

MAINTAINING STUDENT CONNECTEDNESS TO SCHOOL

Balliang East Primary School Case Study



AT A GLANCE

Benefits

- High positive endorsement for Sense of Connectedness on the Attitudes to School Survey, above similar schools, network average and state average.
- Both students and parents see the school as a hub of friendship.
- Students don't want to be away because they will be missed by their friends.
- The friendly environment has contributed to calm classrooms and playgrounds.

Challenges

- Communicating embedded practices to new staff.

Balliang East Primary School is a small school that focuses on supporting their friendly atmosphere. Staff are consistent in their expectations and follow the same strategies and routines when interacting with students. When staff first join the school, they can find these differences confusing but quickly realise the impact they have on the culture of the school. These unique elements include creating a sense of family, supporting friendships, modelling gratitude, and creating a community that welcomes parent and family input.

Parents, students, and teachers all value and live the family atmosphere of the school. Each day the whole school eat lunch together. They learn to sit together at a table and engage in conversation like they are a family. All staff at the school know the students well, and parents know they can approach any teacher with a concern because everyone knows their child. The students are confident to develop friendships across year levels and happily play together.

Teachers actively encourage friendships. They notice students in the yard who do not have someone to play with or who are playing with only select children. The teachers support those students to explore and develop new friendships. The teachers also recognise that sometimes students want help finding someone to play with and sometimes they just need time to themselves. Students spoke about how important their friendships were. If they missed a day of school their friends missed them and would ask where they were.

Students show gratitude using positive language, describing things like a 'massive' basketball court. One student showed her excitement as she had three 'amazing' colours of highlighters that she was going to share with her friend. Students speak about how lucky they are to have fun activities like PE, Art, and Science. One student describes enthusiastically, how he gets to write a narrative this term. He cannot wait until Monday when he gets to start writing his draft. The students speak about how nice their school is, with wonderful teachers and principal.

Parents' positive view of the school supports conversations with their children at home. Staff actively develop trusting relationships with parents. The school is also a hub where parents can meet. They are very welcoming of each other and see the school as a place where they can make new friends. The parent friendships have led to things, such as a walking club for after they drop their children off at school.



A parent's comment about the school:

"Everyone is welcomed."

