom learning. Frequent absences can disrupt learning continuity and impact students' sense of belonging and social connection.

Too many students were absent too often in 2025 and we are asking for your support to address this.

Your support is critical in turning this around.

If you need help to overcome barriers that prevent your child from being at school please reach out to the College for support by contacting Assistant Principals David Mitri (Year 7&8), Kane Dougherty (Year 9 &10) or Damian Marra (Years 11 & 12) on 52519000 or via email on bellarine.sc@education.vic.gov.au

Support and Communication

House Leaders are generally the first point of contact for parents and carers seeking support. Early communication allows us to work together to support student wellbeing, engagement and learning.

	Corio	Lonsdale	Nepean	Swan
Year 7&8	Caitlyn Carter	Jevon Nicholas	Tom Roberts	Ryan Shaw
Year 9&10	Bree Redden	Jenny MCarthy	Annie Oliver	Jacqui Slattery
Year 11&12	Merryn Chalmers	Suzanne Mack	Jess Armstrong	Omar Lewis

While we ask that initial contact be made through House Leaders, please note that each of the College's sub-schools are managed by Leading Teachers and overseen by Assistant Principals;

Junior Years (Years 7&8) Will Ryan (Leader of Learning: Junior Years), Dave Mitri (Assistant Principal)
Middle Years (Years 9&10) Andrew Grimshaw (Leader of Learning: Middle Years), Kane Dougherty (Assistant Principal)
Senior Years (Years 11&12) Vanessa Wedding (Leader of Learning: Later Years), Damian Marra (Assistant Principal).

Swimming Sports

Our annual Swimming Sports are on Thursday 5 February and will again be held at the North Bellarine Swimming Pool.
This is an important whole-school event that provides students with the opportunity to represent their House, support their peers and strengthen relationships with classmates and friends.

Whether students are competing in events, cheering from the sidelines or simply spending the day together, Swimming Sports plays a valuable role in building connection, school spirit and a sense of belonging. Student attendance on this day is expected, as participation supports both wellbeing and engagement and reinforces the importance of being part of our school community. Year 7 and Year 8 students will begin the day as usual on the Ocean Grove campus before travelling by bus to the pool.

At the conclusion of the Swimming Sports, all Year 7 and 8 students will then return by bus to the Ocean Grove campus and will be dismissed at the normal end-of-day time of 3:10 pm.

For supervision and safety reasons, students will **not be dismissed from the pool**.

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Parent BBQs

- **Year 7 Parent BBQ – Monday 9 February**
- **Year 9 and 12 Parent BBQ – Tuesday 17 February**

These events provide a valuable opportunity for families to connect with class teachers, meet other parents and carers, and strengthen relationships with the school. Importantly, they also demonstrate to students that their schooling is valued and supported. We hope to see you there! Further information and an opportunity to RSVP will be shared with you in the coming days.

Bushfire Awareness – Catastrophic Fire Danger Rating in the Central Fire District

As we are experiencing, the risk of bushfire is very real in these warmer months of the year. Please note that when a **Catastrophic Fire Danger Rating is declared for the Central Fire District**, the College is required to close.

This decision is made to prioritise the safety of students, staff and families.

If a Catastrophic fire risk is forecast, the following steps will occur:

The College will be closed for the day
No students or staff are permitted on site on a Catastrophic fire danger day.
Families will be notified as early as possible
Communication will be sent via Compass, with additional messaging via social media platforms, Facebook and Instagram
The closure decision is made the day prior
The Department of Education confirms school closures by **4:00 pm on the day before**, allowing families time to plan alternative arrangements.
Students should not travel to school
Even if conditions appear mild in the morning, travel on Catastrophic days presents significant risk and students must remain at home.
Learning continuity
Where appropriate, teachers may provide guidance on learning tasks or resources; however, safety remains the priority on these days.

Families are encouraged to:
Monitor fire danger ratings and emergency information through official channels
Review family bushfire plans
Ensure contact details in Compass are current so important messages are received promptly

Please be reassured that in the case of a fire emergency, the College will continue to work closely with the Department of Education and emergency services to monitor conditions and communicate clearly with families regarding the bushfire risk.

For further details please see the College website https://bellarinesc.vic.edu.au/bushfire-readiness/

I wish all families a safe, positive and successful 2026.

We look forward to working in partnership with you throughout the year to support every student's learning, wellbeing and sense of belonging. By working together, maintaining open communication and reinforcing the value of education, we can ensure students are supported to engage fully in their learning, build strong relationships and make the most of the opportunities available to them at Bellarine Secondary College.

Wayne Johannesen

Principal

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January 2026	
Wednesday 28th	**Student /Parent /Guardian—Ready To Learn Day—Conference Day and Laptop Support Day**
Thursday 29th	**Years 7, 9 and 12 Commence**
Friday 30th	**Years 8, 10 and 11 Commence**
February	
Thursday 5th	**Swimming Sports - North Bellarine Aquatic Centre**
Monday 9th	**Ocean Grove Year 7 Parent / Guardian Welcome BBQ 5.45pm-7.00pm**
Tuesday 17th	**Year 9 and Year 12 parent Guardian Welcome BBQ 5:45pm-7:00pm**
Friday 20th	**Student Free Day—Staff P/L**
Tuesday 24th	**Student Photo day—New Date**
Tuesday 24th	**2027 Year 7 - Information Evening Tours Ocean Grove Campus**
March	
Wednesday 4th	**Information Evening Tours Drysdale Campus - 5.15pm -7.00pm**
Monday 9th	**Labour Day Public Holiday - Student Free Day**
Wednesday 11th - 23rd	**Naplan Testing**
Tuesday 17th	**Year 10 Immunisations**
Tuesday 31st	**Whole School Athletics - Landy Field**
April	
Thursday 2nd	**Last day of Term 2.—2:30pm Finish**
Friday 3rd	**Good Friday Public Holiday**

Annual privacy reminder for our school community

Our school collects and uses student and parent personal information for standard school functions or where permitted by law, as stated in the Schools' Privacy Policy and the Schools' Privacy Collection Notice. Schools' privacy collection notice | vic.gov.au

Our Photographing, Filming and Recording Students Policy Photographing, Filming and Recording Students Policy – Bellarine Secondary College describes how we collect and use photographs, video and recordings of students. The policy also explains when parent consent is required and how it can be provided and withdrawn.

We ask parents to also review the guidance we provide on how we use Microsoft 365 safely at the school and what parents can do to further protect their child's information. If after reviewing the guidance, you have any questions or concerns regarding your child using Microsoft 365, please contact the school.

For more information about privacy, refer to: Schools' privacy policy: information for parents | vic.gov.au

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2026 School Production Announcement

We are pleased to announce that the 2026 Bellarine Secondary College school production is ……. Information about auditions, backstage jobs and production team roles will be shared this year.

So get your best Wildcat on and get excited to be involved in this fun and energetic show!

Rebecca Cowled

ART PLC Leader

Music teacher & Production Leader

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Nourish Workshops 2026

The link to book tickets is https://events.humanitix.com/host/farm-my-school.

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Thank you to all those who have been buying the this year - we're thrilled with how they are being received! For anyone who hasn't yet purchased and keen to try, in Term 4 you can expect a delicious array of organically grown rainbow carrots, kale, salad mix, onions, potatoes, lettuce, radishes, wombok cabbage, rainbow chard, Tokyo turnips, parsley and more.

We will be offering small and large boxes available for single purchase as you need, as well as a 10-week and 5-week subscriptions to keep you topped up on a weekly basis.

Prices are as follows:

Small Box | $35 (inclusive of discount)

Large Box | $50 (inclusive of discount)

Small Box 10-week Subscription | $315 (inclusive of discount)

Small Box 5-week Subscription I $205 (inclusive of discount)

Large Box 10-week Subscription | $450 (inclusive of discount)

Large Box 5-week Subscription I $315 (inclusive of discount)

Boxes will be available for pick up only from:

LardAss Butter on Wednesdays between 9am-4pm

Farm My School Shed at Bellarine Secondary College, Drysdale on Wednesdays between 8am-4pm

Bellarine Farmgate, Drysdale on Saturdays from 11am-2pm

Be sure to select your preferred pick-up location at checkout!

We have discount codes available for Bellarine Secondary College staff and families available for you to use, so make sure you don't forget to apply these at checkout! We kindly ask that you please keep these codes within the BSC community.

Discount codes below:

SMALLBOX - $10 off small box

LARGEBOX - $20 off large box

SMALLFIVE - $40 off small five-week sub

LARGEFIVE- $90 off large five-week sub

SMALLTEN - $90 off small ten-week sub

LARGETEN - $180 large ten-week sub

We thank you for your support and we look forward to providing you with an abundance of delicious, fresh, locally grown produce. Head to our shop on the Farm My School website for more information. Should you have any queries about veggie boxes please email hello@farmmyschool.com.

Warm Regards,

James McLennan

Chief Executive Officer | Co-Founder

e james@farmmyschool.com.au **w** www.farmmyschool.com

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Student Wellbeing

All staff are in a position to provide emotional support for the young people of Bellarine Secondary College. There is a Student Wellbeing Team at each campus that can be a valuable first contact for information and assistance. Members of the Wellbeing team are available to both students and parents/guardians to discuss matters concerning a particular students' welfare, needs or problems. The team is accessible by making an appointment.

The wellbeing Team is focussed on proactive education to support young people develop their skills related to resilience, personal safety, and positive coping related to their own wellbeing and mental health.

The work of the Wellbeing Team across the College includes:

- 1:1 Support in the form of counselling, resilience building, and referrals to community support services such as mental health services, family support and allied health services.
- 1:2 Leading school-based small group programs and coordinating external small group programs.
- 1:3 Coordinating national health promotion events such as Mental Health Week, IDAHOBIT Day, and RU OK? Day.

When students access a health or counselling service at school, they have the right to provide or withhold consent to their personal or health information, obtained from them, from being disclosed to any other person, including their parent/guardian.

An Individual acquires that right when they have sufficient maturity to understand the consequences of this disclosure. Unless a student has an intellectual disability or is particularly immature, it is likely that a secondary student has the capacity to make this choice.

Where disclosure or health information is necessary to lessen or prevent a serious imminent threat to the student's health or safety, consent by a student to do this disclosure of information is not required.

If a secondary student self-refers to a counselling service provided to students at school, the College does not have to disclose this to parents guardians. However consent from the student to share information with a parent/guardian or staff is always sought, when it is in the best interests of the student.

The College Wellbeing Team is as follows:

Student Wellbeing Team	School Nurse	Mental Health Practitioner
Nicole Wirth, Ocean Grove and Drysdale	Mel White, Ocean Grove and Drysdale campus	Renae Schomacker Ocean Grove and Drysdale
Jan Bowes, Drysdale		
Kate Grinter, Drysdale		Samson – Wellbeing Dog
Kate Daley Ocean Grove		

LOCAL RESOURCES

The wellbeing team may make referrals to local services or provide support for students and families to access valuable health and wellbeing online.

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Parenting support services

We are focused on providing families with access to support and education programs that compliment their role as parents. Strengthening parenting skills and family relationships is a priority.

You can view the full calendar at geelong.link/parenting

Support for Families, Parents & Carers | Meli

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Help your learner get on the road with a free driving lesson!

The myLearners Free Driving Lesson program offers a FREE 60-minute Lesson with a professional driving instructor for learners aged 16–19 who have completed 10–30 hours of driving practice.

The lesson is taken alongside their supervising driver, helping both the learner and supervisor build safer, more confident driving habits together.

This program supports families by making the learning experience more positive and less stressful. It aims to reduce crash risks for young drivers, strengthen supervising skills, and encourage safer driving behaviours early on all at no cost to participants.

Find out more go to - https://mylearnersdrive.com.au/

Scan QR Code