

# 2024 Annual Report

## Kotara School



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# Introduction

The Annual Report for 2024 is provided to the community of Kotara School as an account of the school's operations and achievements throughout the year.

It provides a detailed account of the progress the school has made to provide high quality educational opportunities for all students, as set out in the school plan. It outlines the findings from self-assessment that reflect the impact of key school strategies for improved learning and the benefit to all students from the expenditure of resources, including equity funding.

## School contact details

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Kotara School

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## School background

### School vision

Leading innovative practices through high quality relationships, excelling in academic and wellbeing outcomes that are culturally safe and foster inclusion and positive transitions.

### School context

Kotara School is a School for Specific Purposes (SSP) situated on Awabakal Land in the Glenrock network. The student body is drawn from a wide area including Newcastle, Maitland, Lake Macquarie and Port Stephens areas. Kotara School provides the opportunity for every student to achieve success in an environment that supports students to find the 'Courage to learn, courage to change'.

Kotara School has 28 students enrolled and caters to students between Years 2 and 6. Students are offered a place by the district placement panel, made up of staff from Educational Services, psychologists, principals and consultants. Approximately 50% of students at Kotara School identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. Each class is staffed with a classroom teacher and School Learning Support Officer. There are 2 Aboriginal members of staff.

The length of each student's enrolment at Kotara School is individualised to their need. Academic and wellbeing programs are taught to ensure our students return successfully to their census schools. Our behavioural interventions are based on the work of Dr Bruce Perry and his Neurosequential Model for Education and the school's pedagogy is based upon the Quality Teaching Framework and Explicit Instruction.

The consultation process with stakeholders including students, families, carers, communities, census schools, External Validation data and the local Muloobinbah Aboriginal Education Consultative Group informed Kotara School's situational analysis and the development of the strategic improvement plan. As a result of this process, high-level areas for improvement were identified such as the embedding of evidenced-based pedagogical practices into curriculum, the implementation of assessment and the analysis of data. This process also highlighted the importance of key systems in effectively supporting all stakeholders.

Kotara School is staffed with a school Principal, Assistant Principal Wellbeing, Assistant Principal Curriculum and Instruction, Aboriginal Education Officer, Classroom Teachers, Student Learning and Support Officers, Chaplain, Student Support Officer and school administrative staff.

## Self-assessment and school achievement

This section of the annual report outlines the findings from self-assessment using the School Excellence Framework, school achievements and the next steps to be pursued.

This year, our school undertook self-assessment using the School Excellence Framework. The Framework is a statement of what is valued as excellence for NSW public schools, both now and into the future. The Framework supports public schools throughout NSW in the pursuit of excellence by providing a clear description of high quality practice across the three domains of Learning, Teaching and Leading.

Each year, we assess our practice against the Framework to inform our school plan and annual report.

Our self-assessment process will assist the school to refine our school plan, leading to further improvements in the delivery of education to our students.

For more information about the School Excellence Framework:

<https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/school-excellence-and-accountability/school-excellence>

### Self-assessment using the School Excellence Framework

Elements	2024 School Assessment
LEARNING: Learning Culture	Sustaining and Growing
LEARNING: Wellbeing	Excelling
LEARNING: Curriculum	Sustaining and Growing
LEARNING: Assessment	Sustaining and Growing
LEARNING: Reporting	Delivering
LEARNING: Student growth and performance	Delivering
TEACHING: Effective classroom practice	Delivering
TEACHING: Data skills and use	Working towards Delivering
TEACHING: Professional standards	Delivering
TEACHING: Learning and development	Sustaining and Growing
LEADING: Educational leadership	Sustaining and Growing
LEADING: School planning, implementation and reporting	Delivering
LEADING: School resources	Sustaining and Growing
LEADING: Management practices and processes	Delivering

## Strategic Direction 1: Student growth and attainment

### Purpose

To embed high-quality teaching programs and practices, we will focus on effective professional learning and curriculum differentiation, enabling all students to excel academically and in their wellbeing.

### Initiatives

This year our school implemented the following initiatives to support the realisation of the four year School Excellence Plan and the achievement of school improvement measures.

- Pedagogy
- Data Driven Processes

### Resources allocated to this strategic direction

Professional learning  
Small group tuition (SGT)  
SSP supplementary funding

### Summary of progress

In 2024, the focus for this strategic direction was on embedding the Quality Teaching Framework, integrating Aboriginal perspectives, and meeting syllabus requirements within the school's teaching programs. The teaching and learning programs underwent continuous refinement, with staff from Merewether Public School collaborating on the development of integrated programs that included essential components such as Road Education, Child Protection, and Drug Education. This collaboration ensured the school met departmental requirements while enhancing the overall quality of the curriculum. Additionally, students benefitted from regular lessons on Aboriginal culture and traditions, facilitated by Uncle Perry, which highlighted the importance of Aboriginal Education. However, the integration of Aboriginal culture in other areas requires renewed focus moving forward.

The assessment programs were systematically reviewed by the Curriculum Committee, leading to the decision to adopt PAT testing as a more effective tool for tracking student progress, particularly in light of the challenges associated with NAPLAN data. The trial of Essential Assessment for Mathematics received positive feedback from staff, who noted increased student engagement with the platform. While there were discussions around the collection of student voice, further exploration is needed to establish an efficient process that does not overwhelm stakeholders.

Looking ahead to 2025, staff have proactively considered and selected programs that will further incorporate elements of the Quality Teaching Framework and Aboriginal pedagogy. The continuation of the partnership with Merewether Public School will provide consistency in program delivery, especially during periods of staff turnover. A dedicated learning unit focusing on the eight different teaching styles from Aboriginal Pedagogy is scheduled for early Term 1, ensuring both students and staff gain a comprehensive understanding of these teaching methods.

To enhance the effective collation and review of data, the school will maintain fortnightly Curriculum Committee meetings to facilitate collaboration and support among staff. These meetings will focus on the regular review of both whole school and individual class assessment data. As the school moves into its partnership with Australian Education Research Organisation (AERO), these discussions will become increasingly critical for the successful implementation of Explicit Instruction. The continued use of PAT as the primary assessment tool will allow for consistent monitoring of student progress, while Essential Assessment will be further explored in English to determine its suitability for the school's needs.

### Progress towards achieving improvement measures

The annual progress measures indicate the expected annual level of achievement for each improvement measure, aligned to the initiatives, in the School Excellence Plan. Schools evaluate their achievement against annual progress measures to determine progress and inform future planning.

Annual progress measure	Progress towards achievement
<b>Improved numeracy outcomes</b> Student cohorts in 2024 demonstrate improved Progressive Achievement Test Reading scores compared to 2023 and 2022 cohorts.	Student data identified significant student growth across the school, indicating that DoE mathematics programs are having impact on student learning and growth.

<b>Improved reading outcomes</b> Student cohorts in 2024 demonstrate improved Progressive Achievement Test Numeracy scores compared to 2023 and 2022 cohorts.	Student data identified significant student growth across the school, indicating that English programs are having impact on student learning and growth.
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## Strategic Direction 2: Quality wellbeing

### Purpose

To be a centre of excellence in holistic student wellbeing, fostering a neurologically respectful environment that meets individual needs and supports student attendance and transitions.

### Initiatives

This year our school implemented the following initiatives to support the realisation of the four year School Excellence Plan and the achievement of school improvement measures.

- Attendance
- Transition

### Resources allocated to this strategic direction

Aboriginal background  
SSP supplementary funding  
Location  
Student Support Officer  
Socio-economic background

### Summary of progress

In 2024, the focus for this strategic direction centred on enhancing cultural awareness and student engagement in Aboriginal Education programs: The school implemented a range of initiatives aimed at fostering a deeper understanding of Aboriginal culture among students. Positive behavioural data indicated an increase in gold behaviour during Aboriginal education lessons, reflecting enhanced student participation and engagement compared to the previous year. Feedback from Uncle Perry highlighted the impressive level of student involvement and the quality of artworks produced, which were showcased at the NAIDOC Assembly. Despite not implementing Aboriginal Pedagogy lessons, the school emphasised integrating Aboriginal culture across various subjects.

The school's collaboration with key stakeholders emerged as a significant factor in improving student attendance. Data revealed an increase in PBL gold days from 48% in 2023 to an average of 63.25% in 2024. This improvement was attributed to enhanced communication with parents, carers, and outside agencies, facilitated by the KIN app. The clarity provided by explicit instructions regarding gold day criteria also contributed to this success. Although formal surveys were not conducted, anecdotal feedback from families indicated a positive perception of the KIN communication tool and its impact on student engagement.

Furthermore, the school successfully supported students' transitions to their census schools. Data collected from census schools demonstrated that the established transition goals were met, with students achieving 38 gold days and three silver days across transition programs in the second semester. The school plans to maintain current transition practices while incorporating feedback from students and census school staff to further enhance the process.

Looking ahead, the school aims to build on the success of these initiatives by integrating Aboriginal Education into everyday learning and developing new 8-ways lessons across all Key Learning Areas. The continued expansion of the KIN app will facilitate data collection on parental engagement and student feedback, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the impact of these initiatives. The school will also establish parent and carer focus groups to refine practices and ensure consistency in the approach to student behaviour and attendance.

### Progress towards achieving improvement measures

The annual progress measures indicate the expected annual level of achievement for each improvement measure, aligned to the initiatives, in the School Excellence Plan. Schools evaluate their achievement against annual progress measures to determine progress and inform future planning.

Annual progress measure	Progress towards achievement
<b>Attendance</b> A whole of school approach to attendance data analysis is implemented to identify attendance trends over time and areas for growth.	Attendance has improved from 2023 to 2024, with an increase in student gold days. New processes for attendance have decreased the amount of unexplained and unjustified absences, increasing communication with all stakeholders around attendance.

Funding sources	Impact achieved this year
<p>Socio-economic background</p> <p>\$65,866.16</p>	<p>Socio-economic background equity loading is used to meet the additional learning needs of students at Kotara School who may be experiencing educational disadvantage as a result of their socio-economic background.</p> <p><b>Funds have been targeted to provide additional support to students enabling initiatives in the School Excellence Plan including:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transition</li> </ul> <p><b>Overview of activities partially or fully funded with this equity loading include:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• staff release to increase community engagement</li> </ul> <p><b>The allocation of this funding has resulted in the following impact:</b> Improved attendance outcomes for students was evidenced by internal school measures.</p> <p><b>After evaluation, the next steps to support our students will be:</b> Continue to employ additional staff to facilitate home/school communication. KIN app (Kotara School Intelligence Network) will continue to support daily communication with stakeholders.</p>
<p>Aboriginal background</p> <p>\$6,948.02</p>	<p>Aboriginal background equity loading is used to meet the specific learning needs of Aboriginal students at Kotara School. Funds under this equity loading have been targeted to ensure that the performance of Aboriginal students in NSW public schools, across a broad range of key educational measures, improves to match or better those of the broader student population, while maintaining cultural identity.</p> <p><b>Funds have been targeted to provide additional support to students enabling initiatives in the School Excellence Plan including:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attendance</li> </ul> <p><b>Overview of activities partially or fully funded with this equity loading include:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• employment of additional staff to deliver personalised support for Aboriginal students</li> <li>• employment of specialist additional staff (AEO) to support Aboriginal students</li> </ul> <p><b>The allocation of this funding has resulted in the following impact:</b> Improved outcomes for Aboriginal students in the areas literacy, numeracy, engagement and cultural awareness.</p> <p><b>After evaluation, the next steps to support our students will be:</b> Continue to employ additional staff to facilitate Aboriginal Education and improved outcomes for Aboriginal students.</p>
<p>Location</p> <p>\$647.00</p>	<p>The location funding allocation is provided to Kotara School to address school needs associated with remoteness and/or isolation.</p> <p><b>Funds have been targeted to provide additional support to students enabling initiatives in the School Excellence Plan including:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attendance</li> </ul> <p><b>Overview of activities partially or fully funded with this operational funding include:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• subsidising student excursions to enable all students to participate</li> <li>• incursion expenses</li> </ul> <p><b>The allocation of this funding has resulted in the following impact:</b> High student attendance and engagement.</p> <p><b>After evaluation, the next steps to support our students will be:</b> Continue to invest in additional learning activities.</p>

<p>Professional learning</p> <p>\$13,232.78</p>	<p>Professional learning funding is provided to enable all staff to engage in a cycle of continuous professional learning aligned with the requirement of the Professional learning for teachers and school staff procedures at Kotara School.</p> <p><b>Funds have been targeted to provide additional support to students enabling initiatives in the School Excellence Plan including:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pedagogy</li> </ul> <p><b>Overview of activities partially or fully funded with this initiative funding include:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• teacher relief for staff engaging in professional learning</li> <li>• course costs for staff undertaking recognised courses</li> </ul> <p><b>The allocation of this funding has resulted in the following impact:</b> Improved outcomes for teachers and support staff in the area of pedagogy.</p> <p><b>After evaluation, the next steps to support our students will be:</b> Continue to build teacher capacity to deliver engaging and evidence-based practice.</p>
<p>QTSS release</p> <p>\$18,168.50</p>	<p>The quality teaching, successful students (QTSS) allocation is provided to improve teacher quality and enhance professional practice at Kotara School.</p> <p><b>Funds have been targeted to provide additional support to students enabling initiatives in the School Excellence Plan including:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data Driven Processes</li> </ul> <p><b>Overview of activities partially or fully funded with this initiative funding include:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• implementation of instructional rounds to strengthen quality teaching practices</li> <li>• assistant principals provided with additional release time to support classroom programs</li> </ul> <p><b>The allocation of this funding has resulted in the following impact:</b> Improved outcomes for students in the areas literacy and numeracy as evidenced by internal school measures.</p> <p><b>After evaluation, the next steps to support our students will be:</b> Continue to employ additional staff to facilitate professional learning in curriculum reform.</p>
<p>SSP supplementary funding</p> <p>\$185,494.26</p>	<p>These funds have been used to support improved outcomes and the achievements of staff and students at Kotara School</p> <p><b>Funds have been targeted to provide additional support to students enabling initiatives in the School Excellence Plan including:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pedagogy</li> <li>• Attendance</li> </ul> <p><b>Overview of activities partially or fully funded with this site specific funding include:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• employment of staff to improve the communication between the school and external stakeholders</li> <li>• executive release to ensure all students benefit from high quality teaching and learning practices that best meet the full range of their individual needs.</li> </ul> <p><b>The allocation of this funding has resulted in the following impact:</b> Improved outcomes for students in the areas of wellbeing and attendance as evidenced by internal school measures, stakeholder feedback and student voice.</p> <p><b>After evaluation, the next steps to support our students will be:</b> Continue to employ additional staff to facilitate quality systems to support student wellbeing and attendance.</p>
<p>Student Support Officer</p>	<p>These funds have been used to support improved outcomes and the</p>

<p>\$103,930.00</p>	<p>achievements of staff and students at Kotara School</p> <p><b>Funds have been targeted to provide additional support to students enabling initiatives in the School Excellence Plan including:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attendance</li> </ul> <p><b>Overview of activities partially or fully funded with this Staffing - Other include:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SSOs contribute to the implementation of the whole-of school approach to wellbeing with a focus on early intervention.</li> <li>• working collaboratively with external and other government agencies in their support of students and their families.</li> </ul> <p><b>The allocation of this funding has resulted in the following impact:</b> Improved outcomes for students in the areas of wellbeing and engagement.</p> <p><b>After evaluation, the next steps to support our students will be:</b> Continue to provide community engagement initiatives.</p>
<p>Small group tuition (SGT)</p> <p>\$8,165.00</p>	<p>These funds have been used to support improved outcomes and the achievements of staff and students at Kotara School</p> <p><b>Funds have been targeted to provide additional support to students enabling initiatives in the School Excellence Plan including:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pedagogy</li> </ul> <p><b>Overview of activities partially or fully funded with this targeted funding include:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employment of educator to facilitate and monitor small group tuition.</li> </ul> <p><b>The allocation of this funding has resulted in the following impact:</b> Improved outcomes for targeted students in the areas literacy and numeracy as evidenced by internal school measures.</p> <p><b>After evaluation, the next steps to support our students will be:</b> Continue to provide small group tuition for identified students.</p>

# Student information

## Student enrolment profile

Students	Enrolments			
	2021	2022	2023	2024
Boys	28	27	27	23
Girls	0	1	1	0

## Attendance

Attendance data is based on Semester 1. Data is suppressed at grade-level if there were 5 or less students at the school in the specific grade. Schools with 5 or less total enrolments will have all their attendance data suppressed.

Attendance figures from 2021 were calculated differently to align with the third edition of ACARA's National Standards for Student Attendance Data and Reporting. Changes include treating partial absences over 120 minutes as a half day absence (instead of their actual value, calculated as a proportion of a nominal 6-hour day) and covers all weeks during Semester 1. Prior to 2021, the final week of Term 2 was excluded.

Furthermore, the department implemented an automated attendance feed (AAF) system in Semester 1 2021. AAF transfers data automatically from third-party attendance management systems to the department's centralised data warehouse every night. The AAF significantly improved data quality in 2021, which has affected data comparability with previous years.

Although there were no state-wide or regional lockdowns in NSW during Semester 1 2021, COVID-19 continued to affect student attendance. Analysis of attendance codes showed a change in the structure of absence reasons in 2021.

Although there were no state-wide or regional lockdowns in NSW during Semester 1 2022, student attendance was impacted by a range of factors:

- Families evacuating and relocating due to NSW floods
- Sick students staying at home until a negative COVID-19 test was returned
- Household members testing positive to COVID-19
- The easing of COVID-19 border controls at the beginning of 2022 which allowed families to travel inter-state and overseas.

While there were no lockdowns or learning from home periods in Semester 1 2023/2024, there was still a high prevalence of sick attendance codes as students were encouraged to stay home if they were even slightly unwell. Advice for families was still in place, recommending students and staff to stay home when sick and only returning to school when they were symptom free. (See <https://education.nsw.gov.au/schooling/covid-19/advice-for-families> for advice).

## Management of non-attendance

Attendance at school has a big impact on longer term outcomes for children and young people. When a child is not at school they miss important opportunities to learn, build friendships and develop their skills through play. Regular attendance at school is a shared responsibility between schools and parents. By working together we can have a positive effect on supporting our children and young people to regularly attend school.

Our teachers promote and monitor regular attendance at school and all our schools have effective measures in place to record attendance and follow up student absences promptly. They are guided by the School Attendance policy which details the management of non-attendance.

## Workforce information

### Workforce composition

Position	FTE*
Principal(s)	1
Assistant Principal(s)	2.2
Classroom Teacher(s)	4.64
Teacher Librarian	0.2
School Administration and Support Staff	9.02

\*Full Time Equivalent

### Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce composition

The department actively supports the recruitment and retention of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander employees through the use of identified positions, prioritised permanent employment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers, scholarship opportunities to become a teacher and by providing a culturally safe workplace. As of 2024, 2.3% of the department's overall workforce identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander People.

### Workforce ATSI

Staff type	Benchmark <sup>1</sup>	2024 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander representation <sup>2</sup>
School Support	3.30%	3.30%
Teachers	3.30%	3.40%

Note 1: The NSW Public Sector Aboriginal Employment Strategy 2019-2025 takes a career pathway approach in that it sets an ambitious target of 3% Aboriginal employment at each non-executive grade of the public sector by 2025.

Note 2: Representation of diversity groups are calculated as the estimated number of staff in each group divided by the total number of staff. These statistics have been weighted to estimate the representation of diversity groups in the workforce, where diversity survey response rates were less than 100 per cent. The total number of staff is based on a headcount of permanent and temporary employees.

### Teacher qualifications

All casual, temporary and permanent teachers in NSW public schools must hold a NSW Department of Education approval to teach. Teachers with approval to teach must be accredited with the NSW Education Standards Authority, and hold a recognised teaching degree. All NSW teachers must hold a valid NSW Working With Children Check clearance.

### Professional learning and teacher accreditation

Professional learning is core to enabling staff to improve their practice. Professional learning includes six student-free School Development Days and induction programs for staff new to our school and/or system. These days are used to improve the capacity of teaching and non-teaching staff in line with school and departmental priorities.

## Financial information

### Financial summary

The information provided in the financial summary includes reporting from 1 January 2024 to 31 December 2024. The Principal is responsible for the financial management of the school and ensuring all school funds are managed in line with department policy requirements.

	2024 <b>Actual</b> (\$)
<b>Opening Balance</b>	169,926.92
<b>Revenue</b>	2,118,821.14
Appropriation	2,091,071.76
Grants and contributions	17,068.00
Investment income	6,631.12
Other revenue	4,050.26
<b>Expenses</b>	-2,074,102.29
Employee related	-1,866,953.27
Operating expenses	-207,149.02
<b>Surplus / deficit for the year</b>	44,718.85
<b>Closing Balance</b>	214,645.77

Figures presented in this report may be subject to rounding so may not reconcile exactly with the bottom line totals, which are calculated without any rounding.

## Financial summary - Equity loadings

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The equity loading data is the main component of the 'Appropriation' line item of the financial summary above.

	2024 <b>SBAR Adjustments</b> (\$)
<b>Targeted Total</b>	0
<b>Equity Total</b>	72,814
Equity - Aboriginal	6,948
Equity - Socio-economic	65,866
Equity - Language	0
Equity - Disability	0
<b>Base Total</b>	1,917,232
Base - Per Capita	13,790
Base - Location	647
Base - Other	1,902,795
<b>Other Total</b>	479,698
<b>Grand Total</b>	2,469,745

Figures presented in this report may be subject to rounding so may not reconcile exactly with the bottom line totals, which are calculated without any rounding.

## Parent/caregiver, student, teacher satisfaction

Multiple internal and external surveys were implemented across 2024 to monitor the success of Kotara School programs, policies, systems and structures.

Students participated in the Tell Them From Me survey, indicating that students feel that they are supported and have a sense of belonging while at school. Internal surveys to gain student perceptions of academic programs and activities that are implemented across the year also presented with positive responses, with one child stating "They understand me and I get what I need".

Parent focus groups enabled us to reflect on school practices, responding to suggestions where appropriate. An end of year survey of the community highlighted resounding satisfaction of the Kotara School program. Comments such as "This is the most successful she has ever been." is another indication of the positive impact the school has on our students and community.

Staff efficacy continues to be high in 2024 with one member stating "It is a great culture to work in, where I feel included and informed." Informal conversations with staff also highlight the inclusivity in whole school decisions and they feel varying opinions are valued.

# Policy requirements

## Aboriginal Education Policy

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The responsibility for enacting the Aboriginal Education Policy rests with all departmental staff. The policy should underpin and inform planning, teaching practice and approaches to educational leadership in all educational settings.

Evidence of effective implementation of the policy included:

- Establishing, building and strengthening relationships with the Local Aboriginal Education Consultative Group, Aboriginal people and communities.
- Providing, in partnership with Aboriginal people and communities, education which promotes quality teaching, is engaging, and is culturally appropriate and relevant.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students will match or better the outcomes of the broader student population.
- Implementation of Personalised Learning Pathways for all Aboriginal students in a school culture of high expectations.

## Anti-Racism Policy

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All teachers are responsible for addressing incidents of racism and supporting students to develop an understanding of racism and discrimination and the impact these may have on individuals and the broader community. The Principal is responsible for examining school practices and procedures to ensure they are consistent with the policy. The school has an Anti-Racism Contact Officer who is trained to respond to concerns in relation to racism.

## Multicultural Education Policy

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Teachers are responsible for addressing the specific learning and wellbeing needs of students from culturally diverse backgrounds through their teaching and learning programs. The Principal is responsible for ensuring that school policies, programs and practices respond to the cultural, linguistic and religious diversity of the school community, and provide opportunities that enable all students to achieve equitable education and social outcomes.